

## In Defence of Care: Gilligan's relevance for primary education

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### Abstract

In the main, writing about care seems to contrast the ethics of justice with the ethics of care. Whilst the former deploys objectivity, the latter holds that individuals are connected. Problematically, contemporary primary education seemingly holds a personal, justice conceptions as its basis and rationale. In turn, primary education, in parts, adopts justice orientations for the way in which it organises and controls. This paper sets out to identify the way in which care can be conceived of as an alternative to justice-based conceptions of morality, and hence its applicability to the educational sphere. It takes, as its starting point the contribution made by Carol Gilligan, and examines her work for the ways in which it counters justice mechanisms through its celebration of a different voice. However, a warning is sounded: the neoliberal line holds court in the drive to design education; to simply cite care as the foil to this is problematic. For in so doing lies the danger that care is simply ignored due to the paternalistic hold justice conceptions have. To this end I propose that care be seen as a partner for justice and neoliberalism and not a mere alternative.

Key words: care, justice, neoliberalism, primary education

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## Introduction

Throughout the literature it is clear that 'care' is a contested concept. As Wilkinson notes, there '...is no adequate theory of caring that defines why people are willing to give care, or what attitudes, behaviour and emotional expression constitute 'caring'' (1995: 212). Theories seem to describe a continuum of human experience that stretches between, on the one hand, caring as the provision of warmth and feeling, and, on the other, caring as a technical endeavour.

Usually foregrounded in the literature, however, is the broadly conceived of contrast between the so-called ethics of care and the so-called ethics of justice (Tong, 1998). Indeed, since the publication of Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* (1982) writers have spent time debating the relative merits of care versus justice, virtues versus principles. These debates have given rise to a rich seam of discussion. In particular, they often centre on the contrast between 'male' or 'masculine' views espousing justice and principle as the defining features of ethical action, and those of a 'female', 'feminine' or 'feminist' orientation which take virtue and/or care as their defining feature. Although this debate has often polarised thinking and has, more recently, come in for much criticism, it is fair to say that the bi-polar orientation is one that requires consideration in any work that seriously wishes to discuss care and its relationship to educational practice. For it is not only in the realm of professional practice such as education or social work that this debate has raged; those professions, for example medicine, who, whilst often equated with 'care' in one form or another seem to take their stance from more objective, positivist perspectives,

have also been subject to calls for their work to be construed via such oppositional thinking.

It is important, then, that this contrast is illuminated, not because it can provide definitive answers but rather due to the opportunities such debate offers for subsequent analysis of education policy. Accordingly, this paper is organised into four parts. In the first I offer neoliberalism as one of the defining features for current educational policy and the ways in which this orients the work of primary schools. Here I note the ways in which neoliberal constructs have adopted a justice-based approach in determining the ways and means by which education might be more 'efficient' and 'effective'. In this way I note how the defining features of policy now point education towards distant, a-personal approaches.

I contrast this, in the second section, with a discussion about the ways in which care ethics have been offered as an alternative to the justice orientation. Here I give consideration to the traditional role care has in primary education; the way in which primary education and care are intertwined is examined. In support I outline the work of Carol Gilligan and her conceptions of justice and care. In the third section I outline Gilligan's view that care and justice should not be viewed merely as opposites but rather as complementary; to examine care without justice, or justice without care is problematic. In the final section I note how useful Gilligan's work is in assisting educationalists to restructure their thinking about the role for justice-based orientations and care-based inclinations. I use her work to illuminate an approach that sees care, not in opposition to justice, but rather as a partner to its cold, rational

orientation. This section shows how it is possible to conceive of justice in terms of care and how the two might operate together to effect a better position for education.

### Justice and primary schooling

A common theme in the literature is the way in which primary education has come to be centred on a view of education that is synonymous with legitimising rights and obligations: the rights of parents and pupils to a 'good' education and the obligation on teachers to provide this. Success is thus determined through quantitative attainment published in international league tables such as those produced by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD). What is in place is a means of control that requires schools to demonstrate quantitative uplift through measures designed to reify pupil progress. For some this is a performativity discourse (Ball, 2003) replete with messages about what is to be valued and judged. In turn these form the cornerstone of political and media pronouncements about the state of primary education, and leave the profession open to accusation, allegation, plaudit and control which, variously, condemn or celebrate. This position stems from political moves which seek to use education as an electoral lever; that is to say, politics now positions education as an important mechanism by which to gain electoral advantage. Politicians speak, variously, of the need for education to raise standards, attend to under-performance and equip the future workforce (Forrester, 2005).

Education is, then, a political endeavour in that it requires us to think about the ways in which it is structured, monitored and controlled. In this regard, it is clear that the neoliberal agenda, which has been in the ascendency for at least the last thirty years, has been one of the main drivers of social and public policy. Indeed, Giroux (2002: 425) maintains that neoliberalism is '...the defining political economic paradigm of our time'. He refers to '...the politics and processes whereby a relative handful of private interests are permitted to control as much as possible of social life in order to maximise their personal profit'. In this discourse the market is presented as common-sense; individual property rights and the rule of law are favoured (Harvey, 2005) and individual responsibility is called for through the auspices of accountability via the measures of audit and inspection. Harvey (2005: 5) also notes that in choosing individual freedom as its basis, neoliberalism supports the very fabric of civilisation as we know it.

The founding figures of neoliberal thought took political ideals of human dignity and individual freedom as fundamental, as 'the central values of civilization'. In so doing they chose wisely, for these are indeed compelling and seductive ideals. These values, they held, were threatened not only by fascism, dictatorships, and communism, but by all forms of state intervention that substituted collective judgements for those of individuals free to choose.

Accordingly, success and failure are, respectively, interpreted in terms of entrepreneurial virtues or personal failings rather than through any reason of the system (Harvey, 2005); well-being is seen as an individual issue and, accordingly, the individual is required to think only of himself. Neoliberalism locates the person as a rational decision-maker and ignores the interdependent nature of human existence, preferring instead to extol the virtues of economic individualism. It promotes life as a

'project' in which '...the self is the subject of continuous economic capitalisation' (Pick and Taylor, 2009: 78). Social visions are dismissed as hopelessly out of date and the entrepreneurial self becomes ascendant (Giroux, 2002).

The rise of Neo-Liberalism as one of the defining features for the operationalisation and the conceptualisation of education in turn identifies certain features for consideration. Its agenda of quantitative judgement marks out educational success in terms of simplistic measures not entirely related to dealing with the issues which cause educational underachievement. In this way aspects such as social class or disadvantage are elided, to be replaced by notions of 'best practice', efficiency and effectiveness. The mechanisms by which education is judged are specific to the classroom and any relationship to wider social and political forces is usually underplayed. Indeed, at the classroom level, the rise of efficiency-measures and pedagogic modes designed to elevate standards and concomitant teaching-learning relationships centre on definitions for education conspicuous in their drive to give pupils 'what they deserve'. In education as in other areas of social policy, such matters have an international flavour. For example, economic imperatives for education have been seen as far afield as Australia (Shacklock, 1998). In Britain, speaking of the government's reform agenda, Prime Minister David Cameron said

These radical proposals will give teachers both the freedom and the authority in the classroom that's needed if we are to realise our ambition to drive up standards, improve discipline and behaviour and deliver the world class education *that our children deserve*. (Department for Education (DfE), 2010, *emphasis added*)

At their heart such orientations describe the 'oughtness' of the situation; the means whereby children are defined by their individual rights to a quality education. In essence what are described are versions of justice bound up with notions of accountability, efficiency and effectiveness. This preoccupation with rigour and standards leans towards a sense of individual rights: educational policy becomes concerned with the intentionality and correctness of the learning and achievement endeavour. Now this is not to say that increasing attainment is wrong or that a commitment to justice is misplaced; for as Baier (1995: 47) notes, justice is an essential part of social flourishing:

Let me say quite clearly at this early point that there is little disagreement that justice is a social value of very great importance, and injustice an evil. Nor would those who have worked on theories of justice want to deny that other things matter besides justice.

However, this position signals that as ethical activities, justice-based conceptions hold sway in political thinking and educational policy. Indeed, what has characterised much of the writing in the field of professional, ethical decision-making are constructs based, more or less firmly, on a desire for universality or utility. In particular, such debates have been characterised by the view that ethical decisions are made by independent, rational, autonomous individuals. This separation of 'he' from 'himself' (the maleness of the orientation is often used to denote the orientation of the thinking behind the view) is pursuant of the desire for 'man' to occupy a world whose ontology is conceived and populated by selves in-opposition-to others (Tong, 1997:154). As Held (1995: 172) notes, 'Generalizing from the "public" domain of law and politics to the whole of morality has been the dominant

tendency of philosophical ethics in the modern era.' What is sought is the denial of '...intimate, particular relations, focussing instead on relations and actions in accordance with universalizable maxims...' (Koehn, 1998: 1). This universality is exercised through visions for education that transcend the local. The specificity of the micro is elided, replaced instead with views for education which celebrate success as measured against corporate standards. Pupils are judged against a raft of central targets. Such a focus on the universal seeks to separate subjectivity and objectivity in its attempts to present a "view from nowhere"; a universal epistemology to whose objectivity we might defer. In turn, the employment of Western, scientific reasoning to argue for quasi-mathematical maxims for action not only implies moral status but also the maturity of a position; the use of universal principles forms a hierarchy where the right to a 'good' education trumps other, local rights. Such orientations, through their imputation of 'maturity' enable other opinions and perspectives to be cast as 'immature' and thereby ignorable. Notably, this permits a lack of consultation; as the desire is to state, defend and apply universal principles, the purview of the particular and situated can be dismissed as irrational and therefore amoral.

The neoliberal discourse, then, presents as rational the individual with attendant rights to an education which contribute to marking out the pupil as economically viable. It is a distant position, one borne not of relationships but of audit; the defining feature speaks of cost not worth. Indeed, whilst presenting the political rationale for changes to educational policy, politicians and policy makers will often outline their case in terms of reducing underachievement or making 'our' education

system the best in the world. Presented as a series of arguments about entitlement, such messages play to a sense of rational decision-making; a sense that it is beyond question that such aims are laudable and worthwhile. But what is of note are the ways in which the mechanisms for the achievement of such aims are oft presented as the operationalisation of justice: justice for pupils, justice for parents. Such justice, the population is told, is future oriented: ensuring that the adults of tomorrow can play their economic part in society. In stripping away the informal and imposing a view of education replete with connotations of justice and duty, current educational policy has as its modus operandi a set of criteria against which the progress of all can be judged. Indeed, individuals are accounted for in terms of league tables and the like, not for the implicit worth they have as human beings. Now, this is not to deny that success at school is important, but rather it signals that the underpinning reasons for striving for success are personal to the individual and judged in terms of the quantitative uplift educational success can lead to and subsequent monetary offerings in the form of wages and position in society: economic imperatives hold sway.

This requires consideration though. For in the drive to align education with economics and thus bring opportunity to individuals, if not now, then in the future, education is positioned as requiring of a mode of operation that assuages issues of individual right. The good that is to be gleaned is the good that comes from contributing as *homo-economicus*. Gaze is thus cast over the ways in which an understanding of education can be better aligned with the economic, social and political ideal of neoliberalism. What neoliberalism holds up is a proclivity for seeing

education in terms of rationality and reason. Importantly here, Osgood (2006: 8) notes that '...neoliberal discourse places an emphasis upon being rational above an ethic of care.'

#### From justice ethics to care ethics in primary education

It is, then, fair to note that primary education has become highly politicised. Indeed, although primary education can be said to have a rationale of its own, a position which stems from a view that the primary child has a unique perspective on the world, this has come in for challenge in the current economic, cultural and political climate. For within the primary school rationale is the acknowledgement that care should form part of the primary education staple; a position endorsed by the likes of Nias (1989). Although curricular and assessment changes may have sharpened the focus on progress and attainment, an ethic of care is still prevalent (Webb and Vulliamy, 2001). This orientation is worldwide; indeed, citing the work of Nias, Shacklock (1998: 179) writes of the 'feel' of teaching: the 'caring and the conflict'. His work, in an Australian school, signposts the 'storyline of care' (p.181) typically found in teacher statements about professionalism; the way in which teachers defined themselves was in terms of care. Working in the UK, Cortazzi (1991) also found that teachers' narratives demonstrated that teachers 'care'. In similar terms, Campbell and Neill (1994) note that it is social factors which orient teachers towards an ethic of care. Caution should be taken here though: Ashley and Lee (2003) talk of the distant, managerial status of 'care about' and the associated, classroom level 'care for'. The former, they contend, maintains higher status due to the ways in which it fits with attendant modes for the operationalisation of schools. In a sense what they

note are the ways in which aspects of educational policy position education, in some respects, towards the ideals of the managerial state. As Osgood (2006: 10) states, often an ethic of care and emotional labour, even though cornerstones to practitioners' professional identities, '...are often characteristics that are denigrated in hegemonic professionalism discourses.'

Additionally, work in moral and political philosophy has challenged the focus on the autonomous, abstract, rational agent and on 'justice' as the first virtue of society. Writing in reaction to 'Oxford' philosophy and its exaltation of freedom, right, will, power and judgement for the promotion of 'right action', Iris Murdoch (1970) argued for a moral philosophy which '...helps us learn how to focus our attention on others whom we can recognise as 'real'...' (Robinson, 1999: 17). Starting from the premise that individuals are naturally attached, Murdoch argued

...it is the development, purification, and reorganisation of those attachments which must be the task of morals. Morality is not just about action...but can be about learning how to wait, be patient, trust, and listen. (Robinson, 1999: 17)

It is attention to individuals: the lives we lead and the loving relations we make asserted Murdoch, which constitutes morality. Morality is not an act of will, but the practice of attention tied to love (Murdoch, 1970: 28). In essence, Murdoch advocated replacing justice with the care perspective (Hekman, 1993: 156).

It is clear, though, that care is attuned not only to the nurturing role: it presents a discourse which offers a lens through which to examine. It offers a means whereby

professionals can construct an identity for themselves and a label for their work. For care is an important aspect of male and female teachers; it is part of the 'interpersonal experience of human nurturance' (Smedley and Pepperell, 2000).

Importantly, this concern with an 'ethics of care' has its origins in the work of moral and social psychologists such as Nancy Chodorow (cf. 1978) and Carol Gilligan (cf. 1982) as well as philosophers such as Nel Noddings (cf. 1984) and Sarah Ruddick (cf. 1989). In this vein, whilst the well-known and oft cited work of Jean Piaget (cf. 1997) and Lawrence Kohlberg (cf. 1958) provide the cornerstone of much thinking in the realm of moral developmental theory, many feminist psychologists have critically examined the psychology of moral agency. Of these, perhaps the most influential has been Carol Gilligan (1982) whose work was a response to the neo-Piagetian, deontological reasoning approach advocated by Kohlberg (1958).

Clarity is needed here though. Whilst care is something promoted by traditional primary education discourse, this is not necessarily the same thing as that promoted by moral philosophers or psychologists alike. Indeed, it could be argued that the latter are concerned with the development of moral reasoning alone and thus are less interested in the ways in which primary education is organised and run. In this regard, care is less an educational issue than a psychological one. What is relevant, however, is the way in which care, as a matter of interpersonal relationships, aligns itself with the matter of education. The positions adopted by the psychology of morality within a care framework thus offer starting points for educational

deliberation. They hold up for scrutiny something which should be at the heart of education: the relational.

Similarly, philosophical discussions should not be confused with psychological ones. What follows may well discuss the two, but it is not enough to simply position them as synonymous. This said it is clear that philosophical writings have developed out of psychological positions; and vice versa. I am not seeking to elide the differences between the two; rather I wish to demonstrate the development in care-based thinking; to do this requires consideration of both psychological and philosophical deliberation and theory. Such theory has been used to elucidate a position for educational care and to ignore this is unwise. However, there is a need to remember that such writings whilst influential are not necessarily synonymous.

What is clear from these two positions, though, is the place and form for care. As

Held writes

Rather than assuming, as do the dominant moral theories, that moral relations are to be seen to be entered into voluntarily by free and equal individuals, the ethics of care is developed for the realities, as well, of unequal power and unchosen relations.' (2004: 143)

The psychological turn

Until Gilligan, moral development theory was heavily attuned to the ideas of Kohlberg (1984), who, in turn, was heavily influenced by the neo-Kantian philosopher John Rawls (1971). Rawls philosophical views on moral development proposed a three stage model: morality of authority; of association; and of

principles. The initial, temporary morality of authority is based on love and gives way, eventually, to the morality of principles where abstract 'first principles' take the place of 'contingencies' (Rawls, 1971: 456). Speaking from a different discipline, Kohlberg's three-level, six-stage psychological theory of moral development echoes this: the initial pre-conventional gives way to the conventional which in turn gives way to the post-conventional. For Kohlberg, the stages are scientific and empirical. Kohlberg also maintained that the stages are culturally and individually evolutionary; thus, pre-linguistic cultures do not attain the post-conventional stage, but within particular cultures, development to higher stages happens as individuals mature. Finally, Kohlberg made the point that the presence of thinking at a higher stage does not make that thinking more moral, rather, he implied, such thinking is more adequate for solving moral problems.

Gilligan's psychological research, however, clearly identified both care and justice frameworks as mechanisms employed to discuss moral dilemmas by both genders. It was her contention that subjects are constituted through discursive formation and that moral voices stem from this (Hekman, 1993). Theoretically her work was not entirely new; it echoed the philosophical ideas and principles of Iris Murdoch. Although Murdoch's position is very similar to Gilligan's the two perspectives differ both in terms of discipline and in that Gilligan argues for a non-hierarchical dualism of justice and care. As a seminal influence, Gilligan proposed that the different voices evidenced in her empirical work described gender-different ways of speaking about moral dilemmas. Using the analogy that how perceptual patterns are viewed often relates to prior expectations and ways of seeing, Gilligan highlights that '...although

people are aware of both perspectives, they tend to adopt one or the other in defining and resolving moral conflict' (Gilligan, 1995: 31, 32). She argued that, since moral issues require decisions to be made, it is often the case that a particular perspective may well become adopted for the clarity it offers. However, such clarity can also preclude the use of alternative positions, especially when the one favoured blends with justification, thus leading to the position that there is a 'better' way of thinking about moral issues. In essence, her argument is that morality is a 'focus phenomenon' (Hekman, 1993: 145).

What Gilligan noted, was a psychological predilection by respondents to continue to present reasons based on either one of justice or care when pressed for alternatives or clarification, and that such predilections were gender oriented: females were more likely to use the care-as-moral perspective. Indeed, in support Johnston (1988) found that even though by the age of eleven, children are able to shift between the two perspectives, there is still a marked gender preference in their articulated moral problem-solving methods. This, Gilligan argues, is part of the reason for the preponderance of justice-based ethical decision-making, broadly adopted throughout contemporary moral philosophy.

In point, Gilligan offers the 'care perspective' as a complementary 'vision or frame' by which moral development might be considered. Based on observations of the moral judgements employed by college students and pregnant women considering abortion, Gilligan posited that women, especially when speaking about their own experiences of moral conflict and choice, spoke in ways inconsistent with the

assumptions that, at the time, shaped thinking about the development of moral reasoning and choice-making. For Gilligan, Kohlberg's ideas are problematic. Whereas Kohlbergian theory posits that the ways women described their ethical decision-making was less mature by virtue of their representation lower down a six-stage, three-level progression of moral thinking, Gilligan maintained that this view was a result of problems in the original representation rather than inherent weaknesses in the moral development of females. That Kohlberg's perspective originates in the traditional paradigm of western scientific enquiry is of relevance to Gilligan's refutation: Kohlberg, she argued, started his work on the basis that what constitutes morality had already been defined, and then proceeded to gather evidence to support his ideas and claims. Essentially, Gilligan claimed that Kohlberg 'viewed' his data from a paradigmatic standpoint that was always going to locate thinking and problem-solving that did not fit with neo-Kantian ideals as of lesser stature. Indeed, Gilligan desired to rescue the particularistic and personal from the assertion that they are amoral, and reconfigure them as a legitimate, moral realm, equal to the abstract, formalistic sphere of justice and rights (Hekman, 1993: 523). In so doing, she needed to question the assumptions inherent within the Kohlbergian tradition.

Gilligan's work gained prominence, not only for its challenge to the then dominant, Kohlbergian moral development position, but also for the questions it asked concerning the universal philosophies of the time. For, as Hekman (1995) noted, taking care, relationship and connection as integral to human life and flourishing requires women's stories to be accepted as distinct from, but equal to moral ideas

based on abstract principles. Further, in her critique of Piaget whose work also heavily influenced Kohlberg, Gilligan posited that the differences exhibited by girls when talking about the logic of rules and games highlighted, not deficiencies in understanding or the development of ideas of justice, but rather girls' use of the logic of rules and games. As Kohlberg equated moral development with the development of justice reasoning and conducted his research, initially, on an all-male sample he therefore did not encounter such gendered issues. Even though Kohlberg subsequently revised his stance to describe his theory as a measure of "justice reasoning", this is not recognised in the widespread use of his ideas neither is his belief that there is a care perspective in people's moral thinking.

To sum, Spader (2002) notes four ways in which Gilligan challenged traditional ethical theory: by virtue of the fact that until her work research subjects had been mostly male; that the theories proposed are predominantly the preserve and product of males; that the descriptors used are often linear and reductionist; and, that justice is the major theme.

#### The dualism of justice and care

What is clear is that Gilligan posits that whilst the expression of a moral standpoint is a moral decision, a person's preferred position should be construed as, at times, in conflict with the stated problem-solving preference. Hence, to take expressed positions as indicative of moral development is an obfuscation; that expressed is not, necessarily indicative of the underlying structure of moral thinking. However, it is important to underline the fact that Gilligan did not construe care and justice as

opposites, but rather as '...different ways of organising the basic elements of moral judgement...' (1995: 34).

With the shift in perspective from justice to care, the organizing dimension of relationship changes from inequality/equality to attachment/detachment, reorganizing thoughts, feelings, and language so that words connoting relationship like "dependence" or "responsibility" or even moral terms such as "fairness" and "care" take on different meanings. (Gilligan, 1995: 34)

Zembylas (2010: 234) also notes the distinction between care and justice.

In sum, an ethic of justice focuses on issues of fairness, equality and individual rights, seeking impartiality and universality of principles. In contrast, the ethic of care focuses on trust, social bonds, cooperation, caring relation and responding to needs.

The tension between universalism and parochialism, he writes '...highlights another common dualism: between relativism and universalism or, more precisely, between the abstract universalist ideal of impartiality and the particularist sentiment and practice of partiality (Zembylas, 2010: 235)

The dual-standing position is well rehearsed in the literature. In short, there are four main approaches to the justice/care debate (Spader, 2002):

1. The superiority approach. This holds that one ethic is superior to the other. In most cases this is argued in favour of justice, although some do argue for care as the superior approach. Others, such as Manning (1992) posit that to search for one universal ethic is problematic.

2. The separate and equal approach. This position holds that both care and justice are equal but separate. In this position the view is that there needs to be a separation of the two, but that both need to be present so that a holistic understanding might ensue. Here, care is seen as equal to, but distinct from, justice; however, justice and care are not opposite but different. There is, then, a need to elevate both voices and abandon the idea of ultimate answers (Hekman, 1993). Some, e.g. Hardwig (1984) and Held (1987) argue that care and justice thinking are specific to different spheres. However, this has the danger of reifying the public/private split. In practice, such a thesis is difficult; often what occurs is the elevation of one ethic over the other. It may also be the case that to differentiate may lead to dichotomies which place fixed traits on the other so leading to intolerance and isolationism, usually along power lines.
3. The integration approach seeks to find one monistic theory; that care and justice are intertwined. Here the view is that justice cannot exist without care and vice versa. This can be helpful, but can also lead to problems if the two sides cannot be reconciled in practice. Gilligan does this by relating care to the relational self and justice to the separate self; just as these selves become intertwined, so do care and justice (Hekman, 1993). This challenges the 'other' thesis. Gilligan claims that justice and care are both rooted in universal truths of human existence. This challenges the dominant model of moral psychology and philosophy that the 'human' is the separate, autonomous self. Gilligan's work attempted to 'complete' male scientific theory so achieving truth and objectivity through the acceptance of feminine

viewpoints (Hekman, 1993). One consequence of Gilligan's work is the idea that care is superior to justice. However, advocating that care is superior to justice merely inverts the universalistic theory that precedes it and is not Gilligan's aim. This said, two problems might arise here: the phenomenon in focus (care for example), may preclude the other from having a voice.

Secondly, justice often sees care: as the mercy that tempers justice; of the realm of the personal and private; or, altruism that goes beyond the requirements of justice.

4. The diversity approach finds expression through the myriad ways in which moral and ethical issues can be tackled. Problematically, integration may be required in areas of disagreement or, relativism might ensue due to the multiplicity of voices leading to a 'what works' approach.

Notably, Gilligan eschewed the idea that justice and care are separate; rather she saw them as intertwined: care as conceived through the prism of justice and care as a perspective on moral action. Indeed, she came to view the justice perspective as incomplete without the addition of the care perspective (Hekman, 1993). Central to her claims was the idea that relational and autonomous selves are not, as was previously proposed, different modes of being but are two aspects of human existence: self can only be experienced in relationship with others and relationship can only be experienced through the differentiation of self from other (Hekman, 1993). In effect, Gilligan offered a new discourse of morality that sat in opposition to the unitary theory espoused by the likes of Kohlberg, whereby only abstract

formalistic thought counts as moral; Gilligan asserted that justice and care should be given equal validity as moral endeavours (Hekman, 1993).

What is evident in this difference between care and justice is the way in which care is seen as a modifier to the distant, rational measures employed within a deontological frame and a framework for action in and of itself. The foregrounding of personal interrelationships with care construed within a justice framework is clearly a defining feature for Gilligan. Key to this is the placing of the self-in-relation whereas in the justice perspective, this self is still the origin of action. When speaking of the care-as-moral-perspective, Gilligan noted that responsiveness is key; it is connection that defines the orientation.

For Gilligan, maturity is evidenced through the convergence of justice and care resulting in a dialogue (Hekman, 1993). Her sense of care as a basis for moral action, as distinct from care as a replacement for justice connects individuals through the

...organizing tendencies of human interaction and language. Within this framework, detachment, whether from self or others, is morally problematic, since it breeds moral blindness or indifference – a failure to discern or respond to need. The question of what responses constitute care and what responses lead to hurt draws attention to the fact that one's own terms may differ from those of others. (Gilligan, 1995: 36, 37)

As one of Gilligan's male subjects said people '...have real emotional needs to be attached to something, and equality does not give you attachment. Equality fractures society and places on every person the burden of standing on his own two feet' (1982: 167). Such a shift emphasises a change in the nature of moral

consideration from hierarchical to network. It not only offers new scope for considering relationships, it also necessitates a response to need; an attempt to answer the question "how to respond?" It is this sense of perspective-positioning that is of interest in Gilligan's work; her offering does not denote a negation of justice in favour of care, or vice-versa. Instead, it notes the ambiguity in the construction of questions concerning what is the problem to be solved. As Baier (1995) noted, as individuals we are capable of adopting, and indeed do adopt, one or both of the orientations.

Writing in this tradition, Baier (1995) noted the ways in which infants become aware of two 'evils': of detachment or isolation from others whose love one needs; and, the evil of relative powerlessness. In turn, through socialisation and child-rearing practices these reinforce or preclude one or the other of two dimensions of moral disposition from developing as the predominant orientation: attachment, aimed at satisfying community with others; and, equality aimed at autonomy. In a challenge to Piaget, Gilligan identifies that male egocentrism is not inherent but that it develops as a result of boy's socialisation through the roles adopted by mothers. Thus she challenges the definition of "human" as separate, autonomous and egocentric (Hekman, 1993: 147) replacing it instead with a dualistic theory of moral development.

#### A caring primary education: implications from Gilligan

I argued earlier that one of the underpinning rationales for primary education is the explication of a caring environment (cf. Nias, 1989). Indeed, care has long been seen

as part of the primary teaching exchange; teaching as a reciprocal endeavour (Goldstein and Lake, 2000). It would be propitious to explore, therefore, the place for an ethic of care in primary education policy and practice; for whilst such a position might well be theoretically desired it is fair to say that in practice such moves may be constrained by a culture of performativity (Jeffrey, 2002, 2003). However, it should not be surmised that I am arguing that care has been lost in primary education; I am not. Rather, I am arguing that care, possibly, now has less space in which to operate than previously. Contemporary, justice-based approaches to defining the content and outputs of primary education are seemingly in contradiction with historical perceptions of what primary education might mean. In this regard the proclivities of current regimes would suggest that there is minimal place for care; justice seems to hold court.

Gilligan's views are immensely helpful here. As Blum (1994) notes, the idea of 'a different voice' necessitates space being given to the idea of care and the ways in which it helps us conceive of transformations to the nature of moral, political and social relations. At the heart of Gilligan's work is a desire to advance a dualistic theory of care and justice. Her work is, in orientation, feminist in that it purports to examine why, in our culture, women are expected to exhibit caring and nurturing qualities as opposed to male considerations of abstract justice. As Hekman (1993: 153) notes, Gilligan

'...is clear in her claim that the Western tradition of morality excludes the moral concerns traditionally associated with women ... [and] ... that we can

add this "different voice" to the moral tradition as a separate (or compatible) but equal component'

So, Gilligan's work is important for at least two reasons. Firstly, as Robinson (1999) argues, 'care-ethics', if seen solely as an alternative to traditional, justice-based conceptions, loses its potency as a transformative agent in the drive to realign the relationship between morality and politics. For the dominance of the neoliberal line is such that alternative standpoints are often lost.

If care ethics is understood solely as a 'corrective' to universalistic, impartialist theories, or simply as a 'useful addition' to our moral vocabulary, then it will always retain its image as a 'private', 'personal' morality which is antithetical to justice and most relevant to women as mothers and, more generally, occupiers of the private sphere of the household and the family.... [C]are can transcend these apparent limitations when it is understood not simply as a narrow psychological disposition, or a 'moral theory', but as a value and a practice which informs our daily lives, with the capacity to transform our understanding of both morality and politics and, ultimately, of the relationship between them. (Robinson, 1999: 12)

For as Tong (1998: 132) notes as well,

In the course of reflecting..., I have come to realise that I most often used the language of justice to justify my moral decisions to my colleagues, students and the world in general, while I most often used the language of care to justify my moral decisions to myself, my family and my friends.

Here it is necessary to identify commonality in the ways in which care and caring are used by the various proponents. As stated above, for psychologists, care is taken as a position from which moral development might be construed. The position offered is one of thinking about moral decision-making as relational, and not as something impersonal and bound by rational utilitarianism. As well, philosophically, care is

often akin to virtue: a way of organising relationships so that they might lead to a better life. Although the ways in which care is used differs between the two, there is commonality in the fact that both talk of the self in connection with others. The emphasis is on the interpersonal as a means of understanding human existence. As Sherblom (2008: 88-89) states, it is the underpinning of the care discourse that offers much for primary education.

Care reasoners assume a level of interdependence and connection with other people far more relationally embedded than the individual autonomy emphasised by the ethic of justice, and typical of justice reasoners. Care reasoners view action as responsive and assume caring as a moral mandate. Thus detachment is problematic because it means that there is a failure to respond to others' needs

This resonates with primary education: part of the rationale at this stage is certainly one of connection between selves; the realisation of human inter-connectivity. The work of Gilligan in this matter is clear: care, construed as a means whereby the self might affect and be affected by others for better or worse, denotes an understanding that connectedness is just as important as rational, impersonal decision-making. Whilst it is the case that current political imperatives seek to orient primary education in ways conversant with justice interpretations and orientations, Gilligan's 'different voice' gives succour to those who wish to acknowledge and state that primary education should have connectedness at its heart. However, as Goldstein and Lake (2000) state, there is a danger here: simply equating teaching with caring reduces the latter's complex activity to little more than 'flat representations' commonly found in media images. Indeed, in their research, teachers were often seen as those representations found in television programmes

or greetings cards. Importantly, teaching may thus become equated with a set of affective traits: the 'mumsy' discourse, an idealised, middle class discourse with socially approved feminine virtues. Gilligan's work is, however, non-essentialist and destabilises the boundaries between the political and non-political.

Secondly, that primary education is a female dominated profession is not news.

Forrester (2005) notes how the teaching of younger children, whilst originally the preserve of men, has become associated with women's work since the end of the nineteenth century. She writes how primary teaching is seen as a 'natural act' for women and that caring is part of this orientation. The danger is obvious though: care, with its attendant female/feminist orientation is in danger of being relegated when compared to the viewpoint that celebrates the 'objectivity' of standards and rigour; for patriarchal standpoints often neuter other, non-male views. The feminisation of teaching and the masculinisation of management in schools '...invite the development and appropriation of ideologies of care as gendered controls in the politics of teachers' work' (Shacklock, 1998: 182). It is not that care is not recognised; rather it stands as subordinate to the discourse of individualism and is defined in such terms. Thus, care becomes reframed as 'care about attainment' or 'care about behaviour'. Whilst these things matter though, they matter in the sense that they are about things outside of relationships; they do not develop the human endeavour. What is elided in the separation of care and education, if we are not careful, is the relational.

As care ethics relies on conceptions of human good and is therefore transformative it is about seeing the world in actual terms; taking the ethic of care seriously in political terms would, thus, have serious ramifications for social arrangements (Deveaux, 1995). Indeed, the location of care as an emancipatory discourse located in inequality places it squarely in the political. Citing an ethic of care as an element of subjugated discourse can hold up for scrutiny dominant speech and practice (McLaughlin, 1997).

Such issues are not simply theoretical either: the delineation of work into paid and unpaid, audited and unaudited (cf. Acker, 1999) for example, marks out the ways in which gender-based conceptions of work become reified at the level of professional activity and personal relationships. Those elements of teaching which command attention by managers and policy-makers become seen to be 'work' whilst other elements, notably caring, become relegated to the level of 'non-work'. As this gendered discourse is borne of a male governed social structure dominated by ideas about women's paid and unpaid work, it positions females as outside of the public sphere; their role becomes constructed as private (Vogt, 2002).

It is notable, then, that Gilligan's work has been developed and used by others who wish to develop a "standpoint philosophy", that is that '...some people...see things better than other people...' (Tong, 1996: 3). Gilligan's work has been cited as an influence on the likes of Sarah Ruddick and Nel Noddings, both of whom argue that the caring, connected moral perspective of women is superior to the abstract formality of men. As a cultural feminist perspective, the desire to develop the "ethics

of care" is based on some of the assumptions presented in Gilligan's arguments above. What all these have in common is the view that morality is more than simply an attempt to generate and follow a set of rules. As Tong (1997) notes, whereas the justice ideal utilises conscientiousness to orient action through its desire to see us '...work hard to fulfil our responsibilities, to adhere strictly to duty and principles, kindness leads us to notice the distress of a little boy wondering around lost, and to help him find his father or mother...' (Blum, 1980: 162).

But Gilligan does not desire to see justice and care as opposites. Rather, she sees them as positions of equal worth which need to be intertwined, and this is what is important for primary education. Within current neoliberal conceptions of education, care can offer an alternative to the harshness of the individualising project. It can present a frame within which primary practice can operate.

Additionally, justice offers the care perspective a lens through which to begin to examine the ways in which the 'genderedness' of primary education can be countered. It offers a means whereby those who purport 'to care' can view their work in regard to wider sociological and political matters. For to care without due regard for wider political motivations leaves the teacher open to challenge; education has a set of priorities and to operate without these in mind, albeit tempered by the care perspective, is foolhardy. It seems crucial, then, to ask how current policy orientations position care within primary education. This signals the ways in which contemporary matters orient the work of schools and individual teachers. It is necessary to identify what policy has to say about the relational. It seeks to ask questions about the ways in which interpersonal matters are

foregrounded both between teachers and pupils, pupils and pupils and teachers and teachers. But it is also necessary to consider the ways in which professionals mediate the relationship between caring and justice seeking; how do those who work in primary school play out their role in the current policy climate.

## Conclusion

This paper has argued that care can offer an alternative to the harsh realities of the neoliberal, justice perspective for education, but only if care and justice are seen as intertwined. It outlined the ways in which neoliberalism orients current educational policy and practice and how this is reflective of a justice orientation. This alignment was then contrasted with extant views for primary education that see it as having an ethos akin to a caring enterprise. Such perspectives, I argued, offer primary education a particular tenor. In support Gilligan's work was cited as a means whereby primary practitioners and policy-makers might understand the interplay between care and justice. In essence what the paper calls for is an understanding that to conceive of either care without justice or justice without care is unhelpful; the two offer differing viewpoints which enrich each other. In this way the paper argues that care is an educational matter that is of as much importance now as ever. Whilst the neoliberal project might do well in detracting from this, it is not a forgone conclusion that care is off the agenda. The work of many in primary schools attests to this. Indeed it would seem that its currency is ever greater if we are to think of it as offering a partner for, rather than a contrast to, justice.

In Defence of Care: Gilligan's relevance for public education

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