

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA
GRADUATE COLLEGE

TEACHER UNDERSTANDING OF CARE: USING EMPIRICAL AND CONCEPTUAL
ANALYSIS TO EXPLICATE THE MEANING OF CARE AS REFLECTED IN THE
RELATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE CLASSROOM

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

GOLDIE V. THOMPSON
Norman, Oklahoma
2014

TEACHER UNDERSTANDING OF CARE: USING EMPIRICAL AND CONCEPTUAL
ANALYSIS TO EXPLICATE THE MEANING OF CARE AS REFLECTED IN THE
RELATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE CLASSROOM

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

BY

Dr. John Covaleskie, Chair

Dr. Ben Keppel

Dr. Susan Laird

Dr. Courtney Vaughn

Dr. Neil Houser

© Copyright by GOLDIE V. THOMPSON, 2014
All Rights Reserved.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work came into being through years of inspirational thought, careful scholarship, persistent motivation, and loving support from friends, family, professors, and colleagues. However, I must first credit the one whose orchestration of my life's accomplishments made them possible – my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I could not have accomplished this enormous task without the help of my God who has continued to grant me the strength to press forward with each new day. Additionally, I could not have endured the many challenges and obstacles without the continuous encouragement and loving support of my family and friends. (I daresay now that many of my professors and colleagues have become lifelong friends.) This appreciation is extended with the understanding that sometimes words cannot always convey what is sincerely felt from the heart.

To my mother, Dr. Gloria Pollard, and my late father, Arthur Pollard, you have always been my rock and I am ever grateful for you both. Though I did not become the MD my dad was sure I would become, I, nevertheless, became a doctor - of sorts (smile). He would still be extremely proud. Mom, as one of the first African American doctoral graduates from this program, you were the driving force for my persistence throughout the program, a rite of passage. I am forever in your debt for serving as 'Momma' threefold to all of my children, my husband and myself. You are the SUPER-VIRTUOUS-WOMAN!!!

To my husband, Bobby Thompson, Jr., I simply love you because you made me stay when I wanted to run. You were patient through all the late nights and stressful episodes. I am deeply appreciative for your love and support.

To my children, Bobby III, D'Marcus, and Erin, you are the loves of my life. Your encouragement and support rivaled that of any "grown-up," and you absolutely blew me away

with your patience over the years. You sacrificed so much so that I could achieve my dream.
You are my inspiration!

To my brothers, Anthony Pollard, Michael Pollard, and Mark Pollard, blessings to you by speaking my success into existence and supporting me no matter what. I share this special appreciation with your wives as well - Cynthia, Helen and Tara. You mean the world to me!

To Dr. Donna Robinson, my sister/aunt and Kerry Johnson, my brother/uncle, thank you for adding a ray of sunshine when I couldn't see the light. You have championed me from day one. Thank you.

To all of my extended family, including Hurlon Hamilton, my father-in-law; Coma Kay Hamilton, my late mother-in-law; Hurlonda Hamilton and Hurkayla Reed, my sisters-in-law; and Demarcus Thompson, my brother-in-law, thank you for your encouragement through the years. Thank you for stepping in when there wasn't enough time in the day, enough hands, or when I just needed a break. You are truly the pillars that helped sustain me during my matriculation through the doctoral program.

To Robert and Nafeesah Thompson (my brother and sister-in-law from the other side), thank you for your thoughtful and heartfelt encouragement throughout the years.

To my church family, thank you for your prayers. These prayers are simply priceless.

To Star and James Bradford, thank you for your many kind words of encouragement throughout the years and for being two of my biggest cheerleaders!

To Jason and Marsha Herron, no words can adequately express the appreciation I have for the both of you and how you supported me through this process. You have a special place in my heart.

To my mentors, Mrs. Nancy R. Davis, Mrs. Joyce Henderson, Dr. George Henderson, and Dr. Ben Keppel, thank you for helping to shape the scholar I have become.

To all of my professors, especially Dr. John Covaleskie, Dr. Susan Laird, and Dr. Courtney Vaughn, your ability to impact change and help me grow in the process is invaluable. I learned a great deal under your leadership and instruction. You have made this a very rewarding journey. Thank you for believing in me and giving me the opportunity to be a part of the Educational Studies program.

To Dr. Neil Houser, thank you for your continuous support and for giving me a tutorial on concepts I did not quite understand but related to my research in a significant way. Your insight helped me to shape my thinking towards my topic, and I am deeply grateful for your help.

To all of my peers and wonderful friends of the Oklahoma Educational Studies Association, no words can express the value of your friendship and support you have given me over the years. You are simply the best!

To all of my colleagues at the Oklahoma State Regents, including my dearest coworkers, Ms. Deena Thomas, Mrs. Sylvia Bryant, Ms. Melissa Michie, Dr. Kermit McMurry, Dr. Debra Stuart, Dr. Blake Sonobe, Dr. Debbie Blanke, Dr. Cindy Brown, and Dr. Linda Mason, I am so appreciative for your constant encouragement and support. I also extend a special word of thanks to Dr. Glen Johnson, Chancellor of our state system of higher education. Thank you for continuously pushing me forward.

To my friends at the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation, Renée Launey-Rodolf, Angie Bookout, and Jennifer Gambrell, thank you for all of your encouragement and support. It means the world to me to know I have such wonderful colleagues and friends in education!

To my former Oklahoma State Regents colleagues, Dr. Sheilynda Stewart, Dr. Erin Taylor-Weathers, Mrs. Kyle Dahlem, Dr. Lisa Holder, Dr. Phil Moss and Dr. Houston Davis, you were pivotal in helping me along the way. I could not have made some of the benchmarks without your help. I appreciate you!

To the deans and directors of all Oklahoma colleges of education, as well as the faculty within these colleges, I have learned many things from you over the years, and I thank you for your constant support during my studies. Your words of encouragement were a source of comfort as I worked to juggle state duties with my program studies.

To every teacher I have ever had, including Mrs. Quinn, Mrs. Akin, Mrs. Day, Mrs. Stevenson, Mr. Tsofigh, Mr. Phillips, Mr. Gardner, Mrs. Marzett, Mr. Staples, Mrs. Snodgrass, Mr. Metscher, and Mr. Miller, thank you for laying the foundation of knowledge I would need to carry on my journey to this point in life. You are the unsung heroes of the past, present, and future.

Lastly, to all of those who care for students and whose ability to care far exceeds the classroom, thank you for all of your tireless efforts in affecting humanity through love - a critical need in our society. I dedicate this work to you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	x
PROLOGUE.....	1
CHAPTER 1	
Inquiry Focus.....	4
Purpose and Rationale for the Study.....	6
The Problem.....	9
Research Questions.....	15
CHAPTER 2	
Context for Caring Relations in Schools.....	17
Current Situation of Schools.....	30
CHAPTER 3	
A Review of the Literature: Situating the Study.....	35
Theoretical Lens.....	55
CHAPTER 4	
Methodology.....	67
Participants.....	71
CHAPTER 5	
Findings.....	81
Conclusion.....	93
CHAPTER 6	
Discussion.....	98

CHAPTER 7

Implications for Theory and Practice.....	119
Recommendations for Future Research.....	124
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	126
APPENDIX.....	131

ABSTRACT

Care theory is a complex theory to understand, and interpreting its meaning involves a close investigation of the context in which it is both employed and explored. In this study, both conceptual and empirical literature will be analyzed, along with primary empirical research data, to help explicate the meaning of care as observed in various schooling contexts. Theoretical and empirical scholars discuss care in very different ways which reflect unique frameworks for establishing the meaning of care in a relational sense between teachers and students.

Recognizing that this study is framed in the context of teacher and student relationships in schools, I will test various ontological claims made by care theorists about how care is expressed between one who cares and the one for whom that caring takes place, the “cared-for.” Empirical researchers use this framework either as a catapult for attempting to illustrate how care is operationalized in the school setting (e.g., student outcomes), or to develop a meaning of care through the analysis of empirical data. Interviews with eight teacher participants across four school districts will help to further illuminate the meaning of care. This study will provide educators with a fuller awareness of the different dimensions of care in the classroom and suggest future implications for their relationships with students and its impact on instruction.

PROLOGUE

As a mother of three, I believe that caring takes on dimensions that are extremely difficult to define but easy to identify. Care must be inherently a part of who we are if we are to be considered caring individuals. Having come from schooling institutions in which care was apparent in some cases and lack of care apparent in others, I view this course of inquiry as a source of intrigue as I ponder how student outcomes have been impacted under similar circumstances. I do believe that caring teachers and schools are necessary for students to be successful.

In the role of teacher, I believe it is incumbent upon me to meet the needs of my students so that they are academically successful. Understanding this charge is also my moral obligation which is to do no harm and to show that I am concerned for their emotional and intellectual well-being. To do this, my expression of care must be sincere and cannot be actions under false pretense. In other words, I believe that my heart must match my actions. There are some individuals who do things that are right; however, caring for what is right (or doing the right thing) may not necessarily mean caring for another (caring for the person for whom you are doing what is right). In my opinion, there is a connection between the means and the end. When there is no connection between the heart and the action that follows, there is a risk of missing the needs of another, which might constitute a lack of caring.

In caring for students, I am certain that there were times when I got caring wrong. There are times when I did not possess the wisdom to assist a student in personal needs outside of the classroom. Additionally, there were times when I was not able to help students ascend to a higher level of achievement, for whatever reason that might have existed. However, I did attempt, with all sincerity, to assist students whenever it was within my power to do so.

Reflecting upon the literature about care theory, I find myself concerned about the current state of caring relationships in schools. As Director of Teacher Education for the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, I am able to examine a wide range of issues in higher education as well as common education. What I am seeing too often is that schooling institutions and institutions of higher education are so bound by academic mandates and state policies that the focus on the non-academic needs of students is almost impossible to maintain. In common education, the idea of teachers maintaining caring relationships with students often becomes secondary to meeting state standards and ensuring students pass mandated exams. The extraordinary class sizes, especially at the secondary level, coupled with the short time periods for class further complicates the ability to cultivate teacher/student relationships. To make matters worse, teachers and administrators will soon be evaluated on their students' abilities to successfully master content and pass standardized tests. These evaluations will impact their employment status, which is detrimental to their own livelihoods. Thus, self-preservation moves to the forefront, and care about the student diminishes to what the student can accomplish on the teacher and/or administrator's behalf. Policy takes precedence over advocacy.

On a more personal level, there is a non-caring, systemic example that had a personal impact on me as a child. In 1982, I was a student at a low to middle income community elementary school. Tragically, the school system in which my school was located failed to provide adequate equipment to support the boiler room for the school's cafeteria. Whether due to inadequate funding or simple neglect, the boiler exploded, resulting in the deaths of one teacher and several students, while injuring countless others – both mentally and physically. We were never given counseling or any type of emotional support from the school system, our

teachers, or administrators. We were simply reinstated, following the repairs, to an already constructed set of portables at the local middle school.

In this particular case, the mission of the school was to focus on the academic requirements mandated to students. It was important to meet our academic needs. The school and its leadership failed to meet the additional needs of myself and my classmates. Our physical safety was put at risk, our emotional well-being was shattered, and our humanity was not important in the eyes of the institution. Although we were young children, we realized that this was not indicative of care. It was painful. It was negligent. It was destructive. It had long term consequences for me and my fellow classmates.

This was an institution that endorsed a non-caring ethic, although I admit that there were indeed teachers within that environment who did care. Regardless, the schooling institution functioned in such a way that it failed to allow those individuals (e.g., teachers, administrators, etc.) within it to meet the needs of the students. The schooling institution served as a detriment to endorsing a caring environment and, thus, caring relationships.

Having witnessed the deaths of classmates and a teacher whom I admired, I was scarred for life. Though my teachers and administrators were competent, well-meaning, and caring individuals, the realization that I was not completely cared for became painfully evident. This incident, among others, is what has caused me to want to explore the element of care in schools and classrooms. I have a strong concern for current school mandates that systemically disregard student needs. Academics are extremely important; however, creating citizens who understand the value of - and engage harmoniously in - mutuality, love, and respect for one another is just as important, if not more important. For these reasons, I explore care in schools as a way to bring attention to such a crucial area of significance for teachers and students.

CHAPTER 1

Inquiry Focus:

The focus of this study is to understand teacher perception of care, what is reflected in the literature about care, and how care is operationalized in the classroom or school setting to impact student outcomes. Care is often considered a vital and necessary component for those individuals involved in education because teacher care for students is deemed, loosely, as one of the main motivators for wanting to help children learn, grow, and be successful in school. However, the reality is that there are many ways to define care. The definition of care may vary from one person to the next, such that the idea of care in a classroom or school setting takes on significantly different characteristics that may or may not be apparent to students. What, then, would be the point of studying a phenomenon that is so difficult to make distinct and clear? I argue that in studying care, educators will find meaning in how it is internalized by other educators and operationalized in the school setting. This is important to know because teachers who perceive themselves as caring may not be aware of the different dimensions that “care” takes on in the classroom or school setting and the complex ways in which a caring attitude or a caring practice impacts student growth. Additionally, teachers whose desire is to promote student academic and social success may not consider how their efforts, perceived as being motivated by care, are interpreted by and affect their students. Furthermore, though care cannot be reduced to an exact science in terms of how it is denoted and expressed,

it is helpful to obtain a glimpse of how care might potentially impact student outcomes.

Scholars interpret the meaning of care in different ways. Because there is no exact formula for what care entails, it becomes necessary to highlight meanings of care that may overlap, intersect, or diverge. Three approaches to care theory must be noted to understand the richness of the theory that has evolved as a result of these approaches. One approach is a conceptual one and is supported by renowned care theorists such as Nel Noddings¹ and Milton Mayeroff.² The second and third approaches are empirical and are reflected by research conducted by such scholars as Mari Ann Roberts,³ Michelle Knight-Diop,⁴ Cheryl Ellerbrock, and Sarah Kiefer.⁵

This study aims to highlight elements of both conceptual scholarship and empirical research.⁶ Conceptual scholarship grounded in care theory makes an ontological claim about care. These ontological claims are reflective of the commitments theorists have about the reality of care. However, empirical research grounded in care theory is based on observation or experimentation which leads to the foundation of knowledge. Here, the empirical focus requires a

¹ Nel Noddings, *Caring: A feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003).

² Milton Mayeroff, *On Caring* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1971).

³ Mari Ann Roberts, "Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Critical Teacher Care: African American Teachers' Definitions and Perceptions of Care for African American Students" *Journal of Moral Education* 39, no.4 (2010).

⁴ Michelle Knight-Diop, "Closing the Gap: Enacting Care and Facilitating Black Students' Educational Access in the Creation of High School College-Going Culture," *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk* 15 (2010).

⁵ Cheryl Ellerbrock and Sarah Kiefer, "Creating a Ninth-Grade Community of Care" *The Journal of Educational Research* (Tampa: Routledge, 2010).

⁶ Also, referenced in Goldie Thompson, "Teacher Understanding of Care: Mediating the Structure of Schools with the Relational Aspects of the Classroom," *The Oklahoma Association of Teacher Educators* 16 (2013): 33-35.

more post positivist approach to understanding the phenomenon of care. Two types of empirical research emerge from this study: (1) one in which the concept of care is imported from the conceptual framework and used to look at student outcomes; and (2) another strand in which researchers try to build a concept of care by looking at empirical data.

Thus, there are distinct differences between care theorists and care researchers. An analysis of both the conceptual (theoretical) and empirical components of care will enhance the understanding of how this study could impact teacher education. The study will shed light on ways educators might modify their instructional approaches to teaching and learning in an attempt to strengthen their relationships with students, recognizing care as a significant part of that effort.

Purpose and Rationale for the Study

The purpose of this research study is to gain a better understanding of the perceptions teachers have about *care* as it relates to the classroom setting and their relationships with students.⁷ This research is important because teachers' notions of what their job entails may or may not reflect what the literature says about caring in the classroom. Evaluating teachers' perceptions about care in light of the literature will help to further explicate meaning about this phenomenon and help sensitize educators and policy makers to the relational aspects of care in the classroom.

⁷ Also, referenced in Goldie Thompson, "Teacher Understanding of Care: Mediating the Structure of Schools with the Relational Aspects of the Classroom," *The Oklahoma Association of Teacher Educators* 16 (2013): 33.

Additionally, this research study will help highlight various interpretations of care across empirical and theoretical domains. The word “care” is not used when soliciting teacher responses to the research questions. Their understanding of care is inferred from their responses to questions about positive student outcomes. The goal of the research is to extract common themes regarding *care* that emerge from teacher participant responses. These themes are then used to formulate a lens through which one can observe the underlying meaning(s) and significance of *care* in the classroom. Utilizing an overlay technique, the research literature will further explicate meanings of care in light of the teacher responses. Educators and policy makers may find this information helpful to inform teaching practice.

Considering the nature of the study, then, it is important to consider the implications for embodying the care ethic as there are significant benefits for society in which students emerge to become citizens. In *The Schoolhome*, Jane R. Martin⁸ talks about the significance of children and the role of adults in educating them toward an ethic of care, concern, and connection. She articulately points out that the society we live in today is bound by acts of violence (emotional, spiritual, and physical) with a total disregard for human worth.⁹ As a result, dysfunctions such as sexism, racism, classism, and other problematic practices have influenced the norming principles upon which many individuals have come to develop their moral dispositions. It is no surprise then that modern society continues to evolve

⁸ Jane R. Martin, *The School Home: Rethinking Schools for Changing Families* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

⁹ Jane R. Martin, *The School Home: Rethinking Schools for Changing Families* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 333.

in such a way that social ills are perpetuated through deficits in moral and ethical foundations.

However, there are scholars who suggest mechanisms by which these social ills can be addressed such that individuals can learn to live in mutually caring and socially just ways, eliminating what Martin refers to as “cultural liabilities.”¹⁰ Though families are the primary socializing agent of children¹¹ and highly influential in forming a child’s moral compass, other socializing agents exist that can also have a large influence over individual beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. One such entity that is common to all people in a society is the institution of school. This particular setting lends itself to supporting common interests and educating individuals for a common good. To accomplish this goal, students must first learn what it means to work cohesively, respectfully, and peaceably with others, having a strong regard for the needs and well-being of their peers. Hence, incorporating the ethic of care in school and classroom settings can promote a communal nature of care and encourage dispositions necessary to improve the human condition.

In addition to this moral framework, the study will include an emphasis on academic achievement and how to possibly align a caring ethic within the school and classroom setting to support this goal. This study will highlight those elements that correspond with care in the academic context. Thus, the research will illuminate the significance of care and the relational influence care can have on personal and academic student growth.

¹⁰ Jane R. Martin, *Cultural Miseducation: In Search of a Democratic Solution* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2002).

¹¹ Richard Schaefer, *Sociology: A Brief Introduction* (St. Louis: McGraw Hill, 2003).

The Problem

Uncaring schooling institutions and/or teachers can increase the likelihood that students will not be successful in school.¹² Because schooling institutions are the fabric of American society, the success of students who matriculate through schools become important to their individual growth as well as the betterment of the human condition. According to Shaunessy and McHatton, “In schools where learners feel engaged, cared for, respected, and part of the learning community, achievement of all students is higher than in schools where students feel disconnected to peers and teachers.”¹³

Schooling institutions that are considered uncaring are not necessarily created that way by design; however, the structure of these institutions is such that it is difficult to accommodate an explicit focus on care. For instance, schools are directed by local, state, and federal mandates that underscore the importance of academic content as opposed to interpersonal relationships. As a result, teachers are required to focus on academic content. Meeting this directive in their classrooms can sometimes make interpersonal relationships secondary to content acquisition. Because of the intensity involved in making sure all students are prepared academically to successfully reach benchmarks and complete assessments, many teachers find it difficult to promote caring relationships between themselves and their students. This is especially true at the secondary level where students have limited time periods with multiple teachers. Elementary

¹² Also, referenced in Goldie Thompson, “Teacher Understanding of Care: Mediating the Structure of Schools with the Relational Aspects of the Classroom,” *The Oklahoma Association of Teacher Educators* 16 (2013): 33.

¹³ Elizabeth Shaunessy and Patricia Alvarez McHatton, “Urban Students’ Perceptions of Teachers: Views of Students in General, Special, and Honors Education,” *Springer* (2008): 487.

classrooms are embedded in a different institutional setting that makes caring relationships between teachers and students a little easier; however, the mandates still exist – even in the early grades. Thus, schooling institutions created, influenced, and shaped by local, state, and federal mandates make caring more difficult to do in classrooms, even though teachers attempt to do so.

Schooling institutions typically focus on facilitating academic measures and are considered to be supportive entities of student growth¹⁴ which might be loosely defined as caring in nature. However, the distinction must be made between “institutional care” in an academic sense as opposed to “interpersonal teacher care” which is relational in nature. It is one thing to ask the question - *For whom or what does the institution care?* It is an entirely different thing to ask the question - *For whom or what does the teacher care?* Likely, both would solicit very different answers. The distinction is complex and can be perplexing at times when trying to ascertain the extent of care within those two domains. The schooling institution can be said to care for students, but their primary concern is measures of academic success; whereas, teachers within that same institution might say they care for the students, and that care encompasses academic, social, as well as personal elements.

As mentioned earlier, it is rare to find teachers who say they do not care for students, but it is quite probable that there are some who do not. It is important to note here that, according to various empirical studies such as those

¹⁴ Milton Mayeroff, in his book “On Caring,” identifies helping one to grow as an element of care.

conducted by Shaunessy and McHatton¹⁵ and Souza,¹⁶ uncaring teachers would include those teachers who fail to ensure students are engaged in academic content and growing in a productive direction that will promote positive outcomes for them. Again, this is looking at the meaning of care through a pedagogical or academic context which may not align with other pedagogical views of care. Additionally, conceptual and empirical scholars alike contend that uncaring teachers lack the imperative to build positive interpersonal relationships with students in their classrooms; but again, the idea of what an uncaring teacher is takes on different dimensions, depending on the context and viewpoint. In any case, with uncaring teachers, the risk remains that purposeful engagement may not be achieved because teachers fail to make connections with students.

The problem becomes exacerbated when students lack caring teachers, because the risk of their having unsuccessful outcomes is greatly increased. Not only can the institution limit caring relationships, but teachers can perpetuate this practice as well by losing focus of the importance of caring relations in the classroom. In this situation, lack of care in classroom and school settings can result in negative student outcomes, and it does in many cases. Opalewski and Unkovich explain the significance a caring environment can have on student learning:

Education is a people business. The sooner that teachers of every level learn this extremely important principle, the better the educational

¹⁵ Elizabeth Shaunessy and Patricia Alvarez McHatton, "Urban Students' Perceptions of Teachers: Views of Students in General, Special, and Honors Education," *Springer* (2008).

¹⁶ Tasha J. Souza, "The Communication of Caring: An Analysis of at-risk Students in an Alternative School," *Journal of the Northwest Communication Association* (2005) 34.

experience will be for both the child and the educator... As quality relationships are developed with students, attitudes improve. When attitudes improve, behavior improves. When behavior improves, the classroom atmosphere for learning improves. When the classroom atmosphere for learning improves, attendance for both students and teachers improves. When attendance improves, the chance for academic success greatly improves... The greatest needs for young people are affection, acceptance, feeling valuable, and knowing that they have a positive purpose in life.¹⁷

Implicit in the problem is a lack of positive academic and social outcomes in numerous American public school systems. According to Ellerbrock and Kiefer, “Traditional high schools are often unresponsive to adolescents’ developmental needs and are characterized by a sense of mistrust between students and teachers.... In order to facilitate positive development, caring school communities can create a context that is responsive to adolescents’ developmental needs.”¹⁸ Thus, these authors contend that the community, utilizing an ethic of care, plays a vital part in supporting schools.

As a component imperative for student success, care then is central to the teaching and learning process, as well as the significance of its relational aspects must be highlighted. According to multiple research studies, teacher *care* is included as a significant factor in determining student resilience and continuation

¹⁷ Dave Opalewski and Anna Unkovich, *Caring to Teach, Teaching to Care* (Bloomington: iUniverse, Inc., 2011), 18.

¹⁸ Cheryl Ellerbrock and Sarah Kiefer, “Creating a Ninth-Grade Community of Care” *The Journal of Educational Research* (Tampa: Routledge, 2010): 394-395.

in schools. Souza, citing Phelan, Davidson and Cao, emphasizes that students “are more motivated to learn when they have caring teachers.”¹⁹ Thus, these scholars emphasize the relationship with a caring and compassionate teacher is pivotal in supporting student learning experiences. The assertion here is that the impact of a caring teacher provides students with the motivation and encouragement to continue through graduation.

Still, other successful factors are attributed to teacher care. Souza, citing Epstein, states that “...students claimed that the caring, life-skill oriented, and intellectually stimulating environment...accounted for their success.”²⁰ An example of evidence supporting this assertion is illustrated in an article by Easton and Soguero in which they share a successful model of the Eagle Rock Boarding School located in Estes, Colorado. This school for struggling students ensures their success through alternative means which include “expanding their knowledge base, communicating effectively, creating and making healthy life choices, engaging as a global citizen, and practicing leadership for justice.”²¹ This example represents a practical application of principles illustrated in Souza’s empirical study. Additionally, it reflects other forms of success that align with conceptual frameworks for actualized care. The Eagle Rock Boarding School appears to be a perfect model for progressive education in the Deweyan sense and bases its graduation and completion principles on something other than

¹⁹ Tasha Souza, “The Communication of Caring: An Analysis of At-Risk Students in an Alternative School,” *Journal of the Northwest Communication Association* 34 (2005): 41.

²⁰ Tasha J. Souza, “The Communication of Caring: An Analysis of at-risk Students in an Alternative School,” *Journal of the Northwest Communication Association* 34 (2005);41. (Epstein’s work - 1992)

²¹ Lois Brown Easton and Michael Soguero, “Challenging Assumptions: Helping Struggling Students Succeed,” *Kappan* 92, no. 5 (2011): 31.

proficiency in content knowledge and benchmark assessments. Additionally, students engage in caring relations with faculty in which they interact in ways that promote mutuality, respect, and concern for one another – an outcome that Jane R. Martin would wholeheartedly support. Such elements within this illustration extend within and beyond the classroom setting.

An interesting facet of the Eagle Rock Boarding School is that it is not a public school and, therefore, has flexibility in how it proceeds with helping students successfully matriculate. A focus on the interpersonal relationships between faculty, staff, and students is a major part of this effort. This school model is a rare example of institutional supports that promote an atmosphere closer to the idea of caring Noddings theorizes. However, such a model is not common in public schools.

Still, there is an element of concern here as we observe the notion of care itself. Even though both empirical research and conceptual research support the claim that care is a necessary component for student success, there is something problematic about the expectations associated with caring relations. Conceptual research focuses on the caring relation that includes such elements as nurturing, “respect, empathy, human kindness, and justice.”²² Expectations of the relationship, in this sense, are not necessarily framed by academic elements or expectations. However, one strand of empirical research attempts to create a conceptual understanding of the caring relation by looking at school related data which might inform its meaning. For example, Shanessy and McHatton look at

²² Linda Thurston and Terry Berkeley, “Morality and the Ethic of Care: Peaceable Rural School, Caring Rural Communities,” *Rural Special Education Quarterly (Reprint)* 17, no. 3,4 (1998): 27.

academic factors such as students' ability to master content which informs their (the students') thinking about the extent to which teachers cared for them in helping them to do so.²³ Here, the expectation of the relationship is likely to include academic factors. Care, then, has unique implications for student outcomes. Yet, many scholars agree that it is indeed necessary.

How we define care is often evident in our behavior or embodiment of it. One can look at care as an attitude, a successful performance, or both. In a practical sense, care might include the act of inducing academic growth, as illustrated in the work by Garrett, Barr, and Rothman.²⁴ Caring may also take on additional meanings that are not commonly associated with the often assumed notions of love, concern, connectedness, and the like. Sometimes, students may embrace a harsher element of what they perceive as care such as physical discipline or isolated threats to encourage a desired behavior. Therefore, it is important to look closely at the phenomenon of care to explore its many domains in the school setting and how it potentially impacts students.

Research Questions

This research seeks to answer the following questions: *How do secondary teachers' responses about positive student outcomes reflect notions of care in the school and/or classroom setting? What patterns and themes emerge from secondary teacher participant responses regarding their own approaches to promoting positive outcomes (possible caring) for students? What themes are*

²³ Elizabeth Shaunessy and Patricia Alvarez McHatton, "Urban Students' Perceptions of Teachers: Views of Students in General, Special, and Honors Education," *Springer* (2008), 492.

²⁴ Tracey Garrett, Jason Barr and Terri Rothman, "Perspectives on Caring in the Classroom: Do They Vary According to Ethnicity or Grade Level?" *Adolescence* 44, no. 175 (2009).

prevalent among secondary teacher participants in their responses regarding opposition or support from administrators (institutions) as they implement such (possible caring) approaches in the classroom?

CHAPTER 2

Context for Caring Relations in Schools

In order to grasp some concept of what care entails and the complexity of the issue from the classroom perspective, as opposed to the institutional perspective, we must first look at the context for caring relations in schools at its minute level – teacher and student. This will help provide some clarity for why difficulties emerge when examining various concepts of care and attempting to make distinctions.

Rarely will educators enter the teaching profession without acknowledging care for students in some capacity. The general expectation is that the teacher has a responsibility to help students excel academically and, in some cases, socially to ensure an independent and productive citizen for society. Thus, care may be expressed as a concern for student academic, personal, and/or social growth. It may be exhibited through the enforcement of strict content requirements or a gentle pat on the back showing encouragement. It may consist of a stern reprimand for poor behavior or an encouraging word in light of failure. It may even be considered an act of “tough” love that others might find unconscionable.²⁵ Still, the idea is that most teachers believe that they show care for students by advancing them forward to some degree.

²⁵ *Stand and Deliver*, directed by Ramón Menéndez (United States: Warner Home Video, 1988) DVD. In the 1988 movie entitled *Stand and Deliver*, the main character and classroom teacher, Jaime Escalante, engages in unorthodox and, now, illegal teaching practices that many people, today, would find absolutely unacceptable and unconscionable. Despite such antics as using a butcher knife to cut apples in an effort to teach fractions, or illustrating a mathematical equation using anecdotes with sexual innuendos, Escalante’s students all succeeded academically as evidenced by their 100% pass rate on the Advanced Placement Calculus exam. Based on a true story, this movie portrays a scenario which begs the question of whether or not Escalante was, indeed, a caring teacher. His students were considered the “bad” students, coming from

Caring teachers, then, do not necessarily have intentions that focus on *creating* dispositions of mutuality and respect among fellow schoolmates. Moreover, students may not explicitly be taught to care for, nurture, or love one another as an explicit part of the school curriculum; rather, these practices often become secondary byproducts of school culture, if at all. Nevertheless, it is often assumed and, in many cases, understood that teachers care for their students. After all, what teachers would say that they *did not* care about their students? One would be more apt to hear such a claim from the students themselves or some other stakeholder outside of the schooling institution.

The question of whose opinion counts in the caring relation is often overlooked when discussing teacher perspectives as opposed to student perspectives. When observing the public school system, this issue becomes extremely relevant because of the unequal power relation between students and their teachers. After all, the teacher is the one in charge of student learning. This becomes crucial when discussing the caring relation as it relates to teachers and students in classroom settings. I argue that students' opinions about what constitutes effective caring matter just as much as the teacher's; however, the students' feelings toward their teacher's caring (or uncaring) efforts may not carry

backgrounds of poverty and violence. Still, he managed to help them be academically successful and in most of their cases, socially successful as well. This example adequately portrays the dilemma of answering the aforementioned question of whether or not he was a caring teacher. However, this question can be best answered, or at least addressed, if one considers their own definition of what it means to be a caring teacher. If one's definition of caring is the teacher's efforts to produce a positive academic outcome, then Escalante might be considered a very caring teacher. On the other hand, if one takes into account other characteristics that might define a caring teacher, such as nurturing qualities or encouragement of student learning interests despite potential academic failures, then Escalante might not be considered the most caring teacher.

as much weight in light of the tasks required of both parties, as set forth by local, district, and state policy.

Noddings supports the notion that students' opinion in the caring relation is just as significant as those of the teacher.²⁶ In fact, caring may not exist if students feel that their needs are not being met by a teacher, even if that teacher deems himself or herself as caring for that same student. This may involve both academic and non-academic needs. Empirical researchers sometimes place more value on a teacher's caring abilities and opinions as these are seen to be reflected in student academic outcomes. However, one study regarding students' perspectives on care in schools suggests that more research is necessary in this area: "Future considerations of care in schools must regard the views of students, pedagogical responses to these understandings, and the short- and long-term efficacy of these efforts in shaping the students..."²⁷ In light of this acknowledgement, the current study aims to address certain teacher perspectives or understandings of care while also recognizing that such an investigation does not constitute a complete examination of student perspectives. Rather the intent of this analysis is to bring awareness to the complexities of the expression of care in school and classroom settings and its potential impact on student outcomes.

The complexity of caring approaches within the classroom and school settings often raises several questions about what really constitutes care and how care is successfully operationalized. How do teachers perceive themselves as

²⁶ Nel Noddings *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005), 15.

²⁷ Elizabeth Shaunessy and Patricia Alvarez McHatton, "Urban Students' Perceptions of Teachers: Views of Students in General, Special, and Honors Education," *Springer* (2008), 500.

agents of care? What types of behaviors and attitudes do teachers express as reflective of a care ethic? How do teachers define care? How is the idea of care supported in the structure of schooling institutions?

To be clear, both the conceptual and empirical literature emphasizes the caring relationship between a student and teacher as essential for the academic success of the student. However, there is a distinct difference in the literature that should be further clarified when discussing the perceived relationship between caring and academic success. There are teachers who *care for what is right* and, therefore, act according to this moral compass. In this sense, they express rightness (or what one might perceive as care) as an ethic of duty to make sure students learn and have successful academic outcomes. Conversely, there are those teachers who *care for others in doing what is right*. These actions lend themselves closer to the idea of what Noddings calls an ethic of care. Those teachers who possess this value, also act from a moral compass that requires them to make sure students learn and have successful academic outcomes. What is consistent about these two examples of caring teachers is that they both have moral and ethical approaches to pedagogical caring;²⁸ however, their approaches to such caring might be motivated by different internal dispositions. *Caring for what is right* might be closely aligned with ethical care,²⁹ and *caring for others in doing what is right* might be spurred on by a natural care ethic.³⁰ Here, care has a

²⁸ Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 17. Noddings discusses pedagogical care to mean the type of caring relation that takes place between teachers and students in which the focal point of the relationship is based on and exists in an academic context but has greater implications for what caring involves.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 75.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 73.

dichotomous function: it can be expressed as a practice or as an attitude.

Regardless, academic success becomes the focal point in a results driven atmosphere and teacher care is deemed relevant to this outcome.

The possibility exists that teacher care and academic success can occur independently of one another in a school setting; however, the empirical research suggests that the likelihood of academic success becomes greater with the presence of a caring teacher. Still, it must be noted that even caring teachers can still have students who are not academically successful and vice versa.

According to the empirical literature, most school systems are structured in such a way that caring takes on characteristics of practice. Teachers teach in an effort to reach a desired outcome for students, and their efforts are perceived as motivated through an ethic of care. In *caring for students*, they proceed to do what is right for them – prepare students for academic success. However, at any given time in their teaching career, the possibility of teaching a lesson because the teacher *cares for what is right* can seep into the caring duality and mask the true intentions of the teacher in the perceived caring relationship, (though good intentions). The distinctions are not always clear. The resulting interpretations of care, then, become complex and, in many cases, not easy to discern the means from the end.

The reality of school systems today is that they require data driven results that reflect student learning and academic growth. Emphasis is placed on summative assessments and benchmark levels – not care per se. Systems have been put in place to increase accountability for both teachers and administrators

so that the failure of students to learn the “required material” by the “assigned deadline” results in punitive measures taken against students as well as the school faculty and staff. School districts cannot afford to incur the harsh penalties associated with “perceived” teacher/student failure. Thus, the focal point in schools and school districts becomes raising test scores and emphasizing content knowledge instead of building relationships. In essence, teachers are placed at the helm of the ship guiding students toward the successful completion of these goals. Unfortunately, under this system, students have been reduced to interchangeable parts on a routinized assembly line of knowledge. The intent is that they reach a certain level of completion at each designation in the assembly line. Incomplete (or inadequate) parts are either tampered with in an attempt to fix (remediate) them or thrown out (left behind) with no hope of ever reaching functioning capacity.

If the assembly line analogy is representative of public schools, and if these schools produce good results (as measured by grades and test scores) and good lives for most students (as measured by future educational attainment, employment, and salary), would this be considered a sign of caring for students within these institutions? Noddings and Mayeroff might answer “no” because such a process fails to acknowledge differences between and among students; hence, their individual needs would not be addressed via a caring relationship. Additionally, this process does not account for those students who were not successful – a strong indicator of lack of care. Souza, Roberts, Shiller, and other empirical scholars would likely concur with these sentiments, but their focus

would be on those constructs in place that are representative of care in the school and how those constructs might influence student success. Again, the assumption here is that all students are the same, which is incongruent with the relational principles of the care ethic.

An interesting dichotomy is presented here. On one hand, teachers and the schools in which they work identify caring as a necessity for students; however, the structure of schools seems to work in opposition to this caring dynamic. Yet, some hesitation is required when suggesting that schooling institutions do not support caring relationships. In cases where students have failed to excel academically or even socially, is it fair to assume that their teachers or the schools themselves failed in some way to adequately care? Conversely, in cases where students have excelled academically and/or socially, can we assume that care was present? Do schooling institutions support or limit caring relationships between teachers and students? Is there a mismatch between caring teachers and caring institutions?

Schools are institutions that function as centers of teaching and learning and are often depicted as caring institutions because of their responsibility for children and adolescents. Within schools are communities, loosely defined, that bear a common goal, common interest, and, overall, culture specific to that domain; hence, the communal nature of schools and the extent of their reach to all individuals in society make them appealing places for establishing norms that can be shared, integrated, and solidified into what is considered socially and morally acceptable. To be clear, what is socially and morally acceptable involves the

valuing of others regardless of their individual beliefs, looks, or stature in life. If schooling institutions were to explicitly promote a care ethic, they would be ideal entities for influencing society on a larger scale, thereby promoting a communal nature of care. This care ethic would be applicable to multiple types of schooling institutions, including public, charter, and private schools. Other institutions that reflect attributes of care might also include hospitals as well as churches; however, other than the family, there are no institutions as consistently and longitudinally influential as the institution of schooling. Here, the focus will be on traditional schooling institutions, as we know them today.

To call an institution “caring” requires closer examination of what that means. Institutions do not live and breathe. The institution, itself cannot care for a person but the individuals who make up the institution have the ability to do so. In actuality, and metaphorically speaking, the extent to which an institution is considered caring is directly correlated with its ability to enhance or limit caring relations among and between the people that inhabit them. Still, institutional care can be used in a metaphorical sense and not a literal one. It is more important then, to consider the relational aspect of care between and among individuals within an institution of schooling than to simply posit that an institution, by virtue of being considered a caring institution, is that indeed.

Individual responses within an institutional construct of care are vital to its existence. The research suggests that in order for schooling institutions to have a legitimate claim to an ethic of *care*, the learning community and other stakeholders must embrace the caring mission of the institution and work in

harmony to support it.³¹ This means that relationships that meet the needs (academic and non-academic) of students are vital. Those stakeholders who do not conform to this ideal can potentially hamper the efforts of those who are working to help students be successful and, inevitably, weaken the institutional construct of *care*. Still, a caveat exists such that the mission of the schooling institution may work against certain notions that might be considered caring. For example, if a strong emphasis is placed on increasing test scores - and in many schools today, this is the case - relationships with students might take on a “results oriented” characteristic such that any needs the student has outside of testing requirements and academics might be made secondary or even ignored. In this case, many scholars might argue that this constitutes *non-caring*.

Noddings, in *The Challenge to Care in Schools*, contends that “The structures of current schooling work against care, and at the same time, the need for care is perhaps greater than ever.”³² She is one who believes that most schooling institutions do not support caring relationships. Noddings would agree that education in the formal school setting is important; however, her approach to educational practice differs from what we currently see in most schools today. Learning to be caring and compassionate is an informal curricular attribute and is a need echoed in sentiments expressed by other conceptual scholars such as Jane

³¹ Joyce Epstein, “School/Family/Community Partnerships: Caring for the Children we Share,” (Reprint) Originally found in *Phi Delta Kappan* 76, no. 9 (1995); Cheryl Ellerbrock and Sarah Kiefer, “Creating a Ninth-Grade Community of Care,” *The Journal of Educational Research* (Tampa: Routledge, 2010).

³² Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005), 20.

Roland Martin,³³ philosophy scholar and book writer specializing in women and gender studies, as well as Anna Julia Cooper,³⁴ nineteenth century educator, feminist activist, and social justice advocate. Noddings' argument is conceptual and somewhat reflects the Deweyan concept of progressive schooling practices in which students are allowed to build a constructivist approach to knowledge and work together in the mutual interest of growing according to individual academic interests. However, Noddings adds an additional component, emphasizing relational caring as an explicit part of the curriculum.³⁵ Thus, instead of a byproduct of teaching and learning practices, under Noddings' system care would be made into a formal component as well as a central focus of the curriculum. Schools today do not generally adopt such approaches to teaching and learning. Students are expected to be compliant rather than interactive in the learning process. In fact, a traditional approach³⁶ to schooling is still very pervasive throughout the nation and follows a format that underscores the teacher as the giver of all knowledge and students as recipients of this knowledge.³⁷ In a

³³ Jane R. Martin, *The School Home: Rethinking Schools for Changing Families* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992). Martin equates care, concern and connection with elements of domesticity as characterized by Maria Montessori's 20th century Casa dei Bambini. She contends that these three C's should be included as a central part of the school curriculum; albeit, with a "remapping of home, school and world" (p. 161).

³⁴ Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice From the South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). Anna Julia Cooper, African American feminist scholar, was well known for her stance on equality between men and women, as well as equality between the Black and White races. She was a firm believer in what I have coined *The Law of Love and the Law of Reason*. (Also see Goldie Thompson, "Anna Julia Cooper's Theory of Re-Education: Reconciling the Law of Love and the Law of Reason" in the *Journal of Philosophy and History of Education*, vol. 2, no.1, 2012, pp. 107-117).

³⁵ Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005), 11. Additional background information may be found in John Dewey's *Experience and Education* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1938).

³⁶ John Dewey, *Experience and Education*, pp 17-19.

³⁷ It is important to note that due to the creation of the National Common Core State Standards and pending PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) assessments that will accompany them the traditional approach to teaching and learning must be modified to

traditional school, care is not a part of the formal curriculum but, if present, is considered a part of the implicit curriculum. Care is assumed to already exist in the classroom and school setting by virtue of the educators who inhabit these domains.³⁸ Conceptually, Noddings presents a radical framework for transforming schools and classrooms into unique places where establishing caring relationships with students is just as important as teaching content. Additionally, such places would include teaching students to embody the care ethic in their relationship with others. Academic and social success would come as a result of *caring for the student* and the student's personal or academic interests, as well as aiding the student towards these pursuits.

While Noddings' vision of what a caring school setting would entail seems appealing, it does not appear to be a practical approach to the function of schooling institutions as they exist today. The institutional structure of schooling, as influenced by the policies and mandates that guide it, prevent the kind of relationships Noddings advocates should exist within such a setting. An academic focus is central to the relationship between students and teachers because it is the primary driving force that enables schools to meet policy requirements.

Academic success is reflected in high student scores on standardized tests, and this in turn impacts whether or not a school remains in good standing with district

accommodate the successful implementation of this system. Teaching approaches will have to include more than rote learning practices. Students must be able to synthesize content and provide logical, rational and critical thought when responding to problems and arriving at solutions. More information can be found at <http://www.parcconline.org/about-parcc>.

³⁸ Care might possibly be considered as part of the null curriculum, or that which is not explicitly taught. It could also be considered implicit in the hidden curriculum. For more information on null and hidden curriculum, see the following: David J. Flinders, Nel Noddings, and Stephen J. Thornton, "The Null Curriculum: It's Theoretical Basis and Practical Implications," *Curriculum Inquiry* 16, no. 1 (1986): 33-42 & Jane R. Martin, "What Should We Do with a Hidden Curriculum When We Find One?" *Curriculum Inquiry* 6, no.2 (1976): 135-151.

and state officials. Additionally, teacher evaluations are now being tied to student test scores, which shifts the focus from the needs of the student to the needs of the teacher, such that caring relationships are peripheral, at best. Failure to adhere to the expectations of national, state, and local mandates and/or benchmarks can result in the dismissal of school personnel, loss of school funding, or, worse yet, school closings. Furthermore, a bad evaluation can negatively impact a teacher's attitude, career, and employment status. When the aim of student outcomes is contingent upon such punitive measures, caring relationships between teachers and students can become diminished to a contractual one in which the teaching and learning roles become highly technical and less emotional or abstract.

Similar to Noddings' conceptual scholarship that advocates the necessity for care in school and classroom settings, empirical researchers also emphasize the need for care in this same domain. However, unlike Noddings' transforming paradigm for implementing a care curriculum in schools, some empirical researchers focus on schools as they currently exist and how a care ethic might influence better relationships between teachers and students. Implicit here is the notion that the purpose and function of schools is still to teach subject matter, first and foremost, and prepare students for a successful future in society. Most teachers would probably assume that their caring for students involves their successful ability to teach subject matter and help facilitate student success. Many students share a similar belief. Thus, by virtue of the teacher's role in helping students academically, they express caring within this context. For example, Garrett, Barr and Rothman reported "academic support" as one of five

categories which students (at different percentages) indicated as reflective of teacher care.³⁹ In this context, academic support includes the teacher's ability to encourage students toward academic success.⁴⁰ This body of research does focus on the relational aspect of caring, but it is a form of pedagogical care.⁴¹ The study conducted by Garrett, Barr and Rothman does not imply that a formal and explicit curriculum of care be implemented in schools; nor does it advocate that the relationship is equally important to the delivery of core academic content. Furthermore, it is important to note that the meaning of care here includes teacher provision of academic (curricular) support as part of its definition.

On the other hand, Noddings' work shows academic support as caring *only* if a student expresses an interest in a specific curricular content area and desires that the teacher meets this instructional need.⁴² However, in a more practical and traditional sense, even if the student does not have an explicit interest in the content area, Noddings would likely agree that the teacher can still exhibit caring such that the student's academic need is sufficiently met to the extent necessary (or required by the curriculum). Still, Noddings' care ethic, as it relates to a classroom setting, involves mutual concern, connection, and engrossment in the needs of the student (or the *cared-for*); therefore, in her view, a curriculum that is forced upon students does not reflect an act that is indicative of a caring.

³⁹ Tracey Garrett, Jason Barr and Terri Rothman, "Perspectives on Caring in the Classroom: Do They Vary According to Ethnicity or Grade Level?" *Adolescence* 44, no. 175 (2009): 509.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 509.

⁴¹ Nel Noddings, *Caring: A feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 17. Pedagogical care reflects a relational type of caring that is grounded in a teaching context.

⁴² Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005), 150-154.

Meanings of care, as well as the significance of the caring relationships themselves, take on different connotations as we look closer at both the conceptual and empirical scholarship. With Noddings, establishing caring relationships is *the most* important aspect of schooling; academics, though significantly important, become somewhat secondary in some respects. With Souza, as well as Garrett et. al., the caring relationship is framed in such a way that all aspects of the academic domain are included (and important) when measuring the level of care and its significance in the relationship.⁴³ Such a relationship endorses a concept of care that is expressed in practical ways which align with classroom or school expectations. Shiller, on the other hand, focused on student outcomes as a result of caring (or uncaring) relationships. In this instance, the significance of care is tied to increased (or decreased) positive academic outcomes.⁴⁴ Again, it must be noted that care is a complex phenomenon and requires a close analysis of its usage when defined and or discussed.

Current Situation of Schools

It should be no surprise that inequities exist within, among, and between many of America's schools, and these inequities become even more apparent when looking at the resources available to various school districts. Typically, schools that are considered low-income or are inadequately funded receive less

⁴³ Tasha Souza, "The Communication of Caring: An Analysis of at-risk Students in an Alternative School"; Tracey Garrett, Jason Barr and Terri Rothman, "Perspectives on Caring in the Classroom: Do They Vary According to Ethnicity or Grade Level?" Both of these scholars provide empirical evidence that suggests the importance of the academic domain within a caring relationship between teachers and students.

⁴⁴ Jessica Shiller, "'These are our Children!' An Examination of Relationship-Building Practices in Urban High Schools," *Springer* (2008): 462.

qualified or experienced teachers; they lack the necessary support systems to ensure that a majority of the student body excels beyond the secondary level (high school).⁴⁵ Inherent in this assertion is the reality of disadvantage which can be detrimental to students who come from low-income districts. It is important to note that “approximately two thousand high schools (about 12 percent), known as the nation’s lowest performing high schools, produce nearly half of the nation’s dropouts. In these schools, the number of seniors enrolled is routinely 60 percent or less than the number of freshmen three years earlier.”⁴⁶ This equates to “approximately 1.3 million” student dropouts within the four year period.⁴⁷ Such a staggering statistic warrants the attention of local, state, and national policy makers to support measures that will help curb this dropout rate. Thus, access to appropriate resources to address this problem is extremely important, but the inclusion of teachers who care about potential dropouts becomes equally important in promoting their academic and social success. According to Roberts, “Literature that discusses teacher care affirms that students experience positive school outcomes, such as improved attendance, attitude, self-esteem, effort and identification with school, if they believe their teachers care for them and their well-being.”⁴⁸ Therefore, the element, or ethic, of care warrants sincere attention as it is considered an important phenomenon in supporting positive student

⁴⁵ Kevin Carey, “Education, Funding and Low-Income Children: A Review of Current Research,” (Washington D.C.: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2002).

⁴⁶ Alliance for Excellent Education, “High school dropouts in America,” *FactSheet*: September, 2010, <http://www.all4ed.org/files/HighSchoolDropouts.pdf>.

⁴⁷ Alliance for Excellent Education, (2010), *Ibid*. In 2009, the FactSheet cited that 1.2 million students were dropping out annually and the highest percentage was occurring among minority groups. These same groups are still the highest affected and at a slightly higher rate.

⁴⁸ Mari Ann Roberts, “Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Critical Teacher Care: African American Teachers’ Definitions and Perceptions of Care for African American Students,” *Journal of Moral Education* 39, no.4 (2010): 450.

outcomes. Additionally, caring teachers can play a pivotal role in engaging students in the learning process – engagement being a significant factor in curbing dropout rates.

Various research studies provide reasons for student dropout. For instance, a study produced by Suh, Suh, and Houston includes twenty indicators that influence student dropout rates. A few of these indicators include “grade point average; student suspension; socioeconomic status; ...number of schools attended; ...and optimism about the future.”⁴⁹ As evidenced here, students drop out of school for many different reasons. However, according to the Alliance for Excellent Education, “both academic and social engagement are integral components of successfully navigating the education pipeline. Research shows that a lack of student engagement is predictive of dropping out, even after controlling for academic achievement and student background.”⁵⁰ Other scholars, such as Rodriguez,⁵¹ Easton, and Soguero,⁵² make similar assessments. Such scholars focus on strategies to engage or re-engage students in the learning process to help them excel academically. Rodriguez encourages dialogue between key stakeholders, giving special attention to school culture and student voice.⁵³ Easton and Soguero emphasize strategic approaches that focus on community building and curriculum with community building as the primary

⁴⁹ Suhyun Suh, Jingyo Suh, and Irene Houston, “Predictors of Categorical At-risk High School Dropouts,” *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 85, no.2 (2007); 197-198.

⁵⁰ Alliance for Excellent Education, (2009): 2.

⁵¹ Louie Rodriguez, “What Schools can do about the Dropout Crisis,” *Leadership* 40, no. 1 (2010):19.

⁵² Lois Brown Easton and Michael Soguero, “Challenging Assumptions: Helping Struggling Students Succeed,” *Kappan* 92, no.5 (2011): 30.

⁵³ Louie Rodriguez, “What Schools can do about the Dropout Crisis,” 21.

factor in student success.⁵⁴ Furthermore, empirical researchers Nie and Lau interpret engagement as “students’ report of their attention, effort, and participation in classroom activities.”⁵⁵ In light of this documentation, the question then is *how is this engagement achieved?*

Engagement comes through establishing a sense of community in the school and/or classroom. Additionally, engagement is based upon a trusting and respectful relationship between teacher and student. The often overlooked component essential to supporting student success is, in fact, the student himself or herself! Ayers makes the following observation:

...the deficiencies list tells you almost nothing about me [e.g., the student] – about my experiences, needs, dreams, fears, skills, or know how – and as a teacher it provides you with information of only distant, peripheral value. It doesn’t offer you any insight or clues into how you might engage me in a journey of learning or how you might invite me into your classroom as a student.⁵⁶

Of course teachers cannot always engage students, but they can focus on certain domains outside of the academic sphere in an effort to reach students through the curriculum. Sometimes, this does include an attempt to understand, see and know the backgrounds, as well as experiences, of students in the classroom. This study focuses on care as a central component in addressing the teacher/student

⁵⁴ Lois Brown Easton and Michael Soguero, “Challenging Assumptions: Helping Struggling Students Succeed,” 29.

⁵⁵ Youyan Nie and Shun Lau, “Complementary Roles of Care and Behavioral Control in Classroom Management: The Self-Determination Theory Perspective,” *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 34 (2009); 188.

⁵⁶ William Ayers, *To Teach: The Journey of a Teacher* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010), 44.

relationship so vital to the classroom. Care theory will be used to situate the study and help provide a lens through which we can examine, analyze, and assess the importance of care in schools.

CHAPTER 3

A Review of the Literature: Situating the Study

Teacher care is a vital component of *Care Theory*. Three elements necessary for significantly increasing positive student outcomes and often associated with care in common education include accepted pedagogical practice, intrinsic student motivation, and external support from communities.⁵⁷ However, in an age where testing and accountability in schools have overshadowed the need for caring and compassionate teaching approaches, the question of how we are preparing our students for society, and whether or not they will be successful in it, becomes an important one. It is not uncommon in this 21st Century to observe a constant influx of reform measures by policy makers, state education officials, and other educational agencies in an effort to “better” prepare students for the workforce. Common mantras are *improved assessment*, *teacher accountability*, and *improved academic performance* – all in the name of improving academic student outcomes. However, many students seem disillusioned with *school* as there appears to be little engagement with the fruits it offers.

Despite efforts to increase student achievement, our current student dropout rate, and the socioeconomic challenges and disparities that follow - among other social issues - indicate that something is terribly lacking in our schools.⁵⁸ There are multiple reasons why students fail to perform to the

⁵⁷ Three findings reflected in the following works: Joyce Epstein, “School/Family/Community Partnerships” (*Reprint*) Originally found in *Phi Delta Kappan* 76, no. 9 (1995); Elizabeth Shaunessy and Patricia McHatton, “Urban Students’ Perceptions of Teachers: Views of Students in General, Special, and Honors Education,” *Springer* (2008); Cheryl Ellerbrock and Sarah Kiefer, “Creating a Ninth-Grade Community of Care,” *The Journal of Educational Research* (Tampa: Routledge, 2010).

⁵⁸ Alliance for Excellent Education, “High school dropouts in America,” *FactSheet*: 1, February, 2009, http://www.all4ed.org/files/GraduationRates_FactSheet.pdf. Approximately seven thousand

standards set forth by education mandates. Similarly, many reasons exist for their failure to transition into society as agents of socially just and caring practices. Care theorists and researchers have attempted to unmask one particularly important element that is considered vital in addressing part of this problem – how *care* affects positive student outcomes.

Several attributes of care emerged from the literature on care theory: teacher concern for academic student success; positive interpersonal teacher-student relationships; the development of school community; teacher attempts to meet student needs (academic and non-academic); and sound teacher pedagogy.⁵⁹ There are other characteristics that may be included under the umbrella of care. Such characteristics might include physical contact, mild and severe discipline or punishment, or other seemingly negative approaches. However, the aforementioned attributes of care are most prominent in the literature and are considered precursors to positive student experiences in a school setting. It is important to note that there are complexities in the research that prevent any definitive assessment of a caring approach, as perceptions differ among students and teachers and the nature of this phenomenon prevents a static employment of the principles that underlie it. There is no exact formula for implementing care in the school setting. This approach is contingent upon context, setting, and the individual(s) responsible for engaging in the caring function. As Noddings states,

student dropouts daily, among those who have entered high school as freshmen – amounting to more than one million dropouts within the four year period. The document cites that the highest percentage occurs among minority groups.

⁵⁹ Compilation of articles cited in this paper dealing with attributes of care. This includes Nel Noddings; Elizabeth Shaunessy and Patricia Alvarez McHatton; Anthony De Jesus and Rene Antrop-Gonzalez; Tracey Garrett, Jason Barr and Terri Rothman; Cheryl Ellerbrock and Sarah Kiefer; Mari Ann Roberts; and Linda Thurston and Terry Berkeley – among others.

“...we do not say with any conviction that a person cares if that person acts routinely according to some fixed rule.”⁶⁰ Still, we can be readily assured that there are aspects of care that are considered essential to the teaching profession because, in essence, it is a social institution that should require mutuality and respect between and among individuals. Because individuals share the commonality of the schooling institution, which is designed to socialize them, the caring element may influence what types of individuals they become in society. Ayers argues that “in a democracy, schools have a specific responsibility to educate for active citizenship and democratic living...”⁶¹ School, then, according to Ayers, should teach to the essence of who we become and goes beyond content, tapping into something much deeper than math and science. It is often a hidden curriculum, an unspoken word or deed, or maybe an explicit gesture that becomes internalized by students. Therefore, in this context, one might conclude that it is imperative humaneness is valued, mutual respect and cooperative engagement are fostered, and schools embody those principles we want instilled in future citizens. Many argue that the care ethic is one principle that is essential in this effort.

The literature suggests multiple attributes of care as perceived by students and teachers alike. One of these attributes is teacher concern for the academic success of their students. For example, Shaunessy and McHatton, citing Rich (2006), indicate that “Caring teachers motivate students to succeed in academic

⁶⁰ Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 13.

⁶¹ William Ayers, *To Teach: The Journey of a teacher* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010), 74.

pursuits and to remain in school. . . .”⁶² Additionally, student participants in a study conducted by DeJesus and Antrop-Gonzalez suggested “that caring teachers offered them guidance and friendship inside and outside the classroom, held them to high academic expectations and demonstrated a sense of solidarity by being active co-learners and facilitators rather than authoritarian teachers.”⁶³ DeJesus and Antrop-Gonzalez refer to this form of caring as “hard caring,” a term that represents the opposite of “soft caring” (pity for students) and includes “high expectations for academic performance” by teachers, especially for students of color.⁶⁴ Implicit in this idea of improved academic success is the belief that learning is indeed taking place. Souza indicates in her study that a teacher’s endorsement of high academic success is not necessarily indicative of caring if learning is not taking place.⁶⁵ In other words, according to her empirical research, teachers can emphasize the end goal more than the process it takes to get there, which constitutes *uncaring*, even though student outcomes may be positive. For example, an ineffective teacher, not competent in his content area, teaches unsuccessfully but provides verbal academic encouragement to his student who makes an “A” in the class. Although the student made an “A” in the class, despite

⁶² Elizabeth Shaunessy and Patricia Alvarez McHatton, “Urban Students’ Perceptions of Teachers: Views of Students in General, Special, and Honors Education,” *Springer* (2008), 487.

⁶³ Anthony De Jesus and Rene Antrop-Gonzalez, “Instrumental Relationships and High Expectations: Exploring Critical Care in Two Latino Community-based Schools,” *Intercultural Education* 17, no. 3 (2006): 294.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 282-294. Implicit in the idea of “soft caring” is that teachers “feel sorry” for students whose socioeconomic conditions are not favorable. For example, students who have been marginalized by society, who come from poor homes or who lack stability in the home might be considered as potential recipients of “soft caring.” As a result, some teachers assume that these students are not ready (or capable) of meeting higher standards of learning. In such instances, these same teachers may not push students to a level of rigor that is offered to other students who are not placed in the aforementioned category.

⁶⁵ Tasha Souza, “The Communication of Caring: An Analysis of At-Risk Students in an Alternative School,” *Journal of the Northwest Communication Association* 34 (2005): 65.

the teacher's efforts, no learning took place. In light of this study, while teachers may emphasize end goals (e.g., grades, high test scores), some of them may not consider nor have an effect on the student's ability to accomplish these goals. In this case, and specific to this particular study, the academic goal is for the student to have a positive academic outcome; however, "pedagogical caring" is not considered to exist because the teacher's ability to facilitate learning was not present.

In the aforementioned example, caring is understood to exist only if learning is taking place. However, other scholars might disagree with this assessment. Sometimes students may be reluctant to participate in the learning process and fail to learn the content, even though the teacher teaches it well. Noddings argues that "Too often...students regard their teachers as enemies... What is lost is not only academic knowledge but a relation that might yield a lifetime of friendship and wisdom."⁶⁶ In other words, in Nodding's view, students must also reciprocate engagement and "respond with growing sensitivity to attempts to promote their own growth."⁶⁷ Therefore, sometimes it is more difficult to generalize about what care *is* as opposed to what care *does*. In both cases, care depends on the individual(s) engaged in the caring relationship, the context of that relationship, and their response(s) to one another.

Instrumental in exemplifying teacher *care* in schools, according to many research studies, are strong interpersonal teacher-student relationships. In fact, the relationship between teachers and students is the most heavily cited among

⁶⁶ Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005), 108.

⁶⁷ Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education*, 108.

researchers of care theory as essential for engaging the whole student and pushing him/her toward successful academic and social outcomes. Noddings states that “caring is a relationship that contains another, the cared-for, and...the one-caring and the cared-for are reciprocally dependent.”⁶⁸ Students who perceive that their teacher cares for their well-being and academic success show more receptivity toward learning.⁶⁹ However, receptivity toward learning does not imply that academic learning is taking place. Ellerbrock and Kiefer assert that “the presence of high-quality teacher-student relationships (e.g., relationships characterized by high levels of trust, care, and respect) and emotional and cognitive support are critical for the positive development of students.”⁷⁰ This positive development is reflected in both academic as well as non-academic forms. In this instance, when teachers and school administrators take interest in the lives of students, they cross the threshold of mere intellect and reach to the soul. Even Dewey echoes this sentiment:

...an educator [must] be able to judge what attitudes are actually conducive to continued growth and what are detrimental. He must, in addition, have that sympathetic understanding of individuals as individuals which gives him an idea of what is actually going on in the minds of those who are learning. It is, among other things, the need for these abilities on the part of the parent and teacher which makes a system of education

⁶⁸ Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 58.

⁶⁹ Tasha Souza, “The Communication of Caring: An Analysis of At-Risk Students in an Alternative School,” *Journal of the Northwest Communication Association* 34 (2005): 55-56.

⁷⁰ Cheryl Ellerbrock and Sarah Kiefer, “Creating a Ninth-Grade Community of Care,” *The Journal of Educational Research* (Tampa: Routledge, 2010): 393.

based upon living experience a more difficult affair to conduct successfully than it is to follow the patterns of traditional education.⁷¹

Similarly, Mayeroff presents a meaning of *care* in which it embodies one's efforts to elicit "growth" in the "other," and he contends that "growing includes learning to the degree that one is able [to learn]..."⁷² Teachers, therefore, would be responsible for promoting this learning through a respectful, trusting relationship with their students. Palmer further adds to this connection as he asserts that "good teachers join self and subject and students in the fabric of life."⁷³ He goes on later to state that "human beings were made for relationships."⁷⁴ Thus, what is reflected in the literature becomes substantial when looking at practices that improve student achievement and advances their progress in and outside of the classroom.

Behavioral attributes are also linked to positive teacher-student relationships. Though the focus of this literature review is for the secondary level, this relationship can be observed at all levels K-12. A 2008 study by Thijs, Koomen, and van der Leij found that among kindergarten teachers "...there is a positive link between the quality of teachers' relationships with individual students and the quality of their [the students'] behaviors toward them."⁷⁵

Similarly, Shaunessy and McHatton, in their work with high school students, presented research that showed student behavioral reactions to teachers in

⁷¹ John Dewey, *John Dewey Experience & Education* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1938), 39.

⁷² Milton Mayeroff, *On Caring* (New York: HarperPerennial 1971),13.

⁷³ Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 11.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁷⁵ Jochem Thijs, Helma Koomen, and Aryan van der Leij, "Teacher-Child Relationships and Pedagogical Practices: Considering the Teacher's Perspective," *School Psychology Review* 37, no. 2 (2008): 246.

accordance with their teachers' perceptions of and attitudes toward them. Generally, students who perceived a more positive relationship with their teachers were less likely to exhibit negative attitudes towards them. Students who had negative perceptions of their relationships with their teachers had a negative attitude toward them. It is interesting to note here, in their study, that those students in the honors programs "seemed more empowered to challenge teachers in situations where they perceived teachers to be disconnected, disrespectful, or shirking their responsibilities to teach... [Whereas,] students in general and special education, who reported similar interactions with teachers, seemed more accepting and less confrontational about these messages from teachers."⁷⁶ Garrett, Barr, and Rothman also presented research at the middle school level that paralleled what the previous investigators found – student attitudes reflected their personal perceptions of their teachers' dispositions toward them.⁷⁷

Community is another attribute that is promoted in the research as essential to creating a caring and nurturing environment within the school. Implicit here is an extension of *care* that involves relationships that transcend the school and the classroom while serving to strengthen them. The community surrounding the school, as well as the parents, administration, faculty, staff, and student body collaborate to create an institutional culture of care. The structural cohesiveness that emerges from such a collaborative can provide deep insight into the organizational integration of care as opposed to an individual level of *care*.

⁷⁶ Elizabeth Shaunessy and Patricia Alvarez McHatton, "Urban Students' Perceptions of Teachers: Views of Students in General, Special, and Honors Education," *Springer* (2008), 498.

⁷⁷ Tracey Garrett, Jason Barr and Terri Rothman, "Perspectives on Caring in the Classroom: Do They Vary According to Ethnicity or Grade Level?" *Adolescence* 44, no. 175 (2009).

Ellerbrock and Kiefer present findings that focus on a caring school community and how, if cultivated properly, it promotes a sense of belongingness in students and assists them in fostering “academic and life skills.”⁷⁸ Key to their research is a strong link with the connections students feel to the learning community as a result of caring relationships with teachers. Their research is primarily within the context of the school setting; yet, it supports previous findings that students, whose needs are being met, are deeply committed to the community and tend to be more successful in school.⁷⁹

De Jesus and Antrop-Gonzalez pinpoint important aspects of a different type of school community – one based on cultural premises and historically relevant contexts that reflect the Latino/a population of students. They “argue that communities of color understand caring within their sociocultural, gendered and economic contexts and believe that caring has traditionally existed within differential economic contours for disenfranchised communities...”⁸⁰ Thus, their primary focus is on establishing for students a learning environment that engages them in academic content and integrates the relevant aspects of the students’ cultural background as well. Hence, they support the stance that culturally relevant instruction⁸¹ is necessary for success among students of color. This view of caring is contextually different from Eurocentric views of caring because culturally relevant instruction teaches the sociocultural and sociopolitical values

⁷⁸ Cheryl Ellerbrock and Sarah Kiefer, “Creating a Ninth-Grade Community of Care,” *The Journal of Educational Research* (Tampa: Routledge, 2010): 403.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 396.

⁸⁰ Anthony De Jesus and Rene Antrop-Gonzalez, “Instrumental Relationships and High Expectations: Exploring Critical Care in Two Latino Community-based Schools,” *Intercultural Education* 17, no. 3 (2006): 283.

⁸¹ Gloria Ladson-Billings, *Dream-Keepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009).

associated with one specific group, in this case Latino/a, whose values are traditionally marginalized in schools and the dominant society at large. Eurocentric instructional views often omit the specific sociocultural and sociopolitical contributions of people of color and fail to teach students how to navigate the system which marginalizes them. In this case, care still encompasses relational values but includes cultural interests that extend beyond the school and classroom setting into the social, political, and geographical domain for those who have unique needs.

The failure to acknowledge differences may constitute a lack of *care*. Therefore, De Jesus and Antrop-Gonzalez support a concept of care entitled *critical care* in which “communities of color may care about and educate their own...”⁸² Shiller refers to “cultural mismatch” as an obstacle to “authentic care” because it could potentially create “...rejection of students’ cultural norms and values.”⁸³ Thus, De Jesus and Antrop- Gonzalez present an argument for adopting an aspect of care that does not harm students of color but still promotes high academic achievement among students, maintains student engagement and sustains strong interpersonal relationships between students and teachers - goals commonly found in other research literature.⁸⁴

⁸² Ibid., 284.

⁸³ Jessica Shiller, “‘These are our Children!’ An Examination of Relationship-Building Practices in Urban High Schools,” *Springer* (2008): 476.

⁸⁴ It is important to note here that Noddings, in her book *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, argues one can get caring wrong. Indeed, teachers can attempt to include culturally relevant instruction, along with the social and political underpinnings that affect students, but there is a possibility that they may not be effective in empowering or advancing the students under their charge. In fact, students may resent a teacher’s attempt to do so. Additionally, teachers must recognize that students are still individually distinct from the groups they represent. Thus, the relational context is important and vital to precisely meeting the needs of the student.

While the community's cultural values and viewpoints are essential, the teacher's obligation is to the student. However, caring for the student and meeting the student's needs does not negate the teacher's responsibility to recognize the student's community and its values. Indeed, familiarity with the student's cultural background may be a requirement in the way the teacher cares for the student. One might conclude that part of the caring process is "consider[ing] the other's point of view, his objective needs, and what he expects of us."⁸⁵ Noddings would argue that there must be some reciprocity such that students must acknowledge that their needs are being met in order to constitute successful caring. Teachers who engage in *critical care* might attempt to incorporate a concern for and connection to a student's cultural values and norms. Inherent here is the idea that teachers who fail to engage in *critical care* can get caring wrong, especially when working with students of color. Conversely, teachers who attempt to engage in *critical care* can still get caring wrong if the relational exchange, for whatever reason, is not positive no matter how sincere the caring is.⁸⁶

It is possible, however, that teachers who understand and engage properly in critical caring approaches actually get it "right." However, in cases where these approaches to caring fail, for whatever reason, it is, as Noddings describes it, incomplete caring. In other words, Noddings believes "No matter how hard

⁸⁵ Nell Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 24.

⁸⁶ It is not the intent of this study to examine all aspects of getting *care* wrong; however, it is important to note that this is a possibility in any caring relationship, even with the best intentions. Critical care encompasses many elements that are sensitive in nature and can complicate attempts to express caring when addressing such elements.

teachers try to care, if the caring is not received by students, the claim ‘they don’t care’ has some validity.”⁸⁷ This particular scenario becomes a point of contention among some scholars because of the belief that good intentions should matter and might even constitute caring, even if the student does not receive it as such.

Arguably, there is not always congruence between the context of the community and the interest of children. Sometimes, there are needs that simply cannot be met. What appears to be different about the notion of critical care is the understanding of what it is like to have distinct cultural, racial, social, and political differences. If the person addressing those differences (the teacher) has experienced them personally, that individual can lend critical support, as well as guidance, to those she or he teaches. Having shared a similar lived experience(s) with someone provides a clarity of understanding, feeling, and being that cannot be artificially replicated in one who will not or cannot ever have that same experience. The difference here is the shared level of experiential “knowing” and incorporating instruction that speaks to that common “knowing” for the academic, social, and educational betterment of the student. This type of “knowing” transcends a level of relational value that cannot be developed or attained in any other way by a teacher. Another way of possibly looking at this would be the difficulty of males understanding what it is like for females who fear for their safety when walking alone at night. Some males, under the same conditions, may perceive of a potential violent attack from a rapist as highly irrational and

⁸⁷ Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005), 15.

unlikely. However, for most females, this is a very real fear, and the likelihood of such an attack is always at the forefront of their minds when walking alone at night.

Similar conceptual frameworks of *critical care theory* have emerged as an extension of this notion of caring for students of color. Though her analysis is not framed within a formal school community context, Roberts expounds on teacher care as it relates to African American students. She argues that “the colour blind ‘community of care’ often described in the literature does not disaggregate lines of ethnicity or race...”⁸⁸ In other words, students of color may have needs that require a different caring approach that reflects cultural sensitivity.

Thurston and Berkeley present yet another aspect of school community by including geographical distinctions in their analysis of how care might be implemented. According to these scholars, there are distinct and apparent cultural differences between urban and rural communities that impact how they approach implementation of a caring community. For instance, they highlight that drugs, violence, race prejudice, redistribution of “social and economic ties” as well as depopulation are among some of the problems affecting their rural community and the schools located within that community.⁸⁹ Such problems interfere with the cohesiveness of the individuals who live within the area and, thus, make transition to establishing a *caring* school community difficult. Still, Thurston and Berkeley strive to promote what they refer to as “Peaceable Schools,” which are

⁸⁸ Mari Ann Roberts, “Toward a theory of culturally relevant critical teacher care: African American teachers’ definitions and perceptions of care for African American students,” *Journal of Moral Education* 39, no. 4 (2010): 449.

⁸⁹ Linda Thurston and Terry Berkeley, “Morality and the Ethic of Care: Peaceable Rural School, Caring Rural Communities,” *Rural Special Education Quarterly (Reprint)* 17, no. 3,4 (1998): 26.

“based upon an ideal of valuing human dignity and esteem,” as well as establishing “...a warm and caring community characterized by cooperation, communication, tolerance, positive emotional expression and conflict resolution.”⁹⁰

Still, the notion of the schooling institution itself is considered by some scholars as a barrier to incorporating a care ethic. Though the establishment of caring communities is considered by Ayers as appealing for promoting a culture of *care* in schools, sadly “...we most often settle for institutions. That is, we generally find ourselves in impersonal places characterized by interchangeable parts, hierarchy, competition, and layers of supervision.”⁹¹ Noddings elaborates on this notion as she discusses the intent of “caring” institutions as they “...shift from the nonrational and subjective to the rational and objective”⁹² which, in her eyes, undermines the true intent of *care*. Thus, according to these theorists, it becomes easy to objectify students instead of considering their humaneness. Ayers’ and Noddings’ sentiments suggest that institutions are not constructed, nor conducive, to meeting all of the needs of the student (e.g., non-academic). A common practice by many schooling institutions is to exclude those entities existing within the community (e.g., community organizations, parents, and social agencies) from partnering with the school, which can lead to solitude and isolation that can be detrimental to student growth. However, Epstein advocates

⁹⁰ Ibid., 27.

⁹¹ William Ayers *To Teach: The Journey of a Teacher* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010), 75.

⁹² Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 25.

that schools, families, and communities are all necessary structural components for establishing strong partnerships to support student success.⁹³

An institutional construct of *care* exists which further complicates the issue of how *care* is exemplified in the educational setting. According to Epstein, for institutions to be considered *caring*, they must be completely immersed in the philosophical and ideological mission of care.⁹⁴ For instance, their interests must revolve around the needs of the student (not just academic in nature), and a culture of community should be established for it to flourish under this premise. These combined constructs form what can be loosely interpreted as “institutional care,” which is used here in a metaphorical sense. Institutions are not living, breathing beings capable of caring; however, for the purpose of this study, institutional care will represent the collective and systemic integration of care by key stakeholders in any given schooling environment. The complexities of this phenomenon remain ever-present among scholars who have attempted to disaggregate the data from *care* studies in hopes of grasping a better understanding of this phenomenon in schools as well as its impact on students. Essential to this process is a focus on the interpersonal relationships among all key stakeholders in the school.

An aspect of this study also examines teachers’ responses to administrative support for teacher approaches to student success. Because administrators serve as a major driving force for school culture and climate, it is

⁹³ Joyce Epstein, “School/Family/Community Partnerships: Caring for the Children we Share,” (Reprint) Originally found in *Phi Delta Kappan* 76, no. 9 (1995).

⁹⁴ Joyce Epstein, “School/Family/Community Partnerships: Caring for the Children we Share,” (Reprint) Originally found in *Phi Delta Kappan* 76, no. 9 (1995).

important to address the pivotal roles they play in enforcing academic policy in combination with a caring school environment. Strong community support may or may not be a part of this effort, which impacts the degree to which the institution is considered caring. Institutional care also encompasses such elements as the academic structural components that are a necessary part of traditional schooling institutions today and affect the degree to which care is executed in schools. All of these constructs combined create schooling environments that are somewhere along the spectrum of caring to non-caring.

As teachers attempt to meet students' needs, they are fulfilling an important act of *care*. However, Souza, citing Gaut (1983), states that students who perceive that teachers do not care about them feel that "...the acts of caring directed toward them [by teachers] cannot be defined as caring because the students have no awareness of the need for care."⁹⁵ In other words, teachers who fail to address a specific need that the student considers valid, also fails to care – even in instances where they believe their acts are caring. Such disconnect makes distinctions about caring ambiguous because the existence of care may not be communicated effectively or, in some cases, even realized. Gilligan states, "Relationship requires connection."⁹⁶ The failure (or perception of failure), of numerous faculty, administrators, and staff within the schooling institution to meet student needs could potentially undermine the institution's goals and objectives of establishing a caring learning community.

⁹⁵ Tasha Souza, "The Communication of Caring: An Analysis of At-Risk Students in an Alternative School," *Journal of the Northwest Communication Association* 34 (2005): 58.

⁹⁶ Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), xix.

Ellerbrock and Kiefer acknowledge that “through the promotion of personal and social life skills [for students]...teachers were able to demonstrate care and provide students with the tools necessary to be productive, healthy, and happy individuals.”⁹⁷ Similarly, Knight-Diop asserts that “...academic, social, and emotional factors are involved in serving the student.”⁹⁸ Students valued teachers’ concern for them outside of the teaching and learning environment. In observing student viewpoints of how they perceive caring teachers, Shaunessy and McHatton explain the student perspective of teacher connectedness: “Students valued teachers who shared interests, hobbies, the extra effort teachers made to facilitate interactive learning, and the creative approaches educators undertook to help students comprehend challenging material.”⁹⁹ The students also stressed the teacher’s interests in their well –being.¹⁰⁰ Here we see qualities expressed by students that they believe are important in helping to meet their individual needs.

Students enter schools with various needs, which may be academic or non-academic in nature; however, teachers are not necessarily prepared to handle such variety. Colleges of teacher preparation enforce content specific knowledge and allude to attributes of a good teacher, but rarely are teachers taught the nuances of *care*. One even wonders if *care* is an attribute that can be taught to adults and embodied by them within a short period of time. The teaching profession is

⁹⁷ Cheryl Ellerbrock and Sarah Kiefer, “Creating a Ninth-Grade Community of Care,” *The Journal of Educational Research* (Tampa: Routledge, 2010): 404.

⁹⁸ Michelle Knight-Diop, “Closing the Gap: Enacting Care and Facilitating Black Students’ Educational Access in the Creation of a High School College-Going Culture,” *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk* (Routledge, 2010): 160.

⁹⁹ Elizabeth Shaunessy and Patricia Alvarez McHatton, “Urban Students’ Perceptions of Teachers: Views of Students in General, Special, and Honors Education,” *Springer* (2008), 496.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

considered a “helping” profession, which is assumed to attract *caring* individuals. However, this assumption can be misleading because of the complexities of care and the disconnect between those who assume a natural care ethic and those to whom caring may not come as naturally. Regardless of this debate, the research points out that teachers who know their subjects and teach them well exemplify a component of *care*. Ayers contends that “teaching is intellectual and ethical work; it takes a thoughtful, reflective, and caring person to do it well. It takes a brain and a heart.”¹⁰¹ Though some teachers may not exhibit a nurturing form of *care*, much of the literature suggests that sound pedagogy places them in a category of caring. If teachers know their subjects and are able to teach students effectively, they are considered caring teachers.

Noddings and Mayeroff, in their analysis of *care*, present the idea of reciprocity between the one-caring and the one-cared for. Noddings asserts that the one-cared for must respond in some way to the one-caring such that there is acknowledgement of a need being met.¹⁰² Mayeroff states that “the teacher needs his student, just as the student needs the teacher.”¹⁰³ Again, like Noddings, Mayeroff acknowledges that there must be an exchange between teacher and student. Furthermore, in meeting the needs of the “other” (the student), the “self” must be placed aside to ensure full engrossment¹⁰⁴ in the needs of the “other.”

¹⁰¹ William Ayers, *To Teach: The Journey of a Teacher* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010), 152.

¹⁰² Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 71.

¹⁰³ Milton Mayeroff, *On Caring* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1971), 40.

¹⁰⁴ Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* - Noddings refers to engrossment as necessary for care, 17.

A final component that was important in the literature on *care theory* was the importance of teachers knowing their content and being able to promote the intellectual growth of students through sound pedagogy. In the research study conducted by Shaunessy and McHatton, several students alluded to their desire for teachers to help them with content. One student "...noted feeling a sense of efficacy when faced with teachers who focused on student learning rather than covering content and who were able to use varied methods to assist with understanding..."¹⁰⁵ In this same study, students felt that teachers did not care when they failed to help them learn and, in some cases, blamed the student for their failure to grasp a concept.¹⁰⁶ Another study conducted by Garrett, Barr, and Rothman echoed similar student sentiments by showing that academic support was indeed at the top of the list as an attribute of a caring teacher.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, these same findings were evident in research conducted by Souza.¹⁰⁸

Surprisingly, in the research from Souza regarding teachers' perspectives of their own view of caring toward students, they did not consider teaching as a form of caring in and of itself. Attributes that teachers considered to reflect *care* included "...supporting, adapting to students, encouraging, helping, being immediate, wanting what is best for students, rewarding, respecting, giving students a safe environment, inspiring, and having consequences for students."¹⁰⁹

Therefore, it is important to point out the differences of viewpoints that surround

¹⁰⁵ Elizabeth Shaunessy and Patricia Alvarez McHatton, "Urban Students' Perceptions of Teachers: Views of Students in General, Special, and Honors Education," *Springer* (2008), 495.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Tracey Garrett, Jason Barr and Terri Rothman, "Perspectives on Caring in the Classroom: Do They Vary According to Ethnicity or Grade Level?" *Adolescence* 44, no. 175 (2009).

¹⁰⁸ Tasha Souza, "The Communication of Caring: An Analysis of At-Risk Students in an Alternative School," *Journal of the Northwest Communication Association* 34 (2005):49.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 52.

teacher and student understanding of care in the teaching and learning environment.

The literature presents so many caveats regarding care that may not be mentioned here. However, the key themes that emerged from the research are covered in this review to highlight the reoccurring attributes of care discussed in various documents. Two of the most prominent characteristics of care in education that were consistently mentioned were the teacher's support of academic achievement for students and strong teacher-student interpersonal relationships. In many cases, some of the categories that were discussed (or not discussed) could pose as sub-categories of the major themes mentioned.

What is presented here is the overarching, macro level of *care theory*. Other parts of the research on *care theory* consist of smaller components and branch out into specific areas such as race, class, gender, and ability. There are also other disciplines in which *care theory* is prominently explored. For example, the literature on *care theory* is plentiful in the field of medicine. These specific areas exceed the scope of this essay but are worthy topics for further research.

It is incumbent upon us to consider how this research meets the practical needs of students at the secondary level. Historically, we have not only prepared our students in content knowledge, but we have also prepared them for citizenship and transition into society. At one time there seemed to be a moral agenda directly aimed at helping students to recognize that one day they would inherit a role in society in which they must serve in a democratic capacity and foster mutual respect within that domain. However, it now seems that content

knowledge has replaced the need for developing caring and mutually cooperative citizens. *Care theory*, while having no formal means of implementation in classrooms, has strong and necessary implications for the curriculum and for the future of our society.

Theoretical Lens

For this study, the lens through which care is examined, analyzed, and assessed is reflected by the various meanings found in the theoretical and empirical literature on care theory. These meanings provide insight on how care is operationalized in the school setting and how we come to understand its diverse, complex existence within various contexts.

The contemporary literature that exists on care theory spans thirty years and provides different perspectives of this phenomenon. Most care literature is based in healthcare studies; however, there is an extensive amount on care in education. Both conceptual and empirical literature will be considered when incorporating the use of the term care within the theoretical framework. The information from this literature serves to provide a guiding lens for the study and from which elements or perspectives of care might be better understood.

Considering the conceptual framework of care, similar meanings of this phenomenon are offered by different theoretical scholars. These meanings inevitably place emphasis on the relational value of care and caring relationships. Within this conceptual domain, three prominent care theorists emerge as major contributors to what care means. Care, as reflected in Nodding's theory, "involves stepping out of one's own personal frame of reference into the

other's.”¹¹⁰ According to Noddings, “When we care, we consider the other’s point of view, his objective needs, and what he expects of us.”¹¹¹ Gilligan also offers a vision of care in which relationships are essential. She emphasizes “empathy or the ability to listen to others and learn their language or take their point of view.”¹¹² It must be noted that Gilligan admonishes individuals not to lose their own viewpoint or “voice” in the relational exchange. Similarly, Noddings indicates that one must preserve herself/himself if she/he is incapable of caring for another. Like Noddings and Gilligan, Mayeroff posits that “to care for another person, in the most significant sense, is to help him grow and actualize himself.”¹¹³ Specific to Mayeroff’s definition of care are what he deems as “Major Ingredients” which include elements such as *patience, honesty, trust, and humility*.¹¹⁴

Empirically, “care” takes on slightly different connotations because the approach to understanding this phenomenon stems from it being defined as a result of the observation, experimentation, or the interpretation of others. (In this particular study, teachers are the participants who help to provide understanding of care, and the classroom/school setting is the context that helps to frame their perspectives). Most researchers of empirical studies on care in schools also conceptualize care relationally but focus on its functional component in terms of what academic and social precursors exist to cultivate the teacher/student relationship. For example, a study conducted by Shaunessy and McHatton in

¹¹⁰ Nel Noddings, *Caring*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 24.

¹¹¹ Nel Noddings, *Caring*, 24.

¹¹² Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), ix-xx.

¹¹³ Milton Mayeroff, *On Caring*. (New York: HarperPerennial 1971), 1.

¹¹⁴ Milton Mayeroff, *On Caring*, 19-35.

which they surveyed 577 high school students found that “often students indicated conflicts with learning, on one hand having a desire to master content and again understanding, but on the other hand feeling disappointment with systemic challenges as well as teachers who thwarted – rather than facilitated – effective teaching and learning opportunities.”¹¹⁵ This same study revealed that “students in special education indicated receiving punitive teacher feedback more frequently (M=1.95, SD=.85) while general education students (M=1.87, SD=.77) and honors students (M=1.40, SD=.75) reported less frequent punitive feedback from teachers.”¹¹⁶

Another empirical study conducted by Shiller focused on the “relationship-building” capacity of teachers and students in three small high schools created by the New Century Schools Initiative (NCSI).¹¹⁷ The premise for this study rested on the common assumption that small schools would provide a more feasible environment in which teacher/student relationships could flourish. Utilizing Noddings’ notion of Aesthetic Care in her work, Shiller references Noddings’ philosophy¹¹⁸ as a framework for identifying what caring relationships would look like in these schools. Coupled with multiple interviews and observations, Shiller found that “without training and support, there were many obstacles to developing relationships and in engaging in authentic forms of care...

¹¹⁵ Elizabeth Shaunessy and Patricia Alvarez McHatton, “Urban Students’ Perceptions of Teachers: Views of Students in General, Special, and Honors Education,” *Springer* (2008), 492.

¹¹⁶ Elizabeth Shaunessy and Patricia Alvarez McHatton, “Urban Students’ Perceptions of Teachers,” 491. Formula symbols are included such that “M” stands for the “mean” and SD is short for “standard deviation.”

¹¹⁷ Jessica Shiller, “‘These are our Children!’ An Examination of Relationship-Building Practices in Urban High Schools,” *Springer* (2008): 462.

¹¹⁸ Jessica Shiller, “‘These are our Children!’ An Examination of Relationship-Building Practices in Urban High Schools,” 464.

The schools were under enormous pressure from the New York City Department of Education to improve outcome data which became the priority...which made relationship-building a casualty of a narrow focus on improving quantitative data.”¹¹⁹

This study is reminiscent of the schools Deborah Meier talks about in her book *The Power of Their Ideas*. A resident educator in the New York City school system, she, too, describes the importance of smaller schools in helping foster student academic success and personal growth. She states that “large schools neither nourish the spirit nor educate the mind; except for a small elite...what big schools do is remind most of us that we don’t count for a lot.”¹²⁰ However, unlike the high school initiative described in Shiller’s study, Meier reflects upon the flexibility she had as the “teacher/director” of her Central Park East (elementary) school to engage in out-of-the-box educational approaches without interference from the school district. As a result, her school, along with other Central Park East (CPE) schools that followed, was extremely successful; however, not without some trials and learning obstacles along the way. Aside from district support, one of the most essential components that helped in the success of the CPE schools was the recognition of relationships and the actual attempt to cultivate them between the school and the community, as well as between students and their teachers. For example, Meier states, “Since relationships take time to build, we keep kids and teachers together for two years when we can.”¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 481.

¹²⁰ Deborah Meier, *The Power of Their Ideas: Lessons for America From a Small School in Harlem* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), 107.

¹²¹ Deborah Meier, *The Power of Their Ideas*, 27.

Continuing with this pattern, other empirical studies such as those conducted by Souza, Nie and Lau, as well as Ellerbrock and Kiefer,¹²² all reveal attempts to address care in the context of an academic framework for success. Therefore, care is loosely defined through the lens of the study by which it is being investigated. Because the empirical research in this study also reflects multiple perspectives of teacher care using the language of positive student outcomes, it lends itself to yet another framework by which care might be explored in relation to positive student outcomes.

When we speak of an ethic of care, generally we consider relational aspects that transcend one's own regard for self. Care is a phenomenon that requires mutual respect, concern, and regard for another. It supports the notion that one values another and is willing to convey a degree of responsibility towards some aspect of that person's well-being. Traditional notions of care theory are grounded in feminist theory and moral philosophy but often take on differing characteristics, depending on the context and individual dispositions in expressing care. Within the area of some feminist scholarship, such characteristics commonly associated with care theory include nurturance, concern, empathy, love, and compassion. In moral philosophy, however, the idea of care takes on more rational and logical perspectives grounded in ethical principles of morality. Here, care is often explored in terms of rightness – or how it is expressed – and the ethical foundation upon which it is expressed. Though these two domains have

¹²² Authors: Tasha J. Souza, "The Communication of Caring: An Analysis of at-risk Students in an Alternative School"; Youyan Nie and Shun Lau, "Complementary Roles of Care and Behavioral Control in Classroom Management: The Self-Determination Theory Perspective"; and Cheryl Ellerbrock and Sarah Kiefer, "Creating a Ninth-Grade Community of Care."

distinct elements that identify their role in influencing an ethic of care, a dichotomous connection exists that allow these domains to overlap into a complex understanding of what it means to care for others and self.

Often, care is embodied in the actual process of teaching and learning, which can lead to a sense of community in the classroom among student groups. Many scholars suggest that this sense of community provides a support system that encourages students, regardless of the challenges in their lives, to persevere in hopes of changing their conditions and achieving a higher level of opportunity or advancement. What is problematic about this position is that there is no common definition for what it means to care. The phenomenon of care is understood and expressed in different ways by different individuals. Therefore, it is important in this study to recognize various meanings that have emerged from previous studies of care.

To further complicate this issue, there is a dual worldview of care – as a noun as well as a verb. For the purpose of this framework, an emphasis is placed on the examination of care as it is reflected and understood in these dual meanings.

Students are immersed in environments that may prove detrimental to their success in and beyond the schooling process. The teacher's role becomes crucial in dealing with students in the classroom setting. Teaching and learning revolve around those relationships established during the course of the school year and have an impact on students' outcomes. Because care is an essential and necessary component for promoting positive student engagement, academic and social

success, as well as completion, here, it is considered a primary ingredient in ensuring students finish high school and become successful citizens within society. The problem is that secondary schooling institutions, the way they are currently structured, make interpersonal caring relationships between teachers and students difficult. Lack of care in school and/or classroom settings can negatively impact student academic success and social development, potentially resulting in poor student outcomes.

Scholars have engaged in multiple research studies to identify areas in which this problem could be addressed. Known strategies that address the social component of student success include school assistance from social service agencies, parents, community leaders, faith organizations, as well as the support of other community entities. Among these strategies for improved scholarship are “the presence of high-quality teacher-student relationships...and emotional and cognitive support...”¹²³ An assumption is that care can be expressed through these strategies and is a necessary component to help facilitate the teaching and learning process. However, it should be apparent that care entails a unique approach because it is abstract and difficult to define in terms of what it denotes and how it is integrated into a school setting. It may encompass all of the other strategies, serving as the underlying motive for delivering such support mechanisms to students.

Although the goal of schools should be to increase student learning and, ultimately, improve academic achievement, implementation of care in the

¹²³ Cheryl R. Ellerbrock and Sarah M. Kiefer, “Creating a Ninth-Grade Community of Care,” *The Journal of Educational Research* 103 (2010): 393.

classroom has its own inherent benefits. “The primary obligation of educators...is to assist in the realization of each student’s full humanity – and this obligation may include direct instruction, but it goes way beyond conveying any specific facts or body of information to children.”¹²⁴ Thus, care is not the only variable in student success; it is a major motivational contributor in promoting positive academic and social outcomes for students.

The *ethic of care* has been looked at for decades; however, it is difficult to get a firm grasp on exactly what care is, how it is implemented in schools, and the type of impact it has on student achievement. Many scholars, such as Noddings, Strike and Soltis, Garrett, Barr and Rothman¹²⁵ would probably agree that care, expressed in the school setting, takes on many – sometimes conflicting - dimensions. For example, Noddings states, “If we continue to insist that all work – at whatever stage of expertise – is dignified only to the extent that it is paid, then we really are lost as a caring community. We can only be a self-seeking set of individuals engaged in caretaking for whatever monetary rewards that effort will bring.”¹²⁶ Thus, one could argue that care might be undermined and limited if the incentive for it is some type of external reward. Milton Mayeroff states that growth is an important component in care: “In caring as helping the other grow, I experience what I care for (a person, an ideal, an idea) as an extension of myself

¹²⁴ William Ayers, *To Teach: The Journey of a Teacher* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010), 75.

¹²⁵ Authors: Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005); Kenneth A. Strike and Jonas F. Soltis, *The Ethics of Teaching* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009); and Tracey Garrett, Jason Barr and Terri Rothman, “Perspectives on Caring in the Classroom: Do They Vary According to Ethnicity or Grade Level?” *Adolescence* 44, no.175 (2009).

¹²⁶ Nel Noddings, *Caring: A feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 188.

and at the same time as something separate from me that I respect in its own right.”¹²⁷ According to Tracey Garrett, Jason Barr and Terri Rothman, “white, mainstreamed and high-achieving students frequently cite aspects of academic caring whereas African American and low-achieving students cite aspects of personal caring.”¹²⁸ As one could imagine, care functions as an abstract emotion and distinct action. Therefore, understanding the complexity that surrounds the interpretation and expression of care is essential. It is an emotional quality embodied in the one who possesses it which may differ from one person to the next. There is no standard formula that depicts what care is; thus, it varies in its expression. Nel Noddings echoes this sentiment: “we do not say with any conviction that a person cares if that person acts routinely according to some fixed rule.”¹²⁹

Among school settings that are unique from the traditional school setting, care is operationalized differently within those surroundings; it exudes a different connotation of what care means. For example, private schools and charter schools have flexibility from some mandates that can affect relationships between teachers and students in those institutions. Such impact might include the freedom to explore unique programs and practices to support students in different domains (e.g., emotional, social, spiritual etc.). Such practices can be readily observed in community schools (e.g., Harlem Children’s Zone), religious schools (e.g., Catholic), and charter schools (e.g., KIPP, Knowledge is Power Program). In

¹²⁷ Milton Mayeroff, *On Caring* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1971), 2.

¹²⁸ Tracey Garrett, Jason Barr and Terri Rothman, “Perspectives on Caring in the Classroom: Do They Vary According to Ethnicity or Grade Level?” *Adolescence* 44, no.175 (2009): 507.

¹²⁹ Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 13.

community schools, actions that more readily align with caring can be observed in a systematic way such that partnerships are developed with community stakeholders, including social service agencies, medical agencies, non-profit organizations, and business owners - to work toward meeting all needs of students – spiritual, physical, academic and emotional. Many religious schools institute care within the moral context of a religiously based framework. Students build their understanding of the care-ethic through a non-secular route which may carry a unique viewpoint for relationships within those contexts. Charter schools generally have the flexibility to focus on interpersonal relationships more by virtue of their structure. For instance, they have more control and autonomy over student enrollment, class sizes, and agreements that require parental/student engagement.

As mentioned earlier, caring for what is right and caring for others by doing what is right can be two distinct things. For example, it is a common mantra among educators to advocate feeding students breakfast in order for them to get good test scores on a high stakes test – (caring for what is right). However, it is rarely mentioned the importance of feeding children just because they are hungry (caring for others by doing what is right). Such an example helps to further clarify the concept of caring as an inherent attitude and caring as a practice (or skill). Noddings helps to bring understanding to these differences when she distinguishes natural caring from ethical caring. With natural caring, like a mother caring for her child, one sees that “the cared-for is free to be more fully

himself in the caring relations.”¹³⁰ Such freedom stems from a genuine, sincere interest between the carer and the cared-for. Whereas, with ethical caring, she states “...I behave as one-caring toward one for whom I feel no natural affection.”¹³¹

Somewhere within the spectrum of natural and ethical caring is what Noddings briefly refers to as pedagogical caring. This type of caring highlights the relational exchanges we often see in classrooms between teachers and students and stems from elements of both natural and ethical care. Noddings says the following:

We may say of caring as Martin Buber says of love, ‘it endures, but only in the alternation of actuality and latency.’ The difference that this approach makes is significant. Whatever roles I assume in life, I may be described in constant terms as one-caring. Formal constraints may be added to the fundamental requirement, but they do not replace or weaken it. When we discuss pedagogical caring, for example, we shall develop it from the analysis of caring itself and not from the formal requirements of teaching as a profession.¹³²

According to Ellerbrock and Kiefer, “caring entails a sense of mutuality and connection, is an integrated part of a reciprocated relationship, and is often not accomplished without action...caring can be characterized by the ways in which teachers and schools protect students and promote their development, as well as the ways in which students give back and ultimately support the success of

¹³⁰ Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, 73.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 17.

the school community.”¹³³ Here we see the significance of care as cyclical, embodying all stakeholders within the school setting. Administrators, teachers, and students, alike, have a shared responsibility for establishing positive interpersonal relationships revolving around the central component of care. However, because teachers spend more time with students, they will have more opportunity to exhibit a caring disposition towards them. Knight-Diop, citing Gay, states that “caring interpersonal relationships are central to the interactions between teachers and students and are enacted through teachers’ attitudes, expectations, and behaviors to facilitate students’ high academic achievement.”¹³⁴ Understanding the important role that a teacher has in the lives of his/her students, all stakeholders within the school setting have additional responsibilities to care for students. In this sense, community is a key component of significance, and Knight-Diop alludes to the school community as a vital element in furthering the integration of care for enhancing student outcomes.

The purpose of this study, then, is to investigate various research perspectives of the care ethic in terms of positive student outcomes – how it is interpreted, implemented and perceived among teachers within a given school setting. The perspectives sought are those of eight urban and suburban secondary school teachers. Additionally, this research will analyze the empirical and conceptual literature on care theory, as well as highlight the importance of care in effecting positive student outcomes.

¹³³ Cheryl Ellerbrock and Sara M. Kiefer, “Creating a Ninth-Grade Community of Care,” *The Journal of Educational Research* 103 (2010): 394.

¹³⁴ Michelle G. Knight-Diop, “Closing the Gap: Enacting Care and Facilitating Black Students’ Educational Access in the Creation of High School College-Going Culture,” *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk* 15 (2010): 160.

CHAPTER 4

Methodology

This is a theoretical and analytical study grounded in both empirical and conceptual research.¹³⁵ It is concerned with the relationship between teacher responses and the similarities or differences with the claims made in care theory literature; hence, an empirical and conceptual analysis is necessary to extract meaning from the phenomenon under investigation - care. The central research methodology is phenomenologic-like because the study is concerned with the meaning of care as it is experienced through the lives of teachers. According to Schwandt:

Phenomenologists insist on careful description of ordinary conscious experience of everyday life: the *lifeworld* – a description of ‘things’ (phenomena or the essential structures of consciousness) as one experiences them. These phenomena we experience include perception (hearing, seeing, etc.), believing, remembering, deciding, feeling, judging, evaluating, and all experiences of bodily action. Phenomenological descriptions of such things are possible only by turning from things to their meaning, from what is to the nature of what is.¹³⁶

In an attempt to extract individual meanings about care, the study employs methods that reflect phenomenological approaches. Hence, such practices project elements or characteristics commonly associated with phenomenological studies.

¹³⁵ Also, referenced in Goldie Thompson, “Teacher Understanding of Care: Mediating the Structure of Schools with the Relational Aspects of the Classroom,” *The Oklahoma Association of Teacher Educators* 16 (2013): 35-36.

¹³⁶ Thomas A. Schwandt, *The Sage Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2007), 225.

Because some of the practices associated with collecting and analyzing the research data are closely aligned with phenomenology in general, it is important to outline its historical origins.

It is impossible to understand aspects of phenomenological methodology without acknowledging the individuals that were forerunners in contributing to this vast field. Several key figures were pivotal in the development of phenomenology; however, two are notable for their influence in this area. Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger shared a view that phenomenology reflected a study of an individual's lived experience; however, they differed in their philosophies about how that experience is interpreted when exploring the phenomenon. Husserl believed that "bracketing," or setting aside the subjective view of one's "assumption of the independent existence of what is perceived and thought about" would lead to an objective view of interpreting and understanding the lived experience.¹³⁷ Husserl was concerned with the human consciousness and how one might analyze various elements of that consciousness through a psychological lens. Many scholars criticized Husserl for what they viewed as his misconception about the phenomenological method, loosely constructed as phenomenological psychology.¹³⁸ After receiving harsh criticism for his early work in phenomenological inquiry, Husserl revised his approach, establishing what he called "transcendental phenomenology," which "focus[es] on the essential structures that allow the objects naively taken for granted in the "natural

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Amedeo Giorgi, "The Theory, Practice, And Evaluation of the Phenomenological Method as a Qualitative Research Procedure," *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 28 no. 2 (1997):235-261.

attitude” (which is characteristic of both our everyday life and ordinary science) to ‘constitute themselves’ in consciousness.¹³⁹ Nevertheless, the foundations of phenomenology, as many have come to recognize it today, trace its roots to Husserl’s early accounts of analyzing the subjective interpretations of a given phenomenon. Max Van Manen contended that it is “the study of the lifeworld – the world as we immediately experience it pre-reflectively.”¹⁴⁰

However, Heidegger found value in the lived experience as it *is* reflected upon for its meaning and how that meaning consists of textual components, such that multiple interpretations of how we come to express experience through language gives context to that meaning. Heidegger’s approach to studying phenomenology led to what he coined hermeneutic phenomenology which lends itself to more of an interpretive context as opposed to transcendental phenomenology that has more of a descriptive one. According to Lavery, hermeneutic phenomenology is “concerned with the life world or human experience as it is lived.”¹⁴¹ This methodology supports the interpretivist approach to understanding phenomena and is grounded in the experience of individuals.

This particular study does not constitute a hermeneutic or a transcendental analysis; rather, it uses a phenomenological perspective to arrive at the essence of

¹³⁹ Christian Beyer, "Edmund Husserl," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/husserl/>.

¹⁴⁰ Max Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for An Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990), 9.

¹⁴¹ Susan Lavery, “Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 2 no. 3 (2003): 21-35. Retrieved from http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/2_3final/pdf/lavery.pdf.

what care means in the context of the school setting. Furthermore, though it is interpretive in nature, this study does not adhere to specific prescribed steps found in the aforementioned types of analysis, nor is there an extended engagement with participants regarding the meaning of care, as care is not explicitly acknowledged in the interview and exchange process due to the indirect nature of the research. Thus, practices such as ongoing conversations with participants, maintenance of reflective journals, and participant validation of researcher interpretation of meaning were not included in the data analysis process. Rather, the research methodology used in this study was considered the best way to obtain the meaning of care without compromising its integrity by using the word “care” itself – a characteristic all teachers claim to have. As such, a priori knowledge of what care is as well as the empirical and conceptual meanings of care cannot be discarded.

According to Giorgi, there are multiple avenues in employing a phenomenological perspective within a qualitative study. Unique to a particular disciplinary perspective (e.g., history, sociology), these steps involve aspects of collecting data that reflects the phenomenon under investigation, processing that data into meaningful pieces (or units), and employing appropriate “concepts and terms” that are “phenomenologically grounded” to synthesize what is gained as a result of the research.¹⁴² In this study, participants engaged in interviews about their perspectives on positive student outcomes and the types of activities they encouraged in the classroom to support those outcomes. Their subjective

¹⁴² Amedeo Giorgi, “The Theory, Practice, And Evaluation of the Phenomenological Method as a Qualitative Research Procedure,” *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 28 no. 2 (1997):235-261.

responses were transcribed into text and later analyzed, using a theming and coding technique, for underlying messages that reflected notions of care based on empirical and theoretical definitions about what care might look like in the classroom and/or school setting. Additionally, new meanings of care were sought out as a potential emergence from this data. These categorical meanings of care were then used in an etic overlay to discern various conceptual meanings of care in different contexts and from different perspectives. A summary of findings along with theoretical and practical implications of the research follows the analysis.

Participants

In determining participants for the study, the “snowball effect” was deemed the most convenient and useful approach. Participants were required to be between the ages of 24 and 57 and to teach at the secondary level. The age requirement was determined in an attempt to reflect a range of age groups and ensure ample teaching experience to give more substance to the study. Additionally, teacher participants were expected to have at least three years of teaching experience to add more validity to their experiences. Teachers who are in the profession longer have more resilience in the classroom and have moved past the “honeymoon” phase of their careers. Participants were assigned pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality.

Teacher participants were asked to participate in individual interviews in an effort to solicit their perceptions about *care*. They were asked to share their understanding of how teaching practice effected positive student outcomes.

Because *care* has been determined to function as a central element in this process, participant responses were analyzed to determine the correlation between the research and their personal experiences with this phenomenon in the classroom, without using the term *care* in a definitive way. It should be noted that each participant interviewed in a location of his/her choice, away from their place of employment, to protect their privacy and provide a “safe space” for them to feel comfortable in answering questions openly and honestly.

For the purposes of this research, it was important not to directly disclose the actual phenomenon under investigation – *care* – because the responses would inevitably imply that the teacher participant was indeed caring. Thus, the phenomenological approach involved identifying caring themes through the questions asked about positive student outcomes.

Eight secondary teachers were interviewed for this study (see Table 1 – *Teacher Participant Information*).¹⁴³ Each of them held various teacher certifications and taught in the classroom anywhere from 3 to 36 years. The teachers selected were from five urban schools and three suburban schools across four different school districts. The diversity of the group is reflected in their various ethnicities, years of teaching experience, as well as the type of school setting they are located in. Although the schools are considered suburban or urban, geographically, some of them are located in rural-like areas such that the communities in which they are situated take on a unique, small-town feel.

¹⁴³ Also, referenced in Goldie Thompson, “Teacher Understanding of Care: Mediating the Structure of Schools with the Relational Aspects of the Classroom,” *The Oklahoma Association of Teacher Educators* 16 (2013): 36-37.

Nevertheless, the variety of participants helps broaden the study within the context of detail and meaning.

Of the eight teachers who participated in the study, five of the participants were female, and three were male. The first teacher participant was a white female educator who had been in the classroom over thirty-six years and taught in suburban school districts most of her career. The second teacher participant was a white female veteran educator of thirteen years who taught in urban school districts most of her career. The third teacher participant, a female of Asian descent and also an experienced educator of eight years, taught in suburban school districts her entire career. The fourth teacher participant was an African American male with twenty-nine years of teaching experience in an urban school district. Teacher participant number five was a White female with eighteen years teaching experience, most of which was in urban school districts. Participant Six, a White male, spent eleven years teaching Science in an urban school which also happened to be the school he graduated from. The seventh teacher participant, a white female, had twenty-two years of teaching experience at the secondary level. The last teacher participant, a White male, had only taught for three years and was formerly a youth minister.

Table 1. Teacher Participant Information

P 1	P 2	P 3	P 4
Participant One	Participant Two	Participant Three	Participant Four
White Female	White Female	Asian Female	Afr. American Male
36 Years Teaching	13 Years Teaching	8 Years Teaching	29 Years Teaching
Suburban School	Urban School	Suburban School	Urban School

P 1	P 2	P 3	P 4
Participant One	Participant Two	Participant Three	Participant Four
Pred. White	Pred. Hispanic	Pred. White	Pred. Afr. Am. Student
Student Pop.	Student Pop.	Student Pop.	Pop.
*95.1% Graduation	*76.4 % Graduation	*84.8% Graduation	*94.8 % Graduation
Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate

***2010 Total Graduation Percentage - (Oklahoma Academic Performance Index and Accountability Data).**

P 5	P 6	P 7	P 8
Participant Five	Participant Six	Participant Seven	Participant Eight
White Female	White Male	White Female	White Male
18 Years Teaching	11 Years Teaching	22 Years Teaching	3 Years Teaching
Suburban School	Urban School	Urban School	Urban School
Pred. White Student	Pred. Afr. Am.	Pred. Hispanic	Pred. Afr. Am. Student
Pop.	Student Pop.	Student Pop.	Pop.
*96.1% Graduation	*100% Graduation	*76.4% Graduation	*100% Graduation
Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate

***2010 Total Graduation Percentage - (Oklahoma Academic Performance Index and Accountability Data).**

Two important phases related to what Marshall and Rossman call *Phenomenological Interviewing* include “phenomenological reduction” and “structural synthesis.”¹⁴⁴ These practices were employed during the analytic phase of the study. Phenomenological Reduction refers to the act of

¹⁴⁴ Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2011), 148.

“[identifying] the essence of the phenomenon,” and the Structural Synthesis “culminates in a description of the essence of the phenomenon and its deep structure” after reviewing multiple “meanings” and “perspectives.”¹⁴⁵ Both of these practices allow the researcher and participants to express their experiences with the phenomenon of study and provide a richer, deeper context for exploring meaning. However, it must be noted that while structure is important when looking at essential elements of meaning for each participant, Giorgi suggests that “this is not a requirement of phenomenological research, and one should never force the data into a single structure.” Instead, he states that “One does it only if the data lend themselves to the process. Otherwise, one writes as many structures as required.”¹⁴⁶

Looking at how Phenomenological Reduction and Structural Synthesis are employed as tools in the analysis, in a general sense, consider the following vignettes:

Participant Two: *I think that being available to students to ask questions before/after class, during lunch and even in class makes the relationship between teacher and student stronger.*

...I have one of THE MOST challenging seniors right now in the same class as the kid that doesn't read. This child is smart but does not apply himself at all. And I think to some degree, he has a problem with attention...so I've struggled with this student all semester because he can't sit still; he can't get through an assignment.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Amedeo Giorgi, “The Theory, Practice, And Evaluation of the Phenomenological Method as a Qualitative Research Procedure,” *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 28 no. 2 (1997):235-261.

And so I've tried to chunk it, I've had to make it into smaller bites for him to chew on.

Participant Three: *They know that they can come and talk to me about any needs that they have. About academics, about personal relationships, and I let them know that I'm the teacher, and if we get to a point where I've got to get help because that's all that I can do as their teacher, then, I'm going to do that for 'em... I'm going to get help. ...They know that if something is bigger than I can handle, then I'm gonna go get help. I will seek out whatever resources we need in order to get their situation resolved, whatever it is. It doesn't matter. Whether it is academic, whether it is personal, whatever it is because they have lots of emotions and drama that's going on and if it gets to the point where they can't resolve it, then they know they can come to me and we're gonna figure it out what needs to be done to get it taken care of so we can move forward.*

Participant Six: *Like I said, education – I love it and I will never, ever get away from it. I mean I tutor kids all over. At the library, I don't even know a lot of these kids I tutor. [They say] "I need help" ...sure.*

Participant One: *Do you want your students to like you? And, to a person, young teachers will say, "Well, I don't care if they like me as long as they respect me." And, anytime I hear that, I just want to go, "Oh, Honey, you've got it backwards. The answer is Of course I want positive climate in my classroom." And part of that is we need to like each other. And respect, I give it. So my theory is, respect starts with me, and I've got to give it to my students. And I tell them, "I respect you and I love you for no other reason than you're sitting here in*

my room. Now, every day I'll earn your respect." And, that's the way. I try to earn their respect by being fair, by noticing what kids are doing, by showing an interest, even by being genuinely concerned, by knowing if they raise their hand to ask a question, I'm not going to laugh at 'em, I'm not going to humiliate them in front of their friends, and because I'm older, I have an advantage. I can hug on my students, I'm a very approachable teacher, but I'm safe.

In some of the participant responses, one may notice aspects of care through the desire to see student academic growth, whereas, in other responses, care is implicit through the willingness of the teacher to supply personal help with non-academic issues – or both. Analyzing such participant responses and comparing these responses to empirical and theoretical claims about care provides for an in depth look at how care is expressed within a classroom and schooling context. Synthesizing these various perspectives, then, becomes a difficult task, as care is not explicitly voiced in the interview exchange with participants; however, elements of caring are considered in light of how participants respond to their support of students in achieving positive student outcomes. The process of theming and coding participant responses in light of the empirical and conceptual literature allows categorical meanings of care to emerge which then get at the essence of its structures.

The meanings that individual participants assign to *care* are also situated in the context of who they are; therefore, their backgrounds, or personal experiences, become important to the phenomenologic-like inquiry. Within this study is a focus on how *care* is evident in teacher-student relationships (as the

teachers see it); thus, engagement with participants requires an interpretation of their responses in the context of their individual differences. Below are some excerpts from the interviews that get at the notion of how their identities might affect their interactions with students, and, implicitly, their understanding of care:

Participant Five: *I grew up in a suburban, homogeneous...you know all white school system in Minneapolis. So for me, it was culture shock and I was so young and dumb. [In reference to her transition into the teaching workforce in an urban school...] ...but I wouldn't trade it for anything. And then we moved up to the city. I was there for two years and taught at [anonymous] High School. I loved it...and [anonymous] High School and loved it.*

Participant Seven: *And then I reward my kids, too. I make them cookies. All the time (laughing). I do. I make homemade; I roll 'em out, cut 'em. Make it their own cookie. I take requests. They learn my cookie cutters. I ice them, I decorate them; it takes four hours to make 130 cookies. [further in the interview she reflects on her favorite teacher and identifies herself with similar characteristics]... My favorite teacher...hmmm...kind of looked like me. Kind of wild with some crazy hair, and some fun joy, and some clothes that, you know, are kind of fresh!*

Participant Eight: *I actually am a little bit unusual for most teachers in that I am an alternatively certified teacher. So I, um, actually was a youth minister for ten years. I pastored and, uh, was also an associate pastor. I did quite a bit of work in ministry. We're still heavily involved in that but, uh, when I got my bachelor's degree, I went ahead and took my teacher certification. ...I think, as far as the*

relationships that I have with the students – typically, I do believe that my background working with youth for a long period of time - that age group, specifically – really helps.

Participant Four: *All of my experiences have been uh, I would say they all have been positive...they've all been learning experiences and so even the things that were painful were beneficial because, you know, those experiences helped me grow. I would like to think that each year or each semester I get better in the classroom because I take previous experiences with me and try to, um, just get better.*

Embedded in these teachers' experiences are potential elements of care, as reflected in care theory, which require a close conceptual analysis of the teachers' responses in conjunction with what the literature claims care to be. Such analysis includes the use of etic terms which “refer to...the social scientific language used...to refer to the same phenomena”¹⁴⁷ across different contexts. In other words, according to McMillan and Schumacher, “in the later, more abstract stages of data analysis, etic patterns and themes are necessary to communicate with other researchers and social scientists.”¹⁴⁸ The etic overlay will help provide further clarification of the meaning of care within a variety of contexts.

Within the study, attempts are made to gather information from teachers about meanings they assign to care by extracting claims they make about care in

¹⁴⁷ Thomas A. Schwandt, *The Sage Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2007), 81-82.

¹⁴⁸ James H. McMillan and Sally Schumacher, *Research in Education: Evidenced-Based Inquiry* (New York: Pearson, 2006), 372.

response to inquiries about positive student outcomes.¹⁴⁹ Teacher participants' personal, lived experience, as it relates to positive student outcomes in the classroom, is one context from which notions of care were obtained. According to Creswell, it is not uncommon in some phenomenological studies to use the literature to help "set the stage for the study."¹⁵⁰ In fact, this is another context that helps inform the meaning of care through a different lens. This information is an essential component in gathering meaningful data about the meaning of care.

Although much of the research literature informs this study, primary empirical data was collected to help with framing the context for which the literature on care theory could be further explicated. This unique approach makes defining this study as a purely phenomenological study extremely difficult. Pairing of the research literature with the empirical data collected during this study will enhance understanding about care and its significance for schools.

Attempts are made to identify elements of *care* inherent in the lives of teacher participants as they convey their experience(s) of promoting positive student outcomes. Their lived experiences with the phenomenon under investigation (*care*) are central to understanding *care* better. In addition to the focus on participant experiences that reveal different perspectives about care (as reflected in positive student outcomes), it is important to recognize the theoretical lens through which this research interprets notions of care extracted from participant responses.

¹⁴⁹ To be clear, all teachers would likely claim that they care for students; therefore, efforts were made to avoid the mention of care in the interview process.

¹⁵⁰ John Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2009), 26.

CHAPTER 5

Findings

Seven themes emerged from the empirical data collected from the eight teacher participants in the study (see Table 2).¹⁵¹ These themes included *Knowing Students, Expressing Concern for Students, Having Affection for Students, Being Responsible for Student Growth, Fostering a Sense of Community, Fostering Positive Teacher/Student Relationships, and Utilizing a Strict Discipline Approach*. Two of these themes (*Being Responsible for Student Growth* and *Having Affection for Students*) received a greater emphasis than the other four because all participants unanimously made comments that specifically fit into these categories. Sub-categories (see Table 2) were developed from all of the themes and reflect participant viewpoints as a result of their roles for enacting positive student outcomes. Their pedagogical methods, as representative of care, are somewhat reflected in this sub-thematic scheme. Participant responses related to these categories can be found in Appendix A.

Being Responsible for Student Growth

When asked about their strategies in supporting positive student outcomes, all teacher participants made references to the academic approaches they use to support student success in this domain. This is reflected in the large number of responses under the categorical theme for student growth (see Table 2). Student growth was, by far, the central theme emerging from the research and supports

¹⁵¹ Also, referenced in Goldie Thompson, "Teacher Understanding of Care: Mediating the Structure of Schools with the Relational Aspects of the Classroom," *The Oklahoma Association of Teacher Educators* 16 (2013): 37-38.

Mayeroff's idea of care through helping the other to grow.¹⁵² However, there are further implications within the sphere of assisting students in this growth.

In terms of academics, the primary role of the teacher is to ensure students master content and are able to advance to the next grade level successfully. Some participants have emphasized the relationship as a central component to meeting this goal. Mayeroff contends that both the teacher and student need each other and that this must be reflected in a reciprocal relationship.¹⁵³ Many participants spoke to this notion of caring for their students in an effort to facilitate academic success. Table 1.2, Appendix A, combines aspects of relational caring via a pedagogical context and is explained further below under *Having Affection for Students*.

While each of the participants varied according to their certification areas, they all made references to standardized testing requirements and the focus that is placed upon assisting students in this area. While teachers who taught core content found this mandate to be their main objective in the classroom, other teachers who taught non-testable subject areas spoke of other educational learning objectives for students.

Additional findings in the research indicated that some teacher participants felt that the class type and focus (e.g., elective courses) yielded them more flexibility in establishing better relationships with their students. They suggested that the core courses were more intense and allowed less time for collaborative activities that were fun and engaging. Additionally, each participant exhibited

¹⁵² Milton Mayeroff, *On Caring* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1971).

¹⁵³ Milton Mayeroff, *On Caring* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1971), 40.

their passion for teaching upfront which has some significance for the research on care. Passion yields commitment, which is necessary for working with students and ensuring their positive outcomes.

Having Affection for Students

The notion of having affection for students is probably the closest conceptually illustrated category of care derived from the study. Combined with the emphasis on student growth, this category presents an interesting dualism that spills over into the empirically grounded perspectives on care in schools. In extracting language and implications about care from these interviews, it was quite obvious that these participants have a perspective that is grounded in Noddings' pedagogical caring which stems from both natural and ethical caring.¹⁵⁴ Natural caring is reflective of the type of relationship seen between a child and his/her parent(s) which encompasses more of an affectionate and unconditional love between the two; whereas, ethical caring consists of acting "as one-caring toward one for whom...[you] feel no natural affection."¹⁵⁵ The significance of this finding is that the teacher/student relationships in this study, as well as much of the empirical literature we read about, were often bound to academic objectives which reflect this idea of teacher pedagogical caring. (Please see Table 1.2 in Appendix A for the teacher participant responses indicative of pedagogical care.) Still, it is important to note that this does not mean some of the

¹⁵⁴ Nel Noddings, *Caring: A feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 17.

¹⁵⁵ Nel Noddings, *Caring: A feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 73, 75.

teacher participants did not endorse caring actions outside of the academic domain.

In fact, many participants identified instances in which they assisted or offered assistance for personal issues that students may have faced – academic or non-academic. Reflecting on the idea of student growth and the types of actions necessary to help facilitate that growth, in addition to the caring affect highlighted in this research, the connection is always in a relational context. Teacher participants in this study acknowledged that it was important to connect with students in some way to engage them academically. Pedagogical care seems to adequately reflect this imperative.

Fostering a Sense of Community

Community was a recurring theme in the literature as it alluded to or illustrated a sense of connectedness among the key players within and around schools – teachers, students, administrators, and parents. Strong community was also attributed to improving student outcomes. However, here, we must be clear about what we mean by community. It is an often ambiguous term and can include any combination of meanings. For the purposes of this section, community will be distinctly referred to as the classroom community, the school community, the outside community (the larger community aside from the school) or the community in general (a combination of all three).

Often, *care* is embodied in the actual process of teaching and learning which can lead to a sense of community in the classroom among student groups. Many scholars suggest that this sense of classroom community provides a support

system that encourages students, regardless of the challenges in their lives, to persevere in hopes of changing their condition and achieving a higher level of opportunity or advancement. As seen in Appendix A, Table 1.3, community support in general is a fundamental part of what it means to care for students in the academic setting.

Students are immersed in environments that may pose a detriment to their success in the schooling process. Thus, the teacher's role becomes crucial in dealing with students in the classroom setting. Teaching and learning revolves around those relationships established during the course of the school year and has an impact on the students' outcomes. Table 1.3, Appendix A, illustrates the perspectives of teacher participants regarding community.

Most of the teacher participants shared views consistent with the literature presented by scholars such as Ellerbrock and Kiefer who contend the importance of the community in supporting caring relationships which are so vital to students.¹⁵⁶ Nevertheless, quite a few comments reflected community within the classroom, and loosely within the school, but not necessarily the school in its entirety, nor to those outside of its walls. Interestingly, Thurston and Berkeley, sought to establish a "peaceable" school community within the confines of the school, as their surrounding community did not serve as a means of positive

¹⁵⁶ Cheryl Ellerbrock and Sarah Kiefer, "Creating a Ninth-Grade Community of Care," *The Journal of Educational Research* (Tampa: Routledge, 2010): 394-395.

influence for students.¹⁵⁷ However, concerns exist that isolationist approaches threaten student growth.

In both the empirical and theoretical literature, there is a strong emphasis on community in a holistic sense. For instance, Epstein stresses the necessity to support a strong caring mission within the school as a whole.¹⁵⁸ Still, according to Epstein, families, community members at large, and the school combined all promote student growth.¹⁵⁹ Ayers also shares sentiments reflecting the inadequacy of the schooling institution to meet all of the needs of the student and defers to the community as a necessary entity for student growth and support.¹⁶⁰ However, based on the findings, such a mission was not made explicit in the responses of teacher participants.

Knowing Students

Most of the research participants shared responses that indicated an importance in knowing their students. Several sub-categorical themes emerged from this data: *Differentiating Instruction*, *Seeking to Know Students' Personal Interests*, and *Learning about Students' Backgrounds*. The implication is that engaging with individual students on a personal level helps to enhance those relationships that teacher participants consider vital to the learning process. However, analyzing their responses were difficult because not everyone made

¹⁵⁷ Linda Thurston and Terry Berkeley, "Morality and the Ethic of Care: Peaceable Rural School, Caring Rural Communities," *Rural Special Education Quarterly (Reprint)* 17, no. 3,4 (1998): 26.

¹⁵⁸ Joyce Epstein, "School/Family/Community Partnerships: Caring for the Children we Share," *(Reprint) Originally found in Phi Delta Kappan* 76, no. 9 (1995).

¹⁵⁹ Joyce Epstein, "School/Family/Community Partnerships: Caring for the Children we Share."

¹⁶⁰ William Ayers, *To Teach: The Journey of a Teacher* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010), 75.

explicit reference to the aforementioned subcategories, therefore, eliminating them from fitting into this category.

Participant Three, though referencing her openness to assist students if they had a problem, never directly stated an explicit intent to seek student interests or learn about their backgrounds. This is not to say that she does *not* do this; rather, she did not specifically state criteria that would precisely fit into this category. Other participants did make direct references to knowing students. Table 1.4, located in Appendix A, highlights various responses that teacher participants provided in response to their engagement with students on a personal level in an effort to get to know them.

Expressing Concern for Students

Table 1.5, Appendix A, highlights various teacher participant comments on expressing concern for students in their classrooms. Concern for students is an extension of caring because it indicates a strong interest in or worry about another individual. Such emotional ties provide the grounding for establishing a relational bond between teachers and their students, and are revealed in the responses from participants. The connection between care and concern is evident in Martin's scholarly text which reveals the importance of these elements for students in the school setting.¹⁶¹ Having concern for students embodies a sense of responsibility toward them and yields a desire to assist them in achieving some end. In this case, teacher participants revealed their concern for students in both academic and non-academic contexts.

¹⁶¹ Jane R. Martin, *The School Home: Rethinking Schools for Changing Families*, 133.

It should be noted that some responses within the tables located in Appendix A share characteristics associated with this particular category. Nevertheless, such alignment reveals the seamless connection between the themes as presented in the research and, further, solidifies the overlap in boundaries with which the notion of care is expressed in school and classroom settings.

Fostering Positive Teacher/Student Relationships

Sincere efforts must be made to cultivate positive relationships between teachers and their students. Many teacher participants indicated ways in which they facilitated positive student outcomes through such positive relationships. From those responses shared by participants, three subcategories emerged: modeling care for students, advocating for students' best interests, and showing or embodying care through verbal/non-verbal expressions.

One of the most commonly suggested uses of care in the classroom and school setting is to help kids grow, do better, as well as excel academically and socially. Modeling care is one such method that the literature says helps to achieve this goal. Additionally, attempts to advocate for students and show them that they are cared for pedagogically and personally supports both academic achievement and social growth. Scholars such as Opalewski and Unkovich identify how such practices translate into success for students.¹⁶² Table 1.6, in Appendix A, reveals teacher participant responses that reflect the subcategory themes for ways in which they foster positive student/teacher relationships.

Utilizing a Strict Discipline Approach

¹⁶² Dave Opalewski and Anna Unkovich, *Caring to Teach, Teaching to Care* (Bloomington: iUniverse, Inc., 2011), 18.

The learning environment is crucial to positive student outcomes because it is within this context that the tone is set for all that takes place within the classroom and school settings. Teacher participants made comments on how they interact with students; however, only two participants stressed a strict disciplinary approach to ensure student conformity to class structure and order.

In earlier chapters, it was mentioned how various disciplinary tactics may or may not be considered caring. Sometimes harsher disciplinary approaches are received by students in a negative way; whereas, in other cases, harsh discipline is welcomed by them. Conversely, milder disciplinary approaches may not share equal acceptance by students either. Such a dichotomous function of discipline is very subjective in terms of the intent of the one who delivers it and the reaction of the one who receives it. For this reason, it does become difficult to assess whether caring, in a Noddian sense, is indeed taking place. However, for the purposes of this research, it is important to note that all elements deemed as potential reflections of care were included here to provide a complete picture of how difficult it is to extract meaning from the notion of care.

In Table 1.7 of Appendix A, we see two participants who revealed strong feelings of discipline in their classrooms. One response was seemingly harsh and the other response, more mild in nature. It seems that both teachers have good intentions in helping their students become successful; however, their responses do not “speak” for the actual feelings of the students who are recipients of their discipline. It’s hard to determine how successful their efforts are toward caring;

nevertheless, their discipline techniques indicate that their motivation was induced by a caring attitude.

Table 2. Themed Responses from Participant Interviews

Themes	Thematic Sub-Categories	Participant Views
Knowing Students	• Differentiating instruction	P1, P2, P6, P7,P8
	• Seeking to know students' personal interests	P2, P4, P5, P7, P8
	• Learning about students' backgrounds	P1, P2, P4, P5, P7, P8
Expressing Concern for Students	• Interested in students' thoughts	P1, P2, P4, P7, P8 P1, P2, P4, P6, P7, P8
	• Excited about student experiences and personal growth	
Having Affection for Students	• Showing expressions of affection or nurturance (verbal/non-verbal or physical)	P1, P4, P5, P7, P8 P2, P3, P6,P7, P8
	• Helping students by meeting their personal needs	P4, P7
	• Looking for the good in students (emphasize positive traits)	P2, P3, P4, P7, P8
	• Providing encouragement to students	
Being Responsible for Student Growth	• Advancing academic achievement (meeting academic needs)	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6,P7, P8
	• Promoting self-sufficiency	P1, P2, P3, P5,P6, P7, P8
	• Building self-confidence	P1, P4, P6, P7, P8
	• Promoting independent/social success	P1, P2, P3, P5,P7, P8
	• Making content relevant to students' lives	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5,P7, P8
	• Setting high expectations	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6,P7, P8
	• Sticking with challenging students	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8
	• Promoting peer teaching	P3, P6, P7, P8

Themes	Thematic Sub-Categories	Participant Views
Fostering a Sense of Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching students to care for others Teaching Students to get along with others Encouraging parental support Encouraging students to build camaraderie 	P1, P3, P7 P1, P3, P6, P7, P8 P3, P4, P6, P7, P8 P4, P6, P7
Fostering Positive Teacher/Student Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modeling care for students Advocating for students' best interests Showing/embodying care through verbal/nonverbal expressions 	P1, P2, P4, P7, P8 P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P8 P1, P2, P3, P4, P8
Utilizing a Strict Discipline Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expecting students to conform to teacher's standards for learning environment Use of harsh comments to affect student behavior 	P5, P7 P5

In studying *care*, it is essential to provide a snapshot of what teacher participants perceived or understood a non-caring teacher to be. Table 3 below signifies attributes of an uncaring teacher (a teacher not concerned with students or their personal academic and/or social success).

Table 3. Attributes of Uncaring Teachers – Participant Responses

Attributes of Uncaring Teachers (Teachers not concerned with positive student outcomes)	Participant Views
Unconcerned about students overall	P3, P6, P7
Only focused on their content area	P3, P8
Fails to make eye contact with students	P3
Only concerned about test scores	P3

Attributes of Uncaring Teachers (Teachers not concerned with positive student outcomes)	Participant Views
No parental contact	P3
Gives worksheets or other menial assignments	P2, P5, P6, P8
Does not provide feedback to students	P2
Only concerned about job security	P3, P5
Does not want a relationship with students	P1, P2, P3, P4
Is not in the hallways or not really visible	P1, P8
Is not aware of the students in the hallways	P4, P5
Does not attend student events outside of school	P4
Gives no verbal encouragement	P4
Verbally abusive	P5
Does not teach content or fails to plan lessons	P5, P7
Does not have a desire to grow professionally	P5, P7

Lastly, teacher participants commented on whether or not they had a supportive administration. For the purposes of this study, it was important to note

if the administration was supportive of these teachers in their attempts to help students be successful. This might indicate if care was integrated into the school hierarchical structure. One participant indicated that her administrator was indifferent to her efforts. The remaining participants shared that they had strong administrative support. This is another significant aspect of care as it relates to positive student outcomes, and is also outlined in the framework for this study.

Conclusion

All of the subcategories possess elements of *care* identified in the literature.¹⁶³ However, two major themes emerge from this study that are especially significant in terms of the research outlined in the theoretical and empirical literature. These include *Being Responsible for Student Growth* and *Having Affection for Students*; thereby, influencing positive student/teacher relationships.

Student growth was an important factor, and one of the largest categories for attributes reflective of *care*. Mayeroff¹⁶⁴ uses *growth* in defining his notion of *care*, so there seems to be verification for his theory. Participants expressed strong feelings of wanting to see their students succeed and grow in some way, whether academically, socially or both. This is truly indicative of an interpretation of care that reflects both empirical and conceptual literary claims of how care is expressed in student/teacher relationships within an academic context, but not ignoring non-academic areas of potential growth.

¹⁶³ Also, referenced in Goldie Thompson, "Teacher Understanding of Care: Mediating the Structure of Schools with the Relational Aspects of the Classroom," *The Oklahoma Association of Teacher Educators* 16 (2013): 39.

¹⁶⁴ Milton Mayeroff, *On Caring* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1971).

The surprising aspect of the research was the many expressions of love as reflected through the responses made by one male teacher participant – (P4). He spoke of his love for students and indicated that physical expressions of nurturing were necessary for student success as well. Typically, because *care* (e.g., nurturing, loving) is a social construct attributed to females, it is not a quality that one would expect to see readily expressed by males. As a result, this opens the door to future inquiry over male conceptual perspectives of care versus female conceptual perspectives of care in general. This is not to imply any radical difference between a male or female’s ability to care or to suggest any other notions of inherent difference; the intent is just to highlight this finding. Two additional participants made references to loving students; however, their comments using that terminology were extremely brief. Both of these participants were female.

Nevertheless, it is important that we recognize the comments about affection. Participants present an interesting spectrum of responses that reflect the ranges of natural, ethical and pedagogical caring as revealed by Noddings. Again, both the empirical and conceptual literature reflects characteristics that fit these various forms of care situated in the school and classroom settings. It should be noted that the extent of the comments about the affective domain are limited within the context of school policy; therefore, some of the theoretical literature that identifies what care should look like within such settings may not be considered “practical” in light of the schooling structure – (mandates). Still, teacher affection for their students is noted in their comments about approaches to

positive student outcomes and seems necessary in influencing the teacher/student relationship.

Knowing students and expressing concern for them almost go hand-in-hand. There is the notion of not knowing students personally but still caring about their well-being, which is quite possible; however, in an effort to disaggregate the responses in the research, it was essential to pinpoint the dichotomous nature of the pedagogical context and the personal-relational context. For most participants, the responses they shared took on aspects of both. The implication of knowing students most often revolved around things such as how they learn and what types of things engage them. Closely related is the category of teachers expressing concern for students which consisted of the teachers' attempts to know what was on students' minds and showing an interest in (or concern for) their individual growth. Here, the research becomes somewhat tricky because there are other categories in which there is overlap in teachers' responses. For instance, some of the teacher participants may have shared a response that would also align with the *Fostering Positive Teacher/Student Relationships* category.

While the *Fostering Positive Teacher/Student Relationships* category yielded only three subcategories, in actuality, one might deduce that all the themes could fit nicely under this umbrella. Nevertheless, it was important to allow this theme autonomy so that other categorical themes could emerge for more specificity. Still, positive teacher/student relationships are pivotal to *care*

theory as reflected in the works of Noddings,¹⁶⁵ Roberts,¹⁶⁶ Ayers,¹⁶⁷ Souza,¹⁶⁸ and others.

Community appeared to be an important theme emerging from the research. In most cases, the context reflected more of an idea of community in the classroom setting; however, some participants made reference to a sense of community, or shared values, within their school. Parents were engaged on some levels but the sense of community reflected notions of what takes place within the building itself. Rarely, was there mention of businesses or local entities in support of the school or a specific school mission or vision. This diverges somewhat from what the literature emphasizes is important for caring in schools to have a stronger significance. More will be shared on this later in the discussion.

One final theme in the literature, discipline, was a category that gives a unique perspective to what care looks like from this particular approach. Earlier in the literature, we learn how discipline can have a dichotomous function and may or may not be received in a positive way. Discipline also looks different, depending on context, setting and approach. Participant responses indicate two very different types of disciplinary approaches. Given their context, one response seems proactive and another reactive. Additionally, one use of discipline

¹⁶⁵ Nel Noddings, *Caring: A feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003).

¹⁶⁶ Mari Ann Roberts, "Toward a theory of culturally relevant critical teacher care: African American teachers' definitions and perceptions of care for African American students," *Journal of Moral Education*, 39, no.4 (2010); 449-467.

¹⁶⁷ William Ayers, *To Teach: The Journey of a Teacher* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010).

¹⁶⁸ Tasha J. Souza, "The Communication of Caring: An Analysis of at-risk Students in an Alternative School," *Journal of the Northwest Communication Association* (2005) 34:41.

included establishing order and codes of conduct in the classroom; whereas, the other use of discipline advocated severe punishment for violating these codes of conduct. In either case, these forms of discipline can be considered a form of caring, seeking to promote student growth and showing concern for their well-being.

There are some critics who argue that Noddings' notion of caring becomes compromised because of elements such as discipline. The idea is that there is an unequal relationship between teachers and students which makes caring difficult to establish, as she would have it. However, we will explore this criticism more in Chapter 6.

The research seems to indicate that *care* is essential to positive student outcomes – both academic and social. It is important to highlight that this conclusion was reinforced by the study. Additionally, it is also significant to point out that the data included the experiences of eight teacher participants within five different schools and four school districts- yielding unique viewpoints, but overlapping themes of care. This adds to the soundness of the research. Future studies of care should include a closer look at how administrators view care as a construct in school and/or classroom settings and their ability to enact care in these domains.

CHAPTER 6

Discussion

Based on the findings in the study, the following research questions were revisited to reveal answers, even if vague, to the complexities of elements surrounding care in schools: *How do secondary teachers' responses about positive student outcomes reflect notions of care in the school and/or classroom setting? What patterns and themes emerge from secondary teacher participant responses regarding their own approaches to promoting positive outcomes (possible caring) for students? What themes are prevalent among secondary teacher participants in their responses regarding opposition or support from administrators (institution) as they implement such (possible caring) approaches in the classroom?*

What follows is a close discussion of teacher participant responses and their correlation, if applicable, to the conceptual and empirical literature surrounding the theory. To be clear, the answers to these questions as reflected in this research should not be considered the final end to the matter. Explanations may vary and differ from context to context; however, for the purposes of this study, an attempt is made to shed some light on areas of inquiry that affect secondary teachers as they attempt to support positive student outcomes in school/classroom settings via use of a care ethic.

(1) How do secondary teachers' responses about positive student outcomes reflect notions of care in the school and/or classroom setting?

In an attempt to get at the notion of what it means to care in school and classroom settings, it was important not to reveal the phenomenon, care, underlying the study. Instead of using the term care, teacher participants were asked about how they affect positive student outcomes in school. Their responses were tailored to the context in which they work so their main focus was academic in nature. However, the line of questioning extended to ways in which these teachers might assist students in a non-academic context as well, and it is at this point of intersection when language becomes crucial in terms of caring attributes that might stem from their discussion about their efforts. (See Appendix B for a list of the basic interview questions).

In helping their students to become successful, teacher participants often referred to pedagogical actions of care reflected in an academic context. The idea here is that the teacher supports student growth and academic success and, therefore, exhibits care for students by doing those things for which they (the teachers) feel obligated, either by moral or ethical responsibility, to ensure students have positive outcomes. This is a basic explanation about care and does not adequately address all of the complexities of the expression of care in supporting positive student outcomes.

Intertwined in this idea of pedagogical caring are other notions of care discussed earlier in the text that include natural caring as well as ethical caring.¹⁶⁹ Based on earlier assumptions, one might consider that there is one gradient to caring – natural, ethical, and pedagogical, and that a teacher can assume caring dispositions anywhere along that gradient. However, these various categories of

¹⁶⁹ Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, 73-75.

care might not be as dichotomous as first assumed. The duality of the teacher responses reveals that caring actions can be paired as a combination of two or more types of caring motives. Thus, caring motives can overlap. In other words, teachers in the study made reference to situations in which they expressed the expected outcome they wanted for their students because they cared, but their motives (the *why*) revealed a deeper or more meaningful context from which their actions stemmed. In such instances, these motives appeared to stem from simultaneous caring dispositions. For example, one teacher participant commented that she told her students “I respect you and I love you for no other reason than you’re sitting here in my room...”¹⁷⁰ However, she followed by stating, “... no significant learning occurs when there’s no significant relationship.”¹⁷¹

To be clear, teacher participant responses mirrored quite a bit of the empirical research on care because their focus took on an academic lens. The language of care was pedagogically framed to give credence to the *why* or rationale for explaining teacher efforts in the school and/or classroom setting. Still, it is important to note that such a pedagogical context was not entirely exclusive of other influences. It is in the rationale that one finds certain complexities that are very subjective and hard to address because of its subjectivity. For example, a teacher might have a desire to fulfill a duty based on a contractual obligation; another teacher may be motivated by strong care for students and the desire to see them excel; still, another teacher might have a

¹⁷⁰ See Table 1.2, Appendix A

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

disposition that is purely self-serving in nature such as advancing his/her career. Participant Five made the following comment during her interview: “I waitressed from age 15 through college and waitressed into my first years of teaching... and probably made more waitressing. One thing I learned waitressing: you set the tone...so my motive is self-serving, ultimately, I want to have good classes, and I want to have good test scores.” Here, one can see that any number of rationales, or combinations thereof, might exist as the motive for teacher efforts that could be perceived as a type of “caring” (e.g., pedagogical) on the outside but not necessarily matching with their internal motivations and dispositions which may or may not be inspired by a care ethic. Keeping this in mind, consider the following comment from Participant Eight:

*I think a teacher recognizes you know what, not every student is gonna come in my class at the same level or even willing to learn at the same pace; but if they get it the first nine weeks, and another student gets it at the end of the first semester, and another student gets it at the end of the third nine weeks, then it doesn't matter to me. You know, I mean they've got it. They've learned. They've moved forward.*¹⁷²

Clearly, the focus here is pedagogical and one could assume by looking at student test scores and observing student growth that such outcome shows that the teacher cares for his students; moreover, this same teacher claims that student success is a direct result of the relationship he has with students.¹⁷³ However, one cannot tell what motivates this outward form of pedagogical care.

¹⁷² See Table 1.1, Appendix A

¹⁷³ See Table 1.2, Appendix A

Thus, there is a tension that exists among natural, ethical, and pedagogical caring. What becomes quite obvious is the significance of the *how* and *why* of the caring motif. The *how* might be perceived as a little easier to assess because it reveals action. Nevertheless, actions are still subject to interpretation – (e.g., getting caring right or getting caring wrong). The real challenge to understanding such tension lies in the ability to recognize those internal and external exchanges that reveal whether or not caring, however we define it, is successful and truly exists. The relationship between what it means to care, how one does it, and why she/he does it might indeed be important. Put in another context, one might ask the following questions: *If the student is academically successful, does it matter what manner in which the teacher cared about (or for) the student or if the teacher was truly sincere in his/her caring efforts? To what degree should importance be placed on the relationship between a teacher and student? Should we care for children for the sake of caring for children, despite academic factors or should our primary concern be to care for students in an effort to improve their academic performance?*

In light of such thinking, we must consider the “relationship” and its significance in the academic setting. Earlier, we briefly examined the case of Jaime Escalante (see Chapter 2) and how he had a very specific focus on the academic content and successful test performance of his students.¹⁷⁴ Despite Escalante’s crass approach to teaching, all of his students learned the required material and passed the Advanced Placement exam. Even though he belittled

¹⁷⁴ *Stand and Deliver*, directed by Ramón Menéndez (United States: Warner Home Video, 1988) DVD.

them, embarrassed them, and offended them in various ways, his students still rallied in support of him because they knew he cared for them (at least for their academic success) in doing so. In contrast, he also visited their homes, provided additional help after school, and invited them to his house to study. It was clear that he wanted them to learn and be successful. Thus, such a response begs the question: *what should the teacher/student relationship look like?* This is seemingly impossible to answer because an outsider would probably not use Escalante's example as a model. Again, how do we define the context of the relationship and what constitutes one that is caring in nature? It might be important to point out that one does not necessarily have to separate care from academic performance. Both can coexist. What becomes more difficult to understand is the underlying relationship between a teacher and his/her student(s), and how those specific relationships affect student success.

In the larger context of the classroom, is it logical to assume that if we care for kids successfully (however, "successfully" is translated), that they will improve their academic performance? Empirical research says so. But one area of weakness in the empirical research is pointing out the rationale for students who do succeed, regardless of or despite the absence of teacher care. Here, we see an absence of clarity in how the caring intricacies of any teacher/student relationship impacts student growth. This is not to say that the relationship has no significance, because it does; otherwise, this study would have no bearing. Still, it is important to note that the relationship is a complex association to examine

and it is vitally important when exploring the ethic of care in the classroom and school settings.¹⁷⁵

(2) *What patterns and themes emerge from secondary teacher participant responses regarding their own approaches to promoting positive outcomes (possible caring) for students?*

As mentioned in the last chapter, common themes that emerged from teacher participant responses included: *Knowing Students, Expressing Concern for Students, Having Affection for Students, Being Responsible for Student Growth, Fostering a Sense of Community, Fostering Positive Teacher/Student Relationships*, and *Utilizing a Strict Discipline Approach*. Of these, *Being Responsible for Student Growth and Having Affection for Students* produced unanimous responses from all participants. Each theme addressed an aspect of teacher care reflected in the literature. Such aspects were expounded on in Chapter 5. However, a few distinct patterns emerged from these areas and are significant as we catch a glimpse into the aspects of caring in classroom and school settings.

All teacher participants' central focus was on supporting the academic growth of their students. This should not be too surprising because of the context in which these teachers work and operate. What is interesting from the research is the extent to which each teacher participant discusses their approaches to

¹⁷⁵ Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005), 103. Noddings discusses unequal relationships between teachers and students indicating that despite their individual roles within the school / classroom setting, both parties must learn to give and receive care. Both teachers and students have a responsibility to the relationship of which students' "first contributions are as recipients of care..." In doing so, students learn how "to care for others."

promoting positive student outcomes and how that is framed in the context of what they teach.

Teacher participants teaching core courses usually made comments that reflected the significance of the course content as it related to student growth; whereas, the responses of non-core teachers appeared to reveal greater flexibility in their promotion of student growth via non-academic areas. In fact, Participant One stated in her interview that "... sometimes [the students] are reading for their English class. ...Even reading those books with me is different because I'm not analyzing, I'm not finding the symbolism, I'm not asking to find the metaphors. ...and their English teacher mops up." This particular teacher explains that her role is not to enforce a school curricular mandate; rather, she encourages her students to become enthusiastic about reading in general and engage with a community of readers who share similar enthusiasm and passion about reading.

Similarly, Participant Three commented "[they] help the students to prepare for, not only their transition into high school but also their transition into college and then into life." This teacher participant indicated that she enjoys the ability to emphasize transitional leadership and life skills that transcend specific core content. From her perspective, she is truly meeting the essential needs students will eventually experience in life, highlighting care from a unique lens. When asked what a teacher looks like who does not help students toward positive outcomes, surprisingly, she used core content teachers as an example. She commented that such teachers "[are] only focused on their particular subject area...whether it's English or math or whatever their discipline.... And they don't

want to talk about anything else that doesn't have to do with that particular discipline because they're focused on teaching tests and making sure their test scores come back fine.... they're not connected with them [the students].” While we have shed some light on the notion of caring in general, by all teachers, within the scholarly literature, it was quite interesting to observe first-hand such a comment from a teacher regarding her perception of – what she might suggest - a “non-caring” teacher to be.

Conversely, those teacher participants whose focus is on a core content area express somewhat different comments that seem to place more significance on the content as it relates to facilitating student success. Their perspectives might constitute what they deem a “caring” teacher to be. Participant Six, a secondary science teacher, commented “...I'm looking at remediation rates, high school to college, ACT scores...That's what I want them to look toward.” In his interview his passion for teaching Microbiology and Chemistry was clearly observable. He emphasized helping students in these areas and his caring was tailored to actions in this context, including personalized tutoring outside of school hours. His goal is to ensure students are well prepared for college level science content. Rarely, did he discuss personal non-academic issues and, when prompted, his responses were not as detailed as other participants.

Arguably, these examples do not definitively indicate “non-caring,” but they do lend themselves to a closer examination of what actual caring looks like in the context of the classroom. The implications made in the aforementioned patterns suggest that curriculum is a strong factor in how teachers assess their

ability to support students toward successful outcomes. However, what is not mentioned are the underlying factors that present potential challenges for how these outcomes are achieved. For example, the school structure, school culture, education mandates, and teacher dispositions can influence (academic and non-academic) learning outcomes for students. These factors can also impact relationship development between teachers and their students; thereby, reflecting different notions of care. Important to remember here is that the *how and why* still matters.

Another pattern that emerged from the findings in this research study was the extent to which many participants provided detailed accounts of ways in which they helped students with highly personal issues. To be sure, participants spoke in general about how they were available to students or how they would do what it took to make sure student issues were addressed, whether personal or academic. Still, many responses lacked great detail about specific instances of personal problems and what they did (or didn't do) to address those problems. There were some vignettes that came close. A few are shared below:

Participant Two: *...I was eager to get him back this year. He dropped out. I think he went to jail. And I think he got a fire under him by somebody somewhere that told him "You've got to pull it together." In my classroom I was happy to see him again, and I told him so. And I think that my being open and open-minded and willing to try anything...to lock them into being engaged who otherwise would be reluctant learners - I believe that makes a big difference. I'm not sure if he has the same positive outcomes in other classrooms just because I think that*

I'm willing to go above and beyond and do things a lot of other teachers aren't willing to do.

Participant Four: *...urban kids don't fear retention; they fear exclusion. So if you hold an urban kid back and they have to repeat a grade, they don't fear discipline. They don't fear retention. They fear exclusion. When you exclude someone, you [admit] that they don't exist – that they are not included. So kids...discipline don't feel good but some kids want it. They want to know that they matter. ...I had one boy who said he was going to shoot me last year and he was just running off at the mouth and now that little boy loves me. ...He was a sophomore. He wasn't in my class. He's a junior now. He loves me now. He said he was going to catch me on the street and pop me. [I was like] what does that mean...He's gonna shoot me?*

Participant Six: *...There were only two I had to call DHS; the others, I had to come in and talk to them....I don't like that process. I don't like that process at all. 'Cause now, I mean, if a teacher suspects it [abuse], it's the teacher's responsibility to call. ... There's a few that I have had to talk to the parents. So there's different things at home. ...It's not too bad. ...We are there for the kids and so it doesn't bother me... I'm like okay, 'what am I gonna face when I get here,' but it works out good.*

Such examples provide some understanding of the tension between the care teachers have for their students and the extent of their caring within a schooling context. Details on deep, personal issues the students in these situations faced were very limited. This may have been due to any number of factors. It is

possible that the teacher participants lacked knowledge about students' circumstances. Perhaps, policies in place prevented teachers from having too close of a relationship with students. A third reason for this lack of detail could have been the teachers' ways of caring without causing themselves too much emotional discomfort. In either case, these teachers attempted to assist their students in caring ways that would promote positive outcomes for them.

Further analysis on participant responses revealed yet another pattern reflecting the use of terms commonly used in lieu of the word *care*. Such terms examined included *care, love, nurture, compassion, concern, affection, and attentive*. Regardless of whether these terms were potentially used as a noun, verb or adjective, their use was analyzed in terms of the relationship of teacher participants to their students.

Only three teacher participants mentioned loving their students. However, only one of the three participants emphasized his love for students by expanding his thoughts on what it means to (love) kids. Participant One indicated that she told her students "I respect you and I love you..." which is a direct communication of love. On the other hand, Participant Five merely commented that she had taught at several schools and, with each school referenced, she said that she "loved the kids." Participant Four was the most detailed in his response about caring for students. He stated "I have fallen in love with so many kids..." With this disposition, he makes implications about the type of love he is referring to which is reflected in natural care. He explains:

Let me preface it by saying that we live in a society now that a lot of kids are being raised by grandparents. And, um, there are kids in the classroom with a lot of animosity and resentment because everyone wants to be nurtured and loved by a parent – not by grandparents. Grandparents are great! I'm going to be one here in about five months. [Laughs] Grandparents are great, but there is something to be said for your parents' nurturing. So when kids come to you [the teacher] with that, we recognize that problem.

This teacher participant goes on further to make references to his own biological children and how he is very loving and nurturing toward them. This expression of deep connection and concern ushers in an interesting parallel between parent/child care and teacher/student care. His responses indicated that he closely aligns the two. However, this duality of the care ethic (natural care and pedagogical care) was not observed this explicitly with any other participant and is something rarely teased out in the research.

The concept of love that Participant Four mentions is prominent in Garrison and Liston's book as they highlight the necessity for love in an educational context. Certainly, the term love often poses a perverted view when placing it in the context of schooling. In current society, love is considered by most individuals as being outside of the realm of education and more designed for highly intimate and personal contexts. For example, Garrison and Liston state that "...western culture's most basic educational assumptions banish home,

family, and love from the educational realm. Thus, home is said to ‘nurture’ and ‘socialize,’ not ‘educate’ children.”¹⁷⁶

In this study, care is the central focus and a disposition that most people, especially educators, can identify with as it relates to children in the school setting. However, when Garrison and Liston use the term love, though it carries similar connotations to care, these authors must analyze love so that it, too, is made clear within the schooling context. Such analyses, like the analysis of care, make their work important to understand so that love is understood in all of its positive attributes for helping children and not hurting them.

Garrison and Liston succinctly state:

Indeed, we consider love such an obstacle to the achievement of the objective of preparing children for life in the public world that we make one of early schooling’s main tasks that of casting off the attitudes and values, the patterns of thought and action associated with home, women, and domesticity. ...They fail to recognize that the love whose object is the growth and development of children needs to become an integral part of both [school and home]. They overlook the fact that this kind of love deserves a central place in the educational process.¹⁷⁷

One final and very interesting fact that emerged from Participant Four was that he was the only teacher participant to indicate that his love was reciprocated

¹⁷⁶ Daniel Liston and Jim Garrison, *Teaching, Learning, and Loving* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004), 26.

¹⁷⁷ Daniel Liston and Jim Garrison, *Teaching, Learning, and Loving* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004), 27.

by a student.¹⁷⁸ His student had threatened to shoot him which highlights the severity of the initial relationship. Considering such circumstances, the outcome that resulted from his implementation of a care ethic, yields a very powerful and telling narrative of why it is important to have caring teachers in a classroom. Noddings talks about how teachers are sometimes perceived by students as the opposing force – the enemy.¹⁷⁹ In this case, the teacher participant recognized this common assumption and responded in a caring way to the student. As a result, the student’s disposition towards his teacher shifted to one of reciprocal love; thereby, confirming that his teacher met his needs. Noddings highlights this reciprocity in her theory on care.¹⁸⁰

Other participants used the term care in brief instances to indicate they care for their students or their students know that they care for them. For instance, Participant Five stated, “My students know I care”; whereas, Participant Seven indicated, “If they don’t feel that I respect them and care about them, they have no interest in learning.”

Some of the gaps in their responses and comments might have been richer had they have known that the study was directly focused on care; however, the nature of the indirect research was important to ensure comments were authentic and not coerced or fabricated to make the teacher participant make themselves to “seem” like a caring teacher.

¹⁷⁸ See Participant Four comment on page 97.

¹⁷⁹ Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005), 108.

¹⁸⁰ Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 71.

Other ways the teacher participants used the words *care* and *love*, were not in the context being studied here. For example, one participant made the comment “Teaching is what I love.” Other participants made similar comments. Moreover, love was typically directed toward objects, such as content areas or books, instead of people (or students). Similarly, other terms as mentioned above, were rarely used in the context of the caring relationship between teacher and student. Participant One made a comment about “being genuinely concerned” about students and Participant Seven stated, “...they [students] are comfortable enough to talk to [her]... about things that concern them.” In this respect, the additional terms were minimally used and had no deep impact or bearing on participant responses.

(3) What themes are prevalent among secondary teacher participants in their responses regarding opposition or support from administrators (institutions) as they implement such (possible caring) approaches in the classroom?

An interesting tension that exists in school settings today is the expectation of federal, local, and state mandates which impact the interpersonal caring relationships between teachers and their students. The current structure of schools, under such constraints, shifts the central focus of schooling and can have a negative impact on how teachers care for their students or display caring attributes to help facilitate non-academic qualities for student growth. Though we have established that different forms of caring indeed take place in schools –

natural, ethical, pedagogical – we have not yet teased out the notion of how these different forms of caring work in tandem with the overall school structure.

During teacher interviews, two streams of thought emerge from the line of questioning about administrative support or lack thereof. One is obvious, the other not so much. Because the research was indirect about the phenomenon being investigated, teachers could not consciously speak to the notion of how administrators support (or do not support) a caring school environment. Second, but most importantly, it does not appear that there are distinct connections between individual teacher participants' relationships with their students and how those relationships might be influenced by their administrators' dispositions in a caring context.

Included in Table 2.1, Appendix C, are excerpts taken from portions of teacher participant interviews that speak to the idea of administrative support. In some cases, it is not clear whether or not these support mechanisms consist of embracing the care ethic in a particular school setting; however, taking all of the teacher participant responses into context, what is revealed is a strong tendency for most of them to make references to pedagogical forms of caring, rather than natural or ethical caring.

One consistent pattern, referenced earlier, is the tendency for elective teachers to have a slightly unique focus about their non-core subjects and, in this case, how adequately their administrators provide support for them in this arena. Some of the comments they make with regard to administrator support actually reference how their administrators view what they (the teacher participants) teach

or what they are trying to do to help students be successful. In a couple of cases, two of the non-core teacher participants conveyed positive responses to administrator support. A third participant indicated that there was a level of indifference from her administrators because of the fact that her course was not a core course. In all of these situations, there is no indication of a systematic implementation of a care ethic.

Similarly, with teacher participants who teach core courses, administrative support, or lack thereof, was either motivated by or tied to potential academic processes and/or outcomes. Out of the five core content teachers in the research study, all of them, with the exception of one, felt supported to some degree. Comments showing administrative support ranged from concerns about curriculum and passage of benchmark or key content exams, to ensuring that teachers have the resources they need to be successful. One teacher and principal disagreed on a teachers' learning strategy for a particular student which the teacher indicated as one of several instances in which the principal showed lack of support. In fact, this participant was so disappointed in the lack of support he perceived from his administrator that he was looking to change professions!

There was nothing in the responses that indicated a structure specifically for the non-academic caring attributes for students in these schools. Attempts at caring were often initiated by the teachers through their own individual approaches to caring for their students within the context of their classroom settings. This is not to say that administrators did not try to create safe, caring and

nurturing school environments for their teachers and students; rather, this was not explicitly stated by participants.

Herein lays a challenge to creating a caring community within schools in a systemic way. Among several key ingredients to creating an ethic of care in schools seems to be the need for an intentional vision, mission, and collaborative effort by all key stakeholders in a school and its surrounding community. However, an effort of this magnitude is seemingly hampered by the mode of thinking that aligns with the purpose schools serve and what expectations are for student outcomes. Liston and Garrison expressed their discontent with such status quo thinking:

Institutional constraints silence the discourse of passion and love in the public realm of teaching and learning. This collection seeks to end the silence by speaking loudly in public about what many think should only be spoken about in private. ...Daily, it seems, students are spoon-fed 'educational' material, not to satiate their learning hunger but rather to meet the mandates of the state. ...These days practicing teachers and future teachers are told to never touch their students and, at times, to overlook the lives their students lead so as to teach to the test. At other times this neglect seems to be the outcome of simply trying to 'meet' the new state standards. Increasingly, and in effect, we are asked to disavow our loves, our love of learning, our passion for teaching, our care and concern for our students so as to meet federal, state, and district requirements. Teaching and learning are activities that work best when we

work through our hearts as well as our heads. ...It is time for the academy to allow, even invite, the emotions, and more specifically love, into our understanding and practice of teaching.¹⁸¹

Care, in any capacity, boils down to a byproduct of what that means in terms of student academic outcomes as far as the school and school districts are concerned. Policy appears to take precedence above advocacy.

According to Liston and Garrison, such tensions even impact teacher preparation programs, affecting pre-service teacher dispositions and solidifying the process of diminishing the level of caring that takes place in classrooms:

Influenced by the growing obsession with student outcomes on state-wide standardized tests, teacher education has grown increasingly technocratic as accountability, standards, and measurable outcomes have replaced more humanistic and nuanced concerns in the preparation of professional educators. This erosion of compassionate, responsive approaches to teacher preparation has had a direct impact on the nature of the programs we offer our preservice teachers. ...Interestingly, as these rigid mandates and trends have been reshaping the lives of children in U.S. public schools and of preservice teachers in our teacher education programs, there has been a growing interest in caring's role in educational contexts.¹⁸²

Liston and Garrison point out a very real irony. Teachers are supposed to care for students, a common expectation; however, this can sometimes be difficult

¹⁸¹ Daniel Liston and Jim Garrison, *Teaching, Learning, and Loving* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004), 1-2.

¹⁸² Daniel Liston and Jim Garrison, *Teaching, Learning, and Loving* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004), 35-36.

when rigid mandates and school structures do not run parallel to those efforts. Earlier, Participant Five indicated that she wanted to have good classes and good test scores, but she also recognizes the tensions between achieving academic benchmarks and ensuring that students learn more than just content. Participant Five stated:

I feel like I'm waging a one person battle of trying to have a paradigm shift about being a "grade center" because GPA is nothing to colleges now... it's nothing. And yet it takes a grade instead of learning today. What did you get from this outcome, this voice, this writing or whatever? And it's not comfortable for me. I could care less about the grade. On the flip side, I have such a reverence for history. I think all children need to know it. They need to know their history and they need to know how it relates to today.

Even her passion for history itself is somehow masked by the need to assign a numerical value to determine student success.

In the next section, we will explore implications for the care theory and its impact on teacher practice. *How can we systemically implement a care ethic in school settings to encompass something beyond pedagogical caring? Do schools want to implement a care ethic that extends beyond pedagogical caring? Should they? If so, what would it look like? How would complete caring (caring received and reciprocated) be measured?* These are some questions to consider as we explore possible avenues for looking further into the theory and its practical applications.

CHAPTER 7

Implications for Theory and Practice

Care theory spans many years of scholarly thought, empirical research, and practical inquiry. Such extensive attention to the theory ushers in significant questions about why it is important and what are its benefits concerning schools and society. One particular acknowledgement about the theory is that care has significance for not only students within such domains, but people in general. While the collective perspectives on care theory present complex and, sometimes, ambiguous understandings, one thing is certain – care theory gives us a necessary foundation for addressing many of the cultural liabilities Martin and others readily point out as harmful to our society.

It would be seemingly difficult, but not impossible, to systemically integrate a care ethic in a school setting because many pre-cursors would have to exist to help facilitate such a uniform effort. The assumption is that all teachers (and administrators) care for their students on some level, and this is likely true; however, to cement, or somehow package, this caring into a unified force and align it with the education mandates of schooling institutions, takes an effort that is not commonly practiced. First, understanding what care is becomes fundamental to understanding how one comes to care for others. In other words, care must be defined on a personal, individual level. Next, that individual caring would have to be subsumed within the more comprehensive vision of the school in which it would be embedded.

What becomes problematic about integrating a seamless care ethic in the school setting is that individuals would have to have a common understanding about what that looks like while implementing it. Additionally, individuals would have to recognize both academic and non-academic benefits to the caring relationship they share with their students to enhance student outcomes as future citizens in society. Since education policy mandates on local, state, and federal levels are unlikely to change focus to accommodate such an abstract notion as care, the school would have to be clear on what type of students they want to graduate as future citizens, the types of teachers they want in their classrooms to teach them, and the type of ethical or moral characteristics they would like to instill in students before they exit the system. Thus, if care is part of the focus of schools, benefits associated with this ethic would have to be made explicit to and agreed upon by all stakeholders.

Pedagogical caring is what is commonly observed in school and classroom settings. To emphasize natural caring and/or ethical caring within this context would inevitably be reflected within the purpose of education within a schooling institution. To be sure, there are many educators uncomfortable with any type of relationship with students other than academic in nature. For them, the purpose of schooling may be just limited to the content they teach and nothing more; however, there are those for whom the love of teaching, the love of students, and the interest in impacting students in both academic and non-academic ways are paramount.

Currently, both in-service and pre-service teachers must reflect the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards in their practice. These standards, developed under the umbrella of the Council of Chief State School Officers, "...outline what teachers should know and be able to do to ensure every K-12 student reaches the goal of being ready to enter college or the workforce in today's world."¹⁸³ In continued reading about what the standards entail, while they are extremely clear about what good teaching looks like, it is also clear that the focus of these standards are explicitly academic in nature. There are components, however, within the standards that highlight the "critical dispositions" teachers should possess when working with students. For example, teachers must engage, value, and respect students in the learning process. Furthermore, teachers must encourage the type of learning environments that help foster student growth and development within the academic setting, including positive peer relationships.¹⁸⁴ Though the standards require teachers to be familiar with the background characteristics of students and other areas that help to facilitate their learning, there is nothing made visually explicit about relationships leading to non-academic related outcomes.

Similarly, other standards that impact teaching practice (e.g., Common Core) emphasize other types of academic requirements. But despite such limitations in the mandates, there is some flexibility for teachers to exhibit care simultaneously in their practice. Care need not be merely pedagogical in nature.

¹⁸³ Council of Chief State School Officers, *InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards: A Resource for State Dialogue*, (Washington D.C., 2011), 3.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 10-19.

Professional Development is a good vehicle to share how care impacts student success. It is profusely utilized in every aspect of education to help improve teacher practice and could be adopted as a necessary tool to help in the process. Additionally, a teacher preparation course specifically dealing with care theory can be incorporated for pre-service teachers to understand the foundational principles of care theory and how care is a central component in the development of good human beings for society – not just academic drones for the workforce. Scholarly figures such as Noddings, Gilligan, Mayeroff, and Martin can be explored in more detail, along with their contributions to thinking about care theory as a universal concept.¹⁸⁵ Liston and Garrison, in *Teaching, Learning and Loving*, also share a list of wonderful scholars who shed light on the idea of love (an extension of care): “Megan Boler, Kerry Burch, Michael Dale, Ann Diller...Lisa Goldstein, Ursula Kelly, Rachel Kessler...and Elaine J.O’Quinn”¹⁸⁶ among others. Still, other works by empirical scholars such as Epstein and Roberts can continue to add to the richness and understanding of the theory.

Incorporating care in schools cannot just be an arbitrary mission. It involves a shift in thinking, understanding, and being. For example, Nodding contends that “intellectual development is important, but it cannot be the first

¹⁸⁵ Authors and contributions previously referenced.

¹⁸⁶ Daniel Liston and Jim Garrison, *Teaching, Learning, and Loving* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004), 5. Liston and Garrison go into detail about the work that has been done by these authors and how those works reflect notions of love and its relationship to how individuals connect with one another. In the larger context, Liston and Garrison explain the importance of how certain kinds of love should be reflected in the school setting and how current western philosophical thinking about love presents obstacles to what would be beneficial for humanity.

priority of schools.”¹⁸⁷ She advocates that “classrooms should be places in which students can legitimately act on a rich variety of purposes” which include “[producing] people who would live nonviolently with each other, sensitively and in harmony with the natural environment, reflectively and serenely with themselves.”¹⁸⁸ In other words, schools, in her view, would be places where students can learn ways of living and being that transcend mere intellectual thought.

Thus, schools might adopt practices that reflect caring behaviors and actions. One example might be the incorporation of a school garden, teaching students how to care for nature. A vegetable garden would provide an additional lesson in showing them how to care for their bodies by eating natural, organic foods. Other practices might include the explicit teaching and exercising of character traits that are representative of care such as those found in Mayeroff’s chapter on the *Major Ingredients of Caring* (e.g., patience, honesty, trust, humility, etc.).¹⁸⁹ Similarly, Opalewski and Unkovich have practices that could support implementation of a care ethic in schools which they call the *A-B-C’s of creating a classroom family* and include awareness of, respect for, and connection with others.¹⁹⁰ Other systemic practices could involve the idea of *caring school communities* such as those examined in Ellerbrock and Kiefer’s study.¹⁹¹

Teaching the importance of care is essential to preparing young adults who

¹⁸⁷ Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005), 10.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁸⁹ Milton Mayeroff, *On Caring*, (New York: HarperPerennial 1971),17-35.

¹⁹⁰ Dave Opalewski and Anna Unkovich, *Caring to Teach, Teaching to Care* (Bloomington: iUniverse, Inc., 2011), 65.

¹⁹¹ Cheryl Ellerbrock and Sarah Kiefer, “Creating a Ninth-Grade Community of Care,” *The Journal of Educational Research* (Tampa: Routledge, 2010).

respect, love, and act in moral ways toward others. It is critical for schools to help shape these individuals to meet society's expectations of what it means to be good, ethical, and kind human beings. Intellectualism, alone, cannot produce moral character conducive to caring for others.

Such a shift in thinking and behavior presents a challenge to measuring care in school and classroom settings; however, it is not impossible to place judgments on actions that denote caring behavior and progress in this realm. In fact, many scholars argue that care in and of itself is a necessity for student success - however that success may be defined. Still, the idea of care in this particular context does specify that success must include a great measure of human morality, love, and sincere respect for others, a lesson that exceeds academic outcomes.

A closer look at care theory as it relates to schooling practice is definitely needed, but the application of care in a practical sense is an urgent matter and should be made a systemic reality for all schools, even if there are failed attempts at doing so. As Noddings indicated, there is no set formula for care but that does not mean that educators and policy makers should not attempt to make caring schools a reality, emphasizing relationships that focus on non-academic factors (e.g., moral development, concern for others, empathy).

Recommendations for Future Research

While this study focused on teacher understanding of care, it is important that future research considers student perspectives of teacher care. That is, researchers should observe whether or not students feel their teachers care for

them, and if so, in what ways. What would solidify this type of research further would be an analysis of specific teachers' perceptions of how they care for their students and what their students perceive from them as caring.

Additionally, it would be helpful to observe multiple school settings in which teacher and student relationships can be observed, looking for types of behaviors and actions that reflect caring attributes and whether or not these actions are perceived by both teachers and students as caring in nature. It would also be interesting to see differences across content areas, types of school settings, as well as schools with high levels of community involvement.

A challenge to these types of studies, which this particular study attempted to avoid, is the idea that behavior and responses can be altered when subjects know what you are specifically looking for. As a result, data obtained from observations might lack accuracy or be based on untrue assumptions about the behavior or responses of participants. Skewed or inaccurate research results can alter the impact of findings which could potentially affect claims about care theory.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alliance for Excellent Education, "High school dropouts in America," *FactSheet*: 1, February, 2009,
http://www.all4ed.org/files/GraduationRates_FactSheet.pdf.

Ayers, William. *To Teach: The Journey of a Teacher*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2010.

Beyer, Christian. "Edmund Husserl", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL =
<<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/husserl/>>.

Carey, Kevin. "Education, Funding and Low-Income Children: A Review of Current Research," (Washington D.C.: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2002).

Cooper, Anna Julia. *A Voice From the South*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Council of Chief State School Officers, *InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards: A Resource for State Dialogue*, Washington D.C., 2011.

Creswell, John. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2009.

De Jesus, Anthony and Antrop-Gonzalez, Rene. "Instrumental Relationships and High Expectations: Exploring Critical Care in Two Latino Community-based Schools." *Intercultural Education* 17, no. 3 (2006): 281-299.

Dewey, John. *John Dewey Experience & Education*. New York, Simon & Schuster, 1938.

Easton, Lois Brown and Soguero, Michael. "Challenging Assumptions: Helping Struggling Students Succeed," *Kappan* 92, no.5 (2011): 30.

Ellerbrock, Cheryl R. and Kiefer, Sarah M. "Creating a Ninth-Grade Community of Care," *The Journal of Educational Research* 103 (2010): 393.

- Epstein, Joyce. "School/Family/Community Partnerships: Caring for the Children we Share." (Reprint) *Phi Delta Kappan* 76, no. 9 (1995): 701-712.
- Garrett, Tracey, Barr, Jason and Rothman, Terri. "Perspectives on Caring in the Classroom: Do They Vary According to Ethnicity or Grade Level?" *Adolescence* 44, no.175 (2009): 507.
- Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Giorgi, Amedeo. "The Theory, Practice, And Evaluation of the Phenomenological Method as a Qualitative Research Procedure," *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 28 no. 2 (1997): 235-261.
- Knight-Diop, Michelle G. "Closing the Gap: Enacting Care and Facilitating Black Students' Educational Access in the Creation of High School College-Going Culture," *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk* 15 (2010): 160.
- Ladson-Billings, Gloria. *The Dream-Keepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009.
- Laverty, Susan. "Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 2 no. 3 (2003): 21-35.
Retrieved from
http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/2_3final/pdf/laverty.pdf.
- Liston, Daniel & Garrison, Jim. *Teaching, Learning, and Loving*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004.
- Marshall, Catherine & Rossman, Gretchen. *Designing Qualitative Research*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2011.
- Martin, Jane R. *Cultural Miseducation: In Search of a Democratic Solution*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2002.

- Martin, Jane R. *The Schoolhome: Rethinking Schools for Changing Families*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Mayeroff, Milton. *On Caring*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1971.
- McMillan, James H. & Schumacher, Sally. *Research in Education: Evidenced-Based Inquiry*. New York: Pearson, 2006.
- Meier, Deborah. *The Power of Their Ideas: Lessons for America From a Small School in Harlem*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2002.
- Nie, Youyan and Lau, Shun. "Complementary Roles of Care and Behavioral Control in Classroom Management: The Self-Determination Theory Perspective," *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 34, (2009): 185-194.
- Noddings, Nel. *Caring: A feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003.
- Noddings, Nel. *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2005.
- Opalewski, Dave and Unkovich, Anna. *Caring to Teach, Teaching to Care*. Bloomington: iUniverse, Inc., 2011.
- Palmer, Parker. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007.
- Roberts, Mari Ann. "Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Critical Teacher Care: African American Teachers' Definitions and Perceptions of Care for African American Students," *Journal of Moral Education* 39, no.4 (2010): 450.
- Rodriguez, Louie. "What Schools can do about the Dropout Crisis," *Leadership* 40, no. 1 (2010):19.
- Schaefer, Richard. *Sociology: A Brief Introduction*. St. Louis: McGraw Hill, 2003.

Schwandt, Thomas A. *The Sage Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2007.

Stand and Deliver. Directed by Ramón Menéndez. United States: Warner Home Video, 1988. DVD.

Shaunessy, Elizabeth and Alvarez McHatton, Patricia. "Urban Students' Perceptions of Teachers: Views of Students in General, Special, and Honors Education." *Springer* 41 (2008), 486-503.

Shiller, Jessica. "'These are our Children!' An Examination of Relationship-Building Practices in Urban High Schools." *Springer* (2008): 461-485.

Souza, Tasha J. "The Communication of Caring: An Analysis of at-risk Students in an Alternative School," *Journal of the Northwest Communication Association* (2005) 34:41.

Strike, Kenneth A. & Soltis, Jonas F. *The Ethics of Teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2009.

Suh, Suhyun, Suh, Jingyo and Houston, Irene. "Predictors of Categorical At-risk High School Dropouts," *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 85, no.2 (2007); 197-198.

Thijs, Jochem, Koomen, Helma, and van der Leij, Aryan. "Teacher-Child Relationships and Pedagogical Practices: Considering the Teacher's Perspective." *School Psychology Review* 37, no. 2 (2008): 244-260.

Thompson, Goldie, "Anna Julia Cooper's Theory of Re-Education: Reconciling the Law of Love and the Law of Reason" *Journal of Philosophy and History of Education*, 2, no.1 (2012): 107-117.

Thompson, Goldie "Teacher Understanding of Care: Mediating the Structure of Schools with the Relational Aspects of the Classroom," *The Oklahoma Association of Teacher Educators* 16 (2013): 32-42.

Thurston, Linda and Berkeley, Terry. "Morality and the Ethic of Care: Peaceable Rural School, Caring Rural Communities." *Rural Special Education Quarterly (Reprint)* 17, no. 3, 4 (1998): 25-31.

Van Manen, Max. *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for An Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1990.

APPENDIX A

Table 1.1 Teacher Participant Responses in Relation to Supporting Academic Growth

Academic Growth Response	Teacher Participant
<p><i>But sometimes they are reading for their English class...Even reading those books with me is different because I'm not analyzing, I'm not finding the symbolism, I'm not asking to find the metaphors. I'm reading it like a reader, and, The Scarlet Letter oh my gosh! just wait 'til you find out what they do to her! It's so unfair! They become so mad. Well, that's the way readers talk about books. I get to talk that way with the kids, and their English teacher mops up.</i></p>	<p>P1 Non-Core Teacher (Reading)</p>
<p><i>I'm not sure if he has the same positive outcomes in other classrooms just because I think that I'm willing to go above and beyond and do things a lot of other teachers aren't willing to do. ... I struggle because I kind of run the whole gamut of things in my classroom because I am an elective teacher. I have students who are AP in the classroom with students who are very gifted, and so my challenge is to keep the really smart kids moving in the right direction without being bored and bringing the IEP students along with them. It's a real challenge. So, my outcomes for those same students in the same class are gonna be different.</i></p>	<p>P2 Non-Core Teacher (FACS/Leadership)</p>
<p><i>I would say that positive student outcomes for me is whenever I am able to see students apply what they have learned in my class to their lives and also for them to be able to teach it to each other as well. I teach them how to budget their money and plan for college and get along with each other and actually see the results from lessons that they are learning in class and see them apply it to their future.</i></p>	<p>P3 Non-Core Teacher (Strategies for Success)</p>
<p><i>I do a lot of scaffolding...via vocabulary...history of different authors...you know of literary pieces that have relevance to what we're getting ready to do. ...And they help my kids be successful because African American kids traditionally - I won't say reject but they disconnect from literature that doesn't relate to them. ... I am teaching a course right now that helps kids, you know, prepare...kids who have not passed the End of Instruction. ... And it's remediation slash preparation. And I don't know how many parents know that their kids are in there or know the gravity of what we're trying to do to get them to graduate.</i></p>	<p>P4 Core Teacher (English)</p>
<p><i>I've taught AP now since 1998. I want them to succeed on that test. And for some kids, it might be making a two. Taking children where they start and building them. Not every kid is an AP kid. You don't want to set a kid up for</i></p>	<p>P5 Core Teacher (History)</p>

Academic Growth Response	Teacher Participant
<i>failure. Never ever do you want to set a child up for failure.</i>	
<i>Their test scores are still positive and so most of them are just looking at test scores as positive outcomes; whereas, me, I'm looking at remediation rates, high school to college, ACT scores...That's what I want them to look toward. You gotta develop those critical thinking skills.</i>	P6 Core Teacher (Science)
<i>Let's say they come into 6th grade and they read on a 3rd grade level... and they come out of 6th grade and they read on a fifth grade level... Well, they're not on 6th grade level and they're coming out of 6th grade but they just came up two years of reading in one year. Have they had academic success? And um, I think the answer to that is yes. So, that's something else that we constantly weigh out is individually, is this child succeeding. I can't always compare this child to this child. I have to start with where they are and see where they end up and did they grow – have they learned.</i>	P7 Core Teacher (Science)
<i>I think a teacher recognizes you know what, not every student is gonna come in my class at the same level or even willing to learn at the same pace; but if they get it the first nine weeks, and another student gets it at the end of the first semester, and another student gets it at the end of the third nine weeks, then it doesn't matter to me. You know, I mean they've got it. They've learned. They've moved forward.</i>	P8 Core Teacher (Math)

Table 1.2 Teacher Participant Responses Indicative of Pedagogical Care

Pedagogical Caring Response	Teacher Participant
<i>So my theory is, respect starts with me, and I've got to give it to my students. And I tell them, "I respect you and I love you for no other reason than you're sitting here in my room..." ... no significant learning occurs when there's no significant relationship.</i>	P1 Non-Core Teacher (Reading)
<i>I think that being available to students to ask questions before/after class, during lunch and even in class makes the relationship between teacher and student stronger.</i>	P2 Non-Core Teacher (FACS/Leadership)
<i>They know that they can come and talk to me about any needs that they have. About academics, about personal relationships, and I let them know that I'm the teacher, and if we get to a point where I've got to get help because that's all that I can do as their teacher, then, I'm going to do that for 'em.</i>	P3 Non-Core Teacher (Strategies for Success)
<i>I think I have a great relationship with my students because they are comfortable enough to come and talk to me about</i>	P4 Core Teacher

Pedagogical Caring Response	Teacher Participant
<i>things that concern them.... It's about building relationships. There is no academic success without building relationships. Sometimes we are the parent and the teacher. Sometimes we're called on to play those dual roles.</i>	(English)
<i>My students know I care; they know I'm passionate... I want to have good classes, and I want to have good test scores.</i>	P5 Core Teacher (History)
<i>Were the classes tough? Yeah, it was very tough. And that's what I am trying to give back in teaching my kids. When you get to college, you're not going to have a problem getting through this.</i>	P6 Core Teacher (Science)
<i>I think in order to get any kind of academic success out of my kids, I have to start with... basic routines and rituals and respect, because without that, I am not going to get any academic success out of them at all. If they don't respect me and they don't feel that I respect them and care about them, they have no interest in learning something.</i>	P7 Core Teacher (Science)
<i>We kind of dealt with the situation...I've spoken with him... Brought him in after school, at times, just to do some tutoring sessions and have him make up work. And so, he's definitely successful. ... if I were to narrow down any kind of student success to one thing, I would say it's relationships.</i>	P8 Core Teacher (Math)

Table 1.3 Teacher Participant Responses: Establishing a sense of Community in the Classroom

Responses Regarding Community	Teacher Participant
<i>A lot of my students don't understand what social reading is. They are not readers; they think that readers sit in a room all by themselves and are very isolated. When you read a book you love, the first thing you have to do is go blab about it. With some of my kids, success is finding out that there is this wonderful community of readers who are interested in what you have to say.</i>	P1 Non-Core Teacher (Reading)
-	P2 Non-Core Teacher (FACS/Leadership)
<i>So we bring them into this building, create that unity...and things are going to move forward. ...They need to change; they need to know how to integrate with one another and to... just kind of socially figure out where they are and maybe even develop stronger new relationships...</i>	P3 Non-Core Teacher (Strategies for Success)

Responses Regarding Community	Teacher Participant
<i>These sandwiches that she was making were for her classmates and for the teachers and she felt such a sense of responsibility and belonging that she was doing something for her community. ... We all want to feel connected. I said this in a speech a while ago: urban kids don't fear retention; they fear exclusion. ... They want to know that they matter.</i>	P4 Core Teacher (English)
-	P5 Core Teacher (History)
<i>I work with a lot of them and call them in individually. I kind of say Hey, here's gonna be your group and here's gonna be your group that you'll work with. There's a lot of times some students are going to relate better to peers than they will to a teacher.</i>	P6 Core Teacher (Science)
<i>Student to students relationships, what I really strive to build is that they see themselves as a team. And that in their class... that each class sees their individual class as a group... And that they see their table as a team because we do a lot of lab work that requires a lot of cooperation and respect for each other.</i>	P7 Core Teacher (Science)
<i>...I can see a lot of dynamics with the students. I think social interactions are certainly a huge factor in their development and what they achieve and what they do. ...If you see them, the students are much closer. ... they know each other and they interact well.</i>	P8 Core Teacher (Math)

Table 1.4 Teacher Participant Responses: Knowing Students

Responses for Knowing Students	Teacher Participant
<i>...I know it is because of the Special Ed and my remedial background, I taught Special Ed outside of Oklahoma in Iowa, I can differentiate; and so success is differentiated in my classroom. I have 150 kids... 150 definitions of what successes are.</i>	P1 Non-Core Teacher (Reading)
<i>And if I see them struggling, if I see them nod, I know I need to do some more ... or ask some more questions to pull some more information out of them... Students won't tell me what they are doing wrong. It's something that I have to seek out; otherwise, you have the quietest kids who look busy in the back of the room not getting anything</i>	P2 Non-Core Teacher (FACS/Leadership)

Responses for Knowing Students	Teacher Participant
<p><i>accomplished....I see them in the hall and just stand next to them, not look them in the eye, just stand next to them in the hall. When they look up, I ask what's going on? And their eyes light up. They don't feel like I'm accusing or confronting . If something's going on... It could be a kid in the class that's bothering them; it could be family problems; it could be they didn't have anything for breakfast...</i></p>	
-	<p>P3 Non-Core Teacher (Strategies for Success)</p>
<p><i>I know many kids outside of my classroom...kids who don't come through basketball or my inner circle. Seek out those kids. Get to know those kids. Go to a football game. Go to a basketball game. Go to a wrestling match. Go to cheer pom. Watch those kids and their stomps and tell them how great they've done. Those kids desire recognition and nurturing too. We all want to feel connected.</i></p>	<p>P4 Core Teacher (English)</p>
<p><i>But just yesterday, this one boy during tutorial [said] "I have to work on Super Bowl..." and I see him at the Y [YWCA]. I work out everyday at the Y and he never says hi to me at the Y. I always have to say hi to him, you know. It's weird seeing your teacher not in [class]... So, he was talking about the Super Bowl yesterday and I said, "Well, you know, it starts at 5:00 o'clock." So we talked about the Super Bowl. Yesterday was the first time he said hi to me at the Y.</i></p>	<p>P5 Core Teacher (History)</p>
<p><i>The strategies you have to use are many, many different strategies...cause you have to figure out what is best for every one of them. And so, it usually takes a little while to get adjusted to figure out what is best for one kid compared to another. Everything is not going to work the same for every kid.</i></p>	<p>P6 Core Teacher (Science)</p>
<p><i>And sometimes my students on IEPs – my special ed. students – depending on what their specific ability or disability is, they sometimes are the more um, you know, more auditory...maybe they listen better... So I try to pair them up where they can draw on each other's strengths. You know if somebody is real auditory or if somebody is very kinesthetic or if someone is better at writing out... you know and kind of match their strengths up so they don't all have the same skill set at the table. ...That takes a little getting to know them before you can do that.</i></p>	<p>P7 Core Teacher (Science)</p>
<p><i>Most of the students that I have in class... I know them all</i></p>	<p>P8</p>

Responses for Knowing Students	Teacher Participant
<p><i>by name. And I refer to them by name. I am very careful to do that. They have no problem talking with me. A lot of them, if they maybe have an attitude...I can respond back to them - a lot of times, very playfully...and things of that nature where it's more laid back and I don't...I mean I can, you know...we can joke and talk about things. And... if they're acting up, I am typically just able to pull that student aside and ask them "what's going on" or "what's the problem?" And usually, that's enough to solve whatever issue is going on. ...They know that I know who they are... and it's not just oh there's a student disrupting my class... I definitely think probably, if I were to narrow down any kind of student success to one thing, I would say it's relationships.</i></p>	<p>Core Teacher (Math)</p>

Table 1.5 Teacher Participant Responses: Expressing Concern for Students

Responses for Student Concern	Teacher Participant
<p><i>Once they write a little bit, and I answer back, I get a little more the next time. And I answer back a little bit more; and I start asking those higher level thinking questions, and pretty soon, I've got a reader, and I've got a thinker. And it's more fun than anything in the world!</i></p>	<p>P1 Non-Core Teacher (Reading)</p>
<p><i>When they are working on something, not even that they get tunnel vision, but they just get into it. ...And to see kids begin to do simple arithmetic problems, but to translate that skill into my life, and this is my future, and I've got to know what my GPA is, to see them really get into it and dig in, that's where I see success. Because I know that then that translates into real life work, real life lessons, real opportunities.</i></p>	<p>P2 Non-Core Teacher (FACS/Leadership)</p>
<p>-</p>	<p>P3 Non-Core Teacher (Strategies for Success)</p>
<p><i>But something that I have done and continue to do is to, you know, look for the good. ...Your nails look nice or your boots look nice or you are so athletic or you read so much better than you did last week or you're going places. And so accentuate the positive. I had a young man who acted up in another class and so I said, you know what... I am constantly bragging on you to everyone else and then you do this. And so I am not above playing the guilt card and telling kids... You don't know how many kids are not being told positive things...but you know what I have found to be successful is...at the risk of being transparent, I accentuate the positive. Find something positive. We all have</i></p>	<p>P4 Core Teacher (English)</p>

Responses for Student Concern	Teacher Participant
<i>redeeming qualities.</i>	
-	P5 Core Teacher (History)
<i>For the last couple of years, the groups that have been coming up – it’s a zero. And I have seen how I have really had to adjust my level of teaching. I was like way up here (hand motioning a high level) and I was only reaching maybe 5% or 10% of kids, max. Aw man, so I really had to adjust the level of teaching over the last couple of years... And you still got those kids that are way up there and those are the kids that you bring into these groups, so it helps them learn at the same time.</i>	P6 Core Teacher (Science)
<i>I think in order to get any kind of academic success out of my kids, I have to start with what I just went through with you. I have to start with basic routines and rituals and respect, because without that, I am not going to get any academic success out of them at all. If they don’t respect me and they don’t feel that I respect them and care about them, they have no interest in learning something.</i>	P7 Core Teacher (Science)
<i>I have a young man whose...I would say he has a lot of trouble with home... There’s a lot of home based problems, a lot of struggles with parents in and out of the picture... and him being moved around a lot. And so, he’ll get to class. A lot of times he’s just laying down his head or, you know, just not really involved... And so, I talked to his mother on several occasions. We kind of dealt with the situation...I’ve spoken with him... Brought him in after school, at times, just to do some tutoring sessions and have him make up work. ...He actually came and told me how he went home and worked through a bunch of problems and he couldn’t wait for me to see it...you could actually chart and see that he’s definitely, you know, moving in the right direction. He’s actually concerned about his grade and things of that nature – that when I first got him – that was not a concern at all.</i>	P8 Core Teacher (Math)

Table 1.6 Teacher Participant Responses: Fostering Positive Teacher/Student Relationships

Responses for Positive Teacher/Student Relationships	Teacher Participant
<i>Personal success is my little guy who finished some of the logs and he came up with this grin on his face, and I stuck</i>	P1 Non-Core Teacher

Responses for Positive Teacher/Student Relationships	Teacher Participant
<i>my hand out to shake his hand, and I mean he just glowed. He had finished a book on his own, you know, a book he had been able to choose for himself.</i>	(Reading)
<i>...I had him last year and I was eager to get him back this year. He dropped out. I think he went to jail. And I think he got a fire under him by somebody somewhere that told him "You've got to pull it together." In my classroom I was happy to see him again, and I told him so. And I think that my being open and open-minded and willing to try anything and able to lock them into being engaged who otherwise would be reluctant learners. I believe that makes a big difference.</i>	P2 Non-Core Teacher (FACS/Leadership)
<i>They know that if something is bigger than I can handle, then I'm gonna go get help. I will seek out whatever resources we need in order to get their situation resolved, whatever it is. It doesn't matter. Whether it is academic, whether it is personal, whatever it is...</i>	P3 Non-Core Teacher (Strategies for Success)
<i>It doesn't take but...you know if you go by a Braums or a Taco Bell or a McDonalds or a KFC and see one of your students, those kids are so happy to see you outside of school. Hey you know I saw your run! Good job!...you know and high five them or a fist bump them or say Hey, you know what? You're doing a great job working... Those kids want somebody to be proud of them.</i>	P4 Core Teacher (English)
-	P5 Core Teacher (History)
<i>Yeah, I've had a few kids – 4 or 5... There were only two I had to call DHS; the others, I had to come in and talk to them... There's a few that I have had to talk to the parents. So there's different things at home... We are there for the kids and so it doesn't bother me... I'm like okay, what am I gonna face when I get here, but it works out good. Every time I've done it, it worked out good.</i>	P6 Core Teacher (Science)
<i>...There is no academic success without building relationships. Sometimes we are the parent and the teacher. Sometimes we're called on to play those dual roles. And when that happens, they absolutely know that if something is occurring that is an injustice to them that I will stick my neck out for them and I will be there for them...</i>	P7 Core Teacher (Science)
<i>And so, you know, it's just recognizing it's okay to allow a student to do poorly and it's okay to even give them a poor</i>	P8 Core Teacher

Responses for Positive Teacher/Student Relationships	Teacher Participant
<i>grade but that's not the end all. That's not the purpose. That's just a means, trying to get them to that end. And so, you know, you're not just giving them an "F" just to give them an "F." If they're willing to go back and work harder and put forth the effort, give it to them. You know, allow them to put in that effort. Because what does it matter... if two weeks later they come in excited because they actually...a light bulb flipped and they got it.</i>	(Math)

Table 1.7 Teacher Participant Responses on Utilizing a Strict Discipline Approach

Responses for Strict Disciplinary Approach	Teacher Participant
-	P1 Non-Core Teacher (Reading)
-	P2 Non-Core Teacher (FACS/Leadership)
-	P3 Non-Core Teacher (Strategies for Success)
-	P4 Core Teacher (English)
<i>When I was at [Anonymous High School], I decided that I would never ever write another referral to the principal about a certain class. You can take lighter fluid and a match, and I won't write a referral because... I had my master's degree in administration. ...you know at that point, you want a kid to be severely punished for whatever the infraction. By the time the child gets to the principal's office, they are contrite. ... And then, on top of that, they have to deal with parents, school boards. Often, what happens to the child is a slap on the wrist. ...And I'm a believer, a strong believer in "the hammer should fall fast and furious" 'cause then it won't fall again. You know what I mean? If Little Bobby in 7th grade mouths off to you, you've got to meet that home. You don't do that. You don't do that to your superiors at work; you will not do that.</i>	P5 Core Teacher (History)
-	P6 Core Teacher (Science)
<i>... I have to go back to day one of the first day of school and how I open up my classroom...and just how you set the stage for your class and your expectations and your rituals and your routines that you are going to have. And um, I set the stage on day one partly because of my type of students that I get... they are very comfortable with structure.</i>	P7 Core Teacher (Science)

Responses for Strict Disciplinary Approach

Teacher Participant

Ironically, they don't have a lot of structure in their home life sometimes. ...It gives them a sense of security. So I usually have a seating chart on the first day of school. ...So my classroom rules – I have five. I called them the three P's, an L, and an R. The first P is prompt. They come to my room and they expect me as a teacher and instructor to be there... and I promise I will be and I expect them to be in their seats and ready to go when the bell rings. And the second one is prepare. They need to bring their assignments they were given, their pencil, their composition notebooks – the things that they need for class. And the third one is to participate. I just don't want anyone sitting there like a bump on a pickle. Everyone has something to say and that we're gonna take turns. The next one is listen to each other when everyone is participating... And the last one is – I tell them the very most important one – respect. That if we only had that one... If we just had respect, then all the others would fall into place. I try everyday to be respectful to my kids and have them be respectful to each other. And it really works.

-

P8
Core Teacher
(Math)

APPENDIX B

Investigating Teacher Understanding of Care in the Secondary School Setting

Tentative Questions for Interview Participants:

1. How would you define successful student outcomes in your classroom and/or school?
2. Would you consider social and academic success in this definition?
3. If you had to describe what “successful student outcomes” looks like in your classroom and/or school, including social and academic success, how would you describe it?
4. What are some elements in the classroom and/or school setting that might assist you in promoting successful student outcomes? Prevent you from doing this?
5. Can you provide anecdotal evidence or share a personal story in which you may or may not have played a direct role in influencing positive or successful student outcomes?
6. In your opinion, how important is it that teachers engage in strategies or approaches which promote positive student outcomes?
7. What role, if any, do you feel students should play in the process of supporting their own positive outcomes or that of their classmates?
8. Are there any words or phrases that come to mind that might substitute for the process of ensuring positive student outcomes? (Another question might be *How might you go about doing this?*)
9. What, in your opinion, does a teacher who fails to ensure positive student outcomes look like? In other words, what types of actions reflect this disposition?
10. What other information surrounding this idea of positive student outcomes do you feel is necessary to include in this discussion?

**These questions are not necessarily complete and may serve as springboards to additional questions. This could lead to further inquiry as a basis for the research. The responses given by teacher participants are expected to lead to other areas of inquiry.

APPENDIX C

Table 2.1 Teacher Participant Responses Regarding Administrative Support

Administrative Support – Response	Teacher Participant
<p><i>My school is 100% behind me! [Principal] is my third ...every one of them have supported me, and because they have let me grow the program, and, you know, they take success the way I define it which may not be a higher score on their EOI, we've been able to build this program to the point that I teach close to 300 kids a year and one other teacher has two more sections which is probably fifty... more kids. So in our school of 2400, it's like 350 kids are taking Reading for Pleasure. It has such a good reputation because they've let me be true to this. Other districts have tried this, I think [Anonymous] City has something they call [similar to] it, and it literally is farmed out to coaches who have an extra hour, debate teachers who just need a time to plan. So, it's not successful there. We have, I think, the premier program, and it's absolutely because... my principals... [know] exactly what I am doing. And, [Anonymous] High doesn't have the same success because one teacher hasn't been able to nurture it the way I have. But, I've got blankets of [support] from my administrators and from my parents and from my kids. And that means as much to me. So, no doubt in my mind that they see the value.</i></p>	<p>P1 Non-Core Teacher (Reading)</p>
<p><i>I think I'm the best Tech teacher in my school... I think because I am an elective teacher, nobody is ever in my room. Now, they are in the English teacher's room and the math teacher's room every single day, checking off their list, to make sure that they have met all of their requirements for expectations for teachers. They don't ever come into my room. And, I have to almost invite them. ...I think that I get support, but I think that they have no idea what I do and are surprised when they find out what I am doing. But I think that I am just not on the radar. As an elective teacher, I don't think that I figure a lot of the time into what the district, what the administration approve[s] of... Yeah, because I don't teach an elective class that affects the school as a whole. It's that indifference. It's not that they don't care about my class. The more I invite them into my room and kind of force the issue, the more they identify the things that I do, but because I am not a core class and because I'm not an EOI core class, administrators are too busy trying to make sure that those teachers are staying on [track]...</i></p>	<p>P2 Non-Core Teacher (FACS/Leadership)</p>
<p><i>Oh yes! And it's so nice to have...because it's such a difficult time for them [students] to leave the middle school and then make that jump to high school, especially to have to combine two middle schools together that normally are enemies. But normally we have the rivalry and they come together here at the high school... and so they are used to rivalry. So we bring them into this building, create that unity so that they can see</i></p>	<p>P3 Non-Core Teacher (Strategies for Success)</p>

Administrative Support – Response

Teacher Participant

both halves. ... And faculty, not only the faculty but the administration and I wrote parents in so that they can know that we are on their side. I am going to help you, and I will need your help so that we can [help] your child. And that has got such great respect from them. ... for them [students] to have to deal with each other, just kind of socially figure out where they are and maybe even develop stronger new relationships, given that opportunity instead of having to, if they have been in not a positive cohort group to, you know, figure out where else in the social outfit you can make connection.

Uh huh. [Confirming administrative support] I've had some success. We won a state championship in basketball two years ago. And in the same year I had success in raising test scores. So I think they value me as a coach and as a teacher. They've actually given me an extra class that I've got to get to here in a few minutes. I am trying to help kids pass the End of Instruction test they haven't passed yet. And so, yeah, I mean we all have... And so we all have gifts and those gifts are not necessarily sometimes conventional or orthodox; but if they reach kids, then they reach kids.

I now have a phenomenal principal...the best I've ever worked for. The assistants, though, had all been hired by a former principal - a great, wonderful man, very loving. And with love, you need discipline. And I'm a very big believer in that; it is not in anyone's best interest, teachers, as well, to love them [students] to death. I think that[s] what gives teachers a bad rap is that we don't police ourselves. We've got a bunch of bad teachers in the classroom. And, I just had a conversation with our Freshman Academy principal, our Freshman principal. My daughter is a freshman; she is a nerd; she likes to learn; and she took her ACT as a 7th grader, and she's making all A's... She is in a class where the teacher is teaching an elective they have to take – it's a health class. So I actually went to the principal and I said, "Is there a curriculum for this class?" She said, "I know he doesn't teach. He stands in the hallway on his phone. That, verbatim, came out of her mouth. And I thought, "This is what's okay, then." I don't know if that is a problem with tenure, if it's a problem with administration. In their defense, their entire day is centered around putting out fires. Nothing good comes to them. I get "good" all day.

Now, it's like you are not supposed to teach toward the test, but that is what everybody is graded on. They don't look at what kind of students are coming out; they're looking at test grades, what factual evidence you're gonna have. That limits what you can kind of do with the learning cycle. ... There was one instance we had a great discussion and there was this one kid he did not like discussion so he would read a book and

P4
Core Teacher
(English)

P5
Core Teacher
(History)

P6
Core Teacher
(Science)

Administrative Support – Response

Teacher Participant

work out of the book while we were discussing. He was learning great. We had the top scores in the school... [The principal] comes in one day, sees us discussing and sees him working, and [says] “he can’t be doing that while you all are discussing.” That’s how he learns best! I mean, what are we supposed to do? I help him learn. Every kid is going to be different. I mean little stuff. ... And so after three years of that I’m not going to deal with administration like this. I am going to go into nursing now.

Yes! I have always felt very supported. I have been at two schools...here in [anonymous] City and my principals and administrators have just always been very supportive. Even to the point where they have had to, you know, kind of stick up for me a little bit when I’ve done parent conferences. Because I do student led conferences and the students are in charge of their conference. ... And we spend a day, at least, preparing their portfolios, making sure that their questionnaires are written out... That everything is prepared for them to show their families when they come. And they’re allowed to bring anybody to come. I tell them you are worth somebody’s ten minutes. Somebody will come and invest ten minutes in you and it will be a grade. Because parent conference day is not on the calendar as spring break. It’s not a day off of school. It’s a work day for them and they have to show up with a mom, a dad, an aunt, an uncle, a brother, sister, neighbor, cousin, rabbi or priest... It doesn’t matter. And if they can’t get anybody like that then they need to go down the hall and grab another one of their teachers who will come and sit for their conference while they show their portfolio – their work. And so, they get to sit and say this is my work. ...I think it builds not only their self-esteem, because somebody’s taken ten minutes to look at what they’re doing everyday, but it also kind of cements in their mind I am at a job, I am working, and I do have a purpose here.

P7
Core Teacher
(Science)

Our administrators are pretty well...I mean they really kind of set the...atmosphere...How can I help you? What can I do to make it easier on you in the classroom? [Referring to administrator’s attitudes toward teachers] And I really like that and appreciate it because you do kind of feel like instead of it being you know the administrators... the administrators are just looking to see if every move you make is the right one and if you are doing everything you are supposed to do the correct way. Instead, it’s more of an atmosphere where I feel like they’re asking the questions, you know: Do you have what you need? Are you able to perform your tasks well and do what you need? And so, I think uh...I like that about the school. I don’t feel like there’s just this constant pressure of doing everything like you’re supposed to. And there is certainly that coming from, you know, especially within

P8
Core Teacher
(Math)

Administrative Support – Response

Teacher Participant

[Anonymous] City Schools... I mean, there's just a lot of pressure to do well, to see the students succeed...you know, and of course, that pressure has moved all the way up the line and sometimes down the line too. So, um, you know, I think you get a lot of that. At our school, we see a tremendous amount of administrators coming through outside of the school to come and see what's been done or being done in the school. We have data logs, we have word logs or we have this, that and the other... You typically are getting, you know, okay, well this is what they are coming to look at...Do you have what you need to get them up? You know... Are you able to do that? Or Here's another teacher that's done it. Maybe they can help you with getting yours taken care of. ...I definitely have a lot of connections at the school and feel very free to talk to my administrators or fellow teachers - share with them, you know, things that I'm needing. And they have no problem coming to me and saying hey I can you help me with this? So, I think that's also something that helps the atmosphere.