

## ABSTRACT

BARTLEY, APRIL YOUNG. Teacher Conceptions of Care and the Impact on Elementary School Students. (Under the direction of Dr. Patricia Marshall.)

The emphasis of this study is to understand the conceptions and manifestations of care within the context of the elementary classroom as determined by caring teachers, and how these caring teachers respond to differences among student ethnicities within their conceptions and manifestations of care. This study also looked at the perceived impact of care on students. The definition of care used in this study that arose out of the research literature is the trusting, respectful and supportive relationship between the teacher (care giver), and the students (care receivers), within the classroom setting. By looking at how ethnicity of the student population impacts teacher perceptions of care, this study furthered the extant research on the topic of teacher care.

Data was collected for this research through semi-structured interviews with ten caring elementary teachers. These teachers were each allowed to explain and construct their definitions of care, how they manifest care within the classroom, and the impact of care on students. From these constructions, common themes emerged defining care, explaining how it is shown in the classroom, and how it impacts students.

Overall this research accomplished the goals of understanding teacher constructions of care and its manifestation in the classroom and impact on students. However, the results were inconclusive on the impact of student ethnicity on the teacher constructions. What emerged regarding care in ethnically diverse classrooms is that caring teachers look at each student as an individual, and seek to teach each student with the care most appropriate to them. In addition, caring teachers love and respect their students and are respected in return.

Further research on the topic of teacher care within the context of ethnically diverse classrooms may include interviewing students to provide their perspective on the impact of teacher care. Additionally research on the impact of care on student motivation may also be beneficial.

Teacher Conceptions of Care and the Impact on  
Elementary School Students

by  
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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
North Carolina State University  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Science

Curriculum and Instruction, Elementary Education

Raleigh, NC

2007

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## BIOGRAPHY

I was born in Charlotte, North Carolina, to Dennis and Beth Young. After graduating from Providence High School in Charlotte, North Carolina, in June 1996, I earned a BA in History from North Carolina State University in December of 1999. I also completed my Elementary Education licensure program at Meredith College in May 2000. I gratefully accepted a job teaching fourth grade at Covenant Day School in Matthews, North Carolina, in August 2000 and taught fourth and then third grade for five years there. During this time I married Brandon Bartley, son of Jon and Kathryn Bartley of Raleigh, North Carolina. After five years of teaching, I began the Masters program in Curriculum and Instruction, Elementary Education at North Carolina State University. I will graduate in December 2007 with a Master of Science in Curriculum and Instruction, Elementary Education.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Most importantly I want to thank God for giving me the strength to go through and complete this masters program. I would also like to thank my husband for his continuous love and support, which are invaluable to me, and his listening ears. I also want to acknowledge my family and thank them for their constant love and encouragement. My husband, family, and friends are blessings for which I will always be thankful. I also extend my thanks to the faculty and staff in the College of Education at North Carolina State University for the opportunity to work with and learn from them. In addition, I would like to thank my committee chair and committee members for all of their time and help throughout this process. Also, thank you to all of the wonderful teachers that I have had the pleasure to learn from and work with throughout my schooling and career that have modeled for me what a caring teacher truly is.

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## Teacher Conceptions of Care and the Impact on Elementary School Students

### Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

Care is a need for all people and it has a positive impact on those who receive it. This positive impact can be manifested in such ways as an increased sense of self worth, increased motivation, or perseverance in accomplishing a goal. Care can be particularly important to students. Students that experience care given by their teachers can be positively impacted in numerous ways. For example, such students demonstrate an increased sense of community at school, increased academic motivation, and an increase in concern for others (Solomon, Battistich, Watson, Schaps, & Lewis, 2000). This positive impact of care on students has become a growing area of educational research. Specifically, research on care in the elementary classroom reveals that students' appreciation of learning and the foundations of their learning at this young age are effected by their perceptions of teacher care. One researcher noted, "A teacher may be perceived to know everything about the subject he or she teaches, but if he or she does not act in a caring manner, students in that teacher's classroom may report learning less from that teacher. According to Rice (2001) the important factors influencing children's learning are a sense of belonging and students' perception of caring". Because of the importance of care in elementary classrooms, I sought a study of teachers' perceptions of care and how they perceive that it impacts their students. I intended to go beyond the current research to better understand care as it manifests in contemporary culturally diverse classroom settings. With the increasing ethnic diversity of students and the need to respect others from diverse cultural backgrounds, I planned to study how teachers

demonstrate care within a culturally diverse classroom. Through this research I hope to provide insight into caring classrooms that will add to the existing research in this area and benefit teachers and their students.

I begin this document with an explanation of care. This will provide a starting point and provide background on which to build the remaining sections that go into more detail about care as it is manifested in classrooms. Studies describing care and its impact on students will be explained to provide insight into the extant research on care. This will be narrowed down within a section dealing specifically with elementary classroom care as this is the focus of the data for this study. The literature review will also describe culturally responsive teaching. Culturally responsive teaching is a way for teachers to show care to their students, but is not as widely explored in this literature review as the general topic of care. This will provide background information on showing care within ethnically diverse classrooms and will be tied in with the results from the data collection allowing for analysis of the impact of teacher care in ethnically diverse classrooms.

Following the literature review, I will describe the purpose and methodology used for this study. After this section will be the results from the data collection process. I will also include in this last section a discussion and analysis of the findings with references to the studies in the literature review. Limitations to the research and implications for future research will also be discussed.

### *What Is Care?*

Care has been a topic of growing interest within the past century. Two researchers with particular interest in care as seen through the attachment to care givers are John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. Inge Bretherton (1992), who has extensively studied the work of

Bowlby and Ainsworth on attachment theory, synthesized their research and describes their assertions on care in relation to attachment theory. He explains that John Bowlby focused his attention on attachment of care receivers to care givers. Bowlby defined care givers in multiple roles (e.g. mothers or social workers) but overall his research explored the impact of the care giver on the care receiver. Bretherton explains that in Bowlby's World Health Organization paper in 1951 he examined the mental health of homeless children looking specifically at the separation of children from their mothers, and concluded that "the infant or young child should experience a warm, intimate, and continuous relationship with his [sic] mother (or permanent mother substitute) in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment" (Bowlby, 1951, p. 13). In this particular study, Bowlby defined care as a warm, intimate and continuous relationship with the care giver (which in this case is the mother or mother substitute) that in turn provides satisfaction and enjoyment. Bretherton asserts that Bowlby further proposed that children need a close, consistent relationship with a care giver to thrive emotionally.

To further explain care through Bowlby's attachment theory Bretherton (1992) refers to Bowlby's 1973 book, *Separation*, which was a continuation of his previous work on attachment of children (care receiver) to their mothers (care givers). In this book, which drew on his previous research and that of others such as Freud and Waddington, Bowlby found a connection between the care receiver's development of self and the care giver. He concluded that if the care giver (or the one to whom the child is attached) provided for the child's needs for comfort and protection while also providing for the child's need for independent exploration of the environment, the child would develop a sense of self as valued and self-reliant. Conversely, if the child was not provided with the needed comfort or opportunity for

exploration, then the child would construct a sense of self as unworthy or incompetent.

Bretherton states this explanation of care as the act of providing comfort and protection while allowing the child the freedom to explore his or her environment. This is very different from the previously mentioned explanation of care (i.e., a warm, intimate, continuous relationship) however because Bowlby's 1973 research was a continuation of his earlier work, one can assume that his concept of care as providing comfort, protection, and freedom to explore *would* occur within a warm, intimate, continuous relationship. Additionally, in Bowlby's more recent work care was manifested in the child's development of a sense of self that is valued and self-reliant. Bretherton asserts that Bowlby's work suggests that care is manifested in children through their thriving emotionally and developing a valued and self-reliant sense of self.

Continuing in his explanation of care, Bretherton (1992) describes the work of Mary Ainsworth who supported John Bowlby's assertions through her own work on care givers and care receivers. In 1963, she studied 26 families in Baltimore by conducting interviews and making home visits to obtain observational data. She looked specifically at the behavioral patterns of mothers (care givers) as they interacted with their newborns and young children (care receivers). She took notes on how the children responded to the mothers during various interactions such as during feeding and play. What she found was that mothers who were more sensitive to the needs of the children at the beginning of their lives had more "harmonious" relationships with their children at the end of the fourth quarter of the study. In addition, the children found holding to be more satisfying and affectionate at the end of the fourth quarter if they were held tenderly from the beginning. In this study care was defined as sensitivity and tenderness. It was manifested in the harmonious relationships

between mother and child as well as through feelings of satisfaction and affection felt by the children. Bretherton concludes his explanation of care by correlating Ainsworth's research with Bowlby's by explaining that the latter defines care as a feeling, such as warmth and intimacy, whereas the former defines it as tenderness and sensitivity. Also, care is manifested through the child's feelings, either of self worth or satisfaction.

Nel Noddings is another researcher who has studied the concept of care. She also describes care as a feeling that is manifested through children's emotions; however unlike Bowlby and Ainsworth, Noddings does not define care in terms of an attachment to a care giver. In a synthesis of her own work, Noddings (2005) describes care as providing for the needs of others. She identified two types of needs, i.e. expressed needs and inferred needs, and indicated that the former (expressed needs) "come from the one expressing them, and they may be expressed in either words or behavior" (Noddings, 2005, p.148), whereas an inferred need is a need that is perceived by the one giving the care. This may include the need to belong or feel secure. She continues by stating that if needs are not treated positively or sensitively then the one with the needs will not feel care. Thus care is manifested by a sensitive reaction by the care giver to the needs of the care receiver. A sensitive reaction is one in which the care giver ensures that the one expressing the need (care receiver) is heard and the need is understood and if not satisfied, then at least treated with respect. Noddings continues by adding that care is manifested in the skillful identification of inferred or hidden needs, such as the fear of failure. Care in this situation is felt when the care giver is able to adequately sense and provide the needed attention to the hidden feelings that are prompting the care receiver to feel the initial need for care.

In additional writing on care, Nel Noddings (1995) depicts care as more than a warm feeling. She states that care is a continuous search for competence by which she means that people feel care when they are recognized for doing their best. This recognition by the care giver is what makes the care receiver feel competent. Accordingly, people will feel cared for when they see that they are able to make positive contributions based on their own talents and this in turn will be appreciated by others. With these studies providing a background explaining care, I will now turn to studies that describe care and its impact within the realm of education.

*Care Within Education.*

Within education, the teacher takes the role of care giver while the student has the role of care receiver. Based on the explanations of care and the impact on the care receiver mentioned above, one can conclude that care would be an important part of the role of a teacher in the classroom. Krystyna Nowak-Fabrykowski and Paula Caldwell studied care as an important role for classroom teachers. They researched preservice teachers with the purpose of defining care and understanding how to better teach beginning teachers about the importance of demonstrating care in the classroom. In their 2002 study they surveyed 46 preservice teachers who were in an early childhood program. Participants were asked to reflect on their own caring experiences from when they were young, and were led in a discussion about developing a caring attitude. A synthesis of the survey and discussion resulted in a description of care as “listening, giving feedback, smiling, sharing yourself with others, helping, giving positive reinforcement, and getting down on the child’s level and interacting” (Nowak-Fabrykowski & Caldwell, 2002, p.361). When the participants were specifically asked about care provided by secondary care givers, (such as teachers or

professors) they stated that care included putting others' needs before one's own and respecting others' decisions. In this study the participants explained that care was manifested in the comfort that they felt around care givers and feelings of security and trust.

After the initial questioning of the preservice teachers was conducted by Nowak-Fabrykowski and Caldwell (2002), these same preservice teachers were asked to think about how they would demonstrate care in their classrooms based on four "windows of care" as determined by Caldwell. These four windows, as illustrated in Figure 1, defined a caring teacher as 1) being student centered, by being patient and listening for example, 2) work centered, such as providing extra time if needed to complete an assignment, 3) engaging, by providing time for discussion; and 4) active, for example relating learning to students' lives.

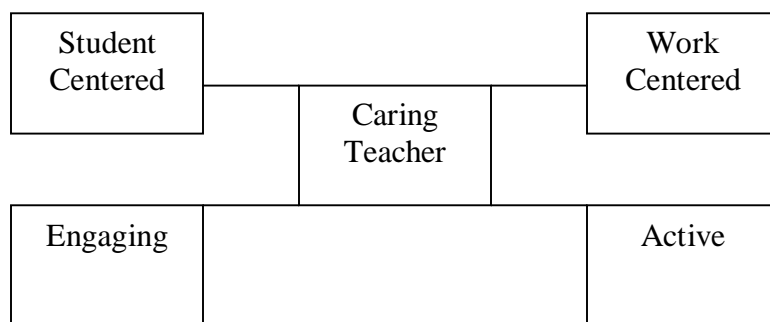


Figure 1. Windows of Care (Nowak-Fabrykowski & Caldwell, 2002)

After this time of reflection, the researchers found that the preservice teachers were more aware of the importance of teacher care within the classroom as they were able to come up with ways that they could incorporate care into their future teaching, such as by actively listening to students. In addition, the researchers further emphasized the importance of the role of the teacher as care giver by modeling caring characteristics as an example of how these teachers would someday show care to their students. It is to be noted that this study occurred within one university in which the demographics of the student teachers were not described. Also, there was no mention of the students with which these preservice teachers

had experience. These factors limit our understanding of care as these factors may impact how care is understood and manifested. The focus of this study was the reflection on care by the preservice teachers and the development of their understanding of how to provide care within the classroom.

In similar research on the importance of care in the role of a teacher, Collinson, Killeavy, and Stephenson (1998) also asked their participants to reflect on care, however their participants were experienced teachers. They surveyed and interviewed 12 teachers (seven females and five males) from England, Ireland, and the United States all of which had more than 15 years of experience teaching. There was little racial diversity among the teachers and there was no mention of the diversity of the students that these teachers taught, which again could impact perceptions of care and its manifestation. The teachers were chosen by administrators or peers because of their professional accomplishments and because they were considered models for their peers. Through the questioning of the researchers and comments by the experienced teachers, definitions of care emerged. These model teachers saw respect as foundational to care. The manifestation of this definition of care was considered to be effective teaching and ultimately the best learning for students. Also, the researchers saw another definition of care emerge wherein the teachers explained care as working hard to know students through multiple sources, such as observing, dialogue, or written work that revealed student thinking. Care, according to this definition, was manifested through the demonstrations of respect within the classroom between students and teachers as well as the establishment of a classroom atmosphere that was open to questioning and self assessment.



The Nowak-Fabrykowski and Caldwell (2002) study and the Collinson et al. (1998) study on the importance of care within the roles of classroom teachers are also similar in that they incorporate the theoretical views of Mayeroff (1971) who asserts that care is shown between the teacher and student when the teacher takes time to truly know the students. “Knowing a student” is defined as understanding what a student needs to grow and actualize him or herself, or finding how each child can feel competent in his or her talents. This feeling of competence is the same manifestation of care as defined by Noddings (1995). All of these studies on care seem to be getting at the same aspect of care, which is building relationships between care giver (the teacher) and care receiver (the student) and in turn facilitating the development of feelings of competence, respect, and understanding within care receivers. This further emphasizes the importance for teachers to demonstrate care within the classroom.

In a study revealing the effects on students when teachers demonstrate care within the classroom, Judith Deiro (2003) interviewed students to better understand how teacher care impacts them. She looked specifically at the feelings of respect felt by students of caring teachers. She studied six junior high or high school classrooms which were chosen because the students in the classes indicated on an inventory that they felt a high level of trust and closeness with their teachers. The teachers in these classrooms were ethnically diverse, three of whom were male and three were female, therefore considering ethnicity in the study of care which was not mentioned by the previous studies. Student demographics were not mentioned. Interviews were conducted with the teachers and students to better understand the relationship that existed between the teacher (care giver) and the students (care receivers), and revealed that the students felt care from their teachers because they felt respected. This

respect was felt due to the considerate tone of voice and receptive manner of the teachers. In addition, the students noted that they felt respected because discipline was used as a way to teach, not just to punish. One teacher expressed discipline as a problem solving method in which he sought the input of the students. Through respectful treatment of the students, the teachers were able to establish trusting relationships with their students. In turn the students felt cared for and therefore reciprocated respect back to their teachers. This study brings out the impact on students as teachers make demonstrating care an important part of the classroom.

In another study describing the impact of care on students as teachers demonstrate care within the classroom, Samdal, Nutbeam, Wold, and Kannas (1998) explain that if students feel care, then they also feel more satisfied with school. These researchers conducted a survey with a cluster sample of students aged, 11, 13, and 15 in four European countries. The sample size of students from each country was considerably large and there was a fairly equal representation of males and females. Again in this study, there was no mention of the ethnicity of the students. The survey included questions about student satisfaction with school as measured on a Likert scale. One of the conclusions that emerged was that a teacher's way of caring for the students played a significant role in determining satisfaction with school. The caring interaction that the teachers had with students determined whether care was felt by the students reflecting the definitions of care from the previous two studies as well as Mayeroff's (1971) theory that establishing relationships between the teacher and students builds care. The research by Samdal et al. went further to state that social and emotional support from the teacher helped to build the relationships between the teachers and students. Similar to Deiro (2003), they also found that involving

students in rule making and teacher enforcement of the rules fairly and consistently also increased student satisfaction with school. Therefore these researchers inferred that students feel care when their teachers provide consistent, fair discipline. This feeling of care in return, manifests itself in students feeling secure and ultimately more satisfied with school. This study as well as the previous one emphasizes how teacher care impacts students.

### *Care Within the Realm of Elementary Education*

The previous studies have provided an explanation of care, emphasized its importance in the role of a teacher, and shown how it is manifested by teachers and its impact on students, however none of them focused specifically on elementary aged students. The work of the Child Development Project (CDP) over the past few decades has looked specifically at care as it is demonstrated in the elementary school setting. In an effort to define the concept of care, Solomon, Watson, Battistich, Schaps, and Delucchi (1992) synthesized research from the CDP. They report that care is established by building positive relationships within the classroom among students, and between students and the teacher. These relationships establish a “caring community” within the classroom. Care is experienced by students within this “community” through the respect that the teacher provides as well as by demonstrations that the teacher is responsive to student needs and continually provides support, whether emotionally or academically. Also within this “caring community”, students are involved in establishing classroom procedures. Student involvement in classroom procedures includes their involvement in rule making, as well as allowing students to express their opinions and providing opportunities for students to make an impact in the classroom. Showing care by being responsive to student needs directly relates to the view of care as discussed by Noddings (2005). Similarly, the CDP’s definition of care as showing respect is consistent

with the findings of Nowak-Fabrykowski and Caldwell (2002), Collinson et al. (1998), and Deiro (2003). Further, the inclusion of student involvement in classroom procedures within their definition of care reflects Deiro and Samdal et al.'s (1998) research. All of these connections between the work of the CDP and the previously mentioned researchers are illustrated in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Connections Between CDP and Previous Research

	Elements Of CDP		
Manifestation of care incorporated in CDP research (Solomon et al., 1992)	Responsiveness to student needs	Showing respect	Student involvement in classroom procedures
Supportive research	Noddings (2005), Solomon et al.	Solomon et al., Nowak-Fabrykowski & Caldwell (2002), Collinson et al. (1998), Deiro (2003)	Solomon et al., Deiro, Samdal et al. (1998)

The CDP went further to denote additional actions of the teacher that promote care within the classroom. These actions include providing literature on care to enhance the caring attitude within the “community” of the classroom, and modeling care by which students may pattern their own caring behavior. This process of modeling care was also an important part of the research by Nowak-Fabrykowski and Caldwell mentioned earlier. Solomon et al. assert that care becomes a cycle, as shown in Figure 2, as teachers show care and students feel care and therefore demonstrate care to other students as well as the teacher. Through this cycle students become more motivated to reflect the care given to them which drives this cycle. Stemming from this cycle of care, Solomon et al. report a strong correlation between an established caring classroom and student motivation. Specifically the caring classroom

communities were positively related to academic motivation, achievement motivation, and self-esteem.

Motivation can be further explained by the research of Ryan and Deci (2000). They state that there is a greater personal commitment to be motivated when the motivation becomes internalized, or valued, as opposed to being externalized, such as by receiving a reward. The motivation to show care to others becomes internalized through the “cycle of care” as students become more personally committed to showing care as they continue to receive it.

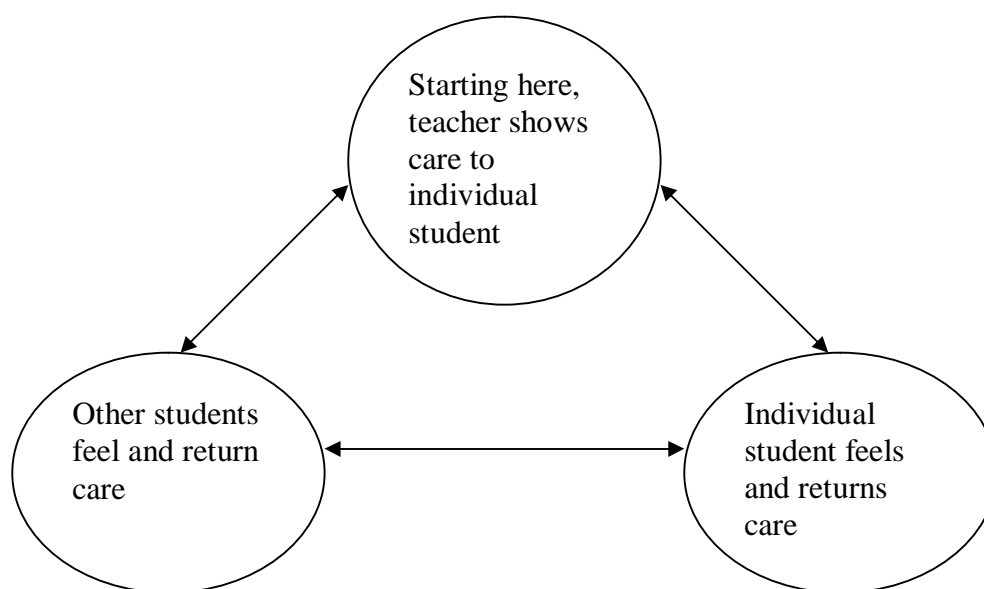


Figure 2. Cycle of Care

Within caring communities students feel respected and engaged and ultimately cared for. As the students feel care, they in turn show care to others building a caring community. As they build this community they become committed to it and its well being. They therefore internalize the values of care that are part of the community. In a caring classroom, learning is an implied part of the community. Therefore students, as a part of the community (if they

feel cared for), internalize the value of learning and are thus more motivated to learn.

Additional impacts of being motivated to care as reported by Solomon et al. (1992) in their synthesis of the CDP's research include students voicing higher educational aspirations as well as exhibiting less misconduct compared to students in classrooms that did not implement "caring communities".

Another study about "caring communities" within elementary classrooms was done by Solomon et al. (2000). In the early 1990's this research team conducted a research project across six school districts to better understand the effects of implementing "caring communities" within classrooms. For this research, Schaps, Battistich, and Solomon (2004) in association with members of the CDP developed a school improvement program for creating a "caring community" within the classroom which included using literature, incorporating cooperative learning, engaging students in developing classroom management, increasing home-school interaction, and school service programs. Solomon et al. then selected classrooms within certain schools in each district and helped them to implement these "caring communities". The schools selected included student populations that represented a wide range of ethnicities allowing for an ethnically diverse perspective on care. Classrooms that implemented the "caring communities" were then compared to control classrooms that did not implement the "caring communities". Data was gathered through student surveys, teacher surveys, and classroom observations over a three year period and was recorded and analyzed. After comparing the classrooms that did not establish caring communities with those classrooms that did establish caring communities Solomon et al. found several themes that emerged showing significant correlations between the caring community and the manifestations of care. One such significant correlation was that for those

schools that did establish the “caring communities” there were clear gains in academic motivation by the students. This gain was explained by the fact that students in “caring communities” developed a relationship with others, including the teacher, in the community. According to the researchers, these relationships promoted the cyclical desire among the students to care for others and feel cared for in return. When students feel cared for, their desire to uphold the values of the community increases. Therefore within the classroom where learning is valued, students desire to uphold this value and become more academically motivated. This finding on the cyclical desire to care mirrors the findings of Solomon et al. (1992) and the work of Ryan and Deci (2000).

Additional research pointing to the importance of teacher care in elementary classrooms by the CDP was carried out by Dalton and Watson (1997). They interviewed and observed teachers from a variety of elementary school classrooms with student populations that reflected varying ethnicities and had implemented caring communities within their classrooms as described by the CDP. This research was driven by the intention to understand how teachers have established these caring classrooms. Dalton and Watson found a variety of teaching styles being incorporated within the caring classrooms that they observed and described among the teachers they interviewed. Nevertheless, they did find some common themes of care that emerged from their data collection. One such theme was on building respectful relationships within the classroom, mirroring what the aforementioned researchers have found. These classrooms were also intentional about developing students’ internal motivation to learn, and focused on supporting students as they learned. These major themes from Dalton and Watson’s research are supported by the previously mentioned studies by

Nowak-Fabrykowski and Caldwell (2002), Collinson et al. (1998), Deiro (2003), Samdal et al. (1998), Solomon et al. (1992), Ryan and Deci (2000), and Solomon et al. (2000).

Dalton and Watson (1997), through their research, found many additional characteristics of caring elementary classrooms (though not seen as major themes) that had an impact on the feeling of care developed within the classroom. One such characteristic was that students felt comfortable to take risks. Students looked at challenges with confidence as they felt they would receive the necessary support that they needed from the teacher. Also, these classrooms were “friendly” places where students could trust the teacher and other students. The teacher made it a priority to connect with students, such as by sharing personal stories and listening to the stories of the students and by sharing feelings with students and allowing for open discussion of feelings. Students also felt care (i.e. secure) because they were familiar with expectations and routines within the classroom. These classrooms were marked by the value the teachers placed on student work as it hung on walls and was displayed around the room. In addition, the students felt more relaxed in their classrooms and were therefore able to put more energy into their learning as they were not preoccupied with outside worries, such as being cared for.

Many of these caring characteristics that were found in caring elementary classrooms by Dalton and Watson (1997) were also found through the research by Thompson, Rousseau, and Ransdell (2005). These researchers conducted similar research to Dalton and Watson in that they surveyed and observed fourteen elementary classroom teachers who also displayed caring characteristics as determined by their principals. These teachers taught in one of four urban schools that partner with researchers from the University of Memphis. The teachers varied ethnically and were all female. The demographics of the students within their



classrooms were not described except for mentioning that they were from predominantly low socio-economic status and lower achieving. The researchers found that these caring teachers were supportive of student needs and provided instruction that was developmentally appropriate for the students. These teachers also showed care by respecting the students as well as by being enthusiastic, good communicators, and by acting professionally. In their concluding remarks, the researchers stated that the teachers' beliefs about their students, in that they cared for their students, influenced the students' motivation to learn. This conclusion was drawn from the researchers' correlation between student achievement on a standardized test and the caring characteristics exhibited by the teachers during their observations. These caring characteristics, along with the aforementioned major themes of caring, observed by Dalton and Watson as well as the previously described researchers are the basis for the definition of care I used in my research. Specifically my definition of care within the context of the elementary classroom is the trusting, respectful and supportive relationship between the teacher (care giver), and the students (care receivers), within the classroom setting.

### *Culturally Responsive Teaching*

In addition to defining care and understanding the impact of care on students, which is the emphasis of the above research, I sought to examine the impact that student ethnicity has on definitions of care and manifestations of care by the teacher. The research on culturally responsive teaching examines the impact of student ethnicity on teaching and also incorporates many of the same aspects of care as described in the previous research. Geneva Gay (2000) who has studied and written about culturally responsive teaching explains that teachers need to be culturally responsive in their teaching. Culturally responsive teaching is

defined as, “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them,” (Gay, 2000, p.29). In addition, classrooms teaching in culturally responsive ways are led by teachers that value and allow expression of each student’s cultural identity which makes connections between school and the students’ homes. This also allows students the freedom to express themselves and learn in meaningful ways. Gay continues by stating that culturally responsive teaching involves setting high, but manageable goals for students and supporting them as they work to achieve these goals. This aspect of culturally responsive teaching reflects the definitions of care stated by both Dalton and Watson (1997) and Thompson et al. (2005) who emphasized that care is felt when students feel supported by the teacher.

Ana Maria Villegas and Tamara Lucas (2002) further explain culturally responsive teaching in their writing on preparing culturally responsive teachers. They propose a curriculum that can be used to prepare teachers to teach in culturally responsive ways. Their curriculum arose out of their study of culturally responsive teaching, observations in ethnically diverse classrooms and through working with preservice teachers. They propose that culturally responsive teaching should include being socioculturally conscious, having affirming views of students, being responsible for educational change, understanding how learners construct knowledge, knowing about the lives of students, and using this knowledge to effectively teach students. Villegas and Lucas provide details for each of these characteristics of culturally responsive teaching. In their details they include that culturally responsive teachers respect cultural differences, view their students as capable, and have their best interests at heart. In addition, culturally responsive teachers plan instruction that builds

on students' prior knowledge and their experiences outside of school making learning more relevant to students. Using students' prior knowledge and life experiences to make learning relevant reflects the assertions by Gay (2000) on culturally responsive teaching.

Understanding students' experiences outside of school relates to Dalton and Watson's (1997) finding on building caring communities within elementary classrooms which states that caring teachers find ways to connect with students.

In a study by Dave Brown (2003) the connection between culturally responsive teaching and teacher care is made more explicit. He specifically studied classrooms that incorporated culturally responsive teaching and created caring communities. The thirteen participants in his study varied ethnically and taught in ethnically diverse communities at various grade levels from elementary to high school. Through his interviews with the participants he came to three major conclusions about creating caring, culturally responsive classrooms. He found that teachers in these classrooms were sincerely interested in knowing each student, they were assertive and made expectations explicit, and they respected their students by understanding and using the communication patterns of their students. These conclusions connect with several of the studies already described on teacher care and culturally responsive teaching. The first major theme involving knowing students personally included knowing student needs and making connections between school and home. Addressing needs directly relates to the research by Noddings (2005) as previously described, and making connections between school and home was part of the research by Nowak-Fabrykowski and Caldwell (2002) and Schaps et al. (2004) who stressed home-school interactions as important to a caring classroom. The second major theme about making expectations explicit relates to Gay's (2000) assertions on culturally responsive

teaching about setting high goals for students. Brown also found culturally responsive teaching occurred in classrooms that created caring communities in which students felt comfortable, supported, and safe. This concept of caring communities connects directly with the research by the Child Development Project as explored by Solomon et al. (1992), Solomon et al. (2000) and Dalton and Watson (1997). Lastly in relation to care, the results of Brown's interviews revealed that building trusting, respectful relationships between students and the teacher was an integral part of culturally responsive teaching. This further supports the definition of caring that I used in my research about care within an ethnically diverse classroom. In addition, I used this background of information to analyze and explain the data I gathered on how teachers in ethnically diverse classrooms conceptualize and demonstrate care and how this impacts their students.

## Chapter 2: Methodology and Data Collection

According to Creswell (1998) a purpose statement for a study provides the major intent and direction in which the study will go. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the conceptions and manifestations of care within the context of the elementary classroom as determined by caring teachers, and how these caring teachers respond to differences among student ethnicities within their conceptions and manifestations of care. The definition of care used in this study that arose out of the research literature is the trusting, respectful and supportive relationship between the teacher (care giver), and the students (care receivers), within the classroom setting. This purpose reflects a qualitative research design that consists of a phenomenological epistemology because it reflects the understandings of the participants within the context of their experiences. A phenomenological approach is described in the literature by Lopez and Willis (2004) as “understanding unique individuals and their meanings and interactions with others” (p. 726). Racher and Robinson (2002) go on to explain phenomenology as a descriptive approach. They also go on in their writing to explain the goal of the “interpretive paradigm” as understanding the constructions of others from the view of those making the constructions. Therefore this study also reflected an interpretivist paradigm as I allowed the participants to make their own constructions about care and gained understanding about teacher care within the context of the teacher constructions. Using an interpretivist approach provided the participants with the freedom to construct their ideas and allowed for elaboration on the topic of care. However, one of the weaknesses of this approach is that the constructions of the participants were interpreted through my lens of understanding. Therefore, throughout the

research process I attempted to understand the constructions of the teachers within the context of their experiences as well as employed methods, which will be explained in detail in subsequent sections, to be sure I accurately described the constructions of the participants. In addition to the purpose stated previously, several issue questions and topical questions guided the research. Creswell explains issue questions as those that address major concerns in the research whereas topical questions seek additional information to provide description for the study. Three issue questions addressed in this study include:

1. How do caring teachers define care within the context of their classrooms?
2. How do caring teachers manifest care within their classrooms?
3. How do they perceive care impacts their students?

Two topical questions addressed in this study include:

1. How do students demonstrate that they feel care?
2. How do teachers demonstrate care in meaningful ways to all students in a culturally diverse classroom?

The methodology section is divided into parts to provide thick description of each step of the methodology of this research. The first section explains the semi-structured interview process employed for this research. Then I describe the method of participant selection and provide thick description of the participants. Additionally I describe the context in which each participant is positioned, including their schools. Lastly, the interview protocol employed for this study is explained.

#### *Semi-structured Interview Process*

Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte (1999) describe semi-structured interviews as unstructured and open-ended with the directionality of an instrument to provide focus to the

data. Rubin and Rubin (1995) further explain the semi-structured interview design as one that “takes shape gradually, as the researcher listens and hears the meaning with the data” (p. 43). The semi-structured interview process was employed in this study because it allowed the participants to construct their ideas based on the open-ended questions asked during the interviews while the interviews were guided by the direction of the interview protocol. Using this qualitative method of questioning allows “participants more freedom to structure their answers as they wish” (Ulin, Robinson, & Tolley, 2005, p. 38). Ulin et al. also propose one-on-one interviews with the participants as an effective method of data collection which allows the participants time to reflect and interact with the interviewer without the distraction and leading of others, therefore this method of questioning was used in this study.

I sat down with each participant and asked the same set of questions, which will be detailed in a subsequent section. These questions guided the interview process, but allowed the participants to construct their own responses to each question. As Schensul et al. assert, semi-structured interview questions are preformulated, but allow for the answers to be open-ended. In addition, as Rubin and Rubin assert, because of the flexible nature of qualitative interviewing, additional questions may arise during an interview that may help to clarify and further explain constructions of the participants, therefore probes were used when necessary during the interviews to provide deeper description by the participants.

In continuing with the semi-structured interview process, I listened throughout each interview for commonalities, called themes, that emerged. I also looked for emergent themes as I transcribed each interview. I transcribed each interview because as Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) assert, understanding is developed through the process of writing down verbatim what is said during interviews. Additionally they state “transcription facilitates the close attention

and the interpretive thinking that is needed to make sense of the data” (p. 82). To guide my transcription process I followed the guidelines of Ulin et al. (2005) which include organizing the data by research questions, then reading and re-reading the transcripts to become familiar with the data. After transcribing the data and reading through it, I coded it using the process as described by Ulin et al. They suggest organizing with broad levels that reflect the research questions as well as having codes for smaller components of themes. I then organized the codes into those representing major themes and those representing smaller components with brief statements explaining each. From this data I was able to write this report of my findings and discuss the implications of the data.

### *Participant Selection*

The emphasis of the semi-structured interview process is the interviews. Therefore the first step in my research process was finding participants for the interviews. As stated previously, this is a qualitative study seeking rich descriptions from the participants on care which requires more time and analysis therefore fewer participants were sought, specifically six to twelve elementary teachers. Purposive sampling was used as the participants were chosen through a non-random process of selecting teachers that exhibited care as I defined it. All teachers, schools, and counties were given pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. Because the purpose of this study was to understand teacher constructions of care and the impact of student ethnicity on these constructions, participants were selected that taught at schools that contained at least one-third students of color out of the total student population. Through reviewing statistical data from the Department of Public Instruction on the ethnic composition of student populations of counties in the area in which the research was to be conducted, several counties were identified that contained schools with student populations



in which at least one-third of the student population were students of color. Two counties were chosen that contained the prescribed ethnic diversity in the student population. One county, Young County, was located in the north-eastern part of North Carolina. African American, Latino(a), and Native American students comprised most of the ethnically diverse (i.e. non-White American) population of this county. The other county selected, Roven County, was located in the southern Piedmont region of North Carolina. African American and Latino(a) students comprised most of the ethnically diverse population of this county. The research coordinator for these counties was contacted by telephone to request permission to conduct research within the public school system of the county. Additionally, the research coordinator was asked to specify schools with the student ethnic diversity described above within the county that may be willing to provide teachers for the research. Names of principals and telephone numbers were given by the research coordinator for schools that may be willing to participate. Each school that was suggested was contacted by telephone.

The first school that was contacted, Martin Elementary, was in Young County. The student population for this school was over half African American, over 30% White, over 10% Latino(a), and one percent Native American. Over 80% of the student population participated in the free-reduced lunch program indicating a high proportion of lower socioeconomic status students. Upon observation of the teacher population at the school, African American and White ethnicities were dominant, however no statistical data was available on the ethnicity of the teacher population. Over half of the teachers in the school had more than four years of experience. The principal at Martin Elementary was an African American woman and was eager to participate in the research.

The second school that was contacted, Watts Elementary, was in Roven County. The student population at this school was over 40% African American, over 40% Latino(a), and slightly over 10% White. Well over 90% of students at this school participated in the free-reduced lunch program indicating that most of the students at the school were of low socioeconomic status. Upon observation of the teacher population, White, African American, and Asian teachers were observed, however no statistical data was available on the ethnicity of the teacher population. Over 70% of the teachers at this school had more than four years of experience. The principal at Watts Elementary was a White male who was also eager to participate in this study.

Each of the two principals that indicated that his or her school would be willing to participate, Martin Elementary and Watts Elementary, was then sent an initial contact letter. (See Appendix A) This letter further explained the research and requested to meet with the principal personally to discuss participant selection. However, during the telephone conversations both principals stated their preference for interviews with participants to be less than one hour, therefore it was agreed that interviews would be set at 45 minutes. Due to this change, a revised initial contact letter was sent to principals in place of the originally planned initial contact letter. (See Appendix B)

Within the initial contact letter was a description of the sampling method that would be used to select teachers from the schools to participate in the study. Caring teachers were sought from each school. In the initial contact letter that each principal received, caring teachers were defined as, “teachers who demonstrate a trusting, respectful, and supportive relationship between themselves and their students”. I had planned to use triangulation in the selection of participants for this study. Triangulation is the process by which multiple sources

are used to enhance the validity and reduce bias within the research (Mathison, 1988).

Therefore in participant selection, multiple sources were used to choose participants, including the principal and various administrators. Using the definition of caring teachers, the principal was to make a list of several teachers who met this definition. Additionally, one or two other members of the school staff were to also independently create lists of teachers who met this definition of caring. Participants were to be chosen by me whose names appeared on all the independent lists. However, the principals of the schools participating in the research were eager to get started with participant selection. They each created a list of caring teachers and asked one or two of their administrators to independently create lists of caring teachers. The principals then collected each list created by the administrators. He or she created a master list of names of caring teachers from those names that appeared on each list collected from the administrators as well as appeared on his or her own list before I could view any of the independent lists. Therefore, based on their reports, the principals did allow for triangulation by asking multiple sources to help with the participant selection. Specifically, I emailed each principal to confirm that lists of participant names were created independently and then used to create one master list of names. At Martin Elementary, the principal explained that she created a list of caring teachers at the school then asked the vice principal to do the same independently of the principal. She then looked at both lists and made a final list comprised of names that appeared on both lists. The principal from Watts Elementary confirmed that lists were generated independently as well. He asked two vice principals to create lists of caring teachers independently. The lists were then compared and the first five names that appeared on all the lists were chosen as participants. This deviation in the participant selection process, however, introduces bias into this research as participant

selection is based on the word of the principals that triangulation was used. Originally, after the names of the participants were given to me, a letter was to be sent to each participant explaining the study and requesting her participation. (See Appendix C) However, because the principals were eager to move forward with the interviews, dates and times were arranged by the principals for conducting the interviews before I could send this initial letter to the participants. Due to this rapid progression by the principals, a revised initial contact letter was sent or given to the participating teachers. (See Appendix D)

Five participants were chosen from Martin Elementary and five participants were chosen from Watts Elementary. A summary of participant demographic information is presented in Table 2.1. At Martin Elementary all five teachers were White females. The first teacher, Althea, was a middle-aged White woman. She had more than 30 years of experience teaching and currently taught in Kindergarten. Her demeanor was happy and she laughed at herself a lot. Althea talked fast and at times trailed off in laughter at herself and what she had said making it difficult to hear her final words in the statements she made. She continually expressed her love of teaching and being around children. The second teacher interviewed at Martin Elementary, Brenda, was a young, pregnant, White woman in her twenties that had less than five years of experience teaching and currently taught fourth grade. She seemed a little nervous and continually looked at me for approval of her answers. Her speech was fast and she did not elaborate much on her answers. Carol, the third teacher interviewed, was a middle-aged White woman with close to ten years of experience teaching who currently taught in fourth grade. She was overweight and expressed that she had several health problems that had come up over the past year. Carol continually referred to her faith in Christ as she answered the interview questions, and her love of her students and teaching was very

apparent. Her words were spoken slowly and carefully and provided very detailed answers to interview questions. She was open to discussing ethnic diversity in the classroom and provided several examples and generalizations about the impact of student ethnicity on care. A younger White woman, Deidre, was the fourth teacher interviewed at Martin Elementary. She was in her twenties, had close to ten years of teaching experience, and currently taught in second grade. Her demeanor seemed relaxed throughout the interview and the flow of conversation ran smoothly. She was open to discussing ethnic diversity in the classroom and provided elaboration for the interview questions asked, however her interview was the shortest one conducted. The fifth teacher from Martin Elementary, Elaine, was not able to meet with me on the day specified by the principal, therefore an alternate day was chosen to meet. She was a middle-aged White woman with close to 20 years of teaching experience and currently taught in Kindergarten. Her speech was fast as she seemed to have much to say and was very concerned about building lasting relationships with her students. Elaine expressed frustration that the interviews were scheduled so quickly by the principal which was why she was unable to meet with me at original time set up by the principal.

Watts Elementary produced five teacher participants. The first participant, Faye, was a middle-aged White woman who currently taught in Kindergarten and had around 20 years of teaching experience, part of which occurred in New York before moving to North Carolina. She stated that she didn't know why she was chosen for this study on care, however through her interview she conveyed that she very much cared for her students. Faye had a Masters degree and had much experience teaching ethnically diverse students in New York. The next teacher interviewed at Watts Elementary, Georgia, was also a middle-aged White woman who taught in Kindergarten with around 20 years of experience. She stated that she

had a high proportion of exceptional children in her classroom because she enjoyed teaching exceptional children and seemed very intuitive about what students need. Harriet, the third teacher from Watts Elementary, was a young Asian woman with just a couple of years of experience who currently taught in first grade. Harriet talked somewhat fast, but conveyed a real joy in teaching children. She expressed her concern over those that respond in negative ways to differences in student ethnicity. Ingrid was the fourth teacher interviewed at Watts Elementary. She was a White woman in her twenties with five years of teaching experience who was currently teaching fourth grade and had looped up with her class from third grade so she had better insight into her students. Ingrid was in the process of getting her Masters in Reading and seemed well spoken and comfortable during the interview. Like Georgia, she stated that she sought out to have exceptional students in her class. The last teacher interviewed was Judith, a young White woman in her twenties with a little more than five years of experience teaching. She taught exceptional children in a self-contained classroom within the elementary school even though she also had experience with middle school exceptional children as well. Judith explained that she was a single mom and was very passionate about going beyond the role of a teacher to meet the needs of her students. It was not unusual for her to take students home if needed and buy them things that they may not have otherwise.

Table 2.1. Summary of Participant Demographics

Participant Name	Race	Age	Years Experience	Current grade
Althea	White	Middle-aged	Over 30 years	Kindergarten
Brenda	White	Twenties	Less than 5 years	Fourth
Carol	White	Middle-aged	Close to 10 years	Fourth
Deidre	White	Twenties	Close to 10 years	Second
Elaine	White	Middle-aged	Close to 20 years	Kindergarten
Faye	White	Middle-aged	Around 20 years	Kindergarten
Georgia	White	Middle-aged	Around 20 years	Kindergarten
Harriet	Asian	Twenties	2 years	First
Ingrid	White	Twenties	5 years	Fourth
Judith	White	Twenties	More than 5 years	Exceptional children

### *Interview Protocol*

On the days specified by the principals, I went to each school to conduct the interviews. Upon arriving at each school, I met each principal and then began the series of interviews that were pre-arranged by the principals. At Martin Elementary the first interview was conducted in the classroom of the teacher. Interruptions were minimal and Althea and I were alone. At one point, however, Althea's teaching assistant came in and then left. The additional three interviews at Martin Elementary were conducted in a workroom.

Interruptions were minimal and the participants and I were alone the entire interview. The participant from Martin Elementary, Elaine, (who sent an email to me stating an inability to meet on the day specified by the principal) and I arranged to meet at a convenient location, a

local restaurant. The noise level at this location was somewhat high, however distractions were minimal and both Elaine and I were able to focus on the interview. At Watts Elementary I conducted all five interviews in a conference room within the main office. Interruptions were minimal and I met alone with each teacher.

Ulin et al. (2005) emphasize the importance of obtaining the consent of participants in a research study. They state that informed consent means that participants understand the purpose of the research, how they were chosen to participate, data collection procedures, possible risks and benefits of participation, that participation is voluntary and will remain confidential, and who to contact with questions or concerns. In addition, consent should be gained at the beginning of an interview before any questions are asked of the participant. Therefore, each of my interviews began by asking the consent of each participant to conduct the interview. (See Appendix E) The consent form was explained and time was given for each participant to ask questions, however none were asked. Each participant signed a consent form before the interview began. The consent form indicated that the participants would be given pseudonyms to maintain their anonymity. In addition, the consent form mentioned that the interviews would be audio recorded. During the interviews a digital recording device was set on the table and used to record the audio from each interview. Following the semi-structured interview process described previously, a preformulated set of questions was asked during the course of each interview. (See Appendix F) Additional questions were asked throughout the interviews to probe the participants to further explain if necessary. Interviews lasted from 20 to 45 minutes from the participant initially entering the room until the end of the recorded interview. Participants were given the time to construct answers to questions and provide as much explanation as they felt necessary. Interview



questions and probes were used to guide the interview, however the participants were free to express their thoughts, tell stories, and do most of the talking. The questions asked during the interview reflect the issue and topic questions stated previously. In addition, these questions reflect the semi-structured interview process described by Schensul et al. (1999). Schensul et al. advocate asking questions in language that is understandable to participants. In addition they state that questions should be of a reasonable length and should avoid leading the participant to provide a certain answer. For the ordering of questions they assert that simpler questions should lead the interview and work into more abstract topics with more sensitive question occurring at the end.

At the end of each interview the participants were asked for their email address so that I could email them the themes that emerged from all the interviews after they were analyzed. I invited each participant to look at the themes and provide feedback. (See Appendix G). This method of member checking is described in the work of Creswell and Miller (2000) who state that “it consists of taking data and interpretations back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information” (p. 127). They go on to assert that this method produces validity for the research.

After the interviews, I transcribed the recordings and read and re-read them looking for emergent themes. I coded the transcriptions by writing small notes, or codes, in the margins on each transcription. Ulin et al. (2005) support this practice by stating that these handwritten notes “remind you where you are and what you see” (p. 146). Continuing under the direction of Ulin et al., the codes were written in language used by the participants and then reviewed so as not to be too detailed yet provide adequate description of the constructions of the participants. The codes were then compiled into a master list of all the

codes occurring within all the transcriptions. Each transcription was then analyzed against the master list and a tally was kept for the number of participants mentioning each code. Ulin et al. state that not all codes will be incorporated into the themes, it depends on how often they arise across the data. As I analyzed the codes I realized that seven codes appeared in eight or more of the transcriptions. An additional nine different codes were given importance by seven of the participants. Two of these codes could be combined with one of the previous seven codes creating a list of 14 major themes to emerge from the transcriptions. Nineteen more codes were mentioned in four to six of the transcriptions. These codes either related to one of the major themes and thus could be explained as a minor theme relating to the major theme, or were related to the research within the literature review and were thus thought to be important to mention. The major themes are reported in the Data Analysis, Conclusions, and Discussion section. Minor themes are discussed within the major themes.

### Chapter 3: Data Analysis, Conclusions, and Discussion

#### *Results*

Following the model of Schensul et al. (1999) the first three questions asked of the teachers during the interviews were simpler questions gathering demographic data on the teachers. The remaining seven questions asked the teachers to construct their understanding about care, how it is manifested within the classroom, and the impact of student ethnicity on the manifestations of care. To organize my analysis, I grouped major emergent themes according to the questions asked following the interview protocol that was used. (See Appendix F) The two questions after the demographic questions asked teachers to define care and explain how they showed care to their students. For many teachers, the answers to each of these two questions were almost identical. From these two questions, 11 major themes arose about care, two of which were repeated by every participant. Care as defined by respect was one theme that was repeated by every teacher. By respect these teachers meant treating each student as an important individual by getting down on the student's level, making eye contact with the students, and being polite. In my interview with Georgia she stated, "I try to look at my, the children in my classes, um, as little people, instead of just kids, with tremendous potential." When Harriett was asked how she showed care to her students she stated, "I respect them, you know. When I look at them I make eye contact with them. I will get down on their level just physically." Respect also includes one of the minor themes that was mentioned by 6 of the teachers which was that teachers show care to students by boosting students' self esteem and building their confidence in themselves by believing in them and helping them to feel comfortable and important in the classroom. Judith specifically

stated in her interview that within the context of her classroom, defining care meant that she would, “try to boost their self esteem and self confidence as much as possible.” In Brenda’s interview she explained that she boosted a student’s confidence about taking the End of Grade test when she stated, “I gave him confidence saying, ‘You can do this.’” Deidre explained that boosting self esteem involves making students feel important when she stated that “even the small things I think you need to make a big deal about.” Judith mentioned that helping students feel comfortable and important included refraining from ridiculing students in front of the class. This major theme about care that emerged from the teachers’ constructions mirrors what each of the aforementioned researchers from the literature review also found about care which is that students feel care when they feel respected by their teachers. Harriett’s construction of respect as getting down on a child’s level was also specifically stated in the research by Nowak-Fabrykowski and Caldwell (2002). Dalton and Watson’s (1997) research and Brown’s (2003) study are reflected by the previously described minor theme which included helping students to feel comfortable in the classroom. In Brown’s study, feeling comfortable in the classroom included being comfortable to express one’s culture. Carol reflected this piece of culturally responsive teaching when she told the story of a Muslim student she taught that would bring pictures of his mosque and would bring her food.

The second major theme that was reiterated by all of the participants was that care is like love, which includes genuine concern and being sensitive. When asked to define care, Brenda said, “genuine concern for my students and their well being.” When asked the same question Althea said, “just the type of teacher who, uh, love my kids.” Georgia stated in her interview, “my commitment grows to just show these kids and their families I love them.” In

addition, Harriett said, “I haven’t really thought about putting it into a definition, but I just really love the kids.” Included in this major theme falls the minor theme that 5 participants mentioned which was that students are the priority and the participants love teaching. Althea explained in her interview, “I just love kids and I love teaching.” Carol emphasized that her students are the priority when she stated, “I have an obligation to teach them.” The interpretation of care as being sensitive is also a part of the work of Solomon et al. (1992) and Noddings (2005) who assert that care is being sensitive to the needs of the care receiver, including the inferred need for love. Also under this major theme of care as being like love, is the minor theme that 4 participants mentioned. These teachers included going out of the way and taking a few extra minutes to care for students. Brenda explained, “I will go above and beyond what I need to do to help you out, and that just, it carries over, the way I was raised to be a caring person, it carries over to teaching.” Judith continues this thought by saying, “take a few extra minutes and you’ll see the difference.”

Knowing each student’s individual needs is another major theme that emerged as participants defined and described showing care. This theme was stated by 9 of the participants. Althea stated, “you are showing your care to each individual student based on their individual needs.” Elaine echoed this in her story of a student who was not as proficient in English and she knew he needed additional support to understand the concept she was teaching. She said, “But that’s a way of caring and saying ‘Oh, OK well I kind of need to boost this up because he’s not going to know this vocabulary.’” Included within this theme is using resources to better understand student needs and using small focused groups within the classroom. In response to this Harriett expressed that care is knowing each child’s individual needs, and when specifically asked how she knew what they needed she stated, “from talking

to them, getting to know them, talking to their parents.” She also mentioned that she observed students to find out what they needed, which was stated by many of the other participants as well. Thompson et al. (2005) mirror this major emergent theme in their research as they found that caring teachers provided for students’ needs by using developmentally appropriate instruction. Additional support of this theme of caring comes from the research of Collinson et al. (1998) who found that care emerged as teachers worked to know students through observation, dialogue with students, and viewing student work. Related to this, Mayeroff (1971) explained care as helping children feel competent with their own talents. In relation to defining care as knowing student needs, two minor themes emerged. One of these themes stated by 4 participants was providing for students’ basic or physical needs so that they may concentrate on learning. This includes providing food, clothes, school supplies and cleaning students when necessary. Brenda reflected this in her comment, “I want to make sure they’re fed.” Harriet summarized this minor theme when she said:

just because of our student population sometimes they come up, they’ll come with breakfast on their face, they’re just, you know, it’s like get them cleaned up, make them feel as good about themselves, if they need a change of clothes, get them that so they’re ready instead of worrying about that kind of stuff, they can focus on learning.

Noddings (2005) and Solomon et al. (1992) echo this finding that meeting students’ needs allows the students to feel care. In addition, one of the major themes from Brown’s (2003) research was knowing and understanding student needs. Harriett’s comment referring specifically to her school’s student population, which is mainly lower socio economic status and the majority of students are students of color, infers that her students may have needs not

felt as strongly at other schools. She reflects culturally responsive teaching in that she is aware of the lower socio economic status of her students and is willing to provide what they need to help them gain the most from their schooling. Similarly, Thompson et al. found that caring teachers were supportive of student needs. The other minor theme related to knowing student needs stated by 6 participants was the need to feel safe and secure. They explained this as students felt cared for in classrooms that were safe places to learn and take risks as well as safe physical environments. Georgia explained this theme in her comment, “I think that’s a blanket that covers, when you’re cared for, then you’re secure.” Faye also stated, “they are in a safe environment and then from there you can start to learn.” Participants in the study by Brown also stated that care was felt in classrooms that were comfortable, supported, and safe. The preservice teachers in the research by Nowak-Fabrykowski and Caldwell (2002) similarly described care as feelings of security. This was also in Dalton and Watson’s (1997) research who described care as students feeling secure and comfortable in classroom environments in which they felt supported and confident to take risks. Similar to knowing student’s individual needs is the major theme repeated by 7 participants which was spending time individually with students. This theme included non-academic interactions, such as greeting students in the morning, noticing things about the students such as new shoes and haircuts, and relating to the students. When asked how she showed care Deidre said, “notice if they have a new haircut, new clothes, new shoes on, something like that.” In her construction of care Carol stated, “So as far as caring, I think they need to see you smile and really greet them warmly in the morning.”

Being positive was a major emergent theme stated by 8 participants when asked to define care and explain how they show care to their students. This included using positive

words and having a positive outlook on the class. The research of Nowak-Fabrykowski and Caldwell (2002) supports this theme as they found their participants described care as giving positive reinforcement. Solomon et al. (1992) mention building positive relationships within the classroom as a demonstration of care. Althea had much to say about the impact of being positive in the classroom. In one explanation about being positive she said:

I always try to praise them. I try to always tell them that they're doing a good job, or I like something they're doing. I try to pick more positive because over the years you find that being negative, it doesn't work. Trying to find that one thing all day that was a good thing and praising them for that, or "I like the way you sat," or "I like the way you did that," or "I like the way you were nice to so and so a while ago," and try to bring out the positives trying to show that, you know, good feelings to each other.

Closely related to this major theme of care is praising students which was a major theme stated by 8 participants. Participants described praise as making sure students know what they are doing well. They also emphasized being specific with praise, but being aware not to give too much praise or students would become desensitized to it. When probed about praise Ingrid said, "you also have to make sure they know what they're doing well." Harriett also said, "I'm trying to be very specific . . . I try and say, 'Oh I really like the way you didn't use your hands to problem solve that,' for example so they know what they're doing right." Carol added, "some of them, they do get a lot of praise, but it's not warranted praise, and I really try to balance the good things I say by being honest." In addition, 7 participants specifically mentioned another major theme which was care meant encouraging students. By encouraging students the participants meant giving compliments. Closely related to this, but stated separately by seven participants was that care means giving hugs, high fives, or showing



affection in some physical way. The teachers described knowing how each individual student responded to physical demonstrations of care and showing care in that way to the student whether it was through a hug, high five, or pat on the back. Deidre explains this in her comments:

Some people like to be hugged, some people don't like to be hugged, and I think different things work better with certain students, just like adults. Um, for example, I had a little boy this year, that he just, he did not like to be touched, and he made that very apparent to me from the very beginning, and so instead of giving him a hug or a half hug, I would say, 'Hey, give me a high five,' and he would be all in to that, and that was our thing and I just learned with him that, you know, was what to do instead.

Also, 7 teachers reiterated that care means doing things that make the students feel good like displaying student work. Carol described showing care by displaying student work when she described one instance involving a student in her class. She said, "she would slip me things . . . and then I would display it and she would smile." Noddings' (1995) research reflects this assertion about care as she found that care is felt when people are recognized for doing their best and are appreciated for their work. Displaying student work as showing care was specifically mentioned by the participants in the research by Dalton and Watson (1997).

One theme of care that was passionately mentioned by 8 participants was that care extends beyond the classroom and school year. This included knowing each student's background and making connections between home and school. Participants mentioned visiting student homes, making phone calls, sending cards and newsletters, encouraging parent involvement nights, and providing help for families, such as those that may not speak English well. Judith was very passionate about making connections with students beyond the

classroom. She stated, “I like to do home visits. Going to their home says ‘Hey, I’m important, she cares enough to come to my house and chat with mama or daddy or grandma.’” She further explains the importance of knowing students’ backgrounds in her elaboration on making home visits. She states:

So going to their home you get to see, it helps you get to understand where they’re coming from because you may have no clue that daddy just got arrested, and there’s no money at home, mama’s pregnant, sick every day, and there’s no food on the table because mama’s too sick to cook it, and then daddy’s in jail. And so they come to school hungry and you’re fussing at them because they’re not doing something that they’re supposed to do, but when they’re hungry, they can’t, you know? So, I mean, it really let’s you know where the kids come from.

Elaine detailed multiple ways that she makes connections with a student’s family through phone calls, notes, newsletters, email, and parent involvement nights. In addition, teachers explained that these connections with students and their families lasted beyond the school year. Teachers kept in touch with families and inquired about students long after they left their classrooms. Elaine went further in her explanation about making connections with a student’s family explaining that teacher’s are really building long lasting relationships with students and their families. Her comments were:

I still have kids that I taught that are like 21 now that I can see out and they instantly recognize me and come up and we have a conversation, “How’s college going, how’s your mom and dad?” . . . Not only that, just brothers and sisters, and you know what I mean? It’s a community and you have to treat it like one. It really is

because you have to get the whole community, you can't just get that one kid and send them on because it just doesn't fly.

Understanding students' lives and relating learning to their lives was one of the four ways preservice teachers described showing care within the research of Nowak-Fabrykowski and Caldwell (2002). Culturally responsive teaching, as explained by Gay (2000) and Villegas and Lucas (2002) also emphasizes the importance of understanding each student's ethnic background which connects school with the student's home life. Judith's comments about making home visits reflect culturally responsive teaching which includes understanding a student's cultural background. Faye also emphasized the importance of understanding each student's ethnic background in her comments on English Language Learners by saying:

They have to learn language, they have to learn skills and I guess the ethnic, they know these, you just have to bring the language alive and for them to be comfortable in it. If they're not comfortable in their environment, they're not going to try it."

This major theme is also a part of the study by Brown (2003) on caring, culturally responsive classrooms and is a goal of the Child Development Project that works on building "caring communities" which support an increase in home-school interactions and school service programs (Schaps et al., 2004). A minor theme repeated by 6 participants which can be encompassed by this major theme is that care is building a relationship or bond with students and making a commitment to this relationship. This relationship between care giver and care receiver is the emphasis of Bowlby's research as explained by Bretherton (1992) who defined care as a warm, intimate and continuous relationship. In addition, the development of a caring relationship between the teacher and student was the emphasis of the work of all the researchers mentioned in the literature review.

One last major theme that emerged when asked to define care and how care is demonstrated was stated by 7 participants. This theme included making expectations known to students, setting high expectations, setting goals to reach expectations, and believing that students could reach the high expectations. This theme related to academic work as well as student behavior. Faye stated, “I do try to be careful to make everybody work at their expected, eh, to achieve higher levels.” Georgia went on to say:

I try to make sure that I’m having expectations that they can meet, which I think is part of care, and high expectations because I think a lot of times they’re told they can’t do certain things and they need people to stand behind them and say that they can.

This major theme of setting high expectations and believing that students can reach these expectations is also one of the main components of the work by Gay (2000) and the study by Brown (2003) and was also included in the work by Villegas and Lucas (2002) on culturally responsive teaching. However, in the above comments, Faye’s comment does not directly relate achieving higher levels to being culturally responsive. Georgia’s comments more closely reflect being culturally responsive, yet she does not specifically state that she is referring to culturally diverse students. Therefore, the conclusion can not be drawn that these teachers are meaningfully being culturally responsive by setting high expectations and believing that students can achieve them. Similar to this major theme about expectations, 6 participants stated care included enforcing the rules and laying down clear limits, as well as disciplining fairly and consistently. In their research, Samdal et al. (1998) found that students felt care when discipline was fair and consistent. Related to this, Dalton and Watson’s (1997)

research described care as coming from familiarity with classroom expectations and routines. Ingrid provides an example of this minor theme by stating:

You get to set procedures and you get to show, yes I do care about you and because I do care about you, these are the rules that you have to follow and the procedures that you're going to use so that we can get on with our day at school.

In an extension of this, 4 participants went on to say that care is correcting behavior, but still loving the student, meaning that teachers separated the behavior from the student and guided the student towards more appropriate behavior. Deiro (2003) found this same specific explanation of care that students felt respected when discipline was used to teach and not to punish. Deiro as well as Samdal et al. and Solomon et al. (1992) all included allowing students to help problem solve and valuing their input in rule making as part of showing care which was echoed by 5 participants in this study. Ingrid explained this point as she described how she used class meetings to allow students time to discuss solutions to problems that arose in class. She also sought the input of students when there were academic or behavior issues. Ingrid said:

If they are doing something wrong, explaining this is what you're doing wrong and this is what you can do to make it better. And then also, like, what do they think that they can do to make things better, whether it's a behavior issue or an academic issue.

Also related to showing care to students, 4 participants mentioned using tangible rewards with students, such as stickers, but not relying on them as students would become desensitized to them. Ryan and Deci's (2000) research on motivation also emphasized not relying on external rewards, but helping students to be more internally motivated. Motivating

students and helping them to enjoy learning and value it was also a minor theme expressed by 4 participants. An example of this theme is Brenda's comments:

It's more fun when they have someone caring about them, for them than, you know, a dictator saying, "We've got to do this, we're going to do it now." So we have a good time.

Lastly, in relation to the questions about defining care and how care is demonstrated within the classroom, 4 participants mentioned that the teacher is a model of care to students, meaning that the teacher demonstrated the caring behavior that was desired from the students. Modeling care was a major part of the research by Nowak-Fabrykowski and Caldwell (2002) who modeled care for preservice teachers as the teachers prepared for their future classrooms. Additionally, Solomon et al. (1992) stated that teachers promote care by modeling care on which students may base their own caring behavior.

After the participants were asked how they define care and show care within the context of their classrooms, they were asked about whether they showed care in the same way to all students and how they may differentiate their care. From these two questions only one major theme arose. One hundred percent of participants stated that they learn what each student needs in regard to receiving care and respond appropriately. Deidre provided an example of this by saying, "I think everybody just has their own specific thing that they really enjoy getting or receiving and you just have to tap into it and figure out what it is that makes them tick." The teachers learned what students needed by observing student behavior and reading emotions. Carol explained this by stating, "I know just by watching behavior. I mean it took about two weeks when they first came in to actually see how they interact with one another." She later explained that she learned students because she could "read all kinds

of emotions in their eyes.” They did state that some students need more care and therefore may receive more teacher attention, but the teachers did not identify any sub-group of the student population that may require more attention, they were willing to give more attention to any student that demonstrated behaviors that indicated the need for more care. Georgia exemplified this in her comments:

I try to have equal, equality there as far as how I love them and encourage them and I care for them. Some of them, some of them need more in some areas more than other areas, but oh no, I try to be as equal as I can with all the kids that I, come through my path.

However, some participants admitted that some students from certain backgrounds did need more attention, but they were sure to emphasize that they still cared for all the students in their classrooms. Georgia went on to explain this by saying:

Some children come from backgrounds that are much more needy. They need more interaction with me and some come from much more independent, they come much more independent into kindergarten. So, um, yeah, uh, certainly I do care, not care as far as emotional caring, but just the physical outreach more than others. That’s just, they’re all different.

In response to the questions about how students show that they know the teacher cares for them and how care impacts students, a couple major themes and several minor themes emerged. A major theme echoed by 7 participants was that students show that they feel cared for by working harder academically. Althea stated, “they want to perform for you, they want to do good for you.” Ingrid provided more detail by saying:

I think that is one of the first things that show you that your kids know you care about them, it's when they want to do what you ask them to do. This group of kids that were so low and had so many issues they worked harder than any group of kids that I'd had, and I think when they just, they show that Ingrid cares enough about me to want me to do this, I'm going to do this the best I can, and when they work really hard, I think that's their number one way of showing . . . their work ethic and then that's when you know.

Further, students feel more comfortable to take academic risks. Supporting this theme is the positive relationship found between caring classrooms and academic motivation in the research of Solomon et al. (1992). Ryan and Deci (2000) and Solomon et al. (2000) confirm this relationship between a caring classroom and academic motivation and further explain this correlation as students developing the value of learning in a caring classroom which drives the cycle of motivation to uphold this value.

Similar to this theme is the participant response repeated by 7 of the teachers that students show that they feel care by doing what is asked of them, including behaving appropriately. Participants went on to explain that students desire to "be good" which in turn allows the classroom to function well which brings a sense of peace to the room. Georgia describes this by saying, "I think there is a peace that comes within the classroom." She continues by saying:

I can look at my class and I know that if I've done my job properly, then the class will be functioning because they'll feel secure and they'll know the procedures and they know that I'm consistent. I think that's another part of caring is being consistent.



This theme also supports the previously cited research about the cycle of care in which students feel care and desire to show care by doing what is asked of them which allows the classroom to function well and continue the cycle of care.

Several minor themes emerged dealing with the different ways that students respond to the care given by the teacher in relation to the questions about how students show that they feel care and the impact of teacher care. One of these responses stated by 4 participants was that students will call them “Mom”. By this teachers meant that the students felt comfortable enough with the teacher that they called her “Mom” whether on purpose or accidentally. This reflects the work of Bowlby as explained by Bretherton (1992) about the relationship between a child and mother as a warm, continuous relationship with a care giver, which is similar to the relationship between caring teachers and their students.

Another way students show that they feel care repeated by 6 participants is that students make the teacher cards, letters, and little gifts. Fifty percent of participants stated that students show that they feel care by giving the teacher hugs, wanting to be close to the teacher and smiling. Additionally, 6 said that students show they feel care by being respectful to other students and to the teacher as well as reflecting the positive behavior modeled by the teacher. This minor theme is also supported by the previously mentioned research about the cycle of feeling care and reflecting care back onto others in return. Deiro’s (2003) research also supports this minor theme as she found that respect built trusting relationships that motivated students to show respect in return. These themes emerging from the questions about how students show they feel care and the impact of care demonstrate how students respond differently to teacher care.

When finally asked specifically about care within an ethnically diverse classroom, no major themes emerged. Both schools in which interviews took place contained at least one third students of color within the student population, however there were no consistencies in teacher responses in regards to student ethnicity. Only one minor theme emerged about ethnicity which was stated by 5 of the participants. They stated that ethnicity doesn't matter when showing care to students. The teachers get to know each student, which also means understanding the background of each student, and then provide care that best meets the student's needs. Elaine provides a distinct example of this minor theme. She explains:

The whole ethnic thing shouldn't make a difference. I mean ideally in our world it does every day of the week, but it shouldn't because kids are kids, and I mean, no matter where they come from they all like to eat Play Doh, and they're all sneaky and you know what I mean? They have bad days just like we have bad days. So it shouldn't make a difference, the care, I mean the fact that you're giving care, not the ways you do it.

Harriett also reflects this sentiment by saying, "I don't care what you come in as, but you just need to do your best and I expect you to respect the other kids, I expect you to respect me and respect yourself." No teacher stated that she attempts to show care in the same way to all students of a specific ethnic group.

All responses, which were not many, given to the last interview question specifically addressing ethnicity were stated by only one or two participants and were generalizations about ethnicities based on their observations of students in their classes showing no common ways of showing care to certain ethnicities and no common ways that certain ethnicities receive care or show that they feel care. For example, Althea stated:

Some of the Hispanic children. . . they're a little bit more hesitant because, uh, they show respect to an adult, you approach it differently, they're not to look you in the eye if they're being, what you might say scolded about something, and, uh, and you have to learn that this is showing you respect when they don't look at you.

Of the responses given to this last question, only African American and Latino(a) ethnicities were mentioned by participants. Deidre provided an example of a generalization she made about African American and Latino(a) students by stating:

This is a generalization, um, but I think the African American students I have in my class are more huggy, touchy, feely kind of kids than what a lot of the White children are or the Hispanic children are. Um, the two Hispanic kids that I had this year were very reserved, very quiet, and so I learned with them that the best things that worked with them were words of praise, not to get overly zealous, you know, and say, "Oh wow, this child did a wonderful job," because that would actually embarrass them.

As described in this section, these teachers demonstrated many of the caring characteristics explained in the literature review about care. Additionally, these teachers were determined to be caring teachers by their principals and administrators. Many of the definitions of care and manifestations of care explained and demonstrated by the teachers are fundamental to culturally responsive teaching as explained throughout the Results section. For example, several participants stated that care means understanding the backgrounds of each student and providing care that is most appropriate. However, the teachers more so focused on knowing the care needed by each individual student, not the cultural context behind differences in receiving care. There were inconsistencies present as to whether the teacher simply knew each student as an individual or whether there was a real attempt made

to understand the culture of the students. In addition, only generalizations were made about ethnicities with no common threads across interviews. Therefore, the conclusion can not be made that these caring teachers defined care or manifested care differently due to student ethnicity or being culturally responsive.

### *Conclusions*

The purpose of this research was to understand the conceptions and manifestations of care within the context of the elementary classroom as determined by caring teachers, and how these caring teachers respond to differences among student ethnicities within their conceptions and manifestations of care. Through the interviews and analysis, fourteen major themes and a number of minor themes arose which were described in the previous section. Overall this research accomplished the goals of understanding teacher constructions of care and its manifestation in the classroom. Also, the data emerging from the interviews supports the research already done on the topic of care.

However, this thesis did not find any themes relating care to student ethnicity. All participants in this research explained that they get to know students individually and show care based on each student's individual needs. Teachers get to know students by making observations in the classroom, talking with parents, or building relationships with students. They come to know each student as a "little person with tremendous potential," as stated by Georgia. However, no teacher stated that she specifically gets to know the culture of each student. Possibly these teachers assumed that knowing a student individually encompassed knowing their culture, however, no teacher made any direct association between definitions of care or manifestations of care and a student's ethnicity.

There may be several explanations for this response. One such explanation may be that the interview questions did not speak directly to the role of ethnicity. Due to the semi-structured interview approach, interview questions were left open ended so that teachers would feel free to express their ideas and form their own constructions of care and not become leading questions about ethnicity. However, this openness of the questions may have been too broad and not gotten directly at the role of ethnicity. Another explanation may be that the sample size was small for this study limiting the number of views expressed. Being a qualitative study that is descriptive in nature, a smaller sample size was sought as the purpose was to understand teacher constructions of care. Additionally, repeating this study in other school districts or states may also produce different results, however it is to be noted that the schools used for this research contained at least one third students of color and over half of the student population in the free and reduced lunch program.

There were several limitations to the findings and interpretations in this study. One such limitation comes from the participant selection process. Participants were supposed to be chosen using triangulation to avoid bias in the sample selection. At one school the principal along with the vice principal made independent lists of caring teachers using the definition provided by me. By independently producing lists, the two administrators avoided leading the other in selecting caring teachers. These two lists were then compared and those teachers appearing on both lists were chosen as participants. This same procedure was followed at the second school used in this study, however the principal and two vice principals created independent lists and then the first five names that appeared on all three lists were chosen as participants. Using this process of triangulation to select participants, teachers were chosen based on the criteria of being caring. As this process of participant

selection attempted to reduce bias, it may be inadvertently biased by the administrators in that only administrators created lists of caring teachers. Principals were given the choice of who they could ask to also create lists of caring teachers. They were asked to choose administrators, secretaries, or PTA personnel, however only administrators were used. The teachers chosen may have been different if a parent or secretary was asked to make a list of caring teachers. Replication of this study could require that a non-administrator also be asked to make an independent list of caring teachers to use in the triangulation process of choosing participants.

Also to be noted is the slightness of diversity among the participants in the study. Out of 10 participants, 9 were White and all were female. The schools in which the study was conducted did have ethnic diversity within the teacher population, yet there was little diversity within the sample. The themes that emerged from the interviews would be biased to represent a White, female perspective as this constituted the majority of the participants. Very different themes may have emerged through the constructions of teachers of non-White ethnicities. Additionally a male perspective may have also influenced the data. While the participant selection process was designed to reduce bias, there still remained a lack of diversity within the participants. Also, as this was a small study, only two schools were used for participant selection. Future research on caring teachers may seek out caring teachers of non-White ethnicities from more than two schools to enhance the findings from this study. Also, caring male teachers may be specifically requested to bring another perspective to the research.

One other limitation to the research comes from the time frame during which the study was conducted. Teachers from one school were interviewed during the final teacher

workdays of the school year. Interviews were conducted at the other school during the first teacher workdays of the school year. Both of these times can be very busy for teachers who are preoccupied with concluding tasks or initial set up for the school year. Whereas teachers continue to be caring throughout the school year, these teachers may not have been completely focused in interviews as they may have been preoccupied with thoughts of school tasks. However, it should be noted that all teachers were given plenty of time to think through their answers to questions and allowed to thoughtfully construct their answers to questions with little interruption from me or from other outside distractions. Repetition of this study may include interviews that occur at different times within the school year that may be less intense.

Lastly, researcher bias may have indirectly influenced the results of this study. Through body language or verbal comments, I may have allowed my bias to show. A bias that I have is I feel strongly that care has a major impact on student motivation in the classroom. I feel that students are more motivated and like school more when they feel that the teacher cares for them. I may have emitted these feelings when participants were being interviewed, and they may have picked up on this and attempted to give answers for which I was looking. Also through greetings when first introduced to the participants, I may have eluded to my feelings about caring for all students as an important characteristic for teachers to possess. This may have influenced participants to make particular comments that they felt I wanted to hear. Reducing this bias would include checking personal bias more carefully. I could do this by writing my biases down before interviewing participants to keep myself from focusing on them. I could also write down a guide for what to say during initial greetings with participants to remind myself not to allow my biases to show. Member

checking was used in this study to help reduce my bias and attempt to correctly portray the constructions of the participants. The emergent themes were sent to each participant for their feedback, however only two out of the ten participants replied with comments, both of which were in complete agreement with the themes and had nothing to add.

### *Recommendations for Future Research*

This study would be greatly enhanced by the constructions of students on the topic of care. In future research, students could be asked how they define care and how they feel that their teachers show care to them. Additionally these students could describe how their teachers make them feel and what they like to do to show care to others. The responses of the students could then be compared with the responses of the caring teachers to determine if the teacher perceptions of care are similar to what the students understand about care. Much could be learned about the differences between teacher perceptions of care and actual student impact by interviewing students about care. In addition, the students may bring perspectives on how care is perceived by them that teachers are not able to realize. This could greatly influence how teachers demonstrate care to future students so that they feel cared for in the most meaningful way. Also, students may illuminate teachers on how care may impact student behaviors in the classroom.

In addition, further research on the topic of care within elementary classrooms could connect with the research of Ryan and Deci (2000) on motivation. As some of the researchers mentioned motivation as related to care (Solomon et al., 1992; Solomon et al., 2000; Deiro, 2003) more research may reveal connections between feeling care and student motivation related to academics as well as behavior. Through student interviews more may be



understood about how care motivates students which may have an impact on how teachers relate to students and conduct their teaching in the classroom.

The implications of this current study point to the perceived role care plays in the classroom. The data and emergent themes arising from the interviews with the participants all suggest that care is an important part of an elementary classroom. All participants stated the importance of personally knowing each student and providing care that is meaningful to each one. In addition, each participant listed several ways that she demonstrates care and perceives that her care impacts her students. However, this study was inconclusive about the impact of student ethnicity on teacher care, teacher demonstrations of care, or perceived impact of care. The caring teachers in this study focused on showing care individually to students and did not specifically mention student ethnicity as a factor that influenced how they showed care. In addition, any generalizations made about student ethnicity were not consistent across participants and therefore were not considered conclusive outcomes of this study. What is conclusive is that participants did agree that care is a respectful, loving, genuine concern for students and this does impact students and is an important part of all classrooms. Therefore, this study supported the previously cited research about teacher care including how teachers define care as well as manifest care within their classrooms. As this study did converge on the general literature dealing with teacher care, it did not make a direct convergence with the literature dealing with culturally responsive teaching. This study indirectly supported aspects of culturally responsive teaching research, such as setting high expectations for students, however it did not further it. Therefore, this study arrived at its intended purpose of understanding teacher constructions and manifestations of care, however it did not provide a

firm understanding of how teachers respond to differences among student ethnicities within their conceptions and manifestations of care.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A. Initial Principal Letter

Date

Dear :

I am writing to request your permission and assistance in identifying several teachers in your school to participate in a study I am conducting as part of my master's degree thesis under the direction of my faculty advisor, Dr. Patricia L. Marshall. I am a graduate student in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction (Elementary Education concentration) at NC State University. The goal of my thesis study is to answer three primary questions: 1) how do teachers conceptualize care?; 2) how do they demonstrate/show care within their classrooms to their students?; and 3) how do teachers perceive students respond to teacher care? By showing care I mean teachers who demonstrate a trusting, respectful, and supportive relationship between themselves and their students. My plan is to conduct this study in schools like yours in which at least one third of the student population are students of color (i.e., African American, Latino(a), Asian American, and/or American Indian). Teacher participation in the study would require a one-on-one interview that would take approximately 1 hour arranged at a mutually convenient time (before or after school).

Where I need your assistance is in recommending teachers to participate in the study. Specifically, I would like for you as well as your administrative assistant (and possibly your PTA president) to independently create lists of teachers in your school who, in your opinions, show care as defined above. The teachers invited to participate in the study will be those whose names appear on your list as well as the list(s) of your administrative assistant and/or PTA president.

I believe elementary teachers would appreciate discussing the issue of care in teaching, and that the findings from this study will be informative for me as well as you and your faculty. Therefore, I want to thank you in advance for your assistance. Also, as follow-up to this letter I will contact you shortly to make arrangements to come to your school and share more details with you about the study. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the study please feel free to contact me at 919-538-2608 or [abartley7@hotmail.com](mailto:abartley7@hotmail.com), or you may contact my advisor, Dr. Marshall at [patricia\\_marshall@ncsu.edu](mailto:patricia_marshall@ncsu.edu).

Sincerely,

April Bartley

cc: Dr. Patricia L. Marshall

## Appendix B. Revised Initial Principal Letter

Date

Dear :

I am writing to request your permission and assistance in identifying several teachers in your school to participate in a study I am conducting as part of my master's degree thesis under the direction of my faculty advisor, Dr. Patricia L. Marshall. I am a graduate student in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction (Elementary Education concentration) at NC State University. The goal of my thesis study is to answer three primary questions: 1) how do teachers conceptualize care?; 2) how do they demonstrate/show care within their classrooms to their students?; and 3) how do teachers perceive students respond to teacher care? By showing care I mean teachers who demonstrate a trusting, respectful, and supportive relationship between themselves and their students. My plan is to conduct this study in schools like yours in which at least one third of the student population are students of color (i.e., African American, Latino(a), Asian American, and/or American Indian). Teacher participation in the study would require a one-on-one interview that would take approximately 45 minutes or less arranged at a mutually convenient time (before or after school).

Where I need your assistance is in recommending teachers to participate in the study. Specifically, I would like for you as well as your administrative assistant (and possibly your PTA president or vice principal) to independently create lists of teachers in your school who, in your opinions, show care as defined above. The teachers invited to participate in the study will be those whose names appear on your list as well as the list(s) of your administrative assistant and/or PTA president or vice principal.

I believe elementary teachers would appreciate discussing the issue of care in teaching, and that the findings from this study will be informative for me as well as you and your faculty. Therefore, I want to thank you in advance for your assistance. Also, as follow-up to this letter I will contact you to make arrangements to come to your school and discuss more details with you about the study. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the study please feel free to contact me at 919-538-2608 or [abartley7@hotmail.com](mailto:abartley7@hotmail.com), or you may contact my advisor, Dr. Marshall at [patricia\\_marshall@ncsu.edu](mailto:patricia_marshall@ncsu.edu).

Sincerely,

April Bartley

cc: Dr. Patricia L. Marshall



## Appendix C. Participant Letter

Date

Dear :

I am writing to request your participation in a study I am conducting as part of my master's degree thesis under the direction of my faculty advisor, Dr. Patricia L. Marshall. I am a graduate student in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction (Elementary Education concentration) at NC State University. The goal of my thesis study is to answer three primary questions: 1) how do teachers conceptualize care?; 2) how do they demonstrate/show care within their classrooms to their students?; and 3) how do teachers perceive students respond to teacher care?

Your participation is being requested because you have been identified by your principal as being a caring teacher that may be open to participate in this study. Your participation in the study would require a one-on-one interview that would take approximately 1 hour arranged at a mutually convenient time (before or after school).

I believe much can be understood about care through conversation with caring teachers. I want to thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this study. Also, as follow-up to this letter I will contact you shortly to make arrangements to come to your school and share more with you about the study, seek your permission to participate in the study, and conduct an interview if you would like to participate. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the study please feel free to contact me at 919-538-2608 or [abartley7@hotmail.com](mailto:abartley7@hotmail.com), or you may contact my advisor, Dr. Marshall at [patricia\\_marshall@ncsu.edu](mailto:patricia_marshall@ncsu.edu).

Sincerely,

April Bartley

cc: Dr. Patricia L. Marshall

## Appendix D. Revised Participant Letter

Date

Dear :

I am writing to request your participation in a study I am conducting as part of my master's degree thesis under the direction of my faculty advisor, Dr. Patricia L. Marshall. I am a graduate student in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction (Elementary Education concentration) at NC State University. The goal of my thesis study is to answer three primary questions: 1) how do teachers conceptualize care?; 2) how do they demonstrate/show care within their classrooms to their students?; and 3) how do teachers perceive students respond to teacher care?

Your participation is being requested because you have been identified by your principal as being a caring teacher that may be open to participate in this study. Your participation in the study would require a one-on-one interview that would take approximately 45 minutes. Your principal has arranged for me to come to your school on (date) to conduct the interview. If you would like to participate, he or she has arranged for the interview to take place from (time) in the conference room.

I believe much can be understood about care through conversation with caring teachers. I want to thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this study. I will be happy to further explain the study and answer any questions you may have on (date) or please feel free to contact me at 919-538-2608 or [abartley7@hotmail.com](mailto:abartley7@hotmail.com), or you may contact my advisor, Dr. Marshall at [patricia\\_marshall@ncsu.edu](mailto:patricia_marshall@ncsu.edu).

Sincerely,

April Bartley

cc: Dr. Patricia L. Marshall

## Appendix E. Informed Consent Form

**North Carolina State University**  
**INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH**

Title of Study Teacher Conceptions of Care and the Impact on Elementary School Students

Principal Investigator April Bartley

Faculty Sponsor Dr. Patricia L. Marshall

We are asking you to participate in a research study. The purposes of this study are to better understand 1) the conception of care within the context of the contemporary culturally diverse elementary classroom as determined by caring teachers; 2) how teachers respond to ethnic differences among their students in their conceptions of care; and 3) how teachers demonstrate care within their classrooms.

**INFORMATION**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be interviewed by the principal investigator (April Bartley). The interview will last approximately one hour, will be audio recorded, and transcribed. Transcriptions will be analyzed for emerging themes on care as described by participants in the study. A follow-up interview may be requested if additional questions arise as a result of the transcription and analysis process. The follow up interview may last approximately one hour.

**RISKS**

There should be no risk to you from this research. However, if any question makes you uncomfortable, you are free to skip it.

**BENEFITS**

There is no direct benefit to participants; however the findings of the study will inform teachers about perceptions of care towards students.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

The information in the study records will be kept strictly confidential and participants will be given pseudonyms to facilitate anonymity. Participants will be assigned numbers which will be used to label their recorded interviews. Data will be stored securely in a locked drawer in the principal investigator's home. The recorded interviews will be kept until the final thesis is written, December 2007, and then they will be destroyed. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link participants to the study.

**CONTACT**

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, April Bartley, at 3400 Birk Bluff Court, Raleigh, NC 27518, or 919-538-2608. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. David Kaber, Chair of the NCSU IRB for the Use of Human Subjects in Research Committee, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-3086) or Mr. Matthew Ronning, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Research Administration, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/513-2148)

**PARTICIPATION**

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed at your request.

**CONSENT**

**"I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may withdraw at any time."**

Subject's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Investigator's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F. Interview Protocol

### Interview Protocol

1. How do you classify yourself (African American, Latino(a), Asian-Pacific, American Indian, White, Other)? If Other, would you like to describe how you identify yourself?
2. What grade level do you teach?
3. How many years have you been teaching?
4. How do you define care within the context of your classroom?
5. How do you show care to your students? What do you do or say? Can you think of any examples?
6. Do you show care in the same way to all students in your classroom? What differences among your students cause you to differentiate how you show care?
7. How do your students show that they know you care for them? Can you think of any examples?
8. How does your care impact your students?
9. Do your students respond to your care differently? If so, how? Can you think of any examples?
10. Is there anything else that you would like to add about care within an ethnically diverse classroom?

## Appendix G. Member Checking Email

Hello!

I hope you are doing well! I want to thank you again for taking the time to be interviewed for my Masters thesis! I really enjoyed talking to you and finding out more about care!

I am attaching a list of themes that emerged about care. I arrived at these themes by looking at what was said in all my interviews. I listed items that were repeated by over 70% of interviewees as Major Emergent themes. Minor emergent themes are those things that were mentioned by less than 70%, but more than 40% of interviewees.

I would love for you to look over the list and let me know what you think! I just want to be sure that I have correctly represented all viewpoints expressed in the interviews. When you have time, would you mind sending me a quick email letting me know if I have correctly represented what you conveyed about care?

Thank you again for your time! I have learned a tremendous amount! Your input is invaluable to my research!

Thank you!

April Bartley

## Appendix H. Major and Minor Emergent Themes list

Emergent themes from interviews on teacher care and its impact on students:

Major themes:

For the questions: How do you define care, How do you show care?

1. It is important to know the students' individual needs
2. It is important to spend individual time with students, such as greeting students in the morning and noticing if they have on new clothes
3. Be positive, look for the positive
4. Praise the students and make sure they know what they are doing well
5. Make expectations known to students, set high expectations, set goals with students, believe that students can meet high expectations
6. Respect the students, make eye contact, get down on their level, and be polite
7. Care is like love, genuine concern, being sensitive
8. Care extends beyond the classroom and the school year- home visits, phone calls, parent involvement, create a community, understanding students' backgrounds
9. Encourage students, compliment them
10. Give hugs or high fives, show affection
11. Do what makes students feel good, like displaying work

For the questions: Do you show care in the same way to all students, What differences among your students cause you to differentiate how you show care?

1. Differentiate care given by learning what students need and responding- this can be done by observing students' behavior and emotions

For the questions: How do your students show that they know you care for them, How does your care impact your students, Do your students respond to your care differently and if so, how?

1. Students show that they know the teacher cares by working harder
2. Students show that they know the teacher cares by doing what is asked of them, this includes behaving appropriately

Minor themes:

For the questions: How do you define care, How do you show care?

1. Correct misbehavior, but still love the student- separate the behavior from the student
2. Motivate students, make learning important and enjoyable
3. Use tangible rewards, but don't rely on them
4. Care is building a relationship and making a connection with students
5. Care is making the students feel safe and secure
6. Allow students to problem solve on their own

7. Boost students' self esteem and confidence, make them feel important and comfortable
8. Go out of your way for students
9. Provide for students' needs, provide food, clothes, or supplies so students can focus on learning
10. Students are the priority and teachers love teaching
11. Enforce the rules and discipline, keep structure in the classroom, lay down clear limits, be fair and consistent
12. Teachers model care for their students

For the questions: Do you show care in the same way to all students, What differences among your students cause you to differentiate how you show care?

1. Students have different ways of responding to care

For the questions: How do your students show that they know you care for them, How does your care impact your students, Do your students respond to your care differently and if so, how?

1. Students show that they know the teacher cares by calling the teacher "mom"
2. Students show that they know the teacher cares by making cards, letters, pictures, etc.
3. Students show that they know the teacher cares by giving hugs and wanting to be close, and smiling
4. Students show that they know the teacher cares by showing respect to others and the teacher
5. Students show that they know the teacher cares by reflecting the behaviors modeled by the teacher

For the question: Is there anything else that you would like to add about care within an ethnically diverse classroom?

1. Ethnicity shouldn't matter when caring for students, teachers may show care in different ways depending on ethnicity