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The Caring Beliefs of Three Teacher Educators

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The Caring Beliefs of Three Teacher Educators

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Dedication

Dedicated with my deepest love and gratitude to Jim, Rush, and Brazos

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The Caring Beliefs of Three Teacher Educators

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Caring is considered a central feature of good teaching yet little is known about teacher educators' beliefs and perceptions of the role of care in their own teaching. This qualitative research study seeks to remedy that, and to encourage other such research. One white American female, one female reared in Mexico by a Swedish mother and a Mexican father, and one African American male are the participants in this study.

Spending a long semester with each participant, the researcher examined the teacher educators' beliefs and practices through the use of interview sessions, observations of their class teaching and conference sessions with individual students, as well as through focus groups with their students.

In addition to the data corroborating already commonly-held notions that care is demonstrated by a teacher's being available, accessible, attentive, and responsive to students, the research data also indicate that each teacher educator has an idiosyncratic approach to caring that is closely aligned with a pedagogical strategy. The major finding, however, is that each teacher educator demonstrated inconsistencies in their caring practices., indicating that inconsistency is, in fact, a characteristic of caring not yet

addressed in the literature. The researcher challenges those in the field to reconsider caring as inherently inconsistent in teacher education, and to examine what in teacher education makes it difficult to care with consistency.

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Introduction

Few would argue that good teachers care about their students. Caring is considered vital to good teaching (Noddings, 1992; Rogers & Webb, 1991), and I believe if we ask preservice teachers or teacher educators about their career decisions, they would often respond that they chose teaching because they care about students. I was no different. Although my vision was naively altruistic, I entered teaching believing that I cared about my students, and that by caring, I could make a difference in their lives. What I meant by caring, however, never received my serious consideration. Even after fifteen years of teaching, I had yet to consider what I really meant by caring in my teaching.

The journey of this research, then, had its impetus in a graduate class in which the topic of care was introduced. Flippantly dismissing the professor's initial explanation that every human encounter has the potential to become a caring encounter (Noddings, 1984), I was primed to move on to the next discussion point. I found myself, however, unable to move on, as I ran scenarios of encounters between strangers, students, spouses, friends, and children through the filter of this newly introduced model of a caring encounter. By the end of class, I found myself willing to consider that, indeed, every human encounter does hold the potential to become a caring encounter. That realization, however, brought only more confusion as I pondered my own path as an educator.

Having been an undergraduate student in education during the late 1960's, an elementary school teacher during the 1970's, and a teacher educator for the previous sixteen years, I wondered why I had never heard a discussion about the role of care in the classroom or even an argument in favor of such a discussion. I feel certain that, throughout my teaching journey, had I been asked if I cared about my students, I would

have responded, “Certainly! That’s why I teach.” Pressed for my own definition, I am equally certain that I would have had difficulty in defining what I meant by “caring.” Teaching was something I did, and caring was something that motivated me to teach.

The semester of my introduction to the topic of care ended, as did others, and I continued to consider what care looks like in a classroom, particularly the college classroom, and how teacher educators think about care in their teaching. After inquiring among teacher education colleagues at my university, I found that each agreed that care is important in teaching, yet none explicitly addresses the topic in their classes. Home/school relationships, multicultural education issues, and classroom management strategies are all considered central to good teaching, and all are common topics for class discussion found on syllabi in Curriculum and Instruction courses. Why not the topic of care? Is it that, unlike the other topics above, we know little about how we think about care in our own teaching, and as thus reluctant to introduce the topic with our students? Many of us have not examined the role of such tacit concepts of care in our teaching practices. Although there is a growing interest in the role beliefs and values play in teachers’ decisions and behaviors, the literature is sparse concerning influences on teachers’ practices (Collinson, 2001).

All of the colleagues I polled consider themselves caring teachers yet none routinely places the topic on the course syllabus. Nor had I. It is assumed that teacher educators are master teachers who work in preservice teacher education, sharing their expertise in topics related to teaching. Why would care in teaching be a topic marginalized to “spontaneous discussion status” only? After all, teachers regularly make decisions based on their belief systems (Agne, 1992). The disconnect, however, between teacher educators’ professed beliefs about the importance of care and our difficulty in defining it coupled with its omission as a topic for class discussion fascinated me.

Taking Glesne's (1999) advice that one "must figure out which issues, uncertainties, dilemmas, or paradoxes intrigue you" (p. 18), I set myself on the research path to learn more about care in teacher education, more specifically to examine teacher educators' beliefs and perceptions regarding the role of care in their own teaching. I took to heart Lampert's (2000) argument that teachers add valuable insider knowledge by becoming both initiators and active participants in research.

The methodological approach of case study seemed particularly appropriate for uncovering the depth, detail, and meaning I sought in better understanding teacher educators' beliefs and perceptions of care. Patton (1990) contends that one of the benefits of such a methodology is that "one can identify cases rich in information--rich in the sense that a great deal can be learned from a few exemplars of the phenomenon in question" (p. 54). Patton's words became my beacon in identifying my purposive sample of three caring teacher educators.

For the purposes of my study, I selected a white American female, an African American male, and a female reared in Mexico by a Mexican father and Swedish mother. My research protocol included multiple interviews with each participant, multiple visits to their classrooms, both graduate and undergraduate, both on campus and off campus. I also accompanied each teacher as he/she held individual conferences with students over the course of the semester. In addition, I collected artifacts over the course of the semesters which shed light on the relationships between the teacher educators and their students. Among these were dialogic reflective journals, spontaneous classroom assignments, e-mail and other messages, and some class materials shared with students. At the end of each semester, I also conducted interviews with student focus groups.

For the interviews, individual conferences, and focus groups, I used an audio recorder, having the tapes transcribed professionally for my data analysis. Each visit to

the classroom was video taped by me for data analysis. In addition to the audio and video tapes, I used field notes to add texture and thought not captured on the tapes. Throughout the time I was gathering data, I kept a researcher's journal of many of my thoughts and reflections on both the researching process, as well as my own role as a caring teacher educator. All of these data were later analyzed for themes and categories that would create a frame around which to craft the story of the teacher educator's beliefs and perceptions of the role of care in his/her teaching.

What the stories of these teacher educators indicate is that, while there are common elements among their beliefs and perceptions regarding care, there are striking differences as well. There were common themes among their discussions regarding those who have served as caring models in their own lives, although the details varied. All of their caring models were either family members or teachers. Each participant was described as a caring teacher educator by their students. The data reveal that each of the participants had a core foundation or focus in which their caring seems to be grounded, and which appears wholly consistent with their life experience. Interestingly, the students of each participant identified their teacher educator's caring within that context independent of my own identification of it. And finally, the evidence from the data indicates that each participant is inconsistent in their caring practices. As caring as they are with their students, there were those times when their caring fell by the wayside.

This qualitative study is by no means generalizable. It is the examination of three teacher educators' beliefs and perceptions regarding the role of care in their teaching lives. My hope is that it will encourage others to examine their own, and, through identifying and acknowledging those, to bring related ideas to the greater consciousness of our profession. My hope is that, through the process, this study can begin to demystify

our notions about the ethic of care and how it is perceived and addressed by educators in teacher preparation programs.

A fundamental premise of this study is the belief that care should be a salient construct within teacher education programs. “To care and be cared for are fundamental human needs” (Noddings, 1992, xi), and, I believe for teacher educators to turn their collective backs examining the role of care in teaching with their students is unwise. On the other hand, to embrace morality by explicitly addressing the role of care in our teaching is to open the possibilities not only for students, but teachers as well. Noddings (1992) passionately challenges the profession to let children’s needs drive our plans for teacher preparation, saying,

We have to stop asking: “...how can we prepare teachers for the real world of teaching? Instead we have to change that world. We have to ask: How can I complete the caring connection with as many as possible? How can I help them care for themselves, other humans, animals, the natural environment, the human-made environment, and the wonderful world of ideas? As we ask these questions, we may find an authentic way to prepare teachers. (p. 179)

Focusing on caring can provide a subtle shift that will lead to altering the culture of schooling (Noblit, Rogers, & McCadden, 1995), and there is no better place to turn our focus than the field of teacher education. Understanding how teacher educators perceive and operationalize care in their own teaching offers a crucial link in our caring connections, and a step toward the authenticity which Noddings envisions. My hope is that this study provides a small step along that path.

PROFESSIONAL LITERATURE

The focus of this study is to examine the beliefs and perceptions of teacher educators regarding the role of care in their own teaching practices. Although caring is considered characteristic of good teaching, the study of care was begun relatively

recently, and largely encouraged by research steeped in the cultural roots of Western feminism (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984, 1992).

In her landmark study challenging the nature of moral choices proposed by Lawrence Kohlberg and others, Gilligan (1982) found that it is relationships that contextualize both identity and morality in females. Whereas males approach their own identities and moral dilemmas from a stance that is more direct and clear, “more distinct and sharp-edged” (Gilligan, 1982, p. 160), females view identity and morality issues by considering their relationships with others. Those considerations result in reason and logic that is more obscure than the clear cut reasoning of their male counterparts. A second difference surfaced, as the women in Gilligan’s study spoke of rights and responsibilities, demonstrating their focus on conceptualizing care not only of another person but also care of one’s self. As a result of the women in Gilligan’s study focusing on the need to consider one’s relationship to others, and the responsibilities inherent in those relationships, caring emerged as a central theme.

Embracing Gilligan’s findings that care is relational in nature, in response to another, uniquely expressed, and representing a moral stance, Noddings (1984) focuses our attention more fully on considering care as a moral obligation. Expressing it as “our first and unending obligation,” Noddings (1984, p. 17) suggests care is a way of being in relation with another. Cautioning against our conceptualizing care as merely a set of behaviors, she characterizes the “one-caring” as demonstrating both engrossment with and motivational displacement toward the “cared-for”, where engrossment represents “an open, nonselective reciprocity to the cared-for” (1992, p.15) and motivational displacement is “the sense that our motive energy is flowing towards others and their projects” (p. 16). As a contributor to the relationship inherent in caring, the “cared-for” is characterized by his reciprocity, that is, “(t)he cared-for receives the caring and shows

that it has been received” (p. 16). This establishes caring as a relationship between two people, each with requisite contributions to the caring relationship.

Continuing with her focus on an ethic of care, Noddings (1992) extends her discussion to consider caring in schools. Placing caring at the center of the work of schools, Noddings (1992) argues that “...the first job of the schools is to care for our children. Our aim should be to encourage the growth of competent, caring, loving, and lovable people” (p. xiv). Noddings’ conceptualization of the school as a crucible of caring for others, as well as caring for plants and animals, the environment, and ideas, presents a lovely vision for all that can transpire in classrooms.

Schools are first and foremost, however, where relationships are established between teachers and learners, and among learners. Noddings’ (1992) vision of care as a moral decision to enter into relationship with another deepens our insight into teaching as more than simply being driven by curricula, strategies, and outcomes. The learner becomes central to all that teachers do in classrooms, and all related decisions to be made. It is encouraging that the ideas Noddings offers have taken root in the field of education, challenging educators to examine the role of care in their own classroom settings.

It is important to note that, although care has its cultural roots in feminist research, males are by no means excluded from being seen as ones-caring in relationships (King, 1998; Sargent, 2002). In my own personal and professional life, I have been influenced by males as ones-caring, and, for that reason chose to include a male among my participants. According to Noddings (1984), her description of an ethic of caring as a feminine ethic neither claims “to speak for all women (nor) to exclude men...(but) there is reason to believe that women are somewhat better equipped for caring than men are” (p. 97). After all, as a result of their own mother-child relationship, girls identify with the

one-caring, maintaining their self-perception of caring while their male counterparts must separate themselves from the one-caring of their childhood to establish their identity as males (Gilligan, 1982).

Caring, however, is widely accepted as being central to good teaching, whether one's students are preschoolers or preservice teachers. "It frames and gives meaning to what happens in classrooms and schools" (Noblit, Rogers, & McCadden, 1995, p. 680.) Although educators, when describing their role as teacher, may use common educational jargon, such as facilitator, guide or co-learner with students, all of these roles position the teacher to initiate caring relations with students, that is, to act as the one-caring for students (Noddings, 1992). Whether teachers consider themselves partnering with their students in the learning process or serving as expert leaders or guides, their descriptive terms illustrate their perception of both the learner, as well as their own relationship to the learner. And regardless of the specific perception of the role of teacher or learner, it is within this relationship that care flourishes, enhancing both the teaching and learning processes. Some scholars contend that those interpersonal relationships are requisite for learning and growth to occur (Goldstein, 1999; Goldstein & Freedman, 2003). It is no wonder, then, that we pay special attention to better understanding caring relationships between teachers and learners.

This study will examine teacher educators' work with preservice teachers as they conduct their teaching in two separate venues...the university classroom, as well as the elementary school. For that reason, we need to examine the care literature as related to several areas. Because each participant's preservice teachers work regularly with young children and their teachers in elementary school classrooms, it becomes necessary to understand the scope of the care literature in early education. Each research participant teaches in higher education, and more specifically in area of teacher education. For that

reason, an examination of the literature from both higher education, as well as teacher education will follow, contextualizing care in the multi-layered teaching of these educators.

Care in Early Education

Considering one's role as teacher without giving any thought to the construct of care is folly to some scholars, and the professional literature corroborates this. Whether approaching care in teaching with a more holistic focus (Charney, 1992; Kohn, 2003; Myers, 1997), or narrowing their research lens to consider care as related to classroom curriculum (Arnstine, 1990; Mecca, 1996), relationships in the classroom (Bosworth, 1995; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Deiro, 2003; Goldstein, 1997; Noblit, Rogers, & McCadden, 1995), or teachers' dispositions and philosophical beliefs related to care (Agne, 2003; Arnstine, 1990; Noblit, 1993; Paley, 1999), scholars' contributions indicate that care is considered essential to the discussion of creating effective learning environments for children.

Caring relationships are seen as central to the creation of learning environments for young children, and the development of relationships with those involved in children's lives are among the highest priorities (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Others envision collaboration with parents as a way to establish an atmosphere of caring within a school community (Schaps, 2003). Whether acknowledging it as requisite for learning or a goal to work toward, caring is crucial to early education, and teachers strive to create caring environments that allow for secure transition, encourage development and learning, and establish respectful and open relationships with children and their families. Others confine their attention to the ways in which teachers create a classroom environment that allows for and supports children's learning (Myers, 1997).

Attempting to clarify what it means for a teacher to care in her primary classroom, Goldstein (1998) argues against the commonly-held, simplistic notion that care is situated in the affective domain, as a personality trait, feeling, or temperament which enables one to work successfully with children. Citing Noddings' ethic of care as a moral decision, Goldstein examines a primary teacher's classroom practices that reveal not only her child-centered philosophy caring as "a deliberate moral and intellectual stance rather than simply a feeling" (p. 18). While elevating care far beyond the simplistically conceived notion of loving little children, Goldstein argues that caring enhances teaching, and lights the way for others to consider the power of caring in teaching.

Foregoing innuendo, Dalton and Watson (1997) believe that "...building caring classroom relationships is *the* (emphasis added) key to creating a successful learning community... (p. 10), and Ayers (1993) corroborates with certainty, writing, "Good teaching requires most of all a caring teacher. Teaching is primarily an act of love. The rest is ornamentation" (p. 18). These statements represent a strong advocacy for caring in teaching, drawing our attention to the power that rests in relationships forged between a caring teacher and her student, and to the concomitant results of that caring.

With her focus squarely on the teacher-learner relationship, Goldstein (1999) encourages educators to expand their commonly held notions of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development to include a philosophical compatibility with Noddings' ethic of care. Hypothesizing that our current understanding of the ZPD is bereft of moral implications to guide teachers, Goldstein believes that situating the ZPD within an ethic of care will enable teachers to pursue work with children confident that they are engaged in the honorable work of encouraging student's achievement of worthwhile goals. In so doing, the teacher meets the learner as "one-caring," altering the relational dynamics in a powerful way (Goldstein, 1999) for both teacher and learner.

With a different tack, Thayer-Bacon (1993) proposes caring relationships as holding promise for developing critical thinking. Pinpointing the motivational displacement of the one-caring toward the cared-for, she argues that it is the relational nature of caring that facilitates one's ability to think critically. As truly caring people listen to and consider the perspectives and alternative points of view offered by others, their caring does not preclude their critical thinking but rather helps to ensure it. Mecca (1996) agrees, suggesting that whole language classrooms become models of the essence of caring when students become collaborative authors, considering others' ideas as they construct class books. Caring relationships become exercises in seeing questions or issues from others' perspectives, and thus, become exercises in thinking critically.

Such perspective-taking is inherent in the class meeting model (Nelsen, 1987) that many espouse as a caring strategy. Framing it as an organic experience, in which the students' interests and needs determine the meeting agenda, proponents believe the class meeting creates learning experiences in which the students invest themselves and learn, while being asked to consider another's perspective (Leachman & Victor, 2003). Suggesting a benefit of a broader scope, Schaps (2003) believes that, through the close and supportive relationships encouraged through class meetings, a sense of connectedness and community can result. It seems that such results are becoming significant for many children.

The power of caring relationships between teachers and young children is the focus of other scholars, as well. In his book *Uncertain Lives* Bullough (2001) reflects on his interviews with school children living in horrific circumstances, often in families reeling out of control due to drug abuse and neglect. For these children, school has become the only place where they feel cared for. Concurring, Schaps & Solomon (1990) believe teachers have little choice but to compensate by creating caring classroom

communities and becoming like supportive families. That educators' caring has a profound impact on children's lives and their learning seems to be gaining more attention.

There is certainly a groundswell of interest in caring in schools. The March 2003 issue of *Educational Leadership* is devoted to the topic of caring in schools, suggesting ways in which teachers, administrators, and parents can contribute to establishing and nurturing caring school communities. Whether proposing a solution to bullying (Cooper & Snell, 2003; Olweus, 2003), making curricular suggestions for nurturing a more caring attitude in children (Glickman, 2003; Leachman & Victor, 2003), or collaborating with parents to create caring school communities (Schaps, 2003), scholars believe that creating caring relationships is the antidote to many of the challenges faces teachers. It is interesting, that while some scholars see caring as leading to harmony, others cite caring as a point of disharmony.

Addressing such issues as the cultural differences and unequal power relations in schools, Eakin-Rich, Van Galen, & Timothy (1996) declare caring a far more slippery slope than formerly considered, concluding "that caring does not always work" (p. 232). They discovered disparate interpretations of what is considered caring and what is received as caring. Schools are places in which diverse populations of children, teachers, and parents meet, and what a teacher might interpret as appropriate behaviors for the one-caring are often misinterpreted by those being cared for, whether they are the students, parents, or others (Eakin-Rich, Van Galen, & Timothy, 1996). Often the researcher is the one left to reinterpret the caring that is demonstrated between a teacher and her students (Noblit, 1993).

Addressing such misunderstandings of what it means to care has challenged other researchers as well. Working with the faculty and staff, students, and parents of an

elementary school, Webb-Demsey, Wilson, Corbett, & Mordecai-Phillips (1996) found that, through discussions groups about care and caring enactments, such caring acts may not always be interpreted as such by those being cared for. Understandings, shaped by issues like race and class, are subtle and entrenched and serve as disparate views that result in major barriers. Realizing their own culpability in the misinterpretations of meaning, these researchers were forced to admit that one's best intentions are not enough to constitute care, or to be received as such. They found simply entering into relationship with another does not ensure that caring will be understood mutually.

Similarly, conflicting interpretations of caring were discovered between non-Latino teachers and immigrant and U. S. born Latino students, giving them little common ground on which to build caring relationships (Valenzuela, 1999). The teachers' views of care were tied to their focus on student achievement, while the students focused on a give-and-take between teachers and students.

For the purposes of this study, it is also interesting to note that the youth's definition of what it means to care (closely related to the Mexican idea of *educacion* as a model of schooling steeped in respectful, caring relations) more closely resembles the reciprocity between student and teacher that facilitates learning (Noddings 1992) than does the teachers' more outcomes-driven perceptions of care. Sadly, even such conceptual differences in care appear to create a crippling cultural divide between the students and teachers in this study (Valenzuela, 1999).

Other examples of cultural dissonance portend troubling situations in schools where teachers care for and teach children different from themselves. When dominant culture teachers impose a "pedagogy of power" (Delpit, 1998) on non-dominant children, or minimize authentic learning experiences through utilizing a pedagogy of poverty (Bullough, 2001), caring is sacrificed. How can we call such teaching caring if there is no

commitment to meeting the student as one-caring, putting his interests, his experience, his needs ahead of our own (Noddings, 1994)?

In short, it seems that our understanding of care, an oft-assumed linchpin of teaching, is much like a path fraught with obstacles. Although we know that caring is integral to good teaching, and offers possibilities for enriched relationships with students and families, it is not something easily realized.

While the above literature frames many of the issues forthcoming in this study, and certainly speaks to the caring that is primarily focused on in teacher education, it does not address the caring relationships that occurs in higher education. For that, we look elsewhere.

Caring in Higher Education

The professional literature addressing care in higher education is somewhat sparse, and focuses particularly on how a caring professor might be characterized. This is useful information, for even in higher education, professors consider themselves caring. And if students learn more with caring teachers, then it behooves professors to become more caring, for their students' sakes.

Through the process of interviewing a purposeful sample of six professors whom the researchers consider to be caring, Thayer-Bacon & Bacon (1996a, 1996b) gleaned the following characteristics of a caring professor: (1) approachable and welcoming; (2) places emphasis on the learning process; (3) engages students in learning; and (4) creates a safe, supportive environment. Through identifying such characteristics, Thayer-Bacon & Bacon challenge the professoriat to scrutinize their own relationships with students in order to make the collegiate classroom, and entire university, a place where people can feel cared for and learning can flourish. Following this investigation into what

characterizes a caring professor, the researchers turned their gaze to students' perceptions of caring.

Examining students' ideas concerning a caring professor constituted part of a larger study done by Thayer-Bacon, Arnold, & Stoots (1998). Although similar in nature to the results of the earlier cited Thayer-Bacon & Bacon study, the results of this study indicate that students attend more to the affective characteristics of care than do the professors. The students conceptualize a caring professor within two domains: that of his relationships with students and that of his teaching. Regarding the first, students believe caring professors establish personal and open relationships with students. Regarding his teaching, students identify the caring professor as one who brings a wealth of knowledge to the classroom, as well as sharing the educational context with them.

Although attempting to characterize a caring professor, another scholar approached the construct of care in direct opposition to Noddings' (1984) contention that care is a way of being in relation with another and not simply a set of behaviors. Teven (2001) surveyed undergraduate students to identify specific behavior patterns that communicate a professor's caring to students. Using questionnaires, the researchers discovered the behaviors that students identify with caring professors are responsiveness, that is, warmth, compassion, and friendliness, and more nonverbal immediacy, that is, as defined by eye contact, body language, proximity, and smiling. Uncaring was perceived as a teacher's assertiveness and aggression. While such characteristics might be helpful for those attempting to identify caring professors, the more relevant contribution from this research seems to be that it reflects the critical role of teachers' communicative behaviors as mediating perceived caring with students. It is not just what we do, but how we do it that can relate our caring to students.

Although the studies of caring in higher education certainly contribute to our understanding of how care is conceptualized, they are less theory-generating studies than they are methodology-generating study. As the earlier authors state, these studies can serve “to develop a method for identifying caring teachers/professors who can then be further studied as part of research on caring” (Thayer-Bacon, Arnold, & Stoots, 1998, p. 3). And while the characteristics certainly inform us, we know little of the nature of the professors’ caring behaviors or of the compatibility between the professor’s and his students’ ideas about caring in higher education.

Although teacher education is situated within higher education, it stands apart when we consider caring. Teacher educators model daily, not only teaching strategies but also caring strategies, in the hopes that their preservice teachers will become caring classroom teachers of the future. And while we need caring professors throughout the university, there seems to be more of an immediacy for understanding caring within teacher education. With that distinction in mind, it becomes salient to examine the literature on care in teacher education.

Caring in Teacher Education

It is not surprising that the care literature is more robust in the field of teacher education. Care is a widely accepted facet of good teaching (Arnstine, 1990; Goldstein, 2001; Goldstein & Lake, 2000; Rogers & Webb, 1991), and those who teach in schools and colleges of education are keenly aware of the need to model sound teaching practices daily with their students. Caring teacher educators “constantly strive to better themselves, not only because they choose to be lifelong learners, but also because they know that they are constantly modeling to those to whom the future will be entrusted” (Agne, 1992, p. 123). What we model as caring teaching educators today becomes what

children of the future will experience in their classrooms. What we know about caring in teacher education informs our practices.

Scholars approach the discussion of care in teacher education from different stances. While some address the need to reconceptualize teacher preparation programs (Arnstine, 1990; Goldstein, 2002; Rogers & Webb, 1991), others examine promising pedagogical strategies (Agne, 1992; Goldstein & Lake, 2000; Rosiek, 1994) or grapple with the challenges of being a teacher educator (Burgess & Carter, 1992; Sumsion, 2000). One scholar addresses her preservice teachers' exogenous perceptions of urban schools and students of color through, among others, an epistemology of caring and empathy (Schwartz, 2003). Despite the slice of teacher education examined by these scholars, all consider care salient to their questions.

Encouraging our conceptualizing teacher education with a focus on the caring relationship between the teacher educator and the preservice teacher, Noddings (1986) offers an alternative view of fidelity ["...not as...faithfulness to duty or principle but as a direct response to individuals with whom one is in relation" (p. 497)] in teacher education. Suggesting it is our responsibility to contribute to the goal of producing caring, moral teachers, Noddings believes that is best done through four tenets: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation.

Discussing those, Noddings (1986) reminds us that teacher educators understand the best practices of teaching regarding preparation, active/thoughtful listening, critical thinking, and an active curiosity, and our responsibility is to model those qualities in our work with preservice teachers. Likewise, if we desire teachers who are capable of engaging students in dialogue, we must work to that end. "If we are serious about critical thinking as an educational goal and if we believe that education is essentially a more enterprise, then true dialogue must become an integral part of our interaction in schools at

all levels” (p. 504). Practice teaching has been a longstanding tradition in teacher education programs but Noddings challenges the conceptualizing of such practice to be broader in scope. “Practice in teaching should be practice in caring” (p. 504). Not only must skills related to teaching be learned but also a caring attitude must be sustained and enhanced, and this is possible through practice. Finally, Noddings suggests that the last major component of her teacher education model is confirmation. As teacher educators work with students, through their interactions they begin to move toward those ethical ideals that we strive to attain. As teacher educators, we are in the position to confirm –“to help the other to actualize that best image” (p. 505). As with all of her writing, Noddings offers an eloquent challenge to teacher educators, some of whom have seized her ideas and used them as building blocks.

With equal fervor but more pragmatism, Rogers & Webb (1991) argue that teacher education programs must first make a programmatic commitment to an ethic of care, explicitly acknowledging its importance and following through within the goals and objectives of their program. Subsequent to a collaborative effort to define, Rogers & Webb suggest the development of a program based on that definition. “Everyone must be committed to an ethic of care for a supportive milieu to be fostered and sustained” (p. 177).

Building on Noddings (1986) discussion of fidelity, Rogers & Webb suggest that reflective thinking and continuity would add depth to the schema. The development of teachers as thoughtful decision-makers is possible when, as preservice teachers, they are encouraged to engage in thoughtful and genuine dialogue with peers and mentors about such grounded theories as care. Such preparation is crucial, as new teachers are often left to grapple with difficult issues once they are in the classroom...often at a time when they are overwhelmed and less likely to be able to reflect on the implications of their decisions

(White & Smith, 1994). Likewise, due to the relational nature of caring, it follows that remaining in a cohort or under the guidance of the same professor for an extended time could provide a continuity which would support a care-centered teacher education program.

Encouraging restructuring teacher education with a different tack, one scholar hypothesizes that, if our goal is to prepare caring and rational teachers, we must restructure the ways in which we prepare teachers (Arnstine, 1990). Focusing on the dispositional nature of both caring and rationality, Contending that these dispositions must be cultivated, with attention to those conditions which foster such cultivation, she points out that most teacher education programs are at cross-purposes for the cultivating care, with more attention paid to obedience and independent work than in caring for one another. Citing predetermined curricula driven by exit-level exams for certification as usurping time and strategies intended to create reflective, caring teachers, Arnstine (1990) believes while most teacher educators offer care and reassurance to the prospective teachers in their classes, the challenge to build a supportive community of peers in teacher education classes can be staggering where class sizes are soaring. As programs grow larger, and classes increase in size semester by semester, the challenge of merely modeling caring morphs to the challenge of modeling the cultivation of a caring community. And while caring communities are worthy outcomes, they should not be at the expense of the caring relationship enjoyed between individual student and teacher.

Another scholar, faced with increased teaching loads and mounting demands to attract research funding as well as publish, corroborates Arnstine's concerns. Sumsion (2000) worries that she cannot maintain her own ethic of care with students as well as to model reflective teaching practices under her circumstances. Believing that the development of caring teachers requires teacher educators who model caring, she

struggles between her own moral commitment to ground her professional practice in an ethic of care while meeting institutional demands. She concludes that her explicitness with her students is the solution. Openly addressing her dilemma with students allows her to maintain her moral ethic, while making clear to students that her efforts to create a caring community of learners is grounded in her hope that her students will also create caring communities in their own professional practices. Although challenged by her professional situation, she responds with care to maintain her own integrity.

Concurring with Rosiek's (1994) vision of preparing teachers who are able to draw on caring to develop strong professional practices, Goldstein (2002) creates a care-centered approach to teacher education that attends to commitment, community, and passion. While a teacher's commitment in and to her teaching, as well as the building of community in her classroom are commonly accepted as part and parcel of teaching, a teacher's passion is less commonly considered. Defending her use of passion in her schema for care-centered teacher education, Goldstein cites Fried (1995), writing, "passion is not just a personality trait that some people have and others lack, but rather something discoverable, teachable, and reproducible"(p. 6). Drawing parallels between the work of Fried and Noddings, Goldstein is encouraged by the notion that both passion and caring can be taught. Reminding us that caring "is contextual, situated, and not specific", she stops short of offering a model for teacher education programs. Instead she urges institutions to create care-centered programs that center on commitment, community, and passion while maintaining elements that make their program uniquely specific in meeting the needs of the students, faculty, and institution.

Examining expert teachers' belief systems, Agne (1991) discovered caring to be the feature distinguishing them from other teachers, leaving her to conclude that further attention should be paid to the influence of caring in teacher's practices. Having found

that the expert teacher's "edge" (that is, the essential part of her teacher belief) is caring, she concludes that "when teacher caring has had time to work its 'magic,' the essential part of...student belief...becomes caring, too" (p. 122). Agne believes in the caring model a teacher provides for her students, and extrapolates specifically to teacher education, saying,

If caring is the expert teacher's edge, then teacher training takes on a new dimension because caring is not a pedagogical strategy. Unlike pacing, overlapping, and routines, caring is not a single technique, but rather a deep emotional belief which pervades every teacher's thoughts and behaviors. (p. 123)

Remaining cognizant of our modeling care as teacher educators, we begin to see its influence throughout our teaching.

Some scholars have narrowed their focus to consider the curriculum as related to caring. For instance, in her treatise suggesting educational goals as best understood as "dispositional," Arnstine (1990) challenges educators to consider both caring and rationality as crucial to the development of curriculum that is characterized, not by a predetermined knowledge base but by criterion of relevance to the students' experiences. Reminiscent of Dewey's (1938) belief that the only permanent frame of reference for education should be "the organic connection between education and personal experience", Arnstine sees caring as the bridge to a robust and meaningful curriculum. Caring teachers, whose "motive energy is flowing towards others and their projects" (Noddings, 1992, p. 16), construct curriculum that is meaningful to the students as "cared-for". Attending to those caring relationships enables the caring teacher to maintain a flexible curriculum, focused on the needs of the students and not administrative mandates. Yet others focus on the potential of caring beyond the scope of a flexible curriculum.

Challenged by their findings that preservice teachers demonstrate a central focus on control rather than a care-centered approach with students (Rosiek, 1994; Weinstein, 1998), scholars call for changes in teacher education pedagogy. Situating his argument within the context of Noddings' ethic of care,

Rosiek (1994) suggests the use of narratives and case studies with preservice teachers, believing that suggest strategies would fortify their insight and wisdom when they face the inevitable dramas in the classroom. Through such an approach, teacher preparation programs can prepare caring teachers who can embrace the complexities of classroom conflicts, giving attention to the child's and the classroom community's future. "Embracing (such) a complexity that at times seems chaotic, this approach is saved by the consistent, future-conscious spirit of caring" (Rosiek, p. 30.) Without such fortification, many new teachers respond to conflicts in the classroom with desperate disciplinary strategies, or worse, by blaming themselves for their lack of vision in handling these sticky situations.

A more established practice in teacher education is reflection, and many teacher educators agree that reflection is an important method to use in their own teaching (Ayers, 1993; Collinson, 2001; Palmer, 1998) or when working with preservice teachers (Bondy & Davis, 2000; Bullough, 1991; Goldstein & Lake, 2000; Rogers & Webb, 1991). Acknowledging the importance of uncovering our tacit understandings that inform our teaching practices, Goldstein & Lake (2000) suggest that, as teacher educators, we need to be aware of those beliefs held by our students as well. Only then can we begin to build on those beliefs in productive ways. Understanding the baseline beliefs held by their preservice teachers about the relationship between caring and teaching was the impetus for their study. Sadly, they discovered that their preservice teachers' beliefs about care were characterized by oversimplification, essentialism, and idealism.

What Goldstein & Lake conclude is that it is possible to encourage a maturing of preservice teachers' beliefs about caring in teaching. They suggest that, in order to do so, teacher education programs include practices that allow for a student's acknowledging his pre-existing beliefs, calling those into question and critically scrutinizing them, and then thoughtfully re-integrating those beliefs into his evolving practice. Concurring with Goldstein and Lake's contention that beliefs are evolving, Collinson (2001) believes "the development and refinement of values and moral decisions is a lifelong endeavor" (p. 23). Thus, understanding one's own values...whether as a teacher educator or a preservice teacher... should continue as a goal in teacher education programs. Such insight enriches our understanding of ourselves and others, develops more consistent behaviors and practices, and improves our judgments and decision-making.

There are those who sound the clarion for the professoriat to turn the research lens inward, to examine those background beliefs that influence the "learning-to-teach ecosystem" of teacher education (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998). Recognizing care as a tacitly understood, culturally shaped construct, the researchers identify cultural insularity a creating problems for modeling caring practices. Others calling for self-study within the teacher education profession believe that in making connections between personal lives and professional careers, we will understand the influences of our early lives on our professional practices, as well as the intersection of our histories and the histories of those we teach (Knowles & Cole, 1994).

Despite evidence of increasing interest in the care literature within teacher education, what has been left unexamined are teacher educators' beliefs and perceptions regarding the role of care in their own teaching practices. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine those beliefs and perceptions. My goal is not to solve a problem, but rather to shed light on a facet of teaching not yet studied. The need for a deeper

understanding of teacher educators' beliefs and perceptions regarding the role of care in their teaching is grounded in the belief that "caring fosters...teacher/student connection(s) and encourages possibilities for learning that may not otherwise occur" (Noblit, Rogers, & McCadden, 1995). Our better understanding the role of care in teaching holds promise for improving instruction in teacher education programs, and subsequently ensuring the creation of more care-centered teaching in our nation's schools.

Methodology

This qualitative study takes place within a public university in central Texas, and seeks insight into the beliefs of teacher educators about the role of care in their own teaching, as well as the sources that have shaped their beliefs. The ways in which a teacher educator has learned to be caring contribute to the ongoing narrative of her personal and social experience that, in turn, becomes a part of her teaching life (Connelly & Clandinin, 1995). The examination of the ideas about care in teacher educators' practices holds promise for better understanding the construct of teaching.

As a teacher educator, I had been interested in the role that care plays in teaching, and the prospect of conducting research about care was exciting to me. In addition to my doctoral studies, I teach early childhood education classes in a teacher preparation program, and find I have little time to observe my colleagues or have more than a passing conversation about the ways in which we believe care is integral to our teaching. While I believed many of my peers were caring educators, I had little knowledge of the ways in which they learned to care or thought about care. As a teacher educator, I have longed for the opportunity to step away from my own teaching to watch others, to talk about issues of importance to me, and to reflect on my own practice. As teacher educators, however, we have demanding work schedules filled with classes to teach, organizations to sponsor, committee meetings to attend, appointments to keep with students, and research interests to pursue.

Yet, with my research proposal approved, I found myself on the brink of a place not unlike Rensenbrink (2001), who describes her researcher self as being in the position of clock-stopper. Elaborating, she recounts,

I spent my day observing in the classroom, able to move around, pursue what looked interesting, question the students and the teacher, and use audiotape and videotape for later reflection” (p. 15).

Despite my own and others’ busy schedules, I was suddenly in a position to observe other teacher educators, be privy to their counseling sessions with students, ask the questions that buzzed around in my head of both the teacher educators and their students. They held the key to my understanding better the ways in which teacher educators think about and operationalize care in their own teaching.

PARTICIPANTS

I began thinking about possible participants by considering the Curriculum and Instruction faculty at my university. To complete my doctoral research while continuing to teach meant that I would need to conduct my study in “my own backyard.” To examine teacher educators’ beliefs about the role of care in their teaching required that I identify caring educators who were likely to have an interest in talking about care. During my nineteen years on this faculty, I have heard numerous comments from students and parents, as well as from educators from other universities, about the caring nature of our faculty. Admittedly, while I believed some to be more caring than others, I began to consider and eliminate potential participants based on my own beliefs. Two very caring teacher educators were eliminated immediately. One was involved with her own doctoral research, and I didn’t have the heart to ask her to participate in mine. The other was simply too close a personal friend. It would have been akin to researching my sister, and I took to heart Glesne’s (1999) warning that “...no matter how much your friendships go beyond the research site and time, feelings of exploitation or betrayal may bubble up from time to time in either researcher or other” (p. 103). Such feelings were not risks I was willing to take, and fortunately, there were others to whom I could turn.

Identifying caring teacher educators proved less of a challenge than creating a relatively diverse triad of participants. Glesne's (1999) suggests, in her discussion of Patton's (1990) ideas of "maximum variation sampling," that the researcher "(s)elect cases that cut across some range of variation such as students of different ethnic backgrounds enrolled in an environment studies program", thus allowing the researcher to search "for common patterns across great variation" (p. 29). Seeking participants who represented diversity in gender and background, as well as in their teaching experiences, seemed critical for the depth and detail I was seeking. I was interested in the ways in which gender and ethnicity might influence both my participants' ideas about care and their demonstrations of care toward students.

While the work of Noddings (1984, 1992), Thayer-Bacon & Bacon (1996a, 1996b), and Myers (1997) offer sound frameworks from which to think about care, all of these scholars stop short of a discussion of the "caring clashes" which exist among people from different cultures. Although documented by scholars (Eaker-Rich & Van Galen, 1996; Delpit, 1998; Valenzuela, 1999; Villenas, 1996), such challenges remain as roadblocks to creating truly caring relationships. Examining and reflecting on our own ideas, as well as the ideas of others, about the role of care in education offer insight into teaching. Such insight enables us to both consider "the others" and challenge us to consider ourselves as "the others." To understand common patterns across great variation in my study, the examination and reflection of a sample representing cultural diversity was requisite.

The make-up of the faculty pool in my department at the university, however, created challenges for my plan to have a measure of diversity among my three participants. At that time, the faculty was only 19% male and 4% non-white. Despite those limitations, however, I was able to secure the collaboration of three caring teacher

educators who also represent the diversity I sought. Two are females, and one is male. One participant is a white American female, while another is a female reared in Mexico by a Mexican father and a Swedish mother. The third participant is an African American male. Any diversity in their teaching loads was more accidental than intentional. My assumption was that, regardless of their teaching responsibilities, all would be in a position to yield the research data I sought. It is my hope that, by using the voices of teacher educators who represent a variety of life and professional experiences, this research narrative will yield “not truth but truth-likeness or verisimilitude” (Bruner, 1985, p. 97). Not generalizable to a larger population, the results, nevertheless, can enrich our understanding of the role of care in teacher education.

My assumption that I could learn a great deal about the issue of care from my participants was bolstered by the interest they demonstrated in my research question as I approached them to participate in the study. Their initial curiosity and interest in the topic of care led me to believe that they would make good any commitment to support my research of care in their teaching. Not only had I identified them as caring teacher educators but each had responded with a sincere interest in the topic, ever ready to make room for the researcher, discuss the topic, and offer questions themselves. Such interest served as a harbinger of the “logic and power of purposeful sampling (that) lies in selecting *information-rich* cases for study...those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research...” (Patton, 1990, p. 169.) My goal was to better understand the ways in which teacher educators think about care in their teaching, and I was convinced that my participants could provide such understanding.

I see each of these participants in our hallways or elsewhere on the campus engaged with students. I have heard each of them offer the “student perspective” or come

to the defense of students during a discussion or a faculty meeting. I certainly suspected that each would indeed exemplify much of what is offered in the professional discourse regarding what the role of care in teaching might look like. For instance, Thayer-Bacon and Bacon (1996a, 1996b) identify such caring teacher qualifiers as welcoming and approachable, personal and open, and sharing the educational context with students. Believing that each of my participants embodies similar characteristics, I was confident that my research would glean each one's particular ideas about where he/she learned to care, what role each believes care plays in teaching, and how each demonstrates care in his/her teaching.

DATA GATHERING

In developing the portraits of these three caring teacher educators, I used a multi-strand method of inquiry to examine their beliefs about care and the role it plays in their teaching. My decision to utilize several research techniques to create the fullest picture of teacher educators' beliefs and perceptions about care was grounded in two considerations.

First, considering the relational nature of the research topic of care (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984), it seemed imperative to become the "fly on the wall" as the teacher educators worked with students. Whether during class time or informal discussions before and after class, in private conference sessions or debriefing a student after she/he had taught a lesson, I felt observing the teacher educator would provide rich data. Although teaching different classes, each participant works with preservice teachers in public elementary schools. In order to gain a fuller picture of each teacher educator's practice, I traveled to five Central Texas elementary schools over the course of the study, and watched my participants as they conducted their college classes, observed their preservice teachers' lessons with children, and conducted individual follow-up

conferences. I also visited numerous class sessions which were held on the university campus over the course of the three semesters of the data gathering process.

Second, my own concern with the validity of this qualitative study required the use of multiple forms of data collection. Although the interviews held promise for revealing the participants' beliefs about the role of care in their teaching, the implementation of their beliefs was still in question. In a discussion of the researcher's need to identify compatibility between our beliefs and practices, Kane, Sandretto and Heath (2002) cite Thompson's (1992) challenge to examine theories-in-use as well as espoused theories. They write that

(a)ny serious attempt to characterize a teacher's conception of the discipline he or she teaches should not be limited to an analysis of the teacher's professed views. It should also include an examination of the instruction setting, the practices characteristic of that teacher, and the relationship between the teacher's professed views and actual practice." (1992, p. 134)

Clearly, utilizing multiple forms of data collection offer not only a greater trustworthiness than offered by a single-collection approach but also leads to a more ecological perspective (Wideen, 1998). Utilizing participant interviews, participant observations, the collection of various document artifacts, as well as student feedback through focus group discussions maximized my opportunities for better understanding the participants' beliefs about the role of care in their teaching.

Participant Interviews

Each participant was the focus of investigation during a long academic semester. I began with an interview that preceded my initial visit to their classroom. The initial visits with two participants took place in the elementary schools where they met their classes and the third initial visit took place on the university campus where all of the student teaching seminars were held. This gave me some foundational information about how the

participant considered care in his/her teaching. Subsequent interviews then continued over the course of the semester of the study. Early interview questions came from my own interest in unearthing the participant's beliefs about care. How would each one define care? How is it demonstrated? From whom or what situations had each participant learned about caring? Is care a construct which can be taught to preservice teachers? In what ways are his/her own ideas about care manifest in his/her teaching? In teacher education, should care be addressed explicitly or implicitly?

My questions for the individual interviews were steeped largely in theory, implicit or explicit, underlying some behavior. Such theoretical assumptions provide a valid source for research questions (Glesne, 1999). Phrasing my questions in an open-ended fashion, while not leading or revealing my own theoretical framework, I addressed my goal of asking questions in the context of purposes known fully only to myself. Hopefully, this resulted in my participants, whom Glesne (1999) terms the "possessors of information, answer(ing) questions in the context of dispositions (motives, values, concerns, needs) that researchers need to unravel in order to make sense out of the words that their questions generate" (p. 68). They had the information I needed. As a novice researcher, I struggled to minimize injecting my own beliefs which might have altered their responses, tainting the data.

Subsequent interviews focused on points of clarification from earlier interviews, as well as topics and questions which emerged from the researcher's study of various data transcripts. On several occasions the participant came to an interview with scribbled notes, indicating a question, a continuation of an earlier story, or an "aha!" moment experienced between interviews. These experiences were not only gratifying to me as a demonstration of their sincere interest in my topic, but also offered additional insight into the ways in which the participant was thinking about care.

Offering each participant a choice of conducting the interviews in his/her office, my office, or in a quiet room within the Education Building, each one chose to join me in my office. I suspect that each did so to escape the distractions that haunt us all in our own offices, allowing more focus on the interview discussion. It worked very well. At the end of the hallway, with my telephone turned off, the office was a quiet space for talking. With each of us sitting in a rocking chair, and table lamp lighting the room, it seemed to welcome the conversation that ensued. I audio taped each interview and had the tapes transcribed for analysis of data.

Organizing our interview times around a framework of ninety minutes allowed time for greeting one another, getting comfortable within the interview setting, addressing the research questions for an hour, and leaving time for arranging subsequent interviews or classroom visits. With their commitments and busy schedules, asking my participants to discuss the research questions for more than an hour at a time seemed inconsiderate, and, I feared, would result in diminishing returns.

One of my commitments as researcher was to remain open to all that my participants had to offer, and to that end, three interviewing strategies were included. First, I repeatedly asked each participant, "Is there anything you would like to add to what you have said?" I added this question to my interview prompts out of deference to Wolcott's (1995) suggestion to "(i)nvite informants to help you become a better researcher" (p. 115). My high regard for what each of these educators brings to his/her teaching demanded that I give each one the opportunity to correct any unintentional omissions for which I was responsible.

Second, keeping the questions for the individual interviews open-ended in nature helped ensure that what I gleaned from my participants indeed represented their experiences, and not my expectations (Patton, 1990). For instance, a common question

during each initial interview was, “How would you define care?” Another question asked was “Can you talk about instances in your own life when you felt cared for?” Through each question, I attempted to see more clearly how my participant conceptualizes care.

The third interview strategy I used was to provide the participants with the interview questions ahead of time. This was an attempt to alleviate some of the stress associated with being interviewed, as well as to maximize the information the participants were able to share. My belief is that care is deeply rooted in us all, and that, by providing the participants’ with time for personal reflection prior to the interview, the caliber and authenticity of the information they shared would be enhanced.

Participant Observations

Shortly after beginning the interviews with each participant, I began to conduct observations of his/her teaching and interactions with college students. Observing my participants’ interactions with students represented an important piece of the research puzzle, allowing me to investigate any consistencies and inconsistencies between the participants’ explanations of how they think about care and what they actually do to demonstrate care with students. Such participant observation both facilitates data collection in the field (Wolcott, 1995) and strengthens the triangulation of data.

Two of the participants are professors in classes the department labels as “block classes”. This 9-hour block of classes is conducted in a public elementary school two days a week, thus, allowing the professor to instruct for half of the school day and for the students to work in the elementary school classrooms the other half of the day. The sole teaching responsibility of the third participant is the supervision of student teachers. While the majority of his interactions with his students occurs at the elementary school sites at which the student teachers are teaching, this participant did conduct occasional seminars on the university campus with the entire cohort of sixteen student teachers.

When observing my participants as they worked with students in the public schools, I videotaped their teaching. While videotaping the “college class” portion of the block classes, as well as the student teaching seminars, I simultaneously took detailed field notes. Taking detailed field notes in addition to videotaping provided access to data not captured on the video camera. The video lens broadens to encompass much of the room but it is not all-encompassing. While the video camera most often captured the research participant on camera, the field notes tended to focus on students and their reactions and interactions with the teacher, as well as their peers. Questions and thoughts emerging from these participant observations also led to discussion topics during our interview times.

Guiding preservice teachers through the challenging waters of classroom teaching was a significant part of each of the research participant’s work with students. The student teaching supervisor/participant regularly counseled with his student teachers at their school sites during their planning periods, and the remaining two participants spent a significant period of time moving about the elementary school to meet with students who had requested observations of their teaching followed by debriefing sessions. Most of these conferences were related to the student’s work with children, often allowing the professor an opportunity to evaluate a lesson which she had just observed. Over the course of three semesters, I shadowed the three teacher educators in meetings with students, audio taping their conversations.

Document Artifacts

Relevant artifacts were also gathered over the course of each research semester. Just as archeologists use artifacts to recreate the probable lives of the cultures they study, documents revealing my participants’ interaction with preservice teachers promised insight into my participants’ perceptions and beliefs about care in their teaching. Glesne

(1999) reminds us that “(d)ocuments corroborate your observations and interviews and thus make your findings more trustworthy. Beyond corroboration, they raise questions about your hunches and thereby shape new direction for observation and interviews” (p. 58).

Among the artifacts provided me were e-mail messages both from students to the participants, as well as from the participants to me; reflective journal entries written by students as part of their course requirements; spontaneous classroom assignments; a newspaper article provided for the students; and, a newspaper published by homeless people which one participant offered as evidence of the breadth of his caring. When student work was collected as artifacts, names had been blacked out by the professor for purposes of the students’ anonymity. One participant is also a published author of three books, one of which addresses the teaching profession. Considering such data also offered me insight into the participant’s thinking about the role of care in teaching and teacher education.

Although some scholars suggest that the researcher can ask the research participants in an educational setting to make assignments that produce documents (Glesne, 1999), I did not choose to do that. My rationale was that such a request might taint the research data by creating a care-centered assignment that did not authentically represent the participant’s beliefs or practices. My hope was that the document artifacts would add a contextual dimension to both interviews and observations.

Student Focus Groups

At each research semester’s end I invited the teacher educator’s students to participate in a focus group to discuss their perceptions of how their teacher had demonstrated care in teaching. Two focus groups were held in my home, where the students talked over a pizza lunch. I wanted to provide a meal to be shared among the

students, both in the belief that the ritual of mealtime makes conversation flow more easily, and to express my gratitude to them for their commitment to my research study. Two other lunch focus groups were held in a conference room in the Education Building, and the final two focus groups were held in the public schools where the focus group participants were student teaching.

All participation in the focus groups was totally voluntary, with the students remaining anonymous. This was achieved by first having each student draw a number before the discussion began, and then, using the number to identify herself before making her remarks. The time set aside for each focus group discussion was not to exceed two hours, and that provided ample time for the students' discussions. Each focus group discussion was audio taped, with the tapes later transcribed for data analysis.

Although I opened the focus group discussion with the question "How do you think your professor demonstrated care in his/her teaching?" I did not want to be a regular participant in the conversation. I was there to listen. My goal was for the focus group to provide the kind of asymmetrical form of conversation Wolcott (1995) suggests, that of one party seeking information while the others provide it.

Occasionally, the thread of the students' conversations would begin to unravel, and they would get sidetracked by irrelevant topics, i. e., what classes to take the next semester. At that time, I would simply interject another question in an effort to keep them talking about their perceptions of their professor's caring or not caring. More often than not, after one of my questions, the discussion would simply take off. It was as though I were not even present. One student would "piggy-back" an idea off another, again and again. Glesne (1999) encourages the use of such a multi-person interviewing process as my focus groups when she writes that "(i)nterviewing more than one person at a time sometimes proves very useful...some topics are better discussed by a small group of

people” (p. 67-68). I believed using focus groups held promise, and I was not disappointed. The students served as reminders for one another of instances in which they felt cared for by their teacher over the course of the semester, and one story seemed to open the door to the next.

I was not only able to analyze each teacher educator’s voice as the “one-caring” but his/her students as the “cared-fors,” as well. Aware that there are “incongruencies between what we *think* we do and what students *perceive* us to be doing,” (Knowles & Cole, 1994), I considered the student focus groups a critical component of my methodology. The student interview data, when placed alongside the respective participant’s own beliefs and perceptions of caring, serve as triangulation for the data examining each participant’s role as a caring teacher educator.

Researcher’s Reflections

Throughout my study I have kept an e-journal of personal reflections, at times on the process of research itself, and other times on my own teaching. Conducting this research also resulted in reflections I could not anticipate. Connecting my experience as researcher to my earliest days as a fledgling teacher, to my life as a child, and my experiences as a member of the dominant culture, at times caught me somewhat off guard. My reflections often sprang from something I had scribbled in my field notes...just a few words jotted down to jog my memory upon returning home, or from dreams and experiences that seemed related to my research topic. Other times, my reflections were in response to my own discoveries about my life as teacher and researcher. These journal notes to myself catapulted me into my data analysis. Even before finishing my first semester of data gathering, I found myself analyzing what I was hearing and seeing. Just as Goldstein (1997) writes about such analytic memos to herself, I found myself simultaneously collecting and analyzing my research data.

As a result of my participation as researcher, this study became a “reflexive inquiry” (Knowles & Cole, 1994). I was unable to delve into the personal histories of others, looking for connections between their personal and professional lives, without reliving my own. I was unable to scrutinize my participants’ pedagogical strategies and decisions without doing the same for my own. Yet, while acknowledging my own experiences as contributory, as a qualitative researcher my responsibility is to critically reflect on my own biases, theoretical predispositions, and preferences. Indeed, reflexivity remains an important procedure for establishing the validity of accounts of social phenomena. “This is particularly true for many critical researchers concerned with the charge that their research can become nothing more than self-serving ideology” (Schwandt, 1997 p. 136). To that end, I asked a research peer to read my drafts at every stage of writing, to look for unwarranted assertions, and to de-brief with me on a regular basis.

The entries in my researcher’s journal repeatedly address my own questions, concerns, and challenges as a teacher educator. Although this data was not analyzed as my other data, some did find its way into my writing. Any excerpts from my researcher’s journal included in this study are separated from the body of the text, and differentiated by italicized type.

DATA ANALYSIS

Shortly after I began gathering data for my study, I realized that, over the course of three semesters, I was going to create a mountain of data to analyze. (As the research progressed, it felt like a mountain range!) As the mountain began to grow, I would experience a feeling of being overwhelmed. I am reminded of a recurring dream my husband has of finding a cache of arrowheads and bird points...so many that as he bends over to pick more up, the ones stuffed in his pockets spill out. Frustrated, he struggles to

keep the situation under control, not losing a single point. There were moments early in my research when I had such feelings. It became clear to me very early that the organization of data is critical, particularly in a qualitative study such as mine. Thus, I made two critical decisions. First, each participant was assigned a file box that would hold all relevant data. Second, I decided to seek professional help with transcription.

Audiotape Analysis

With over one hundred hours of audio taped conversations (between researcher and participant, participant and preservice teachers, and multiple focus groups of students), I made the decision to have the tapes transcribed by a professional transcriber. Over the course of three years, she transcribed thirty-four audiotapes, providing me with the paper transcripts, all original audiotapes, and the computer disks onto which she stored each transcript. For purposes of anonymity, none of my participants was identified for the transcriber.

As soon as the audiotapes of their interviews were transcribed, I provided copies of the transcriptions for the participants to review. This provided them an opportunity to clarify any misinterpretations made by the transcriber. Although one of my participants had no interest in getting copies of the interviews, the other two did. Such attempts to utilize “member checks” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Glesne, 1999) were meant to add to the validity of my data. Occasionally, the two participants who did receive the transcripts would bring up something from a prior interview that would become grist for our conversation. This gave me the confidence that they were reading the transcripts, and that there was simply nothing that called for clarification or correction.

Frequently, I would ask a question based on something I had seen in the participant’s practice or heard in a previous conversation. Glesne’s (1999) suggestion that “(t)he things you see and hear about the people and circumstances of interest to

you...become the nuggets around which you construct your questions” (p. 69) rang true for me.

Following each individual interview or class period, I studied the data provided through the transcripts and my field notes. Initially, I made notes on the insides of the folders holding the transcripts but this only seemed to scratch the surface. Returning to those portions of the transcripts that I had highlighted, I began to write the data on chart paper that I hung on the bookshelves, walls, and doors of my home library. Sitting in my chair, surrounded first by papers labeled “Interview #1, Interview #2...” or “Seminar #3”, I read and reread the participants’ comments as the papers gently rippled under the ceiling fan. I searched for themes and categories, first within the data generated by each participant’s practice. Later, with additional charts divided into two or three columns with participants’ names at the top, I searched for common themes between two of them, and finally among all three of them. As I perused my hanging chart papers, I synthesized the data, creating more chart papers. Although generating more paper, the analysis of data began to reveal similarities and distinct differences.

There were many days when I stared at the papers and nothing bubbled to the surface. Other times, I found it necessary to return to the original audio or video tape to either clarify a word the transcriber had missed or to better understand the atmosphere in the teacher educator’s classroom. On one class day, I was unable to wrest myself away from my own teaching responsibilities, and, therefore, had only the audiotape to inform me. I returned to that audiotape again and again, for, as skilled as the transcriber was, she could not add the rich details of body language and facial expressions. Despite the hours I had spent in the company of my participants and their students, questions still remained even when I had been present, and I wanted desperately to capture the authenticity of the moment or thought.

Throughout the three semesters of my data gathering, the routine of transcripts-chart paper-audio tapes-and more chart paper was re-enacted. As I moved from one participant to another, I was reading transcripts, hanging chart paper, and trying to make sense of my data. Over time, however, some common themes did begin to emerge from the data, and the transcribed data offered an avenue of triangulation with data from other methodological strategies.

The analysis of the focus group discussion audiotapes came at the end of each research semester. Following the same procedure used with the other audio tapes, I found myself with more gently rippling chart papers labeled “Focus Group 1-Graduates” or “Focus Group 2-Undergraduates” as I studied the discussions of undergraduate students, graduate students, and student teachers. My goal was to look for the congruities and incongruities (Knowles & Cole, 1994) between what each teacher educator thought she/he did to care and what the students perceived the teacher educator had done to demonstrate caring.

Videotape Analysis

Following each videotaped episode, I viewed the videotape at home, taking additional notes regarding the data. This often gave me an opportunity to focus on an aspect that I had missed during the episode itself. Sometimes I simply wanted to fill in dialogue missed in my field notes, and other times I wanted to get a “read” on the students’ responses to the teacher in class. Often I studied the videotape of classes in an effort to triangulate data gathered through the interviews. If a participant had talked about care as being demonstrated by personal time with students, I was interested in whether or not the actions in class corroborated such a belief. Did the teacher actually spend individual time with students or simply busy herself with preparations prior to class time?

Making additional notations to myself in the margin of my field notes both added depth to my data or raised more questions.

Document Artifacts

As document artifacts became available, I began to read through them, highlighting sentences or passages that seemed to be relevant, and making notes in the margins. I had intentionally not asked my participants to make any assignments related to care in an effort to keep the data as naturalistic as possible. In an early interview, I had asked one of my participants if she ever addressed care explicitly or planned the topic of care into her syllabus. Her response was that, although she did not plan “care” as a topic of focus, such a discussion was inevitable with preservice teachers working with children for a semester. Elaborating, she said,

...I think (the topic of care) comes up often in our discussions of (both the preservice teachers’) classroom experiences, and...their responses and reflections (about those experiences.) (T)hey...are shocked sometimes by...the ways that teachers are brusque or disrespectful of students, or ignore students because they don’t fit the class...(T)hey’re special ed or they can’t keep up...for all the various reasons that someone gets isolated.

Such a situation did occur during the semester of research in this class. The result was my receiving document artifacts in which the preservice teachers delineated ways in which they perceived their cooperating teachers’ behaviors as caring or not caring toward the children. Analyzing the data involved reading over the student remarks and making notations that might prove helpful as I looked at the larger research picture. Although this data did not relate to the perceptions and beliefs of my research participant, I read, highlighted, and made margin notes that subsequently offered triangulation for the focus group participants’ ideas about ways in which the teacher educator had cared.

Another example of document artifacts collected was two different sets of reflective writing done by the students, complete with the professor’s margin notes. The

teacher educator's written interactions with the students added contextually to my study, offering support, expansion, and challenge to the portrait I was beginning to create (Glesne, 1999). Although much of the document artifact material added nothing to my study, occasionally I would come across a written remark by the participant that would offer triangulation to data gathered earlier. My common practice of reading, highlighting passages and comments, and making my own margin notes facilitated my analysis of this particular strand of data.

What I did discover about examining the document artifacts is that, while they provided no new themes and categories for my research, they did offer verification of many of the themes the research had already yielded. Because some of the documents were solitary e-mails or scribbled notes, they were more appropriately attached to a theme that had already developed, strengthening the case I was making. In other cases, the mere absence of document artifacts challenged my thinking about my participants as caring teachers.

One of my participants had described caring as getting to know your students and their interests, as well as being very accessible to them. That represents caring to me, as well, and I consider the written dialogic exchanges with my students as opportunities to be accessible to them and to get to know them. It has been my own experience that some students are more comfortable revealing themselves in their reflective writing or in private correspondence with me, and I learn a lot about my students' through their writing assignments. Yet, two of my participants whom I consider to be caring engage in no reflective dialogic exchanges with her students. Can one be caring and not offer that alternative avenue for exchange with her students? It seems that not engaging in multiple forms of exchange with students limits our opportunities to express caring.

LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

Considering the limitations of my study helps to maximize the trustworthiness of my data (Glesne, 1999). Those elements of the study that were circumstances beyond my control represent such limitations, and will be discussed. While the limitations are inherent in this study, there were also challenges that I had to face. I will address these through looking at the time frame of my study, the familiarity I share with my participants, and my role as a qualitative researcher.

Time Frame of Study

Conducting research while remaining a full time lecturer at the university created a unique set of problems. Aware that prolonged engagement and persistent observation (Glesne, 1999) would strengthen my research protocol, my obligations stemming from my own teaching prevented me from shadowing my participants for an entire day. My belief was that such extended time together could create a more seamless mural of each participant's teaching life. The reality of my research, however, was that our time together often felt more like a jigsaw puzzle, with some of the pieces missing. As each research semester progressed, I had less angst about the relative brevity of my observations, and came to trust the longevity offered by the semester long examination of each participant.

As soon as my own class time with students (both college and demonstration school preschoolers) came to a close, I grabbed my research gear and jumped into my car to drive to the school where I would meet my research participant. Though at times my destination was local, it was often twelve to forty-five miles away. Occasionally, I was able to begin the day in a research setting but would have to leave after only one hour to join my group of preschool children at our demonstration classroom.

When I did have to leave after an hour, I generally left the video camera running in my absence to continue capturing what transpired in my participants' classrooms as they worked with preservice teachers. I would then return to the school later to retrieve my research equipment. Often times, upon returning, I would shadow the teacher educator on her rounds to conference with preservice teachers. This less-than-ideal protocol remains a limiting quality of my study.

What I observed, as researcher, represents only a small portion of the practices of my participants. There were certainly missed opportunities to capture all of the threads of what are the stories of these three teacher educators as caring teachers. My observation data, however, when coupled with multiple interviews, document artifacts, and student focus groups, offer a contribution to our understanding of how care is perceived and operationalized within teacher education.

Familiarity with Participants

Despite the warnings against engaging in “backyard studies” (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992, p. 21), the fact remains that, given my own teaching, I had little choice but to conduct my research in the “backyard” of my own work. Researching colleagues provided the data I sought while allowing me to continue my own teaching. My choice, however, provided me firsthand knowledge of the “double-edged sword” nature of researching friends. Having established relationships with each of my participants allowed us the advantage of foregoing some of the preliminary work of trust- and rapport-building that precedes the research process of data collection. I found myself much in the position of Goldstein (1997), who describes an ease of entry into her friend and research participant's classroom. I was never denied access to classes, seminars, visits, observations, or the invitation to interview my participants' students. The

participants responded with an openness that I had certainly hoped for but had not taken for granted.

The same familiar relationships, however, also created disadvantages. I was aware that pre-existing relationships, such as those I maintain with my research participants, often make interviews more difficult to conduct, for, even when both parties intend to follow the interview format, the interview often turns into a form of conversation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Despite anticipating such a situation, I subconsciously fell into the trap early on.

The second interview transcript of my first participant reveals her describing a situation in which she was not able to feel a connection with one of her students. She describes a student who was disengaged, seemingly uninterested in the coursework. Asking the participant if she had talked to the student about that, she responds, “No. Do you think I should have?” Mirroring one more akin to a friend than a researcher, the next page and a half of transcript reveal *my* response to her question...*my* experience with a disengaged student. As I read the transcript for the first time, I saw passage after passage of *my* ideas, and *my* experiences. These contributions to the interview provided no insight into the data I was seeking...the perceptions and beliefs of my participants. Frustrated, I crossed out these passages, vowing to be a quieter interviewer.

The experience reiterated the need to hold to a more formal mode of dialogue than was the custom between my participants and me. I continued to remind myself that the reward of such an attempt would be a “dialogical process (that would remain) inherently valuable to the process of learning more about each other and each others’ perspectives as part of the research” (Glesne, 1999, p. 86). In addition to becoming more focused, I strove to become a better listener.

While friendship and intimacy may make certain aspects of the research endeavor easier, it can also make things more challenging (Goldstein, 1997). I was more of a friend than colleague to one of my participants when the study began. She was my first participant, and I remember calling her on the phone to talk about the research schedule for the semester. The following entry in my research journal represents the anxiety I felt following this conversation...one in which she and I seemed to have moved from “friends” to something more aloof. I wrote,

I have just hung up from talking to Jenny about when I can watch her teaching, and schedule interview appointments. Why do I already feel that there is a difference in her voice? She seems so removed from me, unlike our warm discussions at school. Is she intimidated? afraid? I know I am. (September 21, 2001)

While I wanted to know more about Jenny’s beliefs and practices related to caring, I never bargained for losing our friendship. I hoped desperately that this study would not signal the end of a friendship that I found both satisfying and intellectually stimulating.

Once I entered the data analysis phase of my study, I met a challenge far greater. I had not considered confronting my own feelings of betraying my participants. Scrutiny of each participant’s practice, and triangulation of their espoused theory with that practice, led me to discover inconsistencies in my participants that I had not anticipated. My first tendency was to interpret the data in a less critical way, making assumptions or taking things for granted which the data did not reveal. The challenge of being the critical researcher I want to be was compromised as a result of putting friends under my figurative research microscope. Although I cannot wholly escape those biases and prejudices that color my critical interpretation of these data, I believe any data generated from the study of friends present research challenges which become research study limitations. It was the tenacity of peer researchers that helped me to minimize that limitation.

It was in discussing my work with one peer researcher that my tendency toward crafting my participants' stories as victory narratives became obvious. As we talked about the instances in which I excused or rationalized the inconsistencies in the participant's practices, I became aware that I was abandoning my responsibility as researcher in favor of defending the practices of professional friends. With another peer researcher, I sought a better understanding of cultural differences of which I was trying to make sense. My frustration in attempting to analyze the data around certain practices compromised my ability to look at the data from as fair a stance as possible. After discussing my concerns with a peer researcher of the same culture as my participant, I was better able to contextualize what I was trying to interpret.

The Validity of the Naturalistic Setting

Throughout my study, I felt confident that what I was seeing was indeed the naturalistic setting of my participants' work. Although they each knew when I would be visiting their classrooms and conferences, I never had the sense that anyone was on "pins and needles" or checking their responses to situations. One comment, however, by one of my participants led me to consider that the research setting might not be as naturalistic as if I had used a hidden camera, which, of course, was not an option. The participant said, "...since you were looking at me a little more closely...I probably more consciously tried to implement some things that I had done in the past that (I forgot) about doing (to) help make it a caring classroom."

Two points help me live with this limitation. One, having been the participant in a separate research study myself during the tenure of my research study, I know that initially there is an awareness of an outsider in the room that encourages us to be the best we can be. Soon into my colleague's research, however, I became unaware when she came and went, and I returned to being totally absorbed in my work. I suspect the same

was true of my participant. Second, having taught in the same department as my participant, and having many of the same students as she, I am aware that all of the strategies described as contributing to the teacher educators' efforts to care had been used regularly. Students talk, and privy to their conversations, I had already heard about life history assignments and class meetings. I do acknowledge the limitation, however, and assume that these data represent only this semester when my participants were aware of my scrutinizing their practices.

My Role as Qualitative Researcher

The influence of researchers' assumptions and beliefs on their practice is widely accepted, and I acknowledge that my own have become an integral part of this project. I cannot remove my own lens of experience. In fact, it is my own lens of experience through which all of the data has passed. I entered into this qualitative research process with my eyes wide open, and ready to face the challenges of being the "researcher as instrument." Despite my awareness, the challenges of being a critical researcher were, at times, daunting, and I remain immensely grateful to my peer researchers for helping me clear my clouded lens of understanding from time to time.

Throughout this study and now, my colleagues remind me of who I am and am not as a teacher, as well as who I aspire to be. Like the Mobius strip, my own inner life of aspirations is seamlessly woven with my outside life of my teaching, and teaching becomes much like holding a mirror to my soul, emerging from my inwardness (Palmer, 1998). Using life experiences as the source of field texts is not without its pitfall. "Researchers' personal, private, and professional lives flow across the boundaries of the research site; likewise, though often not with the same intensity, participants' lives flow the other way" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 115).

Throughout the periods of data collection, data analysis, and summers in between data collection, I was continually reflecting on my own practice as related to my participants, and repeatedly transported back to my earlier experiences as a public school teacher in the late 1960's and early 1970's in urban schools in Boston and Houston. Issues concerning my membership in the dominant culture while teaching non-dominant culture children linger at a subliminal level as I consider what caring meant to me then as a teacher. I realize now that my theoretical framework of care was that of a savior. I had arrived at both schools where I taught to rescue my students from their hopelessness through imposing my view of what they needed. It seemed so clear to me then that I had something they wanted and needed. My naivete and admission of that still astounds me. Despite these earlier shortcomings, I believe that I am a more caring teacher today because of my experiences with this research study and alongside these three caring teacher educators who have taught me so much over the last eighteen months.

The reality, however, is that the complexities of my own teaching life help create the lens through which all of these data passed, the lens which helped me to translate these data into the portraits of three caring teacher educators. Thinking about the popular movie "Lost in Translation", I am reminded that, just as peace and business negotiations are only as good as the translations on which they are built, qualitative studies are only as good as the researcher's translation of the data. The movie was a good reminder that it seems inevitable that something is "lost in translation." It is my hope that nothing substantive in this study has been lost, and that the narratives that follow are as fair in their representations of my participants as is possible, given these data.

What follows are the portraits of my research participants. They are three very different teacher educators who all care deeply about their work and their students. To protect the anonymity of my research participants, each has been given a fictitious name

which was either approved or self-selected, and any descriptive characteristics not salient to the research data that might compromise their identities have been changed. These data represent context-specific professional knowledge, representing what I observed during one semester with each teacher before beginning interpretation, and for those reasons are not in any way generalizable.

Beverly Dodson: Teacher as Mentor/Friend

From my office, I often hear Beverly's high pitched voice in the hallway, joking with another faculty member about something that happened in a committee meeting or poking fun at herself. She reminds me of the quintessential cheerleader from my high school days. She is short, energetic and enthusiastic, and has a bounce in her step and her voice. With very short cropped hair, she is always well dressed in tailored skirts or slacks, wearing a jacket, simple jewelry, and low-heeled shoes. She's much too stylish to be labeled "sensible" in her dress. Her round face radiates with interest when she talks, whether it's about her own children, her teaching, or asking questions of someone else. She has an optimism that sends the message that all will be well. Throughout my shadowing her, she would offer her own experience of writing a dissertation. "My professor told me to write for at least 20 minutes every day. Just do that, Dianne. Write at least 20 minutes every single day, and it will get done," she encourages.

In some ways, Beverly appears the epitome of "the born teacher." Watching her in her work as an associate professor in a teacher education program, my assumption prior to beginning my research had been that teaching had been her lifelong goal. I had imagined her youth filled with babysitting, working in children's summer programs, or teaching Vacation Bible School. She makes teaching look easy and enjoyable. The profession fits her like the proverbial glove.

Whether catching up with students, presiding as President of our local chapter of Phi Delta Kappa, or talking about teaching experiences with her peers, Beverly's hazel eyes light up when she talks about her work. What a surprise to learn that teaching had never been in her plans! All of her college friends were studying to be teachers, and she laughs, and says, "I used to say I wasn't going to walk back in a classroom once I left."

She continues her career story, saying, “I never really thought about being a teacher. I wanted to go into advertising and journalism...that was my major, and then I met my husband. And Richard thought that teaching would be a good profession, so I thought, “Well, okay, I’ll try that. (And) it’s all I’ve ever done!” What an interesting revelation from the professor who, six months earlier, accepted the “Outstanding Teaching Award” from the university president at a campus-wide convocation. She is one among a university faculty numbering eleven hundred, recognized for her extraordinary gift of teaching.

My surprise that Beverly never intended to be a teacher has more to do with Beverly’s comment dispelling the validity of my own assumptions. After all, any notions of “the born teacher” are purely myth, created in the mind of the observer. Teachers are not born, and good teaching is the result of hard work. My own experience has taught me that.

Beverly represents for me much of what I would like to be as a caring teacher. My head tells me that caring teachers cannot be confined to a set of characteristics. My heart, however, wants to believe that the really caring teacher represents what I value.

Not able to separate from my own constructions, I must admit that knowledge of my research participants as caring teachers is inextricably interwoven into my own vision of a caring teacher and the teacher I am. I know what I imagine as “the born teacher” is simply a myth of my own creation, perpetuated by my values and beliefs about teaching. That I perceive Beverly as “a born teacher” has more to do with how her practices dovetail with my own perceptions of what makes a caring teacher than any pedagogical strategies or educational outcomes related to her teaching. Many of Beverly’s behaviors and characteristics discussed throughout her story illustrate my own

vision of a caring teacher, perpetuating my own myth of Beverly as “a born teacher.” These visions and myths related to education emerge from my experiences as both teacher and learner. We are all contextual knowers affected by social, political, psychological, and historical forces. Thus, owning and exposing my beliefs and perceptions about a caring teacher, as well as facing myths of my own creation, are part of my responsibility as the qualitative researcher. As the research instrument for this study, I become the lens through which everything passes.

Her teaching is multi-layered and varied. Teaching undergraduates during the long semesters, Beverly works in a field-based class that meets in a public school, where students spend half of their time in classrooms with children and the rest in their college classroom which has been designated within the elementary school. Summers are equally busy as she initiates a cohort of twenty-four graduate students (all recent teacher education graduates) into an intensive fifteen month Master’s Degree Program, continuing with them through their first year of teaching. During their second and final summer of the program with Beverly, she is simultaneously initiating another cohort of graduate students. These graduate student/novice teachers have a mentor teacher who has been relieved of her classroom duty to mentor three of the novice teachers. These eight “exchange teachers,” as they are known, also become much like interns to Beverly, as she guides them through their mentoring work, meeting with them one Friday a month. Working with undergraduates, graduates, and mentor teachers, her teaching life is complicated by this weave of intergenerational relationships that share the common thread of teacher education. The role that care plays with undergraduate and graduate students within this complex weave emerges from the story of Beverly’s teaching life.

BEVERLY'S CARING

Attempting to get a clear picture of Beverly's conceptions of caring in her teaching, I began to feel like what I imagine the work of an archeologist to be. He must come upon an earthen chunk that appears promising, for some reason, and so, he begins to use tiny hammers and brushes to knock away that which adds nothing to his search for discovery. Discovering a "chunk" that seemed to hold promise for my search to discover her ideas about caring, I began to tap away that which was not salient, leaving the artifact of meaning. As I began to examine Beverly's ideas about caring in teaching, they began to resemble elements of Noddings' work on the ethic of care. Although not representative of Noddings' complete discussion of the ethic of care, Beverly's ideas do seem to resemble the characteristics of engrossment and motivational displacement.

Defining Care

Recognizing the difficulty of defining a tacit concept like care, Beverly says, "It's hard to give...a Webster's definition other than apart from saying what it...looks like." She then continues offering such descriptive behaviors as "attentive listening" and "getting to know your students...where they come from...what their interests are." While Noddings' (1992) admonition is to conceptualize caring as "a way of being in relation, not a set of specific behaviors" (p. 17), Beverly finds it is easier to talk about in terms of behaviors.

She admits getting to know her students can be challenging at the university level, often being with students for only one semester, and she is purposeful in her activities with students to maximize her efforts in getting to know them. As Beverly elaborates her ideas about caring in these ways, I am reminded of the purposefulness inherent in Noddings' description of the one-caring. "I describe the state of consciousness of the carer as characterized by engrossment...By engrossment I mean an open, nonselective

receptivity to the cared-for” (1992, p. 15). Beverly’s caring for her students represents this nonselective receptivity to her students. She opens herself to receive them through both her dedicated availability to them and her sustained engagement with them.

Beverly considers caring as demonstrated through a teacher educator’s availability to her students, and she says, “(I) try to be real, real accessible to them.” As with my other participants, I found myself seeking interview questions that would approach from different angles how Beverly thinks about caring. As a teacher educator myself, I know that I often wonder how the students are perceiving my own efforts to be the kind of caring teacher educator I strive to be. One question I experiment with is “How do you hope your caring comes across to your students?” It seems to work, and, after thinking a moment, she says, “She was there when I needed her. I could go after hours. She helped us out.” The availability and approachability Beverly describes are actually considered hallmarks of a caring teacher educator (Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996a), and Beverly is aware of the advantages of teaching a field-based class for facilitating such availability for students.

Describing the benefits of the two 7-hour days her class spends in a local elementary school, Beverly says, “You have multiple opportunities to build relationships with (the students). Even when they’re out in the classrooms, (I am) wandering through the building and they see (me).” She continues citing other strategies she uses to maximize her availability for students, among them having a sign up board for individual conferences which are usually accommodated the same day, and remaining in their designated classroom to eat lunch with her students. Even speculating beyond her own present teaching situation to that of teaching what she calls “a monster class”(meaning a large lecture section on campus), she says, “I would be challenged to think about how I

might create some smaller learner groups...and make myself more accessible.” It is a priority she believes helps her be a caring teacher educator.

Her students consider her availability through conferences a caring strategy, and comment about that as a way she cares. Answering my question about ways in which Beverly cares for her students, one focus group participant says, “She would have one-to-one conferences,” while another adds, “People would just put their names up (on the conference board), and then when she had time, she would call them up, one by one.” Beverly’s efforts to get to know her students are seen as caring, as well, and are addressed in these focus group discussions. One graduate student says, “(Beverly) asks questions...and is concerned...(about) people who have kids or husbands or boyfriends,” and another adds that Beverly wants to “know where you are in your life, what you did this weekend...It’s just another example of her caring about you.” Another student adds, that when she was only an applicant, not yet admitted to the graduate program, Beverly demonstrated caring for her as she went through the interviewing process. Explaining, the student says, “I was just a number or a name, and she still was concerned and wanted me to feel comfortable with what I was doing and what I was about to step into.” Before she was one of Beverly’s graduate students, this student felt Beverly’s caring through her attention to her.

Finally, one of her undergraduate student’s comment reminds me of Beverly’s hope that she would be seen as “there when I needed her...help(ing) us out.” The student says to the focus group, “I have a friend who was going to (Beverly) a lot, and she was always there for her...(Then) something came up and I had to go to her, and she was right there...She was caring and she showed that.”

Although Beverly’s availability and accessibility to her students is required to be one-caring, it is Beverly’s attention to getting to know her students that allows for the

relationship building she sees as characterizing her caring. Beverly is intentional in the design of some assignments, as well as the time for sharing them, in order to focus on learning about her students, and letting them learn about one another and her.

At the beginning of the semester, each of Beverly's undergraduate students creates two things: a "me" poster and brochure about herself. (Her graduate students each create a "Me Box".) The "me" poster will be used to introduce the student to the children in her placement classroom while the brochure, including teaching philosophy and semester goals, is designed for introducing the student to the cooperating teacher. Explaining the poster assignment to me, Beverly stresses that, because the target audience is children, they do a "walk-through" of all of the posters in class one day, checking for misspellings and the appropriateness of any pictures included. She adds that it's a good way for the students to begin to make connections with one another. "They see other people (have) pets like theirs, and places others had been...Connections...lots of connections," Beverly says. "One girl graduated from Samuel Clemens, and that was the first class I ever taught, so we had that connection." She creates assignments and uses instructional time to build relationships with her students, and to encourage their relationships with one another. Beyond the immediate goal of this assignment lies the beginning steps of building community.

A week or so after Beverly had talked about the "Me Posters", I asked if I might see what she shares with her students. I had not been in her class on the day that the posters were shared, and wondered in what kinds of ways Beverly opened herself to her students. About two days later, I hear her coming down the hallway. She pops her head in the door, saying, "Here's that poster of me you wanted to see. It's not much but it's what I use." She left it with me to look over. It really offered a delightful peek into her life, and I could only imagine the joy it would give students to get such a glimpse of one of their

professors. Although I talk about my teaching path, fraught with horrors as well as joys, with my students, as well as my family, my passions, and often my weekend's activities, I have never done a presentation on my life.

The prompts Beverly assigns for these posters are "I like...", "Places I've Been", "Significant Life Events", and "Education." From the first category, Beverly's students learn that she likes teaching, reading, Dr. Pepper, Snickers, and her family and pets. I imagine the students enjoy knowing about Beverly's life away from school. In one of the focus groups, a graduate student says, "She'll tell us stories about her daughter and her husband...Just things that let us into her life a little bit, as well as her getting to know us." The student interprets that as caring, concluding by saying, "She lets herself be human with us. In letting her students get closer to her, they feel she cares.

The categories of places and education also offer lots of opportunities for common experiences to be discovered, as she noted with her student who had gone to Samuel Clemens High School. The category for significant life events held more of a surprise for me. Her own birth, marriage and the births of her two children I expected. She also included, however, her own Christian baptism at age nine, and her status as a cancer survivor. It seems as though Beverly holds little back, and in so doing, she allows her students to get to know her at the same time she is getting to know them.

Through getting to know one another, their sharing, and caring, are reciprocal, and begin to reflect the "motivational displacement" Noddings (1992) describes as "the sense that our motive energy is flowing toward others and their projects" (p. 16), and certainly, their concerns. It is obvious that what Beverly's students learn about her in those early weeks of the semester stays with them. She told me that almost every semester, some student(s) approaches her with a need to talk about a mother or other relative who is battling cancer. Other students come to her to ask for her prayers. That she

shares her personal life with her students opens up a connection that the students can access if they so choose...a connection that seems to represent her motive energy flowing toward them and their concerns.

Beverly's caring was evident to me one evening when I was observing her graduate class. The first year teachers in the graduate program had gathered for their weekly class, and their fatigue showed. I remember the first year of teaching as being one of the most exhausting years of my life. Balancing teaching responsibilities with graduate school is beyond what I endured. As I watch the evening's class, I am intrigued by one of the students who has her infant with her. She feeds the baby while listening to Beverly, begins to burp him, and afterward makes smiling facial expressions that parents so naturally do with their young. Asking Beverly later about the baby, she explains that this young mother is away from her baby all day at school, and that, when her husband has to work, she wants her baby to be with her and not babysitter. Beverly understands this young mother's desire to be with her baby, and supports and cares for her by allowing her to bring him to class.

A graduate student in the class comments on Beverly's response to this young parent, saying, "(She) never had a problem allowing, or showing any discomfort with letting graduate students bring their children to class. One (student) had a baby and another had two boys...She welcomed the kids in." Beverly's getting to know the students' situations and the challenges they face allows her to respond to their particular needs, and her students interpret this as caring.

The brochure assignment Beverly makes is another attempt to get to know her students. It is more professionally-oriented, including the student's educational philosophy and goals for the semester, and is handed in for a grade. Beverly concludes that although neither assignment is really in depth, "We learn a little bit more about who

they are and why they are in teaching.” Through their sharing of each of these assignments, Beverly learns more about the students and they learn more about Beverly.

Opening oneself to caring relationships is not without its pitfalls, however, and Beverly acknowledges the risks and vulnerability caring can effect, saying, “When you care, you open yourself up for hurt even if that could be a small, minor hurt...but I guess I have a good enough foundation and I am able to open myself up to that risk.” Despite her efforts to establish caring relationships with students, Beverly’s efforts sometimes fall short. From her perspective, she is caring while, from the perspective of the student, her caring may be misunderstood or absent. Sharing an incident in which she failed to convey her caring, Beverly describes a situation in which some students felt she was partial to another group of students (a group of 3 student workers who actually worked in Beverly’s office area.) One of the disgruntled students accused Beverly of not being approachable. “This came to me as just a shock because I’ve always felt that I was very warm and approachable,” Beverly admits. Telling me that she had worked hard to create an environment that was caring, she concludes, “It didn’t work.” Caring is, after all, relational and reciprocity demonstrated by the cared-for completes the caring. Without the reciprocity, there is no caring relation (Noddings, 1994).

Beverly is tenacious, however, and she was not willing to stop there with the situation. Making the decision to address the situation first with the offended students and then with the whole class, Beverly repeats her speech to the whole class, saying, “You may think and feel differently than what some of (your classmates) have shared but this is their perception. I apologize to you for any way that I may have offended you.” Capitalizing on the opportunity to draw the analogy to their own future classrooms when they are teachers, Beverly says, “Sometimes you’re going to do things that hurt your kids. You don’t mean to. You’re tired. You overlook things.” She tells her students they will

need to talk about it and deal with it. Concluding, she says to me, “It hurt for a while...but I hope I modeled what a caring environment looks like.” Even in the midst of caring gone awry, Beverly attempts to care for her students through being available to openly discuss the situation and the feelings, as well as the different realities involved. In so doing, she allows her motive energy to flow toward others.

I believe that I am a caring teacher but have also felt such a slap in the face. Written on a course/instructor evaluation was the comment “Mrs. Pape plays favorites.” Ouch! What a stunning revelation that one of my students went through the semester thinking I had students whom I favored. Hurt, I initially dismissed the allegation, knowing that I had not had favorite students. Upon reflection, however, I couldn’t simply dismiss the student’s belief that I had favored some students over others. Whomever that student was, it was her reality, and to dismiss that is uncaring. Something about the way I conducted myself or my class led to her conclusion.

As the beneficiary of her comment, I now believe that some students perceive frequent engagement with some students as favoritism. That semester, some students approached me daily before class for clarification, confirmation, or simply to visit socially. Were they my favorite students? No, they were simply the ones who initiated contact with the teacher before class. Some students always have an opinion, answer, or question to offer. If I call only on those few, I can understand how that could be interpreted as favoritism. What that student did for me, and what I believe Beverly’s disgruntled student did for her, was to bring to the surface those things that can be construed as “uncaring” behaviors.

If we approach caring, however, as a relationship of reciprocity, my responsibility is to make myself available for a relationship...a caring relationship...and

my critic provided me with the challenge to be more intentional in making myself available to those who are more timid. If the student does not reciprocate, there can be no caring relationship. I, as teacher alone, am powerless to create a caring relationship. In that admission is a frustration. I would like the power to make the classroom an environment one in which none are excluded or scorned...myself included. I would like to believe that I am always a caring teacher but my evaluation proves otherwise. That it occurs in relationships complicates caring.

While Beverly acknowledges the risks and vulnerability caring can effect on her, she ignores the risk and vulnerability the students face when opening up to her. How is a student cared for when his perspective is at odds with Beverly's?

As we visit one Friday morning, Beverly is talking particularly about being available for students who are in need, saying, "Every semester nearly I've had somebody (who) had a major need" Continuing, she describes a young male graduate student who "was very vocal about being agnostic or atheist...he wasn't a believer at all." His mother-in-law had cancer, and because of Beverly's sharing with her students her own experience as a cancer survivor, "he did want to talk to me about it," she tells me.

Fleshing out her story, Beverly says, "We did talk about it, and I said, 'Mark, I will pray for your mother-in-law.' He says, 'Oh, I'm not a praying kind of guy,'" to which Beverly responds, "That's okay. I'm a praying kind of woman." While her engrossment for Mark seems present in her open receptivity to him, in and of itself, it does not constitute caring. I am left to wonder where her motivational displacement for him is? Where is her attempt to "receive what (Mark) conveys, and...to respond in a way that furthers (his) purpose...? (Noddings, 1992, p. 16) Knowing that they are on different philosophical pages, Beverly completely ignores his viewpoint in favor of her own, and

offers to him a religious practice in which he has already admitted not participating. I believe the more caring stance would have been for Beverly to listen thoughtfully to Mark, trying to place herself in his position as a non-Christian, rather than responding with her own Christian practice. I believe her response in this situation actually represents uncaring, and also demonstrates a potential drawback to students opening themselves to their teachers.

Due to the organization of field-based class, the students spend half of their days in the children's classroom, teaching lessons and assisting their cooperating teachers. On a rotating basis, Beverly visits the students so that she can assess their teaching skills and offer suggestions. On one of my visits to the school, Beverly and I have observed a lesson on the concept of comparative sizes. The student seems very confident with the children, and moves through the lesson with what seems to be ease. At the conclusion of her lesson, we walk out into the hallway, dragging classroom chairs, for a conference between Beverly and her student. It was mayhem! The noise level was so distracting that I found myself simultaneously attempting to read their lips while wondering if the tape recorder would capture anything of this conversation.

Fortunately, the transcript provided additional information, demonstrating Beverly's availability to her student. After Beverly begins with a question about how the student felt about her lesson, I learn that she was less confident than I had realized, saying, "I was wondering if I was on the right track." Confirming her lesson choice, Beverly says, "I think the concept of big and bigger and smaller and smallest is a great one for this group." Aware of areas that need to be addressed, Beverly begins with something positive, and their discussion continues. Beverly guides her through thinking about how to make adjustments for more capable learners, as well as those who recognize only their names in print.

In addition to her earlier comments about what caring looks like, I knew that anyone Beverly cited as a model for her own caring would add definition to her beliefs about a caring teacher educator. Beverly acknowledges the power of modeling care for others when she says, “I think about all we can do is model (care), teach about it, and demonstrate ways of showing caring.” Although her quote addresses her teaching life, she recognizes models of caring from both her personal and professional life.

Models of Caring

It is widely accepted that we learn to care from those who have earlier cared for us (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984). Beverly’s experiences confirm that, as she responded to my question about those whom she believed had influenced her beliefs and perceptions about caring. She begins, saying, “I feel like our home and our backgrounds have so much that we carry into our adult lives...I’m blessed because I have wonderful caring parents.” Describing her parents as influencing her beliefs about caring in different ways, Beverly talks about her father first. “I was very close to my dad,” she said. “He had a lot of witticisms he would share...and he was really good with people.” Turning to the influence of her mother, Beverly adds, “My mother, who is not a real public person, is much more private. She loves her family...We always knew that she cared (for) and loved us.” Describing her mother as “a more private person (than my father)” Beverly adds, “I remember the closeness...(Mother) built that bond...and we were just all close as brothers and sisters.” Acknowledging the contributions of both parents, she says, “Both of my parents were always there for us.” Her parental models stand as examples of the relational nature of caring Beverly has earlier represented, as well as reflecting her belief that to care is to be available/accessible to those for whom we care.

Beverly’s comments on her father seem to really hit the mark. I didn’t know him but, having spent a semester with Beverly, when she mentioned his witticisms, the first

thing that popped into my head was “Inch by inch, everything’s a cinch... Yard by yard, everything is hard.” That has become the other half of Beverly’s mantra of encouragement to me regarding my dissertation. And, as she encourages me, I certainly feel her caring.

Toward the end of our first interview session, Beverly’s discussion of caring models took a turn I had not anticipated. She had returned to describing her parents as caring models, after which she says, “I had good teachers growing up...and then my relationship—I can’t leave this out, Dianne, whether you can use it or not, I don’t know—but really my relationship with the Lord.” She believes that it is her spiritual relationship that “whittles away at those places (in me) that are unlovely”, allowing her to care for “certain classes...or even some students (where) I have a struggle.” Synthesizing her thinking out loud, she concludes, “He’s our model. He’s my model for a caring relation. I think he is the master teacher.” This was one of those moments when I failed as a researcher. I was so taken by surprise at her comment or perhaps subconsciously unwilling to tread into such murky waters as religion, that I did not press Beverly for details at that time.

Talk about uncaring behavior! Any motivational displacement I offered Beverly prior to her comments flew right out the window at her mention of “the Lord.” Having critiqued Beverly’s lack of motivational displacement with her agnostic student, I responded to her in much the same way! More concerned with my own feelings of uncertainty than the thread of data she was offering me, my response was all about my discomfort with stepping outside what I had perceived to be the boundaries of caring. I had anticipated conversations of family and school but not this! My reaction reflects not only my novice status as a researcher but also to my own conceptions of caring. Having

never considered my own Christian faith as a model of caring, I was unwilling to immediately consider hers. While I recovered from my diversionary questioning tactics, I am still wrestling with what one's faith might bring to the discussion of a caring model. Why did I think the waters of my understanding would become clearer the deeper I delved into caring? My neighbor, a retired deep sea diver, tells me that the clarity of deep water all depends on the seabed. I am finding caring to be an unpredictable seabed of research.

Realizing my research blunder, and hoping to better understand what she meant my “He’s my model for a caring relation,” I asked Beverly to think about her comment for our next interview. Beginning, she told of having thumbed through a book about the characteristics of Jesus’ teaching, and then concludes, saying,

I don’t know that I specifically look at his model (of storytelling and being very concrete.) I do know that somewhere along the line, the Lord burst in me a desire to be a teacher, and I feel it is my gift from him. I did not plan to be a teacher. I did not prepare to be a teacher. I did not study to be a teacher.

(I presume that Beverly’s comments relate to her initial undergraduate degree for she has since studied teaching for two graduate degrees.) In essence, Beverly does not pinpoint the influence of Christ as a caring model in her teaching as much as she focuses on the impact of her relationship with him in her life. Over the course of the semester, she mentioned her Christian faith as revealed to students (“Me Posters and Boxes and Brochures”) and former students, in her relationship with her daughter, as well as remarking on the encouragement and peace she feels as a result of her faith. While I have no doubt that Beverly’s “relationship with the Lord” impacts her entire life, there was nothing in the data to add to her idea that Christ is a model of caring in her teaching.

Beverly did, however, return to discussing a caring model within our department at the university.

Talking about a colleague with whom she used to co-teach a class, Beverly's description of her is akin to Noddings' (1992) discussion of motivational displacement. Beverly says, "Polly is the epitome of caring. She will put something aside just to tend to the need of a student. Where I am pre-task oriented and I'll be like... 'Oh, I've got to get this done. I've got to get through. We've got to get on and do all this reading stuff.'" Citing a major challenge she faces in being a caring teacher educator, that is, her attention to the task at hand, Barbara holds Polly as the caring model who consistently puts students first.

As we talk, the credibility of Polly's influence on Beverly is strengthened. Beverly had said, "I'm not the only one who does the caring (in the classroom.)" I ask her to elaborate, and she says, "The students. Hopefully, they become caring of one another." While Beverly is committed to being a caring teacher educator, she wants her students to become integral players in the caring classroom community, and she acknowledges Polly's guiding her in that quest.

It was, in fact, Polly who introduced Beverly to what she considers to be a major vehicle for her caring. Beverly calls Polly "a huge influence," admitting that, although her own inclination has always been to create a caring environment, it was Polly who gave her the tools and a model to use to create such an environment. It is this vehicle, an element of Jane Nelsen's Positive Discipline Approach, that emerges as the dominant strand in the caring that occurs between Beverly and her students.

Class Meetings

Working in a field-based college class, held in an elementary school in a neighboring town, Beverly co-teaches with a younger woman who holds an adjunct

position and is also in the doctoral program at this university. I begin visiting their classroom early in the semester in order to watch the its unfolding. I have actually come this particular day, not only to introduce myself as researcher to the students, but also to video tape a “class meeting.” As a major tenet of her teaching practice, both with undergraduates as well as graduates, Beverly thinks it is important for me to see. Classrooms, by nature, are communities of teachers and learners, representing different personalities and temperaments.

Acknowledging that strong feelings are inevitable as students work in groups and in new school settings, Beverly believes such feelings can block learning and must be dealt with. “The class meeting is the vehicle to get (that big issue) out in the open.” She is planning to hold a class meeting on Monday. “(B)ecause I feel so strongly that somethin’s bothering (the students), we can’t really do learning effectively, and I’m (teaching) comprehension strategies (Monday). We had better take care of this emotional issue early in the morning before we try to...get into our plan for the day because this is going...to be hanging like a cloud over them.” Her strategy for “removing the cloud” is through the use of a class meeting.

The organization of Beverly’s class as a field-based class actually facilitates her use of class meetings. One advantage of being in the field with her students for sixteen hours a week is the convenient opportunity for actually holding class meetings. Were she meeting with her students for only 75 minutes twice a week, she might find it more difficult to justify using class time for meetings. She’s also found that individual student conferences, which can also accommodate during this extended time, actually serve as stepping stones to the class meeting. While many conferences address an individual student’s questions and concerns, other times an issue related to the group surfaces. In those cases, Beverly encourages the student to place the issue in what is called the

“Agenda Box,” so that it might be addressed by the entire class through the vehicle of the class meeting.

This approach is grounded in the work of Nelsen (1987), whose “Positive Discipline” approach requires the creation of “an atmosphere of caring based on kindness and firmness, dignity and mutual respect...” (p. 2). She suggests that the class meeting provides the greatest potential for teaching children life-empowering skills in the least amount of time. Interested in creating such an atmosphere of care, Beverly says, “...I think (what) helps make...a caring classroom is...the class meeting. We have a system where care can come to the forefront...(and) I try to create a caring environment.” With both her undergraduate and graduate students, Beverly thinks about care in her teaching. “I teach about (care) more...(using) the positive discipline (approach) because it is such a caring model. It’s something we (just) try to model and practice.”

Talking about Nelsen’s positive discipline approach as a caring model, Beverly says, “The first and really foundational (strategy) is the class meeting.” The class meeting is, in fact, one of Beverly’s consistent attempts at creating a caring classroom environment with both her undergraduate and graduate students. It is a method she models in her own class, as well as consistently suggesting its use to her students as a caring way to solve problems in their own classrooms. The graduate focus group participants discuss the class meetings held both in Beverly’s classroom as well as their own classrooms. “(Dr. Davis) used the class meetings a lot when things haven’t gone right with us and...It helps...(and) it shows how it could help in your own classroom.” Another student has chosen the class meeting as her action research topic, and chimes in, saying,

That’s my research. It has brought more...community and (a spirit of) working together (to my class), and a lot of shared feelings, for instance, how you feel and how everyone works together to help that person feel better about whatever the

situation (is.) The teacher next door who didn't have (class meetings)...wondered why my children worked so well together...I handed her a copy of the 'Positive Discipline' book.

Having been exposed to the class meeting as a strategy for building a caring classroom community, Beverly's graduate student is experiencing its benefits with her own classroom of children, as well as encouraging others to use it.

I had heard of class meetings, but until I watched Beverly conduct them with her students I was unfamiliar with the procedures involved. I had never considered the potential of class meetings as contributing to a caring environment yet Beverly utilizes them for that very reason. Nelsen (1987) explains the basic purposes of class meetings are: (1) to give compliments; (2) to help each other; (3) to solve problems; and (4) to plan events. The agenda for the class meeting delineates what will be addressed by the class during the class meeting, and agenda items may be submitted by students and teachers alike. Because it is early in the semester, and Beverly is teaching the students how to conduct a class meeting, she constructs the agenda for the first one.

It is my first visit to Beverly's classroom, and I am there to introduce myself and to stay for their first class meeting. I enter an elementary school classroom that has been transformed into a college classroom. A wall of windows and another of green chalkboards remind me of my own days in a sixth grade classroom. Rather than maps of the world, and posters addressing parts of speech and math concepts, these walls and windows are full of charts focusing on the state standards, inquiry skills, classroom committees, and recycling. As soft music plays on a tape player, students arrive with backpacks and sack lunches while Beverly gathers materials and talks informally to students. Their conversations revolve around personal affairs, such as their weekend activities or the morning traffic on the interstate highway.

Shortly after I set up the video camera, Beverly introduces me to the students as a researcher who would be among them during the semester. Following my own remarks about my research and my plans, the class convenes. Beverly begins by introducing the “class meeting” to the students, reminding them that “you can use (this) with your children.” She slowly and deliberately goes over the format of a class meeting, reminding the students that what they have just done...formed a circle of chairs...is the first step in having a class meeting. The second step, called “compliments and appreciations,” gives each person the opportunity to acknowledge another with a compliment or a statement of appreciation. The third step is addressing all items which have been placed in the “agenda box.”

Having already formed the circle, Beverly led the students into the “compliments and appreciations” portion of the class meeting, acknowledging, as Nelsen (1987) does, that this can be awkward in the beginning. Beverly reassures the students, saying, “It’s hard for us (teachers), too. We know you don’t really know each other and we don’t know you either!” After Beverly and her teaching partner each model a compliment, the students take turns going around the circle.

Frankly, I am surprised with the sincerity of their compliments and words of appreciation. These comments address the teaching skill of a peer or gratitude for someone’s flexibility in coping with a situation in a children’s classroom. It is obvious from time to time that such open expressions are not easy for some of the college students to convey. They giggle nervously at times, acting more like preadolescent girls than young women. They are, however, very attentive. The video tape shows some students leaning forward on their knees while the others follow intently as the compliments move around the circle. Everyone seems attentive. Occasionally there would be a long pause in between students. During one of these pauses Beverly said, “You can pass...we’ll come

back to you but you can pass if you can't think of anything to say at that moment." Her comment exemplifies the respect and caring inherent in the class meeting format.

Beverly's teaching partner introduces the next part of the class meeting, the "Agenda Box," explaining that it is a procedure for solving problems. "Today the things aren't really problems...we haven't been together long enough to have many big problems...thankfully!" she says with a laugh. In lieu of any real problem solving, the professors have placed in the agenda box the question, "What would you like to do as a class to celebrate Valentine's Day?" Using Nelsen's procedures for addressing problems in a respectful environment, seeking input on a possible solution, and taking a group vote on the solution, the upcoming Valentine's Day plans are discussed and decided. That is not a contentious class meeting but does serve to introduce the procedures to the students and to me. Both Beverly's earlier comments about inevitable "strong feelings" when working in a group, as well as her partner's comment that "we haven't been together long enough to have many big problems" foreshadow a class meeting later in the semester.

As Beverly had anticipated, agenda items often emanate from issues brought up in individual conferences. During an interview, she describes how such an agenda item has evolved, saying,

Monday afternoon, I had several pairs of students come in...They signed up for conferences...and did come in to see me. There (had been) an incident in the teachers' lounge with the secretary of the school and some of the special class teachers fussing at the interns about using too much laminating and using the copy machines and things like that...(The students) felt very incensed that they had been fussed at by the secretary.

After conferencing with the students, Beverly learns that there are two facets to this unhappy situation. First, there are hurt feelings about what has happened. Second, in response to this altercation, not all of the students are interested in including all of the school staff in the invitation to the end-of-semester "Appreciation Luncheon" the

students were planning. With revenge on their minds, they want to exclude some people on the staff, namely, the school secretary and special education faculty involved. Beverly asks them to put their concerns into the agenda box for the class meeting to be held the next class day.

When Beverly tells me of the impending class meeting, and its purpose, I know that I want to be there. It promises to demonstrate more of what I believe is at the heart of Beverly's commitment to creating a caring community. Clearly, there are strong feelings among some of the students that have the potential to affect the whole group's pending luncheon. A class meeting seems the best way to address such an issue that impacts everyone in the class. Though the situation is troubling to Beverly, I am pleased to have the opportunity to observe what promises to be a more authentic class meeting. When I check my own calendar, I have a conflict! One of the children in my demonstration class at the university will celebrate a birthday that morning. After only a minute or two of struggle, I know where I must be.

The conflicts and ironies that arise as I gather my research data continue to amaze me. Most mornings, I can arrange to have a parent help out in my absence or simply leave the student interns in charge of my classroom, asking a fellow faculty member to "pop her head in" during the morning. In my absence, the children rarely miss a beat of their morning routine. On any given day, they play, clean the room, prepare for snack, gather for circle time, and end their morning playing outdoors. Birthdays are different, however. Bringing a special snack of his own choosing, the birthday child is often so excited that he asks all morning long, "Is it almost snack time?" Although I feel that the best gift I can offer him is a good and satisfying day at

school, I recognize it's not just another day. It is his birthday, and we honor him by letting him provide and serve the snack, and by honoring him at a special circle time.

The children dearly love the finger play we do only on birthdays. They love to count the paper candles on the paper cake, first in English, then in Spanish as their confidence builds, and very tentatively (but proudly!) in Japanese. The birthday child stands tall next to me as I read aloud for all the poem I have written about the birthday child. It's on special large construction paper to be taken home to share with the family. It delights me to think about that particular child at school, including those things that distinguish him from another. There is a magic about turning out the lights during the circle time, and waiting for the one designated for "light switch duty" to return to the circle before singing "Happy Birthday." Even as I write, I can see the birthday child intently holding the lighted taper as his peers sing, mesmerized by the candle glow reflected on his face. We change the atmosphere completely, erupting with a rousing number of "Hip-hip-hoorays" to correspond to the child's new age. A birthday-related book, chosen by the child, is read before heading outside to play with wild abandon. Another day, another milestone.

I know I cannot miss this ritual. Our ritual is a caring one...with attention to the individual as well as to the community who honors him. While one is at the center of the celebration, without the community of others, there would be no celebration. I know where I will be when the class meeting starts. Fortunately, Beverly agrees to audio tape the class meeting for me. At least I will have some record of it.

Listening to the transcript challenges me in ways I had not anticipated. I don't have the advantage of seeing what is transpiring. I wonder about the students' body language. In the first class meeting, I remember their rapt attention to what was being

said and the serious way in which they approached the process. I realize now how much I rely on facial expressions and eye contact when people are talking to help me make sense of the story.

When I listen to the transcript, I hear Beverly's voice, saying, "This is the class meeting of Beverly Dodson's Kyle class. I'm sorry but we forgot to turn on the tape for "compliments and appreciation." Her opening stands as another grim reminder that there is no substitute for the researcher's presence. I am also reminded that such glitches have occurred even when I was present. The difference was that I was in the room that day, listening and taking field notes, and could reconstruct some of the conversations which had occurred. That is not an option on this day, and I lose my opportunity to see if the nature of compliments and words of appreciation add any data attesting to the sense of a caring community.

Beverly begins on a positive note, setting the stage for what is about to unfold. "We have a great opportunity to do some problem-solving, which is one of the reasons for the class meeting. And we had a little issue come up last week..." I know from having spent time with Beverly that she uses the qualifier "little" in her conversation, whether referring to a student or a problem. I find it interesting that she uses it in this context. Based on what she has told me about the students coming to her about this situation, they did not feel it was a "little" situation. Her comment seems to be dismissive of the students' feelings, not reflecting the motivational displacement characteristic of Noddings (1992) discussion of care. I wonder if the students even notice.

She continues by reminding the students that she is modeling what she hopes will occur in their classes. "I wanted to go ahead and talk about it today because it will give us a good opportunity to show what you can do in your classrooms when you do have issues that come up." She continues by defending her decision to introduce the topic on the

agenda. (It is usually the responsibility of the person who placed the item on the agenda.)
“...I was going to introduce this since it was brought to my attention and I wanted to introduce it. So teachers can do that,” she tells them.

Beverly’s haste to take charge of the class meeting doesn’t seem consistent with Nelsen’s (1987) clear explanation of the procedures for class meetings. Her approach, as outlined in her book, is clear, and says,

Read the first item on the agenda. Ask the person who wrote the item if it is still a problem. If she says no, go on to the next item. If another person is involved, ask her to explain her side of the story. (p. 124.)

By not adhering to the outlined procedure, Beverly dismisses the very strategy she has been encouraging her students to use when they become teachers themselves. It seems disrespectful to those students who placed their concerns on the agenda not to begin by asking if the situation still poses a problem for them. It is possible that, either through reflection or conversations among themselves, the students may have come to terms with their feelings and were ready to forgive and forget. At worst, what may have already been resolved for the students is rekindled by her dismissal of their participation at this step in the process.

Interestingly, the way in which Beverly introduces the agenda item results more in what seems to be a litany of excuses for the behavior of the school staff and teachers involved. Among her comments are these:

“...It’s not all of the teachers. It is not.”

“...(The teachers) used to have the really big, big room...for their lounge area...and they moved everything (all the machines) to that little room...so it’s crowded.”

“Another part of the issue is my fault because every semester I try to do a...machines orientation...I don’t know why, it just seems like things have gotten away from us and I never did do that.”

“I think it’s the issue that it’s happening during lunch and people are just kind of all on top of each other.”

“The other thing is you’re out here in the spring and spring is just crazy. Teachers are tired.”

Beverly’s efforts to explain the situation seem to ignore any feelings the students might be having about the situation. An interesting pattern, however, emerges within her introductory remarks.

As purposefully as Beverly appears to be coming to the defense of the elementary school teachers and staff in her explanatory remarks, she is simultaneously doing an about face in distancing herself from them. Interspersed throughout her earlier explanations as to why the situation might have arisen are the following comments:

I think that somebody got snapped at because of the laminating which, to me isn’t...an issue. I mean, it happens. I even know of teachers that I’m sure laminate sometimes with big spaces in between. I know I’ve done that before.

“It is never appropriate to be talked to the way that you were talked to...”

“I’m not defending them. I just want to tell you where they might be coming from.”

It’s totally inappropriate...I mean, I’ve snapped at kids. I’ve snapped at interns. The appropriate thing to do then, in my estimation, is to go back and say, “I’m sorry. I was having a bad day. It was really crowded in there.”

In her position as university professor holding classes in a public elementary school, Beverly is the liaison between the university and the school district, and between the students and the school personnel. Her ambivalence, demonstrated through her attempts to explain why it might have happened and then following up with “it should never happen,” leads her to completely forego the protocol for the class meeting.

This situation presents Beverly with a challenge. The semester is almost over, and she will not be returning to this particular campus, only because the school population is

burgeoning and the classroom is needed for children. In her remarks to the students, she has said,

I'm not sure what we can do to even solve (this problem) but I feel if we can just talk about it. I don't want you leaving Kyle feeling badly about your experience...because truly the majority love having you here and would never talk to you that way.

Beverly admitted in her autobiographical remarks that she is a “middle child,” and that a characteristic is that “We don't like conflict. We want to resolve it.” That personality trait jumps to the surface here as she attempts to wipe away any conflict, leaving everyone happy at semester's end. As liaison, she works to smooth the gulf between students and school personnel. Unfortunately, her intent to use the class meeting to create a caring environment for her own students and to model that strategy for use in their classrooms, is lost in her attempt to resolve the situation. The responsibility she assumes for their unhappiness renders her unable to trust the problem-solving process of the class meeting as theorized by Nelsen. Interestingly enough, this comment about class meetings from an interview reveals Beverly's awareness of the challenges: “(I) tell them it's not easy, and Jane Nelsen (agrees) in the book...(that) you gotta trust the process because sometimes it will look a lot worse before it ever looks any better.”

Beverly's segue to the portion of the meeting in which the students share their feelings is akin to an admonition: “Do keep in mind...when you're tired and you're teaching and you feel like snapping at a kid or another teacher...how it felt when that happened to you.” Although it appears difficult for Barbara to “let go” and turn over the class meeting to the community of students, she does so by saying,

So, I just want to give everybody an opportunity to talk a little bit, and if you think there's a way that we might be able to solve the issue of crowdedness with the teachers' lounge, I'd like for you to share it. Okay?

Following the ground rules Beverly had stated earlier, an object is passed around to designate who the speaker is. “...(W)hen you’re holding the object, you’re the speaker. No one else.” The students begin offering comments and suggestions which represent a range of responses, as well as feelings.

The first student, with very little emotion, describes the situation as “kind of sad for some of us who were doing what we were asked to do.” Following Beverly’s reminder that “passing” is an option, the next student says, “I don’t know much about this issue so I’m going to pass.” The third student was not involved in the situation on the agenda but did take the opportunity to relate a similar experience with the school secretary. Seemingly indignant over that incident, she seizes the platform to publicly share her experience. Another student says, with what sounds like a nervous laugh, “I was in the lounge when (the student) got yelled at and it was kind of weird.”

Beverly describes this 20-something generation, saying, “They’re very sensitive to the way people talk to them. (And) they’re new (in this situation) and they don’t feel to sure of themselves.” Reflecting on the students as participants in class meetings, she adds, “What I’ve learned with the 20-something (generation) is that if you can get it out on the table, and they feel like they’ve been heard, they’re usually okay with it.” Her comment indicates her belief that using the forum generated by the class meeting is a developmentally appropriate strategy for this age student. She cares for them by allowing them to express themselves and to be heard.

The class meeting continues as one student seizes the opportunity to comment on the “coldness when we walk in (the lounge.) I mean, we’re all going to be educators one day and we’re all in this together...they’re so unfriendly and everything.” Although her comment doesn’t address the specific agenda item, Beverly’s silence indicates her willingness to allow all expressions of feelings, however tangential. After numerous

accounts of indignation, anger, and insult, no solutions have been addressed. Beverly has said not a word, save “Okay” after the second student chose to pass. She is letting the students comment on the situation and their feelings brought to the surface by this situation.

A student whom I recognize (and label “the take-charge voice”) as having already had the floor chimes in, obviously not waiting for the object to pass back to her. Although it is not her turn to speak, she begins, building to a passionate tone, saying,

Well, at least if they are going to do some things, my thing was I wouldn't talk to somebody in here like that. I wouldn't talk to anyone the way I had ladies in there talk to me and they talked to me like I was a little girl. And I'm not a little girl. I know I'm not a teacher. I don't have a degree. I haven't even taught one year but I mean I respect them and I'm happy to be here and I wish they would act like they respected us and they were happy to have us here. Because of (this)...I have a very poor opinion of this school. I would not like to do my student teaching here. I would not like to have a job here. I would not like to substitute here. And another thing about making copies....

She segues into her major complaint which stems from her teacher giving her busy work all day, not allowing her to teach lessons until 2:00 P.M. This tirade leads to another similar one. These students seize the opportunity to vent their negative feelings about peripheral experiences at this school. The class meeting seems to me to be in an irreconcilable nose-dive when one student says, “Instead of getting on my soap box and telling you how disgusted I was, I'll make a suggestion,” which she does.

Beverly is the next to speak. Apologetically, she says, “Well, I appreciate that you've had the opportunity to comment, and I do feel very badly. This has never been an issue any other semester so I really don't know what is going on.” Congratulating the students, she adds, “I do appreciate the way you handled it and I think that you all that were involved or got the brunt of it, handled it extremely well by not lashing back.” As the “take charge voice” speaks up again, complaining about her own classroom situation,

side conversations are beginning to sprout. The students who had been very respectful during the more formal part of the class meeting are digressing into private conversations. There has been no discussion of the suggestion made nor has a vote been taken, both tenets of Nelsen's class meeting.

Beverly struggles to bring the students back together with little success as their questions go further and further afield. The tape trails off, and I am again frustrated at my lack of understanding exactly what their faces might convey. I wonder if their heads were nodding or if their faces revealed disgust, disappointment, or perhaps, "You don't know the half of it!" Based on the audio tape, however, I am certain that the students aired their comments in Beverly's presence yet I am troubled at the conclusion of the class meeting.

I had no illusions that holding a class meeting would be a simple task. Nelsen (1987) herself gives such cautions as "Things often get worse before they get better" (p. 142). I did expect, however that Beverly would adhere more closely to the principles she was modeling for the students. She concluded the class meeting by telling the students she would visit with the principal about their comments. She would act as their emissary, taking their side of the story to the campus administrator. Her closing remarks included the following:

But y'all let go of it. Don't harbor resentment. You're going onto another field block. Don't let this hurt that. Don't let this. It's not right what she did. I agree. You should have had conversations. You should have come to me with it. But y'all let...

As I read these comments, I remember one of Nelsen's admonitions:

Do not use the class meeting as another platform for lecturing and moralizing. It is essential to be as objective and nonjudgmental as possible. This does not mean you cannot have input into the meeting. You can still put items on the agenda and give your opinion and have an equal vote (p. 115).

Regardless of her rationale for taking over and lecturing at the end of the class meeting, Beverly violates another tenet of the class meeting. Regardless of her role as liaison between students and the school personnel or her own desire for the students to complete the semester feeling good about their experiences, Beverly was inconsistent in her practicing and modeling the class meeting for her students. Although I was told the students had begun with their “compliments,” introducing the agenda item concisely had proved impossible for Beverly. Rather than checking with the offended parties to see if the issue was still relevant, she led the students into the commenting section. Although a suggestion was offered, no discussion or vote was ever taken, thus robbing the students of part of the democratic process of the meeting. Although Beverly believes such meetings provide an avenue for creating a caring environment, she was unsuccessful in leading the class meeting according to the defining guidelines of Nelsen’s class meeting. That she alters the methods suggested for creating a caring environment, however, doesn’t necessarily mean she doesn’t care. What her altering of Nelsen’s format might illustrate is our difficulty in adhering to another’s interpretations of caring, even if we espouse them as models. If caring is indeed uniquely expressed (Noddings, 1992), we would expect distinctive manifestations of one’s caring. That the focus group data show no student citing her abandoning the meeting protocol as uncaring argues against labeling it as uncaring.

Despite Beverly’s loose adherence to the protocol for the class meeting, her students do recognize the meetings as valuable in giving them an avenue of expression for their own thoughts and feelings. Contrasting Beverly’s leadership of a class meeting with her teaching partner’s, one student shared the following:

There was some tension...with Mrs. Harris....but the (class meetings) with Dr. Dodson (were) really nice...(S)he let everybody express their feelings, and even

though there was a little bit of tension sometimes, she...never acted on that tension. She just...let us talk and let us do our own thing.

Another student, focusing on Beverly's caring through the use of class meetings, says,

(Dr. Dodson) would let us talk about anything...basically release any anger (or) frustration, anything and she was okay with it...She didn't pry...any information out of you. (She) just pretty much lets you say how you felt about it, and...move on. So I thought that was good about the meetings...

The students appreciate the opportunity to air their own feelings about this embarrassing situation, and to be treated like adults in an adult situation. They also consider Beverly's intervention on their behalf with the principal as her caring for them. One student says,

(The situation) ended up being (addressed at) a class meeting, and then it led to...everyone getting to talk...out their frustrations. And then I know for sure (Dr. Dodson) did talk to the principal, and the principal came and apologized to us for everything that happened...I think that showed a lot of caring because (Dr. Dodson) took up for us.

Another student concurs, saying, "It would have been so easy just to ignore the situation for (the last) two weeks (of the semester) and just let it go by but she took the time to stand up on our behalf and to say it was wrong."

As the data from Beverly's work with undergraduates indicate their feeling cared for by being allowed to express their feelings and ideas, the data from her work with graduate students had a different scope.

During a discussion with a group of her graduate students, I ask if there are ways in which Beverly cares for them that have carried over into their own teaching. The first respondent says, "Absolutely! How she reads body language." Another student mentions Beverly's caring through modeling what she wants her students to do in their own classrooms. "(S)he's used the class meetings a lot when things haven't gone right with us, and it helps and it shows that...it could help in your own classroom." Another

acknowledges that their own teaching experiences legitimize the strategy of class meetings. She says,

Now that we've had experience with teaching...it's...important that (we) develop community in (our) classroom(s), which is the purpose of having class meetings...I don't think you see the need for (the class meetings) until you actually have your own class with your own students and things don't go right. (Then) you think, well, maybe if I would have class meetings, it can be fixed.

There is wisdom in what this student has said. The undergraduate students seem to focus more on the class meeting as a demonstration of Beverly's caring for them. It is through the class meetings that they have a platform, and their ideas and feelings are acknowledged. The graduate students, on the other hand, are instructional leaders themselves, the "ones-caring" in their classrooms. They see the class meeting as a vehicle for building community in their own classrooms.

I was curious as to the extent to which any of these novice teachers had used the class meetings in their own classrooms, thus replicating the caring community Beverly espouses. One student, using the class meeting as a topic for her research, believes the meetings have "brought more of a community and working together" into her classroom. There is "a lot of sharing of feelings, how you feel and everyone works together to help that person feel better about whatever situation they're in." She is convinced that the process of class meetings has brought her class together.

Another novice teacher admits her skepticism at the beginning of the year when she considered doing class meetings with her first graders. After doing them for a short time, she discontinued them, and began to see a negative change in her students' peer relations. Concluding, she says, "Next year, I definitely plan to...keep the class meetings consistent throughout the year..."

Another graduate student's story highlights the community thread of the class meeting as she talks about her experience with her bilingual class. She says, "I'm in a

bilingual class so the kids can...(speak) in whatever (language) they feel like. We had a boy who just came from Mexico and did not speak a word of English.” After the children formed a circle, the first little girl who was waiting to go, asked if she should speak in English or Spanish. “(The children) had never asked me that before,” the teacher admits. “And about four of them go, ‘We need to talk in Spanish so...he can understand.’ It never even occurred to me that we would have to think that route...They thought of it. And he really got into (the meeting.)” These novice teachers, having experienced the benefits of class meetings in their own graduate classes with Beverly are reaping the rewards of community building in their own classrooms. It is through teachers caring for students that students begin caring for one another. Although a caring community represents Beverly’s goal, the road to community-building can be treacherous at times.

One evening, at the close of a graduate class, I was folding up my video camera and tripod when I realized that Beverly was speaking to the lone student left in the classroom. I jumped from the cleanup task, realizing that an opportunity to “get nosy” (Wolcott, 1995) was at hand. As I approach, the conversation revolves around this graduate student’s experience of leading a class meeting with her students. She is telling Beverly that the meeting, having to do with a child with a speech delay, “went way below the surface level.” Wanting to know more about her experience with the class meeting, I ask for an interview with her.

This particular class meeting had occurred in the late spring as a result of “some problems in my classroom with fighting and kids getting on each others’ nerves and picking on each other...” the novice teacher tells me. The class meeting began with the children taking turns suggesting why such friction existed. “One student said, ‘Well, I don’t think it’s fair that people pick on Troy because he can’t talk right. God made him special.’” Elaborating, she tells me that Troy has severe speech delays (as does everyone

in his family), ADD, and “he had a lot of issues.” She, however, was unaware of any teasing and was completely taken aback by this situation. As her story continues, I found it very disturbing that this teacher was oblivious to what appeared to be rampant teasing of Troy. She continues, saying, “It was happening on the playground. It was happening behind my back. I didn’t know it was happening and Troy never said anything to me about it.” With the severe speech delay she had described earlier, I am surprised at her comment about Troy’s not telling her about the teasing. Oral communication is a challenge for him. What she describes later is equally disturbing.

During the class meeting, after two or three children had talked about Troy’s having been made fun of, the teacher asked Troy what he would like to say about the situation. “And he just started to cry. He just bit his lip and started crying and shook his head,” she tells me. Although the children were discussing that teasing Troy was not right, he was obviously in a lot of pain during the class meeting. While the other children’s need to talk about this situation is being addressed, Troy’s needs seem to be swept aside, placing him in a very uncomfortable spotlight. Before the class meeting ended Troy did stop crying, and was even laughing...but he never talked. Honoring the open communication tenet of the class meeting, the teacher acknowledged to all the children that it had been a particularly difficult meeting, and that if anyone needed to talk to her later, to do so or write her a note. The teacher attempted to talk with Troy at a later time but he just shook his head and didn’t want to talk. Encouraging him to talk to the school counselor was also fruitless.

Later in our conversation, I wonder what this experience with the class meeting might have done to this teacher’s commitment to using the strategy. “So, will you continue to use class meetings?” I ask her. “Oh, definitely! It definitely gave us a sense of community...it helped us get to know each other a lot quicker.” She believes it makes

them more observant of one another, as they look for actions and attitudes to compliment. Before the interview was completed, I found myself still uncomfortable thinking about the class meeting in which Troy's language was the topic of discussion. I wondered how things were at the end of the year. "The class meetings are never to be a negative experience...I didn't want (Troy) walking away thinking that the meeting was a bad place, a scary place, that he wouldn't want to come back to," she said. What was the outcome? Troy actually spoke in subsequent class meetings.

He was one of the students who didn't really talk much at the beginning of the year and it gave him an outlet to talk, knowing that everyone was going to be quiet and everyone was going to be focused on him, trying to understand him, and we did.

Perhaps my instinct to protect Troy would have prevented such progress. I don't know. I am still uncomfortable with the picture of a child crying in the circle, unable to express himself after others have laid bare such harsh realities. This story is a reminder that the ways in which teachers care for children are not always neat and tidy...not always about "warm smiles and hugs."

The class meeting paradigm holds promise in two ways related to this research examining Beverly's perceptions of caring and her caring practices. First, there is an inherent potential for leveling the playing field within her classroom. By allowing each student the opportunity to speak, no one person dominates, and no one is overlooked. As one of her graduate students explained, "(For) some of the ones who were more shy, it gave them a chance to talk...it was their turn and nobody could cut them off." This procedure also encourages class members to turn their attention to each of their classmates, to "hear, see, or feel what the other tries to convey" (Noddings, 1992, p. 16).

Secondly, the class meeting offers an avenue for addressing problems that inevitably arise and affect the class. Whether it is the language barrier for a recent

immigrant or the hurt feelings of another, the issue is brought out into the open for all to hear, address, and work toward solving. Control of the agenda is open to all. Through an agenda box, available to students and teachers alike, all issues become fodder for the class' consideration. Through such consideration, I believe engrossment and motivational displacement are encouraged, as students are expected to listen respectfully to others and to consider their feelings and ideas (Nelsen, 1987). When the speaker is heard and acknowledged, his reciprocity creates a caring relation (Noddings, 1984). Using the class meeting, as students and teachers speak their minds and feelings, and listen to others, human connections are made, and I believe, as Beverly does, that caring communities are built. But if the research into Beverly's caring demonstrates nothing else, it makes clear that caring is rife with inconsistencies and contradictions.

BEVERLY'S LESS-THAN-PERFECT CARING

When I first began learning about care, it seemed so straightforward. There is a "one-caring", characterized by engrossment and motivational displacement. There is a "cared for", who must demonstrate some form of reciprocity in order for the caring to become complete. That both are enriched or diminished by the completion of the caring added a simple finality to the construct. Imagine, then, my reluctance to accept that care could be as complicated as it has become during this study. It had begun so simply.

As I have continued to examine conversations and relationships in my analyzing these data with Beverly, I have come to believe that care is far from simple, and is actually easily fractured. Our beliefs and values that constitute our tacit understanding of care can become obstacles for our receiving the others into ourselves, seeing and feeling with the other, becoming a "duality" (Noddings, 1984, p. 30). It was Beverly's Christian faith that prevented her from becoming a duality with her agnostic student. Rather than seeing and feeling with him, she responded with her own religious practice, even in the

face of his admitting it had no meaning for him. Although she had the opportunity to become the one-caring when he approached her for counsel or emotional support, her own beliefs and values usurped any focus on his beliefs and values. Although she cites this example as her caring for a student, in reality, it seems she failed to care for him.

Another complication of caring, as a result of our socially constructed views, is that care is open to multiple interpretations. For instance, Beverly is committed to building a caring community in her class, and yet she admits failure when accused of favoring some students over others. Though she saw herself as caring, her students' perceptions challenged that. She herself concedes that her caring doesn't always work, and, from my own experience, I concur. Because it takes two people to have a caring relation, there must be a measure of compatibility to their interpretation of the caring. I would imagine that the closer in nature my social constructions of care are with another, the more successful are my attempts to care. Just because I interpret my practices as caring does not mean that my students do. It's all in how we view it. The folk tale of the blind men feeling different parts of the elephant and coming to different conclusions as to its identity characterizes this obstacle to establishing caring relationships with students. With multiple interpretations caring relationships are challenged.

Even our own limitations get in the way of our caring. Beverly told me that, in apologizing to her students for failing to demonstrate her care for all of them, she explained that we fail to demonstrate care because we are tired or simply overlook things. As teacher educators we are pulled in many directions, through our teaching loads, committee assignments, research and writing demands, not to mention our commitments to our families and communities. These are not excuses but realities. The simple fact is that it's difficult to enact caring practices consistently. We try to care in our teaching, and we sometimes fall short.

Finally, some teacher educators who work in the field find themselves between competing allegiances. They and their students are guests in the elementary schools, welcomed into the classrooms to work with children. As teachers themselves, the teacher educators have a collegial relationship with the host teachers, and have even had some of them as students in their own classes at the university. After the students have begun working in the schools, however, difficult situations arise. Beverly acknowledges the inevitability of this. Students get their feelings hurt, and the teacher educator tries to placate the situation. After all, part of her job is to act as liaison between the university and the school. With another research participant, her students were at odds with what they (and she) considered to be uncaring practices with children, and it created a “We/Them” mentality among the students. How to negotiate such complicated terrain from a caring stance is very difficult. In these situations, remaining caring of all involved seems to present a particular challenge to teacher educators.

Despite the challenges she faced in caring during our semester together, however, Beverly became a wellspring of enlightenment for my better understanding care in teacher education , as well as becoming a mentor and friend to her students. She devoted more time than I had imagined to the formation of relationships in her class. Extending far beyond the typical first class day introductions prior to launching into the semester’s curriculum, Beverly continued using numerous strategies throughout the semester to further the acquaintanceship and feeling of community among her students. Through her sincere interest in them as persons as well as preservice teachers, Beverly left them feeling cared for and confident that they had made a professional friend for life.

With a strong focus on her goal of developing a caring community within her group of students, Beverly began by focusing her caring first on individuals, getting to know them and letting them get to know her. Akin to an attentive host whose thoughtful

attention, both before and during a party, ensures the guests' enjoyment, Beverly's attention to these caring strategies held purpose, paving the way for her goal of creating a community. That, for Beverly, is caring. The irony remained, however, that what seemed to complicate her caring most were those very things that contribute to characterizing her...her loyalty to others and her deeply-held beliefs.

Tex Thompson: Teacher as Maverick

From the inception of this study, my purpose has been to better understand the nature of care in the practice of teacher educators. I believe that such understanding can lead to better teaching practices for others and myself. In her argument for the use of practical inquiry in teacher education, Richardson (1996) suggests that such investigations into teacher educators' practices help "clarify the 'shoulds' of teacher education practice: conceptions of the nature of good and effective teaching, of schools as we want them to be, and of the goals of teacher education programs" (p.722). To that end, as a teacher educator, I want to better understand how care is conceptualized by teacher educators. As a researcher, I seek to enhance our understanding of the role of care in teacher education.

This portion of my research project held its surprises. Tex was my final participant, and I began the semester with him feeling relatively confident in my role as researcher. After all, I had already spent two long semesters with my other participants, and also felt comfortable with Tex's teaching terrain as supervisor of student teachers, having done that job myself years ago. How difficult could this final semester of research be? Mine was a confidence that would be challenged. What I discovered were stark differences between Tex's caring and the caring I had observed in the practices of the other two participants. Making sense of the data gathered the semester I spent with him was challenging at best, and, at times excruciating. His story, more than my other two, sent me back again and again to the transcripts and to my own thinking about caring in teaching. As a result of struggling with his story, I have come to believe that, despite our common experience of being teacher educators within the same teacher education

program, it is our differences that created obstacles to my understanding Tex's caring practices.

Although I have known Tex for almost twenty years, ours has been a professional relationship. We talk sporadically about students, our own children, and issues at the university but have never gone "below the surface" into deeper explanations of our insights or beliefs. We have never discussed our fears, hopes, or dreams. From my perspective, I believed Tex cared a lot about teaching and teachers yet I would have been hard-pressed to elaborate on his caring. Beyond his spoken advocacy for children and teachers, I knew little of the bedrock underlying his commitment to teaching. Frankly, I was eager to legitimize my curiosity about his practices through my research protocol.

Tex is a very handsome man. As a young man he was an alternate on the U. S. Olympic long jump team, and as an older man he remains a striking figure of health and fitness. I often see him briskly walking to the education building from several blocks away, dressed in a business suit or slacks and a sport jacket, with his briefcase in hand. Asking him about his not parking on campus several years ago, he explained to me that his reasoning is two-fold: pragmatically, he takes advantage of the opportunity to walk to campus for the exercise it offers; philosophically, he disagrees with professors having to pay to park on campus. He argued the point before the Parking Committee for years, and lost. And so he walks.

He is a dapper dresser, attested to by one student who said, "His ties always match that suit, and (his) dress shirt always goes with the suit so well. I keep thinking, 'Why can't my husband dress like that?'" His attire of monochromatic colors between his silk shirts and sport coats often stand in contrast to the khaki slacks, oxford cloth shirt, and sweater vests or tweed jackets commonly worn by many male faculty members. He

takes pride in his appearance without seeming arrogant. He is self-assured, and appears to be a man not only comfortable, but genuinely content, with who he is.

The decision to conduct our interview discussions in my office was Tex's. Having given him several options (his office, my office, a conference room) for our visits, without hesitation, he said, "Let's meet in your office." Three or four minutes before Tex arrives for the initial interview, I hear him coming down the hall. His conversational style is very animated, and his voice dances up and down the register of intonation as he continues down the hallway to my office, catching up on news from my colleague next door, and gently chiding her with his rich and contagious laughter. It is a laugh that comes easily and frequently. It is a laugh I noted numerous times throughout my research field notes. At times, it seemed to ease his student teachers' anxieties. For instance, in one entry, while observing a conference between Tex and a student teacher, I wrote the following margin note: "His laughter seems to diffuse her concerns and build camaraderie between them, more like partners/colleagues than student and teacher." Other times, his laugh seemed to convey a philosophical acceptance of situations beyond his control, such as the loss of his hard fought battle with the Campus Parking Committee. Regardless of its effect, it is a laugh that does not go unnoticed. Even in a focus group, one of his students had commented, "I love his laugh. Oh, I love that laugh!" I knew exactly what she meant. His is a comfortable and genuine laugh.

In my office, I anticipate his imminent arrival, and scurry to complete my preparations of turning off my office telephone, getting us each a glass of water, and testing the audio recording device. I finish all of my preparations, and then realize he is still chatting with my colleague. I surprise myself with feelings of disappointment that he does not appear to be as eager as I to begin our research process together. Perhaps the scrutinized is never as eager as the scrutinizer.

In this first meeting, responding to my prompt for an autobiographical sketch of himself, Tex began by saying, “I’m Tex Thompson. African-American. Texan.” He seems to have such a strong sense of self. As I reread his comments, I wondered how I would go about describing myself so succinctly. His pride in being African-American is evident as he reminisces about being among the first African Americans hired to integrate the university faculty years ago, as well as having sponsored every African American student organization on the campus. In 1990, Tex’s book *Freedom Ain’t Free: Handbook for Black College Students and Parents* was published in an effort to encourage African American students to pursue the college experience.

Tex is also proud of his deep Texas roots, explaining, “My father’s people are from...Mexia, Texas, and my great-great grandfather was a member of the Texas Legislature after the Civil War. I think it was 1868. There are pictures (of him) in the Capitol now. Giles Cotton.” There are relatively few Texans who can claim to have a forebear among the portraits hanging in our state Capitol, not to mention one of African American ancestry. Tex’s pride is well deserved.

What is surprising, in retrospect, is Tex’s not including “Teacher” among his self-descriptors. He is proud to be a teacher, and describes his teaching lineage, saying,

I come from a family of educators. All those Cottons up there (in Mexia), they all taught school. They were superintendents. (On) my mother’s side, both my grandparents were teachers. I’m a third generation teacher, (and) I have a nephew (his namesake) who’s teaching in Atlanta, Georgia. So we have four generations of teachers.

Equally surprising is that Tex didn’t use the descriptor “Father” when identifying himself. In my experience, mothers usually self-identify as mothers. Tex has two grown daughters, one of whom works in a public school as a counselor. Reading one of his books, I learned that Tex’s two former wives were teachers as well (Tucker, 1995). Tex himself taught sixth grade and physical education in an elementary school for four years

before beginning graduate school. Since completing his Master's Degree, he has worked in higher education.

Tex's passion for the teaching profession appeared as a theme in his work, as he continually encourages his students to take pride in their roles as teachers. In one seminar, he gave a passionate speech about the critical role teachers play, saying, "I'm trying to show you how important you are to society...how important you are individually and collectively." Tex obviously struck a chord with his students, as exemplified by the focus group participant who said, "I think Mr. Thompson just really has teachers at his heart, just the profession as a whole as well as individually. He just loves it." His second book, *In Defense of Texas Teachers: A Motivational Book for Teachers*, represents his commitment to Texas teachers. In the introductory passage he writes, "I believe that teachers in Texas...desperately need some positive intercession on their behalf so that they can again feel good about themselves and their mission. Hopefully this book will do just that" (Tucker, 1995, p. 5.) Tex seems to want desperately for teachers – both preservice and inservice – to feel validated, and he believes he can do that.

Although his early childhood years were spent in Texas, Tex moved from a segregated fourth grade classroom in Lubbock to an integrated fifth grade classroom in San Diego, California, as a result of his parents' divorcing and his mother moving the family. "(San Diego) was my first taste of integration," he tells me. I ask about that experience, and his response is delivered "tongue-in-cheek" yet without a hint of animosity or resentment. "No, if you don't mind being overlooked, it was harmonious," he says before breaking into laughter. Then he continues, saying, "You're pretty much invisible. It's interesting. It's so interesting." Contrasting his two early school experiences, Tex says, "Lubbock was just the opposite (of San Diego), you know. We

had our community...Everybody knew everybody....But by the time I was in seventh grade (in San Diego), I could see that, 'Hey, this is not right. This is not fair.'”

His detachment surprises me. His burst of laughter following his recollection of “being overlooked” seemed an inappropriate response at first. Only later, upon my reflection, did I begin to consider his laughter as representing a resignation to things beyond his influence. I don't know if Tex has moved on with an acceptance borne out of reflection, or if I am simply denied access to his story of feeling “invisible”? We are, after all, collegial friends and not intimate friends. Considering our racial and gender differences, our experiences are disparate. I can never fully understand his experience of being marginalized in a racist society in which I belong to the dominant group. Perhaps for that reason, I felt uncomfortable probing for more than he chose to share. He simply told his anecdote with little discernible feeling. It was told as an event in the distant past, although I wonder if it is a memory that fuels his strong sense of self and confidence about who he is. For it seems to me, in Tex's world today he is far from invisible.

Over the course of our semester together, Tex seemed to take great delight in sharing those areas of his life outside of his role as teacher. It was never my feeling that he was denying his role as educator as much as reveling in what he sees as a full and varied life away from his teaching world. Mirroring one of the questions I heard Tex use with his own students, I asked, “What do you like most about yourself?” He answered, “I think one thing that I really appreciate about myself is my range of interactions with people...I've always been taught that people are people, rich, poor. I think there's an openness about me to experience people at every level.” He indicates through his conversations that he is as comfortable chatting with his acquaintances whom are among Austin's homeless population as he is chatting with college students he encounters at various music venues in the city. Although he never describes himself as such, I have the

feeling that he would consider himself “a citizen of the world,” comfortable, confident, and competent in any setting.

Tex’s seemingly constant state of self-confidence began to make more sense to me after I read the following quote by Dempsey and Noblit (1996), in which they write about their interviews with community people regarding the African American teachers at Rougemont School:

...for many black people, for most black people, the teacher was *the* (authors’ emphasis) person in the community. That was because primarily [teaching] was the profession that most blacks went in if they wanted to get ahead and so forth. So, when the teachers came to church then everybody took a back seat and they were always allowed to speak...It was a really big thing when they would come [to church]. (p. 123)

Having been reared in a family of African American educators, and having been one himself for more than 30 years, Tex is well aware of the high esteem in which African American teachers are held in their own communities. I believe this cultural respect for educators not only contributes to Tex’s feelings of self-worth and competence but also to his tenacious advocacy for teachers in general.

I actually approached this segment of my research with eagerness. Tex is the only male participant in my study, and, having completed my work with the female participants, I wondered if and how Tex’s caring would resemble what I had found in my female participants’ practices. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that Tex sees himself as a caring teacher. My including him in my study indicates my own belief that he is a caring teacher. The ways in which Tex conceptualizes teachers’ caring was not so surprising. It was closely akin to the beliefs of my other two participants, as well as to some of the care literature. The ways in which he acted on those beliefs, however, held surprises.

TEX'S CARING

The interviews with my participants always preceded my visits to their classrooms. I wanted to have a sense for the ways in which the teacher educators thought about caring before I began watching them with their students. One of the questions I asked each of my participants was who the models for caring in their own lives had been. We learn to care from those who have cared for us (Noddings, 1992), most specifically our family members, former teachers and graduate level teachers (Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996a), and I was interested in caring models who had influenced Tex. I also believed that his discussion of those models would flesh out his own ideas about what it means to care in teaching.

Models of Caring

Tex has no difficulty in talking about those people whom he feels have been models of caring in his life. He began speaking more globally about caring saying, "In general, my models for caring were my mother, my mother's mother, my mother's sisters. They were very caring people...very compassionate, very involved." Situating these early family models of caring in their historical context, Tex continued, adding,

I can remember in Lubbock in the old days of segregation, there was no class stratification within the black community. Everybody lived in the same geographical area, so there were a lot of poor people that you dealt with every day...My parents insisted that we treat everybody the same...that we were no better than anyone else.

Tex talks about caring in terms of compassion, specifically a response to others (by "being involved") and fairness ("treat everybody the same.") Although using different terminology, I believe Tex's expressed ideas about caring resemble those of Noddings' (1992) engrossment and motivational displacement, both characteristics of the "one-caring." Considering engrossment as "an open, non-selective receptivity to the

cared-for” (P. 15), one can imagine such engrossment as resulting from the decision to become involved in the situation of another. The fairness, of treating everybody the same, is couched in Noddings’ (1984) belief that our “first and unending obligation is to meet the other as one-caring” (p. 17.) Our moral obligation is to “meet the other”, whomever that may be, and not only those like us.

Before leaving the discussion of the women in his family as caring models, Tex remarks that his family had been more economically secure than most families in their neighborhood. Reflecting on his family’s status, he adds, “We were very privileged, as I look back, money-wise, education-wise. Both my parents were college graduates (and) my grandparents.” His comment seems to imply that it would have been easy for his family to dissociate themselves from those who were less fortunate, although they did not. His comment confirms the pride I sense he has in his family.

Tex’s revelation about his educated family caught me off-guard, revealing my own racism. Although I assume I have broken free of the racist thinking of my childhood, of seeing African-Americans as less committed to education than whites, I find it is not so. My surprise at learning that his parents and grandparents were college graduates stands as a stark reminder that I continue to make judgments that marginalize people even without realizing it. As the first college graduate in my own family, I had never entertained the idea that his family would have such a tradition of college education when my family had none.

This experience raised other concerns for me. As a teacher educator, I work daily with students who will become teachers, attempting to model caring for them in the hope that they will become caring teachers. Yet, from what kinds of similar assumptions am I operating, unaware of my own prejudices? How can I meet my students as “one-caring”,

with a consciousness that seeks to understand their needs, when my consciousness actually marginalizes them? My prejudices surely prevent me at times from becoming the “one-caring”. This realization is troubling and contributes to problematizing the relatively crystal clear waters of ethical caring suggested by Noddings.

Tex also recalls educators who influence his ideas about caring, however, his discussion of them was disappointing. While his memories of these educators seem vivid, the details of their caring are not. Describing two former colleagues at the university, Tex recalls, “I’d never seen anything like (the rapport they had with students) before.” Continuing, he adds, “They cared...Those men were so great...I just wanted to be around them so I could learn their moves, learn how they operate...Oh, they taught me so much, and I sought out their expertise.” After Tex repeats again that these men had served as models for him, I ask, “In their interactions with students?” hoping that I will gain some clear understanding of how he conceptualizes them as models of caring. Instead, he says there were great people all over the university “but they were just exceptional in the school of education.” As he spoke in generalities, I gained no insight into what their caring represented. Even now, my frustration grows as I try to create some understanding of how these colleagues contribute to Tex’s caring practices. All I can muster from his comments is that the men enjoyed a good relationship with their students.

A perfunctory mention of his cooperating teacher (when he was a student teacher) as caring included the following descriptions: “ she was the hardest teacher in the school” and “When she walked in, the room just lit up.” Unsure of how he relates his memory of her as caring, I wait for him to continue. “I know she cared,” he said. “I think a caring teacher is one who teaches the whole child. What do I mean by that?” he asks. Then continuing, he answers his own question, indicating that a child’s school performance is

not all that matters to the caring teacher. “We want to know what happened last night...who looks a little bit disheveled...who looks hungry...(just) talk to the kids about things. Caring teachers don’t just teach...they go beyond...they nurture.” Tex’s example did add to my understanding of how he interprets caring in teaching. The caring teacher focuses on more than just academics. His explanation of “We want to know what happened last night...(and) just talk to the kids” illumines more than just Tex’s ideas about care. Although he has been in higher education for over 25 years, Tex positions himself as one who think about care in terms of children.

Despite Tex’s information about caring models from his family, two former colleagues, and his cooperating teacher, I felt there was little into which I could sink my teeth. While he was able to identify them as caring models for himself, his inability to flesh out the ways in which they influence his own caring practices as a teacher educator frustrated me. The clear picture of caring which I was hoping for was not coming into focus. Then Tex began talking about Mr. Rodriguez.

That this section of the transcript begins, “In education, in terms of caring, I think...” indicates to me that, although his other examples of caring inform him, the one Tex considers the exemplar of caring in teaching is about to be introduced. Tex says, “In education, in terms of caring, I think the one teacher I had was Mr. Rodriguez at Lincoln High School.” Tex explains that he had Mr. Rodriguez for one science class in junior high school, and for two science classes in high school. Following the comment that he “such a great teacher”, Tex adds, “He was the epitome of caring.”

For almost two pages of the interview transcript, I say nothing. It is as though Tex has been transported back to Lincoln High School. He says,

Mr. Rodriguez was amazing. He loved us so much that he was at all the dances, all the football games, all the track meets, all the basketball games, everything on this campus that was going, Mr. Rodriguez knew about it. He knew who was

going with whom, who was not going with (someone), who broke up, and we just all loved Mr. Rod.

It is no surprise that Mr. Rodriguez left such a lasting impression on Tex, the man who, as a child, had been “pretty much invisible.” Having never felt the invisibility Tex earlier described, I can only imagine how confirming Mr. Rodriguez’s presence and attention were for Tex.

Almost as an aside, Tex adds,

My mother was one of the first African-American teachers in San Diego. She was a pioneer but Mr. Rod is my example. If there’s one person in teaching that I would have to point to...(I wanted) to be like Mr. Rodriguez.

My first reaction to this comment was one of surprise. Having described his mother as “a pioneer” in desegregating the San Diego teaching ranks, he implies an admiration of the hardships endured with such work. Yet Mr. Rodriguez remains his example. In thinking about caring influences, it is Mr. Rodriguez’s model of attention to students that weighs in more heavily than Tex’s mother’s pioneering efforts on behalf of African Americans. While Tex looks to Mr. Rodriguez, whom he describes as “good looking, smart, and bubbly,” as his model for caring, I came to believe that Tex was emulating more than just the caring teacher Mr. Rod represents. It seems Mr. Rod has stood as a model for the man Tex is today.

Tex’s narrowing his focus on caring to a teacher’s attention to individual students emerged as he began to describe the caring of Dr. Cohen, one of Tex’s own college professors. Differentiating Dr. Cohen’s caring about “concepts and linking education with a free society” from Mr. Rodriguez’s caring, Tex simply concludes, “Mr. Rod’s caring had to do more with individuals.” Interestingly, although Tex had confessed his being unfamiliar with Noddings’ work on the ethic of care, his comment about Dr. Cohen’s caring about concepts supports Noddings’ contention that caring includes not

only care of others, but of animals, plants, things, and ideals (Noddings, 1982). Despite recognizing his former professor's caring about concepts, that thread of such caring is not cited as a major influence.

In another conversation, Mr. Rodriguez's name surfaces again as Tex cites him as the model of caring, saying, "Mr. Rod was always available...I think one of the greatest evidences of caring is when people are available to you." As Tex describes Lincoln High School's Mr. Rodriguez as present at dances, games, assemblies, and open houses, as well as in the cafeteria, stairwells, and restrooms, "(h)e seemed to be everywhere at once" (Tucker, 1995, p. 27). That kind of availability and presence made a lasting impression on Tex, and represents caring. Researchers agree, suggesting in particular that one of the ways in which caring college professors are identified is by their being available and approachable with their students (Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996a).

Based on our conversations, I knew that Tex's conceptualizations of care had some footing in relational features such as one's compassion for others, the rapport between teacher and student, and the attention to nurturing the whole learner. Although Tex had mentioned each of these as characteristics of those whom he considered to be among his models of caring, these particular features were never addressed as Tex moved into talking about his own practices. There were, however, two characteristics that seemed paramount in his description of Mr. Rodriguez (whom Tex had professed as "the epitome of caring" and "my example") that surfaced as Tex continued to revisit his ideas about caring. One of those is the availability/accessibility of a teacher to his student, and the second is of the teacher's purposeful attention to his student as an individual. The remainder of Tex's portrait, then, will be presented through the lenses of these two considerations.

Caring as Being Available

Mr. Rodriguez's name is mentioned again as Tex cites him as the model of caring, saying, "Mr. Rod was always available...I think one of the greatest evidences of caring is when people are available to you." Researchers agree, suggesting in particular that one of the ways in which caring college professors are identified is by their being available and approachable with their students (Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996a). It is Tex's availability to his students that he focuses on as we begin talking about his caring.

As a student teaching supervisor who attempts to be available for his students, Tex faces unique challenges not faced by other faculty members within our teacher education program. Whereas most teacher educators meet with their students in classes of at least 90 minutes, twice a week, over the course of a sixteen week semester, student teaching supervisors meet with their students in 60- to 90-minute seminars only four or five times over the course of a semester. Whereas most teacher education faculty members hold regular office hours to accommodate student appointments, student teaching supervisors rarely hold regular office hours during the semester. Their students are often placed in schools across multiple counties, and coming to the university campus to meet with their supervisor during his office hours is simply not practical. When there is an individual conference scheduled between the supervisor and student teacher, it is most often held in the elementary school where the student teacher is teaching, during her planning period. Despite these challenges, availability for his students represents caring for Tex, and he works toward that end.

In one of our early discussions, Tex describes his caring for his students as being available by telephone, saying, "One example of my caring is that I give (my students) my home telephone number and I tell them to call me there...to try to call before 11 at night but just feel free to call whenever (they) need me." Although Tex cannot be

available by being at every school every day, he offers his students accessibility by phone. The students take him at his word, and do call him. “I think the latest (call) I’ve gotten is 11:30 at night, and that poor young lady, she was so good as a student teacher, but she had a personal problem she wanted to talk about,” he explains. He understands that his students’ phone calls are not always related to their teaching per se but are nonetheless important, and deserve his attention. He believes that his students understand his priority to be available to them by phone. “The fact that my students feel that they can call me any time...helps. I stop whatever I’m doing and talk,” he tells me confidently.

I am surprised, however, to discover that Tex does not use a computer, and consequently, has no e-mail service through which he can extend his availability to his students. He is, in fact, the only faculty member listed on the departmental phone roster who has in the e-mail address column “Not at this time.” He rationalizes his decision, saying he has no computer at home and is rarely in his office. I must admit that there are times when I wish I had no e-mail service. A bit of a dinosaur myself, I prefer office hours and face to face contact with people to the incessant e-mail communications. It seems, however, that in our age of technology, we have a responsibility to keep current to better serve our students.

Tex’s availability to his students came up in one of the focus group discussions. A student, responding to my question about ways in which Tex demonstrates caring said, “Just knowing that if I needed him the next day, I could call him that night and say, ‘Hey, would you please come up here?’ And he would.” She had a sure confidence that he would not only be available to her through the phone call to his home in the evening but also through his coming to meet with her the next day.

Tex continually reminds his students of his availability for them beyond simply phone calls. In one of the seminars he said,

I'll help you. I'm your resource...I doubt if you will come across any situation where you're teaching something, and I can't give you a way to do it. That's what I like about me as a teacher. I'm good at strategy. "Well, did you try this? Did you try this? Well, try this or try this." I'm not bragging but you're going to be amazed (with) some of the ideas I come up with on how to teach things, so use me. That's what I'm here for.

As novice teachers, Tex knows they will face challenging situations in the classroom, and he responds by being available to them for problem-solving and counsel. Later in the semester, I was able to observe Tex's availability for problem-solving and strategizing with one of his students.

Having met in the office of an elementary school in a neighboring county, Tex and I stroll to his intern's classroom together, chatting along the way. He thanks the intern for her flexibility in accommodating us for the conference, then begins by asking an open-ended question. "I would like to ask you to reflect on your experience as an intern, from when you started (two months ago) up to this point," he says to her. Tex usually begins his conferences with an open-ended request, allowing his student to select the direction of her response.

Rereading the transcript from this conference and listening to the audio tape reveals the student's comfort discussing her challenges with Tex. My margin note from the conference reflects her comfort in seeking his counsel. I wrote, "Her candor reflects her trust in him." She begins by admitting that "I had intended to come in and be stricter than normal in the beginning...but I've noticed I've had to get even more strict now." He listens thoughtfully before shifting the direction of the dialogue to solutions and application.

"What are some things that you think you could do?" he asks her after she has described a deteriorating classroom management crisis. As an intern, she tells him she must attend three half day inservice meetings a month, and having a substitute teacher

repeatedly has led to what she considers to be unacceptable behavior problems with her students. Addressing her management plan, she begins to talk about a marble jar, to which she adds 5 marbles when the substitute teacher gives her a good report. “And when they get their jar filled, they get a party. And they can help decide. We’ll vote on what kind of party,” she tells him. Watching and listening to her, it is clear that she is determined to get the students to buy into her management system, giving them a measure of authority in the reward of their efforts. Tex questions her, saying, “Do you take (marbles) out as well?” and “How many do you take out?” They continue their dialogue, with the give and take of colleagues trying to solve a problem.

As they talk, Tex isn’t heavy-handed about solutions but rather begins to hint at the abstraction of marbles jumbled into a jar, not really representing a concrete goal. He asks if she knows how many marbles the jar holds. “No because they’re all different sizes,” she responds. Offering a hypothetical number, he says, “Well, let’s say it holds 100 and let’s say you’re at 70 and then they lose 10. That makes it more real.” As she listens, the intern is actively analyzing the situation, concluding, “Well, we could use a number line, I guess.” Tex agrees that by doing so, the children would have a more concrete idea of where they stand behaviorally. “They’re (more) conscious of the fact that it’s 80 (now) but if we’re bad...it’s going to be 70,” he says. Through their dialogue the intern is able to analyze the situation (the abstraction of the jumbled marble jar) and arrive at a decision about how to deal with her classroom challenge. She will supplement the jar of marbles with a number line representing where the class stands in relation to their goal of getting 100 marbles in the jar...and a party. Tex believes one of his strengths is his ability to analyze a situation and respond with solutions, and makes himself available for his students to do just that during their conferences. In this instance, he did not come with his own agenda but rather to serve as a resource for her. Tex’s focus

during the discussion was in response to what his student needed. As collaborators, they address her classroom challenge.

At mid-semester, Tex is still reminding his students of his availability to help them. Telling the students that he will no longer be examining their lesson plans after the following week, he adds, “Either you have it or you don’t.” Then he adds reassurance by saying, “I’m not going to argue...or fuss, but (if you need help with lesson planning,) I want you to pull me aside. Just grab me. And insist that I sit down with you and I will...” Such accessibility and availability to students demonstrate caring for Tex, and is corroborated by one of his students.

Although most of the student teachers have had multiple opportunities through their prior field-based classes to practice the planning skills requisite for teaching, some do enter their student teaching with specific deficits. One focus group participant talks about Tex’s being available to guide her through a planning assignment. Not wanting to admit to her cooperating teacher that she lacked the confidence to plan a week-long unit alone, the student turned to Tex for help. “That’s where Mr. Thompson came in...He was able to set me up for success and guide me in the right direction, planning a week-long unit,” she said. Responding to her need for support midway through the semester, Tex scaffolded her understanding of a major facet of teaching practice—week long units—and she completed the semester with confidence.

Other focus group participants cited Tex’s availability to them as caring for them. One student remarks, “He always makes sure we don’t have any questions, (asking) ‘Is there anything I can help you with?’ He’s really there for us.” In a different focus group, another participant quotes the above student almost verbatim, while a peer of hers describes Tex, saying, “He never seemed rushed...That showed me that he cared.” While

these student teachers' remarks indicate an unwavering confidence in Tex's being available to them, others felt more conflicted about his availability.

During another focus group, two of the student teachers begin discussing Tex's not always being available to go over all of their work when he visits them in their schools. One student remarks that, although Tex had observed her for long periods of time and debriefed her on her lessons in her kindergarten experience, "(H)e hasn't seen me teach at all in first grade...(or) looked at any of my first grade work to see if I'm on task.." She admits that, even though her cooperating teacher validated her success as a teacher, she wanted Tex's feedback. Regarding his not reviewing her work, she said, "I don't know how I'm supposed to feel about that." Tex's suggestion to his students had been the following: "I want you to pull me aside. Just grab me. And insist that I sit down with you and I will." His suggestion indicates that the student has some responsibility to initiate a meeting with him if they want one. From his point of view, he has made himself available through his comment. This student, however, did not perceive Tex as available.

In the same focus group, another student teacher initially agrees, saying, "I understand what Teresa is saying because we put a lot (of effort) into (our lessons, unit, and portfolio) and we just...want to make sure...we're bettering ourselves as far as our student teaching goes." She seems frustrated but then begins to waffle in her conclusion, when she adds, "...but then I don't want to say that he doesn't care because he does." While Tex believes he cares for his students by being available to them, these data indicate mixed reactions to his availability. The other focus group reveals similar data.

After asking the students in the second focus group if there were times during the semester when they felt uncared for, one student begins talking about the last time she had seen Tex at her school. She had been observing in another classroom that day, and met Tex in the hallway as she returned to her classroom. He requested her signature on

her final evaluation from her teacher, and rushed off. She says, “I assumed he would bring back a copy...and I’m sure he assumed I’d seen (my evaluation.)” Her account seems to indicate that, at the moment of their encounter, she felt uncared for but, as the student in the other focus group, she is not ready to label Tex uncaring. Concluding, she says, “I don’t know if that’s not cared for...I’ll call him tonight and ask for a copy when he comes in tomorrow...He (just) showed me the human side.”

A second focus group participant talks about her disappointment that there had been no three-way conference between Tex, the cooperating teacher, and herself at semester’s end. “I was wondering how he felt...I did. Was I successful? Did I meet (his) expectations?” she queries. Although the final evaluation, a copy of which she receives, is an indicator of her performance as a student teacher, it is Tex’s availability to review the evaluation with her that she longs for. Her interpretation is that he was not available to do so. The evidence falls along the spectrum. Some students see him as available to them and feel cared for. Others question his availability to them but consider him caring while others express their feeling uncared for by his not being as available as they would want.

The students’ examples of not feeling cared for by Tex actually illustrate a pitfall for a caring teacher. The premise of this research is that caring is a way to be in relation to another. Noddings’ (1984, 1992) explanation of care as a relation between the one-caring and the cared-for leaves no doubt that care requires two participants. Despite Tex’s belief that he makes himself available, several of his students question his availability. We don’t know whether Tex failed to demonstrate the engrossment and motivational displacement the students needed to feel cared for, or if the students failed in their reciprocity, “essential to the relation” (Noddings, 1992, p. 17.) The fact is that both

parties contribute to the caring relation. Tex cannot will his students to feel cared for. It is a relation which requires specific participation from both Tex and his students.

Caring as Attention to Individuals

It is our first interview, and after Tex has completed an autobiographical sketch, I ask what he believes to be the core of his own caring for students. Responding, he says, “Love. I love all students.” While I consider his response mildly frustrating, have come to understand that many of us meld caring with other constructs. One of my earlier participants admits that she has melded caring and respect over the years. Although I don’t doubt that love is at the center of Tex’s caring, his comment adds little texture to my understanding his ideas about care, and I need more information.

At times it is easier to define something by examining its antithesis. I approach from that angle, asking, “What do you think demonstrates uncaring?” This seems to strike more of a chord with Tex, and he begins to talk about caring and children. “When people don’t see you, they can’t care about you...The thing that children need most is to be seen,” he told me. His comment corroborates Bullough’s (2001) description of the positive learning environment at the largely African American Lafayette School. “Children expect to learn and expect to be cared for by their teachers...No child is invisible. I don’t believe any child slips through the cracks” (p. 103). Tex, like the teachers at Lafayette School, equate awareness and purposeful attention to children with caring.

I cannot help but believe that Tex’s comment about children needing “most to be seen” is related to his own experience of feeling “invisible” in his San Diego classrooms. Palmer (1998) suggests our life experiences act to create an inner landscape onto which we paint our own beliefs about our work as teachers. “Teaching, like any human activity, emerges from one’s inwardness, for better or worse” (p. 2). Tex’s earlier experiences of

feeling “invisible” certainly contribute to his vision of what it means for a teacher to care in the classroom. After such a comment, one can only surmise that Tex’s feeling invisible in school as a child, translates to his having also felt uncared for. Again, although Tex has been teaching at the university for twenty-eight years, his explanation of caring relates to children rather than to his own students at the university.

As a full time university supervisor of student teachers, Tex is responsible for regularly visiting and mentoring student teachers through the capstone experience known as “student teaching” or “practice teaching.” As a supervisor, he spends a lot of time in elementary schools and, thus, spends a lot of time in the company of young children. Early in this study, it became apparent that Tex’s focus on caring often centers on caring for children. After making the comment about children’s needing “to be seen,” Tex expands on his ideas about caring. Explaining that he makes an effort to see, hear, and touch (either mentally or physically) the school children he sees, he says,

...(E)very school I attend or visit, I always look at every child, look at their minds, just look at them because that’s what they want...What children are saying is ‘See me! See me!’ They just want you to see them. So I think caring starts by seeing people. Caring starts by hearing people. Caring starts with touching people, mentally or physically.

While heartfelt, his comments imply a simplicity that, by looking at children when visiting schools, he can “look at their minds.” What does that mean? Teachers work diligently to get to know how the individual children in their classrooms think and learn best, and yet Tex implies that he can intuit a child’s thinking simply with a glance.

Soon after this interview discussion, I have the opportunity to see Tex interacting with school children. I have met Tex in the front office of a Bastrop elementary school, and we are walking down the hallway, discussing the conference I am about to observe. This is my first visit to a school with Tex, and I am eager. I am eager because I miss spending time with young children in a classroom, and I welcome the opportunity to get

into a school setting but I am also eager to see Tex's interactions with his students. As we walk along the hallway, his attention abruptly shifts away from our conversation and to the children meeting us in the hallway. It seems as though Tex addresses every child he meets. "Well, good morning!" and "You look beautiful today!" and "My, my, you certainly look fine!" are among the comments he makes to the young boys and girls walking in the hallway. His comments actually surprise me. Initially, I am taken aback at his abandoning our conversation so easily. I conclude that he considers our conversation something that can wait, while the opportunity to interact with the children will not. Regardless, I took a backseat to the children.

Entering the library, we look for a suitable place for the conference between Tex and his student. There are two library chairs at one table, and Tex goes in search of a third. He finds it in another area, and I hear him ask a young African American student in the hallway for help in getting a third chair into the library. I look to see a young fellow whose hesitancy seems to say, "Are you talking to me?" The child complies, however, carrying the chair for Tex. In response, Tex says, "My goodness, you're not only considerate but very strong. That chair is heavy! Thank you, young man." The child smiles, nods his head, and leaves the library. While Tex's attention seems to please the young boy, this situation raises questions for me.

First, does this constitute care? If, so, what makes it caring? Tex was certainly purposeful in his attention and interaction with this individual child. Tex could have easily moved the chair himself, yet he creates the situation in order to focus on the child. According to Tex's own professed beliefs about caring, teachers care by noticing students. Walker's (1996) discussion of African American teachers' interpersonal caring with their students offers insight. In talking about their interactions with their African American students, the teachers describe to the researcher

how important they felt it was “not to sit high and look low on children” and of how they wanted “to make children believe that they (are) somebody”. In general, they used interpersonal relationships to express a caring that assumed full responsibility to “push children” to learn in their classes and to make an effort to be sure that each child would become the “best that they could be.” (Walker, 1996, p. 133)

It seems to me that Tex’s actions are driven by the same motivation...that is to give this child the opportunity to help, be of service, to be “the best that (he) could be.” The philosophy at Lafayette School also affirms this approach, as Bullough writes, “While good intellectual skills are important assets and ones teachers seek to enhance, having an adult who genuinely believes in and supports a child’s sense of self as a worthwhile person is crucially important” (p. 111). The question seems to come down to the priority of affirming the child’s sense of self.

Secondly, I wonder how such an encounter, in contrast to our cautions for children not to speak with strangers, resembles caring. Does simply being in a school setting, give permission to demonstrate “care” for children by noticing them, speaking to them, or enlisting their aid without a familiar and trusted adult at hand? Some might interpret such an encounter as uncaring by actually compromising the child to interact with strangers despite cautions to the contrary. My belief is that Tex sees such attention to individual children as caring. After all, his enlisting the aid of the child creates an opportunity for him to “notice” or “see” the student, and then to “touch” that child with affirming comments. Such interactions, however, do call into question the focus of Tex’s caring.

Another situation involving Tex’s attention to a child is brought up in one of the focus group discussions. A student teacher describes a day when Tex came into her classroom to observe her teaching for about an hour. She remembers him watching the different children, watching the activity in which they were engaged, and watching the

ways in which the children were reacting to her. “(A)t the end of the class, I saw him writing a little note. I wasn’t sure what it was for, and, as he left, he handed it to a little boy in the classroom,” she explains. Later, the child came up to the student teacher, talking about “the wonderful letter” from Tex which indicated, “(Tex) thought he was a natural born leader”. The child told his student teacher how special the note made him feel, and that he couldn’t wait to get home to show his mom.

As this student teacher told this story, I was uncomfortable about a student teaching supervisor from any university writing a note to a child during a classroom visit, even a note that is encouraging. As a supervisor, Tex’s job is to evaluate his student teachers, and to communicate with their cooperating teachers. Although none of the other student teachers commented on this story, I cannot assume that I was the only one questioning this situation. (I also wonder about the child’s parents’ reaction to the note.) But beyond my own discomfort with this scenario, I wonder why Tex was focusing on a child and not his own student. Why was he not paying attention to the student teacher, and in so doing, model what he considers caring to be? He could just as easily have written a note to her, indicating strengths he saw in her teaching practices, telling her she is a “natural born leader.” If caring is “really seeing” a student, why doesn’t Tex focus on his own student, modeling caring behavior for her? This resonates as an example of Noddings’ (1986) warning that, as caring teacher educators, it is our obligation to see our own students, and not the children they teach, as “the direct objects of (our) caring” (p. 503). It is in caring for our own students that we model the caring we hope will be present in their teaching.

Tex also focuses his students’ attention toward individual children, as well as notices when they demonstrate attention to individual children. One afternoon we are back in my office talking when Tex begins our interview by talking about one of his

interns. He says one of her strengths is her “intense desire to help each individual child.” Elaborating on this as caring, Tex explains, saying, “A lot of us get caught up in the success of the (whole) class and we forget (the) individuals who comprise the class. Miss Gilchrist’s focus seems to be on the individual children...(and) that’s evidence of caring.” His example of caring was one of his student’s caring for the children in her classroom, reminding me of Tex’s lecture during an earlier seminar.

This particular seminar is being held the week before the student teachers will go out into their schools, and he is giving them specific things on which to focus their initial observations while in their classrooms. The first few include such things as the classroom environment, the teacher’s management system, and her teaching cues. Then he suggests that the most important thing the students need to pay careful attention to is the class composition. Delineating examples that deserve their attention, he mentions physical traits of the children, such as gender, ethnicity/race, and extremes in size...tall, short, overweight. Addressing the composition of the class as “the chemistry of the class”, Tex says, “Notice these kinds of things because they make a difference.” He explicitly directs his students to take note of the individual children in the classroom.

Tex, focusing on personality traits, encourages his students to identify those children who are leaders, ones who correct others, sweet ones, fighters, and victims. Almost pleading, he says, “See if you can find them...Why? Because this tells you how to go about teaching the class. These are your personalities that you are going to be dealing with.” This attention to individual children continues as a theme in Tex’s early seminars with his students, and throughout his conferences with them over the course of the semester. Examples of two of Tex’s approaches to focusing his students’ attention on individual children follow.

Tex and I have met at an elementary school in a neighboring town so that I might observe an individual conference with one of his student teachers. I have come to relish these conferences between Tex and his students, as the dialogue from these conferences represent the only interactions I observe between Tex and his individual students. Tex opens the conference dialogue with an open-ending request, saying, “Tell me what has been the highlight of student teaching so far.” The student teacher begins to talk about how much she has learned just from watching her cooperating teacher teach the children. She tells Tex that these children are different from the ones she worked with in her earlier field based work at the university, and she is having opportunities now to work with children with learning disabilities.

Pursuing her comment about working in the classroom with students with disabilities, he begins to ask her more probing kinds of questions related to her comments, such as, “How does (making modifications for the LD students) affect time?” and “What about classroom control (with these students)...Is that challenging?” Although Tex is crafting his questions to pay purposeful attention this student’s individual concerns and challenges, the conversation quickly turns to individual children in her classroom.

Tex says, “I’m going to name a characteristic and I want you to name a child that displays this characteristic. Very cooperative,” he says to the student teacher. “That’d be Brock,” she responds. “Describe him,” Tex counters. The student teacher continues confidently, saying “He doesn’t talk...does his work very quickly...very cooperative. Doesn’t act out.” Moving their dialogue along, Kenny says, “Uncooperative.” “That would be Daisha,” the student teacher replies. “She is very slow with her work...wants to come and hug me and stuff, but has an attitude. She’ll roll her eyes. She’d just rather get the answers from somebody,” she explains. The dialogue ping pongs back and forth as he requests and she describes a leader, a busybody, and a shy student.

After the student teacher has responded to the inquiries regarding different personalities in the classroom, Tex moves to questioning her the child she had labeled as “uncooperative,” asking, “What changes are you going to try to bring about in Daisha?” The student thinks for a moment, then says, “I want Daisha to start trying...She has the (intelligence). She just won’t apply it...I’m always standing right by her to keep her on task. I think she just needs that individual attention.” Their dialogue continues as Tex says, “Angelica?” asking about the child his student teacher has earlier identified as shy. He continues to focus the student teacher’s analytical attention on identifying individual children, then discusses appropriate teaching strategies for each.

In another conference with different student, Tex utilizes a similar strategy for focusing on individual children by asking the student teacher to name a child, describe where that child is academically, socially, or emotionally, and to talk about her goals for that child between now (November) and June. His request mirrors his attention to individual children. The intern begins by talking about one of the boys in her room. Her description includes such phrases as, “I think he may be ADD...He has real trouble focusing...He does good at reading and math...can’t write.” Tex questions her about what has worked with the child and what has not. Occasionally, he makes a suggestion for her to consider.

After a time, Tex says, “Name another child,” and the process of focusing on an individual child continues. We are under a minute away from the end of the conference, and Tex changes his tack, turning his attention away from the children and to the intern herself. Tex says, “Okay, you have 30 seconds left. Think of one word that can describe how you feel as an intern. One word.” “I feel successful, actually,” she replies with a smile. As we walk to the door, she continues admitting that she is not anywhere close to where she wants to be in 5 or 10 years, “but I do feel pretty successful. I think my kids

are doing a really good job.” While most of their attention has been focused on individual children during this conference, I am encouraged that Tex’s final question focuses on the intern...his student...and not one of the children in her classroom.

Although I don’t question the need for student teachers to become skillful in identifying the different personalities in their classrooms, I am puzzled by Tex’s decision to spend the majority of the conference time discussing individual children. These conferences are, after all, the only times the student teachers meet individually with Tex. I believe these conferences represent additional opportunities for Tex to “notice,” “really see,” and thus, care for his own students. Although far fewer in number, there are instances of such attention.

At the close of Tex’s first seminar with his students he indicates that, when he visits them in their classrooms, they will be the focus of his attention. Telling them that he will be observing them just as he expects them to be observing their own students, he says, “When I come to visit you, I’m studying you. I’m a teacher. I’m looking at you as a teacher. I’m trying to figure out how I can motivate (you) or how I can get (you) to do (your) best work.” And perhaps that was Tex’s sincere intention, and what he actually does, however, the example of his writing a note to a child challenges this comment to his students. It seems he was much less committed to studying and motivating his own student than the young fellow to whom he wrote the note.

There are students, however, who did interpret Tex’s individual attention to them as caring. In a focus group discussion, a student says,

I really felt that Mr. Thompson cared about me individually. The first time he came into my class, he observed for a little while, and he observed my teacher and the way she (interacted) with the students. Right away, he pulled me out in the hall and said, “Are you going to be okay in this classroom?” Because he didn’t like what he saw going on in the classroom, he asked if I’d like to be moved...and I said, “No.”

Although this student chose not to take advantage of his offer to move her to a different classroom, she interprets his attention to her situation and his resultant offer to make an adjustment as caring for her as an individual.

Reviewing my focus group data again, I am reminded of the numerous examples of students' offering examples of Tex's caring for them...his attention to them through his encouragement and counseling, his planning of meaningful seminars, and making his expectations clear to them. Although the object of his caring was not always his own students, the students nonetheless felt cared for by Tex. This was a key finding in the study of Tex's caring practices, and one that created more questions than it answered. If students feel cared for, does that mean a teacher educator is caring? On the other hand, are there teacher educators who feel caring and think they are caring but have students who don't feel cared for? How does one determine if that teacher educator is caring or not?

TEX'S CARING, REVISITED

What I believe, after spending three months with Tex, in conversation, in seminars, and in shadowing him during his conferences with his student teachers, is that he sees himself as a caring teacher educator. The model who influences him most is the one Tex remembers as available and attentive to individual students. And, although such availability and attention are also evident in Tex's own teaching, much of his attention to individuals is focused on caring for children and not his own students. Such attention to children flies in the face of Noddings' (1986) work on fidelity in teacher education. She warns that, as caring teacher educators, it is our obligation to care for our own students, and not the children they teach. It is in caring for our own students that we model caring for children. And yet that is not what the focus group data reveals.

After Tex had spent a semester supervising his interns and student teachers, I met with two focus groups. The following was my question to the participants of each focus group was: “In what ways do you feel like Mr. Thompson has cared for you as a student?” In both groups the students gave numerous examples of Tex’s care, related both to children and to themselves. They simply did not distinguish between the two. Talking about his caring for children, one student began by saying,

(H)e cares first of all when he shows a lot of care for the children. He’ll go up and help them and walk around and...he seems to always pinpoint the kids that are lower...He just has a lot of caring first of all for the children.

Another student offered a response about Tex’s caring, saying, “(W)e all want to be that loving and caring, and be able to recognize children who are in crisis or just having difficulties.” Disputing Noddings’ (1986) contention that teacher educators cannot care for their own students by caring for the children in their care, Tex’s students consistently noticed and cited his care for children as though it were caring for them. They saw his model as caring for them.

While I understand Noddings’ caution against caring for the children of our preservice teachers, I am uncomfortable with the certainty with which she sometimes presents issues related to care. I have watched Tex in the schools, and while there has been attention to children that puzzled me, I have also witnessed that his attention to children serves as a model to his students. I have seen his attention to and knowledge of specific children facilitate a discussion of pedagogical strategies between teacher educator and student teacher. Does the fact that his students cite Tex, when caring for children, as an exemplar of caring render his model ineffective?

I do believe we want teacher educators who care first for their own students but I am not convinced that Tex’s attention to and knowledge of individual children in his

students' classes do not serve, in the end, his own students. As I read these data and consider what it means to care in teacher education, the issues get muddied. Theories can appear so neat and tidy, and the world of teaching is anything but neat and tidy at times. Having supervised student teachers for a number of semesters, I was never the model of the astute observer that he is, the model of astute observer his students note again and again. His caring enough to really see the children, and be able to discuss them with his students, thus, becomes caring as identified by his own students.

If we stand with Noddings, we must conclude that by attending to the students of his preservice teachers, Tex robs his own students of the very model of caring which will guide them into caring practices as classroom teachers. The fact is that Tex believes he cares for both student teachers and their students, and his student teachers see him as caring. Over the course of a semester with Tex, they have witnessed his caring, and remain convinced that he demonstrated caring for them.

Like Beverly, Tex further broadened my understanding of caring in teacher education as complicated. Admittedly operating from a model of caring from his own schooldays as a child, Tex equated caring with being available for his students yet his availability seemed drastically limited by some of his own choices. While supervising student teachers, who are already somewhat isolated from the university and the support of the faculty, his availability was actually minimized by his having to travel a five-county area, and yet he remains unwilling to take advantage of e-mail messaging with his students or offering them a cell phone number at which to reach him. And although his full time responsibility for the university is to supervise preservice teachers, his caring seemed more focused on elementary school children. Despite such incongruity in his caring practices, Tex's students described him as caring. Tex's story as a caring teacher

educator turned my researcher's head in a way I had not anticipated, and required that I began to ask questions about the nature of caring in teacher education. While these data presented huge challenges for me, they enriched my understanding of caring as complicated and ripe for further study.

Jessica Blakely: Teacher as Consummate Guide

When I began thinking about my study into teacher educators' beliefs and perceptions of the role of care in their teaching, I knew that I wanted Jessica to be a participant. I had known her for eight years but much about her teaching still remained a mystery. While we had talked about our own children, as well as our individual disciplines and students, there was much we had not discussed. And, while there was no question in my mind that Jessica was a caring teacher, I had nothing with which to substantiate my belief other than my own intuition and the occasional student comment overheard in hallways and elevators.

Jessica champions the efforts of others, and I was no exception. Most of our side conversations dealt with her tenacious encouragement of my pursuit of a doctoral degree. Long before this research study had been conceived, Jessica took as sincere an interest in my coursework as my husband. Continually inquiring about my coursework, she would learn of that semester's professors, course assignments, and reading lists. Her common responses were, "How exciting! That sounds so interesting!" and "You are learning so much!" She also told me her house was never cleaner than when she was writing her own dissertation...a confession I've come to fully appreciate only in the last year! More than anyone on my faculty, Jessica demonstrated a sincere interest not only in my own journey on the doctoral path, but also in the content of my coursework and questions being asked therein. What I learned during my semester with Jessica is that her interest in others is not only characteristic of her caring but also of her own avid curiosity and commitment to learning. What I also learned is that all the time I was focused on Jessica caring for her students, she was also caring for me.

It is 7:45 on a fall morning, and I am setting up the video camera in a classroom in a local elementary school. As researcher, I am here to be “a fly on the wall” in Jessica’s college classroom. As an associate professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, she teaches reading classes to both undergraduate and graduate students. Like another of my participants, Jessica teaches a field-based class of undergraduate preservice teachers, meeting in a local elementary school. Twice a week, the students spend half of their day in this classroom that has been designated for college class work, while spending the other half of the day working with children in the elementary school’s classrooms. This particular elementary school is a Title I school, with a population of children that is 75% Hispanic and 74% lower SES. Jessica believes the demographics of this school is advantageous for her students, saying, “I think it’s more important for our students to be exposed to a school that has a lot of Mexican American children and diverse populations than to be in a school where...there is no diversity.” I also believe that Jessica likes the opportunity to address issues related to diversity with her students that perhaps would not be as prevalent in a school with a less diverse population of children.

Jessica’s classroom has a bank of windows where chart papers hang, representing the college students’ group work in this class, as well as sample projects demonstrating their work with children. A coffee pot sits on the shelf under the windows, although I notice that most students arrive with their own personal drink choices. The students come in and go directly to their tables to unload their backpacks, rifle through papers, and greet their classmates.

Jessica is at the front of the classroom putting class agenda notes on the board for the students. Born in Mexico City to a Swedish-American mother and Mexican father, Jessica is one of their four children. Her features are those of a EuroAmerican, with light

brown hair and hazel eyes. Jessica says, “I like to think of my self as Mexican and European American. I don’t like to choose one or the other as they are both important to me.” Having grown up in Mexico City, Jessica describes herself as “very much a part of the Mexican culture...(its) language, values, ideas, and education.”

She first came to the United States when she matriculated at a private university in Texas. She talks about her experience of living in what she considers to be two very different cultures, saying, “My life and the things that I cared about and thought about before I came to the United States were very different from what I’ve come to find out people think about and care about in this country.” She thought American people were very rude, “less gracious about giving each other turns to speak or do things.” Continuing, Jessica describes Americans as “competitive, in terms of wanting to jockey for position...Where I grew up, people were much more polite and much...less aggressive.” I am reminded, however, that Jessica’s family was financially secure, “of some means” by her description, and, thus, socially secure. Jockeying for position was not a necessity but rather her inherited right. Contrasting her own cultural heritage to the culture in which she now lives, Jessica says, “My ideas of how you establish relationships and how you demonstrate caring are very different.” Her comment puzzles me, as I found her building relationships with students and demonstrations of caring not so very different from others’.

Dressing conservatively, Jessica wears no make-up, and maintains a figure of health. She has a reserved demeanor, and, unlike my other two participants whom I always heard coming down the hallway for our interview sessions before I saw them, Jessica is more like a quiet fog moving into place. Where others’ laughter and conversations herald their coming, Jessica arrives promptly but without fanfare. She does not draw attention to herself yet she is not reclusive.

Although Jessica has a quiet demeanor, it yields to fearlessness when tackling ethical issues. During our discussions Jessica talked one day about her concerns and subsequent negative evaluation of a former student, saying, “The guy was demonstrating a serious lack of judgment in my opinion.” Using the bureaucratic procedures established, she “green flagged” the student (as another professor had done), thus, signifying her concerns about his entering the student teaching experience. She was discouraged to hear that her concerns had been summarily dismissed, and he was admitted to student teaching. After winning two scholarships for his student teaching semester, the student applied for a prestigious graduate program within our department. Jessica was disgusted and minced no words with the Dean of Education, saying, “The day that this person is accepted (into this graduate program) is the day you’ll find my resignation on your desk.” Without a hint of glee but rather a measure of confirmation of her own professional judgment, Jessica tells me that, not only was the student not admitted to the graduate program, he was asked to leave his student teaching placement by the school’s principal. She was steadfast in her judgment as well as her conviction, and both were confirmed.

The classroom phone rings and, answering it, Jessica learns that one of her students is caught in traffic and will be late. She adds that information to the notes on the board so that the student’s tablemates will know where she is. The hum of activity in the room is increasing as students come in. A few students go up to the front of the room to talk to Jessica, and she appears at ease visiting with them, as though with friends. She likes the extended day with her students and the opportunities for getting acquainted. “That’s why I love this (class)”, she tells me. “I can visit with the students one-on-one...I can give feedback...and (I) can give the students the sense that (I’m) watching...and noticing.” She tells me she’s never been the kind of teacher who just wanted to show up and teach. She want to know her students, and she is willing to invest the time to do so.

A focus group participant, describing ways in which she felt cared for by Jessica, talks about a conversation one afternoon after school. Experiencing a crisis with her husband, the student began to confide in Jessica, and “she even stayed after school for an hour listening (to me.) I mean, it had nothing to do with my schoolwork and she still took the time to talk to me (about it.)” While her students’ scholarship is her main focus, she takes an interest in the life and work of her students, in and out of school.

Two students stand close to Jessica at the front of the classroom, talking about going to the dentist, when Jessica adds a sympathetic comment. “Oh, I’m sorry,” she says, sharing an experience she has had at the dentist. Another student comes up to Jessica and they begin to talk, this time in a more private manner. Jessica turns her back to the group as she speaks more softly to this student, suggesting the student’s need for a modicum of privacy in this very un-private classroom. Most of the table groups are complete, and the room is now abuzz with conversations. At 8:03 Jessica begins their class time by complimenting the students on their work with children in their “After School Clubs.”

Over the course of our semester together, I came to understand Jessica’s ironclad commitment to being a caring teacher educator. I also came to appreciate a deep and abiding passion that drives her caring work with her students...a passion that, I believe, is inextricably connected to her own cultural heritage.

JESSICA’S CARING

Sitting in my office, Jessica and I are in rocking chairs facing one another. I have tried to arrange the office to be a place where each participant feels comfortable and free to talk. I have decided to begin this series of interviews by asking about influences on her beliefs about the role of care in her own teaching. I am careful not to define care for my participants, not wanting to color or taint their own ideas about what care involves or

looks like in a classroom. Beginning, I simply ask Jessica if she can think of people or situations that have influenced her own ideas about the role of care in her teaching. With certainty she begins to talk about her father.

Models of Caring

Talking about him as a caring model, Jessica says, “I think I did have a model. My father was a person who took a lot of responsibility for people (beyond our family.)” As owner of a business in Mexico, he was required to hire a lot of people. Continuing, Jessica tells me that there were all levels of employees, among them those who built boxes, as well as personnel for deliveries, sales, bookkeeping, and accounting. She talks about his hiring them, and then she adds, “He also offered to pay for half their education if they wanted to further their education.” Recalling a childhood memory of her father’s caring, she says,

He would sometimes come home and say, “Well, I lost another one” and it would be because (someone was able to get further training...and go on...and get a better paying job, but that never seemed to stop him from offering (them assistance.)

Her father’s stance of commitment in taking responsibility for his employees, albeit partial financial responsibility, is interpreted by Jessica as his caring for them. Both her gender and her culture shape her ideas about responsibility. Females view the world through the lens of relationships where “an awareness of the connection between people gives rise to a recognition of responsibility for one another, a perception of the need for response” (Gilligan, 1982, p. 30.) Regardless of how her father perceived his actions, Jessica considers them to have been caring. Culturally, Jessica has been influenced by the broad concept of *educacion* embraced in her native Mexico. “It refers to the family’s role of inculcating in children a sense of moral, social, and personal responsibility...”(Valenzuela, 1999, p. 23.) While the admonition to be your brother’s

keeper is sadly on the ebb in the greed- and competition-driven United States, it seems to flow more freely in other cultures...and contributes, I believe, to Jessica's thinking about caring for others. She believes it is her responsibility to do so.

Contrasting two teachers from her own children's educational experiences, Jessica's adds to her idea of what she considers to be a caring teacher. The first one, her daughter's fourth grade teacher, Jessica describes as a teacher who got to know her daughter and then "(took) steps to support (her development), and in an area (the teacher) had identified as somewhere where Anne needed some support, some help." Jessica adds, "That made me really think here was a teacher who took some time with one individual child that made a difference in her life..." It seems to be the attention and time taken with her daughter than signifies the teacher as caring to Jessica, particularly when considered in contrast to her son's teacher.

Jessica remembers calling Justin's algebra teacher when, after repeatedly getting exemplary grades, Justin came home with a B on his report card. She says, "I thought, 'Well, this is unusual for algebra...not for other courses but, for algebra, that was not the usual case.'" Justin had no valid explanation, telling Jessica that he had made As on all homework and exams.

After calling to inquire about Justin's work in the class, his teacher told Jessica that he had no student by that name, and that lots of students, in fact, have difficulty with algebra. After the teacher took Jessica's suggestion to review his third period roster, he returned her call, telling her that he did indeed have her son in class, and that, although Justin had made As on all assignments, he had not fulfilled the requirement for taking notes in class. Jessica accepted the teacher's prerogative to require a student's note taking in order to make an A, and told her son that it was his choice not to take notes in class (even though, apparently he didn't need to master the material!) Jessica contrasts the two

teachers' approaches to add substance to her own understanding care in teaching, as evident in the following comment:

The difference between (these) two teachers, one that really cared a lot and showed that through actions, and the other one, who was just going through the motions of assigning, grading, and running the class but not necessarily caring whether the students did well or not...The two examples really stand out as different approaches.

Her story and closing comment speak to two traits Jessica considers to be characteristic of a caring teacher. One, the teacher knows her students. Although Jessica says, "I think an expression of caring is to notice your students," my belief is that her concept of care is better understood by considering the Webster dictionary definition of "notice" as "to regard; observe; pay attention to" (Neufeldt, 1996, p. 928.) It was her attention to getting to know Jessica's daughter that was the teacher's first step in caring for her. Secondly, the teacher then took action to address the needs of the daughter. On the other hand, Jessica's perception is that her son's teacher did neither, and was, thus, labeled uncaring by Jessica. It is a teacher's knowing her students, and subsequently acting in their best interests that represents caring for Jessica.

Two other models she cites are from her graduate studies. The first is the chair of her Master's Thesis committee at a university in the Pacific Northwest, who allowed her to pursue a topic not included in the curriculum at that time...reading for second language learners. Talking about his caring for her, she adds, "I really feel that (it's) an expression of caring to allow a person to pursue their own interests and...to make sense of whatever (they're) studying in terms of (their) own life experience." At the time Jessica was pursuing her Master's degree, she had been teaching in this country, and had become interested in the challenges of Mexican-American children learning to read and write. Second, akin to this experience, Jessica cites a professor in her doctoral program who "taught me that people have questions of their own, and that we need to listen to

those questions...I like to encourage (my students) to pursue those questions, not just in my class but in general.” Jessica adds that she believes people are more likely to make good contributions if they really care about and are passionate about a question or an idea. Both of these professors influenced Jessica’s thinking about caring for her students as allowing them to bring their questions and their own interests to their work as preservice teachers. Each of these professors demonstrated a respect for what the learner brought to the classroom, whether it was questions or interests.

One of the aspects I loved about this research project is that it confirms the process of ideas bubbling to the surface as time passes. The models of caring cited above had been discussed very early in the semester, giving way to conversations on myriad topics as we met. It was at the end of our final interview that Jessica responded to my question, “Do you have any closing remarks?” by saying, “You asked me if there were any other people besides my dad (who had served as models of caring.)” I was initially surprised that she brought up models of caring again. Our earliest interviews had been partially devoted to that discussion, while our latter ones had focused more on specific questions I had in response to my observations. Not even realizing it myself, I had falsely concluded that she was finished talking about caring models, and her continuing the discussion in our final interview was a good reminder to me of the power of reflection. It seems as she continued to think about her own caring during our semester together, ideas and clarifications emerged, which she in turn shared with me.

Continuing, she admits her father “seems to stand way above in terms of everybody else”; after all, she had watched him live as a caring person everyday. “But, in my lifetime, I have known lots of wonderful, caring people in the classroom,” she says. Offering examples, Jessica describes her teachers in Mexico as ones who taught through “huge projects...having us put on Greek plays, making huge murals of Mexican

history...” Then she adds, “You know, it takes a lot of energy to teach through those kinds of huge projects...I think they must have been very caring teachers.” It appears to be the actions of those teachers, as opposed to any relationship skills, that Jessica cites as examples of their caring.

Jessica remembers the caring of her childhood and graduate school teachers, despite their distance in geography and time in her life. She remembers their taking responsibility for encouraging her learning through their attention, albeit through very different approaches, and, for that reason, she considers them models of caring. Although Jessica’s models of caring offer one avenue for beginning to understand the ways in which she conceptualizes caring in her teaching, other avenues rested in the data.

Caring as Attention and Response

A month into our research semester together, Jessica was still uncertain as to how she would define care. She opened an interview, saying, while “I don’t have a ready definition (of care)”, I have always felt that, as a teacher, I have a responsibility to my students to encourage their “self-awareness and self-efficacy (in) pursuing their education...and (their becoming) interested and engaged learners.” In spite of no ready definition, a major thread of Jessica’s discussions of caring revolved around what she calls “noticing” students. She says,

One of the things I try to do with my students is (to notice them.) Everybody wants to be noticed in life, and, as teachers, I think it’s important because they are looking to you to reflect to them how they are, how they are doing, and what the possibilities are for them.

This comment dovetails with her discussion of her daughter’s teacher as caring, and corroborates Jessica’s understanding of caring as paying attention to students and then acting on what the teacher has learned.

She is purposeful in using her time to be available to attend to her students. Telling me about her extended day at school, she says, “I get there at 7:30 and I’m there until 3:30 both days. But I like doing that because it gives me time to observe...notice...talk with...answer questions...and to me, education is about responding to (the students’) questions.” Jessica’s deviation from the other participants’ consideration of attention as caring is interesting. She adds the element of response to her thinking about caring, thus returning to the impact of her father’s caring model as one’s responsibility to others.

Recalling the first day I was in Jessica’s field-based class, she had begun the day by complimenting the students on their “After-School Clubs.” These are extracurricular clubs for the children, organized by her students as part of their coursework. Meeting weekly, the clubs represent varied interests such as cooking, creative dramatics, art, and gym, with participation determined by choice sheets completed by the children and their parents. Jessica apologizes to those students whose clubs she did not get to visit earlier, and promises to visit them the next week.

She then becomes more animated than I have ever seen her before, as she talks about walking around and observing the activities the students had planned for the children. “I was really taken away with how the children were engaged with the activities you were doing and how you were keeping them on task...It looked like they were having a lot of fun. It was great!” she exclaims, communicating her delight in their initial successes with the clubs. Toward the close of her comments Jessica talks about one student in particular, saying, “Sandra is usually very reserved in class but she has another side that I hadn’t known until (I saw her leading the Creative Dramatics Club.) And that was fun!” It is the opening minutes of this college class session, and Jessica has chosen to

begin by focusing on the accomplishments of her students rather than with mundane announcements or a lecture.

What a casual visitor might have seen is Jessica's conveying to her students her own delight with all that they are offering the children after school. Considering her comments through the lens of her caring, one sees that she is demonstrating her careful attention to their efforts, reflecting back to the students how she feels they are doing. Even her comment about Sandra seems to represent the possibilities she sees in that one student...that she can become less reserved with children...and, thus, encouraging other preservice teachers to imagine what they might become with children. Responding to my question about caring, a student commented on Jessica's attention and response, saying, "I believe that she was really thinking about me...as a person...what I'd be interested in...my background... what types of things to recommend to me..." Although very unobtrusive in her approach, Jessica pays careful attention to her students and seeks to respond to their efforts.

In a focus group discussion, Jessica's recognition of the students' work in the after school clubs is mentioned. The student talks about Jessica's taking a sincere interest in what they were doing with children in the After School Art Club. She describes Jessica as coming around to watch their work, ask questions, and even asking them to give her instructions on how to do some things herself. Lisa, the student, admits it was a very confirming experience. Later in the focus group discussion, Lisa confesses that, as a recent transfer student from art to teacher education, she had many doubts as to whether or not she had made the right decision about her major course of study. As the semester progressed, however, Jessica expressed her own confidence in Lisa and what she was doing with children. As a result of Jessica's feedback, Lisa tells us that she learned to

have confidence both in herself, as well as in her decision to become a teacher. Jessica's recognition and confirmation played a crucial role in Lisa's confidence as a teacher.

Other students describe Jessica's caring for them by attention and response to their specific situations. One student, working in a kindergarten classroom which she describes as "hectic" and full of "behavior challenges," tells of Jessica's caring for her by coming in and telling her she was doing a good job, and then suggesting some strategies she might try in order to gain better control of the classroom of children. Having assessed the particular situation, Jessica had ideas and suggestions to share, as well as encouragement to offer, and the student interpreted that as Jessica caring about her.

Another student, unsure of her own Spanish competency when placed in a bilingual classroom, had been told by Jessica to give the experience a day, and then they would talk. Recalling the experience of her first day in that classroom, the student says, "At 3 o'clock, (Dr. Blakely) came by to check on me. I couldn't believe it! I mean, she's so busy and has so much to do but she was thinking of me and checking to see how I was doing." Feeling that she could not function satisfactorily in that classroom, the student was moved. Jessica's consideration of the student's angst about her placement, and willingness to take action to reassign her demonstrated caring to this student.

Jessica realizes that there are times when her caring calls for more than encouraging words or suggested classroom strategies for these preservice teachers. Caring also requires candor in examining students' capabilities and performance. Jessica talks about Marty, a student whom she describes as "an enigma this semester for a time." Referring to a response journal assignment, she tells of Marty's turning it in, "having done exactly what I told him not to do." In their follow-up discussion he explains that he always does everything wrong, that he has never been good at comprehension. His mid-term exam grade confirms his comment. Puzzled by the contrast of his active engagement

in class, Jessica talks with him again. As he summarized some text material for her in an oral discussion, she tells me that he clearly demonstrates comprehension of the material. She says, “He is terribly bright, and (I thought) something is not right here.” After encouraging Marty to go to the Office of Disabilities Support Services on campus, she called the office director, telling her she would like for Marty to be evaluated because “he’s extremely bright and his is wonderful with kids.” Jessica concludes, saying, “I think he may be suffering from ADD or some other learning disability, and (his) humor, slacker persona, or cavalier (attitude) that he sometimes has is a cover up for something else.” Jessica, through careful consideration of both Marty’s oral and written work, sees deficiencies in his work, and takes action to help him continue in his development as a teacher. As a caring teacher educator, Jessica tells Marty, “You’ve got the chance to be a powerful teacher because you work so well with kids...but you’ve got to know what you’re doing.” While focusing on his strengths, she refuses to overlook his liabilities, choosing instead to encourage him to address them.

That a teacher’s caring as demonstrated by reflecting back to her students surfaces again in a later discussion. Jessica says, “When something is important to you, you care about it...And I’ve always felt like, as a teacher, it’s important to me and it (is) my responsibility to help my students develop and learn...to be successful in the world.” Continuing she explains that, to be successful, one has to know who they are and what they are good at. Implying that such knowledge is possible through the reflective eye of a teacher, she laments the paucity she received as a child, saying,

I don’t think I got a lot of guidance...So one of the things I would have wanted coming through school, and especially in college, was someone to reflect back to me what they were seeing and what they could see that was going well.

I am reminded again that it is the entire landscape of our lives, both vistas and thickets, that creates the teachers we are today (Palmer, 1998.) While Jessica’s ideas about care are

influenced by the father she admired, they are also influenced by the memory of little guidance.

At least in her retrospection, Jessica longs to have had reflective guidance from caring teachers, and her memory fuels a desire to be a caring teacher educator who provides that for her own students. That she felt uncared for during her schooling because of the scarcity of such guidance and reflection remains a question of memory, and actually seems inconsistent with her earlier discussion of her teachers in Mexico as “great.” Through their devotion to facilitating students’ learning through stimulating projects, Jessica remembers them as models of caring. Now their lack of guidance or reflection for her imply they were not-so-caring, creating conflicting memories.

Fueled by even inconsistent memories, Jessica remains committed to conveying to her students her vision of their potential and capabilities as teachers. In addition to her conferences with students and face-to-face encounters throughout the school day, Jessica uses her responses to the students’ reflective journals to convey her ideas.

I had asked for copies of written work, on which Jessica had made remarks to her students. I know from my own nineteen years’ experience of reading students’ journals that the written interaction that develops between student and teacher often constitutes a powerful and personal dialogue. The opportunity is ripe for the professor to demonstrate care for a student through carefully thought out remarks. As preservice teachers, often uncertain about their journeys into the profession of teaching, students are sometimes reluctant to discuss in open forum what they enter into their dialogic journal for the professor’s eyes only. It has been my experience that students will often reveal themselves within the safety of their journal writing before they will do so publicly. It is those responses from the professor that have the potential to encourage, challenge, or motivate the student. For this reason, the data revealing Jessica’s written comments held

promise for offering insight into her caring for students through encouraging their self-knowledge. Her remarks might be the written reflection to them “of how they are, how they’re doing, and what...the possibilities (are for them.)”

Reflecting on a textbook chapter, one student recalls the first time her mother read a book to her that was her very own. “Being able to buy a book was a special thing for me...I could not read it myself so I asked my mother to read it,” the student writes. Busy at the sewing machine, her mother put her off and forgot about reading the book. In another day or two, the student recalls seeing the book “in my room, still crisp and new.” Marching to the living room, she demanded that her mother read her the book. “...(A)nd if I close my eyes, I can still remember the dress Mrs. Berenstain wore...it was sky blue with white polka dots.” Vivid memories of her own life wash over her when, as a preservice teacher, she begins to study and consider the power of books in children’s lives. Jessica respects these memories as being formative to the teacher this student is becoming, and Jessica writes the following comment:

You learned an important lesson from your childhood that you are bringing to bear on your life as a teacher. It is always fascinating to see that children do love books and reading, and will even be proactive about reading – like you did! And you still are like that, aren’t you?

Respecting the life experiences this student is bringing to her teacher education experience, Jessica uses those memories to encourage the student to embrace them in her own developing life as a teacher. Through this exercise of dialogic journaling, Jessica cares for her student by providing feedback addressing the student’s own literacy development, as well as that of her future students.

In another reflective piece, a student wrestles with some of the deep questions that plague even experienced teachers. Addressing her own uncertainties, she writes,

(H)ow do we know that we are actually teaching these children? I don’t mean just the testing aspect or the questioning them. How do we know it’s going to stick?

How can you be sure not to screw up on the children while you have them for the short period of time that you do? I am really looking forward to doing this in the future. I just want to get it right. Does that make sense?

This student's insecurities surface in her reflection. She is in the classroom this semester for the first time, and the reality of the responsibilities that rest with a teacher seems to be dawning on her. Sensitive to these uncertainties, Jessica's caring response to the student's uncertainties focuses on who this student is and what Jenny sees as the potential within her. Jessica writes,

Of course (your uncertainties) makes sense. You are a serious teacher that cares deeply about doing the right thing for children. Having your own children, you know the stakes are high. None of us is perfect, but you have the desire to be an excellent teacher and you have a work ethic that helps you pay close attention and grapple with ideas. You can be confident that you are on the right track.

Sometimes by simply putting our fears and uncertainties on paper, we are able to put them into perspective, and the result is that they are somehow diminished. Reflecting on the student's thoughts, Jessica reminds the student of her capabilities, and confirms that her anxieties "make sense." By affirming what she sees as possibilities for this student, Jessica contributes to the student's vision of who she will become as a teacher. While such responses represent caring for Jessica, other times her responses seem to alienate the students and the host faculty and staff at this school.

One such incident came up in a focus group discussion where a student begins talking about the ways in which she felt Jessica had cared for her during the semester. Describing her children's classroom experience as difficult, she says, "I didn't get along well with my authority (cooperating) teacher. I mean, we worked well together but our ideas of what we thought a teacher should be or lesson plan should be were completely opposite." Discussing the situation with Jessica, the student told her that the teacher was not allowing her to do what she felt should be done or to be the teacher she wanted to be.

The crux seemed to be that this student preferred using creative drama as a teaching strategy and her cooperating teacher was diametrically opposed to it. The student says, “She thought the lessons were unrealistic...just too unorganized...not structured.”

Jessica, on the other hand, completely supported her student’s lesson plans. In a conference, the student told Jessica that her cooperating teacher had not liked the first creative dramatic lesson, and “I (thought) it might be spiteful to do it twice,” the student says in a focus group discussion. She then adds that Jessica said, ‘No, I want you to do it.’ To solve the problem, Jessica arranged for her student to teach the children in the college classroom even though the cooperating teacher accompanied them. What surprises me is that Jessica did not simply reassign this student as she had the student in the bilingual classroom. Clearly, the student and the cooperating teacher were at odds, and this situation was not satisfactory for either of them. Where was Jessica’s attention and response in this situation?

In the same focus group, I found another remark even more troubling. Referring to the clash between the student and cooperating teacher mentioned above, another student says, “I thought that what (Dr. Blakely) did was very brave because there’s a lot of things she doesn’t agree with that the elementary school...implements.” Having taught in public schools, I know that not all teachers are as competent as we would hope them to be, and not all policies seem as child- or family-centered as we would hope. Even some teachers with whom we place students leave much to be desired, and the best teachers make mistakes and are inconsistent at times. The discussion of such, however, is inappropriate in the college classroom, especially when the school being criticized is the one in which we are working. The teachers and administrators have, after all, opened their school to our students, and endure any inconvenience inherent in hosting university students.

The tone of these last two students' comments seems to be one of pitting the students against the teachers. If Jessica strives to care for her students by responsibly attending to their situations and reflecting back to them the possibilities she sees, it seems she could do so without it being at the expense of the teachers. And, if she felt the teacher were totally incompetent, why would she place a student in that classroom? The clash seems less about competence and more about philosophy. Teachers' philosophies and strategies abound as our beliefs and personalities do. Demonstrating a respectful understanding for those differences is critical to the learning and development of our preservice teachers. It would seem that our caring would allow for that.

Caring as Respect for the Learner

Attempting to clarify for me her ideas about care, Jessica says, "I think a lot in terms of respect, and I think maybe I kind of melded caring and respecting in my own philosophy." Then continuing antithetically she adds, "That is a way to express not caring when you don't respect someone. It says, 'I don't care about you.'" One of her students talks about Jessica as caring through such an attitude of respect for the learner, and considers Jessica a model to emulate. She says, "I want to be able to hold an open mind the way (Dr. Blakely) did...I think she's given me that...(to be the teacher) who respects students (whether) they're 5 or 10 or 20." I think Jessica would be pleased with this comment because, toward the end of our semester together, she had admitted that the research process had encouraged her own reflection about her caring, saying,

One of the things that has really come to the surface for me that I wasn't aware of is that care is entwined with my desire for the students in my class to learn a lot. (I want them) to realize their dreams...be whom they want to be and have expertise in what they want to do.

It seems to be a respect for the potential and the goals of the individual learner that Jessica places at the heart of her own caring. Pulling no punches about her vision of

caring, she adds, “I want to distinguish myself from those who are very caring about their students but don’t really help their students progress in accomplishing their educational goals.” Guiding preservice teachers who are working in public school classrooms offers opportunities to discuss caring in teaching.

I ask Jessica if she explicitly addresses how teachers care with her students. She concedes that, although the topic is never on her syllabus, the discussion of care is inevitable when her students discuss their teaching experiences at this school. “They are shocked sometimes by some of the ways that teachers are brusque or disrespectful of students, or ignore students because they don’t fit into the class,” Jessica says. “You know (the children) are special ed or they can’t keep up or for all the various reasons that someone gets isolated.” And so they talk about the ways in which teachers care and don’t care.

Continuing, Jessica talks about the experience of one of her students who was upset because of the disrespectful treatment of a child in her placement classroom. The child, only recently having moved from Mexico, speaks only Spanish, and the classroom teacher addresses the class only in English. Her student tells Jessica that when the child doesn’t understand and follow the teacher’s directions, she yells at him, saying, “Why don’t you do (what I say?) This is America. You should be speaking Spanish.” Consequently, the college student “went directly to the principal to report (the incident), and it didn’t come through me,” Jessica explains. Continuing, Jessica says, “The principal was upset but I felt the student was right to do that.” Jessica defended the student both when speaking to the principal and in her follow-up conversations with the student. Unfortunately, while Jessica’s reaction focused candidly on addressing the uncaring response of this teacher, she failed to guide her student in learning about proper protocol and observing bureaucratic procedures.

Caring is not always an easy path, as this scenario demonstrates. Jessica is open about her respect and care for this preservice teacher, taking an activist stance with the principal. However passionate Jessica is about this disturbing interaction between the classroom teacher and Spanish-speaking child, she has a responsibility to the university to serve as a liaison between the elementary school and the university, and between the school personnel and her students. Any channels of communication created by such an arrangement seem to have been thrown to the four winds when she defended the student's going directly to the principal. It is probable that the principal found herself in the delicate position of attempting to defend the classroom teacher's behavior to the preservice teacher considering the void left from Jessica's not acting as liaison. Her own agenda of advocating for this marginalized child who was disrespected may have led Jessica to compromise her responsibility to the university and the school district.

On a November morning, I arrive at the elementary school to join Jessica as she observes her preservice teachers teach lessons in their classroom. We are sitting in a fourth grade classroom of predominantly Mexican American children where Jessica's student is teaching a science lesson. Jars in which she has placed muddy water are spread about the room, and the children are observing the layers into which it is settling. The children talk among themselves about what they are observing in the jar, as Jessica's student walks among the six groups of fourth graders. She seems at ease asking questions, listening to the children, and focusing their attention on particles of rocks and twigs they are seeing among the layers.

Watching, I think the lesson is going well. The intern hands out a worksheet of questions for the children to answer about their observations. Curiosity fills the room as children shift the jars, look closer at the layers, and request use of the few magnifying lenses which are available. There is much discussion within the groups, and some

children debate what the particles in the layers of dirt are. Suddenly the teacher tells the intern to project the transparency, with the answers on it, onto the screen so that the children might copy the correct answers onto their own sheets. The intern dutifully obeys.

The energy created by the children's curiosity, discussion, and eagerness had invigorated the room. Yet, when the transparency shone on the screen at the front of the room with the instructions to simply copy the answer, the energy and the hum of activity vanished.

The lesson ends as time runs out. Schedules must be adhered to, and science has to make way for another subject. Jessica, her student, and I leave the classroom and return to the field-based classroom so that the two of them might discuss the intern's teaching experience. The discussion begins tentatively with the intern saying this lesson was difficult because "you just don't have a lot of room for creativity." She acknowledges that although the children "love to do an experiment (that is) hands on...we didn't have enough time..." Jessica responds by challenging the intern's thinking, saying, "So if you were in charge of the world..." The intern responds, suggesting that beginning the lesson on Friday by having the children actually mix the jars of soil and water, and letting the jars' contents settle over the weekend would be the way she will plan it as a teacher. There is talk of the importance of having sufficient materials; the time involved in allowing for cursive writing practice embedded in assignments; and, the challenges of managing a more active child among engaged learners.

Jessica then begins to narrow the focus of the discussion, asking, "Did Mrs. Jacobs ask you to write the answers on the packet? Is that the way she..." The intern answers before Jessica finishes her question, saying, "She already had it on there...Usually what she does is she writes it while she's telling them and she spells out every letter." Challenging her intern to consider this practice, Jessica asks, "I was just

wondering what you thought about that and...do you think that is actually helping kids learn...to copy the answers?" The intern seems uncertain as to what to say, and then, bordering on defense of her mentor teacher, talks about the importance of providing correct spelling and punctuation. She adds that "they're so pressed for time." It seems to me that the intern struggles with an allegiance to her mentor teacher while grappling with possible philosophical differences alluded to by Jessica.

Refusing to give up, Jessica asks, "When you're going to be a teacher, or when we're talking about learning, do you think that kids actually learn from copying?" The intern responds, "No, they might learn the technique and stuff but they don't learn to do their own...reported observations...No one in there did it because I think they are so used to (having it given to them.)"

Taking a different tack, Jessica says, "I was just trying to think back when I was in fourth grade, and you think back to when you were in fourth grade..." The intern quickly responds, "We did everything on our own pretty much." Making her point, Jessica says,

I think what that tells me is that...we're not expecting the same from these kids...I think that we need to realize that these kids have a brain, they can do things, but they need opportunities to do things. And, if we have them copy, when do you start saying, "Okay, now you've got to do this"? Because I was surprised that fourth graders were being asked to copy, and I know that's the way Mrs. Jacobs does it.

The intern seems intent on what Jessica is saying, and begins to talk about her own disappointment that the children seem generally reticent to suggest answers during group discussion times. Challenging her, however, Jessica says,

You can encourage (them) by saying, "Oh, wow! You saw what? Yea, I see some, too! Look at that! Here they are!" That kind of thing, so that you're supporting (them)...so that kids are starting to get faith in themselves that what they see and what they think and what they observe...

“Is okay,” the intern says, completing Jessica’s thought. “Yea,” Jessica says. Jessica’s suggesting that the student could make encouraging remarks reminds me of her own commitment to notice and remark about what her own students have done. That is caring for Jessica.

Jessica is masterful at encouraging her student to think about this situation. Their discussion had begun tentatively with the intern seemingly mired in uncertain allegiances, her own success both as a teacher and a student, and her challenge of teaching another teacher’s students with her still in the room. As the discussion progressed, the student was nudged by Jessica to reflect on her experience teaching science; on her own experience as a fourth grader; and the vision that she holds for herself with her own classroom of children in the future. Jessica is complimenting her on her work, telling her that she has moved from thinking about surviving a lesson to thinking about the children. “You’re making great progress. And that’s why I’m posing these questions about...what are kids really learning, and why I’m hoping that I can sort of nudge you into being a more critical consumer of a textbook plan...” By becoming a more critical consumer, Jessica is confident that her student will not follow in the footsteps of teachers at Lafayette School, where Bullough (2001) contends “there are some indications that a ‘pedagogy of poverty’ is giving way to ‘good teaching’ within the school” (p. 105). By becoming a more critical consumer, Jessica hopes her student will not fall into the trap of using teaching practices modeled by her teacher that “fail to motivate and educate children at risk and may even add to their problems(p. 105).

Listening to Jessica, I am reminded of Nodding’s (1984, 1992) contention that authentically caring teachers are seized by their students and energy flows toward their projects. I have no trouble believing that Jessica is seized by her students. She is intent in her listening to them, and in her problem solving discussions with them. It just seems that

she is equally seized by her interest in marginalized students, and that her energy flows toward their project...their education. While Jessica seems seized by her own student's project, she simultaneously encourages her student to become seized by the children in her class and their projects.

The conference concludes with a frank discussion between intern and teacher educator about the conflicting pedagogical differences between mentor teachers and preservice teachers, and the challenges the latter face of shaping the teacher they will become. "I care about sharing and helping and supporting my students (as they) learn about the world," Jessica had told me. This conference demonstrates her caring not only for her student but for the children in her room. She believes that her students and the children benefit from such interactions, helping them all develop a sense of competence and mastery over worldly tasks. Jessica scaffolds her student's thinking about ways to empower children in the learning process. At a deeper, subtler level, Jessica advocates for children who are short-changed in lessons designed to spoon-feed rather than to challenge.

Needing to hurry back to my own classroom, I leave the elementary school before discussing this conference with Jessica. I am eager for our next interview for, although Jessica's caring for her own student seemed obvious to me, I had my own unasked questions. Does Jessica see Mrs. Jacobs as a caring teacher, and, if so, in what ways? Do Mrs. Jacobs' practices conflict with Jessica's ideas about caring as a teacher?

We have settled into the rocking chairs in my office when I ask, "How would you talk about how (Mrs. Jacobs demonstrates) care for children, and is that conflicting with the way you see care in a classroom?" Her initial response is that she believes Mrs. Jacobs cares deeply about her students. Then Jessica adds, "...but I think she cares more about (the students doing) well so it will reflect...that she is a good teacher because she

defines herself as an excellent teacher – a model teacher.” Jessica discusses Mrs. Jacob’s practice of providing answers for the children to copy. It represents, Jessica says,

a lack of faith in the children to be able to come up with the answers, the placing of efficiency and schedule above actually learning...It is a taking away of opportunities for children to learn to write, to learn to think, to create their thoughts into a language statement, to be challenged.

One of my interview transcripts revealed Jessica’s following statement: “When you believe in the kids, then you have an enriching curriculum.” What we had witnessed in the concluding moments in this classroom had reflected little faith in the children’s abilities and little effort toward an enriching curriculum.

Jessica was my first participant, and I felt awed by her. I now believe that part of my overwhelming admiration for her was borne out of my own sense of guilt for what I failed to achieve as a teacher of marginalized children in my earliest years of teaching. Observing Jessica’s irresolute advocacy for those who represent “the other” in the dominant society, resulted in my remembering, exposing, and owning my own failings as a teacher. The process has actually been cathartic, as I clearly recognize that, while I thought I was part of the solution, I exacerbated the problem. Where my caring as a new teacher was characterized by an essentialist, savior complex of basically trying to force my white middle-class agenda on Mexican American and African American children, Jessica’s caring is characterized by a respect for all learners and a belief in the capacity of all learners. While I initially felt a disgrace to admit that it was I who represented the polar opposite of all that Jessica brings to her caring, I now know that it is my own education and exposure to important questions and issues, as well as this research project, that allow me a different perspective today...a perspective that I hope is becoming more tolerant, understanding, and caring.

Jessica's attention to populations which tend to be marginalized, and specifically the Mexican American population of school children, emerges as a strong and dominant thread of her practice both with her graduate and undergraduate students. It is not surprising that examples of Jessica's recognition of children being marginalized pepper the transcripts representing her work during the semester of my study, and that her pedagogical strategies address respect for cultural diversity. The undergraduate students with whom Jessica worked are teaching in a Title I school with the majority of children being from lower SES Hispanic homes. The majority of her graduate students are currently classroom teachers in Central Texas where the population is increasingly represented by the non-dominant culture. After several months, I began to see that Jessica's attention to culture acts as the filter through which she expresses much of her thinking about caring. Through her pedagogy, her students learn that caring is about respecting and assuming the responsibility for all learners. Throughout our discussions, Jessica advocates a lens of consideration to include all, while simultaneously narrowing the lens to focus on the issue of culture.

Caring Through Attention to Culture

As I learned more and more about Jessica over the course of our semester together, what I had begun to see as a central thread in her teaching acted as the final puzzle piece falling into place, completing an otherwise incomplete picture. Although the other two participants recognize influences from their personal lives in their teaching, Jessica's teaching life seems more of a response to her personal life. She uses her knowledge of and pride in the Mexican culture, in conjunction with two pedagogical strategies, multicultural literature and a Cultural Roots project, to encourage her students to respect and minimize assumptions of all learners, regardless of their culture. This

approach represents Jessica's caring as the "responsibility to help (all) people learn and develop."

Dispelling the Myths

Jessica is proud of the Mexican culture in which she was raised, and expresses disbelief at the misconceptions people hold about Mexico in this country. Commenting on the stereotypes perpetuated by the media, she talks about the television coverage of an earthquake in Mexico. "It happened on my dad's birthday," she tells me. "And the media...go up to a little Chicklet vendor or...a poor person sitting on the sidewalk selling flowers, and ask that person's opinion on the earthquake." Making her point, she says, "They didn't stop the banker or the flight agent or any of the other millions of people who live in (the city), and so that does promote certain ideas, I think, about a place." That the media, interviewing only street vendors, creates what she believes to be a limited vision of Mexicans is troubling to Jessica, and she strives to correct such misconceptions through her teaching.

In her reading classes, Jessica effectively weaves relevant historical information about Mexico in an effort to share her vision of her native country with her students. She shares with them that the Mayans were the only people other than the Phoenicians to have the beginnings of an alphabetic writing system, and that the first university in the Americas was not Harvard University but was in Mexico City. Telling her students that the first printing press was brought to Mexico City, she emphasizes the country's literary history "because many times our students come with the idea that nobody south of the Rio Bravo knows anything or reads a book..." Jessica is proud of the accomplishments of her compatriots, and was ill-prepared for what she would find when immigrating to the United States.

Jessica describes her first teaching job in San Jose, California, as one that “really got me going in terms of caring about being a good teacher and caring about the students learning...” Teaching in an inner city school, many of her students were juvenile delinquents whom she says were drug addicts and sniffing glue. She describes her shock at finding that her eighth grade students could neither read nor write, saying,

It just amazed me that...the people I was in contact with in Mexico City who were poor and might go to six months of first grade...could read and write. And (my students) had been in school eight years and couldn't read or write or say the alphabet...I'd look at their records and they'd have IQ 54, and yet the student could find his way to school, carry on a normal conversation with you, tell you all about his pets, all about his family...And I started recognizing that there were some real problems with education for minority students.

Whether the students' habits of drug use or glue sniffing influenced their cognitive abilities is not considered in our conversation. Jessica seems to be comparing apples to oranges if the people in Mexico City to whom she compares these eighth graders are not in similar circumstances. While poverty alone could characterize both groups, Jessica seems to ignore that her San Jose students had other debilitating conditions, such as substance abuse, that might explain their school failure.

After leaving California, Jessica taught for three years in a city in Texas, and her concerns from San Jose were only confirmed. Talking about that experience, she says, “After teaching...Mexican American and African American children who were similar (to my students in San Jose), and seeing the way the schools were operating, I mean, teachers just baby sit those children...they don't really teach them.” Such teaching experiences fueled her passion for changing the way in which we educate minority children, and, she admits, provided the impetus for returning to school to receive her doctorate. Expressing her frustration and related vision, she says,

Mexican people have a...very rich literacy history. And to think that these (Mexican-American) children are not capable is just infuriating to me. It's so

wrong. So I guess I feel it's very important for my students...to understand and to know that we must believe in our children.

Although Jessica's own cultural ties to Mexico no doubt lie at the heart of her commitment to educating Mexican American children, she widens the scope of her focus in teaching to include children from cultures beyond the Mexican or Mexican American cultures, and is tenacious in cautioning her students against making assumptions about those who are marginalized in this country.

Reading a student's reflection, I was reminded of Jessica's tenacity in drawing her students' attention to the danger in making assumptions about others. The student writes,

I am amazed at some of the parents these children have. I know that this might sound harsh but in (earlier classes) we were taught that some parents will not take time to help their children learn or will not give them the love that a child needs and deserves. With time in this classroom, I have discovered that this is true for some of these children.

My first reaction to reading this entry, and learning that the student's perception is of learning in a university class that some parents don't help or love their children, was akin to "YIKES!!" or "EGADS!!" Jessica was much more articulate in her response, and writes,

We mustn't make assumptions about parents. Sometimes parents have very good reasons for not reading to their children. One possibility is that the parents don't know how to read. It's important to get to know the parents and their situation before making assumptions. Of course, there will always be some people who don't/won't help their children.

Drawing her student's attention to two possible explanations for the parents' seeming lack of commitment to their child's literacy, Jessica advocates for the parents. Her advocacy is challenged however, with her qualifying statement implying that it's acceptable to make assumptions after you have gotten to know the parents. This student, after all, believes she does understand the situation based on her earlier class work at the university. It seems also that Jessica is making her own assumptions about her student, as

well as those parents “who don’t/won’t help their children.” In other words, her caution against making assumptions seems plagued by her own assumptions.

What surprises me about Jessica’s strong response to the plight of Mexican Americans in this country is that she doesn’t distinguish between immigrants from Mexico, such as herself, and Mexican Americans who were born in this country. The pride she feels, and the knowledge of all that has been accomplished in Mexico does not necessarily mirror the culture of Mexican Americans she defends with her students. The experiences and expectations of Mexican immigrants and Mexican American youth are vastly different (Valenzuela, 1999), and to conjoin them seems disrespectful to both. In her efforts to defend and clarify her own Mexican heritage with others, it seems she overlooks those highlights and accomplishments of the Mexican American culture, of which she is not a member.

Multicultural Literature

During one of my visits to Jessica’s classroom, the undergraduate students have taken a break in the field-based class and are gathering back at their tables. Jessica begins by reading a book by Tomie de Paola, and noting his Italian heritage. She stands at the front of the room, taking plenty of time to show the illustrations. Upon finishing the book, she asks what her students noticed in the book. There is some discussion, and then Jessica asks her students to think about and identify the differing theoretical frameworks characterized in the story. Considering the different viewpoints contained in the story, students describe the main character’s cousins’ belief that an artist should never copy while another cites the teacher’s instructions to the children to copy her model. Jessica then asks, “Does anyone want to play devil’s advocate and respond to what Mrs. Bowers (the teacher in the story) might have been thinking (when she asked the children to

copy?)” The topic for the day’s session is multicultural literature, and she leads the students into considering the viewpoints of others.

While Jessica considers it imperative that her students become familiar with quality children’s literature, she also sees the children’s literature as a method for familiarizing her students “with powerful multi-cultural literature that presents ethnic groups...with positive representations.” Acknowledging that the demographics of our schools are changing, she introduces good literature to her students to counteract those examples of literature fraught with “stereotypes, negative representations, or characters who don’t illuminate the culture at all.” Embracing her focus on the need for a multicultural curriculum in schools is a successful strategy, based on a focus group participant’s comment, who says, “Dr. Blakely always stresses the importance of teaching multiculturalism in our classrooms...She just said we should embrace all our students’ differences (and) find ways to incorporate them in the classroom and teach empathy.” As a reading specialist, Jessica weaves the use of good literature into her goal of illuminating all cultures in the fairest contexts.

Later, after a round robin discussion of how the students’ “read alouds” have gone with the children in their classrooms, Jessica reminds her students that they are learning that discussing a book “is something every kid can do, and we just have to give them the opportunity to do it.” Relating that belief to her own professional commitment, she says to the students, “That’s why I went to graduate school to get my Ph.D. (I wanted) to understand and learn how to give better quality educational experiences to the Mexican American children in this country.” Then she asks them, “Why is the topic of multicultural education so important today?” There is a long silence before someone speaks. The student begins to talk about how diverse classrooms are becoming today, encompassing all cultures, and the related challenges teachers face. She continues by

mentioning the teacher's challenge to engender respect among all in the classroom. The student then concludes by suggesting that a respect within a classroom community would result in an enjoyment of not only an esprit de corps, but also the knowledge to be gained in a culturally diverse classroom. Jessica responds, saying, "Wow! That's fantastic! What a great job you did, Sarah!" Jessica seems very pleased to be able to end the morning session together on a note that confirms so robustly her focus on the respect and consideration of cultures, and how that effects children's classrooms..

Jessica's students recognize her focus on diverse populations as caring for them. One student believes that, through Jessica's use of multicultural literature – introducing such books to her students, reading those books in class, and pointing out things some of them would never have known about or considered sharing with children – Jessica demonstrates care for them. Another focus group participant comments on Jessica's caring as demonstrated in her commitment to including and understanding all cultures. A third student talks about her experience of learning about diversity in Jessica's classroom, saying,

I'm from a little town where I don't have a lot of diversity and there are no minorities, to be honest, none. So, I didn't know how to approach people and I didn't know how your personal life is your personal life...But it's a wonderful thing. There's so much world out there...and I think (if) you get to know about the students in the classroom...learn about them and their culture, and the children learn to love diversity in the whole world, (then) they'll step out of that little closed-minded box and they'll be better because of it. I want to be that teacher.

Although Jessica's students identify in her the commonly-held traits of a caring teacher, such as her openness and availability to them, they also understand her caring to include her attention to respecting all people.

Jessica also sows the seeds of respect for others in the literature she shares with her graduate reading class. The class of twenty-eight students meets with Jessica one

night a week, and the majority of them are teachers, either at the elementary or secondary level. The focus of her reading class is linguistic diversity, and the articles discussed are reminiscent of my own reading lists from my doctoral classes. In addition to the assigned articles, Jessica uses children's literature to provoke class discussions related to diversity. During my first visit to her graduate class, Jessica read a children's book that is a fictionalized version of the childhood life of Harriet Tubman. As if to add credence to her use of the book as a tool for discussion, she talks about the authenticity and reliability of the illustrations, as well as the accuracy of many historical facts in the book.

After reading the book, Jessica invites her students' reactions, saying, "What did you notice in the book?" and "What jumped out at you in the book?" One student wonders if the plantation overseer himself was ever African American, while another student shares a concern about sharing sensitive topics, such as the lashing of a child slave, with children. There are no easy answers, and Jessica ping pongs the question to the group, saying, "So how do you handle these (sensitive) situations in your classroom?" Using the experiences her students are living daily, she applies the challenging questions to their own classrooms. Using their experiences, she nudges them to articulate their own points of view for others.

One student talks about trying to answer her own students' questions, such as ones about slavery, honestly. She says, "I tell them 'It was bad but it's over.'" I notice that as her students add to the discussion, Jessica continues to thumb through the children's book, showing the vivid illustrations of the slave's life, as if to remind her students of a darker time in our history. Waiting a moment for other comments, Jessica asks, "So what would you want the school curriculum to be?" An African American student shares her belief that books like the Harriet Tubman story should be read all the time, not just during Black History month; that the curriculum ought to include

celebrations of all people all of the time. She says, “We ‘celebrate’ (she motions quotation marks with her curved fingers) Black history in February but not white history. We don’t have White History month because we don’t need to.” Agreeing that the student’s point is well taken, Jessica tells the students that the classroom needs to be the place for a discussion of the true representation of history. Children deserve to know what happened. As if to challenge her students to take up the charge, Jessica asks,

Who are going to be the brave teachers who have the courage to round out our history, and the things that have happened in our history, so that children can go forth well educated because they are going to be the ones who will be making decisions? Would it be better for them to be well-informed and understand our history or say ‘We’re wonderful, we’ve never made any mistakes’?

Jessica doesn’t back down from her students’ serious questions. The literature she presents opens a Pandora’s box of difficult issues with which she wants them to grapple, considering the ways in which populations are marginalized and misrepresented, and ways in which these teachers can help improve our society.

In both her undergraduate and graduate classes, Jessica demonstrates Greene’s (1993) belief that “the more continuous and authentic personal encounters can be, the less likely it will be that categorizing and distancing will take place. People are less likely to be treated instrumentally, to be made “other” by those around” (p. 13). While literature representing diverse populations is a mainstay of Jessica’s teaching both in her undergraduate and graduate classes, the other pedagogical strategies she uses are largely different. Whereas, in her undergraduate class, much of the discussion about considerations for the minority children in the school occur in individual conferences and through dialogic journal responses to experiences students are having in their classrooms, in Jessica’s graduate class, one assignment focuses on learning about a variety of cultures, including one’s own, and constitutes a major thread of her graduate teaching.

Cultural Roots Project

Jessica initiated the “Cultural Roots Project” in her graduate classes in an effort to help her students understand the importance of culture...one’s own and others’. Defending her decision, she says, “We are going to fight a losing battle as long as we think ‘If these culturally diverse children would just be like the teachers, then they would be okay.’” (Her comment serves as a good reminder for me that that was exactly my mindset as a novice teacher.) Another facet, however, is that she feels that her students need to understand their own values and culture, and to understand how important it is for them and who they are.

Beginning with a discussion of surface culture, represented by such things as food, holidays, history, art, personalities, and folklore, Jessica and her graduate students talk about it being much easier to see and understand these aspects of culture. Deep culture, on the other hand, as represented by ceremony, ethics, family ties, health and medicine, ownership, precedence, values, sex roles, and taboos, “is much more difficult to discover and know,” Jessica says. Such discovery and knowledge, however, is critical to Jenny’s teaching. Addressing their self-knowledge, Jessica asks her students to research their ancestors to determine, “how they (thought), what was important to them.” Then she asks her students to think about how they have been influenced by their ancestors, or have changed because of them. “Because I believe culture is ever-changing,” she tells me.

Her goal is twofold. First, Jessica wants her students to see that “we all have a place in the story of America...And we all fit into the history of the United States in some way.” Second, Jessica wants her students to understand the power that rests with a teacher. She explains, saying,

A position as a teacher gives you the power to make judgments over children. And so the importance of a teacher's becoming knowledgeable about the concept of culture and awareness and sensitivity of cultural differences, (in addition to understanding) that the teacher's culture may be very different from the child's culture is absolutely important in teaching our students that they can't make assumptions about a child or a child's family. They need to step back and be careful and...find ways to communicate...and establish a relationship of trust with others of all cultures.

A portion of each graduate class period is designated for the sharing of Cultural Roots Projects, but only after Jessica has shared about her own cultural heritage. Explaining her own sharing, she says,

I do talk about some of my own personal culture and cultural values through photos of my family. And I'm very straightforward about the fact that I come from a mixed ethnicity family, and that (that) trend seems to be continuing in my children.

Jessica had told me earlier that her children's high school friends represented a wide variety of cultures, and that her son is married to a woman whose parents are Korean immigrants in this country. Jessica believes her students appreciate her sincerity and knowing "where I'm coming from," she tells me, adding, "I think that's probably a real strength in doing this project. If you're not sincere, it's not going to work real well because it is touchy."

Each time I visited the graduate class, I observed a project being shared. Although the assignment is not optional, Jessica says, "What you choose to talk about is optional." It is not surprising that the students' presentations were as varied as the students. Some projects seemed only slightly beyond the surface culture Jenny had earlier described. Other times they were more riveting.

One night a handsome young man went to the front of the classroom with a tri-fold board filled with lovely old sepia photographs of his ancestors. He begins, saying,

My full name is Roberto Hernandez Robles Balboa Renaud, el Segundo. I use all my names in honor of my grandparents. The sacrifices they made for America and Mexico should not be forgotten. So I honor them by keeping their names alive.

As he continues, he describes his mother as “the rock in my life” and one who, “despite only having a second grade education,” loved to read. He cites her valuing education as being the force behind six of her children having college degrees and two of those with graduate degrees. As he speaks of parents, grandparents, and siblings, one sees what he has come to value in his culture. Education, working together as a family in the fields and at home, and taking responsibility for family become part of his cultural story. He tells us that his younger brother Daniel is mentally retarded and has multiple sclerosis, and that he has become Daniel’s full-time caregiver since the death of his mother. “Daniel and I are very close, and I enjoy taking care of him,” he tells us. His, like the others, is an interesting story, reminding us of ways in which we are very much alike, as well as different. The project is a powerful one of connection-building, and I believe it opens Jenny’s students to all that culture encompasses, as well as encouraging an awareness and sensitivity to other’s cultural heritage.

Jessica’s students reflect on the experience of hearing the Cultural Roots projects of their peers, and confirm what Jessica is trying to accomplish. In a reflective assignment, one student writes, “I learned a lot from the presentations...We can see that everyone is different, and to embrace those differences so that we will become better classroom teachers.” Another student finds comfort in hearing others’ stories. She writes, “WOW! I loved it all. It was interesting how so many of us are (mixed.) I knew I had Black/Indian (ancestors) but...to hear about the mixtures of other folk’s cultures was a great experience for me!” Later in her reflection, this student says, “I was touched by the (sincerity) of each person...Also, (that we have) similar beliefs, values and traditions...Culture really overlaps in so many ways.” She closes her reflection, saying,

“These projects have really allowed us to find out new things about our (own) families (and others.)” A third student writes, saying the project “helped me ‘get in touch’ with my Hispanic side and with my roots, where...I come from and what...it means. It helped me learn and embrace who I am...(and) to see my culture as additive and not subtractive.” Although left unarticulated, I believe this student is less likely to see anyone’s culture as subtractive as a result of this assignment.

Recalling a student’s comment following the Cultural Roots Projects, Jessica describes the student telling her classmates “that it had been a transforming experience for her, to not only look within herself for her own values but also to listen to other people.” Citing what she considers the “charming” reflective comment of a Panamanian, fluent in Spanish but speaking in English, Jessica remembers her as saying, “I changed from one way of having my mind to another way of having my mind.” This Cultural Roots Project that Jessica utilizes seems to serve the intersection of her concepts of caring, specifically her “responsibility to help people develop and learn,” and her emphasis on respecting the learner. Jessica’s interest in her students knowing themselves better while remaining respectful of others is served. In an e-mail to me, Jessica wrote the following about her Cultural Roots assignment:

I just want to revisit the notion that these cultural projects are meant to expose values that (one) cares about, (and that) have meaning...We teachers are in classrooms, at the university and in public schools, where people are very different, and we need to listen to (and) explore (their) ideas. (We need to) hold up that mirror...and ask “What do I care about? Who am I?” (And then), to take it a step further, (ask) “What are we doing for children? Are my beliefs hurting or helping my children?”

Jessica’s commitment to the cultural roots project and its potential is unwavering. That she continued to dialogue about it (as with some of her other points) led me to believe that she immersed herself in my research project more deliberately than I had ever

imagined. Her e-mails were often unsolicited, representing her own independent ruminating about those ideas and issues we had discussed earlier.

Returning to discussing it in our final interview, however, she admits that it doesn't always work. "If students don't appreciate each others' stories or histories, they can leave with the sense (that) they didn't want to know all that about somebody," she tells me. Curious, I ask Jessica if she'd had such an experience. She begins telling about a disgruntled student who, on the instructor evaluation, wrote, "I felt like I knew things about people I didn't want to know...didn't need to know...or shouldn't know." Jessica's response is to say, "That's a viewpoint..." and, she concludes, saying,

I don't think I am always successful in everything that I try to do but I do think (the cultural roots project) is a valuable experience for our students, to think about who they are, where they came from and how they came to believe and think the way they do.

That her students don't always approach this pedagogical strategy enthusiastically does not deter Jessica. This remains one assignment, akin to a personal journey inward, that Jessica requires. The journey, I believe, is one she also grapples with herself.

AFLOAT AMONG CULTURES

Having spent a semester with Jessica, I learned she is deeply committed to knowing her own students, while encouraging them to be teachers who know their students. In one e-mail message, Jessica writes about her own view of teaching, saying,

So much of my philosophy of teaching is critically connected to the idea that successful teaching/learning happens when a child or person finds relevance and excitement in the process. To make that happen, a teacher needs to know her students, and search for what that child/person cares about, is interested in and motivated by.

I also learned that Jessica is committed to guiding her students in learning who they are. The conclusion to her e-mail message above provides this tenet of her philosophy of

teaching. “Education is about learning about oneself,” she writes. Jessica’s commitments to knowing her students and making their learning relevant to their lives are addressed daily in her interactions with her students, as well as in the focus of her pedagogical strategies.

In writing this story, I have come to believe that Jessica is also committed to knowing herself. And while she enjoys leading her students on a journey of self-discovery, her own journey appears more dicey. While admittedly struggling for her own cultural identity, I believe it’s a struggle that deeply influences her caring in teaching.

It seems that Jessica finds herself metaphorically rudderless on the culture sea. Writing about her life in an e-mail message, she writes, “Identity politics are difficult to navigate.” For all of Jessica’s pride and connection to Mexican culture, she has been a resident of the United States for 35 years, and in her graduate class had spoken of United States history as “our history.” While holding dual citizenship, she is married to a U.S. citizen, and the culture of this country has been pervasive in her children’s lives. As children, they vehemently voiced their preference that she abandon her native language at the grocery store. In many ways, she feels apart from their experiences of living in this culture, writing in an e-mail message, “I don’t always react in the expected way, or follow trends. I have gotten used to being different.” Her comment resounds of quiet resignation.

In her work, she finds herself separate from the very population of people for whom she so tenaciously advocates. She writes about her disconnect with the Mexican American community in particular, saying,

I have experienced great difficulty in becoming a part of the Mexican American community in the United States...I was from a family of some means...I did not come across the border illegally, or suffer the injustices and discrimination that many Mexican immigrants suffer as migrant laborers...These differences...and

the fact that I married an American tend to create barriers from (the Mexican American) community.

Even her Americanized name is in stark contrast to her siblings' names of Patricia, Ricardo, and Sylvia. The academic community has afforded her the opportunity to “work with and become friends with other Mexican Americans, and I find that it has been richly rewarding and comforting to me,” she writes. I find it interesting that, in her e-mail, she refers to “other Mexican Americans,” implying that she is one, despite her identifying herself as Mexican and European American in her autobiographical remarks. She demonstrates an ambivalence regarding her own identity, feeling some connection to each culture, yet grounded in none.

While Jessica struggles with being afloat among cultures, moored to none, her struggle is not debilitating. Recognizing her dilemma, she admits, “I’m not really American, and I’m not really Mexican...I don’t fit a stereotypical image. People just have to deal with it the best they can, I guess.” And I believe Jessica does deal with it admirably, actually using her challenge to benefit her students.

It is both Jessica’s interest in culture and deep respect of all learners that characterize her as a caring teacher educator. While she attends specifically to marginalized populations in her discussions with her students, her attention to the cultures of all students and families leaves no one out of the realm of her care. Jessica’s cultural focus appears specific enough to create awareness and appreciation of diverse populations in her students while remaining inclusive enough to demonstrate care for all.

POSTSCRIPT

It is February, 2004, and I have just come from the university where I ran into Jessica on the steps of the Education Building. She is leaving for Australia in three weeks. On developmental leave, she will continue the line of inquiry begun with her

Master's Degree thesis and continued through her doctoral work...the early literacy instruction for second language learners. She is particularly interested in the methods Australians are using to educate Aboriginal children. She believes that the Australians are doing a better job with the Aboriginals than we are doing with our Mexican American children in this country. Having heard of several "wonderful schools where good things are happening," she will visit and interview teachers about their work and the resources they are using.

She also told me that Australia has a large immigrant population, representing many different countries, the majority of whom live in the urban areas. She is interested in the literacy instruction strategies used with those learners, and will spend time in those schools as well. Jessica's passion for improving the way we educate our Mexican American children continues to burn, fueling her caring in teaching.

Caring in Teacher Education

In the first chapter, I cited Glesne's (1999) advice to pursue research in "issues, uncertainties, dilemmas or paradoxes (that) intrigue you" (p. 18). It was my own uncertainties about what it means to care in teacher education that motivated me to pursue this study. I believed I was a caring teacher educator yet had little beyond my own insistence to substantiate my belief. Familiar with Noddings' (1986) theoretical tenets of fidelity in teacher education, I sought to immerse myself in the practices of teacher educators to better understand how we care for our students. Although Noddings and other scholars had provided me with a way to begin to think about caring in my teaching, what seemed to be missing was a richness of texture, if you will, that painted a more authentic picture of caring...the caring that I am convinced is played out everyday in teacher education classrooms across the country. It is through better understanding caring in teacher education that I believe I can become a more effective teacher. Through the generosity and openness of my three research participants, my understanding of caring in teacher education was indeed enriched. And, what I learned as a result of this study far surpassed any research goals I had set for myself.

In addition to learning a great deal about care, I have learned a great deal about myself, both as a teacher educator and a researcher. The findings regarding care are organized under the following major themes: Conceptualizing care in teacher education; Caring as idiosyncratic; and, Inconsistencies in caring. I conclude with revisiting inconsistency in light of my findings, making suggestions for a response to such inconsistency in teacher educators' caring, and a closing challenge. The placement of my own research journey has changed throughout the process of my writing this. While I had originally imagined my researcher experience as a separate section, it became clear that,

just as my self-discovery was interwoven throughout this study, so my accounting of it must be. For that reason, my personal experiences are placed where they most naturally fall as a result of my research. Any passages reflecting my self-discovery through the research process continue to be captured in italicized type.

CONCEPTUALIZING CARE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

A major slice of my methodology was participant interviews, during which our conversations fluctuated between discussing caring models in their own lives, their ideas about care, and the ways in which they think they care for their own students. These discussions were forthright, and offered grist for my initial findings, that is, the ways in which my participants conceptualized care in their teaching.

In this section, I want to place the participants next to each other to determine not only what they have in common, but also where they differ. I believe this will help further our understanding care and its complexities. There were similarities among the three participants regarding their perceptions of caring, particularly as they talked about their definitions of caring and those whom they consider to be caring models.

Participants' Caring Models

In addition to expressing the belief that caring is modeled rather than taught, all three participants recognized influential models from both their families and teachers. When discussing their definitions of care, their ideas seemed parallel although articulated differently. Even these similarities, however, brought surprises as, after further scrutiny, the similarities began to reveal idiosyncrasies among the participants.

Family Models

In talking about their own histories, each participant drew on caring models from their families, as well as their own educational experiences. While Beverly cited both of

her parents as caring models, Jessica described the caring model of her father as “heads above all the rest.” Tex, on the other hand, remembered the matriarchal models of his mother, grandmother, and aunts, describing them as exemplars of compassion and caring. I found it interesting that both Jessica and Beverly referenced first their fathers as caring models while Tex cited his mother. We know that mothers model “one-caring” for their daughters (Noddings, 1984) yet both of these female teacher educators look to the caring models provided by their fathers.

Beverly was the only participant who talked about the close community of her family, saying, “I remember the closeness...(Mother) built that bond...and we were just all close as brothers and sisters.” Although both Tex and Jessica have siblings, neither of them ever talked about those family relationships. Jessica is the only participant who spoke at length and on repeated occasions about the caring influence of her father, not as an educator but as a businessman. She was also more articulate in specifying the contribution he made to her understanding care, describing him as “a person...(who) cared a lot about people and took...responsibility to care about them...to...let them know that he was concerned about them and watching out for them.” Tex’s rather cursory mention of the women in his family as caring through compassion without further elaboration seemed to indicate the absence of a clear model for caring from his family that influences his teaching.

The question becomes “Do family models of caring exert an influence on our beliefs about care in our teaching?” Based on these data, it would appear that our experiences of having been cared for in our families, as well as our watching family members care for others inform our ideas about caring. Jessica certainly embraces the idea that caring is demonstrated by taking responsibility for the development of others,

and Beverly's appreciation for the sense of unity in her family of origin is reflected in her commitment to building community within her class of students.

And because it is true that we are influenced by models of caring from our families, then we must be willing to accept myriad ways of caring within teacher education. This study represents a participant pool of three, and, even within such a limited sample, the examples of caring family models are disparate. As our teacher education faculties hopefully become more diverse, we can only expect that the disparate influences on caring practices will increase, demonstrating a wider range of perceptions of the way teacher educators care for their students.

It occurs to me that the participants' responses about family models were limited to our interview times together, and that, upon deeper reflection and further inquiry, other models might emerge, or the ones cited might become richer in detail and significance. That possibility remains unanswered but recognizes the power of reflective dialogue among teacher educators regarding the influences that shape our practices, and the need to begin to engage students in thinking about those who have influenced their ideas about caring. It seems more probable that our earlier experiences of having been cared for within our families remain as models for us, and serve as the basic frame around which we construct our professional ideas about what it means to care, as influenced by our own experiences of being cared for as a student. Clearly, both family models and teacher models shape our caring practices.

Teacher Models

Another similarity is that, in addition to family members, teachers are the only other influences cited as models of caring for these teacher educators. Both Jessica and Tex recalled teachers from their own childhood who serve as models of caring, while Beverly cited Christ as "the Master Teacher" as a caring model. Jessica and Beverly, on

the other hand, discussed caring influences from their adult life in education, both from teacher educators who were student-centered. Jessica remembered two graduate school professors who taught her the importance of offering the learner an academic freedom of choice, and Beverly from a university colleague who epitomizes caring by placing students' needs above any academic tasks to be done. While Tex's memories from his youth of Mr. Rodriguez are as vivid as though it were yesterday, they remain relatively vague. His comments about Mr. Rodriguez, such as, "He loved us," and "He cared about us," and "His caring had more to do with individuals," leaves me to surmise his implied meaning more than with my other participants. Tex seems to address Mr. Rodriguez less as a teacher to model than as a male figure to emulate. Little of Tex's discussion about Mr. Rodriguez as a model, in other words, deals with pedagogical or classroom strategies.

Both Jessica and Beverly, on the other hand, discuss models that influence their classroom work. Beverly focuses strongly on the creation of a caring environment in the classroom, noting that it was Polly's caring model as represented in her "(putting) something aside to tend to the need of a student" that was inspiring. In response to that model, Barbara strives to make time for her students, to get to know them as well as address their challenges. Polly's encouragement to use the work of Jane Nelsen also led Beverly to incorporate that work, and, more specifically, the use of the class meeting, into both her undergraduate and graduate course outline in an effort to build caring communities. In an interview Beverly admits to her priority for focusing on caring above content by saying, "I do think that it isn't so much the content knowledge we can give (the students.) It's how much we care about them." Creating a caring classroom community with her students is Beverly's priority, and it seems to be the result of a blending of models...both family and teacher.

In contrast to Beverly's focus on caring, Jessica's seems inextricably wedded to the pedagogical content knowledge she considers critical for her students' success as teachers. She uses the examples of two of her children's teachers to remind her that a caring teacher is one who is aware of their individual students' capabilities and responds appropriately to those capabilities. Reminiscent of the examples of her caring graduate professors, Jessica again demonstrates a respect for her individual students, taking into account their particular interests and experiences. Whether allowing her students to pursue their own interests through After School Clubs for the children, encouraging them to write reflectively on their life experiences as they relate to their teaching, or prodding them to ask questions about their own cultures, Jessica demonstrates a respect for what her students bring to her class, and allows that to emerge within their coursework. Through written, oral, and dialogic feedback, Jessica takes responsibility for helping students find those ways in which they can make contributions in their lives.

That each of the participants discussed former teachers as models of caring should serve as a clarion to alert all teachers to what is possible. Teachers from childhood through graduate school have influenced these teacher educators about what it means to care. For Tex, it may be a treasured memory from a secondary school teacher who paid attention to him, while for Jessica and Beverly, their memories of experiences with caring teachers fuel pedagogical strategies that, in turn, result in their being called caring by their students. Regardless of the time and place, former teachers they have encountered influence the caring practices of these teacher educators. That they remember those caring models stands as a reminder to them that they daily serve as models of caring for their own students.

Defining Care

Although each participant was able to discuss ways in which they conceptualize care in teaching, it was not always an easy task. Both Beverly and Jessica addressed this difficulty, with Beverly admitting, “it’s hard to give a Webster’s definition” for caring, and Jessica’s saying, “I don’t have a ready definition.” That is not surprising. Definitions and theoretical frameworks are not contextual, and offer little of the affective nature we experience daily in our caring teaching relationships. They stand apart from the act of caring. The more facile way in which to describe caring was to talk about behaviors they believe demonstrate caring in their own teaching, as well as to cite examples of those caring behaviors. This, of course, contextualized their ideas about caring, placing caring in the space between teacher and learner. Through comparing the data from all three participants, it became clear that what they all seemed to agree on is that caring teachers pay resolute attention to their students.

Caring as Attention

While all of the participants demonstrated a commitment to caring by attending to their students, they talked about it in different ways. Tex said, “When people don’t see you, they can’t care about you...The thing that children need most is to be seen.” His actions, then, over the course of the semester demonstrated his purposeful attention to the individual children in his student teachers’ schools, corroborating Walker’s (1996) contention that African American teachers use their interpersonal relationships with children to encourage them to be the “best that they could be” (p. 133). Tex spoke regularly to children in the schools, enlisting their aid and complimenting them. That he paid careful attention to the children in his own students’ classrooms was evident in his facility at identifying individual children and discussing their attributes with the student teachers. Tex also focused some attention on his own students by using their initial

conferences to learn about the students' own lives, their work and educational histories, and what has inspired them to become teachers. While I believe Tex wants to get to know his students, and what each is bringing to the student teaching experience, he devoted much of his time and expertise in focusing on individual children during the student teacher seminars and subsequent conferences. There was little attention to encouraging the student teachers to reflect on their own challenges or to discuss what was on their minds when he visited their schools.

Jessica, in describing her idea of caring, said, "One of the things I try to do with my students is (to notice them.) Everybody wants to be noticed in life..." And while her comment seems akin to Tex's, the evidence of her caring was different in that her primary attention was focused on her own students and what they were experiencing, rather than on the children in her students' classrooms. Jessica's contrasting examples of her own children's teachers also implied an element in caring beyond just "noticing." According to Jessica, teachers care when they pay attention to learners, and then respond in ways to maximize the learner's development and learning. Jessica cares for her students by devoting class time and individual conference time to recognizing the efforts of her students, such as their organization of the After School Clubs, and through her thorough written responses to their reflective journals addressing their teaching experiences. Jessica was actually the only participant who explicitly related her caring to the education of her students, saying, "It's important to me...to help my students develop and learn...to be successful in the world."

Beverly's description of caring as "attentive listening" and "getting to know your students" and their interests implied that, as a teacher, one must pay attention to students in order to be caring. Unlike the other two, Beverly was much more deliberate in her efforts to get to know her students, making assignments that built bridges of familiarity

between herself and her students, and actually extending the circle of familiarity to include the students getting to know one another. She wanted to know about her students' interests, experiences, and goals, and to that end she turned much of her attention to them, thus caring for them.

I want to make it clear that one's caring is not dependent on one's ability to articulate a definition or theory for caring, I pursued questions in this vein simply as one avenue through which to get at the ways in which my participants conceptualize caring in their teaching. I believe many of our tacit understandings defy definition. While unable to clearly describe or define something, we often know it when we see (or feel) it. Although Jessica was unfamiliar with Noddings' work (1984; 1992), her comment that teachers care by paying attention to learners and then responding to maximize their development and learning is directly linked to Noddings' ideas about caring. Regardless, I believe the value of studying theoretical frameworks for caring, and of considering what we each mean by caring allows us to consider what it is about our practices that characterizes them as caring, as well as offering us possibilities for what our caring might include. Such study can also confirm our own caring practices, giving us courage to meet opposing winds with confidence and perseverance. It has been my experience that my concept of caring has grown beyond my former essentialist conceptual framework as a result of this study. It has been through considering the ideas and theories of others, as well as the practices of my participants that I have begun constructing my own notion of what it means to care in teacher education, and challenging myself in ways I had never imagined.

Caring as Availability/Accessibility

In addition to thinking of caring in terms of noticing/giving attention to students, the participants shared the belief that caring is demonstrated through their availability and

accessibility to students. While both Tex and Beverly articulated their ideas about availability, Jessica implied hers. In an interview with me, Tex said, “One of the greatest evidences of caring is when people are available to you.” He then set about to make himself available to his students through regular visits to their schools, as well as by encouraging the students’ phone calls to his home in the evenings. And, despite Tex’s relatively limited availability, due to his students’ full-day teaching schedules, his supervisory responsibilities across a five-county area, and his having no e-mail or cellular phone access, his students described him as being available and interpreted that as caring.

Beverly described her caring as trying “to be real, real accessible to (the students.)” Spending two full days in a field placement facilitated both Beverly’s and Jessica’s availability for students, and Beverly demonstrated her intent in making herself more available to students by eating lunch with them. Both she and Jessica were able to offer extended availability to their students by observing lessons and holding follow-up conferences with them while out in the schools. Committee meetings and other classes did not intrude on their time with students in their field-based classes. Jessica made a point of coming to class early and staying late when necessary in an effort to engage with her students, whether to get to know them or to act as a sounding board when needed. Both Beverly and Jessica emphasized the advantages for demonstrating care in the field-based classes. Beverly said, “With the amount of time we spend (in the field-based classes), we have lots of opportunities to build caring relationships.” Jessica agreed, saying it affords the opportunity for “more one-to-one interactions”, “a deeper relationship”, and as a result, she believed “(the students) can learn to trust you more.” Their students certainly concurred, and interpreted their availability to them as caring.

These data go beyond simply supporting the earlier research characterizing a caring professor (Teven, 200; Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996a, 1996b; Thayer-Bacon,

Stoos, & Arnold, 1998). Through revealing the participants' own ideas about caring, as well as examples of their caring practices and the ways in which their students perceived their caring, their stories create a richer text for our understanding what it means to care in teacher education. That there were similarities among my participants' discussions of models of caring and what it means to care might lead some to conclude that their practices were fairly comparable. The fascinating discovery for me was that, though they had very similar ideas about ways in which to care for students, the ways in which they expressed their caring practices were delightfully unique.

CARING AS IDIOSYNCRATIC

My second finding, that of each one's idiosyncratic focus for caring, came as a surprise, and took much longer to emerge than my initial findings. Sifting through the data, I came upon a statement Jessica had made that helped me begin to consider my participants' caring practices in a different way. In describing her perception of her class she said, "(We're) in this together and we're a community of people who are trying to learn things about teaching and we all can teach each other things...but I guess I hadn't really thought about (community) as caring..." Jessica's comment illustrated that, although she recognized the community aspect of her class, as well as the by-products of teaching and learning together, community took a back seat to other considerations when she thought about caring in her teaching. Although I believed my participants would perceive and demonstrate care in different ways, this was an example of how far apart their thinking about care could be. While Beverly considered the classroom community a vehicle for caring, Jenny didn't make the connection between caring and community. I was in the midst of my semester with Beverly when this comment took on relevance, and I began to think about how idiosyncratic their caring might be.

Over multiple readings of the data, what emerged was each participant's seeming focus through which their caring was enacted. I do not mean to imply that every caring encounter or act or strategy introduced by the teacher educator reflected this focus. It was my experience, however, that when I stepped away from scrutinizing bits and pieces of data and began to look at the larger picture of the participants' teaching practices, the idiosyncratic thread of each one's caring emerged. Recognizing that care is a human relation, others have noted the uniqueness of enactments of caring (Noddings, 1992; Steitmatter, 1996). Just as our teaching lives are inseparable from our own personal lives, "for better or worse" (Palmer, 1998, p.2), so our caring is tethered to our own personal experiences and our ways of being in relation with others.

Equally fascinating to me was that, in each case, the student focus group participants cited their particular teacher educator's idiosyncrasy as an expression of their teacher's caring. During a one-hour roundtable discussion, and with no data to inform them, the students were able to intuit the unique focus I had begun to consider. I have come to the conclusion that these idiosyncrasies are like "secret(s) hidden in plain sight" (Palmer, 1998, p.3), seamlessly weaving together the personal and professional lives of each caring teacher educator. These idiosyncratic features of the teacher educators' caring reflect not only their ideas about what it means to care, but also the influential models and life experiences that have shaped their caring. The idiosyncratic features not only characterize each one's caring practices but also serve as connecting rods between their personal and teaching lives.

Beverly's Classroom Community

Beverly's caring was characterized by a strong focus on communal relationships. Considering that she was reared in a family of five children and is a devout Christian, her focus is not so surprising. The family unit and Christian church both have a strong

communal element, and the members in each share a common community. Beverly's goal each semester is to create a classroom that is itself a caring community of teachers and students, and she privileges "how we care about students" over "how much content we teach," implying that the two are not intertwined.

Although two participants never addressed the possibility of students actually being carers in the college classroom, Beverly did. When talking about creating a caring classroom environment, she said, "Hopefully, (the students) become caring of one another." From shuffling their seat assignments at tables in the early weeks of the semester to encourage the students to become acquainted, to the students and Barbara sharing their personal information, Beverly attempted to "make connections" between herself and her students, as well as among the students. I was under the false impression, as the semester began, that hers were the usual "get acquainted" activities which some professors use. What became evident, however, was that these were simply the initial steps on the road to her building community. The class meeting soon became the centerpiece for continuing to get to know one another, building community, and caring. But throughout the semester, much of Beverly's attention remained focused on relationships and weaving them into a caring community.

When Beverly talked about caring, it was as though each thread of her thinking contributed to the larger goal of caring through community. She strove to be accessible and available to her students. She wanted to get to know them, and for them to get to know her. She arranged her schedule to accommodate her students, and she intentionally sought to make connections within the classroom community. Though she acknowledged that she modeled the strategies in the hopes that her students would utilize them as teachers, the immediate reward for them all was the experience of creating a caring classroom community.

Tex's Attention to Children

Unlike Beverly, Tex gave no attention to the interpersonal relationships of his students. In and of itself, that was not too surprising. The student teaching experience is unlike other semesters of study. Each of the students works in a separate public school classroom, and the cohort of student teachers meets less than six times over the course of the semester. They were all sharing the common experience of student teaching, however, and the possibility for collaborative problem solving, sharing their successful teaching experiences or engaging in reflective dialogue was possible during their seminar sessions. I felt that their being in different schools having different experiences held promise for engaging in rich dialogue but that strategy was not used.

When the students met with Tex in seminar his preference was to lecture, and a focus of his lectures was on encouraging his students' attention to individual children. With the exception of his initial conference with a student, at which time he devoted almost the entire conference to getting to know the student's background, Tex directed most of the conference dialogue toward the discussion of individual children in the student teachers' classrooms. During these discussions, it became crystal clear how much effort Tex had devoted to watching the children in each classroom, as he was able to discuss individual children, where they sat in the room, and their characteristics. Tex's attention, however, went beyond simply observing. In some instances he interrupted adult conversations to greet children in the halls, interacted with children in classrooms, and even wrote a note to one child in his student's classroom. In other words, when Tex was in the schools, his attention was divided between his students and their students.

Tex's attention to caring for children flies in the face of Noddings' (1986) caution against teacher educators assuming "their first duty is to the children of the land" (p. 502). Noddings suggests it is Tex's own students, those who are learning to teach

children, who should be the object of his caring. I was puzzled by Tex's attention to children as opposed to his own students, and wondered why, after more than twenty-five years of working with preservice teachers, his attention would be focused on children. Upon further study, however, Tex's behavior seemed to make more sense in light of his African American culture. Scholars recognize that some African American communities take a shared interest in their local school children (Dempsey & Noblit, 1996) and many African American teachers feel an obligation to focus on building the students' sense of culture and self-efficacy, and not simply address the standard curriculum (Walker, 1996). Considering such research, Tex's behavior with children became more understandable, and contributed to my belief that his core of caring seemed grounded in his attention to children. In many of Tex's caring interactions with children, he seemed to be serving as encourager or confirmer, even at times telling a child how handsome, beautiful, strong, and capable he or she was.

And while I was both surprised and puzzled by Tex's attention to children, his students were not. They actually interpreted his focus on children as caring. When my focus group question to his students addressed Tex's caring for them, many of their examples were of his interactions with children rather than with them! I found it interesting that not one of Tex's students seemed confused or put off by his attention to children. To the contrary, they cited his interactions with and knowledge of specific children in their classrooms as examples of his caring.

Just as Beverly focused on creating a caring community, Tex focused his own attention, and subsequently that of his students', on individual children. Consistently throughout our interviews, many of Tex's examples of caring were related to caring for children, not his own students. Regularly, as Tex conferred with his students, he drew their attention to the individual children in their classrooms. And, in talking about Tex as

a caring teacher educator, his students cited his attention to children and his ability to pinpoint their strengths and weaknesses (despite working with 22 student teachers) as characteristic of his caring. While Tex believes he cares deeply for his own students, the focus of his caring seemed to be for the children in his students' classrooms.

Jessica's Attention to Culture

Over the course of my semester with Jessica, I became aware of her interweaving the threads of culture and pedagogy. She conceptualized caring as responsibility to help others develop and learn about their world but was adamant that that includes all learners, regardless of culture. Throughout her work with students, Jessica continually challenged them to analyze their own assumptions of others, and, using her own life experiences, worked to dispel many commonly held misconceptions of marginalized people in the United States.

As she employed her pedagogical strategies, it was with a culture-focus. Her sharing of quality literature representing a variety of cultures opened the door for discussions of diverse perspectives, and respect for them all. Through the dialogic journal exchanges with students, Jessica (1) encouraged their own questions and reflective thinking, reminding them that education is "learning about oneself"; (2) applauded their making connections between their own life experiences and their work with children; and (3) challenged their beliefs and assumptions that privilege some groups over others. In her individual conferences with students, she helped them analyze the effects of certain practices, such as "the pedagogy of poverty", on marginalized children, and encouraged them to become more critical consumers than many of the classroom teachers with whom they were working.

Jessica was very purposeful in her cultural roots project with graduate students. By asking them to turn the focus inward first to their own culture, she created an

authentic experience allowing them to learn about themselves. Sharing their cultural roots projects with classmates allowed them to appreciate first hand the similarities and differences among us all. I believe Jessica's commitment to all of her pedagogical strategies reflects Greene's (1993) contention that "the more continuous and authentic personal encounters can be, the less likely it will be that categorizing and distancing will take place" (p. 13). Whether discussing their own cultural heritages, their own marginalizing assumptions, or the possibilities for an enriching and engaging curriculum for all children, Jessica's focus was on pedagogical strategies of integrity that hold promise to elevate learners of all cultures. In this way, Jessica demonstrated caring by assuming the responsibility, as a teacher, to respect, encourage, and advocate for the learning and development of all children.

Turning our gaze, then, back to the care literature enables us to consider what we can glean from these research data. No one has discussed idiosyncrasies in teacher educators' caring. While these data certainly support Noddings' (1984, 1992) idea that care is uniquely expressed, they go beyond simply corroborating that contention. These individual stories contribute to our better understanding care by demonstrating each teacher educator's unique expression, revealing his/her idiosyncratic focus in caring.

While I had expected different ideas about caring from my participants, I had not anticipated that each would have an idiosyncratic focus in their caring practices. Yet, as I have continued to think about caring as integral to teaching, such a focus becomes less surprising. Caring, after all, represents a way of being in relation with another, in this instance in the pedagogical endeavor of teaching. Caring does not stand apart from teaching but is akin to a lens through which teacher educator's pedagogical strategies pass.

What was equally enlightening, however, was that the students of each teacher educator, without the benefit of research data, were able to discern their teacher educator's caring in terms of the focus I identified. It is as though they uncovered with relative ease the secret for which I had to search through reams of data. And that the idiosyncratic focuses were identified by the students serves as a reminder to all teacher educators of the intuitive powers of our students to analyze caring practices embedded within our teaching.

The finding of idiosyncrasy offers a powerful reminder to us that teaching is an art. The ways in which we respond to our students through the decisions we make in the classroom "are in no way prescribable from scientific research" (Eisner, 2003, p. 655), but instead represent the artistry we bring to our teaching, confirming the teacher educator's proverbial thumbprint not only on her teaching but on her caring as well. Each of the participants understands and enacts caring based on influences from their own backgrounds. Thus, their own life experiences have resulted in an interesting array of focuses in caring. That is an exciting possibility for exposing students to different expressions of caring. Perhaps teacher educators' caring can actually hold at bay the tide of conformity that looms in the current atmosphere of standardization in teacher education. Even as standardized curricula are being implemented and departmental exams advocated to determine outcomes, teachers' caring practices can remain a bastion of individual expression, while corporately offering students a kaleidoscope of caring practices.

I also believe that it may indeed be the idiosyncratic nature of caring that can enlighten us all about the myriad ways in which care can be demonstrated. As faculties and student populations become more diverse, caring practices will surely become more diverse. Students' perceptions of what it means to care can be illumined as they are cared

for in myriad ways by caring teacher educators, and their understanding of caring deepened beyond what is possible through simply reading about cultural differences in caring. Because these data indicate students' abilities to see below the surface of our teaching, into the heart of how we care, we must consider our students capable of engaging in rich dialogic exchanges regarding caring practices in teaching...our teaching as well as theirs.

INCONSISTENCIES IN CARING

The third, and major finding in this study is that there exists an essential common characteristic, one of inconsistency, in each of the participants' caring practices. As with any other endeavor, our best intentions and efforts cannot guarantee consistent success as a caring teacher educator. Other factors impede our attempts to be consistently caring teacher educators, and we fall short. My three participants were no exception.

Beverly

During our discussions of her beliefs and perceptions about care in teaching, Beverly had said that caring is expressed by her getting to know her students, who they are, and what their interests are. She made the statement that "being a good listener, an attentive listener" characterizes for her the caring teacher. Yet, she shares later about a personal conversation with an agnostic/atheist student regarding his mother-in-law's illness, in which she totally disregards the spiritual stance he had made known to her in favor of her own. In fact, she simply ignores his response indicating his stance on prayer, replacing it with her own spiritual preference. In a member check e-mail response about this situation, she wrote, "Praying for him and his mother-in-law is what I would do...It just makes perfect sense to me." Despite Beverly's acknowledging that attentive

listening represents caring, when faced with this situation, she responded with her own beliefs and values, summarily dismissing those of her student.

A consistent and defining thread of Beverly's caring practice is the use of the class meeting for facilitating a sense of community in her class. Beverly teaches her students the strategies for holding class meetings, and then uses the meetings not only to address problems that arise in class but also to model the strategy for her students. She is committed to this strategy, having used it with undergraduate and graduate students for a number of years, and she is convinced it is a caring strategy. The first meeting I saw went very smoothly, with Beverly walking her students through the procedures with agenda items that she had created. When another meeting was held, however, to address a volatile issue on the agenda as a result of a dispute between her students and the school staff, it was quite a different story. It was as though Beverly had forgotten all tenets of the class meeting. She began by not checking first with the students who had created the agenda item, and followed that by monopolizing the meeting platform with intermittent excuses for the staff and apologies to the students. Lecturing the students toward the end of the meeting and letting the discussion disintegrate into side conversations were the crowning blows to defeating the whole purpose of the class meeting. It appears that her position as liaison for the university and the school personnel rendered her unable to remain objective in the heat of the situation. Despite her long-standing commitment to this caring practice, she abdicated her role of teacher in the class meeting in favor of the role of peace-maker.

Tex

In our discussions about Tex's care in his teaching, he talked about his being available to his students, citing both one of his caring models as having been available, as well as the ways in which he makes himself available to his students. But his students had

mixed reactions to his availability. While most felt that he had remained available over the course of the semester, there were students who complained that he hadn't even seen them teach in their second placement, leaving them to wonder how they were doing. Although making himself available by phone at night, his strategy was not working with these students. He described himself as available but he was not.

I continue to question the wisdom of Tex's refusal to use electronic mail with students. Considering that his students were scattered across a five-county area, his use of e-mail would have offered a viable alternative for making good his offer to be available. As tiresome as it can be to face numerous e-mails in the evening, it might have facilitated his students' requests to meet with him when they most needed him, and not just during his routine visits to schools. Such electronic dialogue could also have opened up avenues of valuable dialogic exchange between Tex and his preservice teachers that would have resulted in their getting the feedback they felt they were missing. If being available is a priority for Tex, why does he balk at maximizing the very quality he cites as demonstrating his caring for his students?

Lastly, the starkest evidence of inconsistency in Tex's practices seems to be his attention to caring for children. In his explanations of what it means to care, he discusses care in terms of children. When Tex is in the schools, he pays attention to children when his primary responsibility is to his own students who are student teaching. Much of his seminar time and individual conference times are spent in discussions about identifying particular children and subsequently identifying appropriate goals and strategies for use with them. I saw very little attention to what the individual student teachers needed to talk about when Tex visited, or the collaborative sharing of experiences and ideas at seminar time. Despite the fact that Tex has been supervising student teachers at this

university for over twenty-five years, his attention to caring remains more on children than on his own students.

Jessica

Our personal lives and experiences certainly create the teacher educators we are, and this was never more evident than when I was observing Jessica. Our experiences, however, can be so compelling that they lead us into inconsistent caring teaching practices. Jessica is deeply passionate about and committed to all children but particularly marginalized populations. There were times during our semester together when the data reveal inconsistencies in Jessica's caring practices due to her disagreement with certain classroom teachers' practices.

Being in a public school requires that she care for more than just her students. While her students are her first priority, she works closely with classroom teachers, and in that capacity enters into caring relationships with them. Several times during the semester, the data reveal that Jessica let her own agenda of advocating for marginalized children deter her from taking a caring stance in situations. One of those occurred when one of her preservice teachers, upset with the harsh and disrespecting words her cooperating teacher used with a non-English speaking child, went directly to the principal to complain. Rather than collaborate with the principal to deal both with the offending teacher as well as the student who had ignored proper protocol, Jessica defended her student. As liaison between the elementary school and the university, the caring response would include all parties, not siding with one against the other.

In a similar situation, in which Jessica's student was working with a teacher whose philosophical stance on lesson planning and classroom management was diametrically opposed to hers, the incompatibility between the two came to a head. Discussing the unhappy situation with Jessica, she and the student decided that they

would simply circumvent the teacher's authority and bring the children to the college classroom within the school campus to conduct the lesson deemed too unstructured for the teacher's comfort. It would seem that the caring approach would have been to discuss the matter in a three-way conference, attending and respecting all parties involved, and seek a solution satisfactory to all. If no consensus was possible, the student could have been reassigned to a more workable situation. (This had been done for another student and offered to yet another who declined.) Instead, Jessica and the preservice teacher switched the lesson to their classroom, thus neutralizing the teacher's authority with her own children, and demonstrating what seemed to be an uncaring stance with the teacher.

While the care literature in higher education addresses the nature of caring, characteristics of caring teachers, and other related issues, no one has dared to label caring as inconsistent. I believe that calling attention to such inconsistencies contributes to our more fully understanding caring in teacher education. Each of these teacher educators was identified as caring by the researcher, themselves, and their students, and yet, each demonstrated inconsistencies in their caring practices. Does such inconsistency negate their caring? Absolutely not! I suggest that their inconsistency in caring is simply another characteristic of caring, and is one that deserves examination.

RETHINKING INCONSISTENCY

The most thought provoking finding of this study lies in the inconsistency of each of the participants' caring practices. Thus far, no one has addressed inconsistency as actually characterizing caring, yet it is a finding in this study. That all of the research participants demonstrated inconsistency in their caring practices leads me to believe that inconsistency may, in fact, be a feature of caring in teacher education. Although each participant had been identified as caring by their students and me, each demonstrated inconsistency in their caring. Such inconsistency in caring, then, raises questions. Is there

something about caring that makes it difficult to maintain with a high degree of consistency? What might explain such inconsistency in caring? What is it about teacher education that strips people of their ability to be consistently caring? Is it, in fact, even possible to label another as caring in their teaching? Could I have been influenced more by my own ideas about caring than by the data from the study? After all, as qualitative researcher, I viewed all of the data through the lens of my own perceptions and values about caring, and could have created myths of caring for my participants. To begin to address these questions, examinations of the nature of caring and the nature of teacher education are in order, with attention to my own identity, assumptions and expectations, as well as my own construct of caring.

The Nature of Caring

As a central tenet of good teaching, caring demands much of a teacher educator. Agne (1999) reminds us that “(t)hough the principles of caring are simple, their successful execution is quite another, extremely complex matter. Caring mastery requires tremendous dedication, hard work, and commitment” (p. 184). It is the complexity of caring that challenges our mastery of it, if indeed that is even possible. Each of my participants is dedicated, hard working and committed to their work with preservice teachers, and yet each one’s caring practices were inconsistent. That leads me to believe that there must be something about caring that renders it difficult to maintain with a high degree of consistency. What might contribute to such inconsistency? I suggest four considerations that lead to our inconsistency in caring: our humanness, caring as a relation, the role of beliefs and values in our caring, and what I call the “Noddings mystique.”

First, as humans we are inconsistent in our endeavors. The degree to which we bring ourselves to any task, be it driving, teaching, or writing is influenced by our own

experiences. As the one-caring, when I am exhausted, preoccupied with worry or stress, or find myself troubled about an impending appointment, the ease with which I experience motivational displacement for another or will myself to be caring is affected.

Never was this clearer to me than during the semesters of working on my dissertation while continuing to teach. Throughout my doctoral studies I felt less available and attuned to my students than before I began my studies but the dissertation process took it to a whole different level. Guilty when I was not writing, I raced home from campus to do so. At times, when I was available during office hours for students who did not come in, I felt resentful. I was totally obsessed with my study and writing, and ashamed to admit that my students were relegated to the proverbial back burner. Remembering that the situation was temporary did little to assuage my guilt of being what felt like an uncaring teacher.

My own assumptions of what it means to care include turning my focus away from myself and to another. Whether counseling a student, planning challenging curricular assignments, or thoughtfully responding to their work, I feel a responsibility to guide my students to become the best teacher and person they can be during the semester we are together. That I identified those very characteristics in my participants (Beverly's accessibility, Tex's attention to the learner, and Jessica's responsibility to help others grow and develop) leads me to believe that those are strong tenets of my own view of caring. And, if I make that assumption, I am left to wonder what other characteristics of their caring went left unexamined due to the incompatibility with my own perceptions and values.

Second, caring is a relation, occurring between two people, and dependent upon both for the caring relation to be complete. I would like to think that I approach each of my students as one-caring but the fact of the matter is that some students make it very difficult. The student who never has a kind word to say or who seems to have no interest in what is going on in class is sometimes easier to ignore. At other times, it is the student who prevents the caring relation from being realized. I can approach my student as one-caring but if I experience no reciprocity from her, the caring is not complete. There are students who are not interested in engaging in caring relations with the professor, preferring to come to class and complete assignments with minimal involvement or commitment. Although we can espouse a priority for caring in teaching, the complications arising from it occurring between two people cannot be denied.

Third, our perceptions are products of our own social constructions as shaped by our families, educations, and experiences. Our values, attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions are all products of the experiences we have had, and as such, create the unique perspective each brings to all that transpires in teaching (Palmer, 1998; Rogers & Webb, 1991), including caring (Nash, 1991). Cuffaro (1995) acknowledges the particular influence these tacit understandings exercise in our practices, saying, “Teaching is a way of being who we are and a place where in our actions we make manifest what we believe and value” (p. 99). Each of my participants made manifest beliefs they had earlier articulated as informing their ideas about caring. Ironically, in each instance, while their actions corroborated their values and beliefs, they also contributed to inconsistencies in their caring practices.

Beverly’s valuing peaceful resolutions led to her tenaciously attempting to represent both sides of an issue (“One of my problems as a middle child,” she confessed.) when conducting the class meeting. Her attempts to fix the problem between her students

and the school staff sabotaged her guiding her students through the caring practice of a class meeting. Another time, her Christian faith compromised her ability to maintain a caring stance with a student. In her dismissal of his non-Christian beliefs, Beverly failed to put her students' concerns or interests ahead of her own. Tex's attention to children appeared to reflect not only his own childhood experiences but an attitude attributed to his African American culture, and resulted in his inconsistency in privileging caring for children over caring for his own students. And Jessica's beliefs and assumptions about her own culture, as well as that of Mexican Americans in this country, appeared to blindsight her occasionally, causing inconsistency in her own caring practices in her multi-layered collaborative work in the public schools.

Even as a researcher, I was inconsistent in my caring. Reflecting on my role as researcher, I realize that although I was immersed in researching, reading, and writing about care, when the moment came for me to remain open and receptive to what my participants were saying, I deftly changed the subject or failed to follow their line of discussion. In each instance, I believe my own values, beliefs, and assumptions took the front seat to my consideration of my participants. As a researcher, I acted impulsively and uncaringly. That Beverly is much more open with her Christian beliefs and practices than I made me very uncomfortable. There she was talking about Christ as a model for her, and I had no compartment into which to put such a thought. This was my research, and her ideas were not melding easily with my own. My having diverted attention away from her comment initially, I believe, indicated my discomfort or fear, and happened without any forethought. Beverly's statement that Christ is a caring model for her threatened my own thinking about caring, highlighting for me an area I had never considered. What kind of Christian does that make me?

Later, in writing the results of my study, my own caring inconsistency ebbed and flowed anew. In my attempts to be a critical researcher I would scrutinize my participants' practices, pointing out areas of confusion and inconsistency, and then turn around and write some sort of rationalizing closure to the paragraph. It was as though, after I had critically examined their practices, I felt guilty and sought to leave everything neat and tidy before moving on. Early on, my consistency in this pattern led my supervisor to label my practice as "Martha Stewarting", a phrase that still gets my back up! But in the role of peer debriefer she was exactly right, and I began to see my own inconsistency. I felt a need to explain why my friends and colleagues might be acting as they were, especially after I had labeled them as caring, and that challenged my role as researcher. I was further challenged in my role as critical researcher because of my own background. Having been reared a white female in the Southern United States, I have been socialized to abdicate my own thoughts and desires in favor of another, especially if my thoughts and desires are counter to the other. I found it very difficult to criticize the caring practices of my colleagues, and only began to make a measure of progress with the help of a peer debriefer.

Finally, much of the discussion of caring in teaching is grounded in the work of Noddings (1984, 1992), whose work, I believe, created a mystique for me that was difficult to critique for two reasons. For one, hers is a white middle-class construction of caring. As a white, middle-class female myself, I can relate to Noddings' perspective on caring. It makes sense to me, and it is consonant with my own caring practices. Noddings remains the metaphorical starting post from which the majority of care inquiries begin, and yet, while her work is easily compatible with the caring practices of some, it is not the template for all caring (Noblit, 1993). Because our cultures influence our ideas about

caring, contrasts in cultural constructions of what it means to care can result in inconsistencies in caring. In this study, one participant's caring practice represented the polar opposite of one of Noddings' (1986) tenets of fidelity in caring in teacher education. I believe Tex's African American cultural values inform his idea of caring as attention to children. Whether in his seminars with students or in their placement schools, he seemed more focused on helping children "be all that they can be" (Walker, 1996) than his own students. Examining his focus on children through the theoretical lens of Noddings, however, results in labeling him as inconsistent. Such clashes demonstrate the complicated nature of caring.

This polarity between Noddings' ideas and Tex's practice raised questions with which I continue to wrestle. I entered this research study confident in my understanding of Noddings' work on fidelity in teacher education. Her discussions of dialogue, model, practice, and confirmation ring true for me. Yet when I began to analyze the data confusion beset me. What I had observed in Tex's practice did not wash with the theoretical model I understood. Over and over again, as I combed through the transcripts from my research with Tex, his attention to children became more obvious. Where were his own students in his thinking about caring? My immediate reaction was to label him as uncaring. Then in the focus groups, his students actually cited his caring for children as demonstrating care for them! That added to my confusion, as I was forced to examine my role as researcher. I had not been a party to their caring relationship. While as researcher I considered him uncaring toward his students, who was I to label their relationship as caring or not caring? What seemed more relevant was that Tex believed himself to be caring in his teaching, and his students saw him as caring.

Noddings' work presents another challenge to our caring as she frames it as an ethical imperative. Who does not aspire to ethical goals in their teaching, as we attempt to

guide students to become productive and active participants in our democracy? So when we fall short of our goals, when we are inconsistent in our caring, does that mean we are unethical? Noddings continues her description of the caring relation by saying that when either party fails, both are morally diminished. That is heavy-handed language with which to deal when one strives to be a caring teacher educator but falls short. What does it mean to be morally diminished? It smacks of “the dark side”, exile or purgatory. So, although Noddings has given us a theoretical framework around which to think about caring, it is fraught with terminology that offers little wiggle room or that acknowledges our humanness and our inconsistency.

Given our humanness, the relational nature of caring, our own social constructs, and Noddings’ moral imperative, is it possible for any of us to avoid inconsistency in our caring? In the end, is the “duality” that Noddings (1984, p.30) suggests always achievable in our day-to-day caring with others? Considering our myriad differences, I think not. And while it appears that, due to the nature of caring, inconsistency in caring is inevitable, we must continue our rethinking inconsistency in caring by giving equal attention to the nature of teacher education.

The Nature of Teacher Education

Having considered possible explanations for inconsistency as inherent in the nature of caring, the questions now become “Is there something about teacher education that strips people of their ability to be consistent or challenges their attempts to be caring teacher educators?” I believe there are realities within the nature of teacher education that problematize our being consistent in our caring practices.

First, schools of education are within the larger bureaucracies of universities, which, by and large, do not demonstrate a focus on caring, but rather grapple with institutional issues. The focus is often on growing pressure for efficiency in light of

shrinking budgets, resulting in faculty members teaching more students in an effort to reduce costs. Maintaining consistent caring practices becomes challenging as the teacher educator strives to be the “one-caring” for a growing number of students in a university setting. A participant in another study lamented her university’s inattention to caring, saying, “I guess what I’m trying to say in terms of trying to be a caring professor, is one of the really important things is somehow finding a way to infuse our views about caring into the institution” (Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996a, p. 69). University bureaucracies, at this time, seem to value efficiency and mandates over any attention to professors’ caring practices.

Nor do teacher education programs, by design, generally prioritize caring. Though the state of Texas is not alone when it comes to the arm of legislators sweeping through the halls of education, in Texas legislative pressure and scrutiny are manifest through the response of teacher education programs’ increased attention to outcomes and accountability, as well as a standardization of curricula. My own experience of having taught in a teacher education program in Texas the last twenty years has taught me that even the caring teacher can lose sight of the ethical responsibility to care in favor of such top-down directives. I believe our teaching remains rooted in caring as we pay careful attention to our students, and work toward masterful pedagogical strategies. We strive to nurture responsibility in our students, and model equity and fairness...all done in the best interests of our students. We are cognizant, however, of the struggle to maintain the ethical caring practices with our students in the face of mounting demands from university administrators (Sumsion, 2000).

The teacher education program at my university is becoming increasingly standardized and focused on outcomes, such as departmental exams and credentialing examinations. Teacher education programs around the globe are woefully characterized

as technocratic, routine and recipe-oriented, and are producing teachers with utilitarian perspectives (Donoghue & Brooker, 1996). Such a milieu is not conducive to the creation of teacher education programs that focus on developing caring curricula and practices. Operating within such programs and under such expectations, it is no surprise that teacher educators find it challenging to be consistent in their caring practices of attending to individuals as well as to curricular issues. But this study affirms our need to tenaciously advocate for conditions favorable to caring.

In this study, teacher educators and students alike interpreted availability as evidence of caring. We should not turn away from that. Attention must be paid to maximizing faculty members' availability to students while considering the teacher educators' other professional responsibilities, as well as their personal lives. While that can present a daunting challenge, I believe there are considerations that encourage such availability. Classes should be kept to a reasonable size, as should the class loads. Teacher educators teaching two to three blocked classes, where extended time is spent with a section of students, would increase their accessibility to their students while also allowing longevity for building relationships. In the stories of my two participants who taught in blocked classes, both the teachers and students cited the organization of those classes as contributing to the teacher educators' abilities to demonstrate caring practices. Careful scrutiny and advocacy of what is expected of teacher educators in terms of committee work, grant writing responsibilities, and other institutional tasks might result in their increased availability to students, thus facilitating their caring.

The data also revealed that students and teacher educators alike identified certain curricular strategies as evidence of caring. Citing the use of class meetings, multicultural literature and cultural roots projects, and equity in educational opportunities for all children, students considered their teachers' caring as extending far beyond the narrow

boundaries of behaviors. The teacher educators' commitments to the growth and development of their students were interpreted as caring, and indicate that students are savvy in thinking about the caring relationship that occurs between teacher and student.

If inconsistency is indeed characteristic of caring, what *should* be our response? Do we simply capitulate to the inevitability of inconsistency in our caring, or turn from what some might interpret as the “dark side of caring”? I would suggest that our answers lie in robustly embracing the inconsistency that appears to be inherent in our caring in teacher education, and to use the inconsistent nature of caring to our own advantage, as well as that of our students.

EMBRACING INCONSISTENCY

Some might question the wisdom of embracing something as seemingly unproductive as inconsistency. After all, who prides herself in her inconsistency? My belief is that, as teacher educators, our best response is to embrace inconsistency as part of our caring practices. This belief is founded on two points. First, accepting that there are characteristics of teacher education that strip us of our abilities to care consistently, we must also accept that, realistically, there is little each of us can do to change the nature of teacher education, as such changes involve systemic reform. And there is even less we can do to change the nature of caring. It seems most prudent to simply accept that there are factors beyond our control that contribute to inconsistencies in our caring, and begin to consider the second point, over which we do have domain...our pedagogical practices.

I believe the courageous scrutiny of caring as inherently inconsistent holds pedagogical promise in teacher education programs. Who has dared to label caring inconsistent and to accept it as such? Beginning to consider inconsistency as characteristic of caring could shake up some things. We are loathe to describe our caring as inconsistent, and yet we must ask ourselves first, what is it about inconsistency in

caring that we are afraid of? If honest, we all know that, from time to time, we are inconsistent in our personal and professional lives. We actually expect inconsistency in children and accept, albeit begrudgingly perhaps, inconsistency in others. Why not in caring?

Rather than surrender to the overwhelming task of reforming current teacher education programs into more care-centered ones, I am inspired to extrapolate Eisner's (2003) challenge to incrementally tackle the task of school reform to this discussion. He levels his challenge, saying, "Incremental approaches recognize that we can't pay attention to everything and that, even if we could, it is unlikely that everything could be addressed at the same time" (p. 657). Indeed, it is highly unlikely that we could attend simultaneously to all of the possible causal factors within teacher education that contribute to the inconsistency in teacher educators' caring practices.

What we can attend to are incremental efforts that might lead to recognizing and addressing inconsistency in caring, improving the preparation of caring teachers, and enhancing our own caring practices. The incremental efforts I suggest allow for the examination of caring, with special attention to its inconsistency, through two approaches: the examination of one's beliefs/values/assumptions related to caring; and a more critical pedagogical approach to the study of care. It would seem that the candor and personal lenses brought to discussions of the challenges to care consistently would better prepare us all to cope with the rigors of caring teaching practices.

Let us first consider the incremental effort to examine with our students our beliefs and assumptions about care in teaching. I remain convinced that it is of value for us, as teacher educators, to examine our own beliefs and perceptions regarding the role of care in our own teaching, as well as to encourage our students to do the same. Every student in our classes, having been a child, has experienced the caring of others, and

because of that, can relate to both the nature of caring and its inconsistency. What parent has cared consistently for his/her child? Despite the deep love and commitment to our children, parents experience anger and frustration with their children, and often act and say things they later regret. Despite reading an expert's clear outline for the appropriate treatments and suggestions for calm response for a baby with colic, by the end of the sixth week, I felt desperate in my emotions and thoughts. I felt I had been deceived by the simplicity of expert's explanations and suggestions, and I felt far from caring. It simply was not always that easy to care.

There certainly are those scholars who see no need to pursue what it means to care in teaching. I would suggest, on the other hand, that if indeed care is considered central to good teaching, teacher educators must keep it in the cross hairs of their thinking and pedagogical planning. My own hope that this research study, in some way, would benefit my participants was confirmed during each semester of inquiry. Separately each one corroborated the value of my inquiry for them. Beverly said, "Every time we (meet) it reaffirms what I've been thinking about (care) and I can kind of refocus (on it)," while Tex said, "I never thought about caring (before)...but I do now. I'm much more aware of it. I'm working on next semester, (thinking) 'How could I let the students know even more that I care for them?'" And Jessica wrote an e-mail message, saying,

As a result of engaging in these interviews, I have embarked on a very reflective journey that has helped me to begin to clarify my somewhat cloudy notion about caring. I hadn't thought about or read about caring explicitly prior to this opportunity that you have given me.

That each of these already caring teacher educators recognized the importance of discussions about and reflections on caring stands as stalwart evidence to the need for more dialogue and inquiry into such a salient feature of good teaching as caring, especially among those who work in the field of teacher preparation.

My realization of how limited my own understanding of a teacher educator's caring was before I began my inquiry still surprises me. Educated in the literature of care, I had a naive confidence that I could determine with ease my participants' caring ideas and practices. Armed with Noddings' (1984) ethic of care, and Thayer-Bacon's (1996a, 1996b) discussions of a caring professor, I was primed to see those theories revealed in the practice of my participants. I was confident in conceptualizing their caring as an ethical relation, with a "one-caring" and a "cared-for" (Noddings, 1984), and inspired to think about Noddings' contention that both parties are enhanced when the relation is complete. What I learned, however, is that my own conceptual framework of care was no clearer than my participants'. The following entry from my researcher's journal laid bare my self-doubts at the beginning of my study:

I had never imagined how difficult the task of sorting out information and feelings would be. Convinced that this is still the most authentic path to travel toward my question of our beliefs and perceptions about care and its role in our classrooms, I realize that I came into this not knowing clearly what my own beliefs and perceptions are about caring. The tacit understandings that we own are so deeply rooted... July 16, 2002

As I engaged in my research with my participants, I was like "the silent party." There are no interview transcripts, video tapes, or focus groups addressing my caring in teaching although I was treading the murky waters alongside my participants every step of the way.

Having one's beliefs and practices brought to light and acknowledged (Richardson, 1996) is an important process of discovery and reflection, and if teachers typically make decisions based on their personal belief system (Agne, 1992; Collinson, 2001), then it behooves us to understand as best we can those beliefs informing our

caring practices. In each of my participants' caring practices, it was their beliefs/assumptions/values that seemed to have created inconsistency in their caring. It would seem, then, that examining one's own beliefs/assumptions/values might create not only dialogic exchange about caring practices but deeper understanding of the inconsistencies over which we have little control. As one of my participants remarked when attempting to make sense of one of her inconsistent caring practices, "It just made perfect sense to me...I probably didn't even think about it." Our tacit understandings are deeply embedded within us, informing and shaping our teaching and caring practices.

Engaging students in reflective exercises designed to further their professional growth is not a new idea. Whether through the use of electronic dialogue journals (Goldstein & Freedman, 2003), teaching metaphors (Bullough, 1991), or case study and narrative methods (Rosiek, 1994), teacher educators see such exercises as an opportunity for students to uncover, analyze, and reconsider their beliefs, assumptions, and values. In response to this study, I would suggest attention to reflective exercises that not only address what it means to care in teaching, but to venture into the new terrain of what it is about teaching that makes it difficult to care with consistency. Beginning with frank discussions about the challenges the teacher educator faces in caring is itself a caring practice (Sumsion, 2000), and honors the role of the student in the caring relationship. Such discussions could also lead to fascinating considerations regarding the relative similarities and differences between the challenges faced by teacher educators and other educators in maintaining consistent caring practices. Such reflection and dialogue would not only broaden our students' thinking about their own professors' caring practices but also help them begin to view caring in its fullest and most authentic sense.

I would suggest as a second incremental effort that a more critical pedagogical approach to the study of caring be considered in teacher education classes. Teacher

education is largely acritical, apolitical, and prescriptive in nature (Gordon, 1985), and placing caring under a critical lens allows us to effect change in the way we prepare teachers. I would suggest that by critically examining care as a construct, we can begin to hone the critical skills of our preservice teachers while demonstrating that any construct related to teaching is worthy fodder for critical examination.

By critically analyzing care, teacher educators and students alike can begin to scrutinize their own theoretical frameworks of care. As a result of this study, I believe that it is only my own caring that I can truly understand. That the "...critical perspective becomes the framework or lens through which they view and go about the practice of [caring]" (Gordon, 1985, p. 40) represents an exciting possibility for considering caring in teaching. And the results can be emancipating in the sense that, as we deconstruct, analyze, and re-incorporate caring into our pedagogical thinking, we free ourselves to consider caring in new ways...ways that are different than our own, ways that recognize idiosyncrasy and inconsistency.

To attempt a critical approach to examining care requires that we work with students to infuse critical inquiry into our discussions of caring. Extrapolating from Giroux's (1981) work on knowledge holds promise for a critical examination of caring. For instance, the following questions offer possibility for our critical examination and better understanding care and its inherent inconsistency:

What counts as caring in the classroom?

Who decides (legitimizes) what is caring?

How is such caring communicated in the classroom?

What kinds of social relationships serve to create caring relationships in the classroom?

Whose interest does this caring serve in the classroom?

In what ways can we mediate cultural contradictions in caring in the classroom?

How do prevailing methods of evaluation of students serve to legitimize/marginalize caring?

In what ways do any/all of these contribute to inconsistency in a teacher's caring practices?

I believe the consideration of such questions among teacher educators and students holds promise for our beginning to consider the nature of caring as well as the complexities that it represents. I also believe until we do so, we leave much of our capacities to care untapped.

I have no illusion that such critical examination of caring will be an easy task. I believe it will be fraught with challenges as teacher educators attempt to guide their students through discussions and reflective journaling about care in teaching. This research experience has taught me that my own beliefs about care were simplistic, and at times, unknown to me. My experiences as researcher revealed values or beliefs that had gone unarticulated but which demanded examination. Examining the incorporation of my own spiritual beliefs with my caring practices as well as my earlier racist approach to caring for inner city students in my classes added depth to my theoretical framework about caring as I progressed along this research journey. Not all of my questions have been answered, and I continue on the path of understanding what it means to care in teaching.

This study is in no way generalizable, nor would another researcher conducting my research have come to the same conclusions. While this study answered my research questions about my participants' caring practices, it raises other important questions to be considered. It is my hope that some of these questions about caring would be discussed through a critical approach such as the one offered above. Some of those questions are:

Who decides what is caring in a teaching relationship? Can a theorist, who is not an active participant in the relationship, determine whether or not the professor is caring, or that the preservice teacher and the teacher educator have a caring relationship? While Tex's attention to caring for the children in his own students' classrooms is at odds with Noddings' (1986) ideas about caring in teacher education, his students, nonetheless, consider him caring and cite his attention to their children as evidence of his caring. That research experience left me with the haunting questions of "Who is right? Do the opinions of care theorists weigh in more heavily than those participants in the caring relationship?" I cannot answer that question at this time. Other questions raised by this study are "Does each of us have an idiosyncratic focus in our caring practices, such as these three participants demonstrated?" If this study were replicated, would other teacher educator's demonstrate a focus in their caring practices?

What might the implications for teacher education be if we begin to think of caring as inherently inconsistent? Perhaps by doing so, we can respond to Greene's (1993) suggestion that caring become "a feeling, impassioned mode of thrusting into a resistant world together, a mode of remaking lived situations and devising meaningful projects in the face of obstacles that have to be named and surmounted if caring is to be achieved" (p. 35). Among our obstacles to be named and surmounted is the honest and complete examination of caring, including its characteristic of inconsistency.

A FINAL WORD

To me, one of the great challenges in conducting this discussion will be that it will require courage and integrity. The care literature, although growing, has yet to address inconsistency in caring, and uncharted terrain can be unsettling to those who are stakeholders. But forge ahead we must, asking questions not only about the nature of

caring but about what inconsistency in caring might mean for teacher education and teaching in general.

While the focus of this study has remained largely within the field of teacher education, I believe many of our challenges and possibilities remain salient for teachers in general. The nature of care does not change with the age of the learner, and our public schools face accountability and standardization issues as well as fiscal constraints not unlike those challenging teacher education programs.

Admitting that, as teacher educators, we are inconsistent in our caring may be a bitter pill for some to swallow. After all, we are considered “Master Teachers”, providing models for our students who will soon have their own classrooms. Will our admission that even our caring practices are inconsistent diminish our model for students? I think not. I believe Eisner (1997) would advocate celebrating the fullness and texture of our caring beliefs, and indeed our inconsistencies, naming them as more authentic examples of our expressions of caring. Perhaps by embracing our inconsistencies, we will not only meet Greene’s (1993) charge “to make visible somehow our incompleteness, our own internal dialogues” (p. 41) but also raise the overall quality of caring in teaching. Like teaching, caring is not a science, and we must embrace it as equally complicated, unpredictable, and inconsistent as the people engaged in the relationship.

If we operate from a premise that inconsistency is a fact of caring, and not simply a failure to care, there are striking implications for the way in which we approach preparing caring teachers. Pedagogical strategies that allow students to identify and reflect on inconsistencies would seem confirming and contributing to self-efficacy, as students look honestly at their caring practices and those of others doing, we can remain focused on the fact that “we are the professors who are modeling good teaching to

the next generation of teachers” (Thayer-Bacon, Arnold, & Stoots, 1998, p. 5), as well as examining critically and honestly what it means to care.

If we turn our heads, and continue to approach care in the same ways, discussing the same issues, we lose the exciting opportunities to begin to think about this commonly valued feature of good teaching in a new and promising way. If we opt, on the other hand, to embrace inconsistency in caring, I believe we can contribute to Greene’s (1993) challenge to respond to the imperative of care. Surely as we continue to consider caring in its fullest sense, we will begin to understand more clearly what it means to “open more benign spaces in our institutions...where people can make music together and where many different kinds of choices can be made and different languages discovered. It is in those spaces...that care must be pursued” (Greene, p. 34). Perhaps by contextualizing caring within its inherent characteristic of inconsistency, teacher educators and students together can negotiate a more authentic and useful definition of what it means to care in teaching...a definition that can inform and inspire generations of caring teachers.

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