

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: ROLE OF CARING IN THREE PHYSICAL
EDUCATION TEACHERS' CLASSROOM
ENVIRONMENTS

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Even the most caring teachers need to feel appreciated by their students. Noddings proposed a circle of care in which teachers develop a caring classroom environment and initiate care for students. A positive response from the student is required in order to close the circle of care. Although researchers have described the characteristics of caring teachers, there is little research to examine the diverse ways that students reciprocate.

The purpose of the current ethnographic research was to examine the class environments that physical education teachers created for their students. The research question that guided this study was: "What was the place of caring in three physical teachers' class environments."

To address the question, I conducted an ethnographic, multi-site, case study involving sixth-grade classes from three different middle schools in a suburban school district. In each school I observed one teacher teach two classes. I used

qualitative research to collect class observations and teacher and student interview data, focusing on the identification of interpersonal interactions between teachers and students. At the conclusion of the observation period, the three physical education teachers administered a 15 min. written questionnaire to all the students in their two classes. I also conducted one-on-one interviews with 28 students. After the student interviews, I conducted semi-structured interviews with each teacher. I analyzed data inductively and deductively using open, axial, and selective coding and adopted specific strategies to enhance the trustworthiness and transferability of these findings.

Results suggested that the three physical education teachers created and maintained effective classroom environments and held expectations for students associated with learning. However, each teacher's approach to teaching was unique and produced characteristic influences on student learning. The class environments maintained by the teachers led to a wide range of student responses. The students' satisfaction with the classroom environments seemed to be influenced by their interpretation of relationships with their teachers.

One physical education teacher in this study facilitated a variety of interpersonal interactions with students assisting each other in building skills and performing. This environment provided for interpersonal exchanges and relationships, closing the circle of care.

ROLE OF CARING IN THREE PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS'
CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENTS

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Dedication

To my family: my brother, Hyun-gi, and his family; my sister, Hyun-sook, and her family; my sister, Seong-eun, and her family; and my brother, Min-chul, and his family.

In the memory of my mother, Gong-soon Lee, and my father, Gwee-sop Bae.

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I have been honored to have the opportunity to work with stellar scholars Dr. Steven Selden who broadened my perspectives regarding school curriculum development and Dr. Patricia A. Alexander who introduced me to diverse new ways of thinking about cognitive learning theories. Also, I would like to thank my other committee members, Dr. Ang Chen and Dr. David Andrews for their guidance and helpful suggestions with my dissertation.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Caring relationships between teachers and students are essential parts of classroom experiences and are especially important to children who depend on nurturing relationships to grow and sustain their well being (Alder, 2002; Noddings, 1984, 1995; Pianta, 1999; Rogers & Webb, 1991; Thayer-Bacon, 2003, 2004; Van Sickle & Spector, 1996). Caring relationships are initiated and maintained by the teacher and allow individual students to receive caring in different ways (Noddings, 1984, 1992). These caring relationships provide students not only with an emotionally safe environment that facilitates participation in learning activities (Pianta, 1999; Tarlow, 1996; Wentzel, 1997), but also with a sense of being connected, respected, and valued by their teacher (Azzarito & Ennis, 2003; Dempsey, 1994; Gordon, Benner, & Noddings, 1996; Noddings, 1995; Tarlow, 1996).

Students, who experience positive, caring interactions with others, including teachers and peers, often feel safe and valued within educational environments and are more willing to engage in learning activities (Ennis, 1999; Margonis, 2004; Pianta, 1999; Tolley, 2009; Wentzel, 1994, 1997). Because these activities rely on the social dynamic and situational contexts in which students interact (Margonis, 2004), social interchanges in schools allow both students and teachers to develop reciprocal relationships that nurture growth and facilitate achievement (Beck, 1994; Chaskin & Rauner, 1995; Thayer-Bacon, 2004; Wentzel, 1997). A caring learning environment provides opportunities for children to be competent (Pianta, 1999). Relationships with teachers are an essential part of classroom experience for all students, and a potential resource for

improving developmental outcomes (Goodnow, 1993a, 1993b; McCroskey, 1992; Pianta, 1999; Rogers, 1994; Rogers & Webb, 1991; Teven & McCroskey, 1996; Thayer-Bacon, 2004; Wentzel, 1997).

Noddings (1984) proposed that teachers and schools focus the educational process within an Ethic of Care. The Ethic of Care is a philosophical perspective that describes the characteristics and role of caring teachers within the complex educational environment of schools. Caring teachers initiate acts of care within an environment that is characterized by commitment, engrossment, and a total focus on the student, described as the motivational shift. Within this environment, teacher-student relationships become central to the educational process. According to Margonis (2004), establishing educationally conducive relationships between teachers and students allows students to try new things without fear of criticism or failure. Regardless of the students' age, the relational process is indispensable to their successful school life (Noddings, 1992; Thayer-Bacon, 2004). Therefore, many scholars believe that meaningful and positive relationships are the preconditions for powerful learning and teaching (Birth & Ladd, 1997; Margonis, 2004; Pianta, 1999; Van Sickle & Spector, 1996).

It is important to identify the components that help teachers empower their students (Mercado, 1993) and to establish a positive atmosphere by building caring relationships in which positive social reactions can occur (Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Goodnow, 1993a; Tarlow, 1996; Tolley, 2009; Van Sickle & Spector, 1996). Teachers who provide emotional support help students engage in learning activities through different interactions (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Ennis, 1999; Pianta, 1999; Tolley, 2009; Yoon, 2002). Through this process, teachers can create a climate that facilitates student

engagement in learning activities (Bosworth, 1995; Ennis, 1999; Tarlow, 1996; Wentzel, 1997) and helps teachers forge connections between the experiences students bring to class and the subject matter (Ennis, 1999; Noddings, 1995). Since the relationships between teachers and students influence student learning (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Pianta, 1999; Yoon, 2002), it is important to identify how the teacher-student relationships are shaped within the Ethic of Care and the factors that determine the quality of those relationships (Van Sickle & Spector, 1996).

Theoretical Framework

Caring is a fundamental human need that includes a set of relational practices that foster mutual recognition, growth, and human community (Noddings, 1984). Caring for others is basic to education because of the complex interpersonal relationships that exist in school (Lyman, 2000; Noddings, 1992, 1996; Rogers & Webb, 1991). People need both to care for others and to be cared for (Noddings, 1984). Caring, however, requires different considerations, actions, and responses in diverse educational environments (Noddings, 1992; Rogers, 1994). Noddings has proposed the Ethic of Care as a vision of caring that informs educational philosophy statements and educators' individual educational philosophies based on the recognition of needs, relation, and responses (Noddings, 1984, 1992). Relationships are central to the practical application of the ethic of care. Practical application involves the circle of care, qualities of care, and strategies to enhance care. Applications of the ethic of care in educational settings involve developing caring relationships between students and teachers within a reciprocal circle of care (Noddings, 1984). Within this relationship, the student continues to grow as the

result of interpersonal exchanges and relationships, closing the circle of care (Chaskin & Rauner, 1995; Dempsey, 1994; Noblit, 1993; Noddings, 1984).

When caring teachers are actively involved in the caring process, they work to know their students as individuals (Alder, 2002; Tarlow, 1996), to increase their sensitivity to student needs (Dempsey, 1994), to act in the students' best interests (Noddings, 1984, 1992), to become emotionally invested in their well-being, (Beck, 1994), and to do something valuable for the persons cared for (Tarlow, 1996). The caring process is incomplete, however, until the student responds to the teacher's efforts (Dempsey, 1994; Noddings, 1992; Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996). Noddings describes this as the "circle of care."

Noddings (1984, 1992) maintained that caring relations within the circle of care are connections or encounters between two human beings she described as the one-caring teacher and the cared-for student. In schools, the "one caring" teacher initiates the relationship and works actively to sustain and nurture it within the complex school and relational environment (Dempsey, 1994; Ferreira, 1995; Lyman, 2002; Noddings, 1984). The "cared for" student responds to the efforts of the one-caring and acknowledges the one-caring's attention with appreciation, closing the circle of care (Noddings, 1984, 1992; Dempsey, 1994; Noddings, 1984; Tarlow, 1996; Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996; Tolley, 2009).

Caring teachers work actively to create and shape caring environments through the development of unique relationships with their cared for students (Demsey, 1994; Noddings, 1992, 1994; Pianta, 1999; Tarlow, 1996). Essential qualities of caring teachers include engrossment, commitment, and the motivational shift (Crigger, 2001;

Dempsey, 1994; McLaughlin, 1994; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Owens, 2000).

Engrossment, the first essential quality, provides a foundation for thinking about someone and developing a deep understanding of that person (Crigger, 2001, 2002; Noddings, 1984, 1992). Engrossment reflects “an open, non-selective receptivity to the cared-for” (Noddings, 1992, p.15). In an educational environment, engrossment occurs when teachers establish a caring relationship by accepting student feelings and acknowledging the relevance of student experiences before their own needs (Crigger, 2001; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Witherell & Noddings, 1991).

Commitment is the second essential quality. Similarly, committed teachers consider students’ ideas and seek to understand and accept their feelings (Noddings, 1984, 2002; Tarlow, 1996). Students’ shared experiences within a caring relationship are enhanced as students realize the teacher’s commitment to meet their needs and to understand and accept them as individuals (Dempsey, 1994; Noddings, 1984, 2002; Tarlow, 1996).

The third essential quality is motivational shift. The motivational shift occurs when teachers place a priority on students’ needs and interests and become focused on their well being both at school and throughout their lives (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Noddings, 1992; Tarlow, 1996). Therefore, the one-caring teacher establishes a climate that facilitates engrossment, commitment, and a motivational shift to the cared for student (Noddings, 1984). Taken together, engrossment, commitment, and motivational displacement encourage caring teachers to acquire skills that are instrumental to enhancing children’s development (Noddings, 1984).

Another important quality of the caring environment is receptivity. Receptivity enhances the relatedness that is fundamental to human reality (Noddings, 2002). The Ethic of Care involves receptivity as a quality of the one caring teacher within the circle of care in anticipation of better qualities in the one-cared for (Noddings, 1996, 2005). It is important for one caring teachers to establish a climate of receptivity (Noddings, 1996) by opening themselves to what the cared-for is saying and experiencing (Noddings, 1984, 1992; Tarlow, 1996; Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996; Tolley, 2009). Further, being receptive means being attentive in a special way (Hollingsworth, Dybdahl, & Minarik, 1992; Noddings, 1992). Receptive attention is an essential characteristic of a caring encounter (Noddings, 1992; Tarlow, 1996). Teacher awareness and response to students is important for the development and maintenance of mutual receptivity within the caring environment (Beck, 1992; Hayes, Ryan, & Zsellar, 1994; Tarlow, 1996).

Caring is embedded in reciprocal relationships related to a mutual sense of obligation and responsibility (Chaskin & Rauner, 1995; Gordon et al., 1996; Noddings, 1984; Tarlow, 1996). When caring teachers spend time and effort getting to know students and paying attention to them through conversation, the cared for person is more likely to respond, completing the reciprocal process (Flinders & Noddings, 2001; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Tarlow, 1996). Caring teachers expend great amounts of energy to nurture and benefit children (Noddings, 1996, 2002; Owens, 2000; Van Sickle & Spector, 1996; Tolley, 2009). These teachers, in turn, depend on students to respond positively to them to refresh and revitalize their teaching (Noddings, 1984, 1992; Rogers, 1994; Van Sickle & Spector, 1996). Therefore, when the conditions of schooling make caring possible, every student can learn in a caring environment with the nurturing of a

caring teacher. (Gordon et al., 1996; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Rogers, 1994; Witherell & Noddings, 1991).

“Caring requires continuity” (Noddings, 1992, p. 68). Teaching requires long periods of time to develop continuity in relation to educational experiences (Flinders & Noddings, 2001; Noddings, 1992). Therefore, it is important to facilitate continuity in relationships for ones caring and ones cared for to achieve a sense of belonging (Noddings, 1992, 1996). Given that the ongoing and mutual process of caring is based on understanding, personal interest, and attention (Gordon et al., 1996; Tarlow, 1996), it is important to consider continuity as an integral step in the development of caring relationships between students and teachers (Flinders & Noddings, 2001; Nodding, 1992, 2002). With time, teachers can cultivate relationships by sharing their interests with the students. Therefore, considering the value of continuity, teachers should remain the same students for several years by mutual consent (Flinders & Noddings, 2001; Noddings, 1992).

Students are more likely to interact with others, feel safe and secure, and engage actively in learning activities within a caring educational environment created by caring teachers (Goodenow, 1993a; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Pianta, 1999; Tarlow, 1996; Wentzel, 1994, 1997). Within this learning environment, caring teachers, who demonstrate how to care for others in different ways, provide opportunities for young children and adolescents, some of whom may not have a consistent, caring adult in their lives, to experience care and learn to value others who have different experiences (Dempsey, 1994, Noddings, 1984, 1992, Rogers, 1994). As a result, these students are more likely to increase their trust in and willingness to help each other (Ennis &

McCauley, 2002; Goodenow, 1993b; Larson, 2006; Tarlow, 1996; Van Sickle & Spector, 1996). In addition, students become excited about learning through interpersonal interactions in the caring environment and are willing to learn to work more cooperatively with others (Cohen & Hamilton, 2009; Devine & Cohen, 2007; Dewey, 1990; Goldstein, 1998; Mercado, 1993; Rogers & Webb, 1991; Tolley, 2009).

The responsiveness of the cared for can take many different forms (Goldstein, 1998; Tolley, 2009). For example, cared for students can respond by maintaining good behavior, engaging in the lesson, expressing thanks, or in other ways that the teacher recognizes as a form of appreciation for his or her efforts (Dempsey, 1994; Rogers, 1994; Rogers & Webb, 1991). These reciprocating responses to caring teachers have an important function, because they refresh and invigorate them (Goldstein, 1998; Noddings, 1984). It is important to examine students' responses to caring teachers, because their responses provide the impetus for continued caring (Goldstein, 1998, 2002; Noddings, 1984)

In learning environments, it is important to understand what care means to both students and teachers, and to identify the role of teachers with regard to relationships with their students (Bosworth, 1995; Gordon et al., 1996; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Owens, 2000; Rogers, 1994; Van Sickle & Spector, 1996; Tarlow, 1996). Therefore, understanding the interactive nature of the one caring teacher and one cared for student within a learning context is important to promote caring relationships that play important roles in students' overall well being (Gordon et al., 1996; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Rogers, 1994; Van Sickle & Spector, 1996; Witherell & Noddings, 1991).

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the current ethnographic research was to examine three physical education teachers' efforts to create unique class environments for their 6th grade students in three different middle schools. The research question that guided this study was: "what was the place of caring in three physical education teachers' class environments." The answer to this question is important because of the impact of the role of caring in physical education on six grade students' responses to class environments created by three physical education teachers and the nature of reciprocal relationships between these teachers and their 6th grade students. Further, it is likely that increased opportunities for positive interpersonal interactions between the teachers and students enable young students expand various educational experiences in relation to the relationship development and feelings of self-respect necessary for growth and learning at this important stage in their development.

Statement of the Research Question

In this research, I examined sixth-grade students' responses to a caring educational environment created by their teachers in physical education classes. In this research, I examined sixth-grade students' responses to different educational environments created by their teachers in physical education classes. Specifically, the research question that guided this study was, "What was the place of caring in three physical education teachers' class environments?" As the study progressed, it became clear that the teachers' goals varied depending on the situation and the student population in their classes. Furthermore, although all three teachers exhibited "a genuine desire to

uphold or enhance the general well being” of the students, creating a caring environment was never articulated as a goal for the teachers.

Assumptions of this Research

This research was conducted in three sixth-grade classes in three different middle schools. It was assumed that each site was unique because the learning contexts included different participants, social environments, and contextual factors that might shape students’ and teachers’ perceptions and understandings. Therefore, even though the selected sites exhibited similar characteristics, each site included unique characteristics of the participants and contexts for this study.

Secondly, since the participants from the sites were different (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982), I assumed that the participants’ perspectives on the caring environment would be unique cases reflecting the physical education class at each site. Furthermore, for the purposes of this study, I assumed that the participants’ perspectives would be based on every day experiences and interpersonal interactions within the dynamic learning situations specific to each site (Rogers, 1994).

Significance of the Study

Examining teachers and students’ responses to different classroom environments within instructional settings can contribute to our understanding of ways in which teachers create a caring environment for young students and adolescents. The results from this study were descriptions of students’ impressions of their teachers and the environment they created in middle school physical education. An understanding of students’ responses to these environments cannot only assist teachers to continue to nurture and sustain positive environments for students, but also foster students’ abilities

to reach out to their full potential for growth within the reciprocal circle of care (Noddings, 1984). As in any subject area, both the one caring and one cared for are reciprocally dependent in physical education. It is important for educators to acknowledge and value caring for students, demonstrate care, create a comfortable and emotionally safe environment for students, and acknowledge students' efforts to appreciate and respond to teachers' caring.

The results from this research can assist in-service and pre-service physical educators to understand characteristics of caring learning environments in physical education. This knowledge can enhance their understanding and ability to use teaching strategies that students describe as "caring for them." Since diverse students demonstrate a range of needs, some of which are directly related to the need to care and to be cared for, opportunities to discuss this critical need for caring with teachers can extend and confirm the value and need for care in their classrooms.

Limitations of the Study

I based this descriptive study on a qualitative multi-site case study approach. One goal of this qualitative research is to study school settings in which the participants interact with the context and with each other. The results reflect the participants' unique meanings in these specific instructional settings. Thus, my interpretations were limited to these populations. I addressed the threats to the trustworthiness of the research and verified the research findings through purposeful decisions associated with participant selection, data collection, and analysis protocols. However, I could not control other aspects of the setting left in their natural state. Therefore, I acknowledge that the

physical education environment studied may contain contextual limitations that are beyond my control as researcher.

Definitions of Major Terms

This section provides the definitions of the major terms and constructs guiding the research questions address in this study.

Caring. “Caring is a way of being in relation, not a set of specific behaviors” (Noddings, 1992, p. 17). Caring represents a genuine desire to uphold or enhance the general well being of another (Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Noddings, 1992).

Caring relation. A caring relation is “a connection or encounter between two human beings - the one caring and the cared for” (Noddings, 1992, p. 15).

Circle of care. The circle of care is initiated by the one caring teacher and is completed when the recipient of care, described as the cared for, responds to the efforts of the one-caring and acknowledges the one-caring’s attention with appreciation (Noddings, 1984, 1992).

Commitment. Teachers become committed to their students and choose to include students’ ideas and seek to understand and accept their feelings (Noddings, 1984, 2002; Tarlow, 1996). Commitment is a conviction that there is nothing that takes precedence over the responsibility to care (Noddings, 1984).

Confirmation. Confirmation is an act of affirming and encouraging the best in others (Buber, 1965). Confirmation occurs as a response to individual needs within a foundation of relationship and trust (Noddings, 1992).

Connection. A connection is a mutual emotional relationship that facilitates development of an understanding of each person's particular attributes and needs (Noddings, 2002).

Continuity. Continuity of teaching represents a period of time in which the teacher maintains close relationships with the student, such as during one or more years of instruction. Flinders and Noddings explain that caring teachers need to work closely with students over long time periods to get to know and understand their unique needs and interests (Flinders & Noddings, 2001; Noddings, 1992).

Dialogue. Dialogue is not just talk or conversation, but facilitates "a common search for understanding, empathy, and appreciation" (Noddings, 1992, p. 22).

Engrossment. Engrossment is open, non-selective receptivity to the cared-for (Noddings, 1992, p.15). Engrossment refers to thinking about someone and developing a deep understanding of that person (Noddings, 1984).

Ethic of Care. The ethic of care is a philosophy or morality based on the recognition of needs, relation, and response (Noddings, 1992). It falls within the category of relational ethics (Noddings, 1984). A relation is defined as a connection between individuals characterized by an affective awareness in each (Gordon et al., 1996; Thayer-Bacon, 2004).

Growth. One grows by actualizing oneself through interpersonal interaction and connection in educational contexts (Gordon et al., 1996; Mayeroff, 1971).

Modeling Care. Modeling is demonstrating how to care for others (Noddings, 1992).

Motivational displacement. Motivation displacement is the sense that the one caring's motive energy is flowing toward others and their projects (Noddings, 1992, p. 16).

The one caring is seized by the needs of one cared for and focuses on what to do to help one cared for (Noddings, 1992).

Motivational Shift. The motivational shift is a developmental change in the teacher's viewpoint. The motivational shift occurs when teachers place a priority on student's needs and interests and become focused on their well-being both at school and throughout their lives (Noddings, 1992; Tarlow, 1996).

One cared for. The individual who is the focus of the caring teacher's attention is the one-cared for (Noddings, 1992).

One caring. An individual who demonstrates both appropriate actions and intentions associated with giving is described as the one-caring (Noddings, 1992). The one caring feels an obligation toward the other, the cared for, in a relationship (Noddings, 1984).

Practicing Care. Practice is the provision of opportunities for students to learn how to care for others by initiating expressions of attitudes that enhance human connectedness and human concerns within the large context in which caring occurs (Gordon et al., 1996; Noddings, 1992).

Receiving. Receiving involves openness and a willingness to accept another's reality uncritically (Beck, 1994, p. 13).

Receptivity. Receptivity is a conscious effort to receive others, uncritically and unconditionally (Noddings, 1992). Receptivity is an essential characteristic of a caring encounter that enhances the relatedness that is fundamental to human reality (Noddings, 1992; Tarlow, 1996).

Reciprocal Relationships/ Reciprocity. A reciprocal relationship is a mutual process of supportive and affective interchanges and a mutual sense of obligation and responsibility (Beck, 1992; Dempsey, 1994; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Tarlow, 1996; Witherell & Noddings, 1991, 2002).

Relation. A relation is a connection between individuals characterized by an affective awareness in each (Gordon et al., 1996).

Relational Knowing. Knowledge that teachers learn and know about themselves, their students, and the subject matter gained as a result of their relationships with students while engaged in teaching (Hollingsworth et al., 1992; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Thayer-Bacon, 2003, 2004).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

All people have a basic need to connect or relate to others (Goldstein, 1999; Gordon et al., 1996; Noddings, 1984; Tarlow, 1996). Human relationships based on interpersonal connections are the most important component in happiness (Noddings, 2002, 2005). Children appear to feel this need even more strongly than adults (Goodenow, 1993a; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Pianta, 1999). When children are fortunate enough to feel secure and strongly attached to loving and caring adults and peers, they are free to engage constructively in new interactions and activities (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Goldstein, 2002; Lyman, 2000). Conversely, because interpersonal connection based on an ethic of caring is a critical part of the development of learning climates essential for student success (Gordon et al., 1996; Noddings, 1984), the lack of interpersonal connection leads to negative results, such as decreasing interest and academic disengagement (Cothran & Ennis, 1998, 1999; Pianta, 1999; Wentzel, 1994, 1997).

Given that caring fosters students' emotional and intellectual growth (Hayes et al., 1994; Thayer-Bacon, 2003, 2004), teachers can enhance children's feelings of emotional safety and sense of connection by providing classroom environments in which children can share common interests and interact positively with peers and teachers (Alder, 2002; Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Davis, 2003, 2006; Devine & Cohen, 2007; Ennis, Solmon, Satina, Loftus, Mensch, & McCauley, 1999; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Hollingsworth et al., 1993; Newberry & Davis, 2008; Tarlow, 1996; Wentzel, 1997). This sense of connection has been described by Noddings as central to an ethic of care (Noddings, 1984, 1992).

After a brief description of caring, I review the literature on educational caring in six categories: (a) Nodding's Ethic of Care, (b) characteristics of caring environments, (c) teachers' understanding of care, (d) qualities of caring relationships, (e) teachers' strategies to enhance caring relationships, (f) students' perceptions of caring teachers.

Caring

Caring has been described in many ways. Caring is a fundamental human need and therefore is basic to education (Hayes et al., 1994; Lyman, 2000; Noddings, 1992, 1996; Rogers & Webb, 1991). Caring is an ongoing and mutual process based on unconditional acceptance of another and associated with a desire to help (Gordon et al., 1996; Noddings, 1984; Tarlow, 1996). People need to care for and be cared for by others (Noddings, 1984). Gordon, Benner and Noddings (1996) define "caring not as a psychological state or innate attribute, but as a set of relational practices that foster mutual recognition and realization, growth, development, protection, empowerment, and human community, culture, and possibility" (1996, p.13). Although everyone needs caring, caring requires different considerations and flexibility in different environments (Noddings, 1992; Rogers, 1994). Noblit and Rogers (1995) confirmed this by pointing out that caring was received by each individual in different ways. Because people cannot stop caring about someone cared for, caring is not a matter of free choice.

Noddings' Ethic of Care

Noddings (1992) described school relational experiences between teachers and students within an "Ethic of Care." She defined Ethic of Care as a philosophy or morality based on the recognition of needs, relation, and response. Relationships were important to the practical application of the ethic of care. Practical application was also

composed of the circle of care, qualities of care, and strategies to enhance care.

Applications of the Ethic of Care in educational settings involved developing caring relationships between students and teachers within a reciprocal circle of care.

Caring teachers were actively involved in the work of caring. Specifically, they could work to know their students as individuals (Alder, 2002; Tarlow, 1996), to increase their sensitivity to student needs (Dempsey, 1994), to act in the students' best interests (Noddings, 1984, 1992), to become emotionally invested in their well-being, (Beck, 1994; Noddings, 1995), and to do something valuable for the persons cared for (Tarlow, 1996). The caring process was incomplete, however, until the person cared for responded to the one caring's efforts (Dempsey, 1994; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996).

Research suggested that students taught within a caring environment tended to think of their teacher as a helper (Bosworth, 1995; Hayes et al., 1994; Larson, 2006; Ravizza, 2005; Tarlow, 1996; Tolley, 2009). Students' perceptions of teacher caring were increased when teachers demonstrated interest in the students' personal well-being (Bosworth, 1995; Hayes et al., 1994; Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996) and provide emotional support (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Goodenow, 1993a, 1993b; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Hayes et al., 1994; Ravizza, 2005; Tarlow, 1996; Wentzel, 1994, 1997).

Noddings (1984, 1995) described the Ethic of Care within the category of relational ethics. A relation was defined as a connection between individuals characterized by an affective awareness in each (Crigger, 2001; Gordon et al., 1996; Hayes et al., 1994; McLaughlin, 1991, 1994; Thayer-Bacon, 2004). In addition to interpersonal connection, relationships could be characterized by various emotions, such as feelings of closeness

and acceptance, and a sense of interdependence in relation to others (Noddings, 1988; Tarlow, 1996). Thus, according to relational ethics, a form of caring was found in all relations including interpersonal connections, behaviors, and feelings (Gordon et al., 1996; Noddings, 1988, 1992; Thayer-Bacon, 2003, 2004; Witherell & Noddings, 1991).

Characteristics of Caring Environments

Scholars explained that caring was the central factor enabling teachers to know their students (Dempsey, 1994; Noddings, 1992; Tarlow, 1996; Webb & Blond, 1995) and to create an atmosphere conducive to learning (Lipsitz, 1984; Lyman, 2000; Noddings, 1996; Witherell & Noddings, 1991; Tolley, 2009). In this section, I described three factors necessary to promote caring relationships involving interpersonal exchanges: (a) the circle of care, (b) growth of the cared for, and (c) qualities of caring teachers (Chaskin & Rauner, 1995; Dempsey, 1994; Lyman, 2000; Noblit, 1993; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Tarlow, 1996; Witherell & Noddings, 1991).

The Circle of Care

Noddings (1984, 1992) suggested that a caring relation was a connection or encounter between two human beings she described as the “one-caring” and the “cared-for.” In the circle of care, the one caring initiated the relationship and worked actively to sustain and nurture it within the complex relational environment in school (Dempsey, 1994; Ferreira, 1995; Lyman, 2002; Noddings, 1984). The recipient of care, described as the “cared for” responded to the efforts of the one-caring and acknowledged the one-caring’s attention with appreciation, closing the circle of care (Noddings, 1984, 1992). In schools, teachers could choose to assume the one-caring role, reaching out to students in a nurturing relationship (Lyman, 2000; Noddings, 1984). To complete the caring

relation, students respond as the “cared-for” by relating and responding to the teacher’s care (Dempsey, 1994; Noddings, 1984, 1996; Tarlow, 1996; Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996; Tolley, 2009).

Growth of the Cared For

People have a fundamental need to relate and depend on each other (Noddings, 1984, 1992; Pianta, 1999). Caring is a basic requirement for growth and development (Beck, 1994; Hayes et al., 1994; Mayeroff, 1971; Thayer-Bacon, 1993; Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996), and is implemented by exchanges between the one caring and the cared for over time (Dempsey, 1994; Noddings, 1984, 2002; Witherell & Noddings, 1991; Tarlow, 1996). In educational environments, teachers demonstrate care through attentiveness to individual students’ needs, helping students achieve (Alder, 2002; Bosworth, 1995; Noddings, 1992; Tarlow, 1996; Wentzel, 1997) and interact positively with others (Alder, 2002; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Osterman, 2000; Tolley, 2009; Witherell & Noddings, 1991).

Mayeroff (1971) wrote that children, in turn, actualized themselves and grew by caring for others. Through interpersonal growth and connection in educational contexts (Beck, 1994; Davis, 2006; Dempsey, 1994; Gordon et al., 1996; Lyons, 1990; Noblit & Rogers, 1995; Thayer-Bacon, 2003, 2004), the one cared for could learn and gain different educational experiences (Noddings, 1992, 2003; Thayer-Bacon, 2004; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). A caring environment give the one caring a sense of being ready to help the one cared for (Lyman, 2000; Noddings, 1995, 1996; Tarlow, 1996). Growth continues in encounters with others (Noddings, 1984). Understanding the importance of the complicated linkage of individuals in relationships to ways of knowing and learning

is critical to understanding teacher-student interactions (Davis, 2003, 2006; Dempsey, 1994; Hollingsworth et al., 1993; Lyons, 1990; Noddings, 1996; Osterman, 2000; Pianta, 1999; Thayer-Bacon, 2003, 2004). Thus, many educators agree that caring encourages students' growth and learning (Beck, 1992; Hayes et al., 1994; Mayeroff, 1971).

Qualities of Caring Teachers

The most important characteristic of caring environments is the presence of a caring teacher. One caring teachers develops unique relationships with their cared for students (Demsey, 1994; Noddings, 1992, 1994; Pianta, 1999; Tarlow, 1996). The qualities of caring teachers, described as engrossment, commitment, and the motivational shift, are essential to relationships based on the Ethic of Care (Crigger, 2001; Dempsey, 1994; McLaughlin, 1994; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Owens, 2000).

Engrossment. "Caring involves stepping out of one's own personal frame of reference into the other's" (Noddings, 1984, p. 24). Engrossment necessary for caring requires the attention needed to understand the position of the other (Chase-Lansdale, Wakschlag, & Brooks-Gunn, 1995; Crigger, 2001; Noddings, 1984). The attention of the one caring is focused on the other to consider the other's point of view (Crigger, 2001; Goldstein, 1999; Noddings, 1984; Tarlow, 1996). According to Noddings (1984), engrossment refers to thinking about someone and developing a deep understanding of that person. It is similar to Mayeroff's devotion (1971) or the concept of emotional investment (Beck, 1994). In an educational environment, engrossment occurs when a teacher establishes a caring relationship by accepting student feelings and acknowledging the relevance of student experiences (Noddings, 1984, 1995). Engrossment develops as teachers become absorbed in a student's needs instead of their own needs (Crigger, 2001;

Noddings, 1984; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Engrossment centers on the student's need to be accepted or valued (Noddings, 1984, 1992). Teachers develop engrossment in their students' lives by modeling, using dialogue, and confirming their students as valued individuals with different personalities, individual preferences, and unique characteristics (Noddings, 1984, 1992, 2005).

Commitment. The second quality of care demonstrated by caring teachers is a commitment to the cared for (Noddings, 1984). Teachers become committed to their students through the process of engrossment, (Noddings, 1984). Committed teachers consider students' ideas and seek to understand and accept their feelings (Noddings, 1984, 2002; Tarlow, 1996). Beck (1994) affirmed that commitment shifts caring from being a conditional act toward being an unconditional act by acceptance and nurturance. Students' shared experiences within a caring relationship are enhanced as students realize the teacher's commitment to meet their needs and to understand and accept them as individuals (Dempsey, 1994; Noddings, 1984, 2002; Tarlow, 1996; Tolley, 2009). When teachers behave ethically as the one-caring, they meet students directly in genuine encounters of caring and being cared for (Noddings, 1984, 1992). In each caring relationship, there is commitment to act on behalf of the cared for (Noddings, 1994; Tarlow, 1996), and there is choice in relation to the one caring's standings (Noddings, 1984). The commitment is to the one cared for and reflects the teachers' own continual receptivity (Noddings, 1984, 1992). Therefore, caring is an ethic that required commitment and continuity (Bosworth, 1995; Flinders & Noddings, 2001; Noddings, 1984, 1996; Tarlow, 1996).

Motivational shift. Commitment or engrossment alone is not sufficient for ethical caring. As one caring teachers become engrossed in and committed to the cared for students, they experience a shift in their motivation to attend to the cared for student even before their own needs (Noddings, 1984, 1992). The motivational shift occurs when the one-caring's behavior is largely determined by the needs of the person for whom she or he is caring (Noddings, 1992). That is, it occurs as teachers became engrossed and committed to their students (Noddings, 1984, 1992). It is reflected in a developmental change in the teacher's viewpoint and demonstrated in the teacher's ability to see the world from the student's point of view (Goldstein, 1998; Noddings, 1992; Tarlow, 1996). As a result of the motivational shift, teachers' responses vary with different situations and in various contexts (Noddings, 1984, 1992). Teachers place a priority on student's needs and interests and become focused on their well being both at school and throughout their lives (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Noddings, 1992; Tarlow, 1996). As teachers in the role of the one-caring become engrossed and committed to their students, they are more likely to devote attention to thinking about, negotiating, and carrying out actions in the interest of their students (Noddings, 1992, 1995; Tarlow, 1996). Therefore, the one-caring teacher establishes a climate that facilitates engrossment, commitment, and a motivational shift to the cared for student (Noddings, 1984). Taken together, engrossment, commitment, and motivational displacement encourage caring teachers to acquire skills that are instrumental to enhancing children's development (Noddings, 1984).

Owens (2000) discusses motivation shift as a quality of caring teachers. Her' research described the motivational shift as experienced by caring physical education teachers. Owens (2000) examined how teachers experienced a motivational shift and

what factors and experiences were influential as they worked toward achieving a motivational shift. The qualitative research methodology of narrative inquiry was utilized. Participants were three master teachers and the researcher, all of whom were aware of and valued an Ethic of Care in their teaching. Data were collected from the researcher's daily log, a series of structured interviews with each participant, and electronic interactive journaling between each participant and the researcher.

Individual narrative case studies were developed to portray these teachers' stories. The focus of Owens' research was on the teachers' realization of their motivational shift and the ethic of care in their teaching. To analyze the data, Owens (2000) used analytic induction and constant comparison. She identified four themes that traced the development of the motivational shift in these teachers' consciousness. Specifically, she discovered that these participants wanted to become teachers during childhood, suggesting that experience of motivational shift begins quite early in life. Theme two centered on the fact that each teacher reported that she or he had experienced caring role models from their parents and teachers who cared for them. Additionally, they emphasized how becoming parents themselves had heightened their awareness of care and the important role that it played in every child's life. Theme four documented how these teachers were influenced by professional development opportunities to become the one caring teachers.

Owens (2000) demonstrated that while teaching and being engrossed in the students, the teachers, as the ones caring, experienced motivation shifts that enabled them to meet the needs of their students. She described the teachers' decisions for students, caring role models, and becoming one caring. In the process of describing their

experiences, the teachers used four themes to explain their motivational shift and to enhance their insight into the process through which they model and demonstrate the Ethic of Care. This supports Noddings' work (1984, 1992) that asserted that many identified caring behaviors were comprised of some actions of the one cared for to further engrossment with their students.

Receptivity. Receptivity enhances the relatedness that is fundamental to human reality (Noddings, 1996, 2002). The Ethic of Care involves receptivity as a quality of the one caring teacher within the circle of care in anticipation of better qualities in the one-cared for (Noddings, 1996, 2005). That is, the teacher makes an effort to receive students (Noddings, 1984; Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996) and reflects on the ways their students may receive caring (Noddings, 1984, 1996). Noddings (1984) explained, “when I receive the other, I am totally with the other” (p. 32). Beck (1994) indicated, “when one opens to receive another, she or he begins to assume responsibility for the other’s welfare” (p. 20).

Furthermore, being receptive means being attentive in a special way (Hollingsworth et al., 1992, Noddings, 1992, 2002). Considering that receptive attention is an essential characteristic of a caring encounter (Noddings, 1992, 1996; Tarlow, 1996), it is important for the one caring to establish a climate of receptivity by opening to what the cared-for is saying and experiencing (Noddings, 1984, 1992; Tarlow, 1996; Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996). Teacher responses to students are important for the development and maintenance of mutual receptivity within the caring environment (Beck, 1992; Hayes et al., 1994; Tarlow, 1996).

Tarlow (1996) conducted research that described the role of reciprocity in a caring environment. The purpose of the study was to describe ways that students and teachers

defined caring teachers. The research was conducted at one urban and one rural vocational high school and involved three participant sub-samples: families, schools, and voluntary agencies. A total of 84 participant interviews were analyzed. Caring was found to be a process and a phenomenon associated with the amount of time individuals could be with each other. Eight caring concepts emerged: time, being there, talking, sensitivity, acting in the best interest of the other, caring as feeling, caring as doing, and reciprocity. Significantly, both the teachers and the students recognized the importance of extended periods of time together for enhancing reciprocal relationships. Tarlow (1996) reported that students defined the caring teacher as one who was present, who was ready to help, who talked to them, and who was sensitive to their needs. In educational settings, teachers used particular activities to facilitate student learning. They considered student interests in the selection of activities, based on reciprocal relationships. These carefully selected activities made it possible to negotiate mutually supportive interchanges within the circle of care.

Caring is embedded in reciprocal relationships related to a mutual sense of obligation and responsibility (Chaskin & Rauner, 1995; Gordon et al., 1996; Noddings, 1984; Tarlow, 1996). When caring teachers spend time and effort getting to know students and paying attention to them through conversation, the cared for person is more likely to respond, completing the reciprocal process (Flinders & Noddings, 2001; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Tarlow, 1996). Thus, caring is an ongoing process of supportive, affective, and instrumental interchanges embedded in reciprocal relationships described as a time continuum (Dempsey, 1994; Flinders & Noddings, 2001; Gordon et al., 1996; Noddings, 1984; Rogers, 1994; Tarlow, 1996; Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996).

Continuity. “Caring requires continuity” (Noddings, 1992, p. 68). Teaching requires long periods of time to develop continuity in relation to educational experiences (Flinders & Noddings, 2001; Noddings, 1992). Therefore, it is necessary to attend and facilitate continuity in relationships for caregivers and receivers to achieve a sense of belonging (Noddings, 1992, 1996). Given that the ongoing and mutual process of caring is based on understanding, personal interest, and attention (Gordon et al., 1996; Tarlow, 1996; Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996), it is necessary to consider continuity as an integral step in the development of caring relationships between students and teachers (Flinders & Noddings, 2001; Nodding, 1992, 2002; Rogers & Webb, 1991). Tarlow (1996) found that increased time together was an integral part of the relationships between teachers and students in educational environments. The more time both teachers and students had to get to know each other, the more easily teachers noticed the needs and interests of students (Noddings, 1984, 1992; Tarlow, 1996; Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Chaskin and Rauner (1995) explained that schools can be a place for the promotion of caring by providing teachers with extended time to teach the same students. With time, teachers can cultivate relationships by sharing their interests with the students. Therefore, considering the value of continuity, they recommended that both teachers and students should remain together for several years by mutual consent (Flinders & Noddings, 2001; Noddings, 1992, 1996; Witherell & Noddings, 1991).

Teachers’ Understanding of Caring

Several studies have described how teachers defined the concept of caring in classrooms (Alder, 2002; Dempsey, 1994; Tarlow, 1996; Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996). This research focused on identifying the ways teachers regard caring in relation to

improving student learning within a classroom environment (Thayer-Bacon, 1993; Wentzel, 1997). In this section, the concept of caring defined by teachers or prospective teachers is discussed in relation to caring beliefs in an attempt to reconcile caring with a need to control student behavior within school contexts.

Caring Beliefs

Dempsey (1994) conducted an ethnographic study examining how ten elementary teachers defined the concept of caring in classrooms. All the teachers considered caring an important element of good teaching. Within the school population of 300, 65% of the students were African American, while 35% were white. Research teams spent one day per week during the school year observing classrooms. The researcher individually interviewed 10 teachers whose classes ranged from kindergarten to fifth grade. The purpose of the interviews was to identify how future professional staff development efforts might be improved by basing them on teachers' everyday lives. The researcher asked the teachers to describe examples of good teaching and good lessons. Each interview concluded with questions about what they give and get in their work and what motivates them to keep working. The focus of the study was on teachers' relationships with children and the contexts in which they teach. Dempsey (1994) reported that the teachers understood these relationships in terms of caring, loving children, respecting children, being sympathetic, knowing the children, and understanding the children.

In conclusion, the researcher identified the teachers' reflections on the nature of good teaching and the knowledge with which they work. The study showed that connections, relationships, and caring are very much a part of the knowledge base of teaching. The teachers participating in the research defined their work based on their

daily working lives. As a result of the study, Dempsey (1994) concluded that teacher knowledge was constructed in diverse ways, such as within contexts, relationships, and shared experiences.

Caring teachers often express need to get to know students and the circumstances surrounding their lives. They do this through communicating with them in ways that are relevant and meaningful to the students on their level (Tarlow, 1996; Teven & McCroskey, 1996). Communication allows teachers to comprehend the students' environment and enables them to help the children relate to the subject matter, become interested in the world, and acquire skills in finding information (Noddings, 1992). Dempsey (1994) maintained that the teachers received satisfaction during the lessons from the students' responses to their questions and comments within these interchanges. This lent further support to the value of student responses as critical to the concept of reciprocal relationships within the circle of caring. When students become excited about their learning, teachers feel a sense of accomplishment (Dempsey, 1994). Much of the knowledge on which teachers rely is constructed in the context of relationships (Dempsey, 1994; Ferreira, 1995) and shared experiences (Thayer-Bacon, 2003, 2004). This contextual knowledge offers teachers the fundamental base on which they could know and understand the relational aspects of their experiences with children (Thayer-Bacon, 2004). Dempsey (1994) explained that caring teachers understand the need to be flexible, communicate, and establish fair and productive control with students. In addition, they emphasized that it was necessary for students to be in a caring environment that provides an opportunity for them to promote a deeper understanding of connections and relationships.

Teachers interviewed in Dempsey's (1994) research described their relationships with the students as central to their feeling of connection. In the study, Dempsey suggested that teachers share their experiences with their students because "teaching requires connection between students and teachers that cultivates interdependency between student and teacher" (1994, p. 102). Dempsey (1994) also asserted that teachers' ability to involve themselves in the children's world depended on the presence of caring in the joint experiences that students and teachers shared. In these classrooms, attention, response, and communication contributed to the construction of an atmosphere of care (Tarlow, 1996; Thayer-Bacon, 1993). Thus, care was grounded in the experiences teachers shared with their students.

Caring educators aim to encourage their students to develop critical thinking skills necessary to accomplish academic tasks in learning situations (Thayer-Bacon, 1993; Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996) and challenge their students intellectually (Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996). They provide students with opportunities to engage in dialogue to learn more about themselves and others (Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996; Tolley, 2009). Caring educators are committed to reaching out to students within an Ethic of Care (Noddings, 1984). They are receptive to what students were saying and empathize with their issues and concerns (Noddings, 1984; 1992; Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996).

Thayer-Bacon and Bacon (1996) described views of a caring teacher as one who was willing to spend time with students and treat them as valued members of a learning community. In the study, Thayer-Bacon and Bacon (1996) asserted that caring professors wanted students to feel safe and to trust that their thoughts and ideas were respected. Professors could help students make connections that increased their understanding. The

findings of this study were consistent with Noddings' ethic of caring (1984, 1992) and Mayeroff's approach to learning (1971).

In research examining the belief structures of student teachers, Goldstein and Lake (2000) examined the caring beliefs of 17 undergraduate students who expressed a commitment to the development of caring teaching and the creation of caring classrooms. In their study, each student teacher was asked to write on topics related to the role of caring in their classroom experiences. These weekly writings, an integral part of the structure of this course, occurred in the form of exchanges between each student and the teacher educator via e-mail during the semester. Each student's work was coded and analyzed to identify the student teachers' conceptions of caring. Goldstein and Lake (2000) demonstrated that, although most student teachers considered that caring was very important when teaching children, they believed that caring was a natural talent or a personality trait necessary to be a good teacher. This represented an essentialist viewpoint on teaching. Goldstein and Lake (2000) concluded that these attitudes reflected the student teachers' ideal images of teachers they hoped to become or their personal standards of good teaching practices. The researchers suggested that it may be necessary for teacher educators to help student teachers become aware of the process of becoming a caring teacher, although it may contradict their prior beliefs. Goldstein and Lake (2000) pointed out that student teachers who were aware of the complexity of this process developed a more complex and sophisticated understanding of caring. These researchers urged teacher educators to be flexible and use different strategies to enhance student teachers' understandings of the role of caring in classrooms.

Reconciling Caring with Control

McLaughlin (1994) examined how student teachers felt about the student teaching experience and what they learned from it. One female participant was selected from three student teachers experiencing tension between caring and control. She struggled with the interplay of establishing the teacher's legitimate classroom authority and creating a caring environment in the classroom. In particular, over time she became emotionally exhausted while trying to establish an appropriate atmosphere for student learning. McLaughlin explained that the student teacher wanted to be personally affectionate with students and to be cared for within reciprocal relationships (McLaughlin, 1991, 1994), while also needing power to control some aspects of teaching. The student teacher experienced tensions between wanting to care by establishing personal relationships with students and needing to control the students who dominated or disrupted classroom interactions (McLaughlin, 1991).

In educational settings, teachers at times struggle to exert moral authority but become confused by the conflict between wanting to care and needing to control (Noblit, 1993). This conflict interferes with the teacher's efforts to engage in dialogue, practice caring, and confirm students (McLaughlin, 1991, 1994). Dealing with this conflict could lead to changing ways to teach children. For example, McLaughlin (1991) suggested that the process of caring could be enacted with individuals during a lesson and could allow both the student teacher and the students to engage in a shared construction of knowledge (Dempsey, 1994; Thayer-Bacon, 2003, 2004). This required that classroom caring encompass both the relevancy of the subject matter and the challenge of the activities (McLaughlin, 1991, 1994). It was clear that one condition for caring was a teacher's

openness to learning from students through genuine dialogue (Dempsey, 1994; McLaughlin, 1994; Noddings, 1984; Rogers, 1994; Tarlow, 1996). These are not easy to enact within educational settings (McLaughlin, 1994; Noblit, 1993). Therefore, a condition necessary for the development of teacher-student relationships is preparation for positive interpersonal interactions (Osterman, 2000; Pianta, 1999). McLaughlin (1991) pointed out that interpersonal relationships with students contribute to the establishment of caring as well as to enhancing classroom control.

Authority in the classroom could be transferred from the teacher to the students, themselves depending on the classroom structure teachers created (McLaughlin, 1991; Mercado, 1993; Noblit, 1993). McLaughlin (1991) indicated that control without caring limited the teacher's understanding of a student's motivations for learning and also limited the student's positive reaction to the teacher's instruction. Ethical caring also enabled teachers to empower their students to set limits and to establish the classroom atmosphere by creating the environment in which positive social reactions could occur.

Weinstein (1998) explored prospective teachers' conceptions of caring and order based on the responses to a teacher beliefs survey. Weinstein (1998) indicated the necessity for student teachers to understand different ways that positive interpersonal relationships contributed to order. In this research, the student teachers, who had had little formal coursework on classroom management, thought about achieving order in terms of management rather than interpersonal relationships. On the other hand, they saw caring as an interpersonal relationship. Further, the student teachers tended to emphasize the age group they planned to teach. For example, students registered in the secondary education program emphasized both caring and order more than those in the

elementary education program. In contrast, students registered in elementary education program stressed more often interpersonal and management strategies (Weinstein, 1998).

Caring entails both effective teaching and creating safe and productive classrooms for students (Bosworth, 1995; Gordon et al., 1996). Weinstein (1998) encouraged teacher educators to help student teachers become aware of the process of becoming a caring teacher. To that end, student teachers needed to understand how ethical caring could enable them to empower their students to set boundaries and to establish the classroom atmosphere by creating positive interactions that contribute to caring relationships (McLaughlin, 1994; Osterman, 2000). Teacher educators need to be flexible, using a range of strategies to assist prospective teachers to understand the role of caring in classrooms and develop broader and inclusive notions of both caring and order within a caring environment (Goldstein & Lake, 2000; McLaughlin, 1991; Weinstein, 1998).

Both teachers and students agreed on the necessity of maintaining control in the classroom (Alder, 2002). Tarlow (1996) reported that both teachers and students recognized the importance of extended time to develop a caring atmosphere to enable the teachers to consider and support the interests of the students without the need for direct controlling measures (Alder, 2002; Dempsey, 1994). This facilitated the development of reciprocal relationships that free students to express their ideas within an effective and orderly classroom (Mercado, 1993; Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996).

Continuing the examination of research on the role of control within caring environments, Alder (2002) examined how caring relationships are created and maintained between urban middle school students and teachers. This research focused on the participants' personal meanings that contributed to the development of caring

relationships. Two teachers and 12 students from two classes participated in the study. Students' perceptions demonstrated the importance of caring in their relationship with their teachers. Alder (2002) reported that most students assumed all teachers cared for them. However, the students viewed caring teachers as getting to know their students well through communication, teaching to understand schoolwork, and holding high expectations for students. Thus, the students were interpreting the caring behavior of traditional teachers. For example, these urban students considered a caring teacher as willing to be strict for the students' academic success and to help them to concentrate on their work. Similar to students' perceptions of caring, the teachers showed the traditional desire to maintain classroom control to help most students get the work done.

Student Teachers' and Teachers' Understanding of Caring in Physical Education

There were barriers to creating a caring environment for students in physical education. Lack of instructional time allocated to physical education in elementary schools, for example, could limit teachers' opportunities to get to know students and understand their needs (Flinders & Noddings, 2001; Noddings, 1984; Tarlow, 1996). In addition, there were previously reported findings of conflict between teachers' desire to develop a caring environment and the need to maintain control in the classroom (Lee & Ravizza, 2008; McLaughlin, 1991; Noblit, 1993; Weinstein, 1998). For example, Lee and Ravizza (2008) examined how four physical education student teachers defined teachers' caring during the lesson. The student teachers believed that effective teaching and concern for student achievement of learning outcomes were major caring roles. This belief was described as pedagogical caring. Lee and Ravizza (2008) regarded lack of time to interact and tensions between caring and control as barriers to pedagogical caring.

In physical education, the duration of teaching time limited teachers' opportunities to establish interpersonal relationship with students. This was consistent with Tarlow's (1996) research on the time continuum. Lee and Ravizza (2008) indicated that tensions between caring and control caused major concerns for student teachers.

Despite these barriers to creating a caring environment, some physical educators shifted from concern for their own teaching needs and performance to concern for their students' needs (Owens, 2000; Tolley, 2009). There were numerous opportunities for physical education teachers to exhibit caring, despite contextual barriers. These opportunities were based on teachers' abilities and efforts to overcome barriers within the time constraints found in most physical education programs (Cothran & Ennis, 1999, 2000; Ennis et al., 1999).

Students took responsibility for their learning by practicing the role of one caring and the one cared for in situations, where they had positive interpersonal interaction with the teacher and other students (Owens, 2000; Tolley, 2009). In actual practice, teachers cared for students by engaging with them in learning tasks in physical education, enhancing interpersonal interactions between students and teachers (Bae & Ennis, 2008b, 2009; Cothran & Ennis, 1998; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Tolley, 2009).

Qualities of Caring Relationships

Caring is built on relationships formed through interpersonal interactions with specific people (Rogers, 1994; Rogers & Webb, 1991). It involves the establishment of meaningful relationships (Noblit & Rogers, 1995), the ability to sustain connections (Gordon et al., 1996; Thayer-Bacon, 2003; Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996), and the commitment to respond to others (Chaskin & Rauner, 1995; Goldstein & Lake, 2000;

Noddings, 1984, 1992). Given that “relationships occur in different forms” (Van Sickle & Spector, 1996, p. 450), caring relationships are important factors for both students and teachers in educational settings (Dempsey, 1994; Lyman, 2000; Noddings, 1992; Thayer-Bacon, 2003). Thus, caring is an essential component in schools (Noddings, 1992; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Because relationships involve a balance between two people with regard to closeness, acceptance, and reciprocity (Noddings, 1984; Tarlow, 1996; Witherell & Noddings, 1991), building positive relationships with students is essential to effective teaching (Osterman, 2000; Van Sickle & Spector, 1996). In this section, I described three factors necessary to promote the qualities of caring relationships, (a) connections, (b) reciprocal relationships, and (c) relational knowing (Alder, 2002; Dempsey, 1994; Gordon et al., 1996; Hollingsworth et al., 1992; Lipsitz, 1984; Thayer-Bacon, 2003, 2004; Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996)

Connections

A connection between the one-caring teacher and cared-for children facilitates a caring process that begins with the act of receiving others’ perspectives of reality (Beck, 1994; Dempsey, 1994; Noblit & Rogers, 1995; Noddings, 1984, 1992). In a learning community, children and teachers together explore mutuality and reciprocity (Gordon et al., 1996; Lipsitz, 1984; Mercado, 1993; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Witherell & Noddings, 1991), that contribute to developing relationships of high quality (Davis, 2003, 2006; Hollingsworth et al., 1992; Newberry & Davis, 2008; Noddings, 1984; Webb & Blond, 1995). Gordon et al. (1996) described the essence of human beings as human connectedness and human concerns. In educational settings, without caring, teachers depend on the instrumental dimensions of instruction: knowledge of subject matter,

guidelines for planning, and teaching strategies, and traditional class control and management (Noblit & Rogers, 1995). In these settings, students have little opportunity to improve learning experiences through interpersonal interaction (Noblit & Rogers, 1995; Rogers, 1994).

Conversely, contextual knowledge is cultivated in the shared experiences of students and teachers by establishing and maintaining relationships (Dempsey, 1994; Thayer-Bacon, 1993, 2004; Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996). This is consistent with Thayer-Bacon's research (1993, 2004) that concluded when teachers shared their experience with students, it enables them to broaden their perspectives on life. In Thayer-Bacon's study, connections, relationships, and caring were emphasized as important components of the knowledge base for teaching (Dempsey, 1994).

Within caring educational environments, the quality of teaching and the success of student learning depend on interpersonal connections and the relationships between teachers and students (Azzarito & Ennis, 2003; Cothran & Ennis, 1999; Davis, 2006; Hollingsworth et al., 1992; Noddings, 1995; Thayer-Bacon, 2004; Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Noblit and Rogers (1995) indicated that, because caring fostered teacher and student connections, both teachers and students needed opportunities to make and value connections. Caring involves mutuality and connection within educational settings (Chaskin & Rauner, 1995; Dempsey, 1994; Tarlow, 1996). Such connections and mutuality cultivate interdependency between students and teachers (Dempsey, 1994; Lyon, 1983; Noddings, 1992, 1995; Tolley, 2009).

Interdependence and responsiveness in relationships are valuable and imply an acknowledgment of the long-term relationships between individuals (Hayes et al., 1994; Flinders & Noddings, 2001; Lyons, 1983; Noddings, 1984, 1992). Long-term relationships facilitate understandings of each person's particular attributes and needs (Davis, 2003, 2006; Hollingsworth et al., 1993; McLaughlin, 1991; Noddings, 1984, 2002; Tarlow, 1996). Therefore, relating to others contributes not only to resolving potential conflicts among people (Davis, 2006; Gordon et al., 1996; Hollingsworth et al., 1993), but also to creating and maintaining interdependence and responsiveness in relationships (Bosworth, 1995; Dempsey, 1994; Hayes et al., 1994; Noddings, 1984; Tarlow, 1996; Tolley, 2009).

Reciprocal Relationships

Caring is embedded in reciprocal relationships between the one caring and the one cared for that influence the quality of human life (Chaskin & Rauner, 1995; Gordon et al., 1996; Lipsitz, 1984; Noblit, 1993; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Tarlow, 1996). This reciprocal relationship based on mutuality forms the core of the circle of care between the one-caring and the cared-for (Chaskin & Rauner, 1995; Dempsey, 1994; Gordon et al., 1996; Noddings, 1984, 1992). Reciprocity is an essential part of caring relationships (Noddings, 1984, 1996; Tarlow, 1996) that create a mutual process of supportive (Gordon et al., 1996; Noddings, 1984, 1992) and affective interchanges (Dempsey, 1994; Goldstein, 1998; Pianta, 1999; Tolley, 2009) and a mutual sense of obligation and responsibility (Beck, 1992; Gouldner, 1960; Noddings, 1992, 1996; Rogers & Webb, 1991; Tarlow, 1996; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Within reciprocal relationships, both teachers and students play a vital role (Davis, 2006; Dempsey, 1994; Goldstein, 1998;

Noddings, 1984, 2002; Witherell & Noddings, 1991; Tolley, 2009). The response of the one cared for can be direct or indirect, but it is necessary to complete a relationship based on genuine reciprocity (Dempsey, 1994; Gordon et al., 1996; Noddings, 1984, 2002; Tarlow, 1996; Witherell & Noddings, 1991).

Many teachers consider reciprocal caring received from students to be a measure of mutual respect (Bosworth, 1995; Noddings, 1984, 1996; Tarlow, 1996). In a caring relationship, teachers treat each individual student with respect (Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996) and hope that students respond in a caring manner to them and other students (Lipsitz, 1984; Goldstein, 1998; Noddings, 1984; Tarlow, 1996; Tolley, 2009). Considering that “reciprocity [existed] at the end of a circle of care” (Tarlow, 1996, p. 80), students choose to respond to caring teachers by engaging in the academic process (Beck, 1992, 1994; Gordon et al., 1996; Noddings, 1984, 1994; Wentzel, 1997; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Therefore, within reciprocal relationships, the teacher and students are partners influenced by and influencing each other (Dempsey, 1994; Gouldner, 1960; Lyman, 2000; Noddings, 1996; Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Tolley, 2009). The student cared for completes the relationship by noticing and responding positively to the teacher’s acts of caring (Noddings, 1984; Tarlow, 1996; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). That is, the cared for students’ responsiveness and engagement in the learning process are the results of the caring effort (Noddings, 1984, Tarlow, 1996; Tolley, 2009; Wentzel, 1997).

Extended Time to Develop Relationships

Providing an extended time period to develop relationships creates possibilities for ongoing discussion about worthy goals (Gordon et al., 1996; Teven & McCroskey,

1996; Noddings, 1996; Rogers, 1994; Rogers & Webb, 1991). According to Rogers (1994), caring for children opens possibilities “like the chance to learn to read, to get excited about learning something new, to feel better about yourself through recognizing your capabilities and to learn how to work with others” (p. 47). Extended time periods to get to know one another enable both students and teachers to develop sensitivity to the others’ interests, needs, and concerns (Tarlow, 1996). In this way, both the one cared for and the one caring contribute to the maintenance of the relationship based on genuine reciprocity (Beck, 1994; Dempsey, 1994; Gordon et al., 1996; Gouldner, 1960; Noddings, 1984, 1994; Tarlow, 1996; Witherell & Noddings, 1991).

Results of Tarlow’s research (1996) indicated that being sensitive required time and hard work. In the early stage of the caring process, sensitivity entailed a variety of emotional and cognitive tasks that depended on one who was willing to care. The more time people had together, the more easily people could notice the needs of each other (Flinders & Noddings, 2001; Noddings, 1992; Tarlow, 1996). Participants commented that sensitivity was not an innate talent, but something that required commitment, persistence, and effort (Gordon et al., 1996).

To that end, it was clear that both teachers and students should spend time together to get to know one another (Gordon et al., 1996; Tarlow, 1996). This paralleled Noddings’ argument that teachers and students should stay together for longer than one year (Flinders & Noddings, 2001; Noddings, 1984)

Relational Knowing

A sense of relatedness or belonging is linked to important academic outcomes (Davis, 2003, 2006; Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Goodenow, 1993a, 1993b; Newberry &

Davis, 2008), including engagement, competency, and adjustment in school (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004; Wentzel, 1997). The sense of relatedness creates feelings of emotional security and social connection to others (Birth & Ladd, 1997; Dewey, 1990; Newberry & Davis, 2008; Pianta, 1999; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004; Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Tarlow, 1996) and appears to enhance children's positive sense of self (Chase-Lansdale et al., 1995; Connell & Wellborn, 1991) and connection with others (Gordon et al., 1996; Noddings, 1995; Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Thayer-Bacon, 2003). A sense of belonging (Goodenow, 1993a) and social bonds (Dewey, 1990; Furrer & Skinner, 2003) results in school engagement (Davis, 2006; Ennis et al., 1999; Fredricks et al., 2004; Klem & Connell, 2004; Tolley, 2009).

Caring is a certain kind of relation and a way of being in relationship (Chaskin & Rauner, 1995; Gordon et al., 1996; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Tarlow, 1996; Thayer-Bacon, 2004). Caring is a process of relating to someone (Goldstein, 2002; Noddings, 1992; Tarlow, 1996; Thayer-Bacon, 2004), helping them grow (Noblit & Rogers, 1995), and actualizing themselves through a mutual relationship (Beck, 1994; Gordon et al., 1996; Mayeroff, 1971).

Relational knowing occurs when caring influences knowing (Hollingsworth et al., 1992; Thayer-Bacon, 2003, 2004). Knowing through relationship with others allows people to perceive and better understand what they learned about themselves in relation to others (Goldstein, 2002; Gordon et al., 1996; Hollingsworth et al., 1992; Noddings, 1995; Thayer-Bacon, 2004). Relational knowing requires teacher energy and involves both prior knowledge and teacher reflection on the knowledge that individuals perceive within the relationship (Hollingsworth et al., 1992; Goldstein, 2002; Noddings, 1992,

2005; Thayer-Bacon, 2004). According to Webb and Blond (1995), relational knowledge is the awareness of being connected and interactive (Noddings, 1995; Thayer-Bacon, 2004) and is generated through a sense of care for self and others (Hollingsworth et al., 1992; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Therefore, relational knowing enhances both teaching quality and student success (Davis, 2006; Hollingsworth et al., 1992; Noddings, 1992; Thayer-Bacon, 2004; Witherell & Noddings, 1991).

A caring relationship is built on recognition of mutual reciprocity in human interactions (Chaskin & Rauner, 1995; Dempsey, 1994; Gordon et al., 1996; Noblit & Rogers, 1995; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Thayer-Bacon, 2004). Caring helps both teachers and students relate to each other in more positive ways (Goldstein, 1998; Gouldner, 1960; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Thayer-Bacon, 2004; Tolley, 2009).

Teacher Strategies to Enhance Caring Relationships

Noddings (1984, 1992) argued that the Ethic of Care is central to moral education and should be present in all educational environments. In a curriculum based on caring, the teacher's role is instrumental in initiating the circle of care and in teaching students to engage in the caring process with others (Gordon et al., 1996; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Tolley, 2009). Teachers use four strategies to foster an ethic of care: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation (Berman, 2004; Noddings, 1992, 2002).

Modeling

The purpose of modeling is for teachers to demonstrate how to care through their own relationships with cared for students (Goldstein, 2002; Noddings, 1992, 2002). To that end, one caring teachers reflect not only on their competence as care givers, but also on their roles as modelers of care (Noddings, 2002). Teachers use a constructed and

interactive environment to build caring relationships that guide students into doing what is best for them (Lyman, 2000; Rogers, 1994; Tarlow, 1996; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Within these relationships, teachers structure tasks that encourage students to interact actively with different educational resources (Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Johnson & Johnson, 1994, 1999; Slavin, 1995, 1999; Tolley, 2009; Witherell & Noddings, 1991), providing subtle opportunities for students to connect with the teacher (Lyons, 1983; Owens, 2000; Tarlow, 1996). Teachers acknowledged, recognized, and attended to students as they engaged in these tasks in a conscious effort to demonstrate and model care (Noddings, 1992).

In research examining caring curricula in physical education, for example, the increase of student engagement in terms of caring as the result of teacher modeling was examined in two research studies using different physical education curricula. One examined caring in the Sport for Peace high school physical education curriculum (Ennis et al., 1999).

This study showed that low skilled students, many of whom were girls, responded to the teacher's demonstration of caring by their increased willingness to engage and give effort, particularly when they perceived the task as difficult (Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Ennis et al., 1999; Owens, 2000). The other was Tolley's study (2009) that examined the effect of a relationship between one caring teacher and students cared for on student engagement in the implementation of Teaching Game for Understanding (TGfU). This study demonstrated that students' willingness and ability to learn positively influenced, through caring and trust, the implementation of Teaching Games for Understanding.

Both studies confirmed the importance of creating a caring PE environment that facilitated students' recognition of the caring teacher and positive interaction with others.

Therefore, one caring teachers who modeled caring enabled students to positively interact with them and other students by creating caring relations (Noddings, 1992; Owens, 2000; Ravizza, 2005; Tolley, 2009).

Dialogue

Nodding (2002) explained “Dialogue is not just conversation” (p. 16). Dialogue is a reciprocal strategy that consists of talking, listening, sharing, and responding (Alder, 2002; Noddings, 1988, 1992; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). People in true dialogue within a caring relation attend non-selectively to each other (Noddings, 2002; Witherell & Noddings, 1991) and share different issues of interpersonal relations as well (Chase-Lansdale et al., 1995; Noddings, 1992; Rogers & Webb, 1991). Through genuine dialogue, the one-caring teacher and the cared-for student are aware of each other, exchange ideas and understandings, and contribute to the communicative competence of both participants (Dempsey, 1994; McCroskey, 1992; Noddings, 1984, 2002; Rogers & Webb, 1991; Tarlow, 1996). In using dialogue, the one caring can “encourage him to stand personally related to what he says and does” (Noddings, 1984, p. 178). Further, caring teachers also serve as facilitators and counselors who shift the focus of the interaction as students’ needs changed (Noddings, 1992, Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Therefore, the one cared for was “a human being responsible for his words and acts, and the one caring as teacher met him” (Noddings, 1984, p. 178). That is, the one caring addressed his words and needs.

Dialogue includes diverse topics, making it possible for either the student or the teacher to open the discussion (Noddings, 1984, 1992). Through dialogue, students had possibilities to broaden and share educational experiences, such as interpersonal as well

as logical reasoning characteristics related to a particular topic (Noddings, 1992, 2002; Rogers & Webb, 1991). Reciprocal dialogue entails active listening to one another, encouraging connection and caring (Alder, 2002; Noddings, 1995; Tarlow, 1992; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). For these reasons, it is necessary to improve teachers' ability to communicate with students effectively in educational contexts (Dempsey, 1994; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Tarlow, 1996; Teven & McCroskey, 1996; Witherell & Noddings, 1991; Wentzel, 1997). To accomplish this, teachers can learn to teach with the support of ongoing conversation (Hollingsworth et al., 1992; Noddings, 1996, 2002; Tarlow, 1996). Because communication, including talking and listening, is vital in the process of getting to know students (Alder, 2002; Bosworth, 1995; Tarlow, 1996; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Witherell & Noddings, 1991), it can be open and honest, serving as both a means and an end to building and maintaining a caring relationship (Noddings, 1984, 1992; Rogers & Webb, 1991; Tarlow, 1996; Tolley, 2009).

Practice

Through practice, students learned how to develop the capacity for interpersonal attention (Hollingsworth et al., 1993; Noddings, 1992, 2002; Tarlow, 1996). According to Noddings (1992), students shape desired attitudes and ways of looking at the world by increasing the experiences of caring essential in developing human beings. To that end, students need to gain skills of care giving that contribute to initiating those attitudes and that enhance human connectedness and human concerns within the larger context in which caring occurs (Gordon et al., 1996; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Tarlow, 1996)

Caring teachers provide opportunities for students to practice care for others (Dempsey, 1994; Noddings, 1992, 2002). To illustrate, within a caring environment,

students learn how to care for others such as peers, and how to develop a sense of responsibility (Noddings, 1984). In addition, students learn to value their contributions when all are involved in tasks that are beneficial to the community (Ferreira, 1995; Lyman, 2000; Mercado, 1993; Noddings, 1992). For these reasons, students should be encouraged to work together, not only to help each other achieve academically, but also to gain competence in caring for and in improving relationships with others (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Dewey, 1990; Hollingsworth et al., 1993; Mercado, 1993; Noddings, 2002; Goldstein, 2002). Small-group methods help students learn the importance of cooperation as a means to gain practice in caring (Goldstein, 2002; Hollingsworth et al., 1993; Noddings, 1989, 2002). Inclusive classroom environments provide opportunities for students to extend their experiences in relation to others whose lives are different from their own (Noddings, 1984, 1996; Tarlow, 1996).

When one caring teachers create caring environments, the persons cared for actively engage in meaningful and relevant learning activities through which they share in a sense of community with others in their classroom (Chaskin & Rauner, 1995; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Ferreira, 1995; Lyman, 2002; Noddings, 1984, 1996). Teachers included tasks in which students assume responsibility to care for others to promote agreed upon group's goals (Chaskin & Rauner, 1995; Noddings, 2002). As students practice the roles of the one-caring and the cared-for through interaction within small groups (Noddings, 1984, 1989), they begin to understand and value the benefits of caring (Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Noddings, 1992, 1996; Tolley, 2009). As an example of practice for caring, Tolley (2009) demonstrated that students were more willing to engage in learning activities within a caring physical education environment created by a caring

teacher. The students practiced caring activities in the implementation of TGfU curriculum. The caring environment the teacher created enabled every student to actively engage in tasks arranged by the teacher, increasing student interaction with the teacher as well as with other students during the lesson. Tolley (2009) asserted that curricula based on trust and caring contribute to establishing an interdependent community for every student. In this study, middle school students were more willing to practice caring through actively participating in learning activities through which they could share in a sense of community with others (Bae & Ennis, 2008b; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Ferreira, 1995; Ferreira & Bosworth, 2000; Lyman, 2002; Noddings, 1984, 1996). As a result, students began to understand and value the benefits of caring through the roles of the one-caring and the one cared-for within the caring environment (Noddings, 1984, 1989).

Confirmation

Caring teachers confirm their students by developing relationships and getting to know their students well enough to realize and support the unique person each student is becoming (Noddings, 1992, 1996; Tarlow, 1996; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Because confirmation does not occur uniformly, caring teachers do not treat each student the same (Noddings, 1992, 2002). Instead, confirmation occurs in response to individual needs within a foundation of relationship and trust (Noddings, 1992, 1996). Furthermore, confirmation of students' trust provides an environment for development of self-understanding and self-concept (Noddings, 1988, 1992).

To that end, Noddings (1992) suggested that it was important for the one caring to know the cared for well enough to identify and encourage motives that agree with reality.

Confirmation is a positive act founded on a deep relationship that helps students move toward a vision of a better self (Noddings, 1992). For example, when teachers confirm students, they imagine a students' better self and then encourage its development. Teachers can do this only if they know their students well enough to understand what the students are trying to become (Noddings, 1992). Therefore, confirmation leads to stability and continuity of a relationship over time (Noddings, 1992).

Caring teachers in physical education accomplish confirmation by developing a relationship with students and treating them with respect and integrity (Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Ennis et al., 1999; Larson, 2006; Owens, 2000; Tolley, 2009). Children who have been affirmed and encouraged by caring teachers are more likely to feel free to use opportunities to practice decision-making, even if they are not highly skilled (Ennis et al., 1999; Owens, 2000; Tolley, 2009). To that end, confirmation is enhanced through positive and caring relationships between the one caring teacher and the cared for students. Confirmation also leads to the development of trusting relationships during physical education (Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Owens, 2000; Tolley, 2009).

Consequently, when caring teachers trust their students, students develop confidence to reciprocate by developing trusting relationships with their teachers (Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Tolley, 2009). Research suggests that the development of caring and trusting bonds helps children control their negative behaviors during class (Bae & Ennis, 2008b; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Noddings, 1996; Tarlow, 1996).

A critical component of caring is showing or modeling how to care for others (Noddings, 1992, 2002). To that end, caring educators create a climate for genuine dialogue to accompany demonstrations and practice by students (Alder, 2002; Dempsey,

1994; Noddings, 1988, 1992; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). They structure opportunities to explain how to perform caring tasks successfully (Noddings, 1996; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). In particular, they select appropriate teaching strategies based on students' responses and continue to adjust their response to students' increasing skill and emotional levels (Hollingsworth et al., 1992; Noddings, 1984; Tarlow, 1996). Therefore, these teachers continue to interact with their students, showing interest in their increasing learning and understanding in a caring environment (Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Ennis et al., 1999; Owens, 2000; Witherell & Noddings, 1991).

Because it is very difficult for human beings to thrive without caring (Lyman, 2000), children's opportunities to grow and develop are greatly diminished unless and until someone cares for them (Noblit & Rogers, 1995; Rogers, 1994; Rogers & Webb, 1991). When teachers create a caring environment, they permit students to speak, learn, and succeed through positive interaction (Noddings, 1992; Tarlow, 1996; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Therefore, the caring learning environment provides opportunities for students to have many valued experiences through dialogue and practice (Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Witherell & Noddings, 1991).

Student's Perception of Caring Teachers

Students view care as an important teacher quality (Alder, 2002; Larson, 2004, 2006; Ravizza, 2005; Tarlow, 1996). Research has demonstrated that students' perceptions of caring affect their teacher evaluations (Bosworth, 1995; Ferreira & Bosworth, 2001). Qualities that students value in teachers include attentiveness to their needs, willingness to respond to requests, and respect for them as individuals (Alder, 2002; Bosworth, 1995; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Ferreira & Bosworth, 2001; Hayes et

al., 1994; Ravizza, 2005; Tarlow, 1996). Students defined caring teachers as individuals who attempt to know their students (Alder, 2002; Larson, 2006; Tarlow, 1996; Witherell & Noddings, 1991), listen to their personal problems (Ferriera, 1995; Ferreira & Bosworth, 2001), show personal interests in them (Alder, 2002; Hayes et al., 1994; Larson, 2006; Rogers, 1994; Tarlow, 1996), and make learning fun and interesting (Alder, 2002; Hayes et al., 1994; Larson, 2006; Ravizza, 2005; Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996). Students reported they were more willing to put effort into their work when they perceived their teacher to be caring and contributing to creating a caring environment (Lyman, 2000; McCroskey, 1992; Noddings, 1984; Tolley, 2009; Teven & McCroskey, 1996; Wentzel, 1997).

Hayes, Ryan, and Zsellar (1994) examined middle school students' perceptions of caring teacher behaviors. For this study, an ethnographic technique of open-ended written response was used in ethnically diverse schools in a metropolitan area. A total of 208 sixth-grade students from one urban and two suburban public schools participated in this survey research. The survey included two parts, a student demographic questionnaire (i.e., gender, ethnicity, and family structures) and an essay section to identify concepts of caring teachers.

The data collected were coded and regrouped into categories based on the results for the survey. Each essay was read and recorded by two researchers. Teachers' behaviors were recorded as 31 essay concepts. These concepts were clustered into concept groups that were combined into the categories (i.e., SPSS). The process of clustering resulted in 11 concept groups. A frequency analysis of responses of each of

the 11 concept groups was performed. A chi-square test was used to analyze the demographic data and to analyze the concept groups by demographic characteristics.

The researchers identified 11 characteristics that students attributed to caring teachers. Specifically, these students reported that caring teachers responded to students, helped with academic work, encouraged success and positive feelings, provided fun and humor, presented effective subject content, counseled students, expressed an interest in every student, avoided harshness, showed willingness to listen, and managed the class well. Hayes et al. (1994) pointed out that teachers need to be aware of students' perceptions of their behaviors and interactions because students' perceptions of caring are influenced by the one caring who cares for them.

Bosworth (1995) also examined students' perceptions of caring teachers. Bosworth (1995) explored young people's understanding of caring and caring teachers in two middle schools--one urban and one suburban. In these two educational institutions, one school with 800 students was located in urban area. The other with 1200 students was located about 10 miles from that urban area, poor rural areas, and inner city. In the study, the data were collected from 300 classroom observations over four months and 101 student interviews. Teachers assisted in selecting students for the interviews. Data from classroom observations indicated that the teachers were more likely to use traditional teaching strategies such as lectures, silent reading, and viewing videos in which caring interaction were minimal. Additionally, researchers observed that teachers rarely smiled, made positive comments to students, or used a student's name. Furthermore, the schools offered few opportunities outside the classroom for students and teachers to practice caring through interpersonal interaction.

Students identified teaching practices, non-classroom activities, and personal characteristics as key themes of caring teachers. Teaching practices were described as helping with school-work, explaining work, checking for understanding, planning fun activities, valuing individuality, showing respect, encouraging students, and demonstrating tolerance. Non-classroom activities fell into three categories: helping with personal problems, providing guidance, and going the extra mile, while personal attributes were described as being nice or polite, liking to help students, being success-oriented, and being involved.

In this study, students identified helping as a key component of caring and helping with schoolwork was the most frequently mentioned characteristic of a caring teacher. For these reasons, Bosworth (1995) asserted that small schools and classrooms enable teachers to get to know their students individually, to help them with their work, and to become involved with their extracurricular activities (Bosworth, 1995).

Students' Perception of Caring in Physical Education

Several scholars have conducted research in physical education to describe students' perceptions of caring (Ennis, 1999; Cothran & Ennis, 2000; Ennis et al., 1999; Ennis & McCauley, 2002). For example, Ennis et al. (1999) demonstrated how a particular curriculum model, Sport for Peace, developed a caring atmosphere enabling the teacher to become involved and support students' interests. Larson (2006) described how students consider teachers' behaviors as caring and explained students' expectation associated with teacher relationships. In implementing and closing the circle of care, Tolley (2009) demonstrated how the caring relationship between the teacher and the students influenced student engagement in learning activities within the caring physical

education environment. To identify the actual practice of caring in physical education, these studies, Ennis et al. (1999), Larson (2006), and Tolley (2009), are described to elaborate student perceptions of caring.

Ennis et al. (1999) examined the effectiveness of a high school physical education curriculum designed to enhance student engagement and willingness to interact positively with others. Ten teachers in six urban schools participated in the study. Ennis et al. (1999) suggested that the concept of the caring teachers played an important role in creating a caring environment through the positive engagement of students during class time. In this study, students reported the importance of personal connections in their relationships with others, including their teachers. The personal connections encouraged the development of a sense of school membership (Ennis et al., 1999; Goodenow, 1993b). In urban educational settings, the caring relationships that teachers create can establish a connection that enables the students to engage positively in physical activity (Ennis, 1999). Ennis' research concluded that students were more likely to respond positively in the classroom when they felt that teachers cared for them (Cothran & Ennis, 2000). The Sport for Peace curriculum emphasized the importance of a socially supportive atmosphere that contributed to caring relationships between teachers and students (Ennis et al., 1999). This study was consistent with Osterman's study (2000) showing that the primary condition for the development of a relationship was positive interactions.

Ennis and her colleagues asserted that an important benefit of a caring environment was the contribution to creating a favorable context for educational tasks relevant to students' lives. The findings of this study agreed with Wentzel's research

(1994) that emphasized the importance of connecting social concepts. In the Sport for Peace model, the frequent interaction provided opportunities for students to create social affiliations that lead to respect, trust, and a sense of belonging (Ennis et al., 1999). The "Sport for Peace" curriculum was designed to foster shared responsibility for learning, trust, respect, and a sense of family. Unlike many traditional physical education curricula, this was true not only for boys and skilled students but also for girls and low skilled students.

Larson (2006) identified student perceptions of caring physical education teaching behavior in eight teachers' classrooms. Five hundred students at elementary and secondary schools participated by responding to the critical incident solicitation form to identify examples of teacher caring behaviors in physical education. From these students' responses, the data were analyzed into one main category and three sub-categories based on eleven clusters of behaviors. To that end, the technique of critical incidence was used to capture the descriptions of caring teaching behaviors considered critical. It allowed for a large participant sample so that the researcher could get a substantial amount of data for those teaching behaviors. Students reported that caring teaching occurred when teachers showed them how to perform a skill, honored their requests, complimented them, confronted behavior, inquired about health, attended to students, allowed students to redo the test, motivated them, played or participated with them during class, persuaded them, and showed concern for their future health. Further, students categorized "paying attention to me" as the most important characteristics of caring teachers (Larson, 2006). Specifically students wanted teachers to recognize me, help me learn, trust, and respect me. In the study, students cited examples of teachers'

providing individualized instruction and feedback, recognizing when learning progress was achieved, and noticing when something about them was different as central to “paying attention to me.” It became clear that students noticed, remembered, and valued these teacher behaviors. Larson (2006) pointed out that physical education teachers have opportunities to care for students during lessons. When the one caring teacher provides genuine caring through interactive and responsive teaching (Swick, 2006), recognition by the one cared for is often a fundamental result within a caring environment (Noddings, 1984; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). In the caring relation, the one cared for feels the recognition of freedom and grows as a person (Mayeroff, 1971; Noblit & Rogers, 1995; Noddings, 1984; Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996).

Tolley (2009) examined how trusting and caring teacher-student and student-student relationships influenced students' willingness and ability to learn in the implementation of Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU). Thirty middle school students and a physical education teacher/ researcher, participated in the study. Specific teaching strategies, including the characteristics of TGfU, care, and trust, contributed to enhancing students' willingness and ability to learn. In addition, these strategies created a positive condition for developing and fostering reciprocal relationships that embodied trust and care. Tolley (2009) asserted that curricula based on trust and caring helped teachers establish a climate that facilitated participation of students in educational tasks by increasing student interaction with the teacher as well as other students during the lesson. Tolley (2009) suggested that the trusting and caring relationships between the teacher and the students played an important role in sustaining a caring environment that served as an interdependent community for all students (Goldstein, 2002; Noddings,

1984). Within the interdependent community model designed to enhance student willingness and ability to learn, students practiced ways to encourage and nurture others who needed to be cared for (Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Ferreira, 1995; Lyman, 2002; Noddings, 1984, 1996; Tarlow, 1996; Tolley, 2009). According to Tolley's work, this practice encouraged each student to begin to understand and value the benefits of caring through the roles of the one-caring and the one cared-for within the caring physical education environment (Goldstein, 1998, 2002; Noddings, 1984, 1992).

Summary

Physical education is a unique subject matter that provides opportunities for students to construct reciprocal relationships in a dynamic educational environment (Bae & Ennis, 2008a, 2008b; Cothran & Ennis, 1999, 2000; Ennis, 1999; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Owens, 2000; Ravizzard, 2005; Tolley, 2009). In this environment, students also have opportunities to learn how to interact with others who have different strengths and weaknesses. Student caring in a physical education can be nurtured by a well-planned curriculum (Ennis et al., 1999; Tolley, 2009). Caring can be an integral part of the teaching-learning process in physical education (Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Owens, 2000; Tolley, 2009). It can provide opportunities for students to handle conflict that can occur during lessons by considering the effects of their responses in a variety of situations (Ennis et al., 1999; Ennis & McCauley, 2002). Involvement in caring relationships can help students to feel emotional safety in physical education. In caring environments, students are more likely to develop a sense of connections (Bae & Ennis, 2008b; Ennis et al., 1999; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Tolley, 2009) and to learn how to find appropriate solutions to problems or conflict through relational practices that foster mutual growth

(Gordon et al., 1996; Noddings, 1984). These connections not only enable students to handle conflict positively through different relational strategies (Goldstein, 2002), but also help them learn how to enable each other to grow beyond the conflict (Goldstein, 2002; Noddings, 1995; Tolley, 2009).

Practical application of caring in physical education can lead to the formation of reciprocal relationships between students and teachers (Ennis et al., 1999; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Owens, 2000; Tolley, 2009). Caring physical educators are sensitive to student needs (Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Owens, 2000; Tolley, 2009) and are willing to engage in interpersonal exchanges that build reciprocal relationships and foster the circle of care (Tolley, 2009). As a result, students are more likely to develop reciprocal relationships with others, regardless of skill levels (Ennis et al., 1999; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Goldstein, 2002; Noddings, 1995; Tolley, 2009).

In a caring environment, students are more likely to recognize teacher goals and respond to the educational experiences teachers create (Dempsey, 1994; Goldstein, 1998; Noddings, 1984; Rogers, 1994; Tarlow, 1996; Tolley, 2009). Although there have been several studies examining the role of caring in physical education (Gubacs, 1997; Ravizzard, 2005) and prospective teachers' conceptions of caring (Lee & Ravizza, 2008), little research has been conducted to describe how students in the role of the one cared for respond to one caring teachers. Therefore, my research examined students' responses to caring teachers within a caring physical education environment.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research was to examine physical education teachers' effort to create caring environments for their sixth-grade students and also to examine the responses of the students to their teachers in physical education. A secondary purpose was to describe how teachers perceived students' responses to learning environments in physical education and how they perceived students' responses to caring. I conducted an ethnographic multi-site case study involving three middle schools using qualitative research methods of class observation and teacher and student interview (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). In this chapter, I describe the nature of the projected methodology as it related to (a) selecting sites and gaining entry, (b) setting and participants, (c) research design, (d) data collection, (e) data analysis, and (f) trustworthiness and transferability of the data.

Site Selection and Entry

I examined sixth-grade students' responses to caring physical education teachers in three middle schools in a school district in the Baltimore – Washington area. To identify potential research sites, I explained the purpose of this research to the physical education coordinator who identified three middle school physical education teachers she perceived as caring. in the school district. I e-mailed and asked the teachers to provide general information, such as whether they would have a student teacher and sixth-grade students' physical education class schedule. After I contacted those teachers, I found that one of them had a student teacher so that I informed the coordinator that I could not work with the teacher. Later on, an

elementary physical education supervisor, who worked with the physical education coordinator, informed me that one male physical education teacher was willing to join my research. I could select three schools with potential to address my research questions.

Upon approval by the University of Maryland Institutional Review Board, I met principals and teachers at the selected schools and met with sixth-grade students to talk with them briefly about my research and distribute parent permission forms. I explained that the purpose of my study was to understand physical education, without referencing the caring theme to administrators, teachers, or students. While waiting to collect those permission forms, I asked the participating teachers to sign a consent letter pledging confidentiality and confirming their agreement to participate in this research. At the second visit to each school, I reminded sixth-grade students in the selected research class to sign assent forms supporting their participation in the research and to return the parental permission form to their physical education teacher.

Setting and Participants

Setting

This study was conducted in three public schools in a large suburban school district located on the east coast of the United States. The physical education coordinator for health and physical education identified three physical education teachers in three different middle schools in the school district. The physical education curriculum reflected the state's voluntary state curriculum for physical education consistent with the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE, 2004) content standards.

Students in the schools selected for this research participated in physical education two or three times each week.

The school district enrolled 104,283 students comprising Caucasian (49.9%), African American (40%), Hispanic (4.3%), Asian/Pacific (5.4%), and Native American (0.5%) students.

Two sixth-grade classes from each school were selected for observation. The enrollments of the three middle schools were 830, 1,367, and 1,497 students, respectively. In these three schools, State Assessment scores for reading and mathematics surpassed state average scores, while the student mobility rate was lower than both the school district and state averages.

Participants

At each middle school site, the participants were one physical education teacher and his/her two sixth-grade classes.

Teacher. Three physical education teachers were participating in this study. The physical education coordinator identified two of them (female teachers) and the elementary physical education supervisor recommended the third teacher (male teacher). Both the physical education coordinator and the elementary physical education supervisor were aware of my research topic and confirmed them as caring teachers working in the same school district.

Students. I selected sixth-grade students because sixth-grade was the first year in the middle school where physical education provided different instructional experiences in a more extended instructional time, compared to elementary experiences that could limit student interactions with their teacher. Additionally, I have ten years of teaching

experience at the middle school level. I hoped that my experiences would enable me to develop close relationships with the participants so that both the participants and I created a comfortable, open, and respectful atmosphere that facilitated sharing their experiences of teaching middle school students.

I selected two sixth-grade classes, back to back, assigned to the participating physical education teachers at each site based on my ability to view sixth-grade lessons at three different schools. I observed a total of six classes at all three schools on a regular basis. At the conclusion of the observation period, I purposefully selected a representative sample of 28 students (14 boys and 14 girls) from three schools for interviews: seven boys at Peterson, seven girls at Frost, and seven girls and seven boys at Columbus. Selections were based on my class observations and the teachers' recommendations.

The researcher. I am a doctoral student pursuing a post-graduate degree in physical education pedagogy. I earned B.S and M.A degrees in Korea. In addition, I had a full-time teaching position as secondary physical educator teaching middle school students for 10 years in public middle schools in Korea. For the past four years, I worked as a research assistant with a research team and have worked with many physical education teachers in a curriculum intervention study. Through this experience, I was able to develop skills for doing research based on a qualitative research design. As a member of the research team, I observed how a health related science based physical education curriculum created an environment that influenced students' understanding of cognitive learning in physical education classes. However, despite the advantages of the content intended in the curriculum, I discovered that the effect of the curriculum varied

depending on different factors within a learning environment. Furthermore, I have realized the importance of the learning atmosphere that teachers create to improve student learning effectiveness.

I believe that teachers can influence student learning by increasing their interactions with students during the lessons. Students respond to learning environments created by caring teachers. In particular, since physical education classes entail active interpersonal interactions between students and their teacher, creating a caring environment can help students feel comfortable and emotionally safe so that they are willing to respond to educational tasks designed in the content of a physical education curriculum. For those reasons, I was interested in the research that focused on examining students' responses to a caring physical education teacher specifically in a dynamic educational environment.

Research Design

This study was conducted using an ethnographic, multi-site case study that used qualitative research methods of class observation, written questionnaires, and teacher and student interviews. Ethnographic research provides a descriptive study of human societies (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995), including “the shared beliefs, practices, knowledge, and behaviors of some group of people” (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 354). Ethnography presents the results of a holistic research method founded on the premise that a system's properties could not necessarily be accurately understood independently of each other (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Therefore, ethnographic researchers become immersed in the setting to experience the situations that are shaped by shared by a particular group and accurately described the meaningful experiences that the group shares (Emerson et al., 1995).

My research study was conducted over a six week period. Table 1 below shows a detailed timeline for this research. During week 1 of the research, I met with principals, teachers, and students, explained my research in general terms, and distributed and collected assent and parent permission forms from students and consent forms from teaches. In weeks 2-5, I collected observation data in three sixth-grade physical education classes and began the data analysis process. At the conclusion of the observation period (weeks 5 & 6), I purposefully sampled twenty-eight 6th grade students: seven boys at Peterson, seven girls at Frost, and seven girls and seven boys at Columbus and continued to triangulate and analyze the data. After completing the student interviews, I interviewed the three physical education teachers, adding this final data source to the analysis process.

Table 1

Timeline of Data Collection in Multi-Site Case Study

Time	Schedule
5 weeks prior to data entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submitted the research proposal to the school district
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met principals and teachers at the selected schools • Distributed consent forms for teachers and assent forms for students • Collected consent forms
Weeks 2-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Began class observations and data analysis
Week 5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collected written questionnaires from all 6th grade students taught by the teachers participating in the study

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected and interviewed a total of 28 students from all three schools • Continued data analysis and triangulation of data sources
Week 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewed the participating teachers after completing the interviews with the students at the end of May. • Continue data analysis and triangulation of data sources

Data Collection

Data collection consisted of class observations, written questionnaire, and student and teacher interviews.

Class Observations

Class observations began in April and ended at the end of May. I collected field note data as a non-participant to obtain detailed descriptions of participants' actions during the class (Angrosino, 2005; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). As a non-participant, I focused on describing teachers' and students' actions and their interpersonal interactions within the dynamic learning environment. In particular, my class observations focused on recording the students' and teachers' words and expressions during the lesson to capture the emic perspective (Patton, 2002). Thus, the participants' perspectives provided the opportunity to understand the reciprocal relationships in the physical education class. Following each day's observations, I rewrote the field notes and uploaded the files into computer software, MaxQDA2. This software permitted me to organize, code, and triangulate the data sources with separate reflective and interpretive researcher notes and memos.

Written Questionnaire

After I finished classroom observations, the teachers participating in this research agreed to administer the 15-minute written questionnaire to all sixth-grade students at the beginning of classes. The questionnaire, consisting of three questions, was designed to elicit students' impressions of their teachers' teaching or teaching styles, teacher and student interactions, and the learning environments. I also asked students to provide recommendations for physical education for future 6th grade students. The written questionnaire (see Appendix C) included three main questions: (1) What would you like your physical education teacher to do for future sixth-grade classes based on your experiences? (at least 2 examples) (2) What did your physical education teacher do to help you succeed in class? Give two examples of things your teacher did in class. Did it make you feel good, comfortable, or appreciated? (3) What did you do when your physical education teacher helped you in class? Please give me two specific examples of your actions or words.

Interviews

I used structured, open-ended, one-on-one interviews to capture participants' perspectives (Patton, 2002). I also used interview questions with probes to elicit their understandings (Patton, 2002). Example interview questions were included in Appendix A. To that end, I used interview protocols to ask each interviewee focused questions to reveal their perspectives. I audiotaped participants' responses and transcribed the interviews for analysis

Student interviews. I conducted interviews with students at the conclusion of the observation period. The one-on-one interviews (See Appendix B) were conducted in a

quiet location and at a time designated by the school (e.g., before school, during lunch, or other non-instructional time as determined by teachers and at the students' convenience). Participants for the interviews were a total of twenty-eight 6th grade students (14 boys and 14 girls): seven boys at Peterson, seven girls at Frost, and seven girls and seven boys at Columbus. Selections were based on my class observations, the students' ethnicity, their willingness to participate, and the teachers' recommendations. The duration of each interview was approximately 20 minutes.

Teacher interviews. Interviews with one teacher from each school were conducted at the end of May, after the completion of the student interviews. The one-on-one interviews (See Appendix A) were at each teacher's convenience in the teacher's office or other location, such as a conference room. Each interview took at least one and a half hours. The questions focused on strategies they used to interact and built relationships with their students while teaching.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data collected, I utilized qualitative analysis techniques, including constant comparison (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). I used open, axial, and selective coding to analyze the observation and interview data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). To facilitate this process, I used computer qualitative software, MaxQDA2, as a coding tool to create different data categories from the collected data. The software helped me develop dimensions and properties related to the ethic of care within each category and identify any salient themes that emerged through the data coding process. Data triangulation or comparison of data categories, properties, and dimensions were used to verify data accuracy and reinforce emergent findings (Stake, 2005).

Open and axial coding were used throughout data collection to develop categories that represent the environment and students' responses (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In open coding, I was concerned with generating categories and their properties and then determining the differences among categories. During open coding, I grouped information including different interactions between the teachers and students during the classes from the field notes into more abstract concepts, initial categories, properties, and dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Open coding, as an initial analytic step, allowed me to reduce the data including the characteristics of caring into discrete codes, and then to examine and compare these for similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I scanned field notes line-by-line to identify any concepts, themes, or issues related to the ethic of care. This enabled me to survey many concepts and themes including aspects of the ethic of care derived directly from the field note data (Emerson et al., 1995).

Axial coding was the second level of process coding that occurred in the data analysis. The purpose of axial coding is to provide interpretations of the categories, properties, and dimensions identified during open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I performed axial coding to develop abstract themes and relationships among concepts which facilitated interpersonal interactions between the teacher and students. The process of axial coding allowed me to develop interpretive explanations regarding the nature of the ethic of care within physical education classes. In axial coding, categories were systematically developed and linked with subcategories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

To identify mutual and reciprocal relationships among student-teacher and student-student interactions, I used selective coding to build main or abstract themes

reflecting the central categories associated with caring environments that could emerge from the research findings (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Selective coding permitted additional analysis and elaboration of central themes that were reevaluated and adjusted (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

To increase the robustness of the data sources (Goetz & LeCompte, 1994), I triangulated the data collected from multiple sources, such as class observations and student and teacher interviews. Data triangulation allowed me to confirm the presence of meanings and themes from different perspectives, revealing biases that could have occurred in the data (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Goetz & LeCompte, 1994; Stake, 2005).

These refined data examinations enabled me to identify how students perceived and responded to teachers in the physical education environment. These analyses also provided opportunities for me to triangulate or make comparisons across data sources. As a result, I could develop central themes in relation to participants' meanings.

Trustworthiness and Transferability of the Research

It was possible that the trustworthiness and transferability of my research might be influenced by my adoption of an ethnographic, multi-site, case study design. According to LeCompte and Preissle (1993), validity and reliability are central to establishing claims of trustworthiness and are overlapping in certain respects. That is, threats to reliability in ethnographic research also could threaten the validity of a study. Threats to validity and reliability related to my credibility as a researcher, the research design, data collection, and analysis. Therefore, in this section, I identified and addressed the anticipated threats to validity and reliability and also employed several strategies to

minimize both validity and reliability concerns, improving trustworthiness and transferability of the research findings.

Validity

Validity necessitates demonstration that the propositions generated, refined, or tested match what occurs in human life (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Validity is concerned with the accuracy of findings and the extent to which researchers represent participants' realities (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Critical to the validity of this study was the accurate representation of participants' perspectives. There were two types of validity concerns: external and internal validity. Internal validity referred to the extent to which observations and interpretations of phenomena were authentic representations of some reality, whereas external validity addressed the degree to which such representations may be compared legitimately across groups and to other settings. Validity poses special problems for ethnographers because of the nature of their research designs and methods (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). With regard to the current research, I describe the strategies within the research design for addressing these issues.

Internal validity. Internal validity refers to the extent to which interpretations of data include authentic representations of some reality (Goetz & LeCompte, 1994). To strengthen the internal validity in my research design, I used multiple methods to describe and elicit students' responses to a caring learning environment. To that end, I endeavored to use coding systems effectively and also triangulate the data to improve the truth-value of the research findings in relation to research questions.

The data collection and analysis techniques used by ethnographers forms the basis for any claim of ethnography to high internal validity (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). In this

section, I describe some strategies embedded in the current research design, data collection, and data analysis for addressing the five internal validity threats: history and maturation, observer effects, selection effects, mortality, spurious conclusions (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

History and maturation effects. Since ethnographers conduct research in natural settings, history affects the nature of the data (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). While history effects are unexpected events that occur during the research, maturation effects are physical, intellectual, and emotional changes that naturally occur over time within a given context or situation. Establishing which baseline data remain stable over time and which data change within particular phenomena over time is an important task for the ethnographer (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). In this research, both class observations and interview data, which were key data sources, provided baseline information to analyze the data obtained. The multi-site case study design permitted me to compare maturational effects across the sixth-grade classes in three different schools.

Different analytic methods enable the researcher to examine the learning context comprehensively, demonstrating whether observed changes resulted from maturational effects or other factors that could have included curricular and contextual variables (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

Observer effects. Observer effects relate to changes in participants' attitudes caused by the presence of the researcher in the natural setting. Participants could behave atypically in the presence of the researcher. This threatens the validity of the data because the quality of information depends on the natural or typical behavior of the participants (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). This type of distortion could be reduced by

creating sufficient rapport between the participants and the researcher and by coding participants' responses within specific situations (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

The researchers' own biases could cause additional observer effects. To continue to monitor myself, I described clearly the characteristics of caring and being cared for, including conceptual categories, to discover and validate associations among phenomena (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Additionally, I was aware of how I was seen and treated by the participants (Emerson et al., 1995). These ethnographic strategies were used to avoid potential biases in the data chosen for analysis and coding (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

Selection effects. The term, selection effects, refers to distortions in the data caused by the researchers' criterion-selection protocols used to identify sites and participants (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). To minimize problems caused by selection effects, I carefully selected the data collection sites based on the physical education coordinator's recommendations. Careful data selection was important to enable me to determine if the findings represented a unique case or group of cases within unique circumstances. I also established an inventory of field notes that included events and different interpersonal interactions (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Specifically, the inventory included the sites and participants in the research and the questions selected for interviews (Stake, 2005). I planned to focus on the interactions between the teachers and students, and among the students within a caring educational environment. Furthermore, I described in detail the selection process used in this research and the nature of the learning settings. I used thick descriptions in parallel with these methodological guidelines (LeCompte & Preissle,

1993) examining the influence of context variables on students' responses to a caring learning environment across the range of student interactions in the selected classes at each site.

Mortality. Mortality relates to changes to the research setting and the study design as a result of losses in participants over time, and therefore, is one of five internal validity threats (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). An ethnographic case study assumes that “the naturalistic approach precludes the interchangeability of human informants and participants” (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 346). In natural settings, because loss and replacement are assumed to be normal to group members, researchers collect baseline data to analyze mortality effects over time. To reduce mortality threats, I identified the effects of loss and replacement of participants and collected a full data set, including interview data from a few more students than necessary as extra-candidates, to facilitate the replacement of participants.

Spurious conclusion effect. The possibility that my conclusions as researcher could be flawed is another of the five internal validity threats. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) emphasize the possibility that researchers' interpretations do not reflect participants' subjective realities. To reduce this possibility, I was able to locate evidence to verify and validate my research findings (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Stake, 2005). I sought additional evidence to develop awareness of bias or contamination sources that could confound the themes that emerged from the data analysis. After transcribing participants' interviews and developing coding protocols, I conducted member checks and peer reviews to minimize this threat (Goetz & LeCompte, 1994). Member checks were conducted by asking the teachers and students whether or not they agreed with what

I discovered and if they had anything to add (Angrosino, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

By doing this, I hoped to validate my interpretation of the emergent findings.

External validity. Agreement with the results of similar studies and applicability of the results into other contexts are hallmarks of external validity. External validity depends on describing or identifying characteristics of phenomena useful for comparison and translatability with similar studies. According to LeCompte and Preissle (1993), it is important for researchers to describe in detail methods used in a particular research study so that other researchers can compare the results of this study to results found in other contexts that address related issues.

Comparability refers to the extent to which the results of my study can be compared and contrasted along relevant dimensions with other phenomena, whereas translatability relates to the degree to which researchers use theoretical frames and research techniques that are available to other researchers in related disciplines. Establishing comparability and translatability can increase the usefulness of the study.

Anything that reduces a study's comparability and translatability constitutes a threat to external validity (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Clarifying threats to validity is important because stating the threats clearly enables the researcher to adjust the design or provide additional information to enhance credibility within given contexts. Therefore, researchers should identify and describe characteristics of phenomena to address threats to external validity and translate results so that they are applicable across sites (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

A multi-site case study design can address possible threats to external validity because the selection of different participants in diverse settings enhances the study's

availability for general application (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Nonetheless, researchers in multi-site studies must address threats to external validity as carefully as do single-site ethnographers. Since threats to external validity affect the credibility of a study for cross-group comparisons (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993), it is important to describe threats to external validity in relation to four factors: selection effects, setting effects, history effects, and construct effects.

Selection effects. Some constructs can not be compared across groups because they are specific to a particular group or because some groups have been chosen inappropriately (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). This occurs frequently in situations in which the categories are designated by the researcher. To avoid these problems, researchers determine the degree of match between the categories and the experience of the groups being examined.

Setting effects. Ethnographers, as observers, affect the groups and settings being studied, as threats to internal validity, when cross-group comparisons are conducted because constructs generated in a particular context might not be comparable because of context features (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Where the construct is a function of observer-setting interaction, the interactive dynamics must be identified clearly.

History effects. Cross-group comparison of constructs can be invalid because different groups and cultures have unique historical experiences (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 351). Careful identification of the different historical conditions and variations in patterns is important. Consideration of historical differences between groups can minimize the misapplication of constructs and the misinterpretation of phenomena across groups.

Construct effects. Construct validity is defined as the extent to which terms and meanings are shared across times, settings, and populations (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Definitions and meanings of terms and constructs vary across these dimensions. Construct validity also can be defined as the way effects of observed phenomena are interpreted. Thus, explanations perceived as valid among some groups are disparaged by others. Construct validity also refers to the degree to which formats and instructions for instruments are mutually intelligible to the instrument designer, the instrument administrator, and the participants to whom the instrument is applied. The comparability of ethnographic studies can be obstructed by idiosyncratic use of analytic constructs or by generation of constructs so peculiar to a particular group that they are useless for cross group investigation. Many aforementioned effects affect construct validity. Since a major outcome of ethnographic research is the generation and refinement of constructs through cross group applications, ethnographers carefully consider issues of construct validity because it is critical to the credibility of their results.

To establish external validity, I described the characteristics of reciprocal caring that formed the basis of my study in two different data collection folders. First, I described the components and constructs of my study that formed the philosophical basis of my research. This can be helpful, even if familiar, to those who work in educational areas. Second, to increase external validity, I also described the methodologies, including research design, data collection, and analysis, so that scholars interested in my study can understand the process used in conducting this study. This was important because my topic, examining students' responses to a caring teacher based on a reciprocal relationship, had not been studied extensively in physical education. I also used criterion-

based selection and sampling (Patton, 2002) to choose specific sites and participants to match criteria associated with caring teachers (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

To address threats to external validity, I endeavored to keep a close relationship with the participants so they could easily express their thoughts and feelings, enabling me to capture their point of view to increase validity. Additionally, I endeavored to share my interpretations about the events observed with the participants so that I could record their impressions of my findings. This was helpful in addressing any possible differences between my field notes and their analyses of the interpersonal interactions that I observed (Angrosino, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Ultimately, this process enabled me to recognize the potential for possible distortion of meaning and also validated my interpretations by constantly comparing data collected (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I identified specific ideas or variations in patterns among the three groups by using thick description.

For this reason, there could be differences in construct definitions and meanings according to the degree to which they are shared across the three classrooms and the teachers and students in my study (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent to which results of a research study can be reconstructed when the same procedures are followed (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). According to Goetz & LeCompte (1994), the reliability of controlled experiments can be established more easily than the reliability of an ethnographic design. Establishing the reliability of ethnographic design is complicated because ethnographic research occurs in natural settings and includes processes of change. It is not possible for researchers who

study phenomena in natural settings to reconstruct unique situations precisely.

Furthermore, since human behavior in a given context is not static, replication cannot be achieved in natural settings, regardless of the methods and designs employed (Goetz & LeCompte, 1994). To discuss strategies related to reliability, I describe the possible threats to internal and external reliability and how I addressed these threats in my research.

Internal reliability. Internal reliability refers to the degree to which researchers' interpretations are reliable in reflecting participants' perspectives (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Threats to internal reliability can occur when researchers use ethnographic methodology to examine a phenomenon at several research sites. Reliability can be threatened when various observers are used, or when the classification of things to be observed is not sufficiently explicit.

Since I, as an ethnographer, did not use standardized observational protocols, I first used different equipment, such as tape recorder and mp3 player, to catch verbatim accounts of participant conversations as concretely and precisely as possible. While doing the research, I conducted member checks with participants and asked them to review the transcriptions of their interview data (Angrosino, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). These procedures provided an opportunity for me to recapture participants' point of views that I could have missed during the interview. Also, I provided participants with examples of my class observations to capture their views about the observed events that I might have misinterpreted. Through the process, I collected rich data based on thick description, contributing to data credibility (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Additionally, I sought peer reviewers for my data, codes, and themes to keep a balanced perspective in

interpreting data and to increase the depth of understanding about phenomena while considering others' points of view. These strategies have contributed to minimize threats to the reliability of my interpretations of the events observed during the lessons.

External reliability. External reliability refers to the degree to which other researchers can replicate an original study in other settings by using the same constructs and methods to reach similar conclusions (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). To address the issue of external reliability, I described five aspects related to my study: (a) researcher status position at sites, (b) the selection of sites and participants, (c) the specific conditions in given contexts, (d) the analytic definitions and constructs used, and (e) the methods of data collection and analysis.

Researcher status and position. I identified my role as a non-participant observer based on the belief that I could develop a desirable insider's perspective without participating in class activities (Angrosino, 2005). Interpretations were based on my ability to recognize and interpret phenomenon. My ability to discover insider information could be limited compared to participant researchers who might have access to special information based on more close involvement in social relationships with the participants (Markham, 2005).

Sites and participants selection. I detailed the site and participant selection process in this research. To receive authentic representation of the research questions, I also described carefully ways I chose the participants and selected data to be included in the results. I considered the main informants to be collaborators who contributed to the quality of the data (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

Conditions and context. Since different social contexts can have a unique impact on each individual, describing the social context or circumstance in which participants were involved helped me identify different and appropriate information regarding the participants' physical and social behaviors. The different contexts can be very helpful in making relationships understandable (Stake, 2005). I assumed that because individuals in each of the three settings in my research had unique and idiosyncratic information (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993), they made value judgments related to relevant experiences. In the conditions or contexts, discovering the background of the relationship could provide a different interpretation of its meaning and effects for the study because activities were expected to be influenced by contexts. My classroom observations were based on my intention to focus on particular interactions, and my expectations of the caring behavior shaped, but did not necessarily determine, my findings. Therefore, it is important to recognize the problematic nature of these processes (Charmaz, 2005).

Methods and procedures. "Research design decisions make a difference in what was studied, how it was studied, and how society defines and frames environments" (Markham, 2005, p. 816). I described the definitions or constructs used in this study clearly and appropriately so they were understandable to other researchers as well as participants who collaborated with the researcher to refine the data collected. I provided careful descriptions of the research protocols. I used precise identification of data collected and thorough and explicit description of techniques used to acquire data.

Even though it is difficult for ethnographers to present methods that facilitate replication for other researchers (Goetz & LeCompte, 1994), I addressed threats to the external reliability by providing the five aspects of my research designs and

methodology. Attention to threats to reliability is important to enable other researchers to complete similar studies in other schools and produce similar findings (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

In revealing participants' perspectives that directly related to my research topics, I examined the credibility of phenomena in these settings. The more detail I provided of the participants' responses to a caring environment, the better I was able to present authentic representations of the participants' ways of life in learning settings. Furthermore, the theoretical framework used in my study facilitated attentiveness to the desires of the participants, showing how they interacted with each other in a given environment. Because the participants influenced the environments to which they belonged, the trustworthiness and transferability of my research was critical to presenting the participants' points of view in relation to phenomena in school settings.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The three physical education teachers in this study worked to create and maintain effective classroom environments and to hold expectations for students associated with learning. However, each teacher's approach to teaching was unique and produced characteristic influences on student learning. The class environments maintained by the teachers led to a wide range of student responses. The 6th grade students in this study appeared to be sensitive to the classroom atmosphere. They modified their behavior to adjust to the classroom climate. The students' satisfaction with the classroom environments seemed to be influenced by their interpretation of relationships with their teachers.

All three teachers were preparing their 6th grade students who were new to the middle school environment to enjoy various physical activities in class. Tim and Barbara, for example, drilled their students on basic skills with the assumption that skillfulness would lead to more effective participation in physical education. These two teachers closely observed students skill practice. Tim ensured that they stayed on task, while Barbara shouted group encouragement. Shannon also gave instructions on basic skills, but immediately organized her class into small groups to practice the skills in modified game settings designed to encourage successful participation. Shannon participated in the activities with students, ensuring their success. As Shannon's students developed the skills they moved on to more traditional game formats.

In these physical education settings, the nature of the classroom environments created by these three teachers influenced the relationships between teachers and the

students. Interpersonal interactions with their teachers as well as other students influenced students' impressions of educational experience quality. As my research developed, four themes emerged for comparison in the three schools: context, role of skillfulness, complexity of care, and a caring classroom environment.

Context

The observed contexts in the three middle schools included a range of teaching-learning situations. Although the three teachers worked in the same school district, their classrooms were structured differently, requiring different approaches to student learning. Tim and Barbara taught single gender physical education, while Shannon taught co-educational classes. Specifically, Tim taught boys twice per week and Barbara taught girls who had tested low on academic ability twice per week. In the third type of class structure, Shannon taught co-educational classes of both boys and girls every day. All physical education classes were 50 minutes.

Tim's control of the class environment. The all male physical education teachers at Peterson Middle School taught in teams. Tim, who had 12 years of teaching experience, was the dominant member of the teaching team, teaching two 6th grade classes consecutively with two other male teachers. Specifically, his first 6th grade class met with two other classes, while his second class was teamed with one other class. Thus, Tim team-taught approximately 90 boys with two other teachers during the first period and then taught 60 students with one other teacher during the second 6th grade period. Every lesson would begin with one teacher giving directions for that day, briefly reminding students of skill cues, and then encouraging students to practice those skills before they went out to the playground. Students normally sat on the gymnasium floor as

they arrived, seemingly assigned to a spot for attendance. Despite the large number of boys simultaneously gathered in the gymnasium, it was noticeably quiet except for teachers calling roll. Tim, however, checked attendance silently, observing whether students were seated alphabetically in their assigned locations. Although a few students whispered to someone next to them, most quietly waited until their teachers finished checking the attendance.

Tim managed the large number of students confidently. When Tim's turn came to present the activity, he began by emphasizing that it was important for students to follow rules, such as staying on task, until the teachers gave them the next skill cues. He explained and reviewed skills for the day, demonstrating them as he talked. Students were very quiet while Tim explained how to practice skills. After Tim finished his explanation, he asked them to stand and practice a few times. Although Tim asked for questions, they rarely raised their hands. The following class observations occurred at the beginning of class.

Today the three classes of boys were team-taught by three male physical education teachers. As soon as all the students arrived in the gym, they sat in rows in front of their teachers. Tim had 5 rows of 6 students. They were all quiet until Tim finished checking the attendance. He waited until the two other teachers finished and then shouted in a stern voice, 'Listen up! Listen very, very carefully! I just want to tell you one time, not two times, okay?' Tim briefly focused the 90 students' attention on the skills of catching and hitting a ball, emphasizing the stance and the body and hand position, particularly keeping thumbs up. Then Tim told the students to stand up and keep an appropriate

distance from others. They practiced several times following Tim's demonstration while Tim counted to keep them all performing at the same time in the same way. The students followed his directions without talking or becoming distracted. The other teachers were also counting in very loud voices with Tim.

In a typical lesson, his students were serious and focused on his instructions. Tim demanded that all students pay attention to his explanations at the beginning of the class. He believed the teacher's explanation or demonstration provided the best opportunity for students to visualize and concentrate on the skill to be performed.

Barbara's cooperative, but resistant environment. The physical education teachers at Frost Middle School also separated students by gender. The 6th grade students were assigned to physical education at the beginning of the school year based on test scores in mathematics, science, and reading. Barbara taught the low academic 6th grade girls. These students participated in physical education for 50 minutes only twice per week, instead of the typical daily physical education, because they were required to take additional mathematics and English classes.

Barbara, who had 23 years of teaching experience, focused on skillfulness and required the students to practice skills. She also provided group activities to motivate her underachieving students. She explained that she felt her students learned better when they worked cooperatively. During the observation period, Barbara was teaching a track and field unit. The following was part of the data from observations at the beginning of class.

Barbara usually encouraged her students to change into their uniforms as quickly as possible. Her voice was easily heard outside of the locker room that led

directly onto the playground. When they moved onto the playground, they usually saw other classes of 6th grade students who participated in physical education every day. Barbara's students appeared excited at the beginning of the class. They seemed ready for the physical education lesson. Barbara normally checked students' attendance when they came out of the locker room and then began explaining 4-5 station activities they were going to perform.

Barbara observed that certain close friends were constantly arguing, especially when they were on the same team. Barbara explained how she dealt with those who were in a negative situation or mood.

I always tell them: 'that's a great opportunity to work together. That's what the world is all about. You're put on this earth to try to take care of each other.' I'm like, 'Why are you so nasty to each other? You are supposed to be taking care of each other, loving each other.' I try to tell them all the time, but that's not what they are hearing from home. As I said before, we've got everything here.

Barbara tried to cope with their disruptive behavior by assigning them to different groups. However, these students resented being assigned to different teams, and did not hesitate to express their negative feelings publicly.

Shannon's relational class environment. The structure of the physical education classes at Columbus Middle School, unlike the class structure at either Peterson or Frost Middle Schools, was co-educational. The 6th grade students participated every day in class for 50 minutes. Shannon had 12 years of teaching experience.

The 6th grade students at Columbus Middle School had opportunities to experience a variety of interpersonal interactions in a caring and comfortable classroom atmosphere, consistent with the caring environment that Noddings (1984, 1992) described.

The following was part of the data from observations of Shannon's classroom:

A door led from the locker room directly into the gym, and the students entered the gym and huddled on the floor in front of the whiteboard with today's lesson. Some students read the whiteboard and others chatted among themselves. Shannon quietly checked their attendance when they arrived. A few students asked Shannon questions while she was checking attendance. She gave them brief answers. Two boys were chasing each other, running among the students who already sat on the floor. Shannon told the boys to move into the other space, open space, until the class began. After Shannon finished checking the attendance, she waited quietly until they were all sitting on the floor. One of the boys was still walking around and did not pay attention to Shannon. She told him to stop walking around and sit down like the other students. The boy stopped running, but kept walking around the students. Shannon called his name and then started counting 5, 4, 3, 2, & 1 in low voice. The boy slid like a baseball player into his place right before Shannon reached the number one. He seemed happy with his performance, and a couple of boys laughed. As soon as that boy sat down, Shannon explained today's lesson and the related rules and skills regarding the softball unit. Shannon drew a softball diamond on the whiteboard and marked some positions for defending. After she finished explaining the related rules,

several students raised their hands and asked for more details. She gave them additional information and slowly demonstrated certain positions. Shannon told them that they were going to learn by using one Wiffle ball and a plastic bat at the tennis court in order to get accustomed to the regular softball game. The students were asked to move to the court. They chattered to each other excitedly until they arrived at the court that was already set up for the game. Shannon had drawn some big arrow signs on the court to indicate the directions.

In summary, Shannon's students moved around freely when they arrived in the gym, appearing familiar with certain protocols that allowed them to read the lesson plan on the whiteboard in the gymnasium before they sat on the floor for attendance. To use the limited time effectively, Shannon checked the attendance before the class started. All the students huddled in front of Shannon when they recognized that she was ready to begin. Shannon's students appeared to be attentive while she explained the lesson plan and then asked her for more information. Most showed great interest in the softball diagram as Shannon repeated the rules and skills. Her explanation was followed by a demonstration that provided the opportunity for her students to visualize the skills to be performed.

Role of Skillfulness

Although the 6th grade students were familiar with simplified game oriented learning situations at an elementary school level, it was challenging for them to understand and implement the more complex physical activities requiring more active and intense participation at the middle school level. All three teachers introduced student to basic skills, encouraging them to practice those skills. However, the participating

teachers exhibited different methods to help their students learn and practice the skills. Specifically, although each teacher worked to develop student skillfulness, their attitudes towards student-teacher and student-student relationships varied based on the each teacher's individual goals and expectations.

Disciplinary and demanding approach to skillfulness. After Tim finished explaining skill lessons, all the boys carried the assigned equipment to the playground where they were to practice. To encourage them to concentrate on specific cues, Tim was strict with the students, telling them to keep practicing the hitting and catching tasks while they focused on the skill cues. Here was data from classroom observations of Tim's classes.

Students in groups of 4-5 boys spread out around the field for batting practice.

Each group had two fielders, a catcher, and a batter who used a batting tee, and all took turns at the various positions. Tim rotated to each group, encouraging students to keep practicing. In one group, the batter swung and missed the ball twice and his catcher laughed. The batter looked disappointed. The catcher then went to the batter and tried to analyze why he was not able to hit the ball. The batter complained that the tee was too low. Tim looked at them from across the softball field, saw them talking, but was too far away to hear their conversation. Tim shouted, "Hey, stop talking, go back to work. You guys make your fielders bored." As soon as they heard Tim's voice, they stopped their discussion and moved quickly back to their positions without expression.

Tim did not regard student interactions as relevant to the skill building. He insisted that the students focus on the skill practice and perform the task exactly as he directed, and

they complied. Tim reported that his job was to teach skills. He focused on organizing the lesson structure and the class environment to achieve that goal.

In Tim's lessons, students focused on skill improvement. Tim reasoned that creating a serious, focused learning environment helped his students improve their skill levels. This emphasis required students to follow his strict practice protocols, keeping a no-nonsense classroom atmosphere that he thought was best for student learning. To Tim, it was important that all his students concentrated on his explanation of skill performance for a short period of time, before they practiced the skills. For this reason, when Tim was talking, he demanded their complete attention. Further, Tim selected a few critical cues and simplified these so that students could focus on the essence of the skill performance. Here was part of Tim's interview:

We teach [the skill]; then we have to reteach it to 25% of the kids because they weren't listening the first time you taught it. It would be some magic thing just to teach kids to sit there and listen to the information. I think 6th grade students are the worst with this because they don't have great athletic skills or great listening skills, either.

Tim emphasized the importance of teaching students skills as a primary goal for physical education. He strove to create a learning environment in which the students focused on skill development and spent class time practicing skills and skill related performances. He explained:

The most challenging thing [when teaching physical education] is dealing with students' lack of basic skills. So if you can give them the basic skills as briefly as possible by having them practice, then try to get them to use them [in games], I

think that is the best way to keep them engaged in learning, because they are using the skills and they are having fun.

Tim assumed that improving a student's skills would lead to enjoyment of sports, so students spent the majority of each lesson practicing skills. Tim reported that students should learn something new in class, so they needed to focus on doing things exactly as he demonstrated:

I think you need to win the student over. Most of the time they don't want to participate because it is something they are not good at... that skill or a higher level skill. They just don't enjoy doing it because of that. So I think the key is, you have to get those kids to improve skills, basic skills, without any argument. You show them how to do it. You walk them through it. For instance, I always relate it to math class. I always say, 'When you go to math class, your teacher is going to tell you that $2+2=4$. Do you argue with your teacher about that? Well this is how to do this. There is really not any other way to do it. Just pretend that it is as simple as math class and do it that way. This is the best way to improve on that skill. But again, you can encourage them and help them, then you can win them over and you can get them to keep trying.

Tim worked to keep students practicing basic skills and following his directions without any distractions during the class period.

Tim's students reported that the content they learned in class was related to the different skills needed to play games. Patrick explained what he learned and what was emphasized in class:

He [Tim] always teaches the correct way to do things and the correct procedure to

do something, like ‘when you're hitting a ball, you should keep the right stance and check the position of your hands.’ So he reminds us of the accurate way.

Don described how Tim helped students develop their abilities regarding skill-based performance.

I'm not good at some sports, like, I can catch, but I can't throw very well. So he said, ‘try your best,’ and when I'm trying my best, then I know I'll probably get a good grade because I keep trying. I always try, even though I'm not good.

Don's response to Tim's teaching was sustained focused practice on the assigned tasks, and he was confident that he would earn a good grade.

Mike also seemed motivated to practice because he was aware of Tim's emphasis on skillfulness and practice. He described how Tim helped students improve skills. “He encourages us to work hard, and he says, ‘keep working on it,’ and if we're doing well, he just praises. So, we're going to have to practice, practice, and practice.” Mike tried to continue to practice to improve skills and the skill related performance, and he felt that Tim encouraged him.

Brandon affirmed Tim's instructional focus on cue-oriented skill practice. “He's like, ‘If you keep on practicing, you will be okay. Just practice.’ Like when we follow directions well, he would tell us what we were good at.” Brandon recognized that Tim was helpful in improving basic skills. Like Patrick, Don, and Mike, Brandon was ready to follow Tim's instructions.

Clearly, Tim's students were aware of his expectations and most responded positively to his teaching. These students followed his instructions and stayed involved throughout the lesson, practicing skills.

Barbara's encouragement for students to focus on skill practice. Barbara, like Tim, valued skillfulness as a primary goal for physical education and created lessons to assist students to become more skillful. Data from class observations showed that, similar to Tim's lessons, Barbara tried to explain and demonstrate what she wanted students to do:

The long jump was one of the station activities. When Barbara's students arrived in the long distant jump area, she briefly explained the technique for the long jump. Then Barbara explained in more detail how to jump and emphasized the importance of taking off at the white line located between two red cones. After finishing the verbal explanation Barbara asked them whether they had any questions. However, none of them responded to her. Then she showed them, using slow motion, how to take off, but did not jump, herself. She also explained how to rake the sandpit after each jumper landed, so that the next jumper could measure her distance. After Barbara finished explaining, she asked for a volunteer to demonstrate the jump. A couple of students raised their hands. Barbara selected one of the girls and then loudly encouraged her to run fast when the student started running toward the sand. She ran like it was a 100 yard dash, which resulted in her not taking off properly, landing with one foot, and losing her balance in the sand. The observing students laughed at the unexpected landing.

This seemed to embarrass the jumper. However, Barbara said, "good job."

Barbara used this example to explain a few more points that the students should remember as they practiced. Barbara basically focused on explaining basic skills and then having her students practice those skills. To that end, she often required her students

to listen carefully when she explained. Because Barbara, like Tim, explained skills at the beginning of class so that the students could practice during the rest of the class, she did not want them to talk while she was explaining.

Barbara focused on teaching basic skills. One strategy she used was to provide students with sports equipment such as balls, goals, hurdles, etc. because she assumed that having a lot of equipment would help them focus on skills.

[I am] trying to focus on skills, basic skills. So, I am trying to give them each a piece of equipment so they are going to be busy practicing. Just keeping them busy is helpful in teaching them the skills. They are not talking so much when they are busy. That's why I like to give them a lot of equipment. And then I walk around; circulate.

Barbara, like Tim, required students to practice skills. Her students appeared to know what she wanted them to do when participating in activities. They worked together while participating in station activities. She often spoke loudly to encourage students who seemed unwilling to participate in learning activities and she repeatedly emphasized the importance of working together.

Shannon's encouragement for student interacting. Shannon worked to create an emotionally comfortable and supportive classroom so the students would enjoy participating. Shannon recognized that it was hard to deal with the diversity among the students in her classes. To effectively handle them, she emphasized that it was important to know the students' needs and abilities at the beginning of the school year. With the various skill levels represented in the co-ed class, Shannon tried to group students with those of similar ability, so the less skilled students would be able to enjoy the activities.

Given that the co-educational classes demonstrated more diversity of skill level than did the single gender classes, Shannon needed to know the student's skill level throughout the year. She explained:

Well, I think that it is important to bring back [ability] grouping, because they all do come in with different skill levels and outside experiences. If you group them accordingly with their skill they are having a more challenging experience and enjoyable one. If they can compete on a similar level, then the students that aren't highly skilled can also compete in a less threatening environment with students of similar ability. I think it comes back to that social issue. They don't like to look bad in front of their peers, so you try to put them into situations where they don't perceive they are looking bad, and what is challenging for one student might not be challenging for another. You can't assume the same situation is going to work for every student.

Grouping the students according to their skill levels was one way Shannon worked to create a caring classroom environment in which her students could feel comfortable participating in learning activities without fear of failure or embarrassment. Shannon elaborated this perspective:

Sometimes they get to choose where to skill group themselves or choose what game [they want to play]. I set the rules for the game then they choose what grouping they want according to their skill ability. That gives them a chance to compete against the students that are of similar ability. They can self-assess themselves and group themselves accordingly. So, I think you set them up for success by teaching them the skills through demonstration and practice time.

Give them an environment where they can kind of graduate to the next level of whatever you are doing instead of just throwing it at them. Tell them exactly 'I have this expectation' and what you are looking for.

She emphasized that it was important for teachers to consider individual differences among students so that all the students could improve their skills in physical education:

When we did the softball unit, if they had already learned the rules for softball and they felt comfortable with their catching, throwing, and batting skills, they would play a game while the other students were in a learning game, so to speak, where they were learning in a less threatening environment, and the teacher was able to walk through the game play by play.

Shannon assumed that creating an emotionally comfortable classroom environment not only helped increase the student participation, but also prepared them for a lifetime of enjoyment doing the things they learned in physical education:

I try to focus on building skills for a lifetime because most kids are not going to choose to play on a competitive team so it is most important for me to give them how to build life skills, and how to interact with others after they learn basic skills.

Shannon's effort to know the students also focused on being attentive to the students' feelings in different learning situations. She tried to engage the students in the learning situation by creating a comfortable classroom climate.

Shannon was willing to use a differentiated skill approach to teach the 6th grade students, because she believed it would help them adjust to the new environment they perceived as a challenging situation. Wayne described Shannon's incremental approach:

She just makes everything look very easy which makes you feel more experienced at that sport if you've never played it. She makes the court smaller and as you get on with the unit, and then she'll make it larger.

Shannon modified the games effectively, providing opportunities for her students to enjoy learning, even though students each had different interpretations of the learning situations.

Blake, who was quiet and a little shy during the interview, explained how he felt when he recognized his success in certain activities:

It kind of makes me feel pretty good. I feel like I've helped my team if it's something that I've done good. Mainly, I've actually been able to do it. I've not been able to repeat just what I've done before. I feel like I accomplished it. I've done this. Basically, she compliments you.

Blake valued his new achievement that made him feel accomplished and improved his relationships with others including the teacher and peers. Lisa put more value on the content presented by the teacher in class. "It feels great, I could accomplish something, get it over with, and get to try again. Like I did more than the other time, because I'm getting better at what my teacher taught me." These students acknowledged that achievement made them feel good, proud, or accomplished, emphasizing the satisfaction that they were able to do something difficult in class.

The following class observations showed how Shannon provided opportunities for low-skilled students to experience a sense of success, enhancing their enjoyment and involvement in activities.

Shannon pitched for both teams, throwing the ball very carefully for the low skilled players so they were all able to hit it. Shannon didn't say much during the play, but occasionally asked questions, or sometimes gave a "back up" signal by using her right hand to the students who were too close to the batter so they would back away from the batter's box and sit or stand on the hill for safety. She said, "I know you guys want to help him, but get back on the hill, please." Occasionally, when her pitch was not accurate for the batter, she shouts, "Sorry. You can try again."

The teaching strategies Shannon used enabled the students to feel good, accomplished, and proud using their feelings of success to motivate them to keep trying. Amy, for example, was eager to explain how the teacher's encouragement influenced her in class:

She'll tell us to do it, she'll tell us how to do it again, explain why we're doing this, and she'll give us instructions over again and explain to us until we understand or maybe, like, demonstrate it herself. And then she encourages us to do our best and you can tell that she's proud of what we do.

Amy affirmed that Shannon's encouragement influenced not only her participation, but also her confidence. Christina also explained how Shannon helped her engage in game playing activities. She explained:

I think that she [Shannon] helps me try harder. When I saw other people were doing this, I'm, like, 'Oh, they can do it. I must be able to do it, and then I try to get into the game. I try to really work up a sweat you know. She [Shannon] says, 'Come on. Let's do this. You can do it, Christina.' It is more like, 'Okay, now I

understand that I can do it and then I get more into the game which makes me work harder at the things that I am not good at.

Amy also seemed comfortable talking about Shannon and expressed how she responded to her teaching in class:

Probably she's [Shannon], counting on us I guess. Counting on us to get this right and maybe showing other people like 'yeah, I can do this,' like not just 'you can do it' but 'I can do it, too', you know. She [Shannon] really helps us because you can tell she cares for us. She wants us to try harder. So we try our best.

Amy felt that her teacher believed students could perform the assigned activities in class. She recognized that Shannon was willing to help and inspire students to learn the skills.

Amy interpreted her achievement in a contextual situation maintained by Shannon.

I completed a task, ...I did something good and I made her [Shannon] proud of, maybe, or maybe I proved myself to people. Because finally, after all the practices, all the hard work, I got it, you know. I finally know how to do something. Maybe it can come back in the future, you know, but for right now, I got it, you know, it finally "clicked."

Amy recognized that success depended on hard work, and she realized how important her efforts were for success. Her desire to make Shannon proud of her helped inspire her efforts and gave meaning to her success. Amy explained that she was more willing to do what Shannon wanted when she recognized Shannon's caring in the class.

With her teaching-- she actually cares, I follow that, of course, and I try to do my best. I think it all depends on the teacher--how the kid turns out, I guess, and how they follow through on the lessons they are teaching. So, when she is teaching,

she is teaching it well and she is caring, actually caring, about it. Not just saying things. There is something behind it, like; she is interested in it; like she likes what she is teaching. So, that makes students feel like, 'Oh, she actually really wants me to do good on this.' So, I am going to, like, I feel encouraged by it. I don't know, like, I am inspired, maybe so we try to do our best on it. That's how I feel. Um. It's just 'vibes' I guess.

Cathy, who mentioned that she hated physical education classes at the beginning of the school year, indicated that her feeling changed when she recognized she was improving at something that was originally difficult for her:

It makes me feel good about overcoming my problems and then every day I participate more and more, and I get more successful each day. It makes me feel pretty good because I can do, like, 'Oh my gosh, I can do this.' I'm sitting here and playing this game, you know. I couldn't do it this last month, and then it just makes me feel good inside. I overcame something I couldn't do, or overcame something that was hard for me.

Cathy expressed her feelings confidently when engaging in physical activities. She seemed surprised when she recognized her accomplishment. Michelle described how she felt while she participated in learning activities that Shannon provided.

Like, she's not telling us directly, 'I want you to succeed,' but the way she's saying something you can feel that she wants us to succeed. I guess every day you feel that she cares about you. When you realize that she cares about what you do and you're safe, you feel more comfortable to do what she's telling you, because you trust her more and she's not going to tell you the wrong thing. Now,

I feel more comfortable to do what she's telling me to do because I trust her more once I realized that she cares and that she's there.

Complexity of Care

These participating teachers' attitudes appeared to comprehensively influence student learning. These teachers based their teaching strategies on their beliefs or perspectives of what they valued or cherished as a teacher. They responded to the students within the school environments that were different in each school. This section illustrated three different teaching strategies within these school settings: business oriented, cooperative, and caring.

Businesslike teaching. In Tim's serious classroom, he demanded students concentrate on his explanation of skill practice. He guaranteed the 6th grade students knew what the teachers expected them to do. He pointed out that he had high expectations for the students in his classes.

Early in the year, I had to spend a lot of time asking them to be quiet and waiting for them to be quiet. They are better now than they were at the beginning. At the beginning they would come in, and for them to sit there quietly for five minutes was unheard of. It drives me crazy because when I was in school, whatever the teacher said, I did, because my parents would have taken care of me when I got home. Now, they have good behaviors but not as good as what I expect from them. I have high expectations for my students and I tell them all the time. My expectations are through the roof. I expect you to come in here and do the best job you can do.

Tim felt his job was to teach skills and for him to feel successful students must learn skills. He explained that it was important to maintain a clear boundary between himself and the boys to retain the seriousness and control he believed necessary for students to become skillful in physical education.

What I have been told by other teachers is to never smile during the first quarter of the school year. So you have to set that up so that students understand we can have fun and joke to a point, and that is where we stop, because we are here to learn. Again you also have to have your standing with your students, because in the past I have had classes where you can't joke around with them because they couldn't control themselves. As I said before, the kids have to either respect or fear you. I'd lean towards respect but if that doesn't work fear is another option.

Tim's teaching strategies were based on his belief that it was necessary for the classroom to be under control and for a certain boundary to be maintained between the teacher and students in class. His perspective influenced his teaching style, and also influenced his relationships with the students. Tim explained:

I try to keep a teacher-student distance. I am in charge and you are here as a student. I think it is important to keep in mind that if you don't have discipline, you're going to lose control of your classroom, you know. I think that too often a lot of teachers try to become too friendly. Yeah, you need to build that relationship sometimes, but you need to have your barriers with that relationship as far as what your expectations are, and what to expect, and what your role is and what their role is, and you can't get it mixed up or crossed over, because all of a

sudden it doesn't work. I think the key to being successful is to control your classroom. The bottom-line is we are not buddies.

Tim's primary concern was keeping control of the class, a challenge when there were so many students. He felt it was necessary to keep a dominant position to maintain control, and, therefore, he did not want the students to feel they could develop a relaxed, friendly relationship with him. Tim did not regard active interactions among students as relevant to skill building. Student talking was not appropriate for skill-learning situation. Therefore, Tim's students were very careful not to talk to each other. Tim explained that having fun should not interfere with the task. Although he stressed it was very important for students to be serious about the class, he allowed himself to use humor to lighten the mood of the class.

I think the best way is to use your sense of humor to have fun and also I always tell the kids you can have as much fun as you want as long as you know when we have to get back to being serious. We have to stop laughing because we need to get back to what we need to do. I think that's the key to anyone being successful: to have control over your classroom.

Tim allotted a short time to joke with the class, and then demanded their strict attention.

He stated that he did not like to see students talking when he was explaining the skills.

Tim explained:

I think that one of the most difficult and challenging things I have found this year, especially with this sixth grade, is to make them quiet. I say, 'if you are quiet, I can give you information so you can move on the next activity. It's just their inability to listen, just their listening skills. I keep telling them, sometimes yelling

at them, 'You should control your behavior.' They can control their behavior while they are learning these activities, you know. I say, 'that is just common courtesy.'

Chris, a 6th grade student, described how he felt about Tim's teaching.

He [Tim] talks to the class about skills and gives us directions on what to do and how to do it. So, I'm trying my hardest to follow his teachings and what he wants us to do. Sometimes, he yells at us, really loud, because someone talks. But then that sort of helps me to work harder the next time.

Chris explained that he was more likely to comply with Tim's guidelines in class, because he was aware of the consequence of not following the guidelines or rules. David understood Tim's expectations and explained that Tim, at times, became irritated when students did not appear attentive in class:

When he gives us directions on what to do and how to do it, we should follow exactly and efficiently. Mostly just to keep doing what he requires. Sometimes, he yells at us, really loud, because someone talks when he talks.

Tim's students, like Chris and David, knew the consequences of not following directions that Tim provided. They reported that they tried to follow what Tim emphasized and to avoid getting into trouble in class. Chris's and David's comments indicated that one student could influence Tim, because he stopped teaching the entire class to reprimand that one student. However, with that as an example, the rest of the class was careful to focus on Tim's teaching.

Tim's students reported that, although the serious and demanding class climate made them focus on skill-related performance, it was a little frightening. One 6th grader,

Dick, told how he felt. Dick said:

I recommend that he should use a bit quieter tone of voice. The loud tone in his voice frightens some of the kids in my class and sometimes makes us, who don't do anything wrong, feel nervous.

Dick was intimidated by Tim's method of controlling the class.

Tim's focus on skillfulness did not allow the students to experience different interpersonal interactions in class. Because Tim's emphasis on skillfulness required very tight student control, the students had little opportunity to actively interact with Tim or other students.

Cooperative classroom environments. Barbara and Shannon both wanted their students to work cooperatively in class. They emphasized the importance of cooperative learning and also demonstrated diverse forms of care to provide opportunities for the students to experience learning with others who might have different experiences. In general, both Barbara's and Shannon's students followed the teacher's modeling and practiced working cooperatively. Barbara's students followed her instructions when they worked in groups. Shannon's students carefully observed her interactions with others.

Barbara's emphasis on cooperative learning. Most of Barbara's students were willing to work cooperatively in assigned groups. Barbara interacted with each group of students as they performed the assigned tasks. Barbara's students usually tried to help those who might need help by explaining and demonstrating the tasks. Diana explained what Barbara wanted them to do while working as a group.

She [Barbara] wants us to participate and just be nice to other students and do what we are supposed to do. Like, share and help other students if they don't

understand. We have two special needs students. And she wants us to help them. And we do because a lot of times they don't want to play because they don't understand what to do. So we just help them.

Based on Barbara's example and encouragement, Diana helped the special needs students.

Jill recognized that students needed to help each other when facing challenges or having difficulty doing tasks. She explained:

She tells us to help other students that don't understand. If somebody doesn't understand then we explain it to them. It's really challenging. If I don't understand and then my friends are doing it with me, it helps me overcome the challenge.

Another 6th grader, Alice, expressed that she was motivated to work cooperatively with others, following Barbara's instructions.

She wants us to participate and cooperate with other students because she tells us. Um, she helps us if we don't understand. For example, she shows us what to do and she gives us examples, like she shows us herself. So we'll understand how to play more and we'll cooperate with others more.

Mia echoed Barbara's directions while they were working together in groups.

Well, I just really try to help other students and show them what they really supposed to do, because she [Barbara] keeps telling us to help other students. If we are playing something with partners she says that we need to show them when they miss something. Well, if she tells us something and my friends aren't really paying attention, I just might help them and do stuff.

Diana, Jill, Alice, and Mia expressed their willingness to follow Barbara's instructions while working cooperatively. Katie, who was willing to follow Barbara's instructions, explained how she felt about participating in groups:

She [Barbara] talks about basic sports a lot and how there are different opportunities in the world. She will get a group of people together and say, 'Maybe you can help this person doing this. I'll tell you some tips and you can share it with others.' Actually, I like working with others more than just being by myself, because you are in a group. You have your friends, and you are not just doing anything by yourself. But sometimes, I don't like working with a group if I don't like that person or my group. But you always try to get along with somebody. You have to keep your opinions to yourself and just try to work together. Don't be mean.

Katie used the challenges of group work as an opportunity to practice getting along with others.

In short, Barbara's students tended to follow Barbara's instructions when they worked together in groups. They appeared to assume that those who did not play had difficulty understanding what to do and how to perform it. They mentioned they relied on Barbara's demonstration and explanation.

Shannon's students' willingness to cooperate with others. Since Shannon participated in the activities, her students had the opportunity to observe her interacting with others. They could see Shannon's interest in making them successful.

Bruce tried to follow Shannon's modeling when he helped students who were not performing well. Like other students, he tried to encourage them to focus on developing the content.

I'd say 'you just try again' and encourage them by saying 'good luck, nice try' and make tips help. After that, you have to view of them, see if they are making a mistake, you just tell them to work on that and encourage them to try again and see if it's better. Anything helps, because normally she [Shannon] does.

Bruce helped and encouraged other students by following Shannon's example. Cindy tried to help students struggling to perform, but also tried to encourage her friend when she wasn't playing hard.

If someone's having a hard time, I'd like either demonstrate it or I just show them. One of my friends sometime doesn't do her best so I ask her why she does that and then I try to help her as much as I can.

Cindy was willing to listen to a problem and then try to help. Rayna, who was quiet, explained how her friends helped her figure out things. The ways they helped seemed to follow the teacher's teaching style.

Like my friends do it and they help me sometimes, and then they watch how I do it and if I am doing something wrong they correct me. If they sometimes do a mistake I can correct them.

Rayna cooperated with her friends. Like Bruce, she tried to monitor others' performance and she expected others to do the same thing when she performed.

Both Barbara and Shannon worked to create a cooperative classroom climate and in similar ways they encouraged the students to practice working together. Nearly all 6th grade students were willing to follow what their teachers wanted them to do and also what the teachers valued regarding student learning. Specifically, the ways Barbara's and Shannon's students helped and encouraged other students were similar to what their teachers did. Barbara's students helped other students by explaining and demonstrating Barbara's examples. Shannon's students followed Shannon's modeling by monitoring and encouraging each other so they worked effectively and cooperatively.

A Caring Environment

The participating physical education teachers in this study worked to create and maintain effective classroom environments leading to a wide range of student responses. The 6th grade students in this study were sensitive to the classroom atmosphere. They modified their behavior to adjust to the learning situations. A caring classroom environment is distinct from other school settings, providing an opportunity for students to expand school relational experiences (Noddings, 1992). These educational experiences include interpersonal interactions with their teachers as well as other students influenced students' impressions of educational experience quality. Noddings (1984, 1992) emphasized that it is necessary to examine the role of caring teachers who create the caring environment and understand the different needs of students. In this section, the four main components of the caring environment emerged from Shannon's class: building relationships, nurturing, encouraging, and safe environment.

Building reciprocal relationship. The students' satisfaction with the classroom environments seemed to be influenced by their interpretation of relationships with their teachers. In school settings, caring classrooms are based on teachers' efforts to develop meaningful reciprocal and interpersonal relationships between the teacher and students and also share academic expectations with their students. A key to educational caring appeared to be the nature of the relationships developed between the teacher and students within a given context.

Shannon assumed that it was essential to create a comfortable and positive classroom environment in which students had opportunities to value the importance of the mutual relationships with her, as the teacher, and with each other. Reciprocal teacher-student relationships were a necessary foundation for student engagement in Shannon's opinion. Her emphasis on caring and reciprocal relationships resembled the practical application of the ethic of care supported by Noddings (1992). Shannon's care for her students led her to select some strategies to enhance caring relationships similar to Nodding's strategies. Shannon reasoned that if she knew her students well enough, she could increase the quality of interpersonal interactions with them so they could participate more confidently. She emphasized that it was important to know the students' needs and abilities at the beginning of the school year. Her emphasis on getting to know each student continuously influenced her teaching and helped her work effectively with individual students in class, giving them personally relevant encouragement when they participated in activities. Shannon emphasized the importance of building a reciprocal relationship with each individual student from the first day.

I think, at the beginning of the year, that's where you start to build your relationships. You know, it doesn't always have to be such a rush to get into the curriculum as quickly as possible. Instead, it is important to learn about your students. You can do both at the same time hopefully. However, it is hard to do focus only on the content when you have a class of 35. You have to spend time to meet all those needs. But again I think when it comes back to building relationships with kids, you have to have that foundation first with certain kids, and then you build on that. So, you have to start with it. I'd say, 'mutual respect.' Like, I respect them and they respect me. They are accountable for learning something and I help them learn it.

Even though she admitted that it was challenging to deal with the differences among them, she believed that it was helpful to reach out to each student and build reciprocal relationships with them.

Shannon's students also felt that she created caring relationships. In response to my interview questions, Kyle explained how he felt when Shannon helped him in a caring way and how he responded to her.

When she [Shannon] helped me in class, I thanked her because someone who helps someone else in a good way should be thanked in a good way. Those are the people who care about others and help them. It gets you all bubbly inside. Kyle experienced a good feeling based on his reciprocal relationship with the caring teacher, Shannon. He recognized that Shannon cared for him and wanted to show his appreciation for her caring. Because he believed that the teacher deserved being valued, he tried to help her in his own way by helping collect equipment. Kyle commented:

Sometimes I help to bring in the equipment. She says, 'Thank you Kyle because I needed help to bring all of this stuff in.' She usually doesn't ask me. I just go over and help her and she says 'thank you.' I feel grateful because I am volunteering to help because that is my present for her teaching us a sport. It's like I give back.

Helping collect the equipment was the way Kyle showed appreciation to Shannon for teaching the sport. Joe explained that he tried to help other students by observing what they were doing and suggesting alternative techniques if they had difficulty performing activities in their classes. Joe assumed that working together occurred in either helping or being helped by others.

I just talk to them and find out what they weren't comfortable about doing in class and he'll tell me what he did and sometimes we'll agree on the same thing and he'll help me out and I'll help him out.

Joe developed a mutual helping relationship with other students based on the assumption that helping each other would benefit both.

Shannon's students reported that the presence of a reciprocal relationship between teachers and students encouraged and enabled students to engage in a variety of interpersonal interactions, while participating actively in learning activities that the teacher provided. The students also confirmed that various interactions with Shannon not only increased their trust in their teachers, but also enabled them to extend care to other students.

Nurturing. Noddings (1984, 1988) mentioned nurturing as an ethical ideal. Nurturing flows in the direction of the student and relates to the student's needs.

Nurturing is characterized by listening to, and paying non-selective attention to the student.

Shannon explained how best to help engage the 6th grade students in different learning situations.

I think it is important to have a nurturing kind of side in the beginning. In other words, make them feel like you care about what they say and what they like to do by listening to kids and then giving them voice...an appropriate voice, and getting to know them throughout the year. Again, I think that 6th grade students have been struggling to work in this new and challenging environment. Whereas with an 8th grade class you can set the bar higher quicker, so I think, for the 6th grade students, it is all about progression and baby steps. Because if you throw too much information at them they are confused, and it can lead to discipline problems and I think you need to have some elements, so to speak, something that really captures their attention. Sometimes that's difficult because every kid is different in what they think is fun, and it's hard to please all of them.

Shannon properly adjusted her expectations for the 6th grade students and consciously worked to enhance their educational experiences.

Encouragement for students. Noddings (1988, 1992) emphasized the importance of affirming students based on the needs of individual students. She also recommended that the teacher visualize the student in his ideal form and show him an “attainable image of himself” in order to confirm his potential (Noddings, 1984, p. 193).

The 6th grade students in three different learning contexts reported that the teachers' encouragement helped them not only to keep participating in learning activities,

but also to perform better, regardless of skill level. In dynamic physical education settings, teacher's encouragement is an important part of the student learning because it not only gives the confidence to the students who can trust the teacher while participating in learning activities, but also provides opportunity for the teacher to develop the reciprocal relationship while both the teacher and students interact with each other.

Shannon's students described how helpful her encouragement was for them to get involved with activities. Jerry stressed the importance of encouragement between the students and the teacher. He recognized the reciprocal nature of caring expressed through encouragement in Shannon's class. He extended the circle to help or encourage others.

I get my encouragement off of her so she gets her encouragement off of me and if somebody isn't encouraged by her I encourage them to do better. Like if they say 'I want to quit,' I will say 'don't quit just keep trying, you can do it'

Jerry's comment indicated that it was important for him to get encouragement from the teacher, even though he understood that Shannon put a lot of effort into encouraging each individual student in class.

Cathy told how Shannon encouraged her when she did not want to engage in the class. Cathy told how Shannon influenced her attitude toward skill developing situations. Shannon's efforts to engage her in learning activities motivated Cathy to participate more and work with other students who hesitated to participate. Cathy explained:

She [Shannon] got me to participate. Normally, at the beginning of the year, I hated gym. I hated it. I wouldn't even participate because I would just be standing around because I thought that it was boring and I would get sweaty and stuff like that. Particularly Halie and me normally would just walk and wander

around. Then she [Shannon] would be like ‘Okay, look at everybody around you, Cathy. You’re going to like your team. What about your team, Cathy? You need to go help your team. What if they lose, and you won’t be part of that team anymore because you’re not doing anything. COME ON, Cathy, you need to do something. They need your help’ So I’m, like, ‘Yeah, I need to help my team out because they’re losing right now or, even if they’re winning, maybe we need to get more points so they don’t catch up to us.’ So, I am more into it and I WANT to get more active in it. Now she pushes me to do it and I like that. And then I’m like ‘Come on Halie.’ She said, ‘Why?’ She’s like, ‘I don’t really want to.’ And I’m like, ‘Okay, I’m going to.’ She’s like, ‘Okay~.’ So she [Shannon] persuaded me to do it and I persuade other people to do it. Like, ‘Well, I’m doing it, why can’t we work together, you know.’ Like, ‘if we work together, maybe we can both proceed in different things. Because, maybe if you work harder at one thing and I work harder at another and if we put it together, maybe I can learn what you worked hard on and you can learn what I worked hard on.’

Shannon was able to persuade Cathy to engage in learning activity through dialogue, helping Cathy understand her responsibilities to her team. Shannon used dialogue as a tool not only to encourage her students to participate in team activities, but also to change their attitudes toward physical education. Shannon was able to successfully persuade Cathy to engage with other students in learning activities. Cathy’s positive experiences of interactions with Shannon enabled her to help other students, like Halie, who were reluctant to participate or who didn’t like physical education, by suggesting that they could work together. Cathy, however, admitted that it was not quite

enough to express her appreciation to Shannon, but Cathy tried to show her in different ways.

Um you know what? I don't really think that I show her enough kindness to the point where she is. I never, never really like say, 'Thank you for teaching me or having me today.' I don't REALLY do that, you know. But I showed that I participate now. Actually participating in gym is a big thing to show her I appreciate it because usually I don't, I'm not the one to participate; I'm like the one to sit off to the side.

Cathy's responses to Shannon's care seemed to be simple, because people normally assume that the students participated in learning situations. However, for Cathy, it involved a major change in her behavior, which Shannon observed. Shannon encouraged Cathy to respond positively to the active environment. As a result, Cathy played an important role in encouraging other students who were not willing to participate. Further, Cathy encouraged those who were reluctant to participate and made them feel comfortable despite any difficulties they experienced in performing.

Amy described how she followed Shannon's model and encouraged her classmates who had difficulty performing. She said:

I say the same thing like she [Shannon] says like 'it is okay you can do it.' If they fall or do something difficult, you can help them back up, good sportsmanship, like she teaches us. I try to help them back up, like 'it is okay there is always another chance, so you learn from mistakes.' Like sportsmanship, you know. I guess it means 'polite' even when we have won, Don't get full of yourself. Don't just be like 'we are better than you.'

Amy affirmed that the students should not hurt others' feelings while they participated in learning activities. She explained what was important in learning situations and how to interact with others without emotional conflicts. Amy's comment showed what she learned from a caring and supportive classroom environment and how she practiced caring for others' feelings.

John explained how Shannon's caring influenced his attitude toward dealing with a learning situation that challenged him.

Like when I am feeling really angry or really sad in the class and she supports me like when she worries that I won't get to my good level and she says that I need to try harder and if I try harder then I can succeed at a good level. I feel grateful because she still cares and tries to support me and every other student in the gym class.

John told how Shannon's support helped him manage to handle his emotional difficulty and succeed in class. Overall, Shannon's students affirmed that they felt valued, encouraged, and cared-for by Shannon.

Shannon's encouragement was based on her knowing of individual students' needs and desires while they participated. To get to know her students well, Shannon spent time and effort working to be attentive to each of the students in the learning situation. She focused on finding opportunities to praise them publicly and showing her trust in the students' ability to perform. Mostly important, Shannon carefully tried to encourage the students individually in different ways so they were able to get better at something difficult and new in class. As a result, Shannon's efforts made the students felt encouraged, valued, and cared for.

Safe classroom environment. The 6th grade students were sensitive and vulnerable to the classroom environments created by the participating teachers. Creating an emotionally safe and comfortable classroom environment was key to the young students who needed to adjust to a new environment that influenced the students' willingness to become involved in the activities their teachers provided.

Shannon among the participating teachers in this study was the one who focused more on building an emotionally safe classroom environment in which students felt safe, valued, and comfortable in attempting new and difficult activities. She was very careful not to compromise students' feelings during the class period.

Aaron, the largest boy in the class, emphasized the importance of an emotionally and socially safe environment for the students while performing and participating in learning activities. Aaron commented:

She [Shannon] also taught us how to respect other people if they messed up like on the high jump they landed straight on the bar and we learned not to laugh at them even though it is kind of funny. We controlled ourselves.

Aaron's comment indicated that the students were sensitive to peers' responses to their performance. He told how he used Shannon's example to help another student feel comfortable while participating. Aaron reported how he helped Jay, who feared ridicule, because Jay was overweight. He described encouraging Jay and doing the jump first in order to remove Jay's anxiety.

In gym class some kids really don't want to do the [high jump]. Like this one kid, Jay, because of peer pressure, he didn't want to do the high jump because he thinks he's a little overweight and all, but it's not a bad thing. I'm a big guy. I'm

thirteen years old and six feet tall and 240 lbs. But I'm not like a big fluffy person. My height evens it out. But he feels like 'if I do this, I will look like an idiot' and all that. So I jumped first and then he jumped. He made it over the first time and we were all like "good job Jay." Then he does it again and messes up, so we all go, "it's okay. You can still keep going." Then he ended up making it to the top fifteen out of twenty eight students. That's pretty good encouragement, you know, and trying not to put people down, which is pretty much bullying.

Aaron was proud of the result of his practicing engrossment, encouraging Jay to do the high jump in class. Aaron encouraged Jay to keep trying by reducing his fear of ridicule. This learning situation not only enabled both Aaron and other students to play an important role in caring for Jay, but also provided opportunity for Jay to experience other students' caring and also to discover his ability to succeed at the high jump.

Rick described that he was sensitive to peers' responses to his performance and how Shannon created a classroom climate that made students feel comfortable while participating. Rick commented:

She [Shannon] taught us how to respect other people if they messed up. I think she made a comfortable environment because she can do more to stop the laughing at other children. So we learned not to laugh at them even though it is kind of funny.

I think we learned to control ourselves. Actually, when I struck out in softball, some people laughed but she stopped it.

Rick expressed his fear of ridicule while performing an activity planned by the teacher, Shannon. He emphasized the importance of an emotionally and socially safe environment for the students while participating in learning activities.

Sydney, who had asthma, emphasized the importance of the safe environment that directly influenced her willingness to participate in class because of her physical condition. Although she was sensitive to a certain level of exercise, she showed how the presence of the teacher reassured her and encouraged her to participate.

I have asthma and it's hard for me to breathe when I'm running. She is actually the only one who taught me how to stop and make sure I'm okay with breathing. It's easier to do what you're supposed to do when you're feeling safe. You know you're not going to get hurt. If you do something, it's okay because she's always there. She actually makes sure we are all okay and watches over us and stuff like that.

Sydney mentioned that Shannon's caring made her feel safe and comfortable trying something difficult. To Sydney who had bad physical condition, the participation of physical activities might challenge her, but she had the willingness to participate in the learning situation. Sydney's trust in Shannon enabled her to participate in learning activities planned by the teacher. That is, the presence of the teacher guaranteed safety for her during the class.

Since students in physical education are encouraged to handle challenging situations while participating in planned learning activities, the teacher needs to create a physically, emotionally, and socially safe environment in which they can keep participating in learning activities and become more willing to interact with others

without fear of failure during the class. Therefore, it is essential to create a safe and caring learning environment.

Within this classroom climate, Shannon provided students not only with an emotionally safe environment that facilitated participation in learning activities, but also with a sense of being connected, respected, and valued teacher in different ways. In this learning environment, students are more likely to interact with others and engage actively in learning activities. Further, they are more likely to increase their trust in and willingness to help each other.

In short, Shannon's students acknowledged how much Shannon's receptivity and nurturing flexibility met their different needs. In her class, these students affirmed that their experiences of being helped were conducive to keeping positive attitudes toward classroom situations. They asserted that they were willing to work with other students within the given context. Shannon's students were likely to encourage those who were reluctant to participate and to make them feel comfortable despite any difficulties they experienced in performing. Further, because the students felt respected and confirmed during the class, they appeared to experience personal growth and development.

It is a challenge to create a caring classroom environment that also includes critical components for student learning. In Shannon's class the presence of a reciprocal relationship between teachers and students was easily observed. This relationship obviously encouraged and enabled students to engage in a variety of interpersonal interactions, while participating actively in learning activities that Shannon provided. Various interpersonal interactions with Shannon were based on Shannon's caring for students' feelings. Considering that the 6th grade students experienced being pressured to

adjust to new learning situations, Shannon's approach to teaching the 6th grade students started off by nurturing them at the beginning of the school year. Additionally, Shannon made efforts to get to know her students so they knew Shannon was willing to work with them and to be supportive to them. Shannon's attitudes toward them resulted in constructing supportive, trusting, and comfortable environments. In a caring classroom climate, Shannon's students reported they felt emotionally and physically safe when expressing themselves and were more willing to engage in positive interactions with their teacher

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The three physical education teachers in this study created and maintained effective and unique classroom environments and held expectations for students associated with learning. This environment led to a wide range of student responses. The 6th grade students in this study appeared to be sensitive to the classroom atmosphere and modified their behavior to adjust to the classroom climate (Davis, 2006; Klem & Connell, 2004). The students' satisfaction with the classroom climates appeared to depend on their interpretation of relationships with their teachers, increasing various interpersonal interactions with their teachers as well as other students (Dempsey, 1994; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Lee, 2004; Tolley, 2009).

In these dynamic physical education settings, Tim used skill based teaching strategies that were consistent with descriptions of effective, businesslike classrooms, while Barbara also attempted to blend these strategies with compassion for her students' needs (Rink, 2004, 2005; Siedentop, 1994). Shannon was able to blend effective teaching strategies within a caring environment that most closely matched Noddings (1992) definition within an ethic of care.

Tim's Serious Relationship with Students

Tim created a serious, focused learning environment to facilitate students' concentrated practice on skill-related performance. He gave brief explanations, demonstrated, and then encouraged his students to move through the skill pattern without implements before practicing using the complex movement. His emphasis on skillfulness resulted in his students spending large amounts of time on cue-oriented skill practice

(Metzler, 1985; Rink, 1997, 2003; Siedentop, 1994). His teaching strategy resembled parts of Siedentop's approach to skillfulness and Rink's effective teaching in the psychomotor domain (Rink, 1997, 2004; Siedentop, 1994). Research clearly supports the value of instructional time devoted to specific practice, and Tim saw to it that his students had as much practice time as the class period allowed. Rink (2005) and Siedentop (1994) agree that students learn more effectively when they spend class time practicing the skills to be learned. Further, research on businesslike approaches to physical education, shows increased skill learning when the teacher is a good manager of students, equipment, and class time. Teacher efforts to focus students on the task enhance the quality, frequency, and duration of their practice leading to significant increases in student skill learning in the classroom and in physical education (Lee, 2004; Rink, 1997, 2003; Siedentop, 1994).

Consistent with these effective teaching strategies, Tim consistently gave explicit directions, telling his students exactly what they should do. He conscientiously maintained a task oriented and teacher-monitored environment that enabled him to construct and structure lessons and instructional tasks to maximize the amount of time spent in direct practice (Metzler, 1985; Rink, 2003; Siedentop, 1994). To maintain these conditions with 6th graders, Tim required his students follow strict practice, evidence-based protocols for skill improvement (Noblit & Rogers, 1995; Rogers, 1994; Stork & Sanders, 2000). He also endeavored to maintain a serious classroom atmosphere in which he demanded that students concentrate on his explanations, cues, and demonstrations of skill performance without distraction. Further, Tim believed that to maintain an effective instructional environment, he needed to be authoritative and control his young students' attention so that each had the opportunity to focus on skill

development (McLaughlin, 1991, 1994). Unfortunately, the 11 and 12 year old boys in his classes found it difficult to be as serious about becoming skillful as Tim demanded, causing him, at times, to become irritated and impatient.

Tim appeared to have great confidence in the effectiveness of a businesslike environment to increase each student's learning. Therefore, he did not feel the need to consider students' individual differences or feelings; instead, he demanded that they all perform the same tasks in the same way. Although the students who had sport experiences outside of class performed up to Tim's skill expectations, less experienced students took longer to learn and needed more practice. Clearly, Tim's students did not always demonstrate or reflect his businesslike demeanor. Tim watched for any small transgression and quickly reinforced his rules for every student. (McCaslin & Good, 1992; Stork & Sanders, 2000). Because Tim required students to stay on task throughout the class, they had little opportunity to develop reciprocal relationships with either the teacher or other students (Bae & Ennis, 2009b; Cothran & Ennis, 1999; Davis, 2006; Hollingsworth et al., 1992). Tim's commanding presence and controlling approach to teaching provided no chance for his students to be part of the decision making process in his class (McCaslin & Good, 1992; McLaughlin, 1991, 1994; Mosston & Ashworth, 1990). Further, they had no opportunity to share their own learning experiences through interpersonal interactions with Tim or other students (Noblit, 1993; Noblit & Rogers, 1995; Rogers, 1994; Stork & Sanders, 2000). Although Tim worked to create a serious, demanding learning environment focused on skill learning, it did not appear that he cared for the emotional comfort of his students.

Barbara's Focus on Skillfulness and Cooperation

Barbara worked to initiate and sustain a classroom environment in which her underachieving girls became more skillful and confident. Like Tim, she valued skillfulness as a primary goal for physical education and designed lessons using effective direct teaching strategies associated with explanation, cueing, demonstration, and practice to assist students to become more skillful (Rink, 1997, 2003; Siedentop, 1994). She believed her explanations and demonstrations provided the best opportunities for students to learn physical skills. She also provided adequate amounts of sport equipment so that all could practice simultaneously, assisting them to stay on task and practice skills.

Unlike Tim, however, Barbara also believed that her students benefited from learning cooperatively. She attempted to follow effective cooperative learning strategies, using small, frequently-changing groups because she wanted students to learn how to work with others (Slavin, 1996, 1999). She believed that, at times, her students could benefit from peer teaching more than teacher assistance. Barbara assumed that small group work helped students work together while participating in given tasks (Goldstein, 2002; Gordon et al., 1996; Hollingsworth et al., 1992; Noddings, 1992). After explaining the directions for each station, she normally assigned students to groups of four or five and had them rotate from station to station. Slavin (1996, 1999) stressed the importance of cooperative learning methods, citing evidence that they contributed to higher achievement than competitive and individualistic learning. He suggested that teachers choose specific cooperative learning strategies from among a variety of effective methods to maximize student engagement (Slavin, 1983, 1999). These strategies increased task-related interactions within the small groups, promoting the development of relationships,

and increasing learning gains (Cohen, 1994; Goldstein, 1999; Johnson & Johnson, 1994, 1999; Meyers, 1997; Noddings, 1989).

Shannon's Efforts to Build a Caring Environment

Although Shannon gave instruction on basic skills first, she immediately organized her 6th grade students into small groups to practice skills in modified game settings designed to insure successful participation (Bae & Ennis, 2008b; Bradley, 2004; Tolley, 2009). Shannon, unlike Tim, provided opportunities for the 6th grade students to learn basic skills through interpersonal interactions. In order for the students to develop the skills, she actively participated in the activities with the students (Goldstein, 1999; Tolley, 2009), ensuring their success at the activities. Shannon's participation in activities enabled students to benefit from her modeling, dialogue, and confirmation (Goldstein, 1999; Noddings, 1992; Tolley, 2009). This strategy not only motivated students to practice skills necessary play traditional game formats, but also develop interpersonal skills toward relationships with teachers as well as other students (Davis, 2006; Goldstein, 1999; Tolley, 2009).

Shannon emphasized the importance of establishing a warm, positive relationship with each student (Davis, 2003, 2006; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Pianta, 1999; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004). She spent time talking with them in an effort to get to know each student. Further, she looked at them when she spoke and paid attention to them through conversation (Alder, 2002; Flinders & Noddings, 2001; Noddings, 2002; Tarlow, 1996). Knowing the students well was important to Shannon's teaching. She believed that this would help develop reciprocal relationships with her students and encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning (Bae & Ennis, 2008b; Thayer-Bacon, 2003, 2004;

Tolley, 2009). Additionally, she modeled caring and responsibility and encouraged students to help others to learn and to think of the class as a learning community (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Cohen & Hamilton, 2009; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Goldstein, 2002; Tolley, 2009).

Noddings (1984, 1992) used the term “ethic of care” to refer to beneficial educational relationships between teachers and individual students. Noddings (1988) mentioned:

We talk about the importance of expectations, for example, and urge teachers to have high expectations for all their students. But, taken as a formula, this is an empty exhortation. If, without knowing a student—what he loves, strives for, fears, hopes—I merely expect him to do uniformly well in everything I present to him, I treat him like an unreflective animal (p. 224)

Shannon valued a caring environment and made a conscious effort to develop caring relationships central to the practical application of the ethic of care (Davis, 2006; Goldstein, 1998, 1999; Gordon et al., 1996; Noddings, 1992). Because she believed that students were sensitive to her attitudes and behaviors, Shannon consciously modeled positive interactions with others and encouraged students to practice giving care and respond to the caring efforts of others (Bergman, 2004; Noddings, 2002; Tolley, 2009). She explained her point of view:

They might not remember how to dribble a basketball, but they are going to remember how I treated them. I don't want them to leave with a negative connotation because I think their feelings are more important than the skill. I think it is important to have a nurturing kind of side in the beginning. In other

words, make them feel like you care about what they say and what they like to do by listening to kids and then giving them voice...an appropriate voice, and getting to know them throughout the year.

Shannon's awareness and responsiveness to her students helped develop reciprocal relationships with them (Dempsey, 1994; Noddings, 1992; Swick, 2006; Tolley, 2009). Her students responded to her efforts to care for them by working hard to complete given tasks so she would not be disappointed, maintaining positive attitudes toward learning, caring for each other, and completing the reciprocal process, the circle of care, that Noddings described. Shannon stressed the importance of being engrossed and receptive to her students; treating them as individuals (Noddings, 1992, 2005; Owens, 2000; Owens & Ennis, 2005; Tolley, 2009).

Shannon appreciated the students as they were, showing her interest in their interests. Further, she opened herself to what the students were saying and experiencing (Noddings, 1992, 2002; Tarlow, 1996). Shannon believed that her effort to accept the students' feelings and acknowledge the relevance of their experiences benefited her students (Cothran & Ennis, 1999; Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Hollingsworth et al., 1993; Tolley, 2009). Shannon highlighted:

It is a continual learning experience for me as a teacher. I want to get more of these kids to get it. I wish I had the answer, but you just do the best you can. You try to meet each student where they are and sometimes that is very difficult to have so many and you only have so much time. You can only do the best you can with trying to figure out where they are coming from and kind of meeting them halfway. Being successful for one student is not necessarily going to mean you

will be successful for another student. So you try to keep an open mind about, ok that was good for that student, what was really good for them might not be necessarily good for another student. So it doesn't always look the same for every student and I think that is the most difficult part of the teaching job. So it's hard. It takes a lot of work to do that.

Shannon believed that a good teacher should reach out to students, treat them as individuals, and help them realize their potential (Davis, 2006; Gordon et al., 1996; Noddings, 1992; 2005). She thought that it was important to start with the student rather than the discipline. Shannon's students acknowledged how much Shannon's receptivity or nurturing flexibility met their different needs (Noddings, 2005; Owens, 2000; Tolley, 2009). They felt respected and confirmed. By reaching out to each one and maintaining the caring environment, Shannon facilitated their participation in learning activities, (Ennis, 1999; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Tolley, 2009). In response, Shannon's students recognized her efforts to treat them as individuals and respond to their needs (Bosworth, 1995; Noddings, 2002, 2005). They demonstrated this in different ways through activities in which they interacted with other students to develop relationships modeled on Shannon's caring behavior.

Shannon demonstrated characteristics of Noddings' caring by initiating and sustaining the caring classroom atmosphere. In her classes, students became more confident not only to exchange a variety of interpersonal interactions (Davis, 2006; Pianta, 1999), but also to share their learning experiences by receiving and giving caring (Noddings, 1992; Tolley, 2009). Other research confirms that students with caring and supportive interpersonal relationships with their teachers developed more positive

academic attitudes through engagement (Davis, 2006; Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Goldstein, 1999; Klem & Connell, 2004). Furthermore, they had opportunities to expand these educational experiences to develop meaningful and caring interpersonal relationships; a situation that supported Noddings' argument that the Ethic of Care was "need-based," and "future oriented" (Noddings, 2005).

Tim and Barbara focused on the components of behavioral engagement, such as time on task, intensity of concentration and effort, and focused practice. They regarded teaching as transmission of knowledge from teachers to students, who passively accepted information or skills (Alexander, 2006; Klem & Connell, 2004; Murphy, 2001). Tim's teaching ignored individual differences, he did not encourage his students to share unique understanding (Davis, 2006; Stork & Sanders, 2000). Therefore, Tim was less likely to use either reason or emotion to persuade his students of the value of knowing, understanding, or participating in physical activity.

On the other hand, Shannon was willing to persuade her students to participate in learning situations by opening herself to what each individual thought and felt (Sinatra & Kardash, 2004; Tolley 2009). She was determined to spend time and effort to know each student and to value her students as individuals (Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Owens, 2000; Tolley, 2009). Shannon consciously paid attention to her students and sought to persuade or convince them to work together (Fives & Alexander, 2001; Hynd, 2001). Her supportive relationships with the students enabled them to take initiative for their own learning within the dynamic physical education setting (Bae & Ennis, 2008b, 2009; Bradley, 2004; Tolley, 2009).

The caring classroom climate not only facilitated interpersonal interactions, but also built meaningful, reciprocal relationships in school, providing students with feelings of closeness and acceptance (Davis, 2006; Goldstein, 1999; Goodenow, 1993a, 1993b; Noddings, 1992; Osterman, 2000). Students who had caring and supportive interpersonal relationships with their teachers developed more positive academic attitudes while participating in learning activities that the teacher provided (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Klem & Connell, 2004; Pianta, 1999; Webb & Blond, 1995; Wentzel, 1997). Students who experienced meaningful, reciprocal relationships in a caring classroom climate could expand educational experiences and share their experiences with others, including their teachers, completing the circle of care (Noddings, 1992; Tolley, 2009). Reciprocal relationships, classroom climate, student learning, and student satisfaction with school can be effectively constructed by caring teachers who strive to reach out to every student and meet their needs in a caring way (Noddings, 1992, 2005).

Matching Teachers' Expectations with Students' Responses

Tim and Barbara emphasized the importance of developing skills for their 6th grade students (Rink, 1997, 2003; Siedentop, 1994). Both teachers often demanded that the students pay attention to them when they explained or demonstrated the skills. Tim's perceptions of his students' responses to learning situations were based on his beliefs that students should follow strict practice protocols to become skillful (Noblit, 1993; Noblit & Rogers, 1995; Rogers, 1994; Stork & Sanders, 2000).

In class they focused on having their students practice and stay on task, which they believed would improve the students' skill levels (Metzler, 1985; Rink, 1997; Siedentop, 1994). Individual differences among the students were ignored. Reciprocal

communication between Tim and his students and among the students was not apparent, because the students were required to follow their teacher directions without any distraction. Tim's commanding presence and controlling approaches to teaching provided little opportunity for students to interact with him or other students (Bae & Ennis, 2009; Ennis, 1999; Mosston & Ashworth, 1990). In fact, Tim avoided interactions with students and forbade their talking to each other. He yelled at those who were talking, and students reported that they worked hard to focus on Tim's demonstrations.

Similarly, Barbara required that her students pay attention to her and work with other students while participating in learning activities. Tim and Barbara both reported that because their 6th grade students did not have sufficient discipline at home, they felt they needed to control their students to make them focus on skills (Noblit & Rogers, 1995; Mosston & Ashworth, 1990; Stork & Sanders, 2000). Tim and Barbara both expended excessive amounts of time and effort to maintain discipline leaving less time to interact positively with students who were following their instructions.

Conversely, Shannon was consciously attentive to her students and worked to understand and build reciprocal relationships with each individual student. To Shannon, getting to know her students throughout the school year was necessary to build reciprocal relationships that formed the basis for teaching and learning (Thayer-Bacon, 2004). She wanted to know her students well so she could effectively meet their different needs (Noddings, 1988, 2005; Tarlow, 1996).

Completing the Circle of Care

Shannon often expressed how important it was to get to know her students well, explaining that students were all different and responded to her differently (Dempsey,

1994; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Thayer-Bacon, 2004). She began to build a reciprocal relationship with each individual student from the first day. Shannon felt rewarded when she observed students' responses to the learning environment that she had worked to build (Noddings, 1992; Tolley, 2009). Shannon expressed thoughtfully:

I think it is very rewarding when a kid would start out not knowing very much about a particular activity and then by the end of a unit you can see they are participating, grabbing concepts, and enjoying themselves, or one kid actually said, 'I would like to play this sport when I go to high school because we did this in class. I'm going to enjoy this particular team' something like that.

Shannon felt rewarded as a teacher when she saw that her students enjoyed lessons that she had planned and they showed her that they wanted to keep doing the activities. In other words, Shannon's joy resulted from observing students' growth and development in the caring learning environment which she offered them (Demsey, 1994; Noddings, 1992, 1994; Pianta, 1999; Tarlow, 1996; Tolley, 2009).

Conclusion

Education involves the on-going process of interpersonal interactions between teachers and students and among students. The three teachers in this study utilized three different styles of personal interaction based on their philosophies of education, the administration, and the student bodies assigned to them. Tim focused on making the boys in his classes more skillful, while Barbara perceived her students as needing help, so she tried to help them and repeated her instructions, to help them pay attention. Shannon worked with a co-educational class and tried to group them—to put them in situations

where they could work at a level where they would be successful and they would not be embarrassed in front of their peers.

Successful interpersonal interactions result in the students developing meaningful relationships, positive contributions to class climate, increased learning, and satisfaction with schools. These critical characteristics of student academic performance associated with authentic student learning functioned as threads that the students could weave into the fabric of their education. Caring classroom climates not only facilitated interpersonal interactions, but also build meaningful, reciprocal relationships, providing students with feelings of closeness and acceptance. Students who develop caring and supportive interpersonal relationships with their teachers often displayed more positive attitudes and values while participating in physical education learning activities. My research showed that students who experienced meaningful, reciprocal relationships in caring classroom climates initiated and maintained by caring teachers were able to expand their educational experiences and share their experiences with others. Caring teachers who strive to reach out to every student and meet their needs in a caring way develop reciprocal relationships and a positive classroom climate, enhancing student learning, and satisfaction with school.

Shannon, as a one caring teacher, as described by Noddings (1984, 1992), created a caring environment in which her students learned to cooperate with her and with each other. The students taught by Shannon gradually learned to take the responsibility for their learning and for others' learning by practicing caring behavior. In order to have this effect, Shannon worked with her students so they would know how much she wanted to know them as individuals. Through a variety of interpersonal interactions with Shannon,

the students experienced feeling valued, connected, and cared for. The students responded to Shannon's care by enjoying learning activities and cooperating with each other in a caring way.

In short, Shannon created a positive and caring learning climate that fostered her students' confidence and facilitated their engagement. Shannon's efforts not only facilitated interpersonal interactions, but also enabled the students to build meaningful, reciprocal relationships. In this environment the students were able to take charge of their learning. The students continued to grow as the result of interpersonal exchange and relationships, closing the circle of care.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this dissertation research was to examine sixth-grade students' responses to learning environments created by one physical education teacher in each of three different middle schools. I examined the nature of learning environments initiated and maintained by the teachers participating in this study. The theoretical framework for this study was Noddings' (1984, 1992) Ethic of Care. Noddings proposed a circle of care in which teachers develop a caring classroom environment and initiate caring for students. The students close the circle of care by responding positively to the teachers' efforts.

The sixth-grade students in this study appeared to understand their teachers' expectations for them in each of the three classes examined. Nearly all were willing to comply with their teachers' instructions and directions.

Tim and Barbara expected to have their students follow directions and practice protocols without distractions. Both Tim and Barbara wanted their students to become skillful in physical activities. Therefore, success for both teachers required that students learn necessary skills and follow directions. Furthermore, Barbara added cooperative teaching strategies for her underachieving students because she perceived her students as needing help and she wanted them to help each other while working in a group.

Shannon also wanted to introduce skills to her students, but she presented those skills in modified game situations in small groups. The modified lessons gave students opportunities to interact with other students who had similar skill levels. Shannon also

spent a lot of time reaching out to each student, getting to know them so they knew that she cared about them and respected them, both in and outside her classroom (Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Tolley, 2009). Further, Shannon persuaded them to participate in learning situations by opening herself to what each individual thought and felt. She consciously paid attention to her students and sought to persuade or convince them to work together (Hynd, 2001). To Shannon, it was important to actively listen to her students, because she believed that active listening was key to genuine dialogue, nurturing students' efforts to freely express their opinions, ideas, and understandings about her learning activities (Dempsey, 1994; Noddings, 1984).

Shannon worked to develop meaningful and reciprocal interpersonal relationships with her students and shared academic expectations with them because she believed that it was important to build this relationship to increase student engagement and learning (Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Klem & Connell, 2004; Tolley, 2009). Because Shannon believed that students were sensitive to her attitudes and behaviors, she made conscious efforts to model positive interactions with others and encouraged students to practice giving care and responding to the caring efforts of others. Thus, Shannon built an essential foundation for student involvement in learning activities based on hard work and caring relationships with other students.

In this study, Shannon's students modeled their behavior on her examples, interacting with their teacher and peers to develop reciprocal relationships while participating in learning situations. Because Shannon's students recognized her efforts to treat them as individuals and respond to their needs (Noddings, 1992, 2005; Tolley, 2009), they were willing to interact with her and each other. In her classes, sixth graders

became more confident to not only exchange a variety of interpersonal interactions, but also share their learning experiences by receiving and giving caring. Therefore, Shannon's students, who experienced meaningful, reciprocal relationships in a caring classroom climate, could expand their educational experiences and share experiences with others.

Successful interpersonal interactions resulted in students developing in four categories: meaningful relationships, positive contributions to class climate, increased learning, and satisfaction with school.

The reciprocal relationship that Shannon developed with her students encouraged and enabled them to actively engage in a variety of interpersonal interactions, while participating in learning activities (Devine & Cohen, 2007; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Thayer-Bacon, 2004;). The relationships Shannon developed increased students' trust in her. Her supportive relationships with the students enabled them to not only actively interact with Shannon, but also take initiative for their own learning. The students gradually learned to take responsibility for their learning and for others' learning by practicing caring behavior. From this platform they tried to tackle new or difficult learning tasks (Beck, 1994; Devine & Cohen, 2007; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Tolley, 2009).

Conclusions

The findings from this research may have important pedagogical implications that can inform physical education teaching and learning. This study confirmed Tolley's (2009) research findings that documented the importance of teacher caring in a dynamic physical education classroom in which the 6th grade students experienced being cared for

and caring for others. Similarly, an important conclusion from this dissertation study was that, while different teachers had different perspectives on caring and interpersonal relations, a teacher who worked to convince each of her students that she regarded them with respect created an environment that was perceptibly different from that created by teachers who related to students only in groups.

Each teacher who participated in this research attempted to provide an effective learning environment and to hold expectations for students associated with learning. These three teachers' styles of teaching, however, were unique and quite different, leading to range of student responses across the three school settings. The participating teachers' teaching strategies appeared to relate to their expectations for students and their beliefs about the content important for students to learn in physical education. There also were differences among these three teachers in the perceptions of students' learning, perspectives on caring, and interpersonal interactions. These differences influenced students' attitudes toward the learning situations.

Depending on the nature of their learning environment, 6th grade students had various educational experiences and interpersonal interactions. In both Tolley's (2009) study and mine, student engagement depended on the nature of learning environments and reciprocal relationships between teachers and students. Results from both studies affirmed the importance of the role of a caring teacher as a significant component that directly influenced student academic attitudes toward learning situations. The findings from this research confirmed Noddings' ethic of care and circle of care as an effective theoretical framework to examine students' growth and development in a relation with the one caring teacher.

In this study Shannon created a caring learning environment similar to that described by Noddings. Shannon's carefully created classroom environment enabled her to get to know her students well, using engrossment, commitment, and motivational displacement to encourage each student to actively participate in learning activities (Goldstein, 2002; Noddings, 1992; Owens & Ennis, 2005). Additionally, she opened herself to what the students were saying and experiencing (Noddings, 1992; Tarlow, 1996; Tolley, 2009).

Shannon demonstrated characteristics of Noddings' caring by initiating and sustaining the caring classroom atmosphere. She believed that students could understand and value the caring environment through interpersonal interactions with others. Shannon, as the one caring teacher, appreciated and accepted her students as they were, showing her interest in their interests. Further, Shannon implemented teaching strategies designed to enhance caring relationships that enabled her students to feel encouraged, connected, and cared for. Shannon believed that hard work throughout the school year was necessary to create and sustain the meaningful and reciprocal relationships that formed the basis for care (Ennis, 1999; Noddings, 1992; Tolley, 2009). She observed that the students worked hard, expressed themselves in front of others, and strove to try activities that were new or difficult. Students explained that they knew she was willing to accept their feelings, permitting them to take personal and social risks in her physical education class.

This one caring teacher (Noddings, 1984, 1992), created a caring environment in which her students learned to cooperate with her and with each other. They responded to Shannon's care by demonstrating their enjoyment of the learning activities she planned

for them and cooperating with each other in a caring way (Davis , 2006; Devine & Cohen, 2007; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Klem & Connell, 2004; Tolley, 2009). Consequently, by practicing caring behavior, these students learned to take responsibility for their learning and for others' learning, completing the circle of care (Noddings, 1992; Tolley, 2009). Shannon's students continued to grow as the result of interpersonal exchange and relationships, closing the circle of care.

Recommendations

This study confirmed the importance of a reciprocal and meaningful relationship between a caring teacher and her cared-for students. Education is an ongoing process and involves relationships. It does not happen immediately, but gradually and cumulatively. The development of students' abilities to create and maintain positive relationships in the caring physical education environment is as important as learning to be fit and healthy for an active lifestyle.

Recommendations for future research should focus on creating physical education programs that promote respect and care for each individual student. It is beneficial to examine the effect of reciprocal relationships between teachers and students in relation to student engagement in learning situations. Caring teachers who strive to reach out to every student and meet their needs in a caring way develop reciprocal relationships and a positive classroom climate. They enhance student learning and satisfaction with school. Students who experienced meaningful, reciprocal relationships in caring classroom climates initiated and maintained by caring teachers were able to expand their educational experiences and share experiences with others. For teacher education programs, I have four recommendations:

Recommendations for Physical Educators and Teacher Educators

Recommendation 1. Physical educators should spend time considering and emphasizing the importance of building caring learning environments. Young children and adolescents are sensitive to learning environments and sometimes vulnerable in learning situations, regardless of teachers' efforts to help. Students' perceptions of the learning environments are often determined by the nature of their relationships with their teacher, and they respond to the environment the teacher creates (Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Ennis & Owens, 2005; Pianta, 1999; Tolley, 2009). Most importantly, the caring learning environment in physical education can promote positive and supportive behavior in students. This behavior is the opposite of bullying, which has become a significant problem in our schools. Therefore, it seems necessary that students learn how to interact with others in a respectful way while participating in dynamic physical education. Teacher educators can analyze how this caring learning atmosphere directly and indirectly delivers an important message that can improve the relationships of every student (Ennis, 1996; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Owens & Ennis, 2005; Tolley, 2009).

Recommendation 2. Teacher educators should teach methods for relating to students individually. It is important for teachers to master behaviors that convey respect and care for the opinions and ideas of each individual student (Noddings, 1984, 1992). Students who feel respected and cared for are more willing to respect others' feelings and opinions in the same way (Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Tolley, 2009). Further, they might feel free to express their opinions in an environment which does not threaten them in front of the teacher or other students (Tolley, 2009). This learning climate requires teachers to be receptive and attentive to each student, regardless of whether the students

express their needs (Noddings, 2005). Noddings (2005) mentions, “When I am the cared-for in a situation, I hope my need will be heard and, if not actually satisfied, at least treated with regard and understanding” (2005, p. 148). Particularly students who are troubled or disruptive want their teachers to meet their needs.

Recommendation 3. Teacher educators need to promote physical education programs which demonstrate the importance of interactions between teachers and individual students in the development of students (Tolley, 2009). In other words, physical education programs can enable students to actively participate in learning activities and work together with others, including teachers and peers, in order to build caring and supportive interpersonal relationships (Ennis & McCauley, 2002).

Consequently, students can have the opportunity to expand on various educational experiences within the learning atmosphere in physical education (Tolley, 2009).

Students who have opportunities to cooperate with others in a caring way continue to exchange their ideas and experiences with each other through various interpersonal interactions, enabling them to improve their performance while performing tasks presented in structured physical education programs (Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Tolley, 2009).

Recommendation 4. Both physical education teachers and teacher educators need to acknowledge the significance of the dynamic physical education environment in the development of social abilities that enhance performance in every endeavor. That is, students who experience interpersonal, caring interactions are able to develop the ability to work better with others and value the importance of caring for others while working together. The caring physical education environment provides opportunity for students to

continue to experience various interpersonal interactions and share their experiences with each other while working together. Given that education involves on-going process of interpersonal interactions between teachers and students and among students, teacher educators can show that more time allotted for physical education will improve the quality of the physical education experience for students and enable them to have more positive interactions that can benefit them and everyone who interacts with them in the future.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Teacher Interview Questions

Question 1

1. How do you show students that you care for them in physical education class?
2. What do you do to enhance interpersonal interactions between you and students?
3. How do you enable students to achieve success?
4. How do you encourage students to participate more?
5. How do you help your students enjoy more challenging situations?
6. How do your students respond to what you are teaching during the lesson?

Question 2

1. What learning environment would you like in your physical education class?
2. What teaching behaviors have you found most effective in building relationships during physical education lessons?
3. What do you do to enhance student opportunities to learn about caring relationships?
4. How do you encourage the students to share decisions with you and each other in the classroom?
5. What do you do to encourage students, who are low skilled or do not respond to your teaching, to enjoy challenging situations?
6. How do you persuade your students to encourage each other in class?

Appendix B: Student Interview Questions

Question 1

1. What makes you enjoy participating in physical education class?
2. What do you talk about with your physical education teacher?
3. What does your physical education teacher do that encourages you to perform better in the physical education class?
4. How do you show your teacher that you appreciate his/her teaching?

Question 2

1. What does your teacher do to help you share information with each other?
2. What do you do when you face a challenging situation in physical education class?
3. What does your teacher do to help you enjoy challenges?
4. What makes you try harder?
5. How does success make you feel?
6. What do you say to encourage other students who are not performing well?

Appendix C: Student Questionnaire

School Name: _

P.E teacher's name:

Your name:

Time Period:

Age:

Ethnicity:

Please share/Tell your opinion or feelings specifically as a 6th grade student during/in PE class.

Please write at least 5 lines for each question. I would appreciate 2 examples for each question.

1. What would you like your physical education teacher do for future sixth-grade classes based on your experiences? (at least 2 examples)

2. What did your physical education teacher do to help you succeed in class?

Give two examples of things your teacher did in class. Did it make you feel good, comfortable, or appreciated?

3. What did you do when your physical education teacher helped you in class?
Please give me two specific examples of your actions or words.

Appendix D: IRB PROTOCOL FORMS
 UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK
 Institutional Review Board: Initial Application for Research Involving Human Subjects

Name of Principal Investigator (PI) or Project Faculty Advisor
 Dr. Catherine D. Ennis, Professor **Tel.**
 Dr. Jane E. Clark, Professor **No**

Department or Unit Administering the Project
 Department of Kinesiology (School of Public Health)

E-Mail Address of jmahan@umd.edu

Where should the IRB send the approval letter?
 Attention: Mihae Bae: 2132, Dept. of Kinesiology, School of Public Health, University of Maryland, College Park, MD
 Mihae Bae **Tel.** 240-472-2292
bmhae@umd.edu

Check here if this is a student master's thesis or a **dissertation research project**
Project Duration (mo/yr – 04/2009 -- 04/2010)

Project Sixth-Grade Students' Responses to Caring Physical Education Teachers

Sponsored Project Data	Funding <u>None</u>	ORAA Proposal
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(PLEASE NOTE: Failure to include data above may result in delay of processing sponsored research award at ORAA.)

Vulnerable Populations: The proposed research will involve the following (Check all that apply):
 pregnant women , human fetuses , neonates , minors/children , prisoners ,
students , individuals with mental disabilities , individuals with physical disabilities

Exempt or Nonexempt (Optional): You may recommend your research for exemption or nonexemption by completing the appropriate box below. For exempt recommendation, list the numbers for the exempt category(s) that apply. Refer to pages 5-6 of this document.

Exempt----List Exemption Category **Or** Non-Exempt

If exempt, briefly describe the reason(s) for exemption. Your notation is a suggestion to the IRB Manager and IRB Co-Chairs.

Date _____ **Signature of Principal Investigator or Faculty Advisor** *(PLEASE NOTE: Person signing above accepts responsibility for the research even when data collection is performed by*
 Dr. Catherine D. Ennis; Dr. Jane E. Clark

Date _____ **Signature of Student Investigator**
 Mihae Bae

Date _____ **REQUIRED** Departmental Signature
Name _____,
Title _____
(Please also print name of person signing above)

(PLEASE NOTE: The Departmental signature block should not be signed by the investigator or the student investigator's advisor.)

SIXTH-GRADE STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO CARING PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

Mihae Bae, PhD Candidate & Dr. Catherine D. Ennis, Professor,
Department of Kinesiology

The purpose of this dissertation research is to examine students' responses to a caring environment created by physical education teachers. This study focuses on the environment created by caring teachers who are engrossed in their students and highly motivated to respond to students' needs. This caring environment is based on the Ethic of Care theoretical framework. The Ethic of Care involves a set of relational practices that foster mutual recognition, growth, and human community. The Ethic of Care is embraced by caring teachers who use specific communication, teaching, and engagement strategies to demonstrate care. In the caring environment students can contribute to continuing the circle of care by responding positively to teachers' efforts.

1. **Abstract:** The purpose of this dissertation is to examine 6th grade students' responses to caring physical education teachers from three different middle schools. I will conduct an ethnographic, multi-site, case study involving one sixth-grade class from each of three schools selected on the recommendations of the school district's physical education coordinator. The data collected will include class observations and interviews with teachers and students conducted by the researcher. The data to be collected will focus on the examination of interpersonal interactions between teachers and students based on reciprocal caring relationships. At the conclusion of the 5-6 week observation period, I will consult with the physical education teacher to select and interview a representative sample of 10 students, five girls and five boys, from each sixth grade class. At the conclusion of the student interviews, I will interview each teacher. I will analyze the data inductively and deductively using open, axial, and selective coding. Teacher consent, parental permission, and student assent will be sought prior to data collection. To ensure data safety and confidentiality, all participant demographic and response data will be locked in a cabinet at my home. The data will be accessible only to me and my advisor.
2. **Subject selection:**
 - a. **School District:** The suburban school district, Baltimore County Public Schools, where data will be collected has been selected because students in this school district can participate in physical education at least five times in two weeks. The average class size for the school district is 26.2 students. Physical education classes are 50 minutes long.
Teachers: The teachers include three middle school physical education teachers from three different schools in the Baltimore County Public School District in Maryland. I will select the teachers based on the recommendations of the school district's physical education coordinator.
Students: Each sixth-grade class will be selected to fit into my data collection schedule so that I can observe one sixth-grade class assigned to the participating physical education teachers at each site each day (if possible). A representative sample of students (see 2b below) will be selected based on my class observations and the physical education teachers' recommendations. Students whose parents do not give permission will not be observed or

interviewed in this study.

b. Will the subjects be selected for any specific characteristics?

A representative sample of students will be selected for interviews based on my class observations and the recommendations from their physical education teacher. Because students will be asked to respond to interview questions, I will select the students based on their observed interactions with the teacher and other students. For this reason, it is important to compare the recommendations from the participating teachers with my class observations to select students whose interpersonal interactions reflect reciprocal caring relationships.

Additionally, a representative sample of students (e.g., gender, ethnicity) will be considered in sample selection.

c. State why the selection will be made on the basis or bases given in 2(b).

The ethic of care is based on reciprocal relationships that facilitate students' positive school relational experiences. Students who are cared for by caring teachers are more likely to interact with others, feel safe and secure, and engage actively in learning activities within a caring educational environment created by the teachers. Furthermore, students who interact freely in the classroom are less likely to be inhibited in an interview situation.

d. How many subjects will you recruit?

Teachers: 3 from three different middle schools.

Students: a total of 30 students from one sixth-grade class in each middle school assigned to the participating physical education teachers.

3. Procedures: The timeline/protocol for this multi-site case study is presented in the figure below.

Time	Schedule
Before entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit the research proposal and request permission from the school district to conduct this research.
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet principals and teachers at the selected schools. Explain purpose of the study to principals, teachers and students and request their assent. Distribute consent forms for teachers and assent forms for students. Collect consent forms.
Weeks 2-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin class observations and initial data analysis.
Week 5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select and interview 10 students at each site. Continue data analysis and triangulation of data sources.
Week 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interview the participating teachers after completing the interviews with the students at the end of May. Continue data analysis and triangulation of data sources.

Students:

(a) Field Observations: During the 5-6 weeks instructional unit, I will observe physical education lessons at each school as they normally proceed. I plan to observe one sixth grade class assigned to the participating teachers at each site. I will focus on teacher-student and student-student interactions while observing the class. To that end, my class observations will focus on recording the students' and teachers' words,

expressions and actions during the lesson to capture the participants' perspectives.

(b) *Interviews*: I will conduct interviews with students at the conclusion of the observation period. Interview questions will ask students to describe how they recognize and respond to their teachers' demonstrated caring for them. The one-on-one interview will be conducted in a quiet location and at a time designated by the school. Participants for the interviews will be ten sixth grade students in one class (5 boys/5 girls) taught by the participating teachers at each school: a total of 30 students. The duration of each interview will be approximately 20 minutes. All student interviews will be audio-recorded and students will be asked to verbalize and demonstrate their understandings of the target concept. A sample list of the interview questions is attached to this application. A final copy will be submitted to the IRB office prior to administration.

Teachers:

(a) Field Observations: Observations of teachers' lessons will focus on the teachers' interactions with the students in different ways. Particularly, I will focus on the teachers' demonstrated caring for their students and on the identification of how the teachers create caring environments to develop reciprocal relationships with the students in terms of communication.

(b) Interview: At the conclusion of the student interviews, I will conduct a one-on-one formal, open-ended interview with each teacher. The topics will ask teachers to describe how they create caring educational environments in their classes and their perceptions of students' responses to their teaching. The duration of each interview will be approximately 45-60 minutes. All teacher interviews will be audio recorded in a quiet area depending on the teachers' preferences for places for interviews (e.g., their office, school conference room). A sample list of the interview questions is attached to this application. A final copy will be submitted to the IRB office prior to administration.

4. **Risks**: There are no known psychological or physical risks to the participants. This research will be conducted within the regular physical education classes. The interviews with teachers and their students will be conducted in a public location in the schools, such as the school conference room or teachers' office. I will inform all participants of the purpose and procedures involved so that they can feel comfortable when they are involved in this research. Student interview questions will relate to students' social interactions with their physical education teacher. Teacher interview questions will focus on their understandings of how students recognize and respond to their teaching.

Benefits: There will be no direct benefits to these students and teachers involved in this study because of the confidentiality procedures established. I will not reveal student responses to their teachers and thus the teachers will be unable to use the data immediately to increase student understanding. The results will be written as a compilation of categories and themes that can be useful in staff development sessions to assist school district supervisors and teachers to create caring environments in their schools, enhancing their understanding and ability to use teaching strategies that students describe as "caring for them." Thus, I hope that the research will contribute to facilitating the development of meaningful physical education experiences for both teachers and students in the future.

5. **Confidentiality:** To protect participant confidentiality, I will replace participants' names with pseudonyms during the data analysis and in the final report. All the data collected will be destroyed after five years from the completion of the final report. To ensure data safety, I will store all related data, such as interview transcripts, in a locked cabinet at my home.
6. **Information and Consent Forms:** I will conduct this study with the support of the Baltimore County School District in Maryland. I will inform all participants of the purposes and procedures in this study and then provide copies of the study information, parental permission, student assent, and teacher consent forms, to them for their personal records. I will require written permission from parents before interviews with the 30 students and written agreement from these students themselves. Additionally, I will obtain consent from the participating physical education teachers who will be the focus of this research. I will inform all participants that they can withdraw from the study at any time.
7. **Conflict of Interest :** There is no conflict of interest
8. **HIPAA Compliance:** I am not using data that is involves HIPAA clearance
9. **Research Outside of the United States:** I will collect data in the USA.
10. **Research Involving Prisoners:** Prisoners are not involved in this study.

Department of Kinesiology
School of Public Health
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742-2611

PARENTAL PERMISSION LETTER

April, 2009

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am a doctoral student at the University of Maryland, College Park, majoring in physical education curriculum development. Currently, I am conducting my dissertation research to examine how children recognize and respond to caring education environments created by physical education teachers during the lessons. I believe that an improved understanding of how children respond to their physical education teacher can help teachers reflect on their teaching and determine effective ways to create a caring environment that facilitates positive, social relationships between teachers and students. Permission to conduct this research has been received from your child's physical education teacher, the school principal, Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS), and the University of Maryland Institutional Review Board.

This letter asks for your permission to observe your child's physical education class and to interview your child about experiences in physical education. To understand your child's own ideas of caring concepts created by the physical education teacher, interviews will be audio-recorded during or after the physical education lessons. The interviews will last no more than 20 minutes. The result of this study may help BCPS physical education teachers learn more about how students recognize their teaching and respond to their teacher in physical education classes.

This research will not affect your child's physical education grade in any way. Furthermore, the names of the schools, teachers, and students will *never* be used in written documents, my dissertation, or any reports. Your child's name and response will be confidential and anonymous. To protect your child's confidentiality, (1) a pseudonym will be used in place of your child's name and (2) the final report will provide information about the physical education class and middle school students, in general, not specific students.

Participation in this project does not have any known physical or psychological risks to the student. Participation is voluntary and your child is not obliged to participate. Even if you initially agree to have your child participate in the project, you may withdraw your child from this research at any time.

This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects. If you have questions about your rights or your child's rights as a research subject, please contact: Institutional Review Board Office, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 20742; (e-mail) irb@deans.umd.edu; (telephone) 301-405-0678.

Please complete the attached parental permission form and have your child return the form to the physical education teacher. I have discussed the research with your child and asked him/her for assent to be involved in this study.

Thank you for your support and consideration. Please feel free to contact me if you have any question or concern regarding this research.

Sincerely,

Mihae Bae (Email: bmhae@umd.edu /Cell phone: (240)-472-229)

PARENTAL PERMISSION FORM
Dissertation Research

The following statements refer to Ms. Bae's dissertation research at
_____ Middle School:

- I have read and understood the goals and procedures for the research.
- I understand that my child's participation is voluntary.
- I understand that all data collected at the school will be protected and remain confidential.
- I understand that my child may participate in one twenty-minute interview that will be audio-recorded.
- I understand that I can withdraw my child from this study at any time.

Please place a **check mark** in the appropriate section that reflects your choice and return the form to your child's physical education teacher.

I grant permission for my child to participate in the research and interview.

Parent's Name (Print): _____

Child's Name (Print): _____

Parent's Signature: _____ Date: _____

I do not grant permission for my child to participate in interviews for this research.

Parent's Name (Print): _____

Child's Name (Print): _____

Parent's Signature: _____ Date: _____

TEACHER CONSENT LETTER

April, 2009

Dear Ms. /Mr. _____:

I am interested in examining how 6th grade students respond to their teacher in physical education. Although you have verbally agreed to my dissertation research, in order to fulfill University of Maryland Institutional Review Board Procedures, this letter requests your formal consent to participate. I need your help in distributing and collecting parent permission forms and later in selecting students for interviews. Additionally, I would like to request your permission to:

- Observe one of your sixth grade classes during April and May, 2009.
- Conduct a one-on-one interview with a representative sample of ten students (5 girls and 5 boys) from your classes.
- Conduct a one-on-one interview with you after the completion of the instructional unit.

Lesson observations: I would like to observe one of your regularly scheduled sixth grade classes during April and May. I will not interrupt your class and will sit at the side of the class in an area you designate. During the observations, I will write down field notes to comprise narrative accounts of your lessons, especially how your students respond in your class. After each observation, I will type up my observations in detail. You are welcome to review these lesson write-ups at any time. I may also check with you about some aspects of the lessons in order to ensure that I have correctly described your lessons.

Interviews: I would like to conduct a one-on-one interview with you. The interview should be conducted in a quiet location in your school, such as your office or a conference room. I need to audio-record the interview so that I can transcribe and study it. I will share a copy of the interview transcript with you and ask for your comments. Your name will *never* be used in the research report. All data collected will be confidential and anonymous. Only my advisor, Dr. Catherine Ennis, and I will have access to the data and we will allocate codes and pseudonyms.

Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time. None of the data collected in your class or during your interviews will be shared with school personnel. Your name, students' names and the school name will *never* be used. Your involvement is greatly appreciated. Please complete the form below and return to me. Please contact me if you have questions or concerns regarding this research.

This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects. If you have questions about your rights or your child's rights as a research subject, please contact: Institutional Review Board Office, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 20742; (e-mail) irb@deans.umd.edu; (telephone) 301-405-0678.

Sincerely,

Mihae Bae
University of Maryland
bmhae@umd.edu / (240)-472-2292

TEACHER CONSENT FORM
Dissertation Research

The following statements refer to Ms. Bae's dissertation research at
_____Middle School.

- I have read and understood the goals and procedures for the research.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary.
- I understand that Ms. Bae will observe my physical education classes.
- I understand that my interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed.
- I understand that I will have the opportunity to review and comment on the interview transcript.
- I understand that all data collected at my school will be protected and remain confidential.

I agree to participate in the research.

Teacher's Name (Print): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please return form to:
Mihae Bae

Department of Kinesiology
School of Public Health
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742-2611

STUDENT ASSENT FORM

_____2009

Dear Student,

I am a physical education student from the University of Maryland. I will be observing your physical education classes for several weeks. I am interested to learn how middle school students talk and work together and with your teacher during physical education class. I would like you to help me with this research.

If you agree to help me, I may ask to interview you for 15-20 minutes. I would like to tape-record the interview so that I can capture your ideas correctly. Participation does not affect your physical education grade in any way. My goal is to understand your experiences while you participate in physical education class.

If you agree to participate in this research, please place a **check mark** in the appropriate section below, print your name on the form, and return it to me.

I agree to be interviewed during this research. I understand that I can always drop out of this research at any time, even if I initially agree to participate.

Name (print): _____ Date: _____

If you do not want to take part in the research, simply place a check mark on the line below and return the form to your physical education teacher.

I do not want to be interviewed during this research.

Name (print): _____ Date: _____

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