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**A MIXED METHOD STUDY INVESTIGATING HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER-  
STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER-CARING BEHAVIORS**

**By**

**Patricia C. King**

**A Dissertation**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the**

**Degree of**

**Doctor of Education**

**Special Education (P-12)**

**In the**

**Bagwell College of Education**

**Kennesaw State University**

**Dr. T. C. Chan, Chair**

**Kennesaw, GA**

**December 2013**

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**Patricia C. King**

**2013**



## Dissertation Signature Page

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**Degree Program:** Inclusive Education

**The dissertation titled:**

A Mixed Method Study Investigating High School Teacher-Student Perceptions of Teacher-Caring Behaviors

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Doctor of Education

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to my sons, James and Chris, because earning the title “Doctor” can only be trumped by the title “Mama.” It is my hope that this endeavor serves as my ultimate example that to Git-R-Done it takes passion, vision, sacrifice, and perseverance. I love you both more than words can express – you make me proud!

Love, Your Mama

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The saying “it takes a village ...” is also applicable when writing a dissertation. I would like to recognize those who served vital roles in my accomplishment. First, never underestimate the power of the people in charge of the village. I was blessed with the PERFECT committee. Dr. Chan, my chair, is a gifted facilitator. I benefited from his wisdom, expertise, guidance, and ability to build caring relationships. Dr. Hicks and Dr. Chandler were invaluable members whose meaningful feedback provided me insightful direction. Thank you all for working together to ensure that I achieved my goal.

Next, I want to express sincere gratitude to my family, friends, and colleagues for their support during this intense chapter of my life. Thank you for your continuous words of encouragement, prematurely calling me Dr. King, nodding politely and refraining from yawning while I talked endlessly about my research, and over-looking my dirty house, foul moods, and absence from life in general. Special thanks goes to my dad for believing in me so much that he funded this adventure, my husband Joe for granting me countless hours of silence (sorry about your permanent grooves from the headphones) and for always knowing what word I was looking for, my cohort-besties, Susie and Lori, for making the process more like a journey than work, my editing team (Joe, Margaret, Pat, Peggy, and Carolyn) for compensating for my inability to attend to detail, and last, but by far not least, my sons for holding down all drama until their ol’ Ma could make it through.

Lastly, I want to thank the teachers and students who participated in the study for their time and candid responses. I will forever be indebted to those who let me in to provide me rich data to analyze and interpret.

## **ABSTRACT**

### **A MIXED METHOD STUDY INVESTIGATING HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER-STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER-CARING BEHAVIORS**

**By**

**Patricia C. King**

The teacher-student relationship, which sociologists believe to be the driving force of change in student learning experiences, has largely been overlooked and underdeveloped. As Noddings (2003) explained, in teacher-caring behavior, the carer must take on a dual perspective and see the world not only through the lens of the carer but also through the lens of the one being cared for.

In this study, a mixed-method approach was used to investigate what high school teachers and students perceive to be caring-teacher behaviors. The purpose was to gain a better understanding of the factors that contribute to the development of caring teacher-student relationships. Results from the 22-item Likert-type survey and the two open-ended questions were grouped into four main themes: Classroom Management, Academic Support, Interpersonal Relationships, and Sense of Respect and Trust.

A significant difference was found between what teachers and students perceived to be caring-teacher behaviors. Although both teachers and students rated behaviors in the Interpersonal Relationship theme as important, teachers rated them the most important over all other themes. Students, however, rated behaviors in the Academic Support theme as the most important when describing caring teachers. Although teachers

went over and beyond to help students succeed because they felt that this was their call of duty, students saw them as caring behaviors.

*Keywords:* teacher-student relationships, high school, student perceptions, teacher perceptions, caring-teacher behaviors, mixed method



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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Years of well-intended educational reform efforts implemented in attempts to address the national crisis of declining schools have made minimal headway on true transformation (Arum, 2011; Williams, 2011). Instead of enhancing students' overall educational experiences, student achievement measured solely on standardized test scores could be indirectly stalling progress (Arum, 2011). Intellectual growth is indeed important but not at the expense of ignoring the behavioral, emotional, and social development of children (Lee, 2012). When the focus is ultimately on quantifying student output, perhaps more genuine aspects of holistic values and emotionality that inhere in human relationships may be neglected (Hoffman, 2009). Teaching and learning emerge through socially situated practices that are interwoven in emotional encounters (Hargreaves, 1998). Institutional values are being promoted over individual needs (O'Conner, 2008). To address academic achievement effectively, Zullig, Koopman, and Huebner (2009) suggested that redirecting reform efforts toward non-academic aspects of learning (social and emotional) may have a significant impact on the overall quality of students' school experiences and indirectly improve academic achievement.

Schools attending to the non-academic factors in efforts to create safe inclusive and learning climates are more apt to create optimal opportunities for academic success



(Cohen & Hamilton, 2009; Hoffman, 2009; Zullig et al., 2009). Arum (2011) advocated the school's climate is shaped by the interactions between students and teachers. Arum expressed that the missing link in reform is teacher-student relations, stating that this essential relationship has been compromised, which has negatively affected the capacity to accomplish school, district, state and national educational goals. Teachers must be able to connect with their students to get to know them as a whole before understanding what they need to learn and develop (Pantic & Wubbles, 2012). Providing a caring climate by developing teacher-student connections is an important part of improving students' academic success (Hachey, 2012; Noddings, 1984, 1995, 2012; Roberts, 2010; Tosolt, 2008; Walker, 2010). Students are more likely to be successful when they perceive that their teachers genuinely care about them as individuals rather than when they perceive that their teachers are simply there to transfer knowledge (Pattison, Hale, & Gowens, 2011).

Education reform efforts have primarily focused attention on formal curriculum or relationships among educators. The teacher-student relationship, which sociologists believe to be the driving force of change in student outcomes, has largely been overlooked and is therefore underdeveloped (Arum, 2011). Because teacher-student relationships have been undermined by refocusing teachers' energy elsewhere, the capacity to accomplish educational goals has been compromised (Arum, 2011). True reform in education will emerge through relationships when educators attune to the social, emotional, and ethical needs of students as well as their intellectual ones (Cohen & Hamilton, 2009; Walker, 2010).

A climate in which caring relations are fostered should be a goal for all educators and educational policy makers (Noddings, 2012). Noddings (1995) attested:

First, that we should want more from our educational efforts than adequate academic achievement and, second, that we will not achieve even that meager success unless our children believe that they themselves are cared for and learn to care for others (p. 675).

Walker (2010) was convinced that “if teachers are to properly educate children, they must first build a relationship with them,” stating that “children learn best from teachers who care about them” (p. 3).

### **Reciprocity in Caring Teacher-Student Relationships**

The ethic of care is a relational ethic (Noddings, 2012). Reciprocity and mutuality are vital components in relational ethics. However, like the parent-infant relationship and the physician-patient relationship, the roles in the teacher-student relationship are not equal, and therefore, mutuality cannot be expected. Teacher-student relationships are almost entirely defined by the cared-for’s recognition and acknowledgement of the caring encounter, which is necessary to complete the caring relation. The student response serves as building blocks, providing further information that can deepen the caring relation (Noddings, 2012). Note that caring is not referencing an attribute or personality trait; instead, it is an enactment of the teacher-student relationship (Kim & Schallert, 2011). Therefore, teachers need to be aware of how students acknowledge their enactments of care and adjust according to their responses (Sinha & Thornburg, 2012).

When teachers are unaware of how students acknowledge their enactments of care, there is often a breakdown in the communication of caring, causing relationships to fail. (Knestling, 2008). Teachers arrive at school with ideas about what their students will need for the year and how they will care for those who have not yet crossed their

classroom thresholds. With them, teachers bring their lived experiences that play a powerful role in shaping their beliefs on caring, which are often fixed rather than malleable to differing students' realities (James, 2010). The breakdown is not because the teacher does not care; I am sure most teachers live by the "golden rule," which says, "to do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Care ethics, however, suggest that for caring relations to be formed, we need to do unto others as they would have done unto themselves (Noddings, 2010). Even when teachers have the best of intentions, students do not always embrace the teacher's caring enactment (Knestling, 2008). A 14-year old African American in a suburban high school said, "You have to wonder if they really care. I mean, they care but not in the right way, you know?" (Sinha & Thornburg, 2012, p. 27). When educators react to assumed needs of students rather than expressed needs, their efforts to care often result in misfires (Noddings, 2012).

Care ethics differentiate between assumed needs and expressed needs. In other words, what a child may want is not to be confused with what the teacher thinks he may want (Nodding, 2012). The educator needs to be mindful that caring does not exist in a vacuum – the cared-for must acknowledge the care, thereby making it reciprocal by nature (Sinha & Thornburg, 2012).

## **Reciprocity Cycle of Care Ethics**

To increase the likelihood that the trajectory of teacher-student relationships yields desirable outcomes, one must be aware of the process and support needed to build and maintain mutual caring relationships (Newberry, 2010). As described earlier, the ethic of care as it relates to teaching is more than a virtue or disposition; it is relational, requiring a form of asymmetric reciprocity between both participants (Noddings, 2012; James, 2012; Sinha & Thornburg, 2012). The caring teacher-student relationship begins with the teacher serving in the governing role as the carer. With caution and humility, teachers must reflect to examine their assumptions of what they perceive to be caring behaviors and their notions about their students' needs because both preconceptions may inhibit the caring process, as "we cannot ever truly empty our soul of our own motivations" (James, 2012, p. 167) . Consequences of ignoring this vital step of the relational process could result in relational sabotage by addressing mismatched needs, miscommunicating caring, and/or lowering expectations for students of color, in particular.

Bondy and Ross (2008) insisted that successful teacher-student relationships rely on teachers' belief in their students' capacity to succeed. Caring encounters require the carer to be intensively present in the moment, enter into dialogue, and practice active, receptive listening to identify the needs, desires and struggles of the one being cared for (James, 2012; Kim & Schallert, 2011; Noddings, 2012). Even if the teacher has good intentions, if the student does not feel a sense of trust, connections are not made and students will most likely rebuff the encounter as caring (Kim & Schallert, 2011). After listening and reflecting, temporarily putting aside the needs of the institution and self, the

carer must respond. Even if the response cannot meet the needs of the student, due to factors such as lack of resources or disapproval, a response is necessary to maintain the caring relation by keeping the door of communication open (Noddings, 2012).

The cared-for plays a simple yet crucial role in forming and maintaining the caring relationship (Noddings, 1984, 2005, 2010, 2012). Whether by expressing gratitude, engaging instruction, following the rules, asking further questions related to the curriculum being taught, or by simply smiling, the student must somehow show that the caring has been received; the response of the cared-for completes the caring encounter. No matter how hard the carer works to connect in a caring fashion, there is no caring without the response (Noddings, 2012).

Teachers who incorporate caring behaviors in their classroom practices have the potential to influence their students now as well as to impart lifelong impressions (Uitto & Syrjälä, 2008). The effort invested in teaching students to listen receptively to others has both cognitive and moral implications. Receptive listening is the core of caring relations, as well as a powerful strategy for learning and collaboration (Noddings, 2012).

### **Problem Statement**

Factors that contribute to the development of effective teacher-student relationships are vital to understand because of the influence these interactions have on the overall learning experience, particularly for students in minority groups (Averill, 2012). Caring has been identified as essential for developing effective teacher-student relationships (Gay, 2010; Hackenberg, 2010; Noddings, 2012). However, reciprocity in caring and the actual development of caring relationships in the context of teaching have received very little research attention (Kim & Schallert, 2011; Newberry, 2010; Pattison

et al., 2011; Watson, Miller, Davis, & Carter, 2010). Although there are articles that provide insightful lists of characteristics or traits of caring teachers, articles that provide teacher behaviors that communicate desired characteristics are somewhat absent from the literature (Pattison et al., 2011). For instance, it is not effective to direct teachers to be more caring to their students. Most would be insulted, refuting that they show their students they care for them on a daily basis. However, if students specified caring behaviors such as “learns students’ names,” there would be no ambiguity in the behaviors necessary for teachers to show their students they care (King & Chan, 2011; Pattison et al., 2011). This disconnection happens because values and needs are only assumed, not measured, yet are essential for the establishment of caring teacher-student relationships (Sinha & Thornburg, 2012).

Most teachers strive to connect with their students in caring ways but have not been privy to the necessary information to do so (Ang, 2005; Pattison et al., 2011; Sinha & Thornburg, 2012). King and Chan’s (2011) quantitative research revealed a significant difference in what teachers and students perceive to be teacher-caring behaviors. Garza (2009) said teachers might think they are exhibiting caring behaviors, but if students do not perceive them as caring, the efforts are ineffective. Educators need to address not just assumed needs but also expressed needs of students (Noddings, 2012). Unfortunately, there are significant differences in the ideal of care, which promotes responsive, supporting relationships and actual practices (Sinha & Thornburg, 2012). There is a need for more in-depth investigations to provide teachers with behaviors necessary to augment interpersonal experiences with students (Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011).

There are indications in the literature that teacher and student traits can influence the development of teacher-student relationships (Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011). This could be a result of our classrooms in the United States becoming much more complex and consisting of diverse populations: ESL, gifted, general education and special education (Newberry, 2010). Research shows that although teachers respond differently to their students, they are not aware of the varying behaviors that are being conveyed and how those interactions are affecting the overall classroom climate (Newberry, 2010).

Research on teacher-student relationships has focused on namely teachers (predominately White) and students of color, elementary children, and students identified as “at-risk” of academic or affective achievement (Newberry, 2010). Roorda et al. (2011) suggested further research to investigate the impact of relationships on different minority groups to validate their findings, which showed a positive association between relationships and achievement for ethnic minority students. They also recommended research that focuses more on students with learning difficulties and behavioral problems (Roorda et al., 2011). There is little explicit support for teachers to help understand the social and emotional needs of their students (Shiller, 2009).

Little is known about components in a high school climate that impact students’ academic success (Barile et al., 2012; Spilt et al., 2011). A commonly used and well-validated teacher-report questionnaire, The Student-Teacher Relationships Scale (Pianta, 2001), has been a primary tool to measure teachers’ perceptions of their relationships with their students from preschool to upper elementary (Ang, 2005; Koomen et al., 2011; Roeden et al., 2012). Research lacks student perceptions in regards to teacher-student

relationships (Läänemets, Kalamees-Ruubel, & Sepp, 2012). Although numerous studies provide characteristics of an outstanding teacher, few come from the opinions of students (Williams, Sullivan, & Kohn, 2012). Teachers should no longer need to rely on assumptions when addressing the needs of their students (Cohen & Hamilton, 2009).

Developing teacher-student relationships is essential and should be the aim for improving teaching and learning (Martin & Dowson, 2009). Without offering teachers and students a voice and listening closely to what they have to say, efforts implemented to facilitate teacher-student relationships can be futile.

### **Research Questions**

This in-depth study will be guided by the primary research question:

What do teachers and students perceive to be teacher-caring behaviors?

For supporting descriptive details, the following sub-questions will also be investigated:

1. What do teachers perceive to be behaviors of a caring teacher?
2. What do students perceive to be behaviors of a caring teacher?
3. Do students perceive teacher-caring behaviors differently from teachers?
4. Does race/ethnicity make a significant difference in students' perceptions of teacher-caring behaviors?
5. Does gender make a significant difference in students' perceptions of teacher-caring behaviors?
6. Do students with disabilities perceive teacher-caring behaviors differently than students without disabilities?



7. Do teachers' educational qualifications/degree and years of experience make any significant difference in teachers' perceptions of teacher-caring behaviors?
8. How do teachers show students they care?
9. How do students respond to teachers they perceive as caring?

### **Purpose and Significance of Study**

“What we understand is determined by what we pay attention to” (Cohen & Hamilton, 2009, p.105). The purpose of this unique, multilevel study will be to gain insight on how teacher-caring behaviors are perceived by high school teachers and students.

By using mixed methods to investigate the phenomena of teacher caring through the lenses of both teachers and students, comparisons can be made between the perceptions of the carer (teacher) and the cared-for (student), because according to Noddings (1984), if caring behaviors are not acknowledged as caring, it is not caring. The quantitative data will provide an objective baseline for teacher-student perceptions, as well as indicate how the independent variables affect perceptions. Perhaps one of the most important goals is to open the lines of communication about teacher caring with our students. Garza (2009) pointed out that high school students' voices were underrepresented in the literature, and Latino voices were somewhat absent. I agree with Williams et al. (2012) that student opinions are authentic, and efforts to understand their input have the potential to improve their output. Pekar and Levin (2005) believed that student voice might initiate necessary changes within high school cultures and practices to create a climate more conducive to learning (Williams et al., 2012). Student voice was

actively recruited in an attempt to alleviate the gap in research of high school student views regarding relational dynamics to improve the educational experience at both the micro-and macro-structural levels (Knestling, 2008; Uitto & Syrjälä, 2008). By listening to students in their earlier years, we are coincidentally instilling the value of social responsibility and democracy (Williams et al., 2012).

By considering the intersection of race/ethnicity, and gender, differences will be unearthed so all can equally contribute and benefit from the caring relationship. Educators will have a better understanding of how to convey their care effectively, so students will recognize their intentions. Alternatively, teachers will also learn how to identify when their students recognize their care. Viewing the topic of care through the lenses of both teachers and students will provide invaluable insights that will enhance the efforts to build meaningful teacher-student relationships. While teacher-student relationships are considered a core aspect of the teaching profession, teachers are given little support or instruction on how to develop interpersonal relationships with students (Martin & Dowson, 2009; Newberry, 2010; Roorda et al., 2011; Spilt et al., 2011).

Results will therefore enhance relational pedagogy that will contribute to a quality educational experience. Understanding behaviors that can facilitate teacher-student relationships will help improve academic, emotional, and social teacher practices that will in turn create quality-learning opportunities for all students (Averill, 2012). Noddings (2012) believed that a climate in which relations can thrive to meet individual needs, impart knowledge, and foster the development of moral people should be a goal for all educators and educational policymakers.

## **Benefits of Teacher-Student Relationships**

Over the past two decades, researchers have become acutely interested in the importance of effective teacher-student relationships as it relates to student outcomes in the realms of academics and behavior (Cornelius-White, 2007; Murray-Harvey, 2010; Pantic & Wubbels, 2012; Roorda et al., 2011; Roffey, 2012). Martin and Dowson (2009) proclaimed “that positive relationships with significant others are cornerstones of young people’s capacity to function effectively in social, affective and academic domains” (p. 351). Teaching and learning are promoted by inculcating a sense of belonging in a warm school climate created by positive teacher-student relationships (Barile, et al., 2012; Gregory & Ripski, 2008; Murray, 2011). Empirically, it has been shown that caring teacher-student relationships have a positive impact on academic engagement, motivation, and overall student achievement (Averill, 2012; Gay, 2010; Marin & Dowson, 2009).

Murray (2011) found that supportive teacher-student relationships enhanced school adjustment and increased students’ outcomes, especially for those considered at-risk of failure. Roorda et al. (2011) generated more specific results in regards to academic advantages for at-risk students that included favorable outcomes for students with low socioeconomic status (SES), ethnic minority status, and/or students with learning difficulties. Educators and policy makers are more aware than ever that equitable classrooms are needed to address cultural issues affecting high quality learning experiences (Gay, 2010). Teacher-student interpersonal relationships are strongly linked to creating classroom environments that effectively address cultural differences by recognizing students’ backgrounds and individual needs to achieve a positive educational

experience (Averill, 2012; Gay, 2010; Pantic & Wubbel, 2012). Research has indicated improvements in the quality of life for students with intellectual disabilities as well (Roeden et al., 2012).

Strong teacher-student relationships have additional positive effects. When students feel connected with their teachers they may remain in school, even if struggling academically or personally, thereby lowering dropout rates (Barile et al., 2012). Teachers also benefit professionally and personally from relationships they form with their students (Hargreaves, 2000; Roffey, 2012). It is thought that teacher-student relationships enrich teachers' lives by improving their wellbeing, bringing enjoyment, enhancing self-esteem, and lowering stress, which all are noted as core reasons for continuing to teach (Hargreaves, 1998; Hargreaves, 2000; O'Conner, 2008; Roffey, 2012; Spilt et al., 2011). Teachers' wellbeing has a trickle-down effect on students. When teachers are happy in their careers, they are more apt to invest in their students' wellbeing (Roffey, 2012). On the other hand, poor relations make teachers vulnerable for personal failure, professional burnout, and rejection by students (Hargreaves, 1998; Spilt et al., 2011).

Quality relationships formed by teachers and students are key to successful teaching and learning (Aultman, Williams-Johnson, & Schutz, 2009). They can be powerful change agents in quality school experiences by intercepting failure and empowering students and teachers to succeed (Rivera-McCutchen, 2012). There are lasting positive effects of teacher-student relationships that make a mark on students long after they leave the institutional walls of school (Uitto & Syrjälä, 2008). Teacher-student relations are accepted as influential, but how to create them remains a mystery (Newberry, 2010).

## **Researcher's Positionality**

My passion on the topic of caring has resulted from my life experiences and immersion in the educational setting as a parent, educator, and student. I have raised two sons who both attended public schools: I am a speech language pathologist in the public school system, and I thrive on being a life-long learner. My student population has ranged from pre-kindergarten to high school and varied from cognitively superior to profoundly disabled, and from socioeconomically privileged to disadvantaged. It is my experience that the effects of caring transcend age, color, ability level, and socioeconomic status, and yet caring looks and feels different to each individual based on their beliefs, values, and background.

My interests in the effects of teachers' caring behaviors stem from both past and present experiences. Other than my race, gender, and region of residence, I would describe my culture as fluid. I am a White female who was born and raised in the South. Currently, I live and work in the same county in Georgia where I have spent the majority of my life. It was once considered rural yet has grown into a diverse suburb. I was the youngest of two born into a “traditional” Protestant household where my dad modeled hard work and dedication, and my mom infused creativity and morals. I put traditional in quotations, because I believe that tradition, much like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder.

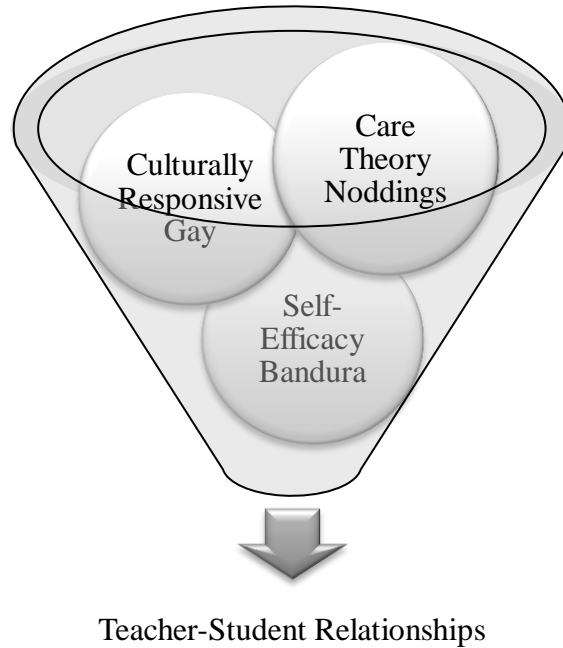
My values, beliefs and assumptions have evolved throughout my life, namely through reciprocal relationships. Through these interpersonal relations, I have experienced caring through the lens of both the carer and the cared-for, most of which developed from being a mother. As a single, teenage mother, I learned very early the

ultimate responsibility of a carer. During those formative years, I have vivid memories of enduring the effects of both caring and uncaring teachers, employers and members of society as a whole. Although I have never considered myself a victim of their projected opinions, I learned what I perceive as being universal truths about class, standards, and expectations. One of my strongest beliefs that governs my personal and professional life is the power of caring. Whether I am fulfilling the role of the carer, the one being cared for, or the investigator of the behaviors and impacts of the caring and uncaring, I witness the profound influences of caring on a daily basis.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Given the complex nature of studying human behaviors and perceptions based on relational interactions, a multilayered, conceptual framework was composed to guide this study. The elements of Noddings' (1984, 2005) Care Theory will serve as the model for anticipated behaviors. However, because behaviors cannot be investigated in isolation, influential factors such as how the individual perceives the behaviors as well as the context in which they interact must be considered (Noddings, 2001). Cultural responsiveness (Gay, 2010) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995) will be employed as supporting components for a more in-depth investigation. These authors' contributions profoundly shaped my personal interests and served as the catalyst that fed my passion for further investigation.

**Figure 1**      **Conceptual Framework**



### **Care Theory**

“In care ethics, relation is ontologically basic, and the caring relation is ethically (morally) basic. Every human life starts in relation, and it is through relations that a human individual emerges.” (Noddings, 2012, p. 771). Noddings (2005) suggested that caring is “the bedrock of all successful education” (p. 27). She emphasized educating students as a whole in the social context in which students are expected to learn. This theory is grounded on what Gilligan (1982) referred to as an “ethic of caring,” which she proclaimed is the sustained connection maintained by acting responsibly toward self and others. Ethic of caring is centered on people and their needs, not merely learners of subjects and takers of tests. Caring is the heart of teaching and should be rooted in the

everyday practices of classrooms (Nodding, 2012). Noddings (2005) stated that caring is a “constant outward flow of energy” (p. 17). This energy comes from both the caregivers and the cared-for.

Noddings (2003, 2005) defined the three fundamentals of caring as engrossment, receptivity, and reciprocity. The caring relationship, whether the encounter is brief or extensive, begins when the caregiver becomes engrossed in the cared-for. For authentic caring to exist, caregivers are fully attentive and act in the best interest of the care-recipients by envisioning the best outcomes as though they were their own realities. “Caring is largely reactive and responsive” (Noddings, 2003, p. 19). Both the carer and cared-for have active roles in the caring relationship. The cared-for fuels the care-giver’s engrossment through receptivity by acknowledging the care-giver and the care. This reciprocity between the care-giver and the cared-for can be short or long lived.

Noddings (2003, 2005) suggested strategies such as modeling, dialogue, and practice followed by affirmation to employ engrossment, receptivity, and reciprocity. To facilitate caring relationships, teachers should model behaviors that are perceived as caring by their students, engage in meaningful dialogue by using open-ended questions to nurture interpersonal connections, and create ample opportunities for students to practice acts of caring in a safe, trusting environment. Affirmation is an important element that keeps the caring relational process in motion. The care-giver, normally the teacher, feels valued when the caring is recognized and acknowledged, which can in turn strengthen the care-recipient’s capacities to care (Parsons, 2005). Shiller (2009) urged schools, especially those that serve diverse students, to engage in authentic care to ensure that students feel a sense of belonging to the school and are prepared to navigate in the



school, community, and world at large. Such caring behaviors are known to counteract the negative forces in communities where failure is predicted (Anness, 2008; Rivera-McCutchen, 2012). This relational perspective is becoming more and more relevant in national and global affairs (Noddings, 2012).

### **Cultural Responsiveness**

Cultural diversity in schools reflects our global society (Gur, 2010). Research shows that caring teachers (Noddings, 2005) and culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010) have the potential to increase achievement for all students. Caring behaviors are crucial for student achievement (Garza, Ryser & Lee, 2010; Noddings, 2005; Paciotti, 2010; Rodrigues, 2012; Teven & McCroskey, 1996), "especially for culturally diverse students who may be at risk of failing or who may be disengaged from schooling" (Gay, 2010, Paciotti, 2010; Perez, 2000). Gay (2000) argued, "many students of color encounter too many uncaring teachers at all levels of education from preschool to college" (p. 62).

Teachers who incorporate a caring ethic in their pedagogical practices participate in ongoing self-reflection, negotiating amid various socio-cultural, institutional and discursive contexts (James, 2012). In doing do, they demonstrate awareness of the sociological, cultural, and political factors that affect the context in which their students interact and are more prepared to maximize opportunities to know their students, families and communities in which their students live (Bondy & Ross, 2008; James, 2012; Rivera-McCutchen, 2012). In the increasingly culturally diverse classroom, this is an essential practice because how people exhibit and interpret emotions, interests, respect, and body language are among many behaviors embedded in their cultural background (Gay, 2000).

Teachers who exhibit cultural responsiveness by respecting the values, beliefs, and traditions of their students from different cultures are able to interact effectively (Gur, 2010).

Noddings (2003) explained that the carer must take on a dual perspective and see the world not only through the lens of the carer but also through the lens of the one being cared for. Like Care Theory, culturally responsive teaching is also a reciprocal process involving teachers' and students' cooperative efforts to improve teaching and learning for optimal educational experiences (Gay, 2010).

In Noddings' (2003) engrossment stage, where caring relationships are formed, teachers "must see the other's reality as a possibility for" their own in order to fill the needs of their students (p. 14). Seeing needs through the eyes of their students requires teachers to engage in culturally responsive practices to ensure the best possible outcomes for all students (Parson, 2005). For this to occur, teachers should continually strive for cultural competence to provide a caring classroom environment that addresses the needs of all students (James, 2012).

Culturally responsive teachers communicate with their ethnically diverse students by creating opportunities for dialogue, which is essential in developing caring relationships (Gay, 2010). Caring teachers promote a trusting culture within their classrooms (McDermott, 1977; Teven & Hanson, 2004). A caring, trusting classroom climate is the very landscape that fosters culturally responsive pedagogy (Brown, 2004). Unfortunately, many at-risk students are in schools that lack caring educators, which in turn becomes an environment where learners suffer (Cassidy & Bates, 2005). Adding the culturally responsive element while investigating teacher-student relationships will

expand the caring component to under-represented populations whose voices have yet to be fully included in the literature (Roberts, 2010).

### **Self-Efficacy**

The expectations for teachers to create classroom cultures conducive to learning rest heavily on their talents and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995). Empirical data show that strong interpersonal relationships with parents and teachers are positively related to self-efficacy, which improves students' school experiences (Bandura, 1995, Lin, 2001).

Students can gain a sense of self-efficacy through supportive communication of significant others (Bandura, 1997). Teachers practicing culturally responsive strategies find ways to treat their students justly, fairly, and equitably to increase achievement and self-efficacy (Lin, 2001).

Caring teachers form teacher-student relationships and provide support to enhance student achievement; these experiences increase teachers' satisfaction with teaching and commitment to the profession (Collier, 2005; O'Conner, 2008). High teacher efficacy is perhaps the key to teacher effectiveness, which in turn affects student achievement (Collier, 2005; Spilt et al., 2011).

The influence of caring can motivate teachers to be life-long learners to improve their skills, so they will be better prepared to meet the needs of their students (Noblit, 1995). Caring teachers support their students in academic endeavors to ensure that they succeed (Collier, 2005). Bandura (1995) suggested that the most effective way to create self-efficacy is through mastery of experiences; beliefs from these successes influence how people think, feel, motivate themselves, and act.

## Definitions of Terms

The interpretations of caring behaviors make this venture a challenge (Garza, 2009). While researchers agree that caring is a key ingredient for establishing a relationship, their descriptors vary. Based on previous studies, caring behaviors have been characterized by Gay (2000) as "patience, persistence, facilitation, validation, and empowerment for the participants" (p. 49). Others have expressed attributes such as trust, respect, and kindness (Mayeroff, 1971; Noddings, 2005). Murray (2011) asserted that caring behaviors also involve providing students with necessary support. However, caring is "not just a warm, fuzzy feeling that makes people kind and likable" (Noddings, 1995, p. 676). My definitions were built on the foundations of established researchers yet reflect my perception for the intent of this study.

*Behaviors* are actions or reactions relating to environmental factors that display personal values, beliefs, and experiences, whether conscious or unconscious. The meaning of one's actions can be conveyed either verbally or non-verbally.

*Caring* behaviors are purposeful actions exhibited when one is passionate enough about the well-being of someone or something to invest ample time and effort to ensure the desired outcome occurs. Caring involves actions such as being sensitive, compassionate, and honest, which are relevant to a person's unique needs.

*The carer* refers to the one in the relation responding to the needs, wants, and initiations of the cared for.

*The cared for* refers to the one in the relation who is recognizing and responding to the caring.

*Culture* is the part of a society that reflects common languages, beliefs, social activities, and defines appropriate interactions. Margaret Mead's simplistic view of culture is the way people prefer to behave in a group (Tosti, 2007).

*Educational qualifications* in this study are referring to teachers' highest-level degree: High School Diploma, Bachelors, Masters, Specialists, or Doctorate.

*Effective* is used to describe a change agent that brings about desired outcomes.

*Relation* is an affective awareness of individuals characterized by encounters in which both involved parties feel and respond toward each other.

### **Summary**

To promote academic achievement for all students, practices that serve as change agents must be identified (Barile et al., 2012). Noddings (2012) insisted that "time spent on building a relation of care and trust is not time wasted" (p. 774). Caring plays a powerful role in effective teaching and learning (Noddings, 2012). This study aims to deepen existing theoretical understandings of the development and sustainability of caring teacher-student relationships (James, 2012). Teachers who are culturally responsive and build interpersonal relationships with their students have the potential to increase intellectual growth (Gay, 2010; Noddings, 2012). Traits such as trust, caring, open communication, empathy, and an appreciation of cultural differences are attributes of an effective teacher (Bowman, 2005; Noddings, 2005; Gay, 2010; Steele, 2010). Previous research has revealed the positive results caring can have on students' overall outcomes (James, 2012; Newberry, 2010; Roberts, 2010; Roorda et al., 2011; Sinha & Thornburg, 2012).

Benefits of caring are abundant, yet perceptions of what constitutes caring behaviors are still in question (Newberry, 2010; Pattison et al., 2011; Roorda et al., 2011). Analyzing test scores will not yield results needed to recognize and understand multiple levels of functioning that will stimulate reform in the social, emotional, as well as intellectual aspects of learning and teaching (Cohen & Hamilton, 2009; Williams et al., 2012). When these essential dimensions are measured, results can serve as a catalyst for transformational dialogue. Reform goal setting, intervention strategies, and innovative classroom practices will emerge, providing students with engaging educational platforms that are both emotionally nurturing and academically rigorous (Cohen & Hamilton, 2009; Rivera-McCutchen, 2012).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

The purpose of this section is to report relevant findings of journal articles and books that I located, analyzed, synthesized, and organized related to my current study (Roberts 2010). An exhaustive review of literature was conducted using the Horace W. Sturgis library search engines Galileo Scholar, ProQuest, ERIC, EBSCOhost, SAGE, as well as accessing articles through the University of Georgia Interlibrary Loan. I searched for original studies in the related field of interest to provide historical background and grounded theories. It appears that the majority of research related to the ethic of care in regards to teacher caring has used qualitative methods to obtain subjective perceptions of teachers, namely at the elementary level. Very few studies reported objective data using quantitative methods or included perceptions of students. It seems that there is a deficit in empirical studies using mixed methods at the high school level with both teachers and students. This chapter has been composed to offer a better understanding of the topic by providing key elements of previous research so that the current research will not repeat, but only extend, knowledge in this field.

#### **Practices of a Caring Teacher**

In practice, caring-teacher behaviors are often used to describe qualities of an effective teacher (Steele, 2010; Teven, 2001; Watson et al., 2010), a good teacher (Alder, 2003), and an exemplary teacher (Ang, 2005, Gentry, Steenbergen-Hu, Choi, 2011).

Watson et al. (2010) qualitatively analyzed middle school teacher perceptions of effective teacher qualities by using Stronge's (2007) "Teacher Skills Assessment Checklist". This three-year study involving 66 focus group sessions showed that almost half (42.6%) of the teachers' responses fell within the "Teacher as a Person" category of the survey, with caring being the number one indicator. When reviewing the literature, two themes emerged in terms of teacher practices relating to caring: academic expectations/support and emotional support (Alder, 2002; Aness, 2008; Bondy & Ross, 2008; Noddings, 2005; Rivera-McCutchen, 2012; Shiller, 2009). However, students never described caring teachers as easy (Uitto & Syrjälä, 2008). They did describe them as kind (Shiller, 2009; Story & Butts, 2010).

Woven throughout the literature, evidence showed that caring teachers shared the beliefs that all students had a capacity to learn and, with proper support, could reach high standards (Knestling, 2008; Rivera-McCutchen, 2012; Shiller, 2009). Caring teachers made the effort to find out the specific areas in which their students were struggling. They guided students through the learning process by offering academic supports, providing appropriate pacing, responding with meaningful feedback, and holding them accountable for completion. Students were afforded a rigorous education within the context of a nurturing environment (Alder, 2002; Rivera-McCutchen, 2012; Shiller, 2009). Other teacher practices such as making learning relevant, creating interest and fun were noted as caring acts, as well as attributes of a good teacher (Alder, 2002). Noddings (2005) claimed, "Caring teachers listen and respond differentially to their students" (p. 19). However, lowering expectations is not an option. Teachers in the Shiller (2009) study were able to address their students' poverty-related obstacles to achievement, while



holding students to high standards. For whatever reason, lowering expectations is the antitheses of an ethic of caring (Bondy & Ross, 2008).

Authentic care relates to teachers caring about who their students are in addition to their academic outcomes (Noddings, 2012). Teacher-caring behaviors facilitate teacher-student relationships, which help sync teaching and learning (Deiro, 2003; Garrett, Barr, & Rothman, 2009). Although some teachers had a difficult time reaching out to students in an emotional capacity, it was evident that emotional support was a vital aspect in the ethic of caring (Rivera-McCutchen, 2012). Study after study revealed that the healthier the personal relationship between teacher and student, the more caring the teacher was perceived (James, 2012). Caring behaviors need not be grand gestures or heroic acts; instead, they are often small acts such as spending time talking to students, listening to their concerns, and being authentic (Story & Butts, 2010). Other teacher practices that convey care are being fair, celebrating small accomplishments, and valuing the opinions of students regarding classroom policies, procedures and activities (Story & Butts, 2010).

Knestling's (2008) qualitative study that consisted of high school students at risk for dropping out said that they felt supported by teachers who listened to them and communicated caring. Students appreciated teachers' willingness to engage in meaningful interactions (Cassidy & Bates, 2005; Teven & McCroskey, 1996). Providing a caring climate by developing teacher-student connections is an important part of improving students' academic success (Hachey, 2012; Roberts, 2010; Tosolt, 2008). Caring teachers also supported students' emotional needs by exhibiting excellent interpersonal skills (Pang, 2005; Teven, 2001), which enabled them to listen and value

what students had to say (Mihalas, Morse, Allsopp, & McHatton, 2009; Noddings, 2005), respond to students with respect (Schussler & Collins, 2006), and treat them as individuals (Kim & Schallert, 2011). Yet, holding high standards must accompany this emotional support in order to be effective. Teachers in the Rivera-McCutchen (2012) study were able to engage previously disengaged students by making emotional connections, yet because they did not adopt the critical belief that their students were capable of rigorous work, long-term academic gains were not made.

Pang (2005) described teacher caring as being directly related to the ethic of care where the teachers purposefully made a moral commitment to know about their students' experiences and backgrounds. Effective teachers are aware of the differences between their African American, Hispanic, Native American, and immigrant students' communication styles to develop harmonious communication approaches (Brown, 2004; Gay, 2010). In Alder's study (2002), students reported that teachers who took the time to intermingle with them and truly heard their voices were highly valued. Pang (2005) also claimed that teachers who formed interpersonal relationships with their students taught them to develop reciprocal relationships. Garza (2009) agreed that caring for students should be relevant to each student's individual needs. Yet, he disagreed with Noddings and Pang by suggesting that teacher-student relationships were often one-way relationships, with the teacher serving as the caregiver and the student as the receiver.

It cannot be denied that interpersonal interactions can influence learning experiences (Blau, 2011). Dialogue and confirmation are key features of Care Theory (Noddings, 2003). Tevin (2001) found that interpersonal relationships were affected by how students perceived caring and nonverbal immediacy (Tevin, 2001). Nonverbal

immediacy must not be excluded when investigating caring behaviors. Teven (2001) suggested that nonverbal immediacy is essential when dissecting relational elements between perceived caring behaviors and effective learning. Nonverbal gestures exhibited by teachers such as eye contact, relaxed body position, pleasant facial expressions, and proximity regarding position and movement may be cuing students to perceive their teachers as caring. Teachers should be cognizant of how powerful their nonverbal behaviors are when interacting with their students to ensure that their nonverbal behaviors are matching their verbal messages (Steele, 2010; Teven, 2007). The results of Teven's (2007) research clearly demonstrated the critical role of teachers' communication and how it influences students' perception of caring. Caring teachers facilitate learning by being nonverbally immediate and responsive to their students (Teven, 2007).

Research also showed that demonstrations of caring teacher practices were not confined to the school. Teachers maximized the support students received by reaching out to the students' communities and families to better understand students' lives outside of school (Rivera-McCutchen, 2012; Shiller, 2009). Caring teachers were willing to initiate relationships to bridge communication between students, other teachers, and parents (Alder, 2002). By accessing personal, institutional, and community resources, teachers were able to give their students optimal care in efforts to help them meet graduation requirements and provide them with the opportunity to achieve success beyond high school (Rivera-McCutchen, 2012).

## **Teacher-Student Perceptions of Teachers' Caring Behaviors**

Although studies have repeatedly shown the value students place on a teacher's ability to successfully develop interpersonal relationships with their students (Cassidy & Bates, 2005; Garrett, Barr, & Rothman, 2009; Garza, Ryser, & Lee, 2010; Noblit, 1995; Noddings, 2003; Shiller, 2009; Teven, 2001; Wubbels, Levy, & Brekelmans, 1997), assumptions of teacher caring vary from student to student. Before stepping into their class, some students believe that all teachers care, while others believe none do (Alder, 2002). Ferreira and Bosworth (2001) advised that "how students perceive their teachers as caring or noncaring has a direct impact on how students perceive the culture of the school" (p. 25). Noddings (2005) believed that the act of caring is complete whenever the teacher's caring behaviors are acknowledged by the student. She also felt that although teachers genuinely care for their students, they are often not successful at making the connections necessary to complete caring relations with their students. Although research on high school students' perceptions of teacher caring is sparse, studies on other age levels provide us with a heightened awareness of what students perceive to be teacher-caring behaviors (Alder, 2002; Larkins-Strathy & LaRocco, 2007; Shiller, 2009).

More than a hundred hours of collecting multiple data sources were spent on Alder's (2002) qualitative study to investigate what caring meant to urban middle school students. The two middle schools that participated in the study were located in the heart of a southeastern metropolitan city in the United States. Atlantic Middle School was made up of 95% African American students from mid to lower income neighborhoods. Although the school had undergone recent renovation, the majority of the houses in the area were run down and in need of major repairs. Pacific Middle was a model school with

the racial composition being 70% African American, 29% European American, and 1% new immigrants. The students came from neighborhoods that were in the midst of renovation, with well-kept homes and manicured lawns.

The perceptions of care were concluded by experiencing the interactions between teachers and students. One teacher from each school was purposely selected by the principal based on exceptional caring attributes. From the two classrooms, 12 out of 50 students returned the necessary forms to volunteer to participate. Teachers from both schools were African American. Mrs. Apple, who held a bachelor's degree, taught eighth grade science at Atlantic Middle. She had taught five years in middle school and three in high school. Mrs. Baker was working on her master's degree in educational studies and had taught seventh grade English at Pacific for more than 10 years.

It was unanimous that students perceived teachers who pressured them to study and complete assignments as caring. Students referred to the teachers as strict yet caring. A student from Atlantic expressed how she knew that Mrs. Apple cared by stating, "I know she cares, 'cause if she didn't, she wouldn't help us with our work." Other students from Atlantic expressed similar sentiments. Monique said, "they give us a whole lot of work...cause they care about us." Mike responded by saying he knew his teacher cared because when he was not doing his work, his teacher would say, "Do your work!"

In Alder's (2002) study, students from both middle schools identified other behaviors that made them perceive that their teachers cared for them such as being kind, fair, and honest. They felt that caring teachers value both them and their parents. The urban students also asserted that a caring teacher interacts with them and truly gives them a voice.

Larkins-Strathy and LaRocco (2007) conducted a study similar to Alder's (2003), yet findings differed. Although both were qualitative studies carried out in middle schools, the communities in which the schools were located contrasted. Alder's (2003) research took place in two southeastern urban schools, and Larkins-Strathy and LaRocco's (2007) setting was in a single northeastern suburban school. The teacher-student ratio also varied. Larkins-Strathy and LaRocco (2007) interviewed 10 seventh grade teachers and 15 of their students to gain a better understanding of teachers' and students' perceptions of the caring leadership practices used in the classroom.

The two emergent themes were "setting clear standards and supporting students in meeting standards" (Larkins-Strathy and LaRocco, 2007, p. 11). Standards were comprised of academic, behavioral, and ethical goals. Data revealed that teachers namely focused their classroom standards on behavior goals related to students demonstrating self-control. Some students reported that although teachers' behavior standards were similar, they were not consistent. Neither teachers nor students described occasions when teachers set academic standards. Participants reported that teachers consistently set ethical standards based on honesty and respect. It was known that students were expected to be responsible for their own learning. Both teacher and student participants explained ways teachers assisted their students in mastering the classroom standards. Teachers held students accountable while providing feedback, extra assistance, and motivation to ensure their success.

Garza's (2009) qualitative study highlighted five dominant themes on how Latino and White high school students identified teachers' caring attributes. Data collected from 49 Latino and 44 White students in a large suburban high school in central Texas

generated five dominant themes: (a) provide necessary scaffolding during teaching; (b) exhibit a kind disposition, including having a good sense of humor; (c) being available outside of class to help students succeed; (d) show a personal interest in the students' well-being outside as well as inside of the classroom; and (e) do whatever is necessary to provide them with academic support in the classroom to ensure that they pass.

Although both ethnic groups in Garza's study valued the same themes, they prioritized the attributes differently. Latino students indicated that teachers' kind dispositions did not show that they cared as much as when the teachers scaffold during lessons or provided effective academic support in a class setting. Likewise, Perez (2000) suggested that culturally diverse students not only needed to like their teachers and sense they cared, but they also needed to form mutual, respectful relationships with their teachers if they were to succeed in the classroom. It has been noted that Latino students perceive that their teacher cares when he or she respects their language and cultural identity (Garza, 2009; Gay, 2000).

Contrary to Latino students' perceptions, White students commented most frequently that teachers' actions that reflected a kind disposition conveyed that they cared, yet academic support in the classroom setting was their least valued teachers' caring attribute. The key element that may explain the differences in perceptions may be a result of the focus on Latino students passing state-mandated tests to navigate the competitive nature of our educational system. Findings on White high school students' perceptions from Garza's (2009) research stated that behaviors that reflect teacher disposition ranks first. This was congruent with other studies that suggested teacher attention as a key component to a caring relationship (Garrett, Barr, & Forsbach-Rothman, 2007; Teven &

McCroskey, 1996). Garza (2009) warned that dismissing students' perspectives might lead to inadequate actions and dispositions that teachers display toward students.

Garrett, Barr, and Forsbach-Rothman (2007) conducted their investigation in a large, diverse urban setting and included African American students' perceptions. Comments on how teachers demonstrated care reflected the perceptions of the participants, which included sixth-grade students (24 African American, 13 White, and 23 Latino) and ninth-grade students (22 African American, 27 White, and 46 Latino). Results suggested that African American students, in contrast to White students, also perceived teachers providing academic support as a critical caring behavior. White students again placed more emphasis on teachers' personalities and taking personal interests in them as indicators that teachers cared. Findings in both studies suggested that the students' ethnicities did not significantly influence what they perceived to be teacher-caring behaviors, but the way they prioritized the behaviors varied.

Teven and McCroskey (1996) conducted a study with predominately White university students. The findings revealed a strong correlation between perceived caring and instructor appraisal. Students who perceived their instructors as caring rated both the instructor and content positively. Data revealed a higher level of competency in course materials from students who perceived their teachers as caring. This research provided evidence that teachers who engaged in behaviors that communicated a positive intent toward their students were more likely to influence the students to put forth more effort.

Also, McCroskey (1992) noted that students were motivated by the teacher's concern for them when they interpreted the teacher as displaying empathy, understanding, and responsiveness. Research based on building a caring classroom



community and establishing strong interpersonal relationships was consistent with the studies on students' perceptions of "good teachers," which appeared to make all the difference between a functional and dysfunctional classroom (Garrett, Barr, & Rothman, 2009; Osterman & Freese, 2000; Wentzel, 1997). In contrast, disapproving or non-existent teacher-student interactions made students feel insignificant and of no value (Garza et al., 2010).

Students in the Scholsser's (1992) study, conducted in a successful middle school, noted the following behaviors as qualities of good teachers which were equated with caring teachers: teachers who noticed if a student was in trouble, discussed topics of interest to students such as gangs, drug addiction, and values, and also teachers who told students that they could come back after class if they needed to talk more. Students felt that the good teachers knew about their students' needs and interests without judging them.

It is also important to point out what students perceived as uncaring-teacher behaviors. Students described an uncaring teacher as one who humiliates them by yelling and pointing out poor academic standing in front of their peers (Alder, 2002). When Wubbels et al. (1997) asked students about their worst teachers, students reported teacher characteristics such as uncertain, dissatisfied, and critical. Teven (2001) pointed out that "teachers who use verbally aggressive messages (e.g., character attacks, competence attacks, background attacks, physical appearance attacks, malediction, ridicule, threats, swearing, nonverbal emblems) are perceived as being less competent and caring" (p. 41).

Garza, Ryser, and Lee (2010) used a mixed methods approach to expand on the notion of caring by identifying the most important teacher behaviors secondary students

perceived as caring. Their research was conducted in a large suburban high school in the southern part of the United States with a population of more than 50% Latino students (54% Latino, 42% White, and 4% African –American). Students in this study completed a survey rating 28 caring behaviors by importance. The top five ranked teacher behaviors that conveyed caring were: (1) prepares me for tests (89%), (2) answers my questions with respect (87%), (2) makes sure I understand (87%), (3) listens to me whenever I talk (86%), (3) is willing to help me when I need it (86%), (4) responds with a positive tone when I ask for help (85%), (4) is available whenever I need help on something (85%), and (5) likes helping me when I do not understand something (82%). The two themes that are glaring from these results are academic support and respect.

### **Effects of Teachers' Caring Behaviors**

Positive effects from teachers' caring behaviors are evident throughout the literature. Caring teachers have the potential to encourage students to be ambitious and remain engaged (Averill, 2012; Garza, 2009; Gregory & Ripski, 2008; Knestling, 2008; Rivera-McCutchen, 2012; Garza et al., 2010), enhance a sense of belonging (Strong, 2007; Watson et al., 2010), build trust (Shiller, 2009), and develop learning-focused teacher-student relationships (Gay, 2010; Hackenberg, 2010; Shiller, 2009). Caring teacher-student relationships appear to contribute to reducing students' negative feelings about school (Gregory & Ripski, 2008), motivating students to stay in school (Garza, 2009; Knestling, 2008), and supporting students to achieve high standards (Averill, 2012; Barile, 2012; Murray, 2011; Perez, 2000; Rich, 2006; Rivera-McCutchen, 2012), specifically in writing (Rivera-McCutchen, 2012) and math (Averill, 2012). When

students perceive that their teachers care about who they are as people, their academic performances and behavior improve (Garza, 2009; Noddings, 2003; Perez, 2000).

Garza (2009) reported that teachers who created a sense of community, built respectful relationships, and validated a student's self-worth were perceived as caring, effective teachers who were likely to affect students' dispositions in the classroom and their motivation to engage in the educational process. In turn, positive classroom social environments evolved, creating a climate in which students cooperated with teachers and peers to reach maximum potential. He also proposed that understanding students' distinct perspectives could lead to culturally responsive caring that provides equitable classrooms to improve learning experiences for all students, particularly those who are at risk and experiencing more failure than success. Averill's (2012) results strengthened Garza's by offering that caring teachers recognize students' needs and utilize suitable tools to maximize equitable access to learning and achievement.

Noddings (2005, 2012) argued that schools could not achieve academic success without connecting with and caring for their students. When students know their teachers care for them and are genuinely interested in their well-being, they commit to the learning process (Noblit, 1995). Teachers earned greater respect from students by displaying empathy, understanding, and responsiveness. When these connections were made, students were motivated to demonstrate their ability to perform to levels that met their teachers' expectations (McCroskey, 1992; Noddings, 2012).

Perez (2000) noted that a caring demeanor was critical to encourage students' commitment to school and their engagement in learning, especially for culturally diverse, at-risk of failing, or disengaged students. Perez concluded by saying, "the care,

understanding, and sensitivity teachers show toward these students may, in the final analysis, be the most important influence on student academic performance" (p. 105). Until our children believe that they themselves are cared for and learn to care for others, our children will not achieve adequate academic achievement (Noddings, 1995, 2012). Caring teachers' behaviors have residual effects on students that last throughout adulthood (Uitto & Syrjälä, 2008).

### **Teacher-Student Relationships**

Teven (2007) contended that "caring is a major component of teaching which involves a personal relationship with one's students" (p. 383). Teacher-caring behaviors facilitate teacher-student relationships, which help sync teaching and learning (Deiro, 2003; Garrett, Barr, & Rothman, 2009). Cultivating "caring teacher-student relationships can be a strong mechanism for guiding and supporting students' social-emotional, behavioral, and academic growth" (Mihalas et al, 2009, p. 110). High-quality interpersonal relationships have positive effects on students' academic motivation, engagement, and achievements (Lee, 2012; Malik & Ain, 2012; Martin & Dowson, 2009). Many subscribe to the belief that teachers' care for their students is central for developing learning-focused teacher- student relations (Averill, 2012; Gay, 2010; Hackenberg, 2010; Noddings, 2005). A deeper understanding of literature regarding caring teacher-student relationships can potentially have a positive impact on both practitioners and applied researchers interested in improving student educational experiences as a whole (Mihalas et al., 2009).

There is a surfeit of research showing the value students place on a teacher's ability to successfully develop interpersonal relationships with their students (Cassidy &

Bates, 2005; Garrett, Barr, & Rothman, 2009; Garza, Ryser, & Lee, 2010; Noblit, 1995; Noddings, 2003; Shiller, 2009; Teven, 2001; Wubbels et al., 1997). These interpersonal relations create opportunities for learning to occur (Noblit, 1995). Yet for these behaviors to be beneficial in establishing and maintaining relationships, the behaviors must be acknowledged as caring by students (Noddings, 2005).

Students linked caring to reciprocal dialogue, which requires active listening that implies “respect and empowerment” (Alder, 2002, p. 263). Deiro (2003) stated that reciprocity is central to teacher-student relations. He advocated “teachers who believe that students have reciprocal rights use their power respectfully and ethically” (Deiro, 2003, p. 61).

Shiller (2009) examined a recent school reform called the New Century Schools Initiative (NCSI) implemented to transform the public schools in New York City’s poorest neighborhoods. To address abysmal graduation rates, which averaged 50%, New York City took an innovative approach by phasing out large high schools by transitioning to new, smaller schools. The basic reform strategy entailed creating environments that fostered teacher-student relationships in an attempt to strengthen academic support for all students, thereby leading to improved academic achievement. Unfortunately, NCSI did not define what teacher-student relationships should look like nor did they offer professional development to teachers in relationship building. Instead, training and support were left up to individual schools.

Shiller used qualitative methods to examine how teacher-student relationships were established as well as the quality in three of the new, small schools. The schools were purposefully chosen because they had all shown improved student academic

achievement while actively implementing a theory of change based on the development of teacher-student relationships.

Findings revealed significant differences in the quality of teacher-student relationships both within and among the schools. Some similarities emerged from the students' voices from all three schools. The evidence indicated that students felt cared for namely because of the safety and policies of the small school, not from building reciprocal relationships with their teachers. Despite the attempts to cultivate relationships through an advisory system, teachers engaged in forms of care that valued students' compliance to directives and effort in academics rather than authentic caring relationships. Factors such as lack of training, clear roles, and time affected implementation. Some teachers did not know how to form relationships with their students and others did not feel comfortable acting as an advisor.

Although one of the schools had their struggles, they were the most successful at building teacher-student relationships through their advisory system. They offered ongoing youth training for their teachers, concentrated on engaging rather than punishing students with discipline issues, and had men of color facilitate conversations with male students about their struggles. Principal and staff believed that building relationships with their students was central to their school culture and teaching practices. Many teachers saw themselves as role models. Often times, teachers became a primary adult agent, placing them in powerful positions to influence how students perceive and deal with life dilemmas and choices (Mihalas et al., 2009). The school as a whole acknowledged and addressed barriers their students brought with them such as poverty and fragmented

families, while maintaining high expectations. Students reported sincere gratitude for the teachers who held high standards for them and helped them achieve those standards.

By far, cultural mismatch appeared to have the largest impact on teachers' abilities to effectively build relationships with their students. Because they did not understand their students and did not get to know them for whom they were, teachers exhibited attitudes that suggested they rejected their students' cultural norms and values. Shiller's (2009) findings clearly revealed that it takes more than creating small schools as a change agent when attempting to build relationships and engage in authentic forms of care. The obstacles that prevented the successful building of relations were embedded in the teachers' and administrators' cultural values and beliefs. Ongoing training and support should be incorporated into initiatives to ensure teachers know their roles and are prepared for the endeavor. Learning cultural responsive strategies will help teachers understand and appreciate the cultural differences between them and their students. To engage in authentic caring relationships, teachers will need to shift their roles as educators from only imparting knowledge to include social and emotional education as well as academic (Mihalas et al., 2009). Only then will teachers be able to move away from viewing their students through the deficit model. Implementing culturally responsive teaching practices that build social capital, trust, and reciprocal relationships with their students will pave the way for developing a connection between community, home, and school.

There are multiple benefits of teachers investing efforts to build teacher-student relationships. For instance, teachers who invest efforts into getting to know their students and appreciate their students' life experiences are more than likely successful at engaging

in authentic, caring relationships with their students. Understanding students for who they are helps build respect, appreciation, and compassion, which all shape how a teacher responds to a student. Gaining a deeper understanding of their students' lives outside of school can also provide teachers relevant information that can be used to adapt curriculum to reflect culturally responsive practices (Mihalas et al., 2009).

### **Culturally Responsive Teaching**

Gay (2002) defines culturally responsive teaching as “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (p. 106). Through a caring and culturally relevant education process, equal treatment and access can foster high academic achievement for all students regardless of their race, class, ethnicity, language, gender, and culture (Noddings, 1988; Olsson, 2009). Authentic caring takes into account students' communities and families (Shiller, 2009). This is especially important for teachers who serve students of color to ensure that their students feel part of the school community (Garza, 2009; Olsson, 2009; Shiller, 2009). Culturally responsive teaching incorporates powerful practices that help establish respect for cultural differences by embedding students' cultures into the curriculum to ensure that students feel their teachers understand and respect them (Shiller, 2009; Sinha & Thornburg, 2012).

In most cases, teachers in the Shiller (2009) study who actively engaged in culturally responsive teaching were teachers of color. Although they did not identify their practices as culturally relevant, they wove their students' cultures into the curriculum by obtaining information about ethnic groups represented in the classroom to cultivate engagement. They did not view their students through the deficit model lens using



remediation instruction practices. Instead, they stimulated learning by acknowledging their students' abilities and encouraging their performance, all of which are culturally responsive best practices (Gay, 2010).

Cultural caring involves more than using cultural scaffolding to adapt the curriculum or using students' own cultures and experiences to enrich their educational experiences. It takes teachers who care so much about their diverse students' academic achievement that they expect nothing less than high-level performance from them and do everything in their power to help them reach their potential (Gay, 2010; Shiller, 2009).

How one understands students' needs shapes one's goals to address those needs, whether consciously or not (Cohen & Hamilton, 2009). Teachers practicing culturally responsive strategies find ways to treat their students justly, fairly, and equitably to increase achievement and self-efficacy (Lin, 2001). On the other hand, teachers who are not conscious about how their own cultural identities and ideological commitments shape their teaching can sustain classroom inequities (Parsons, 2005). If the classroom climate is based on the ethic of care, a platform will enable teachers to question, challenge, and adjust their beliefs, resulting in practices that provide all students an equal, quality educational experience (Parsons, 2005).

### **Higher Self-Efficacy**

Teachers rely primarily on their talents and self-efficacy to create classroom climates that support teaching and learning (Bandura, 1995). Caring teachers provide support to enhance student achievement; these experiences increase teachers' satisfaction with teaching and commitment to the profession (Collier, 2005). High teacher efficacy is perhaps the key to teacher effectiveness, which in turn affects student achievement

(Collier, 2005). The influence of caring can motivate teachers to be life-long learners - continually improving their skills, so they will be better prepared to meet the needs of their students (Noblit, 1995). Caring teachers support their students in academic endeavors to ensure that they succeed (Collier, 2005). Bandura (1995) suggested that the most effective way to create self-efficacy is through mastery of experiences; beliefs from their successes influence how people think, feel, and motivate themselves and others.

Bulach, Brown, & Potter (1998) expressed that the awareness of what students perceive to be caring behaviors could have positive effects on student achievement by helping teachers create caring learning communities in which teachers and students can experience success and self-actualization. Teachers who convey genuine caring add “humanness to the learning experiences limiting the cold, authoritative atmosphere that suppresses the authentic learning that enriches everyone” (Story & Butts, 2010, p. 291). Teachers demonstrating authenticity and caring are vital for building a transformative learning environment (Story & Butts, 2010).

### **Implications of Related Literature**

Emphasis placed on relationship building between teacher and student has lasting implications on student achievement (Noblit, 1995; Shiller, 2009). Garza (2009) reported that examining students' perceptions of caring behaviors provided an opportunity for educators to reflect on how their verbal and nonverbal actions and disposition influenced student-learning achievement. Teachers must be cognizant of their personal mores, which influence their views when establishing respect for students. If actions are viewed by their students as caring, connections could perhaps foster the development of meaningful, caring relationships (Mihalas et al., 2009; Shiller, 2009). When teachers are ethnically

unique to their students, perceptions of caring behaviors can often be misaligned (Gay, 2010; Shiller, 2009). Because each ethnic group's point of view is based on their experiences and ethnic background, race and ethnicity must not be overlooked as an important aspect when caring for students (Garza, 2009; Gay, 2010; Shiller, 2009).

Garrett, Barr and Forsbach-Rothman (2007) shared that teachers could use the mentioned behaviors to examine their own practices to determine if they indeed exhibit culturally responsive caring in their classrooms. Including students' voices could serve as a springboard to shape content in teacher education courses and in-service professional development courses. Concrete examples of what students view as the critical components of fostering relationships and a sense of belonging could only enhance their teachers' pedagogical knowledge and understanding about how to best reach their students' needs. Without the insight of students, the education puzzle will remain unsolved by teachers remaining solely focused on student compliance, rather than building relationships to form productive partnerships (Shiller, 2009).

### **Summary**

An extensive review of the literature from a continuum of both national and international studies shows consistencies related to teacher-caring behaviors as well as some glaring gaps. Repeatedly, studies reveal positive impacts of a caring teacher. It is obvious that positive academic and behavioral outcomes result when students perceive that their teachers genuinely care for them. Characteristics such as respectful, trusting, honest, as well as strict, fair, and kind are used to describe a caring teacher. What appears to be missing from the literature is the comparison of teacher-student perceptions of caring-teacher behaviors, specifically different ethnic groups at the high school level

(Newberry, 2010; Roorda, Kim & Schallert, 2011; Koomen et al., 2012; Uitto & Syrjälä, 2008; Williams et al., 2012). Reviewed articles suggested further research is needed for teachers to understand how to develop and maintain caring, reciprocal relationships with their students (Newberry, 2010; Shiller, 2009). Shiller recommended initiating scholarly conversations between faculty members as a prerequisite of teacher-student relationships. Involving students as co-learners and leaders will also support the development and sustainability of the increasingly complex capacities of improving teaching and learning (Cohen & Hamilton, 2009). A deeper understanding of literature on caring teacher-student relationships has an impact on both practitioners and applied researchers interested in improving students' educational experiences (Mihalas et al., 2009).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study was a continuum of my previous research using a quantitative method in the spring of 2011, when I investigated whether or not there was a significant difference between teachers' and students' perceptions of teachers' caring behaviors. Findings revealed that there was a significant difference ( $p < .05$ ), validating the belief that while teachers may think their practices reflect caring, their students may perceive their behavior quite differently (Garza, 2009; King & Chan, 2011).

The humanistic nature of the topic and my research questions drove my decision to use a mixed methodology for data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2009). The study used Noddings' Care Theory as the framework to investigate teachers' and students' perceptions of caring-teacher behaviors. The purpose is to provide educators, teacher educators, and policy makers with a comprehensive level of awareness of what teachers and students perceive to be caring behaviors. The descriptive findings will be beneficial in developing teacher education courses and in-service professional development, as well as making necessary adjustments in classroom practices to create a school climate more conducive to teaching and learning by effectively building teacher-student relationships.

## Research Questions

The major guiding question is:

What do high school teachers and students perceive to be teacher-caring behaviors?

To expound on this area for greater insight, the following sub-questions will also be investigated:

1. What do teachers perceive to be behaviors of a caring teacher?
2. What do students perceive to be behaviors of a caring teacher?
3. Do students perceive teacher-caring behaviors differently from teachers?
4. Does race/ethnicity make a significant difference in students' perceptions of teacher-caring behaviors?
5. Does gender make a significant difference in students' perceptions of teacher-caring behaviors?
6. Do students with disabilities perceive teacher-caring behaviors differently from students without disabilities?
7. Do teacher educational qualifications/degree and years of experience make any significant difference in teachers' perceptions of teacher-caring behaviors?
8. How do teachers show students they care?
9. How do students respond to teachers they perceive as caring?

## Research Design

The research design encompassed a concurrent mixed methods approach as the strategy of inquiry. An advantage of this model was that it allowed both quantitative and qualitative data to be collected simultaneously. Mixed methods were utilized at the data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation stages with an emphasis on the quantitative data. Utilizing this approach afforded strengths that counteracted the weaknesses of individual methods. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) cited Greene's definition of mixed methodology as multiple ways of seeing, hearing, and making sense of everyday life.

This complex research design was necessary to best examine the abstract nature of perceptions and capture the essence of caring behaviors. Noddings (2002) stated that the "position or attitude of caring activates a complex structure of memories, feelings, and capacities" (p. 8). Using a mixed methodology allowed me to examine a broader range of research questions to discover both patterns (quantitative) and themes (qualitative) that yielded rich descriptive results. Findings contributed a detailed view that resulted in a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' and students' perceptions of teachers' caring behaviors than previous studies that used exclusively one approach (Creswell, 2009). This research was not intended to offer a set of knowledge claims or rules but rather as an investigation to examine and describe behaviors from alternative perspectives (Noddings, 2002).

## **Benefits of Mixed Methodology**

Using mixed methodology allows researchers to rely on more than one data source (Creswell, 2009). The benefits of using a quantitative approach are described by Creswell (2009) as research that provides a numeric description of "trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" (p. 12). On the other hand, Merriam (2009) explained that qualitative inquiry uses richly descriptive words to convey, "how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 13). The qualitative analysis afforded high school teachers and students the opportunity to have a voice, which is scarce in the current literature (Alder, 2002).

Quantitative methods brought objective data to the study, which minimizes the shortcomings and biases or "subjectivities" qualitative methods may have on the study. Nevertheless, qualitative data allowed me to interpret the data in an inductive manner building on concepts that quantitative data did not yield (Merriam, 2009). Using mixed methods was a practical means for gathering data to answer my research questions thoroughly. This collaborative approach offered me the freedom to use all methods possible to seek multiple perspectives.

## **Variables**

The dependent variables in this study are the teachers' perceptions and students' perceptions of caring behaviors as teachers. The independent variables are student race/ethnicity, gender, exceptionality (students with and without disabilities), as well as teacher educational background (degree) and years of teaching experience.



## **Context and Participants**

### **Setting**

This mixed methods study was conducted at a diverse public high school located 20 miles west of Atlanta, Georgia. This was the same setting as the pilot and original quantitative studies conducted in 2011 (King & Chan, 2011), as well as a follow-up qualitative study in the fall of 2012. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the school, teachers, and students.

In the fall of 2012, Huey High launched its new Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) program as the change agent for the Transformation Reform Model implemented as part of the School Improvement Grant (SIG). The hands-on, project-based program engages students on multiple levels, exposes them to areas of study that have not previously been available, and provides them with a foundation and proven path to college and career success. Courses offered through the program allow students the opportunity to apply what they are learning in traditional math and science classes to authentic engineering, technology, and biomedical science-related projects. Teachers have participated in multiple professional development trainings over the past two years to increase effectiveness of teaching and learning to support the school's goals of retaining teacher leadership capacity and highly qualified teachers.

### **Students**

For the 2012-13 academic year, Huey High's enrollment was approximately 1,500 students from ninth to 12<sup>th</sup> grades. The gender breakdown of the student body was as follows: for ninth graders, 216 (41%) females and 304 (59%) males; for 10<sup>th</sup> graders, 157 (47%) females and 174 (53%) males; for 11th graders, 138 (44%) females and 175 (56%)

males; and for 12<sup>th</sup> graders, 188 (50%) females and 186 (50%) males. Students with disabilities make up 11% (N-163) of the student body. The diverse population is reflected by the ethnicity/race make-up: 52% African American; 25% White; 16% Latino; 4% Multi-Racial; and 2% other.

### **Graduation/dropout rates and behavioral referrals.**

The graduation rate for the 2010-11 school year was 62.8%. This rate was significantly lower than the previous years', which was 75% in 2009-10 and 74% in 2008-09. Over time, the Asian subgroup has had a higher percent of students graduating, with the Multi-Racial subgroup having the second highest.

The dropout rate for the 2010-11 school year was 3.4%, which shows an increase since the 2008-2009 school year. Over time, White students have had the highest dropout rate at 4.2% in 2010-11 than other subgroups, but Hispanic students make up the second highest group who dropped out at 3.7% that same year.

As for discipline, the 2011-12 school data indicated there were 3,716 student discipline referrals. Consequences consisted of a combination of disciplinary actions, which included before and after school detention, in-school suspension (2,740 days), and out of school suspension (1,794).

### **Staff**

For the 2012-13 school year, the high school's staff members were comprised of 111 certified and 44 classified members. Certified staff members consist of administrators, teachers, counselors, media specialists, graduation coach, academic coaches, social workers, and a School Improvement Specialist. Their degrees range from

bachelors to doctorates: 44 bachelors, 41 masters, 20 specialists, and six doctorates. Classified personnel include paraprofessionals, clerical, lunchroom workers, custodial staff and SIG support staff. Huey High also has two full-time sheriff deputies and a part-time probation officer.

### **Overview of School Climate**

Results from the interviews/surveys conducted during the 2010 Georgia Assessment of Performance on School Standards (GAPSS) and in preparation of the SIG application revealed that parents, teachers, and students wanted the school to have a more caring climate. It was expressed that some faculty members negatively confront students when addressing and redirecting inappropriate behaviors. Data based on observations reflected many students refusing to comply with teachers' requests when trying to enforce school policies such as no hats, pants must be worn at waist, shirt must remain tucked in, or no electronic devices. Reports indicated concern about halls being cluttered with students long after the tardy bell. Students were described as being disrespectful, unmotivated, and generally disengaged in the learning process.

Students consistently reported that some teachers did not care about them, their feelings, or their lives away from school. Teachers protested that students did not work as hard as they should in regards to their academics and did not appear to care how well they performed in class. Students, on the other hand, expressed they wished their teachers cared more about them, their feelings, and their desires to achieve. Teachers also voiced that misbehaving students did not seem to care what disciplinary consequences they received from them or administration. It was noted that teachers' comments regarding students were namely negative; very few acknowledged positive outcomes of students.

## **Participants**

To maintain consistency, a purposive sample of students 18 years old or older was used to best mirror the initial study, which consisted of 48 students. For the current study, 178 students met the sample criteria and volunteered to participate. Students reported their race/ethnicity and gender on the demographic section of the survey. The student sample consisted of 52% female and 48% male. Participants were asked to select one racial/ethnic category. The self-identified groups were 53% African American, 13% Latino, 22% White, 3% Asian, and 9% other, which accurately represents the diverse racial/ethnic make-up of the school. I used the system-wide student database to determine that 7% (N=12) of the students participating were being served in special education for disabilities. Although they had differing expectationalities (five Specific Learning Disabilities, three Other Health Impaired, two Mildly Intellectually Impaired, one Emotional Behavioral Disabilities, and one Speech Language Impaired), all but two were in co-taught, senior literature, general education classrooms with both a special education and a general education teacher. The expectations were one student with a Speech Language Impairment and one with a Specific Learning Disability, who were both in a senior literature classroom with only a general education teacher. None of the students with disabilities was among the 29% of the participants taking Advanced Placement senior literature classes. Over 75% of the student participants had attended Huey High for all four years of their high school careers (see Table 1).

To obtain data necessary to investigate teacher perceptions, only teachers were asked to complete the survey for the study. The teacher sample size consisted of 41 teachers (78% female and 22% male), which was comparable to the first study (N= 38).

Despite the multiple attempts and additional incentives to increase participation, efforts resulted in a 37% return rate. The demographic section of the survey collected information pertaining to the independent variables necessary to answer the research questions relating to the teacher sample. The self-identified teacher race/ethnic groups were 85% White and 15 % African American. Teachers' education levels (degrees) were as follows: 34% BS/BA, 41% Masters, 20% Specialist, and 5% Doctorate. Almost a quarter of the teachers who responded to the survey had been teaching for five years or less. The breakdown of the total years of teaching experience for the teacher sample was 22% 0-5 years, 39% 6-10 years 12% 11-15 years, 12% 16-20 years, and 15% 21+ years (see Table 2).

## **Instrument**

### **Quantitative component**

As Creswell (2009) explained, a quantitative approach provides a numeric description of "trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" (p. 12). For this study, a survey appeared to be the most efficient means to collect data. To further investigate high school teachers' and students' perceptions of teacher behaviors that convey caring, participants were asked to respond to an existing survey.

This Likert-type scale survey was originally used by Bulach et al. (1998). With permission, it was slightly modified by King and Chan (2011). Questions were reworded to better examine caring behaviors of teachers in general rather than caring behaviors of a specific teacher. One question was eliminated due to ambiguity, and questions were grouped into sub-themes to create new dimensions of interpretation.

The 22-item survey, entitled "A Survey of The Behavioral Characteristics of a Caring Teacher," consists of a teacher version (Appendix E) and a student version (Appendix F). The questions of both versions are the same with the exception of minor variations in wording to suit the particular audience being surveyed. The four sub-themes are: Classroom Management, Academic Support, Interpersonal Relationships, and Sense of Respect and Trust. The scale ranges from 1 (least important) to 5 (most important).

Validity of the instrument was established during the pilot study before the initial research was conducted. The survey was examined by a panel of five experts in the areas of research, inclusive education, and leadership. Suggested revisions in the areas of content, language and format were made before pilot testing. Instrument's reliability was tested for internal consistency of the scales using the Cronbach alpha statistics. The alphas for the teacher survey and the student survey were .8 and .76 respectively.

### **Qualitative component**

Open-ended questions were added to the existing survey to prompt responses to answer the research questions inquiring about behaviors of a caring teacher. Questions focus on individual meaning of this humanistic topic (Creswell, 2009). Allowing the teachers and students an opportunity to have a voice provided personalized data that generated richer findings. The essence of caring emerged through words, which strengthened the quantitative findings. Although the survey was used to elicit responses for data collection, I, as the researcher, was the primary instrument for gathering, analyzing and interpreting the data (Merriam, 2009). In this role, I had the advantage to be able to take into account the context of the research setting, yet this did not come without responsibility. At all times, I had to remain cognizant of my beliefs, values, and

experiences that created the lens through which I interpreted the school climate and participants' responses.

### **Data Collection and Management**

I assumed sole accountability for administering the surveys. After receiving university and county IRB clearance, I started the two-week administration process. Students were asked to complete the survey as a warm-up activity in their senior literature class. Before starting, the purpose of the study and the survey directions were explained. Student participants were informed by a previously approved cover letter that they had to be 18 years of age or older to participate, participation was strictly voluntary, and there would be no adverse effects for electing not to participate in the study. To ensure confidentiality, only pseudonyms were used when reporting findings.

Because the data collection occurred during the last two weeks of school, I did not have the opportunity to address the faculty as a whole. I relied on a mass email and one-on-one interactions. Surveys accompanied by a letter of explanation and a raffle ticket for a chance to win one out of four \$25 cash prizes were placed in each teacher's mailbox. To increase likelihood of participation, I sent a mass email explaining the intent, instructions, and incentive for taking the survey. Over the two-week collection period, I sent out two more reminder emails and spoke to many teachers one-on-one.

I secured all paper and digital data at all times. Completed surveys were stored in a locked filing cabinet at my personal residence. Digital data were analyzed and saved on my personal computer, which is password protected. To minimize the chance of losing invaluable data, all digital data were backed-up using a portable flash drive that was

stored with the paper data. Digital data were not organized, analyzed, or stored on a public network cloud at any time.

### **Analyzing Quantitative and Qualitative Data**

The survey was cross-sectional and data were analyzed using statistical procedures to provide sufficient evidence for examining the relationships among variables. Demographic information of each participant was included to answer the questions involving the independent variables. To examine the various relationships among the variables, several major statistical analysis procedures were configured by using the IBM SPSS Statistics software program.

In chapter four, findings and demographic information of participating teachers and students are displayed by descriptive statistics; responses are presented by frequencies, means, and standard deviations. Next, an independent samples *t*-test was used to calculate and compare the teachers' and students' responses related to their perceptions of teachers' caring behaviors. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if ethnic grouping, gender, or exceptionality (students with and without disabilities) caused a difference in students' perceptions of caring behaviors of teachers. The same analysis was used to determine if background or years of experience influenced teachers' perceptions.

Multiple steps were necessary to analyze the open-ended questions. During the pre-interpretation stage, I reviewed the participant responses to gain a general sense of the text and reflect on its overall meaning. During this initial handling of data, I did not think of codes, patterns, or themes; I simply listened, absorbed, and reflected on their voices. The responses appeared sincere and were moving. Next, as Wolcott (1990)



suggested, I prepared my qualitative data “by identifying the broadest categories imaginable” in relation to my research questions (p. 33). I started with my participants; my first major categories were teachers, male and female students, noting race/ethnicity, and whether they were students with or without disabilities in case these details deemed valuable in the refinement stage. As recommended by Creswell (2009), I then organized the data into units before starting the coding process. Microsoft Word processor proved to be an efficient means to transcribe the segmented units. While combing through their insightful perceptions, patterns started to surface. To assist me in the coding process, I exported my cleaned data units into ATLAS.ti software. Although I interpreted the data for meaning, the data management software assisted in comparing the units to identify recurring regularities to generate conceptual elements called categories. Categories were then reduced to themes that emerged, capturing the essence of teacher-caring behaviors. Lastly, data were reported using thick rich descriptions in Chapter Four (Creswell, 2009). Triangulating the data allowed for interconnection of themes; this was beneficial when interpreting what caring teachers look like and how they affect their students.

### **Research Approach Coordination**

In this section, I have synthesized the research questions, source of data and method of analysis for an in-depth delineation of the strategies used for conducting the research (See Appendix A). Specific sections of the surveys (demographics, Likert scale questions 1-22, and open-ended questions 1 & 2) provided the quantitative and qualitative data necessary to answer all research questions. As stated earlier, MS Word and Excel were used to organize the data, and two different software programs were used to assist in the data analyses process: SPSS for statistical analysis and ATLAS.ti to

manage, extract, compare, and explore the text. As the researcher, I was responsible for interpreting the findings to answer the major question: what do high school teachers and students perceive to be teacher-caring behaviors?

The quantitative section of the survey provided data necessary to analyze research questions 1-7.

Teacher demographic information and answers to survey questions 1-22 were used to answer research question number one: What do teachers perceive to be behaviors of a caring teacher? Student demographic information and answers to survey questions 1-22 were used to answer research question number two: What do students perceive to be behaviors of a caring teacher? Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and/or frequency) were used as the method of analysis for both.

Data from questions 1-22 of the teacher and student surveys were used to answer research question number three: Do students perceive teacher-caring behaviors differently from teachers? A *t*-test was used to compare the differences between the teachers' and students' perceptions.

The student survey, demographic data, and responses to questions 1-22 were used to answer research question number four: Does race/ethnicity make a significant difference in students' perceptions of teacher-caring behaviors? Because this question is addressing a multilevel independent variable, ANOVA was necessary to compare perceptions based on race/ethnicity.

Demographic data and responses from questions 1-22 from the student surveys were used as a source of data to answer research questions five and six: (5) Does gender make a significant difference in students' perceptions of teacher-caring behaviors? and

(6) Do students with disabilities perceive teacher-caring behaviors differently from students without disabilities? An independent *t*-test was calculated to compare the mean scores for both questions.

Information from the demographic section and answers to the survey questions 1-22 from the teacher version was used to answer research question number seven: Do teacher educational qualifications/degree and years of experience make any significant difference in teachers' perceptions of teacher-caring behaviors? ANOVA was used to compare teachers' perceptions based on teacher qualifications (degree) and years of teaching experience.

The open-ended questions on both the teacher and student surveys provided data for research questions eight and nine. Teachers' and students' responses to open-ended question number one were analyzed to answer research question number eight: How do teachers show students they care? Teachers' and students' responses to open-ended question number two were analyzed to answer research question nine: how do students respond to teachers they perceive as caring? Merriam (2009) explained, "data analysis is the process used to answer your research question (s)" and "these answers to your questions are the findings to your study" (p. 176).

### **Limitations**

I, as the researcher, assumed the responsibility of providing enough accurate detailed results so readers can compare results in relation to their own contexts (Knestling, 2008). Yet like all research, this study has limitations that has been disclosed to the reader. The generalizability of the findings from this study is limited to comparable

institutions with a similar teacher-student population. However, results from Williams' et al. (2012) research indicated that suburban and rural secondary students from diverse settings shared similar opinions.

The study was limited to a purposive sample of a high school population. Due to the restricted sample only reflecting perceptions at this specific school, results may not be a true representation of different grades, regions, or performance levels. Another limitation of this study is that the primary source of data was generated by participants completing self-reporting surveys. Since participation was strictly voluntary, one must presume that participants reflectively completed the survey in its entirety. Only then can these results be a true representation of the sample, generating reliable data to answer the research questions accurately.

When identifying potential limitations, elements of my role as researcher were also taken into account. Being at Huey High for the past four years has given me ample time to interact with the teachers as well as the students. I consider myself a member of the very culture I investigated. Although having the opportunity to observe behaviors and experience the climate of the school on a day-to-day basis was ideal for applied research; familiarity has undeniably altered my lens. I remained acutely conscious of my biases that may have been lying dormant, so they did not subconsciously influence my interpretations of the outcomes. As Noddings (2010) points out, "the unconscious influence may be greater than any conscious choice" (147).

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FINDINGS**

Chapter four displays the results from the teachers' and students' surveys. As Wolcott (1990) stated, "In writing, results are what count; the end justifies the means" (p. 37). The quantitative and qualitative data were then interpreted to answer the overarching research question, "What do high school teachers and students perceive to be teacher-caring behaviors?" The sub-questions related to the independent variables were also answered by the results of different analyses.

#### **Analysis of Quantitative Data**

Descriptive statistics indicated that 41 teachers responded to the 22-item Likert-type scale section of the survey. On a five-point scale, with five being the highest, results showed perceptions of what teachers believed to be the most significant items in regards to identifying teacher-caring behaviors. Mean scores indicated that teachers rated each item above average, resulting in their overall rating being considerably higher than average ( $m = 4.319$ ,  $sd = 0.584$ ). The 22 items were organized into four subscales for reporting purposes: Classroom Management, Academic Support, Interpersonal Relationships, and Respect/Trust. Subscale scores in descending order were as follows: Classroom Management ( $m = 4.576$ ,  $sd = 0.400$ ), Interpersonal Relationships ( $m = 4.302$ ,

sd = 1.554), Respect/Trust (m = 4.244, sd = 0.559), and Academic Support (m = 4.153, sd = 0.535) (see Table 3).

Out of the 22 items, the top five behaviors ranked by teachers as caring behaviors were:

1. Call students by their names (m = 4.850, sd = 0.362).
2. Create an environment where students feel safe (m = 4.805, sd = 0.459).
3. Provide student with “treats” and “goodies” on special occasions (m = 4.756, sd = 7.965).
4. Hold high expectations for student achievement (m = 4.659, sd = 0.617).
5. Are positive with students (m = 4.634, sd = 0.536).

The bottom five ranked behaviors perceived by teachers as caring were:

1. Inform parents about their student’s progress (m = 4.049, sd = 0.835).
2. Ask students to help with classroom tasks (m = 3.829, sd = 0.946).
3. Give students hints when they do not understand or respond (m = 3.829, sd = 1.046).
4. Display students’ work (m = 3.781, sd = 0.988).
5. Joke around with students (m = 3.634, sd = 1.199).

Teachers’ responses reported by individual items by descending rank revealed behaviors that they perceived as caring-teacher behaviors (see Table 4).

Descriptive statistics for the 178 student participants computed an overall average score of 3.918 (sd = 0.681), which was significantly lower than the teachers’ overall mean. Results from the students’ subscale ratings in descending order were as follows: Classroom Management (m = 4.084, sd = 0.811), Academics (m = 3.939, sd = 0.740),

Respect/Trust ( $m = 3.830$ ,  $sd = 0.681$ ), and Interpersonal Relationships ( $m = 3.819$ ,  $sd = 0.800$ ) (See Table 5).

The five top ranked items perceived by students as teacher-caring behaviors were:

1. Call students by their names ( $m = 4.446$ ,  $sd = 0.865$ ).
2. Create an environment where students feel safe ( $m = 4.294$ ,  $sd = 0.919$ ).
3. Hold high expectations for student achievement ( $m = 4.282$ ,  $sd = 0.866$ ).
4. Recognize students for academic achievement ( $m = 4.242$ ,  $sd = 0.958$ ).
5. Make time for students before and after school ( $m = 4.225$ ,  $sd = 1.017$ ).

The bottom five ranked items perceived by students as teacher-caring behaviors were:

1. Inform parents about their student's progress ( $m = 3.599$ ,  $sd = 1.226$ ).
2. Display students' work ( $m = 3.567$ ,  $sd = 1.207$ ).
3. Provide students with "treats" and "goodies" on special occasions ( $m = 3.522$ ,  $sd = 1.362$ ).
4. Ask students to help with classroom tasks ( $m = 3.455$ ,  $sd = 1.222$ ).
5. Take a personal interest in what students do outside their class ( $m = 3.433$ ,  $sd = 1.335$ ).

Students' data organized by individual items uncovered what they perceived as caring-teacher behaviors by degree of importance (see Table 6).

When comparing the teachers' and students' data, the teachers generally rated items higher, which was indicated by their overall mean ( $m = 4.319$ ) being higher than the students' overall mean ( $m = 3.918$ ) (see Table 7). An independent sample t-test was calculated comparing the mean scores of the teachers and students, which revealed a

significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) in four of the five subscales (see Table 8): Classroom Management:  $t(3.772)$ ,  $p = .000$ , Academic Support:  $t(1.770)$ ,  $p = .078$ , Interpersonal Relationships:  $t(2.836)$ ,  $p = .005$ , Respect / Trust:  $t(2.835)$ ,  $p = .005$ , and Overall Total:  $t(3.488)$ ,  $p = .001$ ) (see Table 9).

The students' means within race/ethnic groups were reported by subscales using descriptive statistics (see Table 10). Results indicated that overall mean scores per student race/ethnic group were as follows: African American ( $n = 94$ ,  $m = 3.955$ ), Latino ( $n = 23$ ,  $m = 3.806$ ), White ( $n = 40$ ,  $m = 3.784$ ), Asian ( $n = 5$ ,  $m = 3.667$ ), and Other ( $n = 16$ ,  $m = 3.918$ ). Comparisons of student perceptions by race/ethnic groups were calculated using one-way ANOVA and reported by subscales: Classroom Management ( $p = .639$ ), Academic Support ( $p = .222$ ), Interpersonal Relationships ( $p = .076$ ), Respect / Trust ( $p = .153$ ), and Overall Total ( $p = .152$ ) (see Table 11).

Descriptive statistics were used to report student means by gender for each subscale (see Table 12). Data showed that the overall mean for male participants ( $n = 85$ ) was  $3.827$  ( $sd = 0.637$ ), and the overall mean for female participants ( $n = 93$ ) was  $4.001$  ( $sd = .0712$ ). An independent sample t-test comparing students' perceptions based on gender showed the following differences: Classroom Management:  $t(-2.048)$ ,  $p = .042$ , Academic Support:  $t(-.441)$ ,  $p = .660$ , Interpersonal Relationships:  $t(-1.740)$ ,  $p = .084$ , Respect / Trust:  $t(-1.445)$ ,  $p = .150$ , and Overall Total:  $t(-1.715)$ ,  $p = .088$ ) (see Table 13).

Data on students with disabilities and those without disabilities were described by means in terms of exceptionality using descriptive statistics (see Table 14). Results indicated that the overall mean for student participants with disabilities ( $n = 11$ ) was



3.748 (sd = 0.651), and the overall mean for student participants without disabilities (n = 167) was 3.929 (sd = 0.683). An independent sample t-test compared students' perceptions based on exceptionality by subscales: Classroom Management:  $t(816)$ ,  $p = .416$ , Academic Support:  $t(-.173)$ ,  $p = .863$ , Interpersonal Relationships:  $t(1.015)$ ,  $p = .311$ , Respect / Trust:  $t(1.092)$ ,  $p = .276$ , and Overall Total:  $t(.852)$ ,  $p = .395$  (see Table 15).

The overall means for teachers' perceptions based on degree were bachelors (m = 4.939, sd = 0.782), masters (m = 4.337, sd = 0.384), specialists (m = 4.118, sd = 0.545), and doctorates (m = 4.319, sd = 0.584) (see Table 16). When comparing these perceptions using ANOVA, no significant differences were discovered: Classroom Management:  $p = .314$ , Academic Support:  $p = .358$ , Interpersonal Relationships:  $p = .707$ , Respect / Trust:  $p = .922$ , and Overall Total:  $p = .752$  (see Table 17).

Descriptive statistics were also used to compute means and standard deviations for teacher responses in terms of years of experience. Overall totals were 0 – 5 years (m = 4.670, sd = 0.965), 6 – 10 years (m = 4.114, sd = 0.260), 11 – 15 years (m = 4.324, sd = 0.426), 16 – 20 years (m = 4.343, sd = 0.356), and 21 plus years (m = 4.314, sd = 0.655) (see Table 18). No significant differences were determined when comparisons were made applying ANOVA: Classroom Management:  $p = .858$ , Academic Support:  $p = .427$ , Interpersonal Relationships:  $p = .249$ , Respect / Trust:  $p = .689$ , and Overall Total:  $p = .268$  (see Table 19).

## Analysis of Qualitative Data

### Teachers

I elaborated on the question, “How do you show your students you care?” to display not only the findings but also the process that I used to lead me to the outcome. Out of the 41 teachers who completed the survey, 39 represented the voice of teachers by responding to the two open-ended questions. Some teachers, such as Ms. Worthan, responded in the form of brief, concise bullets to describe behaviors they felt expressed caring. Ms. Worthan wrote:

- Learn students names ASAP
- Send reminder text messages when assignments are due
- Talk with them about their grades
- Ask how I can help
- Talk with them about future plans
- Attend events

Ms. Cass also used this approach when answering, by stating that she shows students she cares by:

- Speaking with them, not at them
- Asking their opinion of both class work and the school at large
- Providing cupcakes/cookies on occasions
- Expecting their best and not settling for less

Other teachers responded by using a narrative approach such as Ms. Robins. She wrote:

I show my students I care by taking a personal interest in them. It is important to know background information like which extra-curricular

activities a student is involved in and attend those activities when possible. Remember things about them and ask about their brother or ask how they did on their math test. Most importantly make yourself available to help students academically. Answer questions, be available to stay after school to work with students that need tutoring, explain things more than once, explain things in a different way; these are things a good teacher does.

Mr. Davis elaborated and added an example of making personal sacrifices by saying:

I try to push all students to tap into the potential they have even if they lack the confidence to do it themselves. I make time for students and often miss personal events I had previously scheduled to make time for students. I also try to hold all students to a high standard as far as academic achievement and classroom behavior.

The teachers' responses appeared to be authentic and shared many common elements concerning their perceptions of what constitutes caring-teacher behaviors such as holding students to high standards, interacting with them on a personal basis, and valuing their opinions.

There were 190 original units of segmented behaviors extracted from the answers to question one. Through the analysis process, 34 of the units were discarded due to infrequencies or their irrelevant nature, resulting in 156 units that were coded and categorized. I used Ms. Tiff's answer to demonstrate how units were determined. When answering how she shows students she cares, she said:

I show students how I care through building relations with them. That means calling them by name, getting to know their background,

personality, etc. All students must be treated equally and with respect. I get feedback about what they think and feel about standards.

The behaviors below were extracted from the response as a unit and coded:

- Building relationships (*Interpersonal Relationships*)
- Calling them by name, getting to know their background, personality, etc. (*Interpersonal Relationships*)
- Students must be treated equally (*Respect*)
- Get feedback about what they think (*Respect*)

Therefore, out of the four units of teacher-caring behaviors, two were coded as *Interpersonal Relationships* and two were coded as *Respect*. More examples of the coding process are illustrated in figure 2.

**Figure 2**

**Extracted Units of Caring-Teacher Behaviors and Assigned Codes**

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<b>Units</b>	<b>Codes</b>
Help all students improve	Academics
Personal interest pertaining to outside activities	Personal Relationships
Listening without cutting them off	Respect
Consistent with classroom rules and procedures	Classroom Management
Recognize and praise them	Positive Reinforcement
Positive postcards home to parents	Parental Involvement
I tell them I care	Affirmation
Show up every day with a positive attitude	Positive Attitude

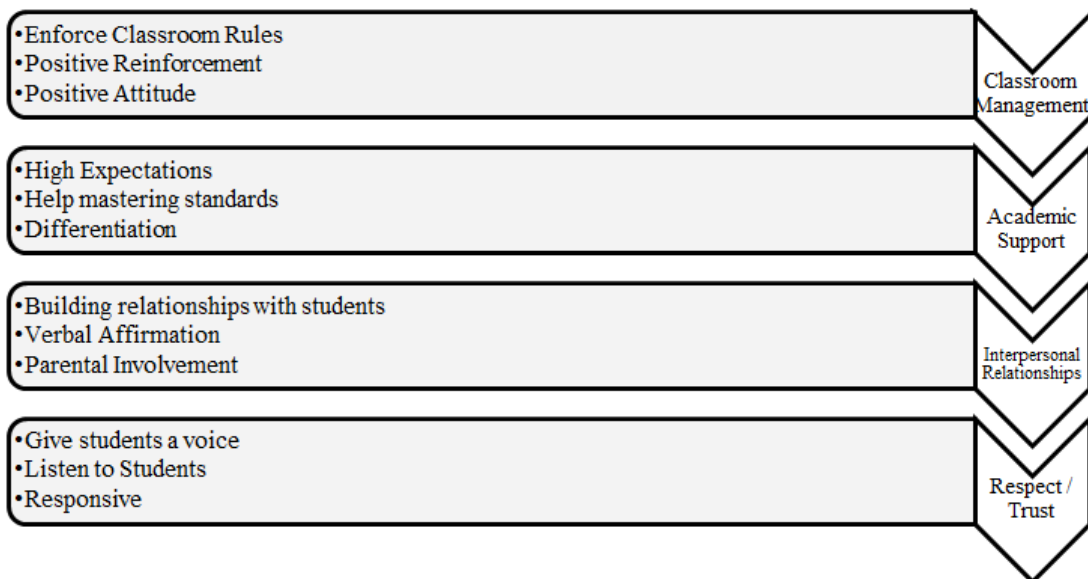
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After initial coding was completed, it was evident that codes could be collapsed to align with the quantitative subscales (Classroom Management, Academics, Interpersonal Relationships, and Respect/Trust). This approach facilitated triangulation by reconciling numeric (quantitative) and text (qualitative) data to integrate both forms to best answer the research questions

(Creswell, Fetters, & Ivankova, 2004). See Figure 3 for the merging of final codes into four themes. The final analysis for the 156 units of teacher-caring behaviors resulting from teachers' responses to the open-ended question number one, "How do teachers show students they care?" was: Classroom Management (f = 24, 15.4%), Academic Support (f = 30, 19.2%), Interpersonal Relationships (f = 68, 43.6%), and Respect/Trust (f = 34, 21.8%). Statistics showed that the category of Interpersonal Relationship had the most behaviors identified by teachers as behaviors they exhibit to show students they care. Classroom Management had the least amount of behaviors classified as teacher-caring behaviors.

**Figure 3**

**Initial Codes to Final Themes for Open-ended Question One on Teacher's Survey**



The second open-ended question on the teacher survey asked, "How do you know that your students recognize your care for them?" Although the same number of responses was analyzed, teachers expressed fewer behaviors they perceived as ways students showed they knew they cared for them, resulting in 126 units of segmented

behaviors. I reduced the codes to the four themes because codes represented students' reactions to teacher-caring behaviors, and I made a slight change in the wording for pragmatic appropriateness: Classroom Climate (n = 8, 8.8%), Academic Related (n = 14, 15.6%), Interpersonal Relationships (n = 54, 60%), and Respect/Trust (n = 14, 15.6%).

Classroom climate was the theme with the least amount of behaviors teachers identified as ways students show they recognize they care for them. One teacher said, "I have very few discipline problems." Another teacher commented that students "respond positively to feedback and behavior corrections" Almost twice as many behavior units were assigned to the Academic and Respect themes. Teachers conveyed how students were more willing to ask for help and worked harder for them when they perceived their teacher as caring. One teacher expressed that "they put more efforts in completing assigned tasks to impress me." Most of the behaviors described by teachers that formed the Respect/Trust Theme directly specified respect in their response such as "they show me respect" or "they are respectful." Others talked about students' tone of voice, which was linked to respect. One said some students "give assistance when other students are disrespectful" during class. Again, the Interpersonal Relationships theme was the most mentioned indicator in which teachers said students showed they recognized their teachers cared for them. Repeatedly, teachers said that students showed they recognized their care by talking to them, hanging out in their room, and sharing personal information with them. Teachers talked about students' kind gestures such as notes or small gifts. One teacher said, "I have students come by and visit although I no longer teach them." These data indicate that the majority of behaviors that teachers pair with teacher-caring

behaviors and students' reciprocal behaviors to caring teachers fall within the Interpersonal Relationships theme.

### **Students**

Only three students out of the 178 who completed the survey chose not to answer the two open-ended questions. The first question was, "How do teachers show you they care?" Out of the 175 completed surveys, 261 units of segmented behaviors were coded to be caring-teacher behaviors perceived by students. Like the teachers, the codes were reduced to mirror the subscales on the quantitative portion of the survey. Results by themes for question one on the student survey were: Classroom Management (f – 46, 17.6%), Academic Support (f – 101, 38.7%), Interpersonal Relationships (f – 86, 33.0%), and Respect/Trust (f – 28, 10.7%).

Academic Support was the top ranked theme for the student participants. Males mentioned academic related behaviors slightly more than females (males: 40.2%, females: 37.6%). Students often conveyed that caring teachers helped them with their work. Within the 261 coded units, a form of the word "help" was mentioned 63 times. Martha shared examples of how some of her teachers showed her they cared. She said, "One let me use her room for any project after school. One teacher tutors me when I need it. One teacher helps me when it's hard for me to understand the material." Students said caring teachers stay after school to help them, care about their grades, and make learning fun. Deon profoundly stated, "They do whatever it takes to make sure the children succeed."

Interpersonal Relationships was the second highest ranked theme for students. Renee voiced that teachers show students they care "By communicating with the students



and developing some kind of relationship.” Many students noted teacher behaviors that appear small but apparently speak volumes such as “ask about my day” or “notice when I’m absent.” Monique stated, “They take time to talk to us about things other than just school stuff. Like if someone is having a bad day and the teacher asks them what’s going on, and they make sure you’re okay.”

Classroom Management and Respect/Trust Themes combined only contained approximately a quarter of the coded teacher-caring behaviors expressed by the students. The Classroom Management category contained teacher behaviors that influence the classroom climate that students equated with caring such as not yelling and rewarding good behavior, and as one student said, “they take their job seriously.” Attributes that were also associated with caring behavior that were coded under Classroom Management described caring teachers as motivating, cooperative, sympathetic, and positive. Destiny explained that teachers show that they care by “creating a working environment, know when it’s time to be serious, actually discipline the students who disturb the classroom.” The Respect/Trust theme consisted of the least amount of coded teacher behaviors that students perceived to show caring. Other than the obvious remarks stating that caring teachers “treat students with respect,” there were also latent ones suggesting that caring teachers “listen and receive feedback well.” Marcus wrote:

It depends on the teacher, but they treat you as an individual and not like a number. When addressing issues or problems, they don’t always group people into a bunch; they give the same level of respect, even if they don’t technically have to, and are fair, but also do what’s in the student’s best interest.

Hannah responded that caring teachers “give all students the same or equal opportunities, never show favoritism.”

The second open-ended question on the student survey was, “How do you show your teachers that you appreciate that they care?” The students’ responses were dissected into 270 units of segmented behaviors they perceived as evidence that they appreciate that their teachers care. Keeping with the four themes, two were modified to best represent the students’ behaviors: Classroom Management was renamed Classroom Climate, and Academic Support was renamed Academic Achievement. Frequency and percentages of the coded units in each theme were: Classroom Climate (f – 43, 15.9%), Academic Achievement (f – 91, 33.7%), Interpersonal Relationships (f – 63, 23.3%), and Respect/Trust (f – 73, 27.0%). The Academic Achievement theme again was weighted heaviest with a third of the coded units aligning with this category, with the Respect/Trust theme ranking right below it. When analyzing the 270 coded units, the words “work(ing)” (f - 42) and “respect(ful)” (f – 49) were the top two meaningful words students used while describing how they show teachers they appreciate their care. Many students commented on how they work harder for teachers who care about them. Tameka said, “Do the best that I can in their class – work as hard as I can.” Another student responded by writing “By trying my best in their class, going home to study and making sure I know their material.” Time-after-time the same response emerged – “I do my work.” One student was more specific and stated, “By performing well enough to meet their standards.” Some said very few words, yet they were powerful. Brittany simply voiced, “I listen, learn, pass.” Michael answered with one word, “Graduate.” Carlos’ response summarized what so many others expressed; he said, “The way I show my

teacher that I appreciate their care is to be very respectful. As in never interrupt, listen to instructions and pass their class.”

### **Answers to Research Questions**

#### 1. What do teachers perceive to be behaviors of a caring teacher?

Quantitative data analysis revealed subscale scores that indicated teachers preferred some groups of behaviors to others. The Classroom Management subscale had the highest average, indicating that teachers are more in favor of the behaviors making up that group. Teachers rated items belonging to the Academic Support subscale lowest. Therefore, it appears that teachers do not perceive items in the Academic Support category as behaviors that show caring as much as the items in the Classroom Management category.

#### 2. What do students perceive to be behaviors of a caring teacher?

Findings presented evidence that the Classroom Management subscale average was also higher among the student participants than the other subscales. The average for the Interpersonal Relationships category was the lowest, yet students' number one ranked item was “Caring teachers call students by their names,” which was in the Interpersonal Relationships category. However when examining individual items, three out of the students' top five rated items that were chosen to describe caring teachers were in the Academic Support category. Further elaboration of the answer will be provided in the discussions of chapter five.

3. Do students perceive teacher-caring behaviors differently from teachers?

Statistics revealed that out of the 41 teachers and 178 students responding to the 22 items of the survey based on a five-point scale, five indicating the most important behavior in regards to a caring teacher, there was a significant difference in teachers' and students' scores. The teachers' rated each caring behavior in general above average ( $m = 4.3$ ). This shows that teachers feel that all of the items are very important behaviors to show students they care for them. Students, on the other hand, scored items significantly lower ( $m = 3.9$ ), showing that students are more selective, only rating specific teacher-caring behaviors as important.

4. Does race/ethnicity make a significant difference in students' perceptions of teacher-caring behaviors?

There were no overall significant differences in student perceptions within race/ethnicity groups, nor were there any significant differences in the scores of the four subscales.

5. Does gender make a significant difference in students' perceptions of teacher-caring behaviors?

Data analysis displayed that females generally scored items slightly higher than males, yet there was no significant difference in the overall findings based on gender. However, when examining each subscale, there was a statistical significant difference in the Classroom Management category. Females as a group scored items in the Classroom Management subcategory higher than males, indicating that females are

more apt to perceive teachers who have control of the classroom and a positive climate as more caring than teachers who do not.

6. Do students with disabilities perceive teacher-caring behaviors differently from students without disabilities?

After comparing the responses representing the perceptions of the 167 students without disabilities to the 11 students with disabilities, it was evident that there were no significant differences in any of the subscales.

7. Do teacher educational qualifications/degree and years of experience make any significant difference in teachers' perceptions of teacher-caring behaviors?

Data were analyzed based on teachers' educational qualifications, with the majority of teachers holding a bachelor's or master's degree. Findings showed that there were no significant differences in their perceptions of teacher-caring behaviors. Teachers' years of experience was also examined. With 40% of the teachers falling into the six to nine years of teaching range, no significant differences were found.

8. How do teachers show students they care?

Based on qualitative data, teachers and students perceived behaviors that show a teacher cares differently. Teachers felt that building interpersonal relationships was central to showing students they care. Almost half ( $f = 43.6\%$ ) of the coded teacher-caring behaviors noted by teachers belonged in the Interpersonal Relationships theme. Teachers shared heart-felt experiences about current and past students in whom they

invested their time, energy, and emotions in efforts to bond with their students on a more personal level. They gave examples that included going to their students' extra-curricular activities or discussing with students what was going on in their lives outside of school.

Students, on the other hand, voiced that teachers show that they care by helping them academically. Interpersonal relationships were also important to students (f = 33.0%), yet the theme with the most student responses was the Academic Support theme (f = 38.7%). Although many of the students wrote how caring teachers took the time to build relationships with them, more of their responses related to academics. Repeatedly, students expressed that caring teachers helped them with their work, saying that they knew a teacher cared when she answered their questions to clarify classroom materials, helped them learn the standard, or stayed after to give them further assistance on their class work.

#### 9. How do students respond to teachers they perceive as caring?

Patterns recognized in the qualitative data revealed teachers' and students' perceptions on how students responded to caring teachers. Their responses reflected their beliefs about what made a teacher caring. Teachers conveyed they perceived that their students recognized their care when they reciprocated the interpersonal relationships they invested in developing. Sixty percent of the total units of segmented behaviors perceived by teachers to be students' reactions to their caring were related to interpersonal relationships. They wrote about students coming by to talk to them or hanging out in their rooms, conversing about topics unrelated to

school. Teachers expressed that they knew students recognized their care because they disclosed information about their private lives to them. They talked about how students asked about their day or inquired about their family.

Akin to the teachers' answers, students' responses appeared to be guided by their beliefs about what constitutes a caring teacher. They communicated that they showed teachers they recognized their care by achieving academically. Students reported frequently that they tried harder in the classes of those teachers who cared for them. Other segmented units coded and placed in the Academic Achievement theme were positive behaviors such as paying attention, engaging in the activities, learning, and doing whatever is necessary to perform well in the classes of the teachers who they perceived as caring.

### **Summary**

Using mixed research methods proved to be an effective means to collect and analyze data necessary to answer each research question thoroughly. The quantitative data that were taken from the Likert scale portion of the survey provided numerical findings to measure the teachers' and students' perceptions pertaining to what they perceived to be caring-teacher behaviors. Supportive qualitative data derived from the open-ended questions afforded a deeper understanding by analyzing both teachers' and students' voices to further explain how teachers demonstrate caring behaviors as well as how students respond to teachers they perceive as caring.

For an accurate representation, both subscale averages and individual items will be used to summarize the quantitative findings. When comparing teachers' and students' perceptions of teacher-caring behaviors, statistical outcomes exhibited a significant difference in all subscales except for Academic Support.

Three out of five individual caring-teacher behaviors noted as important were the same for both teachers and students. The three items teachers and students ranked as highly important as caring-teacher behaviors were call students by their names, create an environment where students feel safe, and hold high expectations for student achievement. The other two items chosen as important caring-teacher behaviors differed. Teachers ranked provide students with "treats" and "goodies" on special occasions and caring teachers are positive with students within their top five. Students, on the other hand, ranked caring teachers recognize students for academic achievement and make time for students before and after school as very important.

Statistical methods were used to analyze quantitative data related to multiple independent variables. Descriptive statistics and comparisons revealed that there were no overall significant differences in student perceptions based on race/ethnicity, gender, or exceptionality. In addition, quantitative results revealed that there were no significant differences in teacher perceptions when compared by teachers' certification or years of experience.

Qualitative data were coded to identify patterns of what teachers and students perceived to be caring teachers' behaviors. Throughout the inquest, themes emerged that aligned with the quantitative portion of the survey. The four major themes used to capture



the essence of how teachers show students they care were: (1) Classroom Management, (2) Academic Support, (3) Interpersonal Relationships, and (4) Respect/Trust.

All four themes were evident throughout the teachers' written responses, yet the Interpersonal Relationships' theme by far overshadowed the others. Examples of interpersonal relationships teachers shared with their students permeated their responses. Their heartfelt text richly described how they connected with their students to show them that they cared. Many teachers wrote that they showed their students they cared by taking a personal interest in them. Repeatedly, teachers mentioned that they talked to their students about their lives outside of school. It was apparent that teachers perceived that teacher-student relationships were key to showing students they care.

When teachers were asked how students showed they recognized their care, teachers' responses explicitly illustrated the importance they put on reciprocal interpersonal relationships. There were surfeit amounts of behaviors related to teacher-student relationships. Teachers told that they knew that students recognized they cared for them because they would carry on conversations with them. Students interacted with their teachers by hanging out in their rooms, asking about their families, or by writing notes.

Themes were more balanced within the students' responses. Although many of the behaviors students used to describe caring teachers fell into the Interpersonal Relationships theme, the most common caring behaviors were related to Academic Support. Students expressed that they perceived teachers who interacted with them on a personal basis as caring. However, it appeared to be more important to students for

teachers to help them achieve academically. Students stated that caring teachers helped them learn the standards, explained materials in different ways to increase understanding, and would do whatever it took to ensure their students succeeded academically.

Students replied that they showed their teachers they recognized their care by working hard in their classes. Again, the Academic theme was the most observable when analyzing the students' data. Students voiced that if they perceived a teacher cared, they would turn in their work. Other students said they would study more, participate in classroom discussions, and remain engaged. Students also expressed ways they would react to caring teachers by forming teacher-student relationships, yet teacher-caring behaviors that fell into the Academic theme were primarily the most important to students.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS**

As supported in early chapters, research provided evidence that teacher-student relationships have a positive effect on students' overall educational experiences (Martin & Dowson, 2009; Noddings, 2012). Some have declared that teacher caring serves as cornerstones for such relationships (Averill, 2012; Noddings, 2012). Noddings (2012) proposed that reciprocity and mutuality were important in relational ethics. She explained that reciprocity was almost exclusively defined by the responses of the cared-for showing recognition of the caring acts of the carer. The response not only confirms the caring interactions, but it also provides building blocks to maintain a continuing, caring relation. However, research focused on describing behaviors that teachers and students perceive to be caring in addition to how students show they recognize their teachers care is scarce (Garza et al, 2009; Williams et al, 2012).

#### **Summarized Research Questions and Answers**

1. What do teachers perceive to be behaviors of a caring teacher?

Based on subscale averages, teachers rated items in the Classroom Management subscale the highest, while rating items belonging to the Academic Support subscale the lowest. Therefore, it appears that teachers perceive that caring teachers exhibit behaviors

that create a safe, positive environment versus behaviors that help students achieve academically.

2. What do students perceive to be behaviors of a caring teacher?

Students' subscale averages indicated that they too rated items in the Classroom Management subscale highest, yet they rated items in the Interpersonal Relationships category the lowest. These averages indicated that students perceive that teachers are caring when they establish a safe, positive classroom environment versus when they interact in efforts to create interpersonal relationships.

3. Do students perceive teacher-caring behaviors differently from teachers?

Statistic measures show that teachers and students perceive teacher-caring behaviors significantly different in all subscales, except in Academic Support. However, when looking at individual items, three out of their top ranked behaviors were the same.

4. Does race/ethnicity make a significant difference in students' perceptions of teacher-caring behaviors?

It does not appear that race/ethnicity influence how students perceive teacher-caring behaviors.

5. Does gender make a significant difference in students' perceptions of teacher-caring behaviors?

It seems that males and females generally perceive teacher-caring behaviors the same, except when it comes to the learning environment. Females rated items in the Classroom Management subscale significantly higher than males.

6. Do students with disabilities perceive teacher-caring behaviors differently from students without disabilities?

It does not appear that students with disabilities taking core content classes in the general education setting perceive teacher-caring behaviors significantly different than students without disabilities.

7. Do teacher educational qualifications/degree and years of experience make any significant difference in teachers' perceptions of teacher-caring behaviors?

Teachers' educational qualifications or years of experience did not appear to affect what they perceived to be teacher-caring behaviors.

8. How do teachers show students they care?

Teachers voiced that they show their students they care by exhibiting behaviors to build interpersonal relationships. However, students expressed that they know teachers care when they help them succeed academically.

9. How do students respond to teachers they perceive as caring?

Teachers communicated that students respond to their caring behaviors by reciprocal interactions. On the other hand, students stated that they worked harder for the teachers they perceived as caring.

### **Relationship of Findings to Previous Literature**

Findings from this study corroborate results from previous research as well as contradict others. When comparing quantitative results to King and Chan's (2011) original study, findings differ only in the Academic subscale. In the original study, there was a significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) in what teachers and students perceived to be

caring-teacher behaviors in all subscales. However, the current study showed a significant difference in all subscales, except in Academic Support. Conflicting results may be directly related to the intensified emphasis the school has placed on increasing student achievement since receiving the School Improvement Grant. It appears that students are being held more accountable for academic outcomes, which has made them perceive teachers who help them master content standards as caring teachers.

Students from prior studies also felt that caring teachers helped students succeed academically. In Alder's (2002) study, students expressed that teachers cared when they challenged their students and encouraged them to study and complete assignments. Similar results were reported by Shaunessy & McHatton (2009). Students in their study stated that caring teachers went over and beyond to help their students succeed academically. Students described their teachers' commitment to learning as teaching to understanding, working one-on-one with students, and answering questions to assist them in performing better on assignments (Shaunessy & McHatton, 2009).

Results of this study also parallel the work of Knesting (2008), Garza et al. (2009), and Averill (2012). They all confirm that teachers who are perceived as caring contribute to increased student engagement, attentiveness, and academic productivity. Like students in Garza's (2009) study, students in this study voiced most frequently that caring teachers helped them successfully complete their work.

Although race/ethnicity did not appear to affect what students perceived to be teacher-caring behaviors in this study, the students in Garza's (2009) study prioritized behaviors slightly differently according to their race/ethnicity. Findings in this study also contradicted those of Garrett, Barr, and Forsbach-Rothman (2007), which showed

African American students placed more importance on academic support when defining caring teachers than White students who placed more importance on teacher-student relationships.

Teachers at the participating high school shared Noddings (2012) views that caring teachers listened to their students and cared about whom their students were as a person in addition to their academic expectations. As in Rivera-McCutchen's (2012) study, teachers who invested time to get to know their students on a personal basis were able to support them both emotionally and academically to help them achieve the requirements for graduation as well as assist in post-graduation plans.

### **Discussion of Findings**

This study adds to the sparse literature on caring-teacher behaviors. General themes were compared showing differences between teacher and student perceptions. To improve classroom-learning climates, specific caring-teacher behaviors, which were discovered through the lenses of both teachers and students, have also been provided. Benefits from the findings are two-fold. Results offer concrete examples of behaviors teachers can demonstrate to foster caring teacher-student relationships that are lacking in existing literature. In addition, findings that demonstrate how students respond to teachers they perceive as caring will heighten teachers' awareness of how to recognize and maintain the reciprocal caring cycle as a means to improve student achievement.

Findings from the quantitative data showed that teachers and students agreed that caring teachers provided a safe learning environment and held high expectations for their students. When interpreting the quantitative data, it is important to note that the Academic subscale was the only category on the survey showing no significant difference

between the teachers' and students' perceptions. Yet when looking at the subscale averages for each group of participants, it was apparent that students believed that items in the Academic category were very important in terms of describing caring teachers. Teachers alternatively rated items in the Interpersonal Relationships subscale higher than the items in the Academic subscale.

Collecting qualitative data allowed for triangulation, which validated the quantitative findings by removing any statistical ambiguities. The way teachers generally described how they showed students they cared related to interpersonal relationships between teachers and students. They passionately described how they took time to talk to their students to find out about their interests and what was going on in their lives outside of school. Although students explicitly described ways in which caring teachers developed interpersonal relationships with them, they mostly described caring teachers as those who helped them academically.

I believe there is a reason why these findings are transposed from what one would expect. Teachers could possibly think that helping students academically is their job. It could be rationalized that teachers go into the field of education because of their desire to help students learn. Therefore, when they are describing how they show students they care, their responses are reflecting behaviors that fall outside of their lines of duties. They are describing behaviors that they exhibit to build teacher-student relationships that the literature proposed as necessities in developing a culturally responsive classroom climate conducive to learning. Only by building these relationships can teachers know what each student needs academically.



In contrast, students may have pointed out that caring teachers help them academically because they feel those teachers believe that they can be successful. When students acknowledged that caring teachers came in early and stayed late to help them with their work, they appreciated their teachers' efforts. They were aware that their teachers did it because of a care for their students. Objective data showing academic gains also support my rationalization. This year, Huey High improved in three out of four academic areas school-wide, which could not have happened without teachers' commitment to helping students successfully master content standards.

In regards to the reciprocity of the caring teacher- student relationship, it was interesting to see that behaviors that were perceived as caring influenced both teachers' and students' responses in regards to how students showed they recognized that their teachers cared for them. Teachers spoke of how students interacted with them, reciprocating their efforts to get to know them on a personal basis. Students' responses to the way they reacted to caring teachers were somewhat balanced between interpersonal relationships and academic achievement. Recounts of academic productivity were slightly higher than their emphasis on teacher-student personal interactions. Although many students reported that they talked to the teachers they perceived as caring about topics not related to schoolwork, most of their responses included performance-based reactions such as working hard and turning work in on time.

### **Limitations of the Study**

As mentioned in chapter one, this study, like others, has limitations due to contextual factors. Caution should be taken and unique settings considered before generalizing the findings. A limitation in the findings related to the perceptions of

students that was not included in chapter one should be disclosed. It should be noted that students who participated in this study, whether they were classified as students with or without disabilities, were all taking academic courses in the general curriculum. Therefore, students served in a self-contained setting were not included in the research sample. In addition, although students taking advanced placement classes were surveyed, their responses were only analyzed using factors related to the research questions such as gender, race/ethnicity, and exceptionality. In spite of the acknowledged limitations, it can be assumed that the findings accurately reflect the perceptions of both teachers and students because the sample closely depicted the demographic composition of the school.

### **Implications for Practitioners**

Suggested implications for practitioners should include stakeholders in the education process other than just teachers and students. Although decision makers and administrators have only an indirect influence on student achievement, their actions have a direct impact on classroom practices. Findings show that indeed caring teacher-student relationships serve as powerful change agents in terms of desired quality educational experiences for teachers and students. Therefore, decision makers should consider redirecting reform efforts to include non-academic aspects of learning that include social and emotional needs of the learner. Using a more holistic approach by incorporating effective teacher-caring behaviors to improve the educational experiences of the teacher and learner may yield the transformation needed to alleviate the national educational crisis.

This research provides evidence that a paradigm shift is needed at the school level, as well as at the teacher education level. Preparing future teachers to build effective

teacher-student relationships by exhibiting caring-teacher behaviors should not be done in isolation. Instead, while building cumulative content knowledge and developing professional pedagogical beliefs, care theory practices and specific behaviors should be embedded in each teacher education course. By integrating a teacher-caring component in education courses to change teacher perceptions before entering the classroom, teachers will be better prepared to relate to students and exhibit effective caring-behaviors that have been proven to enhance the quality of education for all students.

Although effective teachers provide academic rigor, establishing caring teacher-student relationships drives teacher effectiveness. Effective caring adds the emotional component needed to support the learner and improve the quality of the overall educational experiences. This study has provided specific examples of what students identified as caring-teacher behaviors, which can guide current teachers in connecting with their students, which is now a teacher expectation included in the Georgia Teacher Keys Evaluation System. Furthermore, administrators should be mindful of prospective teachers' interpersonal skills during the teacher selection process to select teachers with caring skills to work with students.

### **Implications for Future Research**

A continuum of investigations will be necessary to develop effective caring relationships that have the potential to improve all students' achievement. Perceptions of all educational stakeholders in teacher caring need to be explored. This includes administrators, support staff members, and parents. Furthermore, specific student populations need to be surveyed to examine their perceptions of caring-teacher behaviors. For example, students with autism, cognitive disabilities, or language impairments could

be included in the study. Additionally, future research is needed to compare perceptions of students taking advanced placement courses versus those in general education courses. Eliciting student voices can be a powerful way to examine how schools can effectively meet the needs of all learners (Ellerbrook & Kiefer, 2010). Continued research is warranted because teacher-caring behaviors undoubtedly make a difference in student achievement and behavior.

### **Conclusion**

I trust that the results from this study respond to previous researchers' calls for additional investigations on what teachers and students perceive to be teacher-caring behaviors (Läänemets et al., 2012). It is important for educators and researchers alike to understand potential barriers to establishing caring teacher-student relationships. Pre-service and in-service teachers can use the results as a guide for establishing teacher-student relationships to develop a classroom climate that will facilitate improved teaching and learning. This study further solidifies the importance of attending to not only the academic needs of all students, but also their social and emotional needs. Caring teacher-student relationships have the capacity to create safe inclusive learning environments that result in improved student school experiences. Teacher preparation, school climates, and individual student development contribute to cultivation of caring teacher-student relationships (Mihalas et al., 2009). As Noddings (2012) exclaimed, a climate in which caring relations can flourish should be a goal for all educational stakeholders to achieve.

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## APPENDIX A

### Research Approach Coordination

	Research Questions	Sources of Data	Method of Analysis
1.	What do teachers perceive to be behaviors of a caring teacher?	Teacher Surveys Questions 1-22	Use of descriptive statistics: mean, standard deviation, and/or frequency.
2.	What do students perceive to be behaviors of a caring teacher?	Student Surveys Questions 1-22	Use of descriptive statistics: mean, standard deviation, and/or frequency.
3.	Do students perceive teacher-caring behaviors differently from teachers?	Teacher/Student Surveys Questions 1-22	T-test will be used to compare the teachers and students' perception differences.
4.	Does race/ethnicity make a significant difference in students' perceptions of teacher-caring behaviors?	Student Surveys Demographic & Questions 1-22	Analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare perceptions based on race/ethnic groups.
5.	Does gender make a significant difference in students' perceptions of teacher-caring behaviors?	Student Surveys Demographic & Questions 1-22	T-test will be used to compare perception differences.
6.	Do students with disabilities perceive teacher-caring behaviors differently from students without disabilities?	Student Survey Demographic & Questions 1-22	T-test will be used to compare perception differences.
7.	Do teacher educational qualifications (degree) and years of experience make any significant difference in teachers' perceptions of teacher-caring behaviors?	Teacher Surveys Demographic & Questions 1-22	ANOVA will be used to compare teachers' perceptions based on teacher qualifications (degree) and years of experience.
8.	How do teachers show students they care?	Teacher/Student Surveys Open-ended Question 1	Data will be analyzed by using <i>Atlas.ti</i> software to discover patterns and themes.
9.	How do students respond to teachers they perceive as caring?	Teacher/Student Surveys Open-ended Question 2	Data will be analyzed by using <i>Atlas.ti</i> software to discover patterns and themes.

## APPENDIX B

April 11, 2013

Pat King, Student  
Department of Educational Leadership  
1000 Chastain Road  
Kennesaw, GA 30144-5591

RE: Request for Revision to Exempted Study, Study #11-147: A comparison of teacher and student perception of behaviors of caring teachers

Dear Ms. King:

I have reviewed your request for revisions to the exempted study listed above, which involves the following change to the protocol: Revision of study to include addition of current senior students as participants, new survey and consent for student participants and new survey and consent for past teacher participants; new study dates are April 11, 2013 through June 2013. This study continues to qualify as exempt from review under DHHS (OHRP) Title 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) - educational tests, surveys, interviews, public observations. You are free to conduct your study as approved.

Please note that any further proposed changes to the study must be promptly reported and approved prior to implementation. Contact the IRB at (678) 797-2268 or [irb@kennesaw.edu](mailto:irb@kennesaw.edu) if you have any questions or require further information.

Sincerely,

Christine Ziegler, Ph.D.  
Institutional Review Board Chair

cc: [tchan@kennesaw.edu](mailto:tchan@kennesaw.edu)

**APPENDIX C**

**TEACHER CONSENT FORM**

I agree to participate in the research project entitled *Teachers’ and Students’ Perceptions of Teachers’ Caring Behaviors*, conducted by Mrs. P. King at [REDACTED]. I understand that this participation is voluntary; I can withdraw my consent at any time and have the results of the participation returned to me, removed from the experimental records, or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me:

1. The reason for the research is to examine perceptions of the caring behaviors of teachers in order to evaluate and improve teacher-student relationships. There are no direct benefits for completing this survey.
2. The procedures for the research are as follows: Participating teachers will be asked to complete a teacher version survey, which consist of 22 Likert-type scale items and 2 open-ended questions. The activity will take approximately 15 minutes.
3. There should be no discomfort or stress during this research.
4. There are no risks associated with participation in this research.
5. The results will be confidential and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without the prior consent of the participant unless required by law. Names or any other identifiable information will not appear in the final report and all information submitted is secured in locked files and will be shredded by December 2013.

Signature of Investigator	Date
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Signature of Participant	Date
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\_\_\_\_\_  
 Printed Name of Participant

Research at Kennesaw State University that involves human participants is carried out under the oversight of an Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding these activities should be addressed to the Institutional Review Board, Kennesaw State University, 1000 Chastain Road, #0112, Kennesaw, GA 30144-5591, (678) 797-2268.

**APPENDIX D**

**STUDENT CONSENT FORM**

I am 18 years old or older and agree to participate in the research project entitled *Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of Teachers' Caring Behaviors*, conducted by Mrs. P. King at [REDACTED]. **I understand that this participation is voluntary**; I can withdraw my consent at any time and have the results of the participation returned to me, removed from the experimental records, or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me:

1. The reason for the research is to examine perceptions of the caring behaviors of teachers in order to evaluate and improve teacher-student relationships. There are no direct benefits for taking part in this survey.
2. The procedures for the research are as follows: Participating students will be asked to complete a student version survey, which consist of 22 Likert-type scale items and 2 open-ended questions. The activity will take approximately 15 minutes.
3. There should be no discomfort or stress during this research.
4. There are no risks associated with participation in this research.
5. The results of this participation will be confidential and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without the prior consent of the participant unless required by law. Names or any other identifiable information will not appear in the final report and all information submitted is secured in locked files and will be shredded by December 2013.

_____	_____
Signature of Investigator	Date
_____	_____
Signature of Participant	Date
_____	

Printed Name of Participant

Research at Kennesaw State University that involves human participants is carried out under the oversight of an Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding these activities should be addressed to the Institutional Review Board, Kennesaw State University, 1000 Chastain Road, #0112, Kennesaw, GA 30144-5591, (678) 797-2268.

**APPENDIX E**  
**A SURVEY OF**  
**THE BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS OF A CARING TEACHER**  
**(Teacher Version)**

The purpose of this survey is to identify what teachers perceive to be caring-teacher behaviors.

**Part I--Demographics**

**Directions:** Please respond to each item by circling one, which most accurately describes you.

1. **Subject(s):** English    Math    Science    Social Studies  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. **Educational Level:** BS/BA    Masters    Specialist    Doctorate
  
3. **Total years of teaching experience:**    0 – 5    6 -10    11 – 15    16 – 20    21+
  
4. **Gender:**    male    or    female
  
5. **Race/Ethnicity:**  
African American/Black  
Latino  
White  
Asian American  
American Indian  
Other:\_\_\_\_\_

**Did you participate in my original study using the same survey two years ago?**

Yes                      No

## Part II--Survey items

**Directions:** Using the scale from 1 to 5 (1 being the least important and 5 being the most), rate the importance of the following teacher behaviors in terms of “caring”.

### Caring teachers:

		Least > > > Most					
Classroom Management	1.	create an environment where students feel safe.	1	2	3	4	5
	2.	are positive with students.	1	2	3	4	5
	3.	step in when students pick on each other.	1	2	3	4	5
	4.	give students positive reinforcement for good behavior.	1	2	3	4	5
	5.	enforce the same rules for all students.	1	2	3	4	5
Academic Support	6.	hold high expectations for student achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
	7.	return work promptly with meaningful feedback.	1	2	3	4	5
	8.	recognize students for academic achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
	9.	display students' work.	1	2	3	4	5
	10.	give students hints when they do not understand or respond.	1	2	3	4	5
	11.	make time for students before and after school.	1	2	3	4	5
	12.	inform parents about their student's progress.	1	2	3	4	5
Interpersonal Relationships	13.	take a personal interest in what students do outside their class.	1	2	3	4	5
	14.	call students by their names.	1	2	3	4	5
	15.	provide students with "treats" and "goodies" on special occasions.	1	2	3	4	5
	16.	joke around with students.	1	2	3	4	5
	17.	recognize students for extra-curricular achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
Sense of Respect and Trust	18.	greet students when entering the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
	19.	ask students to help with classroom tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
	20.	ask students for their opinions.	1	2	3	4	5
	21.	maintain eye contact with students when talking to them.	1	2	3	4	5
	22.	give students opportunities to make decisions that affect them.	1	2	3	4	5

### **Part III—Open-ended questions**

**Directions:** Please answer the following questions regarding teacher-caring behaviors.

1. How do you show your students you care?

2. How do you know that your students recognize your care for them?

**Thank you for participating in this survey. I appreciate your input.**





## Part II--Survey items

**Directions:** Using the scale from 1 to 5 (1 being the least important and 5 being the most), rate the importance of the following teacher behaviors in terms of “caring”.

### Caring teachers:

Least >.> >> Most

Classroom Management	1.	create an environment where students feel safe.	1	2	3	4	5
	2.	are positive with students.	1	2	3	4	5
	3.	step in when students pick on each other.	1	2	3	4	5
	4.	reward good behavior.	1	2	3	4	5
	5.	enforce the same rules for all students.	1	2	3	4	5
Academic Support	6.	hold high expectations for student achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
	7.	return work promptly with meaningful feedback.	1	2	3	4	5
	8.	recognize students for academic achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
	9.	display students' work.	1	2	3	4	5
	10.	give students hints when they do not understand or respond.	1	2	3	4	5
	11.	make time for students before and after school.	1	2	3	4	5
	12.	inform parents about their student's progress.	1	2	3	4	5
Interpersonal Relationships	13.	take a personal interest in what students do outside their class.	1	2	3	4	5
	14.	call students by their names.	1	2	3	4	5
	15.	provide students with "treats" and "goodies" on special occasions.	1	2	3	4	5
	16.	joke around with students.	1	2	3	4	5
	17.	recognize students for extra-curricular achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
Sense of Respect and Trust	18.	greet students when entering the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
	19.	ask students to help with classroom tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
	20.	ask students for their opinions.	1	2	3	4	5
	21.	maintain eye contact with students when talking to them.	1	2	3	4	5
	22.	give students opportunities to make decisions that affect them.	1	2	3	4	5

### **Part III—Open-ended questions**

**Directions:** Please answer the following questions regarding caring-teacher behaviors.

1. How do teachers show you they care?

2. How do you show your teachers that you appreciate that they care?

**Thank you for participating in this survey. I appreciate your input.**

**Table 1**  
**Demographics of Student Participants (N-178) by Percentages**

Gender	Male	Female			
	47.8%	52.2%			
Race/ Ethnicity	African Am.	Latino	White	Asian	Other
	52.8%	12.9%	22.5%	2.8%	9.0%
Exceptionality	Students w/out Disabilities	Students with Disabilities			
	93.8%	6.2%			
Classroom Setting	General Ed	Advanced Placement			
	71.3%	28.7%			

**Table 2**  
**Demographics of Teacher Participants (N-41) by Percentages**

Gender	Male	Female			
	22.0%	78.0%			
Race/ Ethnicity	African Am.	White			
	14.6%	85.4%			
Degree	Bachelors	Masters	Specialists	Doctorates	
	36.6%	39.0%	19.5%	4.9%	
Yrs of Experience	0 – 5 Yrs	6 – 10 Yrs	11 – 15 Yrs	16 – 20 Yrs	21+ Yrs
	22.0%	39.0%	12.2%	12.2%	14.6%

**Table 3**  
**Descriptive Statistics - Teacher Perceptions by Subscale**

Subscales	N	Mean	SD
Classroom Management	41	4.576	0.400
Academics	41	4.153	0.535
Interpersonal Relationship	41	4.302	1.554
Respect and Trust	41	4.244	0.559
Total	41	4.319	0.584

**Table 4**  
**Teacher Responses for Items 1 – 22 by Descending Mean**

Items	N	Mean	SD
Caring teachers:			
14. call students by their names.	40	4.850	0.362
1. create an environment where students feel safe.	41	4.805	0.459
15. provide students with "treats" and "goodies" on special occasions.	41	4.756	7.965
6. hold high expectations for student achievement.	41	4.659	0.617
2. are positive with students.	41	4.634	0.536
5. enforce the same rules for all students.	41	4.610	0.666
21. maintain eye contact with students when talking to them.	41	4.561	0.594
3. step in when students pick on each other.	41	4.463	0.636
8. recognize students for academic achievement.	41	4.439	0.673
4. give students positive reinforcement for good behavior.	41	4.366	0.799
22. give students opportunities to make decisions that affect them.	41	4.342	0.728
20. ask students for their opinions.	41	4.268	0.708
11. make time for students before and after school.	41	4.244	0.734
18. greet students when entering the classroom.	41	4.220	0.909
17. recognize students for extra-curricular achievement.	41	4.195	0.872
13. take a personal interest in what students do outside their class.	41	4.195	0.782
7. return work promptly with meaningful feedback.	41	4.073	0.721
12. inform parents about their student's progress.	41	4.049	0.835
19. ask students to help with classroom tasks.	41	3.829	0.946
10. give students hints when they do not understand or respond.	41	3.829	1.046
9. display students' work.	41	3.781	0.988
16. joke around with students.	41	3.634	1.199

**Table 5****Descriptive Statistics - Student Perceptions by Subscale**

Subscales	N	Mean	SD
Classroom Management	178	4.084	.811
Academics	178	3.936	.740
Interpersonal Relationship	178	3.819	.800
Respect and Trust	178	3.830	.894
Total	178	3.918	.681

Table 6

## Descriptive Statistics: Student Responses for Items 1 – 22 by Descending Mean

Items	N	Mean	SD
Caring teachers:			
14. call students by their names.	177	4.446	0.865
1. create an environment where students feel safe.	177	4.294	0.919
6. hold high expectations for student achievement.	177	4.282	0.866
8. recognize students for academic achievement.	178	4.242	0.958
11. make time for students before and after school.	178	4.225	1.017
2. are positive with students.	178	4.180	0.992
5. enforce the same rules for all students.	178	4.129	1.155
22. give students opportunities to make decisions that affect them.	178	4.118	1.010
7. return work promptly with meaningful feedback.	178	3.944	1.153
3. step in when students pick on each other.	178	3.927	1.130
21. maintain eye contact with students when talking to them.	178	3.921	1.132
4. give students positive reinforcement for good behavior.	178	3.916	1.119
20. ask students for their opinions.	178	3.910	1.146
17. recognize students for extra-curricular achievement.	177	3.910	1.109
16. joke around with students.	178	3.831	1.223
18. greet students when entering the classroom.	178	3.747	1.275
10. give students hints when they do not understand or respond.	178	3.742	1.095
12. inform parents about their student's progress.	177	3.599	1.226
9. display students' work.	178	3.567	1.207
15. provide students with "treats" and "goodies" on special occasions.	178	3.522	1.362
19. ask students to help with classroom tasks.	178	3.455	1.222
13. take a personal interest in what students do outside their class.	178	3.433	1.336

**Table 7****Descriptive Statistics: Ranking of Teachers - Student Perceptions by Top Five**

Teachers	Mean	Students	Mean
Caring teachers:		Caring teachers:	
14. call students by their names.	4.850	14. call students by their names.	4.446
1. create an environment where students feel safe.	4.805	1. create an environment where students feel safe.	4.294
15. provide students with "treats" and "goodies" on special occasions.	4.756	6. hold high expectations for student achievement.	4.282
6. hold high expectations for student achievement.	4.659	8. recognize students for academic achievement.	4.242
2. are positive with students.	4.634	11. make time for students before and after school.	4.225

**Table 8****Descriptive Statistics: Teacher - Student Perceptions by Subscale**

Subscales	Participant	N	Mean
Classroom Management	Teachers	41	4.576
	Students	178	4.084
Academic	Teachers	41	4.153
	Students	178	3.937
Interpersonal Relationships	Teachers	41	4.302
	Students	178	3.819
Respect and Trust	Teachers	41	4.244
	Students	178	3.830
Total	Teachers	41	4.319
	Students	178	3.918

**Table 9****Independent Samples t-Test Comparison of Teachers' and Students' Perceptions**

Subscales		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Classroom Management	Equal variances assumed	3.772	217	.000
Academic	Equal variances assumed	1.770	217	.078
Interpersonal Relationships	Equal variances assumed	2.836	217	.005
Respect & Trust	Equal variances assumed	2.835	217	.005
Total	Equal variances assumed	3.488	217	.001

**Table 10****Descriptive Statistics – Student Perceptions by Race/Ethnicity**

Group	N	Classroom Management	Academic	Interpersonal Relationships	Respect & Trust	Total
		Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
African American	94	4.111	3.982	3.800	3.926	3.955
Latino	23	3.939	3.919	3.687	3.678	3.806
White	40	4.015	3.739	3.775	3.645	3.794
Asian	5	4.040	3.829	3.480	3.320	3.667
Other	16	4.325	4.223	4.338	4.113	4.250
Total	178	4.084	3.937	3.819	3.830	3.918

**Table 11****Analysis of Variance – Comparison of Student Perceptions by Race/Ethnicity**

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (2-tailed)
Classroom Management	Between Groups	1.679	4	.420	.633	.639
Academic	Between Groups	3.129	4	.782	1.442	.222
Interpersonal Relationships	Between Groups	5.388	4	1.347	2.159	.076
Respect & Trust	Between Groups	5.334	4	1.333	1.695	.153
Total	Between Groups	3.107	4	.777	1.702	.152

**Table 12**  
**Descriptive Statistics – Student Perceptions by Gender**

Subscale	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean
Classroom Management	Male	85	3.955	0.792	0.086
	Female	93	4.202	0.814	0.084
Academics	Male	85	3.911	0.672	0.073
	Female	93	3.960	0.801	0.083
Interpersonal Responses	Male	85	3.711	0.771	0.084
	Female	93	3.918	0.818	0.085
Respect & Trust	Male	85	3.729	0.808	0.088
	Female	93	3.923	0.961	0.100
Total	Male	85	3.827	0.637	0.069
	Female	93	4.001	0.712	0.074

**Table 13**  
**Independent Samples t-Test - Comparison of Student Perceptions by Gender**

		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Classroom Management	Equal variances assumed	-2.048	176	.042
	Equal variances not assumed			
Academics	Equal variances assumed	-.441	176	.660
	Equal variances not assumed			
Interpersonal Relationships	Equal variances assumed	-1.740	176	.084
	Equal variances not assumed			
Respect & Trust	Equal variances assumed	-1.445	176	.150
	Equal variances not assumed			
Total	Equal variances assumed	-1.715	176	.088
	Equal variances not assumed			



**Table 14****Descriptive Statistics – Student Perceptions by Exceptionality**

Subscales	Exceptionality	N	Mean	SD
Classroom Management	SWOD	167	4.097	0.813
	SWD	11	3.891	0.792
Academics	SWOD	167	3.934	0.752
	SWD	11	3.974	0.560
Interpersonal Relationships	SWOD	167	3.835	0.799
	SWD	11	3.582	0.817
Respect & Trust	SWOD	167	3.849	0.885
	SWD	11	3.546	1.028
Total	SWOD	167	3.929	0.683
	SWD	11	3.748	0.651

**Table 15****Independent Samples t-Test - Comparison of Student Perceptions by Exceptionality**

Subscales		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Classroom Management	Equal variances assumed	.816	176	.416
	Not assumed			
Academic	Equal variances assumed	-.173	176	.863
	Not assumed			
Interpersonal Relationships	Equal variances assumed	1.015	176	.311
	Not assumed			
Respect & Trust	Equal variances assumed	1.092	176	.276
	Not assumed			
Total	Equal variances assumed	.852	176	.395
	Not assumed			

**Table 16**  
**Analysis of Variance – Comparison of Teacher Perceptions by Degree**

Subscales		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Classroom Management	Between Groups	.580	3	.193	1.225	.314
Academics	Between Groups	.943	3	.314	1.108	.358
Interpersonal Relationships	Between Groups	3.524	3	1.175	.467	.707
Respect & Trust	Between Groups	.161	3	.054	.161	.922
Total	Between Groups	.430	3	.143	.402	.752

**Table 17**  
**Descriptive Statistics – Teacher Perceptions by Degree**

Degree	N	Classroom Management		Academics		Interpersonal Relationships		Respect & Trust		Totals	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Bachelors	15	4.640	.264	4.067	0.503	4.667	2.448	4.200	0.628	4.393	0.782
Masters	16	4.600	.407	4.313	0.512	4.188	0.568	4.250	0.529	4.337	0.384
Specialists	8	4.350	.573	3.947	0.629	3.925	0.725	4.250	0.553	4.118	0.545
Doctorates	2	4.800	.283	4.357	0.505	4.000	0.849	4.500	0.707	4.415	0.586
Total	41	4.576	.401	4.153	0.535	4.302	1.554	4.244	0.559	4.319	0.584

**Table 18**  
**Descriptive Statistics – Teacher Perceptions by Years of Experience**

Yrs. of Exp.	N	Classroom Management		Academics		Interpersonal Relationships		Respect & Trust		Totals	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
0 – 5 Yrs	9	4.600	0.412	4.302	0.620	5.356	2.985	4.422	0.524	4.670	0.965
6 – 10 Yrs	16	4.488	0.413	3.955	0.436	3.913	0.566	4.100	0.444	4.114	0.260
11 – 15 Yrs	5	4.640	0.297	4.257	0.584	4.160	0.669	4.240	0.555	4.324	0.426
16 – 20 Yrs	5	4.680	0.268	4.171	0.618	4.120	0.415	4.400	0.648	4.343	0.356
21+ Yrs	6	4.633	0.572	4.357	0.547	4.033	0.999	4.233	0.862	4.314	0.655
Total	41	4.576	0.400	4.153	0.535	4.302	1.554	4.244	0.559	4.319	0.584

**Table 19**  
**Analysis of Variance – Comparison of Teacher Perceptions by Years of Experience**

Subscales		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Classroom Management	Between Groups	.225	4	.056	.327	.858
Academics	Between Groups	1.130	4	.283	.986	.427
Interpersonal Relationships	Between Groups	13.117	4	3.279	1.413	.249
Respect & Trust	Between Groups	.740	4	.185	.565	.689
Total	Between Groups	1.784	4	.446	1.356	.268