

CARING IN ACTION: HOW PACE CENTER FOR GIRLS AND KIDS COUNT ENACT
A FEMINIST VERSION OF CARE FOR AT-RISK YOUTH IN ALACHUA COUNTY

By

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To all who care

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This thesis aims to generate momentum among feminists toward future involvement in causes, particularly those in the field of education, that are not explicitly identified as feminist but speak to feminist goals. My research serves as a starting point for such momentum by exploring how a feminist version of care is enacted within PACE Center for Girls: Alachua County and Kids Count in Alachua County, despite the fact that neither organization employs the word "feminist" in its description. Using interview responses from founders, staff, and board members of each organization, this thesis shows interview participants' articulation of a version of feminist caring for at-risk youth that is notably consistent with care-focused feminism, a body of thought and literature that originated in the mid-1980s but no longer enjoys the attention of feminists as it once did.

Importantly, the feminist caring articulated by participants did not align perfectly with care-focused feminism, but instead, reflected a more grounded conception and practice of feminist caring that encompassed tenets of both care-focused feminism and warm demander theory, a culturally responsive style of teaching that characterizes

highly successful teachers of children of color. Feminists should see the enactment of feminist caring in these organizations as an example of how various tenets of feminism can be and perhaps already are employed, modified, or repurposed to work toward goals for at-risk youth that, while perhaps not explicitly identified as feminist, are certainly in line with feminist aims of equality.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The idea for this thesis began with a problematic realization during my experience as a Teach For America classroom teacher in a low-performing high school in the Mississippi Delta: students who need the most care typically get the least care in public schools. I arrived to my classroom in August 2009 after graduating from the University of Texas at Austin, ready to make a change in students' lives. I had spent a significant amount of my undergraduate career working with at-risk youth, and looked forward to being able to make more of a formidable impact on young people's lives than what my volunteer experience, albeit extensive, had allowed me to do in Austin. I saw teaching as the first step in a long career of working with at-risk youth, possibly as a teacher, but definitely within the public school system.

Within a few months of teaching, however, my school had aggressively and effectively crushed my dreams of success as a teacher, a bitter disappointment that continued to characterize the two years I spent teaching, and one I still feel. However, my undoing was not, as so many often assume when they find out I was in Teach For America, a result of my students or the weighty demands of a first-year teacher in a low-performing school. It was something else—something far more serious than behavior problems or lesson planning.

While teaching, I felt powerless to give my students the individual care they so clearly needed. I felt as though my ultimate goal in teaching was unattainable, not through any fault of my own, nor because of my students, but because of the structure of the school where I taught. My teaching experience left me pondering what it meant to care for vulnerable students in a setting as bureaucratized and rigidly structured as

the US public school system, and not at all convinced that providing care was even possible.

Usually, when people find out that I taught in a low-income, predominantly African American high school, and especially when they find out I was a TFA corps member, they assume I left because I simply “couldn’t handle” teaching where I did, or more commonly, because I did not like my students. This is obviously a loaded and deeply troubling assumption, and unfortunately, one that is not entirely unfounded (Darling-Hammond 2010, 47), but the main issue I take with it is that it is false. My departure was not the result of my inability to “cut it” as a new teacher in a low-performing school, and it was not the result of any malice toward my students. I left because I could no longer envision effectively caring for my students, which was the whole reason I had gone into teaching. I certainly cared about them, but I felt it was impossible to care for them given the structure of my school.

My conclusion that I could not provide adequate care for my students was not for lack of trying. I provided care to the greatest extent that I could, taking on the role of personal counselor and social worker on a daily basis, often acting as the only advocate any of my students had, even within the school. I started an after-school club for my female students where we would talk through issues they were having. I spent hours and a sizeable part of my first-year teacher’s paycheck stocking my class library with books that my students could read, understand, and enjoy (no easy task, given that most of my high school students read on a third grade level). I spent as much time as I could talking with my students about their culture, and thinking about my own, and what that meant for me as a teacher. I developed meaningful, personal relationships with my

students, and many of those relationships remain as one of the few positive memories I have of teaching. However, while I know my students recognized my clear investment in them as care, I always felt that this care was insufficient. There was simply not enough time or space. The reason, in a nutshell, was because there were too many tests to take.

I was a state-tested reading teacher assigned with one goal: improve my students' reading levels so that they could pass the state test. My school district communicated this goal to me clearly, loudly, and frequently (usually daily). In the months leading to the state test, there were endless benchmarks, practice tests, and consulting sessions that dictated our schedules and defined what teachers' and students' priorities –our only priority-- should be. In my daily classes, I had to solely rely on practice test reading passages and practice test questions to prepare students. Practically speaking, as far as my job was concerned, my students were to mean more to me as test scores than as people.

I hope that I speak for all teachers when I say that I viewed my students as more than test scores. I saw them as young adults with futures that I wanted to be bright, and I recognized them as individual people with individual needs, educational and otherwise, that were not being met. Since I cared for them, I wanted to meet those needs, but I could not. I felt it was impossible. The structure of my classroom that was forced upon me by my school district did not allow me to achieve my primary reason for teaching: caring for my students in a way that valued them as individuals, working with instead of against their differences to lead them to academic and personal success.

Again, I did not leave the classroom because I had poor relationships with my students, nor because my students were “bad” (another assumption that I find most people make when I tell them I used to teach in a low-performing minority school). I left because I felt like I would never be able to provide them with the genuine care they needed to be successful in life, not just on a test, and because the effort to try to provide that care anyway, despite the structural obstacles, left me physically and emotionally exhausted. In some ways, I still am. I left knowing that I wanted to make a difference in the lives of at-risk youth, but also completely convinced that I simply could not do so while teaching in a public school. This is certainly (thankfully) not everyone’s experience, but it was mine, and it is from this experience that I now speak.

I view my frustration with not being able to provide the care that my students needed as a consequence of the conventional model of school. While I am indeed critical of it, my purpose in briefly discussing the conventional model of school here is not to argue for its overhaul. The writing on school reform is extensive, and there are thousands of brilliant minds constantly working toward making classrooms a better place for all students (even if there are just as many who are not). Instead, my purpose for describing the conventional model of school is to highlight the lack of space and time it allows for caring to take place.

In her book *The Flat World and Education*, Linda Darling-Hammond explains that “modern schools were designed at the turn of the last century as highly bureaucratic organizations—divided into grade levels and subject matter departments, separate tracks, programs, and auxiliary services—each managed separately and run by carefully specified procedures engineered to yield standard products” (Darling-

Hammond 2010, 62). This design that that values efficiency, not personal relationships, established the conventional model of school that still abides in the US. The conventional model of school is one in which teachers are concerned with academic achievement above all else; this focus on achievement is accompanied by emotional distance between teacher and student, whose relationship is characterized instead by rewards and penalties (Cuban 1989). There is little room for caring to take place. Even with the most ambitious intentions and reforms, teachers and schools often fall victim to the “powerful hold that larger societal values and organizational norms and structures have on those working within the institution” (Cuban 2004) and revert back to familiar practices of the conventional classroom.

The passage and implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and other high stakes testing reforms have strengthened this conventional model of schools, as I illustrated in my story. Because standardized tests present schools with a “one size fits all” method of evaluation, the personal and emotional relationship between teacher and student is detrimentally affected. In public schools, standardized test scores play a central role in teacher evaluation, thereby strengthening the component of the conventional model of schools that values academic achievement above all else. Obviously academic achievement is important for students, but while NCLB and mandatory standardized testing practices do provide a renewed focus on accountability of teachers, students, and schools, they do nothing to aid the sense of community and personal relationships that are so vital to student success, especially for at-risk students.

Of course, there are certainly schools and teachers who have been able to build a sense of community and foster relationships while also implementing high stakes testing reforms and providing students with quality educations. Those interested in education reform allude to inspirational success stories such as the legacy of Jaime Escalante or Geoffrey Canada's Harlem Children Zone (Tough 2009) as proof that change can happen. The growing number and popularity of charter schools and alternative teacher certification programs like Teach For America ("Teach For America Enrollment Surges" 2007) evidence the excitement and momentum that education reform is experiencing. However, it is important to understand that, despite the abundance of buzzwords and talk of reform, the success stories coming out of education are not characteristic of all classrooms or schools (including charter schools), or even most of them ("More Lessons About Charter Schools" 2013). They are, as Larry Cuban puts it, "a faint sound in the Grand Canyon of hundreds of thousands of classrooms and millions of students' lives" (Cuban 1989).

Acknowledging the presence but understanding the rarity of schools and programs that are able to provide students with both an excellent education and the personal support students need to be successful, we are left with the reality that thousands of students across the country are not receiving the care they need to be successful in school—the same reality I felt in my own classroom. The numbers prove this reality. Currently, fewer than 7 out of every 10 students graduate from high school ("Test, Punish, and Push Out" 2010). The statistics for Black, Latino, and Native American students are even more shocking: less than half of these students graduate from high school (ibid).

When I left the classroom to attend a graduate Women's Studies and Gender Research program, I brought my frustrations with both the public school system and my own teaching experience with me. I have always viewed feminism as a simultaneously liberating and empowering tool, and wanted to research ways in which I could use feminist ideas and tenets to improve the lives of at-risk youth like the students I taught. Specifically, I wanted to figure out if there was a way feminism could help institutions or organizations provide the care that I felt, as a teacher in a conventional public school setting, I was never able to fully provide.

I was reluctant to embark on such a task within the classroom. Convinced that, at least for the time being, care is forced to take a backseat in the conventional classroom, I began to think about other locations and institutions where caring could take place. Naturally, I gravitated toward "institutions" that do not have the same structure as a conventional school; specifically, I focused my attention on nonprofit organizations that aim to increase students' academic success by providing them with the care and support they need.

I was lucky enough to intern with two organizations that allowed me to witness care in action. In Spring 2012, I interned at PACE Center for Girls in Alachua County. PACE, founded in 1985 and funded by the state, has 17 branches total (including the one where I interned in Alachua County) across the state of Florida and has served over 21,000 girls (ages 12-18) since its founding (PACE About); the Alachua County branch where I interned serves around 100 girls per year. In Fall 2012, I interned at Kids Count in Alachua County, a relatively new (2007) nonprofit for K-3 boys and girls that currently serves 20 students at each of its two sites. The majority of students at both PACE and

Kids Count are low-income, minority youth. My experience with both internships allowed me to observe how staff was able to care in a more personal, direct way than, from my experience, would have been possible in a traditional school setting. For the first time, I saw the level of caring I had wanted to provide while teaching.

At the same time I was researching nonprofit organizations, I began to familiarize myself with the literature on two concepts I believed spoke to the practice of caring for those who need it most. The first of these concepts was care-focused feminism, a branch of feminist thought that contends the nurturing qualities traditionally associated with women are strengths instead of weaknesses (Tong 2009, 163). The second concept I began exploring was warm demander theory. Used to characterize highly successful teachers of children of color, warm demander theory describes the way in which a particular “brand” of successful teachers in high poverty schools, called warm demanders, communicate “both warmth and a nonnegotiable demand for student effort and mutual respect” (Bondy and Ross 2008).

Central to warm demander theory is a genuine care and concern for student success on the part of the teacher; in many ways, warm demander theory seemed to offer a practical way in which the type of caring I was reading about in the care-focused feminism literature could effectively take place between teachers and at-risk youth. Further, it specifically targeted the very group of students whom I had felt so helpless to care for as a teacher. I began to link the concepts of care-focused feminism and warm demander theory in a way that seemed to have real potential to help at-risk youth.

Interestingly, my internships and exploration of the literature ultimately led me to understand that the staff at PACE and Kids count were enacting a deep level of caring,

seemingly consistent with tenets of both care-focused feminism and warm demander theory, within their respective organizations. While I found the presence of warm demander theory encouraging but not entirely surprising given the demographic of both PACE and Kids Count, the similarity I was seeing between the care that the literature on care-focused feminism described and the care enacted in the relationships between staff and students at these organizations was not what I had expected, and needless to say, intrigued me.

I realized that if the similarity I saw was real, feminists should know about it. Were PACE and Kids count feminist? Were these organizations, unbeknownst to feminists or the people who worked at these organizations, operating with feminist mindsets? I knew the answer was not a simple yes or no, but the more I observed the daily operations and relationships between staff and students at PACE and Kids Count, the more I began to believe that the care these organizations were providing students was indeed feminist in nature, despite the fact that neither organization uses any form of the word “feminism” to describe what they do for students. Relationships between staff and students at both organizations seemed to enact what I saw as a feminist version of caring, using tenets of warm demander theory to help students toward success.

In a turn of events I had not predicted or expected, PACE and Kids Count appeared to be doing on the ground what I had been theoretically constructing in my head: using care-focused feminism fortified with warm demander theory to provide care for at-risk youth. This was exciting to me, to say the least. First, I was excited because I now had something to see instead of something to ponder. More to the point,

however, my discovery excited me as a Women's Studies student interested in a branch of feminist thought (care-focused feminism) that no one seemed to discuss anymore.

Most of the later publication dates I had found in my research on care-focused feminism were in the early 1990s, with the bulk of the writing being in the early 1980s, and the discussion largely ending in the early 2000s.¹ Feminists and academics appeared to have largely stopped talking about care-focused feminism, which was frustrating for me. In care-focused feminism, I had found an attention to the importance of caring, what it means to care, why it is important to care, etc. that I felt was useful and appropriate for what I wanted to do, but it seemed like no one else shared my interest—like care focused feminism was lost. Had I found it again in PACE and Kids Count?

While the majority of the literature I was reading was at least a decade old, I was witnessing what seemed to me to be a grounded version of feminist caring being enacted in 2012 by two organizations who did not even use the word “feminism” to describe their mission. If I was right, what did this mean for the stifled discussion of care-focused feminism? What did this mean for feminism and feminists as a whole? What did this mean for organizations serving at-risk youth? What did this mean for those interested in policy dealing with educational equality?

In an effort to begin to be able to answer these questions, I conducted interviews with staff, administration, and board members of both PACE and Kids Count in order to

¹ Approximately 7 days before the completion of this thesis, I was able to obtain a copy of a book Carol Gilligan published in 2011, entitled Joining the Resistance (citation included in my reference list). This book was not available when I was doing my initial research for the project, so I was unable to include a discussion of it in my thesis. This book explores the concept of why care ethics have not been enacted by society, and discusses the potential utilization of care ethics in a democracy. I look forward to engaging these ideas in future research.

talk with them about their personal conceptualizations of care, how their organizations provide that care to students, and how care features as a central component of their daily operations and relationships with students. Unsurprisingly, their interviews revealed neither an exact articulation of care-focused feminism nor an exact articulation of warm demander theory. Instead, participants articulated what can be read as a feminist version of caring that utilizes components of warm demander theory, which allows staff to form meaningful relationships with students and ultimately helps staff move students toward academic and personal success.

In the chapters that follow, I illustrate the influences and contributions of care-focused feminism and warm demander theory on the version of caring articulated by administrators, staff, and board members at PACE and Kids Count. In Chapter 1, I situate my current interest in caring for at-risk youth within the existing literature. I describe how care-focused feminism and its components have evolved within feminist theory, telling the story of how feminist care ethics evolved into a process of feminist relational caring, a version of which is later articulated by participants. I then introduce warm demander theory as a more grounded, less abstract form of care-focused feminism, important to my discussion (and participants' discussion) of care due to its noted success in reaching at-risk children of color.

In Chapter 2, I provide in-depth descriptions of both PACE and Kids Count, as well as provide biographical information on participants detailing how they arrived to their respective organizations. I explain how the two organizations speak to the issues of caring for at-risk youth I raise in my introduction and in Chapter 1, situating them as

important examples of ways that we can look at how caring is enacted in practical ways for at-risk youth.

Chapter 3 represents the body of my findings from participant interviews and illustrates how participants' articulation of care encompasses elements of care-focused feminism and warm demander theory. I relay participants' personal conceptions and articulations of care, as well as highlight themes that emerged from participant interviews. I end Chapter 3 with a discussion of what feminists can take away from this project, a summary of which I provide at the end of this introduction.

My conclusion consists of a short discussion of how educators or those who work in education policy could utilize participant responses and the feminist version of caring participants articulated in interviews to inform decisions related to the education and educational support of at-risk youth. While this thesis primarily speaks to the need for feminists to begin to recognize how organizations and institutions serving marginalized people practically, if not purposefully, use feminist theory, I also hope that those in the field of education can gain something valuable from this project. Specifically, I hope they are able to see the value of organizations like PACE and Kids Count and begin to think about ways in which such programs could be better supported, as well as consider how conventional classrooms could benefit from the commitment to caring articulated by participants.

The significance of this project lies largely in what it can teach feminists about the practical, everyday implementation of feminist thought by organizations serving marginalized groups, even if, like PACE and Kids Count, such organizations refrain from using the term "feminism." The question of what I call "activism versus academia" is a

defining one of feminism (Messer-Davidow 2002), but while it is important to keep feminism alive and recognizable in both the academic and “real” worlds, what is feminism doing if it is not at work in the lives of those who are victimized by patriarchal, structural inequality? What is it doing if it is not at the service, in any way it can be, of organizations and institutions seeking to address the very real oppressions and limitations people suffer because of circumstances beyond their control?

It seems to me that it is less important for those in caring and empowering professions—feminist or not—to perfectly articulate feminist theory, and more important that they are practically aware of the tools it provides and ideas it espouses. Feminists need to find those places and causes where feminist ideas are present (if not perfectly articulated) and build on them. This could take place on an academic or activist level, but regardless, feminists must locate and strengthen efforts of any field that has something to contribute to our cause of helping those who are structurally or socially oppressed.

Another key component of this project relevant to feminists is its illustration that feminist theory acts in conjunction with other theories, institutions, and policies. Recognizing this relationship will allow feminists to engage in more practical discussions of ways feminist theory can be utilized. Care-focused feminism is an excellent example of this. Care-focused feminism as it was developed in the late 1980s and early 1990s seems to have little to no practical role (at least as it is utilized) in our institutions today; however, re-conceptualizing care-focused feminism as it informs feminist caring practices enacted by PACE and Kids Count and understanding how participants incorporate tenets of warm demander theory into their version of feminist caring sheds

new light on care-focused feminism, opening up new possibilities for its application to institutions.

Further, still speaking directly to the issue of care-focused feminism, feminists and other scholars from any fields that address issues of inequality need to return to the concept of care. At the very least, feminists should make the issue of care and how care is provided a major component of attempts to end inequality. This must happen, because caring must happen. While I acknowledge the widely-shared belief that resource inequality is a primary cause of the disparities and oppressions clearly visible in our society today, I also believe that a society that is conscious of the need to not just care about people, but care for them is a society that can better approach issues of resource inequality with the regard they deserve. Calling for a returned attention to care does not mean that discussions of care should eclipse other issues vital to improving society; it means that discussions of resource and other structural equality must recognize the vital, irreplaceable role that care must play in these issues.

Care is an essential component in people's lives. Care sustains people, care empowers people, and care can heal people. Most importantly, care can help people. This is not to say that caring is not happening in organizations and institutions currently, but its importance in terms of the still pervasive inequality that plagues our society demands a stronger attention by feminists and academics from other disciplines.

Finally, I hope this project compels feminists to more closely consider their role in the field of education. Beyond feminist pedagogy, how are we involved in what is arguably the most important institution in children's lives: schools? We need to think about the extent of our involvement in education and its support systems, and address

instances in which that involvement is not deep enough. The presence of feminist caring in PACE and Kids Count proves there is a place for feminists in the struggle for educational equality; by way of our commitment to dismantling oppressive institutions, we should insert ourselves more visibly into this struggle.

CHAPTER 2 UNPACKING FEMINIST CARING AND UNDERSTANDING WARM DEMANDER THEORY AS A PRACTICE OF FEMINIST CARING

In this chapter, I situate my current interest in caring for at-risk youth within the existing literature. I describe how care-focused feminism and its components have evolved within feminist theory, telling the story of how feminist care ethics evolved into a process of feminist relational caring, a version of which is later articulated by participants. I follow the section on caring with a discussion of warm demander theory as a grounded form of care-focused feminism, with an added component of social justice. I explain the origins of warm demander theory as well as how it is situated in the history of strong caring enacted in African American schools. In addition, I also explain its relationship to multicultural pedagogy and its current place in the literature on culturally responsive teaching practices.

While participants articulated a version of feminist caring more clearly than they articulated warm demander theory, the ideas and mindsets of warm demander theory describe important qualities of those who care about and are successful with at-risk youth, including participants in this project. It is my hope that this chapter will leave the reader with a familiarity and understanding of both feminist caring and warm demander theory, so that as she reads through participant responses, she will be able to see how each body of ideas is represented despite not being perfectly articulated.

Before I show the ways in which staff and board members from PACE and Kids Count enact a version of feminist caring for students, I must first explain what I mean by feminist caring. In order to do this, I first, for clarity's sake, differentiate between three "terms" associated with feminist caring: care-focused feminism, ethics of care, and relational caring. These terms often appear to be used interchangeably, but while they

are all closely related to one another, they are not the same; each term has a specific role in discussions of feminist caring. Next, I explain the relationship between ethics of care and relational caring; specifically, I will explain how relational caring is predicated on ethics of care, but takes this ethic further. Finally, I address how relational caring can be applied to institutions, as well as briefly discuss other literature that criticizes and continues the discussion of relational caring for those who wish to learn more.

Defining Feminist Caring: Differentiating Between Care-Focused Feminism, Feminist Caring, Care Ethics, and Relational Caring

Care-focused feminism is the term used to describe a branch of feminist thought primarily informed by care ethics and relational caring as developed by Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings, respectively. Care-focused feminists believe that women's capacity for care has been devalued due to its association with women, and contest this devaluing. They contend instead that qualities traditionally feminine in nature (ex: caring, nurturing, etc.) are in fact strengths upon which our society should be based (Tong 2009, 162).

Care-focused feminism directly informs what I mean when I use the term "feminist caring." When I use the term feminist caring, as I do when I say, "Interview participants articulated a version of feminist caring," I am referring to a version of care that is informed by feminist ethics of care and relational caring. In many ways, my use of the term feminist caring encompasses much of what comprises care-focused feminism. However, I purposefully choose to use the term "feminist caring" instead of "care-focused feminism" when talking about how participants articulated care.

I feel that "feminist caring" is a more accurate way to describe the grounded, less academically rigid or defined conception of care participants articulated in interviews.

No participant articulated a precise definition of care-focused feminism, so I do not feel it is fair to use that term in my discussion of participant interview responses. In addition, because neither PACE nor Kids Count uses the word “feminism” to describe its organization, I feel it is more appropriate to use the term “feminist caring” than it is to use the term “care-focused feminism” when referencing the version of care participants articulated because I do not want to directly attribute an identity or theory to these organizations that would make them uncomfortable.

So far, I have explained that when I use the term feminist caring, I am referring to a version of caring informed by ethics of care and relational caring. In the section that follows, I explain what ethics of care are, as well as how they develop into relational ethics. A valuable aspect of this section for the purposes of this thesis is the concept that feminist ethics of care stand as a foundation for the process of relational caring. In other words, relational caring takes place within a feminist ethic of care. Relational caring cannot happen without an ethic of care coming first. Therefore, in Chapter 3, when interview participants articulate aspects of relational caring, they are unknowingly employing a form of care ethics.

From Care Ethics to Relational Caring: How Relational Caring Provides a Process for the Enactment of Care Ethics

Ethics of care originated from the work of Dr. Carol Gilligan, an educational psychologist whose research centered on moral development. For years, Gilligan worked with Dr. Lawrence Kohlberg, an educational psychologist who developed a six-stage process by which a person becomes fully morally developed (Kohlberg 1971). While men typically reached Stage Five of this process, Kohlberg’s belief was that women rarely climb past Stage Three, a stage in which an adolescent “conforms to

prevailing mores because s/he seeks the approval of other people” (Tong 2009, 164). Gilligan questioned Kohlberg’s methodology, contending that he was addressing male moral development instead of human moral development.

In her book *In a Different Voice*, published in 1982 and nicknamed “the little book that started a revolution,” Gilligan told of her experience “listening to people talking about morality and themselves,” and noted that she began to notice that women’s voices differed from men’s they when described relationships between other and self and spoke about moral problems (Gilligan 1982, 1).

In short, Gilligan began to notice that women’s voices departed rather dramatically from what she had read and taught to be “normal.” Instead of attributing this departure to an inadequate moral development, Gilligan saw a potential problem in the conception of what comprised moral development. She explained

The disparity between women’s experience and the representation of human development, noted throughout the psychological literature, has generally been seen to signify a problem in women’s development. Instead, the failure of women to fit existing models of human growth may point to a problem in the representation, a limitation in the conception of human condition, an omission of certain truths about life (Gilligan 1982, 1-2).

The context in which she noticed the departure of women’s voices from men’s and, as a result, began to suspect there was something problematic in the evaluation process, was “a study of the relation between judgment and action in a situation of moral conflict and choice” (Gilligan 1982, 1). The two-part study, which *In a Different Voice* describes in detail (Gilligan 1982, x), “expanded the usual design of research on moral judgment by asking how people defined moral problems and what experiences they construed as moral conflicts in their lives, rather than focusing on their thinking about problems presented to them for resolution” (Gilligan 1982, 3).

Gilligan found the women in these studies were much more likely to evaluate situations and make decisions based on interpersonal relationships rather than relying more extensively on objective reason; they considered how their decisions would affect others, as opposed to simply deciding whether something was right or wrong. Essentially, Gilligan's claim is that "on the average, and for a variety of cultural reasons, women tend to espouse an ethics of care that stresses relationships and responsibilities, whereas men tend to espouse an ethics of justice that stresses rules and rights" (Gilligan 1982, 7).

Gilligan's suggestions from *In a Different Voice* were taken further by American teacher and philosopher Nel Noddings almost immediately. While Gilligan coined the phrase and would continue to write about the "ethics of care" in more detail throughout her career, Noddings was the first to expand upon such an ethic, and in particular, the first to offer a way in which this ethic is enacted in every day relationships. For this reason, Noddings' work is often called "relational ethics" or "relational caring," as opposed to the more general "ethics of care."

While relational caring is grounded in Gilligan's concept of care ethics, it is important to emphasize that Gilligan's care ethics and Noddings' relational caring are not the same. Because relational caring outlines a specific process through which individuals care for others as opposed to describing a more general ethic of care, relational caring is more useful in understanding and evaluating how caring takes place within relationships. Relational caring explains how caring between two individuals happens.

Relational caring is a useful framework for one who is interested in the process by which care ethics are enacted by individuals in a relationship, as I am in this project. While the abstract language Noddings employs to describe relational caring may initially make it seem impractical for implementation in the non-academic world, I argue that relational caring is actually a helpful way of understanding the complex idea and process of caring that marks our relationships.

In her first book *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Noddings 1984), published just two years after Gilligan's *In a Different Voice*, Noddings prefaces her description of relational ethics with assertions that sound almost identical to Gilligan's discussion of the ethics of care. She asserts that ethics have been discussed largely, as she puts it, "in the voice of the father," in masculine terms such as justice, justification, and fairness; the voice of the mother—one of warmth, caring, and receptivity-- has been silent. It is her belief that traditional ethicists have focused so heavily on principles and logic that caring and the memory of caring or being cared for have been completely overshadowed and forgotten.

Noddings not only contends that the lack of attention to the voice of the mother is wrong, but argues that human caring and the memory of caring and being cared for "form the foundation for ethical response," (Noddings 1984, 1). She contends that the foundation for ethical response should be spoken with the voice of the mother, not the father. While she does not dismiss the voice of the father, she is insistent that it should no longer form the foundation for ethical response.

Before diving into her explanation of relational ethics, Noddings makes two more important assertions. The first is that her feminine view of ethics does not exclude the

possibility that women can be and are logical; in other words, women's reliance on care ethics does not mean that they rely solely on emotion to make all decisions. Her second assertion is that she is unconcerned with whether or not the form of ethics she presents is shared by more women or men. She explains

The view to be expressed here is a feminine view. This does not imply that all women will accept it or that men will reject it; indeed, there is no reason why men should not embrace it. It is feminine in the deep classical sense—rooted in receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness. It does not imply either that logic is to be discarded or that logic is alien to women. It represents an alternative to present views, one that begins with moral attitude or longing for goodness and not with moral reasoning. It may indeed be the case that such an approach is more typical of women than of men, but this is an empirical question I shall not attempt to answer (Noddings 1984, 2).

Noddings' emphasis that feminine caring is not just for women is important to remember as she begins to describe the process of relational ethics. This emphasis serves to help readers remember that, within Noddings' conception of care, caring relationships can exist between fathers and their children just as they can exist between mothers and their children; being female is not a pre-requisite to relational caring.

Beginning the Process of Relational Caring: Why Relational Caring is Important, Understanding Its Process, and the Role of the One-Caring

Before I describe the process of relational caring, I would like my reader to briefly think about his or her own concept of caring. As I have now mentioned several times, relational caring is the process by which caring happens. For some, this is probably initially counter-intuitive; how can there be a process for caring about someone? Isn't caring just a feeling that someone has, or a feeling that someone has for him or her? Perhaps part of the beauty of care to some individuals is that it seems simple—a universal feeling people share.

However, after some thought, caring is not so simple after all. In fact, it is actually quite complex. For instance, is the feeling of caring “about” a cause the same as caring “for” those affected by that cause? Is it possible to care about someone but not care for him or her? How is it possible for someone to care about a person he or she does not know?

I’m purposefully problematizing the notion of care here not to confuse my reader, but to highlight care as a concept that deserves serious and careful attention. Care is inarguably a vital component to our society; think of what would the world would be like if people suddenly woke up tomorrow and ceased to care about anything or anyone but themselves. As citizens, we say we care about various causes or issues all the time; We care about education, we care about the environment, we care about other people, etc. These declarations may be true to various extents, but who do we care *for*, and how do we care for them? Why do we need *care for someone* instead of *about something*?

Noddings is careful to distinguish caring about something or someone from caring for someone. She explains

I shall reject the notion of universal caring—that is, caring for everyone—on the grounds that it is impossible to actualize and leads us to substitute abstract problem solving and mere talk for genuine caring. Many of us think that it is not only possible to care for everyone but morally obligatory that we should do so. We can, in a sense that will need elaboration, “care about” everyone; that is, we can maintain an internal state of readiness to try to care for whoever crosses our path. But this is different from the caring-for to which we refer when we use the word “caring.” If we are thoughtful persons, we know that the difference is great...(Noddings 1984, 18).

My goal with this project and particularly with this section is not to devote a large amount of energy to explicitly exploring the idea of caring “about” someone versus the

idea of caring “for” someone, but I would like my reader to keep this mind. My goal is to provide my reader with an understanding of how relational caring happens so that he or she may see the connections between feminist caring and the articulations of care from participant interviews; put another way, I am more concerned in this project with the idea of *caring for* as opposed to *caring about*. Still, I find this concept of caring for versus caring about important to interrogate, particularly as a feminist. As feminists, we care about numerous causes and people, largely people who are structurally and socially oppressed by patriarchal institutions. This being the case, who are we caring for? How do we strike a balance between caring about causes and people as a whole and caring for people individually? I will return to this question at the end of Chapter 3, but for now, as I explain relational caring, I ask that my feminist (and non-feminist) reader shift away from the mindset of caring about causes and people, and instead direct their thoughts to what it means to care for others.

Noddings contends that ethics involve specific, particular relations, hence the name “relational ethics.” Relational ethics is comprised of two parties: the first is the “one-caring,” whom she assigns the pronoun “she,” and the second is the “cared-for,” whom Noddings has assigned the pronoun “he.” Noddings explains her thought behind this terminology and particular assignment of pronouns as follows:

First, it allows us to speak about our basic entities without explaining the entire conceptual apparatus repeatedly; second, it prevents us from smuggling in meanings through the use of synonyms...Another matter of style in connection with “one-caring” and “cared-for” should be mentioned here. In order to maintain balance and avoid confusion, I have consistently associated the generic “one-caring” with the universal feminine, “she,” and “cared-for” with the masculine, “he.” Clearly, however, when actual persons are substituted for “one-caring” and “cared-for” in the basic relation, they may be both male, both female, female-male, or male-female (Noddings 1984, 4).

The one-caring and the cared-for engage in the process of relational caring, and “it is complete when it is fulfilled in both” (Noddings 1984, 68). In other words, caring is not complete until both the one-caring and the cared-for have performed their specific roles in the process. I will return to this idea in more detail in a moment, but it is important to keep in mind as I proceed with the explanation of relational caring.

The process for relational caring is as follows: First, the one-caring becomes engrossed in the cared-for and exhibits motivational displacement. Second, the one-caring performs some act for the cared-for. Finally, the cared-for then reacts in some way to the caring. In order to provide a more detailed understanding of how this process works in terms of exactly what each party does, I will first describe the actions of the one-caring, and then describe the actions of the cared-for.

The one-caring engages in caring in a particular way, differently than the cared-for. For the one-caring, caring begins with a “feeling-with” the cared-for (Noddings 1984, 30). Noddings cautions her reader about using the word “empathy,” noting that the dictionary definition of the word “empathy” is “The power of projecting one’s personality into, and so fully understanding, the object of contemplation.” She considers that this is perhaps a traditionally western, masculine way of looking at the concept of “feeling with,” and unsurprisingly, does not appear compelled to use it (ibid). Instead, she uses the term “engrossment” –step 1 of the relational caring process- to describe what she means by “feeling-with.”

The notion of ‘feeling-with’ that I have outlined does not involve projection but reception. I have called it ‘engrossment.’ I do not ‘put myself in the other’s shoes,’ so to speak, by analyzing his reality as objective data and then asking, ‘How would I feel in such a situation?’ On the contrary, I set aside my temptation to analyze and to plan. I do not project. I receive the

other into myself, and I see and feel with the other. I become a duality. I am not thus caused to see or feel—that is, to exhibit certain behavioral signs interpreted as seeing and feeling—for I am committed to the receptivity that permits me to see and to feel this way. The seeing and the feelings are mine, but only partly and temporarily mine, as on loan to me (Noddings 1984, 30).

At first blush, Noddings' description of engrossment seems somewhat impossible, or like a mystical experience that one might have had at Woodstock. She anticipates this, and explains that, "It is not a mystical notion. On the contrary, it refers to a common occurrence, something with which we are all familiar" (ibid).

Noddings points out that when infants cry, mothers react with the infant and immediately *feel* that something is wrong. They do not start to rationally question themselves about how they would feel if particular things had happened to them (Noddings uses the example of how ridiculous it would be for a mother to ask herself, "How would I feel if I were wet to the ribs?"). She explains

Naturally, when an infant cries, we react with the infant and feel that something is wrong. *Something is wrong*. This is the infant's feeling, and it is ours. We receive it and share it. We do not begin by trying to interpret the cry, although we may learn to do this. We first respond to the feeling that something is the matter. It is not foolishness to begin talking to our child as we respond to the cry. We say 'I'm here, sweetheart,' and 'I hear you, darling,' as we move physically toward the child. And usually, we comfort first, saying, 'There, there. Everything is alright,' before we begin to analyze what is the matter. We do not begin by formulating or solving a problem but by sharing a feeling (Noddings 1984, 31).

At the same time the one-caring becomes engrossed with the cared-for, there is, in addition to engrossment, what Noddings calls a "motivational shift or displacement" (Noddings 1984, 33) on the part of the one-caring. The one-caring puts her motive energy "at the service of the [cared-for]" (ibid), meaning she not only feels engrossed with him, but feels compelled to act *for* him. She wants to do something to help him. Noddings acknowledges that in extreme cases, motivational displacement can result in

parents “living for” their children, but this is an extreme example that does not take into account the aspect of care being self-serving (Noddings 1984, 99-100). Normally, motivational displacement simply means that the one-caring is ready to couple her engrossment with the cared-for with action. Otherwise, the mother with the crying infant would stay in the other room, feeling that something was wrong, but doing nothing else.

After the one-caring exhibits engrossment and motivational displacement, she performs some kind of act for the cared-for. Noddings points out that this step is tricky, because after the one-caring becomes engrossed in and exhibits motivational displacement in the cared-for, she tends to start to rationalize. This is normal because, after all, in caring, we must respond in some way. Otherwise, we would simply stay forever in the receptive mode of engrossment and motivational displacement and never actually do anything for the cared-for (Noddings 1984, 36).

The problem with the one-caring beginning to rationalize as she moves to act for the cared-for is that as she converts what she has received from the cared-for into a problem, she begins to move away from the reality of the cared-for. “We clean up his reality, strip it of complex and bothersome qualities, in order to think it. The other’s reality becomes data, stuff to be analyzed, studied, interpreted” (Noddings 1984, 36).

If and when this rationalization starts to take place, Noddings stresses the one-caring must recognize that she is objectifying and isolating the cared-for, and make an effort to keep the relational experience in tact. A simpler way of putting this would be to say that she must keep the specific feelings and needs of the cared-for central as she begins to act. In doing this, the one-caring is able to tie her objective thinking to a “relational stake at the heart of caring” (ibid), as opposed to simply producing an

objective solution to the problem that does not take into account any particulars of the situation.

Noddings warns her reader of what happens if the one-caring does not or cannot tie objective thinking to the relational stake of caring:

When we fail to do this, we can climb into the clouds of abstraction, moving rapidly away from the caring situation into a domain of objective and impersonal problems where we are free to impose structure as we will. If I do not turn away from my abstractions, I lose the one cared-for. Indeed, I lose myself as one-caring, for now I care about a problem instead of a person (Noddings 1984, 36).

In other words, if the one-caring begins to objectify the cared-for, moving away from him as a person and casting him as a problem, she risks losing the caring relationship.

Noddings explains that it is normal to want to objectify or rationalize the problems of the cared-for; it is normal to want to move toward abstraction. However, this feeling should be understood as a turning point for the one-caring; she should identify this desire as a sign to make sure she is keeping the relational stake of caring central (ibid), then reconcile her abstraction with this relational stake.

What all of this means is that Noddings wishes to move toward a way of making decisions that is the inverse of abstraction. She does not want to turn people into problems; she wants us to remember that problems are people. According to Noddings (and Gilligan), women are likely to do this already. When women are faced with moral dilemmas—that instead of acting or making decisions in a traditionally masculine fashion, based on pre-determined principles superimposed on a situation, “women seek to ‘fill out’ hypothetical situations in a defensible move toward concretization” (Noddings 1984, 36). She illustrates this possibility by giving the example of deciding on a punishment for someone. Whereas a traditionally masculine approach might involve

inquiring details regarding the principle under which the person's offense falls, what principles it violates, etc., a more feminine approach might be to inquire more about the offender and his victims, what the circumstances were surrounding the crime, what will happen as a result of punishment, etc. She may ask, "What if this were my child?"

While it's unfair to fully assess each position by simply looking at the first move, it is clear that the approaches are different—whereas the traditional (masculine) method is to move immediately toward abstraction, allowing thinking to "take place clearly and logically in isolation from the complicating factors of particular persons, places, and circumstances" (Noddings 1984, 37), the nontraditional/alternative (feminine) method moves toward concretization where initial feelings, opinions, and decisions can be altered by the introduction of new facts, feelings, or histories/stories. Noddings explains

The father might sacrifice his own child in fulfilling a principle; the mother might sacrifice any principle to preserve her child. This is far too simplistic to be considered a summary or definitive description of positions, but it is indicative and instructive. It underscores the sort of difference that places the present approach in opposition to traditional ethics (Noddings 1984, 37).

In other words, Noddings contends that in her approach, a shift away from the traditionally masculine, immediate abstraction of the cared-for should take place. She is suggesting that the way she believes women are more likely to make decisions—a process that does not value black and white as much as it values various shades of grey, so to speak—is the ethic upon which we as a society should be operating.

The Cared-For: Understanding the Importance of Receptivity On the Part of the Cared-For In the Process and Completion of Relational Caring

In Noddings' relational caring, the role of the cared-for is simple but important: he completes the act of caring by showing receptivity of the act of care given by the

one-caring. In order for the caring cycle to be completed, the cared-for must communicate that he has received care. Noddings explains

The one-caring reflects reality as she sees it to the child. She accepts him as she hopes he will accept himself—seeing what is there, considering what might be changed, speculating on what might be. But the commitment, the decision to embrace a particular possibility, must be the responsibility of the cared-for (Noddings 1984, 60).

Noddings does not take the role of the cared-for lightly. To her, the cared-for is not simply acted upon; he is not simply cared for without the one-caring being concerned with his response. Instead, his reaction to the care, his “decision to embrace a particular possibility,” is an equally important component of relational caring. It is only when the cared-for is receptive to the care provided by the one-caring that relational caring be completed, and begin again.

It is hard to overemphasize the importance of the cared-for’s reception of care. This reception will allow the cared-for to differentiate between being received or ignored; “Whatever the one-caring actually does is enhanced or diminished, made meaningful or meaningless, in the attitude conveyed to the cared-for” (Noddings 1984, 61). In other words, whatever the one-caring does for the cared-for, how the cared-for receives it matters equally. Whatever the intentions of the one-caring, how the cared-for receives those intentions matters equally.

In a perfect world, the cared-for would always be receptive to the care provided by the one-caring. However, we do not live in a perfect world, which begs the question: If the process of relational caring is completed when the cared-for is receptive to the one-caring, what happens when the cared-for is not receptive to the one-caring? Can the one-caring successfully care if the cared-for does not receive her care? Noddings’s answer is no.

Does this mean that I cannot be said to care for X if X does not recognize my caring? In the fullest sense, I think we have to accept this result... Suppose I claim to care for X, but X does not believe that I care for him. If I meet the first-person requirements of caring for X, I am tempted to insist that I do care—that there is something wrong with X that he does not appreciate my caring. But if you are looking at this relationship, you would have to report, however reluctantly, that something is missing. X does not feel that I care. Therefore, sadly, I must admit that, while I feel that I care, X does not perceive that I care and, hence, the relationship cannot be characterized as one of caring. This result does not necessarily signify a negligence on my part. There are limits in caring. X may be paranoid or otherwise pathological. There may be no way for my caring to reach him. But, then, caring has been only partially actualized (Noddings 1984, 68).

For many, this many seem counterintuitive. How can caring be dependent upon how the cared-for perceives that care? Noddings points out this issue is particularly relevant in teaching, as there are those in education who find it inconceivable that teaching is dependent on students learning. She relies on Aristotle's contention that "one process may find its actualization in another," to address this issue, explaining that caring's necessary completion in reception by the cared-for or teaching's necessary completion in learning on the part of the student should not be incomprehensible at all (Noddings 1984, 69).

Importantly, Noddings does not label the one-caring whose care the cared-for does not positively receive as a failure and end her book. She does not vilify the one-caring who is ultimately unable to engage in a complete, successful relationship with the cared-for. She explains that saying, "I care," does not take away the intention of the one-caring; the one-caring can still say, "I care for him," and mean it, even if the one-caring does not receive that care. In these situations, however, the one-caring must understand that she is not alone in the caring relation, and is not solely to be credited or blamed. As much as the one-caring might be prepared to care, relational caring cannot

be complete if the cared-for does not receive it. While she can earnestly acknowledge her intention to care, she cannot proclaim that intention alone as successful caring.

The importance Noddings gives to the cared-for is perhaps the most crucial aspect of relational caring for feminists to take away from this discussion due to its emphasis on receptivity and valuing of the cared-for. It shifts the bulk of the power away from the one-caring and emphasizes caring as a relational process. Indeed, anyone in a caring profession could benefit immensely from the idea that in order for caring to be successful, the cared-for must perceive and receive the care being offered. I will return to this idea in Chapter 3, as the reality of unsuccessful caring was one of the components of caring participants discussed in interviews.

Enacting Caring in Social Policy: Noddings' Ideas on How Care Found in the Home Should Inform Social Policy

Nodding's attention to care did not end with relationships between the one-caring and the cared-for; she extended it to social policy as well. In *Starting at Home* (Noddings 2002), Noddings briefly sketched out the process of relational caring to establish that this type of caring was what she meant when she used the term "care" (Noddings 2002, 13-19), but the explicit discussion of care ethics or relational caring was not the focus of the book. Instead, Noddings talked about the relationship between the home and social policy. Given that, to an extent, my project speaks to feminists as well as those in education about ways in which a feminist version of caring could be useful in caring for at-risk youth, a look at what Noddings, an advocate of care ethics and relational caring, had to say about care in social policy seems warranted.

Noddings' main argument in *Starting at Home: Caring and Social Policy* was that the relational caring learned in the home should influence social policy. She contended

that this is the reverse of what has happened historically, a reversal Noddings believed could help to refute one of the greatest arguments against care theory and relational ethics. She explains

The approach I take here reverses a long philosophical tradition. The custom, since Plato, has been to describe an ideal or best state and then to discuss the role of home and families as supporters of that state. What might we learn if, instead, we start with a description of best homes and then move outward to the larger society? The question is intriguing in itself, but answering it should effectively address an objection that has sometimes been raised against care theory—namely, that it is a fine “domestic” theory but has little to contribute to policy making at the societal level (Noddings 2002, 1).

Noddings provided an extensive description of how she conceptualized ideal homes. According to her, ideal homes protect and encourage children, as well offer necessary material resources, encourage growth, provide at least one adult who engages in attentive love, and “educate for a form of acceptability that is simultaneously adapted to and critical of the cultural standards in which the home is located” (Noddings 2002, 227).

In addition, ideal homes constantly evolve; they are never fixed to a point of becoming static or permanent. Noddings points out that the only element that remains fixed is that every member of the family can count on receiving the response “I am here” when he or she calls. Ideal homes both recognize and encourage healthy attitudes towards bodies and bodily pleasures, as well as “to places as extensions of the body, to living things and our natural surroundings, to material objects, buildings, and the like, and to reasons that all of these things are important to us” (ibid).

Regarding abuse, cruelty, and coercion, Noddings maintained that while all good homes guard against cruelty, ideal homes provide an environment in which every act of coercion is questioned and examined. If coercion is used because someone (a care-

taker) is being responsible, it is followed by negotiation in an attempt by the one in control to help the one who is controlled understand why coercion was necessary. “She negotiates conditions that make the use of force more palatable and more profitable. The aim is always to shift more control to the one who is more dependent, but there is no denial of interdependence. Responsibility trumps autonomy” (Noddings 2002, 228).

While ideal homes promote the idea of shared responsibility, they do not deliberately inflict pain. In working cooperatively with both the controller and the controlled, ideal homes are educative, meaning that they encourage growth in both academics and hobbies/interest. In addition, ideal homes support flexible ideals and dreams of children, and can differentiate between expressed and inferred needs of children.

In Noddings’ final comments on ideal homes, she remarked that perhaps the greatest difference between good homes and ideal homes is the emphasis placed by ideal homes on understanding how we are conditioned. They are open to the idea that while some rules must stay the same, others must be broken or changed; “they do not try to internalize the stern father as a conscience but to educate the caring response” (Noddings 2002, 229).

The trouble with talking about ideal homes, of course, is that no two homes are the same. Noddings does not explicitly assign a race or class to ideal homes; however, it is safe to assume that not all people would share her conception of an ideal home. This is a particularly relevant issue for the purposes of this thesis. Given that I am interested in ways to provide care for at risk-youth, the concept of what an “ideal home” looks like is an important one to consider. At-risk youth comes from different homes

than youth not “at-risk.” Different families, largely depending on their race and class, provide care in different ways, and while I am not explicitly concerned in this project with the care that children receive in the home (rather, I am more concerned about how they receive care outside the home, by those who are not related to them), the issue of homes of children and the care they receive there deserves a more nuanced look than is required in deciding whether or not they meet what Noddings has described as the ideal.

Speaking to this issue, Anette Lareau looks the concept of childhood in her book *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life* (Lareau 2003), illustrating the differences between how upper, middle, and lower class parents raise their children. She gives a counter example to Noddings’ concept of ideal homes within the first 3 pages of her book in the stories of Billy, Wendy, and Harold, three children from poor families whose parents believe that “the crucial responsibilities of parenthood do not lie in eliciting their children’s feelings, opinions, and thoughts. Rather, they see a clear boundary between adults and children. Parents tend to use directives: they tell their children what to do rather persuading them with reasoning” (Lareau 2003, 3). While it is not fair to say that Noddings would definitely characterize these homes as bad, the homes where Billy, Wendy, and Harold live clearly do not match Noddings’ description of ideal homes.

Lareau emphasizes that class culture largely determines what homes are like for children. She points out that “in this historical moment,” middle-class parents embrace the idea of concerted cultivation of children—that is, middle-class parents structure the time of their children, enrolling them in sports, music classes, etc. to encourage their

children's growth. In contrast, working-class and poor parents tend to parent in a way that embraces the idea of natural growth, in which children "experience long stretches of leisure time, child-initiated play, clear boundaries between adults and children, and daily interactions with kin" (Lareau 2003, 3-4). Clearly the homes of children with middle-class parents are different from the homes of children with working-class and poor parents, but are they necessarily better?

Lareau's book is just one example of how the concept of "ideal homes" is not a simple one. As I have already addressed and will discuss more in the next section, a key aspect of any discussion on care is that care is culturally defined, and that aspect is vital to remember when dealing with the relationships between homes, care, and institutions. Marie Ann Roberts (Roberts 2010), Janine Jones (Jones 2010), and Gun and Curtis (Gun and Curtis 2000) all provide discussions of how cultural conceptions of care, especially as they relate to African American families, affect the lives of children in their families in terms of their interactions with institutions, particularly in the field of education. What feminists, specifically white feminists, can gain from this body of literature is a reminder of the necessary caution we must exercise when we talk about caring; we must pay attention to ways of caring that have been ignored, ways of caring that are currently being enacted by those in caring professions within minority communities, and generally speaking, the defining role culture plays in determining what kind of caring is successful.

In moving forward, I do not wish to set the problematic task of defining an ideal home aside. Still, Noddings' thoughts on incorporating care into social policy are useful in thinking about what care ethics look like when they are practically enacted within

institutions. Using her description of the ideal home as a foundation, she argues we should extend the characteristics of such homes to social institutions and practices in order to make them more caring places.

Noddings contends that using practices that characterize ideal homes, policy makers may begin to inform institutions (such as education) with suggestions that are care-based and care-focused. According to Noddings, policy makers “would reject any principle or rule that makes it impossible for people in responsible positions to respond with care to those who plead for care or obviously need it” (Noddings 2002, 231). Ideally, this would happen naturally, but in reality, it rarely does. She contends that professionals must be expertly trained (perhaps to explicitly counter the dismissal of caring in the workplace) and, consequently, allowed a wide range of decision-making powers, even if that means changing the wording (and nature) of job descriptions. She explains that, for example, “social workers should be able to tinker, within limits, with amounts, deadlines, eligibility requirements, and the like. There should be no mandatory sentencing laws that effectively move judgment from judges. Schools should not adopt zero tolerance rules and, if they already have them, they should abolish them” (Noddings 2002, 231).

An obvious issue with Noddings’ conception of how institutions and policy makers should incorporate care is that she seems to be operating on the assumption that all professionals will be well-suited for and dedicated to their jobs, and therefore competent to appropriately handle the broader powers and responsibilities Noddings contends they should have. In other words, it seems she is assuming that all people

will “care” about their jobs in addition to being good at them. This is unrealistic for a number of reasons, and a complication that, importantly, does not escape Noddings.

Noddings addresses this issue by acknowledging that abuse of power is possible, and the notion of a realized utopian society in which professionals are immune from abuses of power is simply unrealistic, bordering on absurd. Suggesting a way to combat this, she states, “In actual life, however, provision must be made to curb both error and abuse, and one answer to the problem is the establishment of review boards or informal counseling groups. Judicial decisions are routinely open to appeal, but the process could be made more efficient and more instructive” (Noddings 2002, 232). Essentially, Noddings advocates for more review boards of varying powers, particularly comprised of groups of professionals who share the same occupation, that can “monitor one another’s work, make suggestions for reconsideration, and mediate disputes with clients” (ibid).

Specifically regarding education, Noddings provides two recommendations in *Caring and Social Policy*, both still revolving around the importance of ideal homes (Noddings 2002, 289). The first recommendation is that “every child should live in a home that has at least adequate material resources and attentive love,” and the second is that “schools should include education for home life in their curriculum.” She contends that because it is well known that homes are the number one factor in a child’s success (ibid), it makes sense that children should be able to rely on the supportive structure of their homes, and that schools should be preparing young people to create ideal homes in the future.

These recommendations would and should make anyone with an interest in how care is culturally defined more than a little nervous. They beg careful attention, again, to the fact that “ideal” homes may look different in different cultures. To me, this attention seems particularly warranted in Noddings’ second recommendation that schools should prepare young people to create ideal homes. While there is certainly something to be said for schools helping children to develop the skills to have fulfilling and supportive personal lives, the idea that schools should prepare students to create ideal homes means that schools would to agree on and define what an ideal home looks like, and perpetuate those views on students. Clearly, this is problematic.

According to Lareau, however, such a uniformly shared belief about homes and child-rearing practices already exists among professionals who work with children. She explains these professionals (doctors, teachers, counselors, etc.) tend to generally agree on general guidelines concerning how children should be raised, and that this agreement contributes to a dominant set of ideas on how parents should care for their children.

There is little dispute among professionals on the broad principles for promoting educational development in children through proper parenting. These standards include the importance of talking with children, developing their educational interests, and playing an active role in their schooling. Similarly, parenting guidelines typically stress the importance of reasoning with children and teaching them to solve problems through negotiation rather than with physical force. Because these guidelines are so generally accepted, and because they focus on a set of practices concerning how parents should raise their children, they form a dominant set of cultural repertoires about how children should be raised. This widespread agreement among professionals about the broad principles for child rearing permeates our society. A small number of experts thus potentially shape the behavior of a large number of parents (Lareau 2003, 4).

Lareau’s observation seems to be in line with much of what Noddings contends should happen, namely in terms of the messages sent to parents about what good

parenting (and consequently, ideal homes) looks like. Again, this is an issue that those interested in equality and opportunity must not ignore. However, despite her lack of problematization of the concept of ideal homes, Noddings' central reliance on ideal homes informing social policy should not be devalued entirely. We, feminists included, must closely interrogate what "ideal" means to different people and cultures, but that does not mean we have to aggressively dismiss the notion of the "home" informing social policy. Her idea that the caring that is enacted within the home should also play a central role in social policy seems, to me, a good one, and in fact, one that I soon illustrate at work in warm demander theory. The existing and growing body of literature on cultural responsiveness, critical race theory, and other ideas concerning how culture should feature in social policy issues indicates a closer look at this issue, and provides an opportunity for feminists to think about how they can enter into the discussion, contributing their attention to gender to the ongoing attention to race and culture as it pertains to social policy.

The Response to Care-Focused Feminism: Critiques, Applications to Other Disciplines, and Receptivity

One camp of criticism of care-focused feminism comes from philosophers such as Bill Puka (Puka 1990), Brian Berry (Berry 1995), and Marilyn Friedman (Friedman 1990). Their criticisms take place on a high level of abstraction, questioning the validity of Gilligan's moral claims about care and justice. These critics claim that, in developing care ethics, Gilligan overestimated the value of care and underestimated the value of justice, or, at the very least, did not pay enough attention to the relationship between the two (Tong 2009, 177).

In addition, much of the criticism regarding care-focused feminism, and ethics of care specifically, has been directed toward Gilligan's methodology in her work that eventually led her to write *In a Different Voice* (Robinson 1999). Critics claim that the empirical data she used from her studies was not sufficient to arrive at her claims about the difference in men's and women's "voices," and if she had paid more attention to the men in the lives of the women she interviewed, she might have arrived at an entirely different conclusion about the difference in moral reasoning between men and women (Tong 2009, 173-174). In other words, by focusing on the voices of women, Gilligan somewhat ironically excluded men (Hekman 1995).

The exclusion of men's voices seems like an essential issue with which feminists should concern themselves in future scholarship, potentially using projects like mine to do so. Do men articulate an ethic of care? Both Gilligan and Noddings certainly allow for them to do so, but do they? Does the increased number of fathers who choose to stay home with their children (Peacock and Marsden 2013), for example, suggest that men's traditionally masculine articulation of ethics has changed? Feminists could gain valuable scholarship by looking at ways men articulate feminist caring in practical situations.

While there are certainly many criticisms of care-focused feminism as whole, the chief issue is that of essentialism. Critics question "the wisdom of too closely linking women to an ethics of care," (Tong 2009, 173), fearing that even if an ethics of care is real, it is unwise to publicly proclaim such a fact. "Linking women with caring may promote the view that women care by nature, or the view that because women can and

have cared, they should always care, no matter the cost to themselves” (Tong 2009, 174).

This is an understandable concern. First, by championing characteristics traditionally associated with women (such as tenderness, caring, nurturing, etc.), care focused feminism seems to fly in the face of the United States’ most popular and utilized branch of feminism, liberal feminism. Of course, this is not to say that liberal feminists do not care about people or engage in caring relationships, but their interests in freeing women from oppressive gender roles in order to allow them to gain access to institutions from which they have previously been excluded understandably does not focus on women as care-takers (Tong 2009, 34). Liberal feminists highlight the fact that historically, women have been pushed into “caring” professions and been denied access to more traditionally masculine institutions as a result; therefore, an advertised focus on feminine caring could potentially undo decades of activism championing women as more than mothers and wives.

Even if the link between caring and women is done in a positive, proud manner – in other words, even if women “reclaim” their association with care-- there is still the very real risk that linking women with caring implies that women can only care, rendering women’s capacity for logic, reason, etc. nonexistent. We cannot expect society at large, with its still pervasive sexist and patriarchal assumptions about women, to devote careful attention to Gilligan’s and Noddings’ assertions that women do in fact use reason and logic even as they care. Masculine characteristics of rational evaluation, objectivity, etc. are the characteristics viewed and regarded as most responsible for success in western societies, and it is understandable that the idea of

embracing characteristics that appear diametrically opposed to these more traditionally masculine traits that are rewarded in success is troubling to many.

Closely related to the issue of essentialism is the possibility of danger and exploitation faced by women in care focused feminism. Under care focused feminism, women risk their identities becoming “other-directed,” and, as Sarah Hoagland argues, acting morally can suddenly mean being exploited (Tong 2009, 178-179). Even the issue of self-caring is potentially blurred within care focused feminism; do women care for themselves because they want to for reasons grounded in autonomy, or do they self-care because it enables them to be better carers for the cared-for?

Finally, care focused feminism seems to do very little to address the pervasive social and structural inequalities that characterize both past and present society. As with the issue of ideal homes, a person’s personal circumstances, location, socialization, race, gender, class, and sexuality all play a role in how that person conceptualizes care. However, care focused feminism can be seen as insufficiently taking such factors into account, and it is this failure that I would argue is the strongest evidence of the essentialism to which an inattentive discussion of care-focused feminism can lead.

Not all responses to Noddings’ work have been negative; however, those who have positively responded to her work typically do so in a way that discusses how her concept of relational caring can be used practically. For feminist purposes, this is highly useful; feminists can stand to gain just as much, if not more, from studying practical ways in which care ethics have been utilized by professionals as they can learn from reading the actual theory. Those who have responded positively to Noddings’ work are

primarily educators or those concerned or involved with professions that emphasize and are built on the basis of caring, such as nursing or social work.

Author and educator Ruth Sidney Charney writes largely on ways that a relational ethic of care can aid not only academic progress in the classroom, but also help with classroom management (Charney 1992). Ann Higgins uses the ethic of care in her discussion about her experience in a Bronx public school, arguing that caring can only take place in the context of social justice (Higgins 1989). Carol Baines, Patricia Evans, Sheila Neysmith Sheila Fry, and Betty Sichel all work with the idea that an ethic of care is beneficial when enacted within nursing, social work, and teaching, with a particular focus on the relationship between caring and social problems such as poverty and abuse (Baines et al. 1991; Fry 1989; Sichel 1989). Brinton Lykes writes about the role power plays within an ethic of care and how it can affect the type and amount of caring one performs, speaking to the importance of power dynamics and privilege at work in relationships (Lykes 1989).

Writing from an African American perspective, Toinette Eugene discusses how the ethic of care is constant in the lives of black women. Further, she argues that black women best represent the ethic of care, and that even though it has not translated into power within institutions, the ethic of care has been extremely liberating for black women as a whole (Toinette 1989). This idea speaks to the idea of other mothering (sometimes written “othermothering”), a tradition that African American communities have incorporated since slavery. “Other mothers” are typically middle-aged to older African American women who help blood mothers in their community care for children, imparting wisdom and knowledge gained from their maturity and time in the community

(James 1993). Incorporating scholarship that examines feminist care ethics in African American communities should be an important endeavor to feminists looking to incorporate culture into the conversation about care.

The three scholars whose work most closely responds to Noddings are Sara Ruddick (Ruddick 1989), Virginia Held (Held 2006), and Eva Kittay (Kittay 1999). These women argue that our foundational relationships of mother-infant or parent-child are what should inform society at its core, as they inform us at our core. In many ways, this speaks to Noddings' desire for social policy to reflect values we learn growing up in ideal homes. One key distinction that Ruddick, Held, and Kittay make between their work and Noddings' is their characterization of care as work. They cast caring "not only as an other-directed psychological attitude of attentiveness but also as a practice, work, or labor. Caring is about having a certain sort of mind-set, but it is also about assisting those in need of care" (Tong 2009, 181). Their interpretation of caring as labor is one that marks an important viewpoint in potential ways of thinking about care, and also one that is present in certain ways in participant interview responses. Yes, caring is something one feels, but the reality is that caring is also very much something one does, and requires its own logic and skills (Ruddick 1984).

Care-Focused Feminism Organically Enacted via Warm Demander Theory: Who Warm Demanders Are, How They Care, and What They Add to the Discussion of Care

The criticism for care-focused feminism is largely relegated to the same time period most of the response, good and bad, was published: mid-1980s to early to mid-1990s, with a few exceptions around 2000. This is unsurprising, given the increasingly anti-positivist climate of the academy around that time, as well as the 2001 passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and growing criticisms of self-esteem curriculum and

character education that both preceded and surrounded the bill. Care-focused feminism, with its emphasis on children's needs and the importance of caring relationships, did not appear to speak to the move toward "objective" standardized testing and evaluation of knowledge. While both Noddings and Gilligan continued to contribute to discussion into the early 2000s regarding how ethics of care can inform modern society and societal institutions, comprehensive discussions of care focused feminism largely disappeared by the mid to late 1990s, and have yet to resurface as a central part of feminist discussion.

However, a non-abstract, more organic and active form of care focused feminism can be found in warm demander theory, a teaching style and theory that has historically characterized and continues to characterize many highly successful teachers of minority students in the United States, a population well known for being on the wrong side of the achievement gap and often requiring more specific and personal attention and care (Howard 2003). Warm demander theory is a practical, solid example of how relational caring can operate in the lives of at-risk youth, while also speaking to culturally defined conceptions of care. The fact that there are professionals called warm demanders is significant; warm demander theory gives feminists and others an opportunity to observe people who have been so effective at the particular type of care they provide that there is an entire (emerging) theory named after them. There is no one with the title of "relational carer" we can observe in any setting, but we can observe warm demanders, and more importantly, learn from them.

Warm demanders are teachers who communicate warmth, but also communicate a strong, nonnegotiable demand for students' respect and effort out a genuine concern

and care for students and their futures. In doing so, warm demanders are able to sustain students' attention and engagement, a task that is vital in the success of at-risk students. Warm demanders build deliberate, caring relationships with their students, clearly expressing their interest in students' lives and individual personalities. They regard even the most challenging student as important and full of potential, with what Bondy and Ross call an "unconditional positive regard," believing that each student has the ability to achieve success (Bondy and Ross 2008).

Warm demanders also recognize the monumental role that culture plays in a student's life; they openly value and seek to learn about students' culture, while also recognizing the role their own culture plays in their own worldview. "Gaining insight into cultural values and habits helps teachers monitor their reactions to student behaviors that they might deem "bad," but that are considered normal or even valued in the student's home culture. Without such reflection, a teacher's implicit assumptions can inadvertently communicate to students a lack of caring" (ibid). This attention to culture in a caring relationship is a component that, as I discussed earlier as it related to Noddings' "ideal homes," is largely missing in care-focused feminism, and warm demanders' intense consciousness of it should be read as a meaningful contribution to important considerations a caring relationship.

In terms of expectations of their students, warm demanders do not merely communicate their hope that students will attain success; they demand success, and provide whatever support systems are necessary for students to attain such success, including working with the students to address both academic and behavioral issues (ibid). They know that success, both academic and personal, is crucial for at-risk

students and children of color; while they do not deny the autonomy of students, warm demanders operate with the mindset that students not only have the potential to attain success, but must absolutely attain success for their own sake as well as the sake of their community (Irvine and Fraser 1998). Warm demanders care about student success for more personal reasons than their own evaluations; in their relationships with students, they hold what Noddings would call a strong relational stake in caring.

Finally, warm demanders provide a clear, no-nonsense articulation of their expectations frequently (Irvine and Fraser 1998), leaving students with no confusion as to exactly what they should be doing. Although there is still more research needed on the effectiveness of warm demanders, the existing research shows that students, particularly children of color, positively receive warm demanders as people who love them, want them to succeed, and are willing to do whatever it takes to make sure they do succeed (Wilson and Corbett 2001). Put another way, a warm demander is an example of the one-caring who, even in a high stakes, difficult situation, is able to reach the cared-for in a meaningful, lasting way that makes him receptive to her care.

Warm Demander Theory: Origins, Enactment Within Multicultural Pedagogy, and Current Employment in Culturally Relevant Teaching

Warm demander theory was originally conceptualized by Judith Kleinfeld, a psychology professor at the University of Alaska, as a result of a study conducted during the 1970-1971 school year aiming to identify effective teaching methods utilized by teachers of classrooms comprised of Indian and Eskimo students (Kleinfeld 1975). Kleinfeld observed teachers of native Indian and Eskimo students, and was able to quickly discern that one particular teaching style was used by highly affective teachers of native students; further, teachers who did not teach in this particular style were not

successful with native students (Kleinfeld 1975, 328-335). This successful style of teaching was characterized by two components: the teacher's ability to create a classroom of emotional warmth that fulfills the student's expectation of close, personal relationships, and the expression of concern and care for the student "not by passive sympathy, but by demanding a high quality of academic work." (Kleinfeld 1975, 318). She deemed the successful teachers "warm demanders."

While Kleinfeld might have been the first person to give warm demanders a name, she was certainly not the first person to observe this teaching style. A review of the literature discussing black schools in the era just prior and then during school integration is highly suggestive that warm demanders, in addition to being a major presence in modern successful African American classrooms, have been active in African American classrooms for quite some time. In her book *Their Highest Potential* (Walker 1996), Vanessa Siddle Walker argues that the historic memory of the education black students received before integration is incorrect and incomplete; while it is true that black schools suffered from poor facilities and a severe lack of resources, the schools themselves were high functioning institutions that supported students in culturally specific ways and held high standards for all students, with teachers and administrators leading the way. She explains

Although black schools were indeed commonly lacking facilities and funding, some evidence suggests that the environment of the segregated school had affective traits, institutional policies, and community support that helped black children learn in spite of the neglect their schools received from white school boards...The schools are remembered as having atmospheres where 'support, encouragement, and rigid standards' combined to enhance students' self-worth and increase their aspirations to achieve...Students recount teachers and principals who 'would not let them go wrong;' they describe teachers who were well-trained, dedicated, and

demanding and who took a personal interest in them, even if it meant devoting their own money, or time outside the school day (Walker 1996, 3).

Faustine Jones, the author of the first extensive description of the positive elements in black schools during segregation, provides an account even more congruent with warm demander theory. Walker shares Jones' account to support her own argument: most pre-integration schools did not give students a choice whether or not they would learn; the choice was how much they would learn. Failure was unacceptable to teachers, family, peers, and the community. The schools were most often compared with a family "where teachers and principal, with parentlike authority, exercised almost complete autonomy in shaping student learning and insuring student discipline" (Walker 1996 3).

Walker's work is certainly not meant to contribute to a strict discussion of pedagogy, nor, really, is Kleinfeld's. Walker's work is historical, and while Kleinfeld's is certainly more pedagogical in nature, it is mostly an observation of what works with a particular demographic, coupled with suggestions. However, the work of both women does have significant pedagogical value, as the characteristics of the teachers they describe as being effective, unyielding, and nurturing—the teachers who are warm demanders—have been, in many ways, incorporated into multicultural pedagogy.

I discuss multicultural pedagogy here both because it broadly encompasses components of warm demander theory and because it represents an important concept in education: the valuing and inclusion of multiple cultures. Multicultural pedagogy and education is a not only a mindset, but also a toolkit of ideas, strategies, resources, and scholarship that serves to ensure students from all backgrounds will be academically successful (Nieto 1996). Not solely relegated to teaching, tenets and ideas of

multicultural education can be enacted by administrators, school systems, counselors, and other actors in the education system. In multicultural pedagogy, teachers and students expressly value different cultures, histories, and perspectives, as opposed to complying with and replicating the white hegemonic culture that has defined schools and societies for hundreds of years. By valuing and studying individual histories and identities, multicultural pedagogy helps to instill in students a sense of pride and self-worth; in many ways, this can be seen as emancipatory for the student (Sleeter and McLaren 1995; Giroux 1992), thus speaking to a social justice component of multicultural pedagogy (intensified by warm demander theory) in addition to what it offers educational practice.

Multicultural pedagogy contends that teaching should attend to the individual experiences and backgrounds of a diverse student background. Students are obviously more likely to be invested in education when that education (or teacher) seems to value them, and as a result, will ideally succeed academically as well as develop a positive sense of self. In this aspect, multicultural pedagogy values students as the cared-for that Noddings' so emphatically emphasizes completes the cycle of relational caring. Warm demanders take this a step further, as they are individuals (instead of a pedagogy) that engage in a caring relationship with the cared-for.

While the presence of warm demander theory in multicultural pedagogy may not be explicitly stated in the literature, the language used to describe and define multicultural pedagogy contains noticeable similarities to the language used to describe Warm Demander Theory; in other words, since the term "warm demander" is a specific characterization of teachers who are highly successful with children of color, much of

what a warm demander “is” and does is encompassed within multicultural pedagogy. Warm demanders understand and value students’ culture, address students in personal and engaging ways, and regard students’ life experiences as important to the classroom (Bondy and Ross 2008)—all acts that are performed by warm demanders, but also fit within the description of multicultural pedagogy. There is not one universal, comprehensive definition of multicultural pedagogy, as teachers and educators tend to conceptualize multicultural pedagogy in relation to their own disciplines; however, in any context, on any level, teachers who practice multicultural pedagogy practice cultural responsiveness and inclusiveness, which are at the very core of how warm demanders operate (Ware, 2006).

Multicultural pedagogy values students’ personal identities, histories, communities, and complexities, and warm demander theory honors such valuing by communicating to students (who are, more often than not, non-white, poor, and historically excluded in a variety of ways) that they are loved, cared for, and respected; it is because of this love, care, and respect that warm demanders demand so much of their students. Importantly, however, warm demanders enact their love for students using a particular *style*, an aspect of teaching that is not covered in teaching literature (Bondy and Ross 2008), but it a hugely meaningful and influential element in the classroom. This is one of the biggest, most important differences between those who embrace multicultural pedagogy and those who are warm demanders. While multicultural pedagogy certainly values students as unique individuals and makes many claims about what the content of classrooms should be, it does not instruct teachers to

use any particular style, making the defining characteristic of warm demander theory – the style—absent from multicultural pedagogy.

While warm demander theory is still under-studied, it is emerging within the larger body of literature on the concept called culturally relevant teaching (Bondy, et al. 2012). Gay defines culturally responsive teaching as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students (Gay 2000). Gloria Ladson-Billings adds an emancipatory aspect to Gay's characterization, describing culturally responsive teaching is a way of teaching that empowers students "intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings 1994, 382).

In many ways, culturally responsive teaching can be seen as a more focused, individualistic way of enacting many of the same goals of multicultural pedagogy. Culturally responsive teachers recognize the importance of academic achievement, but at the same time, also recognize the importance of valuing and maintaining students culture; in this sense, culturally responsive education attends to the "whole child" (Gay 2000), a concept that several interview participants articulated as fundamental in their conceptions of caring and educating children. While culturally responsive teaching is not a synonym for multicultural pedagogy, it can be conceptualized as a more "exact" way of enacting the goals of multicultural pedagogy, and more importantly, stands as the growing body of literature in which discussions of warm demander theory are situated.

Warm Demander Theory: Understated, but Emerging

Warm demander theory is an exciting, promising concept that has the potential to significantly inform the ongoing attempts at closing the achievement gap, and I hope that feminists will join those interested in education reform in recognizing warm demander theory as an effective means of ending educational inequality. The popularity of warm demander theory is emerging, largely as a result of the growing body of literature stressing the importance of critically responsive teaching (Gay 2000; Gay 2010; Ladson-Billings 1994; Villegas and Baur 1991). While recognition of warm demanders is largely absent from the literature on best teaching practices (Bondy and Ross 2008), research looking at the utilization and effectiveness of warm demander theory (Bondy et al. 2012; Ware 2006) makes its more widespread recognition seem plausible. This recognition could be aided by feminists interested in how practical, grounded caring is enacted within institutions, and is an important opportunity for feminists to lend support to warm demanders not just as educators, but as fellow activists .

How the Absence of Culturally Responsive Teaching Contributes to the Lack of Knowledge About and Study of Warm Demanders

Culture is critical in the discussion of why warm demanders are not more widely recognized as the empowering educators they are. The fact that warm demanders teach in a culturally responsive manner is key to their success, but is also key to understanding their lack of recognition. Culturally responsive teaching practices do not yet enjoy the degree of attention they should receive in teacher education programs, rendering teachers committed to cultural responsiveness –and as an extension, warm demanders—still relatively unrecognized.

Schools in the United States run on an implicit assumption that white, middle or upper class, English speaking values are superior, and that academic success is contingent upon adhering to these values (Tutwiler 2003, 144). Most US teachers receive their education in white, western universities, they begin teaching with a mindset that does not value minority cultures' beliefs, mindsets, or customs (Kleinfeld 1975). In addition to receiving an education from hegemonic institutions, the majority of US teachers come from a white, middle-class, English speaking background, and therefore use the values they have attained from such a background as a default point of reference (Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005, 237). In other words, the bulk of the teaching force is not comprised of teachers committed to teaching in culturally responsive ways; warm demanders are powerful needles, but the haystack is still largely comprised of teachers whose institutions have taught them to value a particular set of values and norms that does not respect culture as one of, if not the, most powerful forces in a child's life.

Despite the current neglect of warm demander theory in current teacher literature (Bondy and Ross 2008), the growing body of scholarship on the importance of culturally responsive teaching practices is encouraging. Hopefully, as teacher educators shine a brighter spotlight on culturally responsive teaching practices, they will point to warm demander theory as a style teachers can utilize in culturally responsive teaching. While warm demanders still do not have the recognition they deserve for the incredible impact they have on students, their central and effective role in culturally responsive teaching will hopefully move them into a more visible role in discussions of best educational practices.

Warm Demanders as Care-Givers With a Sociopolitical Conscience: Why They are Important for Feminists

A valuable contribution warm demander theory provides to the discussion of feminist caring is its sociopolitical consciousness and commitments to social justice issues as a component of caring. Because warm demanders are highly successful teachers among students of color who know just how high the stakes are for their students, they deeply value and seek to understand the role that culture plays in their students' lives as a means of keeping students engaged (Bondy and Ross 2008). Conceptualizing and recognizing them as care-givers can allow feminists who have not been attentive to issues of social justice or culture to begin to understand the dynamic relationship between care and culture, largely because warm demanders give feminists something to see: a teaching style.

Warm demanders give feminists a new kind of care-giver to observe, one that is informed by the history of sociopolitical consciousness and African American teacher caring found in the African American education community (Walker 1996). By understanding how warm demanders provide care, or in the case of this project, understanding ways in which tenets of warm demander theory inform care, feminists can begin to broaden their conception of care as it has largely been informed by care ethics and relational caring.

CHAPTER 3 UNDERSTANDING PACE CENTER FOR GIRLS AND KIDS COUNT AS LOCATIONS TO OBSERVE CARE IN ACTION

Chapter 2 provides background and relevant information on the organizations and participants involved in my research, as well as describes my methodology. With this chapter, I wish to give those who are unfamiliar with PACE and Kids Count a sense of what these organizations seek to do for their students, as well as provide a knowledge of the “caring” backgrounds from which most interview participants arrived at the jobs they held when I interviewed them. I wish highlight both the similarities and differences in the programs in order to give my reader an accurate picture of the organizations in which I witnessed such a deep level of a feminist version of care, informed by warm demander theory.

PACE Center for Girls: Alachua County

The creation of PACE Center for Girls, founded in 1985, can be seen in large part as a result of the energized focus on girls’ issues that characterized the 1980s. A natural and unsurprising consequence of the attention to various forms of oppression that feminists made visible in the 1960s and 1970s, the 1980s brought with them a never before seen targeting of girls as needing specific programming and interventions in order to address various gender specific inequalities, including those in education. Books such as *Reviving Ophelia* (Pipher 1995) and *Making Connections: The Relational Worlds of Adolescent Girls at Emma Willard School* (Gilligan et al.. 1990) triumphed the importance of girls’ voices and unique struggles, and a lack of pre-existing feminist organizations arguably made the sudden attention to girls’ issues a defining characteristic of feminist activism during this period.

It is important to recognize that girl programming in the 1980s sought to do more than improve girls' academic achievement (ibid). Programs also dealt with the same issues *Reviving Ophelia* and *Making Connections* investigated; they sought to address girls' experiences and voices, investigate gender bias in curriculum, and understand how the experience of being female contributed to young girls' lives. Attention and funding for such programs eventually dwindled, and the passage of *No Child Left Behind* meant a zealous energy toward standardized evaluation of knowledge.

Many girl-specific programs popular in the 1980s have disappeared as a result of an increased nation-wide and policy focus on equalizing all students through mandated curriculum requirements and standardized testing. While this has led to a broader focus on at-risk students than one on gender specifically, gender specific programming for girls is still in existence, now functioning well into third wave feminism. *PACE Center for Girls* is a solid example of a program designed specifically for girls not flourishing in traditional school settings, paying attention to the role gender plays in conjunction with other components of identity in the lives of at-risk youth.

PACE was founded in 1985 by social worker Vicki Burke as a response to the (then) common process of placing girls involved with the justice system in a program designed for boys, or, alternatively, placing them deeper within the system for their own protection. She explained in her interview that she wanted to create a school where girls who had not been successful in traditional school settings could enjoy a strong sense of community and support, ultimately leading them to academic and personal success. A combination of personal concern and growing research recommendations

for gender responsive programming led Burke to create PACE, and since then, the program has flourished.

Although PACE began with just one location in Jacksonville, FL, that only served 10 girls, it now has 17 locations throughout the state of Florida that collectively serve around 2,000 girls a year (PACE About). Currently, PACE Center for Girls is a 501(c)3 Florida nonprofit that serves at-risk girls who are identified as dependent, truant, runaway, delinquent, or in need of academic skills, who are in middle school or high school, ages 12-17 (ibid). It has been nationally recognized as a model for reducing recidivism and improving overall school and personal success by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Children's Defense Fund, National Mental Health Association, National Council on Crime and Delinquency, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (PACE Model).

The mission of PACE is to provide girls opportunity for future success using four main components: education, counseling, advocacy, and training (PACE Mission). The philosophy behind the organization is “PACE values all girls and young women, believing each one deserves an opportunity to find her voice, achieve her potential and celebrate a life defined by responsibility, dignity, serenity and grace.” PACE promotes its focus on girls highly, describing itself as a place where girls can “step off the path [they are] on and find a new path to success,” and highlighting gender specific “benefits” such as “academics and other activities designed exclusively for girls,” teachers who take a personal interest in students and “understand how girls learn,” staff and fellow students who will help girls get through bad days, and a lack of “boy drama.” While PACE does not appear to explicitly call itself an “intervention” program, its goal of

assisting girls experiencing a difficult time due to personal circumstances and (depending on the situation) choices certainly speaks to components of what most people would conceptualize as “intervention.”

In terms of operation, PACE uses a “holistic, strength-based and asset building model specifically responsive to the needs of girls and which is recognized as among the most effective programs in the country for keeping girls from entering the juvenile justice system” (PACE Model). This model consists of the following 9 components: goal setting and progress monitoring, academic education, Spirited Girls class (PACE’s life management curriculum that helps girls to make positive decisions and lifestyle choices.), service learning, career preparation, case management, counseling, parental involvement, and transition services (PACE About). In addition, PACE lists 9 guiding values and principles used in their operation: honoring the female spirit, a focus on strength, acting with integrity and positive intent, embracing growth and change, valuing the wisdom of time, exhibiting courage, seeking excellence, creating partnerships, and investing in the future (PACE Guiding Principles).

PACE is a non-residential program and functions like a typical school with the exception that class sizes are often smaller. It provides transportation for those who need it, as well as lunch. Students at PACE are instructed using the Florida state curriculum in an effort to make sure students receive the same knowledge at PACE as they would receive at a traditional school. Girls at PACE are not separated by age; any given class will contain girls who are of different ages and grade levels. Typically, the girls are instructed on a certain objective at the beginning of the class period, then given differentiated class work depending on their grade level. The teacher and volunteer

tutors circulate around the room as the girls work in order to answer any questions the girls might have.

Once students at PACE are in a better personal, emotional, and academic place, they may either return to their home school or, if they are close to graduation, complete their remaining high school graduation requirements at PACE. Concerning the time girls spend at PACE, the organization's goal is to get students back on the path to success and, subsequently, return them to either their home school or help them find a college or career setting that is both appropriate for the student and in line with the student's wishes. Every girl at PACE sets individual educational and social goals that are focused on earning a high school diploma or GED, re-entering public school, attending college, getting vocational training, joining the military or entering the private workforce.

It is not uncommon for girls at PACE to have been in one or more previous intervention programs before coming to PACE. Girls arrive at PACE largely as a result of referrals; they can be referred by the juvenile justice system, DCF (Department of Children and Families), school personnel, community services agencies, parents, family members, friends, or via self-referral. These referral sources reflect what is often a difficult home or school environment for the girls; according to the current statistics (from 2010-2011) available from the Alachua County branch of PACE, 53% of the 91 girls served by the program came from single parent households. Of those 91 girls, 31% reported experiencing physical, psychological, or sexual abuse prior to coming to PACE, and 27% had run away prior to coming to PACE (PACE Alachua About Us).

After program completion, PACE continues to monitor each girl's educational and personal development with three years of follow-up case management. According to the latest outcomes available from PACE: Alachua County (from 2008-2009), 87% of girls had no criminal involvement a year after leaving PACE (PACE Outcome Report). Additionally, 100% of girls both improved their academic performance while in the program and were placed in appropriate educational settings after leaving PACE (ibid). As these statistics are from PACE's annual student success report, I cannot provide more information regarding either academic performance while in the program or where the girls went after the program.

My first impression of PACE was how bright and cheerful it was; positive images and messages promoting women's strength and power are everywhere—in the hallways, in conference rooms, in offices, and in classrooms. PACE clearly makes a concerted effort to visibly celebrate girls as special, powerful people, and does so in more ways than hanging motivational posters and testaments of student success on the walls. Teachers, administrators, and staff at PACE provide a human version of the support and care for girls that is so visible throughout the building.

As I said in my introduction, I both heard and witnessed PACE staff's deep level of care for their students while interning there, which led to the idea of interviewing them in order to further and better understand how they conceptualized the care they provided students. At this point, I provide background for interview participants from PACE in order to give my reader of the experience these participants bring to their caring for girls. The PACE participants were comprised of the founder of PACE, the current director of PACE in Alachua County, a former teacher at PACE Alachua County,

two local (Alachua County) board members, and one state board member. A brief biography of each participant follows.

Vicki Burke: Founder, PACE Center for Girls: The Founder of PACE Center for Girls, Vicki began her career at the Jacksonville Marine Institute (JMI) after earning a B.A. in psychology. JMI is a non-residential marine institute that served boys from the juvenile justice system through education and enrichment activities. Vicki served as a counselor and educator at JMI for a number of years before her work there led her to found PACE Center for Girls in 1985. Since then, she has served as a teacher at Matthew Gilbert Middle School, Director of Education and Youth at FreshMinistries, Inc., and the senior case manager for Worksource. She currently works with Juvenile Detention Alternative Commission (JDIC), where she works with youth to keep them from entering detention centers.

In addition to founding PACE Center for Girls, Vicki has also co-founded both the National Girls Caucus (cite) and Florida Girls Initiative (cite). She remains highly active in her Jacksonville, FL community, and is a contributing member to Jacksonville Journey, Jacksonville Community Council, Leadership Florida, and Leadership Jacksonville. Within these organizations, she has focused on issues regarding education, truancy, literacy, dropout prevention, and prostitution. In 2011, Vicki was inducted into the Florida Women's Hall of Fame, and remains actively committed to serving the youth in her community.

Kathy Southwick: Director, PACE Alachua County: After earning her B.A. in public relations, Kathy went on to earn her M.Ed. and Ed.S. in counselor education at the University of Florida. Following graduation, she was a guidance counselor at North

Marion Middle School for 16 years, during which time she also developed and instructed a course at Santa Fe Community college called Living Successfully in the 1990s. In 1995, she became the coordinator for Teen Court in Alachua County, and two years later, began working in her current position as the director for PACE Center for Girls in Alachua County.

Y'vette Carter: Board member, PACE Alachua County: Y'Vette graduated from the University of Florida with a B.S. in family, youth, and community science. She currently works for Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU) as a Community Relations Coordinator, and became a board member for PACE: Alachua County in January 2012. Y'Vette has numerous community affiliations, including work with the American Cancer Society, ACE Mentoring Program, Gainesville Community Redevelopment Agency, and the Jerusalem Church of God by Faith.

Lisa Chacon: Board member, PACE Alachua County: Lisa graduated from San Diego State with a B.A. in Spanish. She then entered the ministry with her husband, where she served as a ministry leader and women's counselor for 23 years. After she left the ministry, she worked as a financial planner for UBS Wealth Management, which ultimately led her to co-found Chacon Diaz and De Virgilio Wealth Management. She currently serves as a Certified Financial Planner for the company. In addition to being on the board for PACE, she also serves as an advisor to the Gainesville Community Foundation, and is a regular financial education instructor at Santa Fe Community College.

Tiffany Hunt: Former Spirited Girls/reading teacher, PACE Alachua County
After obtaining her B.A. in sociology from Augusta State University, Tiffany received her

M.S. in school counseling from the University of Southern Mississippi. Following graduation, she served as both a language arts teacher and guidance counselor at the SBAC Horizon Center, a position that eventually led her to her PACE Center for Girls in Alachua County. At PACE, Tiffany served as the Spirited Girls! instructor as well as the reading teacher. After teaching at PACE for 2 years, Tiffany has recently begun working at C. Shell Elementary School as a guidance counselor.

Carole Zegel, State board member, PACE: Carole earned a B.S. in elementary education, which she supplemented with graduate training in dealing with learning disabilities. Since completing her education, Carole has served tremendously to improve the well-being of children in her community. After a year of teaching immediately after graduation, she founded a cooperative nursery preschool, one of the first of its kind. Carole designed the curriculum, organized and led the administration, and also organized all volunteers. Following her work with the preschool, she began working in the court system as a Guardian Ad Litem, first as a volunteer and ultimately as the eight judicial circuit director for the Guardian Ad Litem program.

Following her service as the circuit director for the Guardian Ad Litem program, Carole began working as the Senior Deputy Court Administrator for the Eighth Judicial Circuit. In this position, she was responsible for the development of family court, and also oversaw the Guardian Ad Litem program as well as Teen Court, Juvenile Justice Alternatives Sanctions, Project Pay Back and Family Law Self Help. She eventually became the executive director for the Eighth Judicial Circuit court, a position from which she retired in 2008. Carole has been on the state board of PACE since 2003, and has been serving as its chair since 2009.

The brief biographies of interview participants from PACE Center for Girls speak to participants' foundational commitments to improving the lives of at-risk youth and girls. These college-educated women have chosen to dedicate a majority, if not the entirety, of their careers and/or community involvement to caring for children in various capacities. Their commitment to the ideas and care for girls that PACE espouses will be further evident in their interview responses, but should come as no surprise given their backgrounds.

It is important to note that while these participants are clearly invested in the well-being of girls, none of their biographies include any academic, professional, or personal accomplishments explicitly tied to feminism; participants did not use the term "feminism" (or any of its variations) as a descriptor of any of their work. While readers might possibly interpret their wide-reaching service, both before they became involved with PACE and during their work with PACE, as speaking or contributing to feminist causes, they should not assume that interview participants share this view. No participants chose to characterize their work this way either in their resumes/biographies, nor did they articulate a commitment to feminism in their interviews. In arguing that participants articulated a feminist version of caring, I am not explicitly labeling all interview participants from PACE as feminists, nor am I labeling PACE as a feminist organization.

Kids Count: Alachua County

Kids Count in Alachua County, founded in 2007 by Ward Simonton, is an organization that serves K-3rd grade students of both male and female students who attend Williams Elementary and Rawlings Elementary in Gainesville, FL. Fall 2012 marked the first semester they have served students who attend Williams Elementary; before Fall 2012, the organization had only served students attending Rawlings

Elementary. Kids Count partners with the University of Florida College of Education as part of its commitment to students' academic success.

Kids Count states its mission as one that seeks "to create, grow, and support highly effective after school programs," and operates with 4 core principles in mind.

They are listed as follows (Kids Count Mission):

1. We will work with organizations, with families, and with children in a way that demonstrates hope over despair, passion over apathy, persuasion over power, reason over emotion, and trust over suspicion.
2. We will work to continuously improve our understanding of the educational, social, emotional, and physical needs of at-risk children in our community.
3. We will partner with public, private faith-based, non-profit organizations and individuals to extend our reach, to leverage resources, and to broaden expertise.
4. We will maintain a high level of stewardship in the management of financial resources.

While Kids Count currently serves children at only two locations, their ultimate goal is to create a model after-school program that can be replicated throughout Alachua County. They created their pilot program in collaboration with Faith United Methodist Church in Gainesville, FL, with the intention of developing a model that will be highly effective, sustainable, and reproducible for at-risk elementary students in Alachua County. The opening of their new site in Fall 2012 represented the first step in this goal.

The Kids Count program is comprised of three main components: literacy tutoring, character development, and enrichment. Literacy tutoring is provided by students from the University of Florida's College of Education two days a week; these tutors design lessons and activities to meet each student's needs, as well as monitor students' progress. Each tutor is trained and supported by the Executive Director of the organization. Students are engaged in character education by Kids Count staff and

volunteers, who choose one characteristic per month on which to focus. Enrichment activities include art projects, field trips, and presentations by community members.

A useful tool for conceptualizing Kids Count and how it cares for students is to look at how the organization characterizes what makes it special. According to the “About Us” section of Kids Count’s website (Kids Count About Us), there are a several aspects that make it unique. The full list is available on the website, but I will mention a few here as they speak to how Kids Count conceptualizes caring for its students.

The “About Us” section explains that Kids Count embraces “the whole child,” and employs a “cradle to college/career” mindset. In addition, Kids Count teaches social skills to students so that they may be “best citizens” and “care for others.” Finally, in an important characterization speaking to the commitment of those working with Kids Count, their website explains that, “Our program is unique and special because of the collaboration that happens between our staff, students, parents, teachers, tutors, volunteers, donors, Master Gardener, and Board Members. We are a fearless group of people who have heart, drive, and willpower to get things done so our students can succeed and thrive.”

Founded in 2007, twenty-two years after Vicki Burke founded PACE Center for Girls and six years after the passage of No Child Left Behind, Kids Count in Alachua County comes from an entirely different place and mindset than PACE Center for Girls. As he explained to me in his interview, Ward Simonton founded Kids Count because of a need he saw while working with Prime Time, an after-school for elementary children run through his church. Ward wanted to reach more students just the children Prime Time Worked with, so he eventually founded Kids in a hope to address the social

inequalities that often prevent low income and/or minority students from achieving academic success, offering one-on-one support for poor children.

At first glance, PACE: Center for Girls in Alachua County and Kids Count in Alachua County look like two organizations with few similarities. PACE serves girls in middle and high school, while Kids Count serves both girls and boys in elementary school. The branch of PACE I studied is one of 17 branches located throughout the state of Florida, while the only two locations of Kids Count (the second of which opened in Fall 2012) are located in Gainesville, FL. Generally speaking, PACE is an older, bigger, more established organization than Kids Count, but that does not mean there are not important similarities.

PACE and Kids Count were both conceived in roughly the same manner: as a means for providing assistance and opportunity to at-risk youth in hopes that students would flourish with extra care and attention. They were created by one person who wanted to make a difference in the lives of young people, and grew from there (though PACE has certainly had more time to grow). Both organizations recognize that circumstances beyond a child's control should not define that child's future, and are committed to caring for students in ways that will not only help them succeed academically, but personally as well.

In other words, even though PACE and Kids Count serve different populations of children and have different structures, they share the goal of the students reaching their fullest potential for success. They both speak to the educational inequality that exists due to barriers related to race, gender, and class, and seek to eradicate this inequality by providing care for students. Looking at these two organizations allows us to see two

manifestations of care: one old and one new, but both with the same foundational commitment to caring for children in an effective way, ultimately leading them to academic and personal success.

Care is at the core of both PACE and Kids Count. The staff who work with children at these organizations are care-givers; they are all the “one-caring,” caring for multiple “cared-fors.” The nature of their job requires successful caring to take place; if the idea behind PACE and Kids Count is that extra care will lead students to academic and personal success, then both the giving and receiving of care must happen. By looking at articulations of care provided by interview participants from PACE and Kids Count, we see conceptions care from a broad array of care givers who are all trying to provide more or less the same type of care, even if they are giving it to different populations of students.

It is clear from this characterization of Kids Count that those involved with the organization are invested in more than improving students’ test scores. They are expressly committed to all aspects of their students’ lives, and work with others outside their organization to provide care. For the purposes of this thesis, the aspect I find most interesting about Kids Count’s description of what it provides for students is the idea that it is committed to teaching students to care for others. The emphasis on being kind and considerate toward others was something I repeatedly noticed during my internship, and was not surprised to hear interview participants mention in their comments on care.

Interview participants from Kids Count were comprised the former director, current director, founder, former program assistant, and board member. Overall Kids Count staff and board members come from a stronger, more experienced educational

background than is the case in PACE; this background accurately characterizes Kids Count as a united front of educators seeking to end educational inequality.

Ward Simonton: Founder/board member, Kids Count: Ward holds a B.S. and M.S, both in engineering, from the University of Georgia, as well as a Ph.D. in engineering from Oklahoma State. He has worked at the University of Georgia as an associate professor and research leader, and has also worked briefly with Kellogg as a research engineer. From 1994-2008, he served as the co-owner and vice president of Adaptive Equipment, Inc., a business that provides custom robotic automation. In 2010, he co-founded Simonton & McKinney, LLC, a building performance company that helps business and home owners reduce energy use.

Ward has extensive experience in community service, largely through his church. This experience primarily involves leading missions to build homes for those in need, as well as tutoring and mentoring at-risk youth. His volunteer experience with Prime Time, an after-school program for at-risk children run by his church, ultimately led him to found Kids Count in Alachua County in 2007, where he currently serves as the board president.

Elizabeth Jacobbe: Former Director, Kids Count: Elizabeth graduated from Bluffton College with a B.A. in elementary education. After graduating, she taught 3rd and 4th grade from October of 1998 to June 2001, at which point she moved to Ohio and taught elementary school from August 2001 to June 2003. She earned her M.A.T. (Masters of Arts in teaching) in December 2003, and has since proceeded to teach various early education classes at Bowling Green State University (1/05-5/05), University of Kentucky (8/07-12/07), and the University of Florida (8/-9-5/10). She

primarily worked as a stay-at-home mom from August 2003 to August 2010, after which she taught a second and third grade split class at Rawlings Elementary in Gainesville, FL. In July 2011, she began working as the Executive Director for Kids Count in Alachua County; Elizabeth was the director when I began my involvement with Kids Count. She remained the Executive Director until Fall 2012, and is currently employed with P.K. Yonge Elementary.

Sabriena Williams: Current Director, Kids Count: Sabriena graduated from Bethune Cookman College with a B.S. in psychology. Her professional experience includes working with the Alachua County School Board as a guidance aid and family liaison specialist, serving as the Family Involvement Coordinator for Child Care Resources, teaching with Alachua County schools in various capacities, and serving as the adult outreach counselor at Peaceful Paths Domestic Abuse Network. In Fall 2012, Sabriena began serving as the director of Kids Count in Alachua County, also serving as the site director for the Kids Count Rawlings location.

Jessica Belcoure: Former Program Assistant, Kids Count: Jessica with a dual B.S. in anthropology and museum studies from Central Michigan University, as well as a M.A. in Museology. She has extensive professional experience in museums; specifically, she was instrumental in the beginning stages of the Cade Museum of Creativity + Invention. She began working at Kids Count in 2012 as a program assistant, eventually becoming the site director.

While employed with Kids Count, Jessica also worked at the Cade Museum, where she helped to develop a pedagogical philosophy and strategy for museum programming, recruited volunteers, and synthesized museum programs with Florida's

Next Generation Sunshine State Standards. Currently, Jessica works as the volunteer coordinator for Panama Canal Museum Collection at the University of Florida.

Kathy Vance: Board member, Kids Count: Kathy holds a B.A. in elementary education from the University of North Carolina as well as a M.A. in K-12 reading education from the University of Florida. She was a classroom teacher for 41 years, teaching in a variety of elementary and middle school classrooms. After her retirement from teaching in 2006, she served as an adjunct professor for the University of Florida College of Education as an intern supervisor and field advisor. Kathy now serves on the board of Kids Count and volunteers with the organization regularly.

Methodology

My methodology for this project was comprised of participant observation and 11 interviews conducted with staff and board members of PACE and Kids Count. I completed semester-long internships at both PACE (Spring 2012) and Kids Count (Fall 2012), during which time I was a participant-observer in each organization. I observed how staff interacted with students, but also helped with students, primarily in terms of help with school work/homework. I then conducted interviews with participants in Fall 2012. While I used information and observations from my time as a participant-observer to help ground my interviews, my observations during my time as a participant observer are not a primary data source in this thesis. I use interview responses as my primary source of data.

My purpose behind interning at both organizations and conducting interviews with members of both organizations was to give myself a contextual understanding as well as an accurate portrait of practice for PACE and Kids Count. Interning at both locations allowed me to observe how the organizations run on a daily basis, understand

their structure, experience issues and complications with which they must frequently contend, and observe the relationships between staff and students. Interviewing participants allowed me to speak personally with the people who are responsible for the organization, operation, and (ultimately) success of both organizations about their personal conceptualizations of care and how they conceptualize what their organizations do for children.

My method for selecting interview participants was not random; I chose to interview people from various positions (teacher, administrator, board member, etc.) within each organization in order to more holistically portray the mindsets and ideas of each organization. Because I had interned with both organizations, I already knew most participants' and their contact information by the time I began this project. I obtained the contact information for participants I did not know from the directors of each program.

After receiving approval from the University of Florida Internal Review Board for this project, I began the interview process by emailing, calling, or speaking in person with prospective participants about their potential participation in this project. I provided them with a proposal I had developed over Summer 2012 for my project and summarized why I was interested in talking with them: in order to understand how they personally conceptualized care, as well as how they conceptualized the care their respective organization provided its students. Once they indicated a willingness to participate in interviews, I provided them with a consent form giving me permission to use their information and responses in my thesis, and also provided a list of sample

interview questions. I collected the signed consent form before each interview and also supplied each participant with a copy for his or her records.

Before each interview, I contacted each participant to obtain permission to record the interview, and explained that I would destroy the recordings after the project was complete. Interviews with participants typically lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. They were conducted at various locations depending on what was most convenient for the participant I was interviewing, but typically took place at either coffee shops or the participant's home.

My interview questions were semi-structured. I had a set of general questions to ask participants, but they were broad questions that allowed the participant to interpret and answer questions in the way that was not limiting to the participant. Most participants carried the interview themselves, addressing many (and usually all) of the issues I wished to explore even without me asking the questions.

My choice to use semi-structured interviews (as opposed to surveys or questionnaires, for example) speaks to not just the qualitative aspect of my research, but also speaks to the feminist aspect of it. Feminist researcher Shulamit Reinharz contends that feminists often use semi-structured interviews to "achieve the active involvement of their respondents in the construction of data about their lives" (Reinharz 1992, 18). This was precisely what I hoped to accomplish in my interviews, and believe I was largely successful in this. My use of semi-structured interviews allowed participants to speak freely about their experiences of care in their personal lives and professions, as well as the connection between the two.

Because of time restraints and nonexistent budget of my project, I did not completely transcribe each interview. Instead, I created a summary of each interview, in which I included exact transcriptions of what I felt were the participant's important remarks speaking directly to the issue of care. I provided each participant with a copy of the summary of his or her interview so that he or she could approve the summary and/or make any necessary changes to it before the completion of this thesis.

In analyzing the data, I focused on common themes that participants articulated throughout and across participant interviews. I did not categorize the data according to the participant's organization, meaning that I did not compare data from PACE participants only with data from other PACE participants. Instead, I focused on themes participants in both organizations articulated across interviews. This decision was largely due to the commonalities in responses from participants at both organizations; most participants spoke about the same ideas and themes as other participants in their interviews. In addition, I feel that presenting the data as a whole instead of separating it, drawing from both sets of participants' responses in describing broad themes regarding care, better represents how care is conceptualized and articulated similarly in PACE and Kids Count, even though the two organizations certainly have differences.

In Chapter 3, I share participant responses on conceptualizations of care and the themes that participants articulated across interviews, showing how these responses speak to a feminist version of caring, supplemented with tenets of warm demander theory, being enacted within PACE and Kids Count. I then provide suggestions to the feminist community concerning how feminists can use the responses of interview

participants in our commitment to ending inequality, gendered and otherwise. In my conclusion, I discuss what this project could mean for those in the field of education.

CHAPTER 4

ARTICULATIONS OF FEMINIST CARING BY PARTICIPANTS FROM PACE CENTER FOR GIRLS: ALACHUA COUNTY AND KIDS COUNT

So far, I have situated feminist discussion of care within the existing literature, as well as provided a more social justice-oriented, practical way of looking at Noddings' conception of relational caring in action via warm demander theory. This discussion is important, as it explains how care-focused feminists have articulated care in academic circles, as well as how warm demanders have enacted (and still enact) care in their classrooms. It has given us a lens through which we can examine how those in caring professions conceptualize and enact care in a feminist manner.

For most people, care is much more practical than theoretical; performing care “on the ground” is quite different from thinking about care on a theoretical level. The relationship between any theory and the practice of that theory holds significant value for feminists interested in ways to enact theory in a way that furthers feminist goals of equality (an interest that should characterize all feminists), and the relationship between care on a theoretical level and care enacted on a practical level speaks even more directly to this interest. We know (or hope, at least) that people who work for organizations such as PACE and Kids Count care “about” others, but how do they care *for* them?

In the first part of this chapter, I draw comparisons between participants' conceptualizations of care and feminist care ethics/relational caring. I then share common themes from interviews that speak to how participants enact a version of care for children that is feminist in nature. I close by discussing what feminists should take away from participants' responses in future activist efforts and collaborative work.

General Conceptions of Care: The Relationship Between Participants' Articulated Conceptualizations of Care and Feminist Caring

At the beginning of each interview, I asked the participant to talk to me about how he/she conceptualized care, or what care means to him/her. Importantly, no participant discussed their conceptualization of care explicitly in relation to his/her job or organization; all participants articulated an idea of care that encompassed both their personal and professional lives. This is important because it suggests that participants do not associate one particular “type” of care with their career and another “type” with their personal lives. Participants consistently articulated their conceptualizations of care in two primary ways: 1) by establishing care as a deeply personal experience and feeling, and 2) by asserting that care is something that they perform on an individual level, for other individuals.

Ten participants began by expressing the idea that caring was an intensely personal experience for them. As Y'Vette Carter (PACE) said, “For me, caring comes from the innermost place—from a deep part of me. Maybe the deepest. You know, you know people, and then you care for people. We all know lots of people, but the people we care about—that’s where we spend our energy.” All participants except one articulated this concept in one way or another, asserting that caring was a unique and meaningful emotional experience and activity for them.

Ward Simonton (Kids Count) was the one participant who did not articulate his conceptualization of care in terms of an intensely personal experience. He explained that, “To me, caring is holding you accountable, but encouraging you and showing you in every single way that you can do this. I’m going to do everything I can to help you, and I expect you to work with me.” It is worth noting that Ward was the only man I

interviewed in this project. While I do not seek to attribute the departure from what I found to otherwise be the norm among participant conceptualizations in care solely to his gender, the difference in his response to this question signals an opportunity for feminists to further engage the conceptions of care held by men in caring professions.

The majority of participants' characterization of care as a deep emotional experience is unsurprising and not particularly unique; most people would probably describe their conceptualization of care in this way. However, seven participants, after making their initial statements about care, directly linked their caring to motherhood. As Y'Vette continued talking, for instance, she explained, "You know, that same care I give as a mom, that's how I care for people. There's really no difference. Once I start caring for someone, I don't care [laughs] if it's my child or a friend or someone whose story has touched me in a special way. It's like an on switch that is just so *on*."

Y'Vette was one of four participants who described her conception of caring in terms of motherhood, speaking about the experience of being a mother as a defining way in which she thought about care. Interestingly, all three participants who have been or are directors of both PACE and Kids Count equated caring with motherhood. Kathy Southwick (PACE) explained

I love teenagers, I love teenage girls. I have two teenage daughters. I just think teenage girls are strong and funny and dramatic and just have so much potential. That group is a group that I'm very connected with. . . . I guess to me, since I'm a mother, it's a mothering kind of feeling—nurturing kind of feeling. I want to protect them. I wanna give them wings. I want to help them to believe in themselves—I want them to see their potential. I feel like that with my girls—all my girls, at home and at PACE.

Sabriena Williams (Kids Count) echoed this sentiment, articulating a vision of maternal caring not just for her own children, but for the children at Kids Count as well.

You know, the latter part of my parenting, I was a single mom, and I know how much I cared and still do care for and love my kids. I think about that and can relate to that when I see single mothers at Kids Count, and you know-- I'm just a mother by nature, I'm just a mother figure . . . when I see the kids doing something, my mother instinct kicks in. I don't make a distinction between the kids here and my own kids. I just care like a mother for all of them. That's just how I care.

The participant who spoke most extensively and directly about equating caring with motherhood was Elizabeth Jacobbe (Kids Count). She explained her initial conception of care as follows:

I just want to be that mother, nurturing, I'll be there for you, consistent, always try to stay positive sort of thing. I love making volunteers feel comfortable, and useful, welcome, I like that whole feeling of being family oriented, and in that family, I'm the mom. I want it to be a place where you feel like family. That's what I'd want my child to have. As the director, I wanted to provide that to everyone at Kids Count—the kids, the staff, the volunteers. I just wanted to nurture them. Everyone. That's exactly what I felt like in the classroom too—teaching is taking care of people, and that's what I tried to do at Kids Count...I do the same things for the kids at kids count as I do for my own children. I care for them the same way.

When I asked Elizabeth if I was correctly interpreting her response to mean that her conception of care and conception of motherhood were very similar, she responded:

Aren't motherhood and teaching and caring the same? That's a bad thing? To me that's not a bad thing. To me, that's a good thing. I don't want to take the place of somebody's mother, but that's what I'd want my child to have. I'd want someone to not only be focused on academics, but also meet my child's emotional needs.

Additionally, all participants except for one spoke about care as something that happens on an individual level, for another individual. Their discussions of care did not use collective language; instead, they emphasized that much of what caring meant to them involved personal, meaningful interactions with other individuals. As Kathy Vance (Kids Count) explained, "It means to me that someone is really interested in you, and would like to help you. You. Not anybody else, but really takes an interest in you."

Four participants briefly mentioned this aspect of care in their initial explanations, but all participants discussed it more in detail when talking about how they felt their organizations enacted care for youth.

That participants mentioned individual-focused care twice, first as a way of conceptualizing care, but also as a way of enacting care, is significant for two reasons. First, it suggests that the four participants who spoke about caring as an individual act conceptualize care in terms of two individuals in a relationship where one person is caring for the other, much like in Noddings' relational caring between the one-caring and the cared-for. Second, because more participants spoke about this aspect of care in their discussions of how they enact care rather than how they conceptualize it, we can see the concept of caring for people as individuals as a *practice* of care among participants. This speaks to the issue of caring for someone as opposed to caring about someone; while participants certainly care about the children in their organization, they also care for them.

Two participants also explicitly spoke about the limitations of care in their initial discussions of it. When talking specifically about her position at PACE within her more general discussion of care, Tiffany Hunt (PACE) explained her belief that it was necessary to care "within reason," recognizing that some of her students needed a type of care that she could not always provide.

Providing care within reason is something I had to come to terms with; there are some girls who need more assistance, and sometimes you can't provide that within the working day, at your job, or you know, at least at mine. Girls might need to talk to you at 7 at night and that's not always practical. You do as much as you can with what you have.

Kathy Vance also included potential qualifiers of care in her comments, stressing the importance of what she believed to be an integral part of caring: reciprocity.

Care goes both ways. Not only have I felt like I care about those kids in Kids Count, but its reciprocal. That's a big part of care for me. When you take an interest in someone and try to help them, and they care right back for you, that's a caring relationship. That's what care means to me . . . how you go about caring for someone is important too. If you just go in with the concept of "I'm just gonna give give give with this person—that doesn't work. Realistically, sometimes you give everything and get nothing. You have to look at the relationship. Sometimes it's not a great one—not anybody's fault, but just not working. So you have to think about that.

The statements from Tiffany Hunt and Kathy Vance on the limitations of care can be read as a version of Noddings' contention that relational caring can not be completed if the cared-for does not receive the care of the one-caring, even if the one-caring has nothing but the cared-for's best interests at heart. This is particularly true for Kathy Vance's statement; she not only emphasized the importance of the relationships in which caring takes place, but directly addressed the issue of reciprocity that is so central to Noddings' argument. She recognized that sometimes, caring does not "work," and that this failure of a caring relationship is not necessarily anyone's fault.

Also, Kathy Vance's quick acknowledgement that care sometimes fails is important to note when coupled with the fact that she was a classroom teacher for 41 years. Kathy was, by far, the most experienced participant in terms of time spent with children, and it seems significant that she would so quickly and directly address the possibility of care potentially failing—an issue that no other participant addressed. Her familiarity and no-nonsense phrasing of the fact that care sometimes fails and no one is necessarily to blame could be read as a "common sense" of caring gained from experience, and is indicative of the need for feminists and others who are interested in the success of caring relationships to learn from the wisdom of experienced caring professionals.

Elizabeth Jacobbe [Kids count] and Kathy Southwick [PACE] also talked about students in their organization not being willing or able to receive care from the staff. Importantly, like Kathy Vance, they did not do so in a dismissive way; rather, they used positive rhetoric indicating that, while the student might not be able to benefit from the organization's care at a particular moment of time, care provided by the staff was certainly not wasted. Participants often used the term "planting seeds" to describe their feelings about these incidents, which, participants admitted, happen fairly often.

Common Ideas in Discussion of Care: Participants' Understanding of How They Care for Students

The staff and board members of PACE Center for Girls and Kids Count in Alachua County overwhelmingly articulated that they cared for their charges on a deep, individual level. Unsurprisingly, though participants' discussions about care varied, a sense of caring was common to all of them. Four other key ideas were common to all interview participants: 1) the role that strong mothering or female mentorship has played in their life trajectory toward the work they do and continues to play in their conceptualization of that work, 2) a sense of social justice drove their work, 3) they believed in the education of the "whole child," and 4) they sought to build individual relationships with children as these would allow them to best meet children's needs. Together these ideas informed and shaped the practice of care by the professionals working within PACE and Kids Count, although they did not necessarily link them explicitly to the practice of caring.

Mothering and Female Mentorship

Seven of my participants explicitly spoke of the presence of strong maternal figures or female mentorship, usually early in their lives. They often mentioned this

influence at the very beginning of the interview, while talking about mindsets or beliefs that influenced them to do the work they do. At times, their allusion to the influence of mothering or female mentorship even overlapped with their discussions of their conceptualizations of care. Because of that connection and the obvious role these female figures have played in my participants' choice to do the work that they do, it is important to highlight the influence of these maternal figures.

While talking about what led them to do the work they do, five participants articulated a deep memory of a mother or grandmother figure. Participants who spoke about mothers or grandmothers not only spoke about their memories at the beginning of the interview, but also frequently alluded to them throughout their comments. These discussions often centered less on the warmth and love these figures than on high expectations they had, as well as their strong ethics of social justice.

Vicki Burke (PACE), in her discussion of how and why she founded PACE, explained that she grew up with two incredibly strong women: her mother and grandmother. Her mother, she emphasized, had a fierce passion for social justice, and encouraged Vicki to start doing social justice work when she was just 7 years old. Vicki explained, "My mom absolutely, all the time stressed the importance that I made a difference in this world and care for people. Even when I was really young, she would say, 'You need to get out there and use your talents to help people. You were born fortunate. You have to give something back.'" This early influence by her mother led Vicki to know that she wanted to be a social worker early in life, a calling which she eventually made a reality, and would eventually lead her to found PACE against overwhelming odds. Vicki emphasized how different her life path would have been if

not for the influence of her mother, saying, “So there I was at 7, doing social work! And I just knew I would be a social worker when I grew up. I just knew. And you know, where I’m from, that’s not normal. It’s not normal to be different. Where I’m from, you’re either a waitress or an attorney.”

In Kathy Vance’s discussion of the role her mother and grandmother played in her childhood, she explained that both were strong feminists who instilled a belief in women’s empowerment and gender equality in Kathy at a young age.

I came from a long line of feminists. My grandmother was directly involved in women getting the right to vote, my mother was born the year women got the right to vote...I mean, my grandmother and her 5 sisters were all marching around, demanding equal rights for women. So you know, I saw that role model of course. My mom was definitely a feminist, and so was my grandmother. They told me —showed me—early on that I was lucky, and that you have to fight sometimes to achieve the equality that you deserve. And you know, I knew that they expected me to do that. It was clear.

Other participants who spoke about the role their mothers and grandmothers played in their lives (Kathy Southwick [PACE], Y’Vette Carter [PACE], Jessica Belcoure [Kids Count]) also emphasized the high expectations these maternal figures held for their children/grandchildren to be successful in a way that would help others.

The component of social justice that emerges here is an important one, as it speaks to an addition to the traditional warm or caring mother. Participants’ discussion of their mothers and grandmothers implied that they were warm and caring, but that was not the aspect on which they focused their memories. Their mothers or grandmothers were certainly caring individuals, but they also demanded their children and grandchildren help others.

The role that maternal figures’ passion for social justice clearly plays in the lives of children and grandchildren is something that should draw the attention of feminists

interested in ethics of care, as it evidences maternal figures instilling –not just engaging in—relational caring in their children/grandchildren. It speaks to the question, “How do we learn to care about and *for* others?” Mothers engage in relational caring with their children, but how can that relationship instill a desire to care for others? What role can or should social justice play, for example, in feminist parenting or other mothering? An attempt to answer these questions would not only extend and expand the discussion of care ethics, but would also be a way of examining ways in which culture informs conceptions of care and social justice.

The two participants who did not directly address the role their maternal relatives played in their childhood were Ward and Elizabeth. Instead, they both spoke about women who had greatly influenced them to care in the way that they now do. For Elizabeth, this role model came early, in the form of a teacher. When asked why she chose to specifically help young, at-risk students, she explains:

It's very personal to me. I had someone to help me—my teacher; she had a huge impact; had I not had her, I would have questioned my choice to go to college. You know, I didn't come from a lot of money; I didn't necessarily have this urgent need pressed on me to go to college by anyone else but her. I want to do this for other people; I've never told kids that their situation doesn't influence their position. It does. But that doesn't mean that I don't believe in them. I believe in them the same way my teacher believed in me, and I hope that I make the difference that she did. She had really high expectations of me—I knew what those were, but I knew that she loved me. And so I met them. That's what I tried to do with kids at Kids Count—just letting them know that they were loved, and at the same time, being open with them that I expected them to succeed because they just had to. My teacher really taught me what it meant to care about people, and what it means to truly help them.

While this was Elizabeth's most direct comment about the influence her teacher had on her, it was not her only one. She frequently referenced this teacher in her discussions about how she conceptualized her role at Kids Count, why the

organizations was so important to her, and what it means to help children. Her comments clearly indicated that this teacher had left a lasting impression not only on Elizabeth's life, but on her work as well.

Ward articulated his experience in female mentorship as one that taught him "how to really care effectively for a child." He explained that by watching a woman who worked with him in Prime Time (the organization that was partially responsible for what would eventually become Kids Count), he learned the importance of combining love with high expectations.

I primarily learned to care for kids by watching a lady I worked with in Prime Time. Man, this lady really made an impression on me—I've never forgotten it. She showed those kids such encouragement—she really made it clear that she loved them and respected them—but she ALWAYS had high expectations of them, and it didn't matter that they maybe came from a difficult place—that just meant they had to work harder, and was expected that and would help them do it. That helped me realize what it means to care for a child, especially one from difficult circumstances. I think I was really lucky to witness something like that, and I try to keep it mind in my work with Kids Count, of course.

Elizabeth and Ward both clearly, almost perfectly articulate the essence of warm demander theory in their descriptions of their teacher and colleague, respectively. While their female mentors were not related to them, and while they may not have been influenced by these mentors as early in life as some of my other participants were influenced by their mothers or grandmothers, their mentors seem to have impressed upon them much of the same sense of social justice my other participants mentioned in their discussions of their mothers and grandmothers. Elizabeth's and Ward's comments are illustrations of how warm demanders interject social justice into caring for students, and the powerful impression that either experiencing or witnessing warm demanding can leave. These impressions are clearly central to how Elizabeth and Ward

conceptualize their work at Kids Count, therefore evidencing the important potential warm demander theory holds for feminists seeking to understand the relationship between ethics of care and social justice.

Social Justice as a Driving Force of Care

While Ward Simonton and Elizabeth Jacobbe both expressly articulated the role warm demanders had played in their lives, they were not the only participants who referenced the connection between care and social justice. Three more participants clearly articulated a commitment to leveling social inequalities when discussing how their organization cares for kids. This sense of justice was both personal and professional, often appearing to stem primarily from a recognition participants' had of the privilege from which they or their families had benefitted. Participants understood that the youth their organizations serve do not have that same privilege, and articulated a desire to provide opportunities so that their students could be successful.

In her discussion of the mindsets that led her to PACE, Kathy Southwick expressed her consciousness of the privilege that has characterized her life, and her subsequent desire to give other kids just as many opportunities as she has received.

One aspect of me is that I realize what a great childhood I had. . . . Looking back, I realize how my childhood led me to take risks and believe in myself. I feel like that people who are more fortunate and get better cards need to give back. You know, I didn't do anything really special—I just got really lucky from the start, but that doesn't mean that I'm better than anyone else. It's not fair to assume that just because someone is born to certain parents or comes from a certain place means they won't succeed—but it's your job as someone who has made it to give back, to help those other people and give them their chance.

Y'Vette Carter (PACE) made many of the same comments as Kathy Southwick, but also spoke directly about the issue race played in her conviction to help at-risk youth. She explained that she has always felt lucky “to be a black woman from a stable,

middle class background,” but is aware that her life as a young black female could have taken a different turn.

You know, these girls look just like I did at that age. That’s why I have such a heart for these girls—I look at them and see what could have happened with ME, had I not had such structure, such high expectations, had I not had such a good support system. Although bad things happened to me, I was not allowed to make it an excuse. So part of my mission is to make sure these girls know that whatever happens to them, it does not define them. You know, you define yourself. You define your own future. Because I defined mine. But I had the tools and the help to do it. It’s not fair to expect someone to define herself if she just doesn’t know how, or if there’s no one there to help her...I feel that for a young black girl, it’s essential that you find somebody to care about you who looks like you. It’s essential. That you see someone –SOMEONE- who looks like you. And you might not be able to touch them, although they can absolutely touch me, but if you have someone that you can emulate, that’s imperative. It’s my duty as a successful black women to be there for these girls, and to help them in any way I can. Otherwise it’s just so unfair.

Ward also alluded to the privilege that has benefitted him and his family, asserting that it is simply not fair that his children have had advantages and opportunity that the children at Kids Count have not. He explained that this consciousness of his own kids’ privilege and its absence in the lives of the children at Kids Count, combined with his social-justice oriented Methodist faith, led him to found Kids Count and drives how he continues to lead it.

I come from the Methodist faith, and that shapes so much of how I look at social justice issues. To me, I believe in compassion with legs under it—I’m the legs. . . . All the parts of my job that are exhausting, especially all the fundraising—I can complain about it, but at the end of the day, I feel called to lead this organization and help these kids. I just don’t see how I could ignore the fact that my kids have had so many opportunities and so many chances to do great things, just because my wife and I are their parents. That’s absolutely not fair, and the way I see it, if I believe in social justice (which I do), then I have no choice but to help the kids at Kids Count succeed. It’s the only right thing to do.

While these participants talked about the role social justice plays in their work did so from a personal perspective, Elizabeth Jacobbe (Kids Count) and Kathy Vance (Kids

Count) spoke about how working with low-income kids had made them realize just how integral a part social justice plays in what they want to accomplish. In Elizabeth's discussion of the way social justice concerns inform how she conceptualizes her work, she explained that the care she felt and expressed for the children at Kids Count exposed her to how much of a social justice component her work has.

If there is a problem, we as a society must help; we can't turn a blind eye. These kids deserve every chance that everyone else gets, and that's all there is to it. When I first started working with low income kids, it was out of the same place of care –the same caring—that I felt toward any child. It was no different, and it's still not different—I care about the kids I help like I care about my own kids. But then, when I saw how people reacted, when I would hear the things they would say and assume about these kids that they didn't even know, then it became about justice. Like 'come, on!' It's not right they don't get the same chance as everyone else. Where they're from or how much money their parents make does not make a difference to me. It's just the right thing to do as a society. Everybody deserves a chance.

Kathy V. articulated her concern with social justice issues as a product of what she witnessed as a classroom teacher. A 41 year teaching career allowed her watch the demographics of her classroom change from high SES (socio-economic status) to low SES, an experience that opened her eyes to how much social circumstances affect a child's education.

It really took me to a different place. It opened my eyes and boy let me tell you, it opened my mind because although you read about poverty and you hear about it and you knew about it, but after 1986, when I would see students from Kennedy homes, which is not just low-end, it's no end. It was public housing, and I mean it was entirely different. It changed the dynamics. The gap was huge.

Kathy Vance and other teachers responded to their schools' changing demographic by taking steps to make themselves more available for the communities in which students lived. They started going into these communities for PTA meetings,

tutoring sessions, etc. For Kathy, this decision to do everything possible to help her students was part of a deep belief system about children's rights to an education.

It comes from a belief system. All kids can learn . . . and I think probably this was instilled in me from day 1. My mom and grandma were teachers and demanded the best from their students. They loved them and told them that, but they demanded the best and believed their students could give it to them. So when I saw these kids with just such deep needs... you know, we banded together to help. I think teachers as a whole are very dedicated people who want all their children, no matter what, to be the best they can be. We didn't even think about it—we just knew that it wasn't fair these kids didn't have the chances other kids did, so we wanted to help them. What else was there to do?

Participants' clear passion for social justice is one way in which they employ tenets of warm demander theory; the passion they feel for children drives them to strive to help students overcome barriers of inequality, just like warm demanders do. In addition, their articulated commitment to social justice is important because, just like participants' discussions of influential maternal figures, it indicates an extra component of the care these participants enact for children. The remarks above prove that participants are not merely caring for children because they care about them; they are caring for them as an extension of their commitment to social justice as well. Another way to think about this would be to say that participants' commitment to social justice could explain the bridge between these participants caring about children and caring for them.

Practically speaking, it was these participants' commitment to social justice that, in large part, drove them to work with organizations like PACE and Kids Count. No participant said, "I wanted to work for (organization) because I wish to enact a feminist version of caring for at-risk youth," even though I argue they actually did articulate a version of feminist caring without realizing it. What five participants *did* articulate,

however, was that an influential component of their care for children was their commitment to social justice. This has important implications for feminists in terms of understanding what motivates different kinds of care-givers, and how feminists can become part of the communities of care-givers that are not explicitly feminist in nature.

Valuing of “Education of the Whole Child”

The above participants’ articulation of commitments to social justice leads directly to a valuing of the education of the “whole child.” All participants made statements indicating they valued the education of the whole child, as opposed to solely academic education. To clarify, when I use the term “education of the whole child,” I am referring to the general structure that both PACE and Kids Count use, one that provides and performs services for students beyond those that are simply academic.

As I have already shared in my description of the two organizations, PACE Center for Girls asserts that it “provides girls & young women an opportunity for a better future through education, counseling and advocacy,” and Kids Count splits its focus among three primary services for children: academics, social skill development, and enrichment. I return to the missions and services of these organizations briefly to highlight that the structures of these organizations and their commitments to the education of the whole child speak explicitly to the conditions in which poor and at-risk children live.

Even before their education begins, poor children typically suffer from limited learning opportunities. As a result, the average four year old child from a poor family uses a vocabulary approximately one-third the size of children from middle income families, and research has shown that first-graders from poor families are half as likely as their peers from non-poor families to be proficient at understanding words in context

and performing basic mathematic skills (Darling-Hammond 2010, 33). Once they begin school, poor non-white children are likely to experience unequal educational opportunities such as fewer experienced teachers, rapid teacher turnover and fewer educational resources than their non-poor peers enjoy (Douglas 2006). In addition to poor academic performance, the risks for poor, disproportionately minority children are shockingly high; they are far more likely than their white, non-poor peers to drop out of high school, become parents, display emotional and behavior problems, suffer from low self-esteem, be incarcerated, and end up as adults living in poverty (Moore et al. 2009).

Staff at PACE and Kids Count are aware of the risks for the whole child, and are committed to educated the whole child as a result. Neither of the founders even mentioned academics explicitly while telling me about their initial visions of their organizations. Vicki Burke (PACE) explained that her experience working with a group of at-risk girls as a social worker inspired her to create a program where girls could be in a warm, welcoming environment, feel comfortable talking about their issues, and move past the problems that had kept them from being successful.

Ward Simonton, the director of Kids Count, stressed that in his initial envisioning of the organization, he felt strongly that children should not just be given a warm environment, but also be equipped with the skills to be successful in all aspects of life, and be rewarded for hard work. He explains

We really wanted to develop a nurturing environment for these kids, but we didn't just want to hold their hand and have that be that. We wanted something that would develop their social skills and deal with character development. You know, we wanted to really engage the child to help foster determination, responsibility, love—all those things that you need in every day life. Also, we wanted to make it fun! That's why we try to schedule something fun on Friday—we want to send the message very

early that if you work hard during the week and do what you need to do, then you will be rewarded.

It would neither be fair nor correct to read Vicki's or Ward's exclusion of academics in their narratives of founding PACE and Kids Count to mean they did not care about academics, or want their programs to academically assist and prepare students. It is clear from their organizations that they did (and do) absolutely want to help students academically. However, their explicit focus on non-academic aspects of their organization highlights the fact that academic development was not their only, or even primary, focus.

The current directors of PACE in Alachua County and Kids Count clearly share Vicki Burke's (PACE) and Ward's (Kids Count) belief that holistic education is most beneficial for the at-risk youth they serve. Both Sabriena Williams (Kids Count) and Kathy Southwick (Kids Count) emphasized that their organizations go well beyond academics, providing students with the environment they need to not only do well in school, but to do well as people. Kathy Southwick's articulation of this tied in closely with her conceptualization of treating girls as individuals, which I explore in the next section. When I asked her what makes her organization so successful, she immediately responded, "What makes us successful is that we're very holistic. We treat each girl individually and take into account what she's been through—we meet them where they are. We don't just shove books and tests at them and then send them home—we let them know we care by looking at their whole self."

Kathy Southwick (PACE) also emphasized that, while she believes "academics is your ticket," the students' issues often must be addressed before the student can be academically successful. Alluding to the importance of treating each student as an

individual, she explained how the social services PACE offers inform the students' education by saying, "It kind of depends on the girl—each girl and what she's been through. But I know academics is your ticket. Most girls come to us behind in school because of everything that's been going on in their lives—we have to do the social service piece first to get them in a place where they're motivated to do what they need to do academically."

In addition to the current directors being committed to the vision of holistic education, staff and board members members also articulated a focus on other aspects of "education" beyond simply academics. One of similarities across these discussions was participants' stress on the way that their organization helps students to develop nonacademic skills that will help them to be successful later in life. As Kathy Vance (Kids Count) explained when I asked her how Kids Count best helps its students,

Well we talked about the academics. But that's only one part of it. We are teaching them how to present themselves in a positive way in life. How to behave, how to get along with people—we teach words like integrity and what means, compassion and what that means. We also do an enrichment day...it's a combination of everything. However, if you can teach kids to care and model caring for them—then that's extremely important. They will grow up to be caring people.

It is important to note in Kathy's answer the close connection she established between holistic education and teaching children to care in addition to the emphasis she put on promoting social skills. Jessica Belcoure (Kids Count) echoed this emphasis when she explained how she conceptualizes the connection between academics and social skills.

Academics is only one part of what we do, and honestly, I am not sure it's always the most important part. I guess maybe a better way to say that is that I don't think academics are all that makes you successful in life. Everything is equally important. You have to know how to get along with people, how to work in a group, how to be a person with integrity and

character. That's why we take field trips, that's why we let them play games and play outside, even though we watch them like hawks. We want them to develop the skills to be successful people, not just successful students—but but, you know, aren't those the same thing?

The focus by participants from Kids Count on helping students develop skills beyond the academic realm speaks to a desire on the staff's part to move students outside their normal experience at school every day. As Elizabeth Jacobbe (Kids Count) explained, "We do things at Kids Count that our kids—really very few kids at public school—get to do. You know, it's very important to us that we not just give them test prep questions, but instead, we challenge them as individuals to be kind, and full of integrity, and thoughtful." Elizabeth's belief that Kids Count provided its young people an opportunity for social and personal development they might not get in school was shared by all participants from Kids Count, and all participants from PACE almost identically articulated this idea.

Importantly, and perhaps predictably, the focus on what those opportunities for social and personal development were used to accomplish varied between the groups. Generally, participants from Kids Count tended to talk about how their organization's utilization of a holistic approach helped students grow, as Ward Simonton (Kids Count) said, "with a stronger foundation," as well as helped students develop an early curiosity and thirst for knowledge. Participants from PACE, on the other hand, tended to discuss the holistic nature of their program as helping girls to "heal" or move past their problems so that they could, first, succeed academically, but just as importantly, build social and personal skills to help them get careers.

Kathy Southwick (PACE) explained that one aspect of PACE that has come out of their holistic approach is PACE's incorporation of vocational opportunities:

One of the things we stress with the girls –because not all of them have had the opportunity to develop really awesome social skills for a variety of reasons, or have been exposed to a lot of enrichment stuff- is that, you know, not only do you have to learn how to work in group settings and have good communication skills for your work here, but you’re also going to have to have those skills for your job. And we try to show them that. We take field trips, have speakers come in—you know, we do as much as we can to prepare them not just to get their GED or graduate, but to really be functional people and professionals after they leave here, even if they don’t go to college.

It stands to reason that PACE’s and Kids Count’s emphasis on the education of the whole child would attract people who are not interested in traditional education.

This attraction is certainly recognizable in both organizations; many staff members in both PACE and Kids Count could work in schools if they wished, but instead (at least at the time of my interviews), chose not to do so. Jessica Belcoure (PACE) provided me with a great explanation of what attracted her to Kids Count, and why:

The biggest reason I came to Kids Count is that it centers on nonformal education. That’s always been my primary academic focus in all the work I’ve done. I really support all forms of nonformal “free choice” education...That’s what I like doing. I’ve always been passionate about education but I never wanted to be a classroom teacher. To me, one part of learning isn’t more important than another. You have to educate the whole child, and sometimes that can’t happen in a school. I also am adamant that passion is a required part of learning, and I do not think most kids –even really privileged ones- get that in schools. If kids don’t develop a passion for something, they will never want to learn anything; kids just don’t develop passions for things naturally—someone has to expose them to what could be their passion. More than one thing, haha, and for the most part, with testing and regulations and what have you, schools are limited in ways that they can do that.

Tiffany also expressed some of these same views when talking to me about what attracted her to PACE.

I was really drawn to PACE because it doesn’t just focus on academics. Don’t get me wrong, academics are important to me, but I liked that I was given a space to do both. As the reading teacher and the Spirited Girls teacher, I was helping them with traditional school stuff, sure, but I was also helping them emotionally. I was helping them get to a place where they

wanted to learn because they care about themselves and their futures enough to do so, and I don't think that would be as easy in a regular school.

The emphasis Jessica Belcoure (Kids Count) and Tiffany Hunt (PACE) placed on wanting to work in a setting that allowed them to educate the "whole" child, and their clear articulation that they did not view that setting as a classroom, is an issue I will return to in my conclusion.

Building Relationships and Consequently Meeting Students' Needs

The predominant theme that emerged from interviews was participants' belief that their organization's commitment to creating a space for individual relationships between staff and students was the primary factor that allowed the organizations to care for children in effective and meaningful ways. The power in these relationships lies in what they enable: a personal knowledge of each child, the ability to respond to each child as an individual, and an increased ability to meet children's needs. All participants spoke extensively about how vital relationships are to both PACE and Kids Count in terms of allowing staff to care for children.

Relationships formed the foundation of participants' organizations, creating a family-like atmosphere in which relationships were not simply a tool to help students improve academically, but the ultimate way in which individual care-givers can show students how much they genuinely care about their lives. As Kathy Southwick (PACE) explains:

You know, we're really all about relationships. Our relationships with the girls are the foundation of everything we do with them. We're all about relationships, and that's how she's going to want to learn better. It is honest, sincere caring about her. Kids will pick it up right away if you're being fake, and a huge part of my job is to hire staff that has the heart to care for them the way they need. We become their family. Loving them

where they are, understanding them, helping to build trust so they can tell us their secrets and move past them.

Elizabeth Jacobbe (Kids Count) echoed Kathy Southwick's focus on relationships helping to foster a family-like atmosphere, characterizing Kids Count as a whole in terms of family and acceptance.

Kids Count is a place where it's after-school family. I want kids to feel like they're going home. Some kids will go home, some kids will go to Kids Count. Even though it's not a home, it functions as a home...just that feel of home, like how was your day. . . . I would say it's a safe, nurturing, loving environment where people can be and learn and grow and change, just have their basic needs met.

Continuing the emphasis on relationships, Sabriena Williams (Kids Count) explained that she conceptualizes her job in terms of the relationships she builds and holds with students and families. Importantly, the relationships Sabriena builds with students are just as impactful for her as they are for the students at Kids Count, as they help foster the familial type of care she provides.

I've only been on this job a couple of months and I genuinely have a concern for each child and each family—I care about what's going on in their home life, their academic life, their personal life—I make an effort to get to know each child individually. It's very important to build a relationship with each child as an individual—that's you how gain their trust and show them you care. When that happens, they become like your own child.

Sabriena's comment evidences how relational caring works in Kids Count. A primary goal of participants building a relationship with each child is to reach a point where the child will trust them and understand that they care (“that's how you gain their trust and show them you care”)—in other words, the goal of the one-caring in building relationships with children is to reach a point where the cared-for positively receives that care, so that he may benefit from it. Multiple relationships of this nature result in the “after-school family” Elizabeth describes. Further, I believe that Sabriena's statement of

“when that happens, they become like your own child” could be read as indicative of the reciprocity that is at work in both PACE and Kids Count. In their strong valuing of building individual relationships with children, participants are also valuing the cycle of relational caring.

That participants value being able to know and respond to each child within individual relationships is not surprising. Generally speaking, the idea of working “one on one” with children is what often draws people to organizations like PACE and Kids Count. The significance of individual relationships, then, lies not in their novelty, but in what they enable: the meeting of children’s needs.

Relationships are essential for a staff trying to meet the needs of their students. As I mentioned earlier, staff members’ establishment of individual relationships with students results in staff enjoying a relational connection with students that allows them to better understand and meet students’ needs, even as those needs change. The importance of meeting student needs was something that all participants stressed in interviews, in two different capacities. First, participants stressed the importance of meeting students where they are, taking time to understand what they need at a particular time. Second, participants stressed the fact that students’ needs change over time, and staff must respond to those changes as well.

Kathy Vance (Kids Count) provided an excellent articulation of how participants seemed to conceptualize the connection between maintaining individual relationships with students and meeting their needs. She explained

Caring has to be individual. Of course you have the general sense of caring, but that’s just the first step. You wouldn’t come here if not for that general care. That’s why you come. But then you get there and you see that every kid is individual—they have their own needs and so you care for

them individually. You take into account what that individual child needs, and you do your best to meet those needs. If you didn't treat each child as an individual, you would never be able to know what they need to begin with, and if you don't know what they need, how can you help them?

Tiffany Hunt (PACE) further elaborated on Kathy's conception of identifying and meeting needs, emphasizing the importance of maintaining individual relationships with students in order to form a plan based around a student's particular needs. She stated that, "If you actually sit down and have a conversation with each student and figure out what their [his/her] needs are, plus what social issues are you having. Then you form a plan based on those conversations."

Overstating the emphasis participants placed on "meeting students where they are" would be difficult. All participants repeatedly mentioned the importance of being able to understand and meet student needs. This emphasis is strong evidence of the fact that such a belief is an integral part of their conception of the connection between education and care. As Elizabeth Jacobbe (Kids Count) told me within minutes of the beginning of our interview, "I really, deeply believe –I still believe—that you need to meet children where they are, and go from there. That's the only way you can ever truly help them in the way they need the most."

Participants' emphasis on understanding and meeting a child's needs correlates directly with Noddings' conception of engrossment, the first step in relational caring. To recap, engrossment happens when the one-caring receives the feeling or pain of the cared-for; the one-caring does not immediately diagnose what the problem is, or instantly start thinking of solutions. Kathy Southwick (PACE) nicely illustrated what engrossment looks like on a practical level in her explanation of how she and her staff handle the often intense emotional trauma and pain with which PACE students often

arrive. She said that she operates with a mindset of “knowing that I can’t imagine but yet feeling their pain . . . that makes me want to do everything I can to feel their pain and let my staff feel their pain—that’s what our job means. Feeling their pain before we start working through it.” While Kathy was the only participant to state this idea so directly, participants’ consistent comments later in this chapter about “meeting children where they are” and understanding their changing needs before moving forward could arguably be interpreted as an unknowing allusion to engrossment as well.

Just as participants recognized that each student has individual needs, they also recognized that students’ needs may change over time. As Jessica Belcoure (Kids Count) explained

We are always in the process of learning what our students need. Every child has different deficits—different needs—at different points in their life, and because we’re the ones who need to meet those needs, we have to make sure that our relationship is strong enough with the child, and that we’re being attentive enough to the child as an individual instead of just part of the group, to recognize when those needs change. Every action is potentially a warning sign for a new need, and those happen every day. It’s not like the kids will always have the exact same needs they have when they come here on the first day, although that would certainly be easier, haha. But they don’t.

Elizabeth Jacobbe (Kids Count) also expressed the importance of staff meeting students’ changing needs, explaining her belief that “knowing when a child’s needs change is part of your job as a care-taker in this profession. And needs change all the time. You have to know the kids well enough as people—not just as students—to notice when something changes, and you have to have that relationship with them so that they’ll feel comfortable talking to you.”

The idea that staff should know students well enough to be aware of changes in their needs came through loudly in my interviews with board members. All of the board members communicated in one form or another that, as Y'Vette Carter (PACE) stated:

I don't know what those girls need. I may have an idea, but I don't know for sure. That's not my job, and that's good, because the people who work with the girls are better at knowing what they need than I could ever be. They know each girl individually and because of that, they can tell the board what needs to be done. And you know, the board doesn't do the same old thing every day and week and month. Some things stay the same, but the needs of the girls change, and sometimes, that means that the board needs to start doing something else, or something different. About the only thing that doesn't change is that there is never enough money, [laughs].

Y'Vette's sentiments were echoed by all the board members with whom I spoke, both from PACE and Kids Count. They all were complimentary of staff members' focus on relationships with students, repeatedly emphasizing that the board relies on staff to communicate what students need.

Connecting Practice and Theory: What Feminists Should Take Away

Participants' focus on meeting the needs of children is perhaps the strongest evidence of the similarities between the care that participants provide students at PACE and Kids Count and the process of relational caring within ethics of care, so it is fitting that all participants from both organizations explicitly mentioned this component in discussing how their organizations care for children. Just as Noddings contends that caring is performed on the foundation of a relationship between the one-caring and the cared-for, participants repeatedly stressed that individual relationships between themselves and students were essential in order to care for children and meet their needs. While participants might not use the term "one-caring" to describe themselves, they indeed are ones-caring, working to ensure that the cared-for positively receives and benefits from their care.

It would be unreasonable to expect any participant to perfectly articulate relational caring or warm demander theory; indeed, this project would not be as useful or as powerful if they did, as so much of its value lies in the practice of feminist caring by participants. We can see that a version of feminist caring *is* happening, but what should that mean to feminists? As we have seen throughout this chapter, participants frequently (if unknowingly) articulated a feminist version of care consistent with ethics of care and relational caring, also incorporating tenets of warm demander theory largely to address issues of social justice and an unwavering commitment to high expectations and support to students. What should feminists gain from this project?

I think a good way of looking at the answer to this question lies in my own feelings about this project. As I shared in my introduction, I was initially surprised to see what I recognized as a feminist version of care being enacted by PACE and Kids Count. However, the more I processed and wrote about participants' responses to my questions of care, the more I began to interrogate why I had been so surprised. I knew the answer of course: I was surprised because neither of the organizations called themselves feminist. Yet I knew what these organizations did for children; I knew they were combating structural inequality by valuing and caring for their students as individual people with different identities, problems, and needs. Why did I assume such an organization would be completely void of feminist components? Should I really have been that surprised that I could see feminist caring at work?

Allow me to provide a small anecdote to explain how I have come to see my answers to these questions. In early Fall 2012, as I was in the early stages this project and interning with Kids Count, I was a teaching assistant for an introductory Women's

Studies Class. The first piece the class read was Penny Weiss' "I'm Not a Feminist, But..." (Weiss 1991, 9-25). I had read the piece and students' responses to it a number of times as a teaching assistant and students' responses to it a number of times; inevitably, there were always a few students who articulated a strong commitment to feminist goals, but then at the end of their responses, explained they did not consider themselves feminists for a variety of reasons. When I would read responses denying the word "feminist" but clearly embracing feminist tenets, I was never surprised; it has never been my experience that people who do not spend a significant amount of time thinking or talking about feminism choose to call themselves feminists. I would think, "Well, maybe they won't use the word, but I'm happy they are on our side."

What I hope feminists gain from this project is that even if organizations serving marginalized communities refrain from using *the word*, this does not mean they are not on our side in terms of eradicating the inequality that defines the lives of so many—the same inequality we commit ourselves to overcoming. More importantly, that does not mean we cannot lend them our efforts. Most importantly, this does not mean we cannot learn from them.

As I said in my introduction, the significance of this project lies largely in what it can teach feminists about the unknowing employment of feminist thought by organizations who may not proclaim a feminist identity. Primarily, we should learn that this employment happens, and it does not happen in isolation from other ideas (I will return to this point in a moment). It is simply unrealistic to assume that every organization that serves marginalized populations in ways that utilize feminist tenets will characterize itself with the word "feminist." The sooner feminists begin to recognize our

shared aims with such organizations, the sooner we can get to work on accomplishing them with our new friends.

The question of what I call “activism versus academia” is a defining question of feminism; should feminists focus more on activism or academia? What this project offers in terms of answering that question is its illustration that understanding theory is important, but it is important because of the impact it can make on people’s lives, not for esoteric purposes of contributing to the academy and to the academy alone. Ellen Messer-Davidow explains, “Despite our professed concern with societal problems, our scholarly practices have recast them as discursive artifacts. . . . We became too driven by the imperative to criticize, too engrossed in particularizing identities and issues, and too busy sustaining our organizations on scant resources to keep the gradually shifting conditions of social change in view” (Messer-Davidow 2002, 287). This quote speaks directly to my project in that it speaks to the disassociation that can occur as a result of feminist theory being disconnected from feminist practice, as I believe is the case with care-focused feminism.

As soon as I looked up from the extreme level of abstraction I waded through in reading about feminist ethics of care and relational caring, I saw a group of teenaged girls who have spent their lives in and out of the juvenile justice system walk into a brightly colored classroom, smile and say hello to their teacher, and get to work. I saw twenty minority K-3rd graders from poor families run into a building, hang up their backpacks, and eat a snack before they started on their afternoon of homework and tutoring. I saw exactly what feminist caring can accomplish, but I was not the one doing the caring. I saw theory in practice, but it was not my practice. This project should

remind feminists that our theory must also be our practice, because if feminism is not working in every setting it can to end patriarchal, structural, and social inequality, then what is it doing?

To be clear, I am not arguing that feminists should give up their title, nor am I arguing that there should no longer be expressed feminist causes. I am arguing that feminists should shift their focus to recognizing similarities we have with others committed to combating inequality, then learn from them. Understanding how participants utilized tenets of warm demander theory in their conceptualization and enactment of feminist care for students is a perfect example of what we stand to gain from committing ourselves to communities and causes from which we have, for whatever reason, been absent.

This project speaks to the fact that venturing into these communities reminds feminists that we are not the only ones with ideas on combating inequality. We begin to remember that feminist theory does not act alone. It acts within the limitations of institutions, it acts within the policies of issues it seeks to inform, and it acts with other theories. I think this idea is particularly important and relevant as it relates to care-focused feminism, and use it as my example here.

Alone, care-focused feminism currently stands as an older, relatively outdated branch of feminist thought able to be articulated by very few people outside academia, if any. It seems irrelevant. However, when we revamp care-focused feminism by thinking about how it informs organizations like PACE and Kids Count –two organizations directly addressing pressing concerns of our nation-- in conjunction with contributions

from the field of education (like warm demander theory), it is repurposed and suddenly practically relevant again.

Perhaps this “repurposing” of care is an avenue by which feminists could, as I called for in my introduction, return to the issue of care. I contend that because care is so central to people’s lives, it demands feminists and others take an updated look at its place and enactment in society. Looking at care in collaboration with people who have experience dealing with resource inequality and other factors that complicate discussions of care would be useful for feminists in determining how to best proceed with what I believe is our necessary commitment to care.

Just as feminists stand to gain knowledge from venturing into new territory, those who do not identify as feminists stand to gain knowledge as well. Feminists should work within organizations committed to combating inequality to help ensure that those who lead and work for the organization are practically aware of the liberating tools and mindsets feminism provides and the ideas it espouses. Feminist must contribute our academic and activist efforts to places and causes where feminist ideas are present (if not perfectly articulated) and build on them. When that happens, everyone wins.

In closing, I hope this project compels feminists to more closely consider our role in the field of education. We must extend our involvement in education beyond feminist pedagogy and insert ourselves in important conversations regarding the education of our nation’s youth. My project shows that feminist caring is useful in educational endeavors for at-risk youth; what else do we have that is useful? What else can we do to assist in the goal to end educational inequality? We should talk to those in education to help us answer this question.

At any rate, the feminist voice in education, informed by our own convictions as well as the thoughts of new friends, must be louder. This is especially true concerning educational issues and programs involving at-risk youth. Feminists have much to offer this group of young people; we understand the history that has led to their oppression, we care about the significant ways in which the intersection of their race, gender, class, and sexuality affect their lives, and are committed to working toward dismantling the structures that bar them from opportunities they should have. I hope this project marks an invigorated interest on the part of feminists to concertedly join the fight for educational equality,

CHAPTER 5 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS PROJECT TO THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

I am focusing this brief conclusion on what those in education policy should gain from the information presented in this thesis. While this project speaks to primarily to feminists, I hope that those in the field of education find it useful as well. Participants articulated valuable insights into caring for at-risk youth, an endeavor that should concern all professionals involved in education, and feminists should not be the only ones who hear those insights. This project, if nothing else, is a look into the care at-risk youth receive in programs like PACE and Kids Count receive, and I hope that all education professionals, particularly those involved in policy, will consider ways to better support this care as well as begin to think about ways to incorporate it into the classroom.

To ignore the difficulties that nonprofits face in their attempt to care for others would be to ignore an important reality of nonprofits. I readily admit that I am not an expert on educational policy or nonprofits, and as such, it is not appropriate for me to delve into a long discussion of either. What I do instead is urge educators and policy makers to support the research and funding of nonprofits serving at-risk youth.

By the completion of this thesis, three of the staff member participants I interviewed had left either PACE or Kids Count in favor of a more structured or less demanding/time-consuming job. In addition, every participant I interviewed was able to quickly and easily cite a number of problems they encountered within their organization, most of which revolved around time or money. I did not put these comments in the body of my findings as they did not speak to the issue of feminist caring, nor will I share them all here as they are too extensive to be warranted by my brief conclusion, but I feel

that it is important to at least acknowledge that, in the midst of their discussions of deep commitment to and care for children, participants were often frustrated by the lack of support and funding of their programs. Hearing their voices change when they would shift from talking about the care they enacted for children to talking about financial issues or the unmanageable amounts of time they spent at their job that could not possibly compensate is one of the strongest memories I have from interviews.

Ward Simonton (Kids Count) and Kathy Southwick (PACE) both shared insights in their interviews about the difficulties organizations such as PACE and Kids Count face. Ward explained that, “honestly, if I’d had any idea what this would involve—how long it would take and how many obstacles we’d encounter, I’m not sure I’d do it again. Obviously I’m glad I did, but let me tell you, it hasn’t been easy. I’m not sure it will ever be easy.” Kathy Southwick (PACE) echoed his sentiments, saying, “You know, running something like this—working here—is exhausting. It takes time and money and thought at 3 in the morning. It’s exhausting.” I share Ward’s and Kathy’s comments to provide anecdotal evidence that whether a nonprofit has been around since 2007 or 1985, working for nonprofits is no easy task.

Speaking with participants about the challenges of time and money they face in their jobs after listening to them speak extensively about how deeply they cared for their charges re-affirmed my belief that these important organizations must be better supported, in every way, on state and federal levels. Participants believe strongly in the value of their work, and they are not alone. Research has shown that prolonged involvement of at-risk youth in nonprofits results in improved grades, test scores, and behavior, as well as increased school attendance (“Closing the Achievement Gap: The

Promise of Afterschool Programs” 2006), evidencing the role that programs like PACE, Kids Count, and other nonprofits can play in helping to close the achievement gap.

While more research is needed to look at the long-term effects of nonprofits, educators and policy makers committed to ending educational equality should recognize nonprofits serving at-risk youth as a valuable asset to communities.

In addition to evidencing the need for the continued and improved support of existing nonprofits, I hope this thesis also speaks to the need to incorporate more room for care into classrooms. Education must utilize the feminist caring articulated by participants, particularly in its focus on building relationships and meeting needs, to provide care for students. While this is difficult due to the conventional model of school, it is not impossible. It is a worthwhile cause that I believe would both benefit students and attract a high caliber of caring individuals to the classroom.

Importantly, a key component of providing care for students in the classroom is having caring teachers in the classroom. In this project, however, three participants articulated their belief that the kind of caring they were able to provide for children in PACE and Kids Count was much more difficult to accomplish in traditional school settings. I share them now as examples of caring voices articulating the frustration that can come with the conventional model of school.

Both Jessica Belcoure’s (Kids Count) and Tiffany Hunt’s (PACE) comments on the importance of a holistic approach to education evidenced their belief that caring for the “whole child” is more difficult to do in a traditional school. Jessica explained,

I’ve always been passionate about education but I never wanted to be a classroom teacher. To me, one part of learning isn’t more important than another. You have to educate the whole child, and sometimes that can’t happen in a school. I also am adamant that passion is a required part of

learning, and I do not think most kids—even really privileged ones- get that in schools. If kids don't develop a passion for something, they will never want to learn anything; kids just don't develop passions for things naturally—someone has to expose them to what could be their passion. More than one thing, haha, and for the most part, with testing and regulations and what have you, schools are limited in ways that they can do that.

Tiffany Hunt's (PACE) work as the both the reading teacher and Spirited Girls teacher led her to feel like she was helping students both academically and emotionally, something she articulated on she was not sure would have been possible at a traditional school. She explained, "As the reading teacher and the Spirited Girls teacher, I was helping them with traditional school stuff, sure, but I was also helping them emotionally. I was helping them get to a place where they wanted to learn because they care about themselves and their futures enough to do so, and I don't think that would be as easy in a regular school."

The value in these responses is that they communicate the reality that there are people who want to be involved in education, but in a way that is free of what many people feel are the restrictions, limitations, and burdens of the school system. Jessica and Tiffany believed that what they wanted to instill in children would not be possible, or at the very least, would be much more difficult, in a traditional classroom setting. It is clear from their responses that their conception of a school classroom does not and would not allow them to do the work that they want to do with youth, even though this would obviously not be true in all schools.

In addition to Jessica Belcoure's (Kids Count) and Tiffany Hunt's (PACE) comments about not feeling as though they could teach the "whole child" in a conventional classroom, Elizabeth Jacobbe (Kids Count) also voiced her frustration with what she experienced as a classroom teacher:

Public schools say that they want you to teach individually, but really, they give you a formula—this was just the most frustrating thing! You know, I've been in the classroom—I know what works and what doesn't, but you can't always put that knowledge to work on an individual level with so many kids. It's like you're expected to teach a certain way that might not reach each kid individually. Of course it's a different setting—you know, it's a classroom and that's different—but the formulaic system you're expected to teach under can be really limiting.

While Elizabeth's frustration was influenced by her experience as a classroom teacher, Tiffany Hunt (PACE) is experiencing difficulty in the lack of space and time conventional schools allow for caring in her new job as a public school counselor. Speaking about the importance that counseling plays for the girls at PACE, she emphasized the absence of this opportunity in public school.

That's something that they don't get in a regular school setting, which is unfortunate because it's incredibly helpful for them. There's no time in the school day for kids to sit down and have counseling—it's just too busy and there are too many students. That's not how it's structured, you know? At PACE, there is time to help each girl in a way that they just couldn't be helped in a more mainstream public school. That's so much of what makes PACE special.

While I am not arguing that it is impossible for schools and teachers to provide care or that caring never happens in schools, I do think it is important for those in education to take the message in the above remarks to heart. Interviews with participants evidence the fact that caring individuals do not feel as though the type of care they want to provide for children is possible in traditional classrooms, and as a result, they do not enter them.

Again, while this project is primarily for feminists, it is valuable for those in education as well. I hope that readers from the field of education will remember the all of comments from participant interviews as they seek to make headway against educational inequality and remain committed to proving at-risk youth with the care and

support they need. Participant interviews speak to the need for both continued research and funding of nonprofits for at-risk youth as well as the need for a concerted effort to incorporate care into the structure of the conventional model of school. If leaders in the field of education want more quality, caring teachers in the classroom, and further, if they want students to benefit from individual care in school, they should work toward altering the conventional model of school into a form that begins to give care the role it deserves in schools. Finally, I hope that those in educational leadership will seek collaboration with feminists, warm demanders, staff members of nonprofits, and other “ones-caring” to better inform what will ideally be policy that values children as the “cared-for” that they should be allowed to be.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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