

STUDENT AUTONOMY AS A CONTEMPORARY MEASURE OF CARE THEORY AND
STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF CARE

A Dissertation

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR of PHILOSOPHY

in

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
Corpus Christi, Texas

May 2019

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May 2019

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This dissertation meets the standards for scope and quality of
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and is hereby approved.

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ABSTRACT

While there are a variety of teaching methods that may or may not be successful, this study focused on a student led, autonomous classroom environment—where autonomy is defined as offering students several choices and much control of a classroom. The researcher addressed how this learning environment supported the idea of demonstrating care in the classroom based on Nel Noddings' care theory and Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory. The study addressed guidelines for professors at the community college based on students' perceptions of care in the autonomy-based classroom.

The data collected for this study reflected two campuses at one community college in central Texas. The study, conducted during fall 2018, focused on students enrolled in the researcher's three English autonomy-based classes as well as students enrolled in an English professor colleague's three instructor-controlled classes. The populations varied in ethnicity, gender, and age based on the two participating campus locations.

Data relied on student participation in a pre and post-survey and results for them (generating a sample size of 35), interviews with six students (two from each of the autonomous courses), an interview with an English professor colleague, and student course outcomes. The study instrument used—Faculty Caring Survey—was developed by Garza and Overschelde (2017) to determine professor caring behaviors as identified by undergraduate and graduate students.

Quantitative data statistically revealed students in the instructor-controlled classroom favored this method of learning and earned slightly higher grades than students in the

autonomous classroom. However, there was not enough data to offer a final determination. All interviews, on the other hand, provided support for students' perceptions of caring behaviors and recognition of the benefits of an autonomous classroom.

The evidence base for care theory at the community college level requires further analysis. A similar or replicated study should be conducted to include student voices in the instructor-controlled classroom. Also, a study that includes more student input from both the instructor-controlled and autonomous classrooms would offer further analysis of student perceptions.

DEDICATION

It is with love and appreciation that I dedicate this dissertation to my husband Chris Grote and my daughter Lauren Bogard. You two endured much sacrifice while I was on this doctoral journey. I missed gatherings, events, school functions because I was immersed in this entire process, yet neither of you complained. You were always supportive in so many ways, and I can not imagine reaching the end of the journey without you two by my side. I love you Husband—more than I can ever express. And you, my daughter . . . you are my pride and joy and constant reminder that I can do anything. I love you so much!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ralph Waldo Emerson is credited with stating, “What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.” It was difficult, at times, to remember that what lay within me was the ability to complete this personal achievement. However, with the consistent support of my committee, I was able to overcome obstacles. I am especially grateful to Dr. Faye Bruun and Dr. Kelli Bippert for their constant encouragement. If I cried, you listened. If I threatened to quit, you allowed me time to calm down and then called and asked me to visit your office. You never gave up on me. Your belief in me and constant encouragement led me to complete this process, and for that I am forever grateful.

I must also acknowledge friends who listened to me vent about each stage of the dissertation process. Sherry Bowers, my life-long best friend and Dr. John Matteson, my sounding board—you two were instrumental in helping me maintain a positive attitude and believe I was capable of abilities I did not realize I possessed. The world is a better place because of you, and I am so fortunate to count you as dear friends.

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CHAPTER I: THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

College Atlas offered startling, updated statistics about college dropout rates in 2018. According to their site, 70% of Americans study at a four-year college, but less than 2/3 will graduate. 30% of college and university students drop out after their first year,” and “40% of college dropouts have parents with nothing beyond a high school diploma (Beckstead, 2018). These statistics suggest that students are not fully prepared for the expectations of college. They struggle with trying to maintain jobs, family, friends, and school. Professors struggle to convey necessary material in ways that appeal to students; the ideal situation is students are engaged and active learners in the classroom. While there are a variety of teaching methods that may or may not be successful, this study will focus on a student led, autonomous classroom environment—where autonomy is defined as offering students several choices and much control of a classroom. The researcher will address how this learning environment supports the idea of demonstrating care in the classroom.

Statement of Problem

While the evidence base about care theory and how caring instructors influence student success is substantial for primary and secondary levels of education, the evidence base for care theory at the community college level is less robust. On one hand, existing models provide some guidelines for community college educators; however, there is a lack of guidelines for professors based on students’ perceptions of care in the autonomy-based classroom.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this dissertation was to inform educators at the community college level about care theory to enhance student outcomes and experiences of community college students. Specifically, the researcher implemented a mixed methodological research paradigm to evaluate the treatment effect on student outcomes.

Theoretical Framework

Care-centered teacher education

John Dewey (1930), philosopher and educator, is known for his belief that traditional education would not benefit children. In the traditional sense, children were viewed as passive receptacles that must be filled with knowledge, according to a prescribed curriculum. Dewey, however, felt education should be more progressive by focusing on children's experiences. If students were able to apply a particular subject to their everyday lives, they would likely embrace what they were learning. Thus, teachers were challenged to present real-life problems to students and then guide them to develop a solution on their own using hands on activities. This would allow them to develop as individuals and productive citizens. This method practices the basic premise concerning care theory, established by Nel Noddings, as the students' needs are the main focus.

Nel Noddings (1986) proposed a theoretical model for care-centered teacher (moral) education comprised of four components: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation. While the model is specifically aimed at preservice teachers, it is one that will be adapted to apply to students in this study. In modeling, Noddings (1986) suggests preparing future teachers to care for children by modeling caring behaviors. While modeling care, Noddings (1986) suggests other

positive qualities will be modeled as well—behaviors like “meticulous preparation, lively preparation, lively presentation, critical thinking, appreciative listening, constructive evaluation, genuine curiosity” (p. 503). For this study, students in the autonomy-based classroom modeled these behaviors for classmates. Having the opportunity to make curriculum choices initially generated the idea of modeling what they determined was important to their learning. Because they had the choice of how to conduct discussions, various methods were presented, thus practicing a form of modeling. The researcher, too, modeled behaviors like those identified by Noddings.

The second component identified by Noddings (1986) is dialogue. She contends that preservice teachers are taught how to develop lesson plans, behavioral objectives, and discipline techniques. However, these methods are not always applicable. Preservice teachers who truly engage in dialogue are those who may reject what was taught in order to develop methods that are conducive to their classrooms. Noddings (1986) argues that preservice teachers should be encouraged to consider their students and make autonomous decisions with students in mind. This idea is, again, relevant to this study as students had an active role in making autonomous decisions. The researcher clarified, to students, that their input in classroom curriculum shaped what would occur during the semester, thus establishing dialogue from the beginning.

In the third component, practice occurs. Noddings (1986) recognizes teaching programs encourage preservice teachers to practice teaching, usually in the field giving them the opportunity to experience what teaching in a classroom might entail. However, Noddings (1986) clarifies that practicing teaching, based on her model, is actually practicing caring. Preservice teachers who practice caring are, according to Noddings (1986), more likely to experience the need for competence, insightful learning, and experimentation with instruction. This study

encompassed Noddings' definition of practice. Because students had a significant amount of input about course curriculum, they engaged in experimentation of instruction—they were leading particular areas of instruction. They engaged in insightful learning because they were learning from each other, and they engaged in competence because they were selecting reading material that represented their knowledge about the topics.

In the final component of Noddings' (1986) model, confirmation occurs. As preservice teachers develop teaching traits, they learn to talk to others, often questioning ideas and beliefs; in essence, this practice involves the interaction between dialogue and practice. This interaction allows for these preservice teachers to confirm others' ideas helping one another identify best practices of teaching. Once again, this study's participants engaged in discussions based on their suggested readings. These discussions introduced students to various topics and generated dialogue that allowed them to learn from one another. They guided each other in the presentation of their ideas thus engaging in confirmation.

Noddings' model for care-centered teacher education is applicable to students at the community college level. Before entering a classroom, students are able to self-determine which instructors and courses they will select. They have the opportunity to enroll with the same professor who teaches various levels of a particular subject, thus providing them the ability to remain with the same instructors for a full school year—sometimes longer. Having a voice in the development of course curriculum instilled a sense of autonomy relevant to this study. Thus, Noddings' model introduces the concept of a democratic classroom developed by students.

Another key component of Noddings' (1984/2003) care theory is the importance of establishing a relationship between the person offering care and the person receiving it, an interaction she terms relational theory, or view. She stresses this relational theory as the key to

effective care. She further clarifies that relational theory is only established if three requirements—engrossment or receptivity, motivational displacement or relatedness, and responsiveness or reciprocation—are achieved. Noddings (1984/2003) defines engrossment as having an *understanding* of the individual's knowledge and needs, so the instructor can adapt curriculum to meet the student's needs. The professor's behavior is then *determined* by the student's needs, which is known as motivational displacement. The third requirement, responsiveness, occurs when the student not only recognizes but also accepts the care provided by the instructor (carer). Thus, the instructor promotes growth in students because he/she spends time learning what students want and why. As Noddings (1984/2003) stresses, the relational view allows for development of productive citizens, a consideration which she feels should be a primary goal in education.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

Quantitative:

1. Do students participating in an autonomy-based, classroom learning environment demonstrate statistically significant differences in perceptions of care when compared to students in an instructor-controlled classroom?
2. What are the practical differences in this perception of caring between students in an autonomy-based, classroom learning environment and those in an instructor-controlled classroom?
3. How does student autonomy affect community college writing and literature student outcomes?

Qualitative:

4. How do community college writing and literature students perceive care in connection to autonomy?

Significance of the Study

Community colleges are comprised of a diverse body of students. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (2018), students enrolled in classes are from different backgrounds including first generation (36%), single parents (17%), non-U.S. citizens (7%), veterans (4%), and students with disabilities (12%). While professors acknowledge these and various other reasons for students entering the classroom, many do not alter curriculum based on individual student learning needs. Professors at the community college level are more likely presented with options concerning academic freedom than teachers at the primary and second levels of education. Thus, the opportunity to invest in care theory is realistic and imperative.

While care theory is applicable to all college courses, it seems most useful to courses where students consistently struggle with learning. A survey conducted by CollegeStats asked 500 undergraduate and post-graduate students to identify the courses they loved and hated the most. English was ranked fourth as both the most loved and hated course (Newman, 2017). In order for students to rank English courses higher (on the hated list), applying care theory through autonomy is even more important.

The results of this study will provide community college professors with clarification of what students recognize as relative instructor caring behaviors. These identified traits can be used to determine if community college professors exhibit these qualities within themselves.

While professors may feel that they do exhibit caring qualities, their beliefs may not agree with what students perceive as caring traits. Community college professors serve a diverse student population; thus, it is important that they recognize student perceptions in order to better serve their needs.

In addition, the results clarified student perspectives about what they felt they needed in order to feel cared for in a classroom setting. Students who value caring traits will validate instructors who possess the identified traits and their ability to instill a sense of camaraderie and a stress-free environment which contributes to a productive working environment and the inherent desire to perform better on assignments.

Additionally, the study helped determine how students viewed autonomy in connection to care. Students who were offered the opportunity to select readings, determine a forum for discussion of the selected articles, and select topics for essays had input about how these opportunities influenced how they viewed their professors.

Finally, community college administrators, staff, and professors gained insight about a learning and teaching environment that could improve student learning and outcomes. The study focused on two campuses but could be expanded to the other campuses to determine how perceptions of care in connection to autonomy affects students of various populations.

Limitations and Challenges

The data collected for this study reflected one community college in central Texas. More specifically, the study was conducted at two campuses out of the eleven campuses (and numerous satellite locations) that comprise the community college. One campus is located on the east side of the city where the primary ethnic groups that attend the campus are comprised of

39.34% Hispanic, 38.01% White, and 11.57% Black (Austin, 2018, p. 169). The campus located in a suburb on the north side of the city is primarily comprised of 50.94% White, 27.57% Hispanic, and 6.55% Asian students (Austin, 2018, p. 168). These demographics differ between the two campuses based on social and economic factors and are, therefore, one limitation. Thus, other researchers might conclude that because the demographics are different, care theory might be more appropriate for minorities who comprise the majority of the population at the east campus.

Another issue that existed in the study related to the small sample size. Both participating professors teach 6-7 classes per semester; however, the focus of the study was on how students perceived care in connection to autonomy in a classroom setting; online students were excluded from the study. Therefore, the three classroom courses taught by each professor were included. While most classes began with the maximum amount of students—28 in each course for a maximum of 168 students, the final count was less.

Interviews represented a snapshot of student perceptions of autonomy in connection to care. Students enrolled in the student controlled classrooms were the primary focus in determining perceptions of autonomy and care. Of the potential 28 students per course, two from each of the three courses were interviewed—total of 6 students. Some researchers might infer that these student responses were not representative of a majority.

Focusing on a specific large urban community college district in the southwestern United States served as a beginning for conducting such research. Further analysis should be considered. Using a current semester, new research would be conducted using an instructor-controlled classroom environment and student led, autonomous classroom environment for freshmen writing courses which would allow for a comparison of effectiveness with care theory and how

autonomy affects care. Another focus would determine the amount of students who initially enrolled in freshmen level writing courses and how many successfully completed the courses.

Conclusion

Care and autonomy have been addressed in connection to education, mainly at the primary and secondary levels of education. At these levels, the focus is directed at preservice teachers in preparation to enter the classroom. While, according to Noddings (1986), they should be guided to engage in caring behavior through teaching, it is also possible to use Noddings' care-centered teaching model to engage students, at the community college level, and establish a student led, autonomous classroom. Students in this classroom participate in creating specific aspects of the course curriculum and engage in Noddings' (1986) components of modeling, engaging in dialogue, practice, and confirmation. Using a mixed methods research framework, the researcher evaluated the treatment effect on student perceptions and outcomes.

Definition of Terms

Autonomy—"to act volitionally, with a sense of choice, whereas independence means to function alone and not rely on others" (Deci & Ryan, 2007, p. 16).

Cognitive Evaluation Theory—an approach that "argues, first, that social—contextual events (e.g., feedback, communications, rewards) that conduce toward feelings of competence during action can enhance intrinsic motivation for that action" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 70).

Community college—for the purpose of this study, community colleges are defined as two-year "inclusive institutions that serve all segments of society through an open-access admissions policy that offers equal and fair treatment to all students" (American Association of Community Colleges, 2018).

Controlled behaviors—behaviors created from external events that “induce or coerce the recipient into acting in a specific manner” (Ryan, 1982, p. 451).

Engrossment—the first requirement of relational theory, also known as receptivity, which is defined as having an *understanding* of the individual’s knowledge and needs, so the instructor can adapt curriculum to meet the student’s needs (Noddings, 1984/2003).

Ethics of care theory—the idea that ethics is associated with relationships and the connections established between one another and situations as context dependent (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 2003).

Ethical caring—the idea that a person needs to care (a requirement) (Noddings, 2003).

Instructor controlled classroom—a classroom setting where the instructor determines key curriculum for a particular course.

Intrinsic motivation—“the inherent tendency to seek out novelty and challenges, to extend and exercise one’s capacities, to explore, and to learn” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, pp. 70).

Motivational displacement—the second requirement of relational theory, also known as relatedness, demonstrates the professor’s behavior is *determined* by the student’s needs (Noddings, 1984/2003).

Natural caring—the desire to care for another (not required) (Noddings’, 2003).

Relational theory—a key component of care theory that stresses a relationship between the carer (instructor) and cared-for (student) must be established by meeting three requirements—engrossment, motivational displacement, and responsiveness (Noddings, 1984/2003).

Responsiveness—the third requirement of relational theory, also known as reciprocation occurs when the student not only recognizes but also accepts the care provided by the instructor (carer) (Noddings, 1984/2003).

Self-determination Theory—a theory that investigates “people’s inherent growth tendencies and innate psychological needs that are the basis for their self-motivation and personality integration, as well as for the conditions that foster those positive processes” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 68).

Student controlled classroom—an autonomous classroom setting where students determine key curriculum for a particular course.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

In this review of the literature the concepts of care ethics and care theory are explored by first establishing care as demonstrated in David Hume's and Adam Smith's ideas on morality. The idea of care ethics is introduced through Carol Gilligan's work while Nel Noddings's work explores the belief that those being care-for must accept the carer's outward care in order for care theory to be effective. The connection between care theory and autonomy is introduced with Deci and Ryan's explanations of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and self-determination theory.

Autonomy

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

In considering the term autonomy, research has specifically addressed the idea of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Initial discussion by Atkinson (1964) indicates that both motivations compliment one another which results in total motivation. Atkinson (1964), for example, introduced the theory of achievement motivation which occurs when a person knows his performance will be evaluated whether by another or by himself. The individual recognizes the established standard of excellence and recognizes his actions will be evaluated positively if his actions are successful or negatively if his actions fail. Atkinson (1964) further addresses variables that outline aspects of the theory. Specific situational factors affect motivation. The first variable relates to the individual's ability to analyze the required task, "expect that his performance will lead on to the goal, success" (Atkinson, 1964, p. 241). In the second variable, the person determines the incentive—is it worth his time and effort—of successfully completing the task which leads to the recognition of the incentive value of success, the third variable.

Atkinson (1964) further emphasizes “the prediction of a risk-preference, level of aspiration, or performance of an achievement-related-task” requires knowledge of other extrinsic sources (p. 247). Atkinson (1964) defines extrinsic as “strength of the tendency to act that is attributable to the influence of other motives and incentives that are not intrinsically related to the evaluation of performance” (p. 247). Thus, the theory of achievement considers both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.

Deci and Ryan (2000) further address intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in connection to autonomy. Ryan and Deci (2000) clarify that autonomy has been viewed as having little relation to community. They recognize some theories associate autonomy with individualism and independence which seems opposite to community relation.

However, in the 1970s, research expanded to focus on the idea that the two types of motivation were not necessarily additive. Deci and Ryan (2007) reason that if a level of intrinsic motivation is either increased or decreased simply from adding extrinsic rewards, this will suggest the two motivations offer no improvement. For example, if the extrinsic reward decreases intrinsic motivation, this will suggest both motivations work against one another instead of positively working together. In fact, “By 1999, over 100 published experiments had examined this issue and the results of a meta-analysis confirmed that, overall, extrinsic rewards decreased intrinsic motivation across a range of ages, activities, rewards, and reward contingencies” (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999; Deci & Ryan, 2007, p. 15) thus supporting that the two types of motivation are not necessarily additive. Ryan and Deci (2006) interpret their findings and argue people who are intrinsically motivated experience a sense of autonomy because their need for autonomy is fulfilled. If rewards, threats, or evaluations are introduced, people may feel impinged upon or controlled which then lessens their autonomous need. If,

however, they are offered choices, they are more likely to experience a higher level of autonomy satisfaction.

Self-Motivation Theory

In order for students to feel autonomous, they must recognize their professors provide autonomy support. Deci and Ryan (1985) clarify that autonomy support “means that an individual in a position of authority (e.g., an instructor) takes the other’s (e.g., a student’s) perspective, acknowledges the other’s feelings, and provides the other with pertinent information and opportunities for choice, while minimizing the use of pressures and demands” (Black & Deci, 2000, p. 742). Black and Deci (2000) further clarify, a professor who is autonomy supportive might provide students with information that is necessary related to a problem; however, the professor will encourage the students to determine a solution on their own and in their way. On the other hand, a professor engaged in a controlled environment might coerce students to use a particular method to solve a problem in order to perform well on a test.

This type of controlled pressure does not necessarily ensure student competence or improved learning outcomes. In fact, studies conducted by Eric Mazur, a physics professor at Harvard University prove that students who spend time memorizing course material do not necessarily *learn* the material. He began teaching, as most professors do, through lecture. He, however, realized that his students could recite Newton’s third law of motion, for example. Yet when he tested students’ understanding of the law using a conceptual problem that included a crash between a heavy truck and light car, he was surprised to learn that students either struggled to solve the problem or did not understand it. He discovered students struggled with almost any type of conception problem presented.

This realization prompted Mazur to change his teaching strategy; he replaced his lecture method of telling students information to teaching by asking questions. Mazur (2009) concluded that through data gathered from his class and several of his worldwide colleagues' classrooms, "learning gains nearly triple[d] with an approach that focuse[d] on the student and interactive learning . . . Most important, students not only perform[ed] better on a variety of conceptual assessments, but also improve[d] their traditional problem-solving skills" (p. 51). Thus, students' learning improved when the teaching approach was student centered.

Deci and Ryan (2000) revised their ideas concerning the terms intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to represent their concept of self-determination theory. Ryan and Deci (2006) identify self-determination theory (SDT) as an empirical approach to motivation and personality. Thus, SDT focuses on "the nature and consequences of autonomy" as well as identifying how autonomy develops and determining how it can be "diminished or facilitated by specific biological and social conditions" (p. 1562). Deci and Ryan (2008) further clarify that instead of focusing on the amount of motivation a person has for an activity or behavior, self-determination theory (SDT) focuses on the different types of motivation a person possesses. Specifically, Deci and Ryan (2008) identify autonomous motivation and controlled motivation in SDT.

According to Deci and Ryan (2008), autonomous motivation consists of intrinsic motivation and "the types of extrinsic motivation in which people have identified with an activity's value and ideally will have integrated it into their sense of self" (p. 182). Thus, when individuals experience autonomous motivation, "they experience volition, or a self-endorsement of their actions" (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p. 182).

Controlled motivation, on the other hand, is comprised of what Deci and Ryan (2008) identify as external regulation and introjected regulation. External regulation applies to those

whose behaviors are determined by “external contingencies of reward or punishment” (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p. 182). Introjected regulation, according to Deci and Ryan (2008) occurs when an action is internalized partially enabled by elements such as “an approval motive, avoidance of shame, contingent self-esteem, and ego-involvements” (p. 182).

It is this autonomous motivation that applies to students. If students experience the inherent need for growth, they are inclined to make autonomous choices. It is then the professor’s responsibility to encourage such autonomy which is described in Ryan and Deci’s introduction to a sub-theory of SDT called cognitive evaluation theory (CET). Cognitive evaluation theory focuses on the fundamental need for competence and autonomy. Ryan and Deci (2000) explain CET claims that social, or contextual events such as “feedback, communications, rewards” that contribute to feelings of competence during a specific action may magnify intrinsic motivation for the action (p. 70). Therefore, “optimal challenges, promoting feedback, and freedom from demeaning evaluations” encourage intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 70).

Ryan and Deci (2000) further emphasize that a person’s feelings of competence do not intensify intrinsic motivation unless it is associated with a sense of autonomy. Therefore, “according to CET, people must not only experience competence or efficacy, they must also experience their behavior as self-determined for intrinsic motivation to be in evidence” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 70). A community college classroom that is primarily based on student autonomy is supported by the professor. The instructor will consider the students’ needs and base support and action on those needs. It is through this support that students will recognize their behavior as self-determined.

Two studies conducted by Ryan and Grolnik (1986) reflect the importance of “student perceptions of their classroom environment along autonomy versus external control dimensions” (p. 550). In phase two of the study, students were asked to develop stories to determine if their perceptions of the classroom environment would be reflected in those stories. They were presented with an obscure elementary classroom scene. The children were then provided the opportunity to describe the classroom in whatever manner they wanted. Ryan and Grolnik (1986) evaluated the stories using subjective ratings of all the stories along six dimensions of theoretical interest. Three of the subjective ratings concerned substantive issues, namely: “(a) an “origin” rating of the student protagonist, that is, how much the student’s behavior was characterized by an internal focus causality and personal responsibility, (b) an autonomy-control rating of the projected teacher, and (c) the amount of aggression expressed in the story” (p. 553). Results related to these dimensions indicated that children who portrayed an autonomy-oriented teacher were more likely to portray themselves as origin characters. “In addition, when the student protagonist was portrayed as origin in character, there was less aggression expressed in the story. Similarly, when the teacher was depicted as autonomy oriented, less depression was evidenced” (Ryan & Grolnik, 1986, p. 555).

Care Ethics

Care theory stems from care ethics—credited to Carol Gilligan; however, the basic premise can be connected to several early philosophers, including David Hume and Adam Smith. Hume (1738), a Scottish philosopher is known for his *A Treatise of Human Nature*. In the text, he explores human cognition, emotions and free will, and morals. In the morality section of the treatise, Hume argues:

Our decisions concerning moral rectitude and depravity are evidently perceptions;

and as all perceptions are either impressions or ideas, the exclusion of the one is a convincing argument for the other. Morality, therefore, is more properly felt than judged of; though this feeling or sentiment is commonly so soft and gentle, that we are apt to confound it with an idea, according to our common custom of taking all things for the same, which have any near resemblance to each other.

(Hume, 1738-40/2010, "Sect. II Moral Distinctions," para. 1).

Care ethics is associated with the idea that morals are fundamental in establishing and maintaining relationships. The individual who cares is one who is truly concerned about him/herself and others. Hume proposes that because morality is felt rather than judged, these feelings are subtle which causes one to associate them with something that may not be recognized as moral. Thus, care ethicists stress the importance of reasoning based on specific situations as a way for individuals to recognize that morality is key in applying care theory.

Adam Smith, also a Scottish philosopher, is known for his *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, published in 1759. His thoughts about morality are based on Francis Hutcheson's ideas; however, he disagrees with Hutcheson's idea that morality can be explained through a sixth sense that man is pleased by his usefulness. Smith, on the other hand, explores the idea that the principle of sympathy can replace moral sense arguing that through mirroring, a person can reconstruct experiences of the person being watched. This mirroring is conducted based on the fact that one feels the passion of others. This idea is similar to what contemporary care theorists suggest one who cares should do for someone being cared-for. Putting one's self in another's situation allows for the carer (Noddings defines carer as the one caring) to accommodate according to the cared-for's (the one receiving the care) needs.

Smith (1759/2005) applies his idea of sympathy claiming:

What is called affection, is in reality nothing but habitual sympathy. Our concern in the happiness or misery of those who are the objects of what we call our affections; our desire to promote the one, and to prevent the other, are either the actual feeling of that habitual sympathy, or the necessary consequences of that feeling. Relations being usually placed in situations which naturally create this habitual sympathy, it is expected that a suitable degree of affection should take place among them (p. 199).

He further argues that in order for children to learn kindness and affection, they must be educated in the home. “From their parent’s house, they may, with propriety and advantage, go out every day to attend public schools; but let their dwelling be always at home” (Smith, 1759/2005, p. 201). He differentiates “[T]he institution of nature; public education, the contrivance of man” (Smith, 1759/2005, p. 201). These ideas imply that applying care in schools is not necessarily recommended. However, Smith is writing about morals and care in connection to a different era. A refined approach to care theory was introduced in the 1980s by theorists Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings.

Carol Gilligan’s primary work, *In a Different Voice: Psychological theory and women’s development*, published in 1982, presents her views about morality as it relates to care ethics based on gender differences. A large amount of the work addresses stages for female moral development. She argues that moral development, based on American psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg, is primarily male-oriented. She had firsthand experience with Kohlberg’s work because she was his research assistant while she worked on her doctorate degree at Harvard University. Kohlberg (1968) identifies the stages of morality as 1) obedience and punishment orientation; 2) orientation related to one’s self needs; 3) orientation of good behavior; 4) orientation towards authority which includes rules and social order; 5) orientation of social-

contract; and 6) orientation towards ethical principles. Kohlberg's theory is based on the idea that justice is the key element in moral reasoning which is based on sound reasoning. He presents brief moral issues, or dilemmas, to male participants to determine how they will morally reason an answer. The most common dilemma presented is known as the druggist dilemma (Kohlberg, 1968). Heinz, a character in the story, learns that there is a drug that can possibly save his wife from death. He is unable to afford the cost of the drug, so he breaks into the pharmacy at night and steals it. The question then presented is should Heinz have stolen the drug? Why or why not? As participants reason with their answers, Kohlberg is able to determine which stages are being used. He also stresses that no one can move up in levels without first having completed the previous ones. Thus, the graduation from one level to the next leads to an increased morality of value judgement.

While Gilligan (1982) admits there is merit in Kohlberg's work, she introduces the idea that moral voices should be masculine as well as feminine. Kohlberg's stages of morality were developed using white males for his studies—the main support, according to Gilligan, for Kohlberg's (1968) claim that women are deficient in moral reasoning. Thus, Gilligan (1986) conducts her own studies focusing on women participants and determines that women are not deficient but rather using a different style of moral reasoning that Kohlberg's methods do not represent. Therefore, since their voices are not recognized, they are not represented in Kohlberg's theory.

Gilligan (1982) introduces the idea that women participants use a method she terms ethics of care, the idea that women's morality is based on the care for others rather than universal standards of behavior. She recognizes this ethics of care is not limited to women but is more common in female participants.

Gilligan explains that the conflict between “compassion and autonomy, between virtue and power” is what a woman struggles to resolve so that she can reclaim the self but also “resolve the moral problem in a way that no one is hurt” (Gilligan, 1982, p. 71). She clarifies the ability to resolve moral issues by stating, “The inflicting of hurt is considered selfish and immoral in its reflection of unconcern, while the expression of care is seen as the fulfillment of moral responsibility” (Gilligan, 1982, p. 73). The process women complete in order to achieve moral reasoning, according to Gilligan, is completed in three stages.

The first stage called preconventional relates to moral growth that is dependent on focusing on individual survival. “In this mode of understanding, the self, which is the sole object of concern, is constrained by a lack of power that stems from feeling disconnected and thus, in effect, all alone” (Gilligan, 1982, p. 75). This focus then allows a woman to transition to the second level, the conventional stage. At this level, “a new understanding of the connection between self and others which is articulated by the concept of responsibility” (Gilligan, 1982, p. 74). The primary focus is equating care for others by identifying solutions where no one is hurt. Gilligan (1982) establishes, “The good is equated with caring for others” which leads to a reconsideration of relationships in an effort to sort out the confusion between self-sacrifice and care inherent in the conventions of feminine goodness” (Gilligan, 1982, p. 74). The third level—the post-conventional stage—focuses on the consequences of choices and accepting responsibility of those choices. According to Gilligan (1982), “Care becomes the self-chosen principle of a judgment that remains psychological in its concern with relationships and response” (p. 74).

Thus, Gilligan (1982) argues specific forms of reciprocity characterize a relationship between two parties. Noddings (1986) expands on this idea by suggesting “the ‘different voice’

expressing an ethic of caring is more likely to be female than male, but the reason for this is to be found in culture and experience” (p. 498). Noddings (1986) further explains the connection to natural caring, clarifying that natural caring is the response of wanting to care for another, claiming this “establishes the ideal for ethic caring, and ethical caring imitates this ideal in its efforts to institute, maintain, or reestablish natural caring” (p. 497).

Gilligan’s comments have categorized her as a feminist; however, she is not one who completely ignores studies whose participants are men. Her ideas are meant to compliment Kohlberg’s work, for example, rather than argue replacement. Gilligan recognizes the validity in Kohlberg’s work for what is presented at the time but clearly argues that only half the population is considered in addressing moral reasoning.

Care Theory

Nel Noddings (1984/2003) agrees with Gilligan’s acceptance that the male stereotyped approaches which include “justification, fairness, and justice” are valid and sincere methods in relation to care ethics (p. 1). Her seminal work, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, was published just two years after Gilligan’s *In a Different Voice*. In her work, Noddings clearly indicates that she accepts the feminine label—only if it is understood that “all of humanity can participate in the feminine . . .” (Noddings, 1984/2003, p. 172). She clarifies, “‘Feminine’ point[s] to a mode of experience, not to an essential characteristic of women, and I wanted to make clear that men might also share this experience” (Noddings, 1984/2003, p. xvi). Unlike Gilligan, Noddings (1984/2003) believes that caring, “rooted in receptivity [also known as engrossment], relatedness [also known as motivational displacement], and responsiveness” is a more basic and preferable approach to ethics” (p. 2). Her care theory is usually referred to as relational or ethics theory as Noddings argues the key to establishing effective care theory is in

the development of a relationship between the person providing the care and the one receiving it. She offers a specific example using the subject of math.

Perhaps a teacher is one who loves math and encounters a student who struggles with the subject. After a discussion, the teacher learns that the student hates math. In this case, the instructor might feel that the best way to help the student is to teach the student to love math, so his grades will improve. The teacher who thinks this way is focusing on the self rather than how the student feels. Noddings (1984/2003) stresses she does not attempt to understand the reality of a student as something that is a possibility for her. She does not ask, “*How would it feel to hate mathematics?*” (Noddings, 1984/2003, p. 15). Rather she projects her own reality onto her student and says, “*You will be just fine if only you learn to love mathematics*” (Noddings, 1984/2003, p. 15). Here, it is important that the teacher focus on the student’s needs rather than his/her own. Noddings (2005b) admits the teacher-student relationship is unequal. Teachers have specific responsibilities that students cannot complete; however, teachers must accept their own as well as student perspectives. They must view the world the way students view it, so they can graduate from a less to more satisfactory view. “Good teachers do not reject what students see and feel but, rather, work with what is presently seen and felt to build a stronger position for each student” (Noddings, 1984/2003, p. 107).

Thus, Noddings claims, “What matters to me, if I care, is that he find[s] some reason, acceptable in his inner self, for learning the mathematics required of him or that he reject[s] it boldly and honestly” (Noddings, 1984/2003, p. 15). She suggests that the two shall struggle together to reach an understanding.

The relational view idea is harder for American thinkers to accept, for, as Noddings (2005a) indicates, “the Western tradition puts such great emphasis on individualism. In that

tradition, it is almost instinctive to regard virtues as personal possessions, hard-won through a grueling process of character building.” She further explains that Dewey (1930) rejects this view and “encourage[s] us to consider virtues as ‘working adaptations of personal capacities with environing forces’” (p. 16). As an extension of Dewey’s thought, Noddings (2005a) argues that care theorists identify moral interdependence which means a rejection of “Kant’s claim that it is contradictory to make ourselves responsible for another’s moral perfection” (p. 4). Instead, care theorists willingly accept this responsibility. Noddings (2005a) argues that as a care theorist, “I must realize that my treatment of him may deeply affect the way he behaves in the world” (pp. 4-5).

The relational view is difficult to accept because most people, no matter the culture, have been taught to believe that “teacher knows best” (Noddings, 2005a, p. 5). According to Noddings (2005b), “The primary aim of every teacher must be to promote the growth of students as competent, caring, loving, and lovable people” (p. 154). She further explains this type of teacher as a constructivist.

Constructivists believe people are internally motivated and that they construct their own mental representations of situations, events, and conceptual structures. Constructivist teachers, then, usually spend time trying to find out what their students are trying to do and why. They are ready with suggestions and challenges that will help students to make strong and useful constructions (p. 154).

Noddings (2005a) recognizes that all students are different which means they learn in different ways. She offers an example using John and Ann. What John needs may be completely different from what Ann needs. A caring teacher will listen to both John and Ann to help each obtain

knowledge and develop attitudes to help them achieve specific goals, rather than those prescribed by a “pre-established curriculum” (Noddings, 2005a, p. 5).

Students who recognize their autonomy is supported by their instructors associate this recognition with care. Ryan and Grolnick (1986) “observed lower intrinsic motivation in students who experienced their teachers as cold and uncaring” (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p. 71).

Ryan and Deci (2000) recognize “Field studies have further shown that teachers who are autonomy supportive (in contrast to controlling) catalyze in their students’ greater intrinsic motivation, curiosity, and desire for challenge” (pp. 70-71). For example, a study conducted by Deci, Nezlek, & Sheinman (1981) concludes that “children’s perceptions of their teachers and classrooms seem to mediate the effects of teacher characteristics on children’s motivation and self-esteem” (p. 9). These perceptions, ideally, are based on the relationship the children develop with their teachers—Noddings’ relational theory.

Noddings’ ideas about care offer a realistic approach to applying care theory in a classroom, no matter the level. Guiding students in the manner described can be initiated through the application of care theory using Noddings’ three care requirements. In the first two stages, the carer “requires the typical engrossment [stage one] and motivational displacement [stage two]” (Noddings, 1984/2003, p. 69). Noddings defines engrossment as having a full understanding about the individual’s knowledge and needs so that the carer (instructor) can adapt curriculum to meet the cared-for’s (student’s) needs. The math student example above clearly identifies this first stage. This adaptation relates to motivational displacement, stage two. The instructor’s behavior is determined by the student’s needs. Using the same example, the teacher who tries to understand the student’s reality is one who will adjust curriculum to meet the student’s needs. The third requirement, or stage three, relates to the idea of reciprocation from

the cared-for. Noddings (1984/2003) stresses that “the cared-for contributes to the relation” (p. 4). Noddings (2012b) further stresses the importance of the cared-for’s role in the established relationship. She explains, “He [cared-for] shows somehow that the caring has been received. He does not have to express gratitude. He may simply pursue an agreed-upon project with renewed energy, ask further questions, or smile and nod” (p. 772). Thus, when there is a recognition of and response to the caring by the person being cared for, relational theory has been established, and care theory has been effective.

Noddings offers a more direct discussion about applying care theory in schools in her *The Challenge to Care in Schools*, arguing that school systems be developed based on a progressive approach. She describes this approach as “one that offers many choices for students on topics of study, ways of learning, and forms of assessing what has been learned” (Noddings, 2005b, p. xviii); however, she admits supporting this approach suggests abandoning a large amount of students to traditional teaching methods, which she cannot do. “The most basic idea of relational caring is to respond to each individual in such a way that we establish and maintain caring relations” (Noddings, 2005b, p. xviii). She stresses that students’, in today’s classrooms, overwhelming complaint is that no one cares about them. She further explains that students “feel alienated from their schoolwork, separated from the adults who try to teach them, and adrift in a world perceived as baffling and hostile” (Noddings, 2005b, p. 2). Noddings (2005b) also acknowledges the fact that teachers work hard and do express concern for their students. As such, teachers care but are unable to connect with students in a way that completes the caring relationship. In order to change this mentality, “The primary aim of every educational institution and of every educational effort must be the maintenance and enhancement of caring. Parents, police, social workers, teachers, preachers, neighbors, coaches, older siblings must all embrace

this primary aim” (Noddings, 2003, p. 172). All are responsible for exhibiting Noddings’ identified qualities of care. More specific to the classroom, Noddings consistently stresses the importance of creating democratic classrooms which allows for care theory to be explored, acknowledging John Dewey for establishing basic democratic classroom traits. Dewey (1930) insists that students be included in the development of objections related to their learning. Students should locate and generate problems rather than solve existing ones; they should work together within the school as they would in workplaces. There should also be a connection between what is learned and students’ personal experiences.

With Dewey’s ideas in mind, Noddings (2005b) describes what should occur in classrooms. Classroom environments should encourage students to participate in “a rich variety of purposes, in which wonder and curiosity are alive, in which students and teachers live together and grow” (Noddings, 2005b, p. 12). In this type of classroom, Noddings (2005b) argues that “full human growth will not stunt or impede intellectual achievement” (p. 12). Noddings (2005b) further claims that in order to truly change education, “we have to set aside the deadly notion that the schools’ first priority should be intellectual development” (p. 12).

If schools care and allow for teachers to develop caring relationships with their students, the students will recognize merit in their ideas and a connection to their own lives. They will gain skills that allow for development of productive citizens. This enrichment is achievable by empowering students with their learning. Noddings credits Dewey’s support that students should have more of a direct role in their learning. Dewey (1930) argues that teaching should promote learning but does not believe that students should learn predetermined skills. This idea implies the practice of Noddings’ care theory, for if students are to have a direct say in their learning

objectives, teachers are required to understand those objectives in connection to each student's need (engrossment).

Noddings (2013b) further emphasizes, "A primary purpose of schooling in a democratic society is to produce thoughtful citizens who can deliberate and make wise choices" (p. 25). It can be argued that in order to produce this type of citizen, moral education be considered and applied. According to Noddings (2012a), "Moral education from the care perspective has four major components: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation" (p. 237). In the modeling stage, Noddings (2012a) stresses the main concern relates to "the growth of our students as carers, and cared-for. We have to show in our own behavior what it means to care . . . Our caring must be genuine; the inevitable modeling is a by-product" (p. 237). In the dialogue stage, it is important to "engage our students in dialogue about caring" (Noddings, 2012a, p. 237). Dialogue offers the opportunity to "evaluate the effects of our attempts to care. Through dialogue we learn more about the other, and we need this knowledge to act effectively as carers" (Noddings, 2012a, p. 238). Dialogue also offers students the opportunity to engage in insightful conversations. Noddings (2012a) explains care theorists support Socrates and Adler's ideas that a meaningful education "must help students to examine their own lives and explore the great questions human beings have always asked . . ." (p. 238). However, care theorists will not force students to struggle with "the so called eternal questions" (Noddings, 2012a, p. 238). Instead, they will "*invite* such conversation and allow students to codirect the line of investigation" (p. 238).

In the practice stage, Noddings stresses the importance of giving students the opportunity to practice caring and reflect on the practice. She explains that "Children need to participate in caring with adult models who show them how to care, talk with them about the difficulties and

rewards of such work, and demonstrate in their own work that caring is important” (Noddings, 2012a, p. 239). She emphasizes curriculum related to cooperative learning, proposing cooperative learning “can be used to promote competence in caring” (Noddings, 2012a, p. 239). The “fourth component, *confirmation*, sets caring apart from other approaches to moral education . . . When we confirm someone, we identify a better self and encourage its development. To do this, we must know the other reasonably well” (Noddings, 2012a, p. 239). Thus, confirmation requires trust and continuity. “Continuity is needed because we require knowledge of the other. Trust is required for the carer to be credible and also to sustain the search for an acceptable motive” (Noddings, 2012a, p. 240). In order for these two traits to develop, Noddings argues the importance of keeping students with the same teachers, for years. She argues the decision must be mutual.

With Noddings’ ideas in mind, various definitions about a caring professor have been developed. The most appropriate, for this dissertation, is based on Thayer-Bacon’s idea. Thayer-Bacon (1993) interprets caring as

. . . being receptive to what another has to say, and open to hearing the other’s voice more completely and fairly. Caring about another (whether another person’s ideas, other life forms, or even inanimate objects) requires respecting the other as a separate, autonomous being, worthy of caring. Caring is an attitude that gives value to another, by denoting that the other is worth attending to in serious or close manner (p. 325).

With this definition in mind, Thayer-Bacon and Bacon (1996) further expands this idea.

Thayer-Bacon and Bacon (1996), using informal interviews with students, and interviews with six caring instructors, generate a specific definition which includes identification of several

traits. Caring instructors admit that students bring certain experiences to the classroom just as the instructors do. One identified trait suggests “A caring educator is willing to attend to his or her students and treats them as valued members of the learning situation” (Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996, p. 256). This idea is expanded with another trait that caring professors are concerned with instruction, so they focus on teaching methods as student-centered. Thus, caring professors develop their curriculum based on student experiences, “using those experiences as bridges to what they are trying to teach” (Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1996, p. 259). In order to develop such a curriculum, Thayer-Bacon and Bacon (1996) argue that professors must develop ways to become familiar with their students, so they can then incorporate what they learn into their curriculum. Thayer-Bacon and Bacon (1996) further claim “Students who have an opportunity to take control of their own learning are more likely to be intrinsically motivated as learner” (p. 260) further supporting Deci and Ryan’s (2007/2008) discussion of intrinsic motivation as an influence for developing a sense of autonomy.

Research has been conducted related to care and college professors. In 2010, Leigh O’Brien, professor at the Shear School of Education at the State University of New York, argues professors must deliberately develop and nurture teacher-student relationships. To establish these relationships, O’Brien (2010) focuses on students in her classroom and uses one-to-one meetings which can be viewed as a form of caring.

O’Brien (2010) first establishes her belief that all students, no matter the level of education, “must be seen and treated as whole, embodied people who deserve our best ‘teacherly’ selves so that they are able to maximize their potential” (p. 110). O’Brien (2010) establishes that on her part, she must care about her students’ lives, what they think, what they want to say, and what they want to do. Therefore, at the beginning of a semester, O’Brien (2010)

sends an email to students introducing the idea that the importance of getting to know them, and asks that they respond to the email offering a time when they can spend approximately 15 minutes with her in her office or at a location of their choice. She reports that of the 29 students enrolled in the course, 24 met with her. In an initial course evaluation, “many cited this beginning-of-the-semester meeting as evidence of my caring” (O’Brien, 2010, p. 112). In the end-of-the-semester evaluations, O’Brien (2010) students offer more specific comments such as “‘Get to know you’ meetings made the class more personal” and “. . . In the beginning of the semester we had individual meetings with Dr. ____ . . . That showed us that she wanted to know us at a personal level and be more than [just] a professor we saw twice a week” (p. 112). Her experience and student feedback with what she calls the “trial” class encourages her to continue meeting students on a one-to-one basis, and she continues to experience success. O’Brien’s practice offers proof that professors recognize care as key in student learning and are willing to convey how they care towards students.

In 1999, Mary Ann Heverly conducted a study at Delaware County Community College that focused on student retention and how changes in specific areas such as instruction could improve retention. Results reveal a connection between retention and exhibiting care characteristics.

Compared to nonreturning students, returning students in this study are more satisfied with several types of interaction reflecting positive involvement with faculty. These include: “Instructors know when students do not know the material”: “My instructors show respect for me as an individual”; “My instructors seem concerned with my success” (Heverly, 1999, p. 10).

This study's focus relates to how a professor's caring qualities does or does not affect retention of students in a course rather than how an autonomy based classroom setting affects students' performance outcomes and their perceptions of care.

In 2002, Lisa Goldstein conducted a study using her college students enrolled in a Classroom Organization and Management Course. The class was comprised of preservice primary grade teachers. Goldstein's (2002) purpose was to generate basic knowledge about preservice teachers' understanding of care and the connection to teaching and to document how those ideas were affected after their first field placement.

Goldstein (2002) assigned electronic journals requiring students to generate ideas about the role of caring in the classroom based on their own experiences. Goldstein reviewed each student's entry and offered comments that focused on that student's content. She prompted them with questions or suggestions of how they might further explore theme of caring in classrooms. Goldstein and a graduate student worked separately to analyze the data. Each read the electronic dialogue journals "to develop an overall sense of progression of the class's experiences, attitudes, and perceptions over the course of their field placement and to reveal general themes common to all participants" (Goldstein, 2002, p. 64). They then read each preservice teacher's correspondence file which "revealed the development of each preservice teacher's thoughts, concerns, and attitudes over the course of the field placement period" (Goldstein, 2002, p. 64). This information provided the opportunity for case and cross-case analysis. Through this analysis, Goldstein (2002), discovered that initial perceptions of care in the classroom were characterized by "essentialism, idealism, and oversimplification" (Goldstein, 2002, p. 64). In other words, all students required was an excessive amount of attention, or love, in order for caring to occur within the classroom. However, after spending time in the field, Goldstein (2002)

noted a change in perceptions. Preservice teachers “realized that their initial preconceptions about caring and teaching were inadequate to explain the complexity of what they were witnessing and experiencing” (Goldstein, 2002, p. 64). This allowed preservice teachers to reconsider their initial thoughts about care and develop new ideas based on their experiences.

In 2004, Muraskin, Lee, Wilner, and Swail identified select public and 4-year universities, based on high graduation rates, and contrasted these institutions with similar universities with low graduations rates. They determine key traits such as geographical isolation, shared values, and a dedicated faculty increase student retention. In connection to dedicated faculty, “students and staff report that the faculty are caring, helpful, and focused primarily on undergraduate instruction” (Muraskin et al. p. 38). They report “One large state university campus ha[s] surveyed students on features of the institution they like[] best. The high quality of teaching, including opportunities for classroom interaction, is the number one factor cited by students across the institution” (Muraskin et al. p. 38). While Meraskin et al.’s study does identify classroom interaction as a key factor in connection to quality of teaching based on student perceptions, the type of interactions are not addressed.

Another study conducted in 1998 focuses on generating a method to identify caring professors. Dr. Barbara Thayer-Bacon, a professor at Bowling Green State University, uses her school as the basis for her study. The main goal is to test different methods of identification. One process explored is student nominations where students identified what they perceived as caring. Another, more common, method addressed relates to teacher submission of evaluations (Thayer-Bacon, Arnold, S., & Soots, J., 1998). The researchers determined that caring instructors were remembered by students if they produced change and incited change. These studies focus more on student perception of care of instructors based on survey only.

Specific research devoted to care theory at the college level in connection to specific courses has also been applied to nursing. Theories related to cognitive development (Piaget) and social development (Vygotsky) are common in nursing education.

“In nursing theory, for example, Jean Watson (1985) define[s] the moment in which nurse and patient meet as a ‘caring occasion.’ It is not just that the nurse will provide care in the form of physical skills to the patient. Rather, it is a moment in which each must decide how to meet the other and what to do with the moment” (Noddings, 2005b, p. 24).

Nurse theorist and professor Jean Watson is known for her theory of human caring. Her theory identifies considers seven assumptions related to the nursing process, four of which can be applied to a college classroom. These include:

1. Caring can be effectively demonstrated and practiced only interpersonally.
2. Caring consists of carative factors that result in the satisfaction of certain human needs.
3. Effective caring promotes health and *individual* (emphasis included by researcher) or family growth.
4. A caring environment is one that offers the development of potential while allowing the patient [or student] to choose the best action for him or herself at a given point in time. (Petiprin, 2016).

Theories related to humanists and experiential learning are also introduced—these more closely related to care theory.

[H]umanism is a perspective in psychology (and the psychology of learning) that insists upon totality of human existence as a free person tries to maximize its capabilities. In

humanism perspective, the teacher gives priority to the students to learn through curiosity. The teacher g[ives] them the responsibility and freedom to learn as they wish, based on what they are willing to learn (Aliakbari, Parvin, Heidari, and Haghani, 2015).

It is understandable that students who will be caring for patients learn using theories described.

Gap In Research

The issue concerning autonomy has been addressed as peer instruction or interactive learning. Harvard professor Eric Mazur learned of another professor, Arizona State professor David Hestenes, who devised “a very simple test, couched in everyday language, to check students’ understanding of one of the most fundamental concepts of physics—force—and had administered it to thousands of undergraduates in the southwestern United States” (Lambert, 2012, p. 23). Lambert (2012) offers Mazur’s thoughts about the results of the test. Unfortunately, he discovered that introductory courses taught them very little. For example, after one semester of physics, students still had the same misconceptions they displayed at the beginning of the semester. This caused Mazur to wonder if *his* students were actually learning concepts related to physics and decided to administer the conceptual understanding test. Unfortunately, the test “showed that his students had not grasped the basic ideas of his physics course: two-thirds of them were modern Aristotelians” (Lambert, 2012, p. 23). Instead, Mazur (2009) explained that students performed well on textbook style problems. They had memorized formulas which were used to solve the problems. However, they struggled with simple word problems which required an understanding of the concepts behind the formulas. When Mazur tried to explain the test questions to his class, students became even more confused and not knowing what else to do, Mazur (2009) recalled telling his students to discuss the questions with each other. He admitted that the room erupted in chaos; however, at three minutes, students understood what they had

originally spent 10 minutes trying to explain. Mazur was surprised when the class admitted they understood and were ready to move on. This process became a staple for all his classes and became known as peer instruction or interactive learning. In a sense, this form of student learning connects to autonomy as students are encouraged to determine results on their own. They rely on one another, rather than a teacher, to learn. But the issue about autonomy as proposed for my study has not been explored—especially at the community college level.

As noted, basic discussion of morality which serves as a basis for care ethics dates back to the eighteenth century with philosophers like Hume and Smith. Gilligan introduced her ideas about care theory in 1982 while Noddings introduced hers in 1984. Noddings presents several ideas that promote the importance of applying care theory, in a democratic setting in public schools, to produce productive citizens. Her theories are noteworthy and support the idea that caring is key in producing such citizens. However, her work primarily focuses on young children and young adults. Care theory at the community college level is lacking in research. Research has primarily been conducted concerning the recognition of caring qualities and the importance of teaching allied health students to care about patients. But there is a gap as related to students enrolled in basic core courses at the community college level—especially when connected to students participating in autonomy within the classroom.

Both Dewey (1930) and Noddings (1984/2003) claim that a teacher who possesses a love for working with children and instinctively pursues subjects and social issues related to the profession with the intention of sharing this information with others is one who is qualified to teach. These qualifications suggest an individual who pursues teaching *naturally* possesses these traits. It should then seem natural for them to develop a relationship, as Noddings (1984/2003) describes, “rooted in receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness” with students (p. 2). This

relationship is not always established at the community college level for fear that the basis for the relationship might be misconstrued. Noddings' ideas about care theory suggest that instructors who *truly* invest in students' learning will be willing to invest in a way that encourages students to *want* to learn—to feel excited about material—to recognize a correlation between classroom material and the student's environment—connection to the real world. “Students should be aware that their schools are conceived as centers of care—places where they are cared for and will be encouraged to care deeply themselves” (Noddings, 2005b, p. 65).

Conclusion

The literature reveals that the idea of caring for students can be traced back to eighteenth century philosophers David Hume and Adam Smith who explore ideas related to human cognition and morality. Carol Gilligan's focus on care ethics is applied to women only as a follow up to Lawrence Kohlberg's moral development study conducted on males only. Gilligan is able to determine women are not deficient as Kohlberg suggests. Instead, women use a moral reasoning style that Kohlberg's assessment does not identify. Gilligan does acknowledge validity in Kohlberg's study; however, she stresses that only half the population is considered. Nel Noddings (1984/2003), like Gilligan, accepts that the male stereotyped approaches include “justification, fairness, and justice” are valid and sincere methods in connection to care ethics (p. 1). However, Noddings (1984/2003) believes that caring, “rooted in receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness” is a more simplistic and preferable approach to ethics (p. 2). In order for caring to be effective, the cared-for must accept care displayed by the carer. Thus, responsiveness is key. In this manner, Dewey's ideas about the student's role in the classroom relates to care theory. Dewey (1930) argues that students must be actively involved in developing learning

objectives. They must be given opportunities to shape the curriculum and classroom environment. Offering these opportunities introduces autonomy in the classroom.

Researchers such as Deci and Ryan highlight autonomy in connection to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, claiming that if people feel intrinsically motivated, they will feel a sense of autonomy. However, if adding extrinsic rewards, for example, increases or decreases the level of intrinsic motivation, then these two motivations work against each other rather than being additive. In order for students to feel autonomous, they must recognize their professors are providing them with autonomy support. This means the professor (the authority) takes the students' perspective, acknowledges their feelings, and provides students with relevant information and opportunities for choice all while minimizing pressures and demands. Like Noddings, Deci and Ryan support the idea of professors genuinely exhibiting care qualities that indicate they are interested in the students' needs.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This section on the research method is divided into five parts: the research design, sampling procedure, participation, instrumentation, and data analysis. The purpose of this comparative mixed methods study was to explore how community college student autonomy affected student perceptions of care in writing and literature courses.

Because students struggle to remain in college and gain life-applicable learning experiences, it was important to address how student autonomy affected learning and student perceptions of autonomy in connection to care. Students approach community college with the seriousness and concern that they must do what instructors expect in order to successfully pass courses. While it is understandable for instructors to develop an organized classroom, assignments etc., this should not necessarily impact the opportunity for students to not only learn material but to also have choices in what and how they learn. Students who recognized the merit of making such choices also recognized this opportunity as one related to care theory.

Nel Noddings (2003), a contemporary philosopher, claims that true caring occurs in three stages: 1) engrossment, 2) motivational displacement, and 3) recognition. These stages have been addressed in research focused on care theory and young children and with students in primary and secondary levels of education.

Therefore, this dissertation provides further exploration of community college student perceptions of care in relation to autonomy to determine if student perceptions of care were associated with autonomy.

Research Questions

Questions guiding the research were:

Quantitative:

1. Do students participating in an autonomy-based, classroom learning environment demonstrate statistically significant differences in perceptions of care when compared to students in an instructor-controlled classroom?
2. What are the practical differences in this perception of caring between students in an autonomy-based, classroom learning environment and those in an instructor-controlled classroom?
3. How does student autonomy affect community college writing and literature student outcomes?

Qualitative:

4. How do community college writing and literature students perceive care in connection to autonomy?

Quantitative methods were used in this study to determine how student perceptions differ in connection to their own recognition of care in an autonomy-based classroom as opposed to students in an instructor-controlled classroom.

Qualitative methods were used in this study to gain insight about how autonomy affects students in connection to assignments, performance outcomes, and perceptions of care.

Focusing on a mixed methods approach allowed for clarity related to the problem. For example, gathering information in survey form to determine student perceptions of care may not

accurately reflect student performance outcomes. Students highly ranked their learning abilities in survey responses; however, their performance outcomes suggested otherwise. In addition, final data was not contradictory because more than one form of data was collected.

Research Design

In this study, data relied on student participation in a pre and post-survey and results for them, open-ended interviewing, of six students, through purposeful sampling, and an interview with an English professor colleague, and student course outcomes. Participants were asked to complete an online survey conducted at both the beginning and end of the semester. The evaluation addressed demographics and well as the “Faculty Caring Survey—FCS)” (Garza & Van Overschelde, 2017); the FCS asked students to rank, using a Likert scale, specific instructor behaviors that they associated with care. Participants’ rights were considered in the reporting of the data. Participants’ identities were confidential.

The “Faculty Caring Survey” was developed by authors Garza and Van Overschelde for a study they conducted with preservice undergraduate and graduate students. The survey identified “preservice teachers’ perceptions of faculty behaviors that convey caring” (Garza & Van Overschelde, 2017, p. 1). The demographic questions were based on ethnicity, gender, age, and parental college status.

Academic Achievement

Academic achievement within the study was quantified based on the final course grade. Grades for students enrolled in the student autonomy classroom and those for students in the instructor-controlled classroom were collected to generate a comparison between the classes.

Learning Environment

Using a care informed approach to a student led, autonomous classroom learning environment, generated by the researcher, student performance was examined. This environment was dependent upon including specific criteria in the course syllabus, which was addressed during the first week of the semester so students could ask questions, as well as acknowledging student perceptions of autonomy in connection to care. Nel Noddings' belief that caring is based on receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness was also addressed in connection to the learning environment.

In addition to discussion of the syllabus, the learning environment related to Nel Noddings' (2002) belief that care is a basic human desire—everyone wants to be cared for. Noddings (2002) presents the idea that both men and women are guided by ethics of care, but natural caring seems more significant in women's experiences. Noddings (2002) defines natural caring as “a form of caring that does not require an ethical effort to motivate it (although it may require considerable physical and mental effort in responding to needs” (p. 2); instead, natural caring is a moral attitude. Thus, Noddings (1984/2003) focuses on the idea of ethical caring, which is dependent on natural caring, as “a state of being in relation, characterized by receptivity, relatedness and responsiveness” (p. 2). Receptivity, relatedness and responsiveness were keys to the intervention.

The researcher addressed each of these traits in the autonomous classroom. Noddings (2002) focuses on the idea of what happens when people engage in caring situations. She suggests “Perhaps the first thing we discover about ourselves is that we are receptive; we are attentive in a special way” (Noddings, 2002, p. 13). She explores this receptivity through the idea of sympathy, clarifying the term relates to “the affective state of attention in caring” (Noddings,

2002, p. 14). In the researcher's autonomous classroom, she initially established receptivity by creating a dialogue with students in order to discover their needs and learn of their experiences related to the classroom. In an introduction assignment, students were asked to answer the following questions: 1) What is *your* primary goal in enrolling in college? In this English course? 2) What are your expectations from your instructor as well as the course? 3) What is your experience with college? Were you enrolled in college previously? Or are you attending for the first time? 4) If enrolled in college previously, what type experiences have you had? Have your expectations of college been what you expected? If you are entering college for the first time, what expectations do you have? 5) Offer two interesting traits, interests, hobbies, etc. about yourself. From this initial assignment, the researcher was able to learn of students' expectations, experiences, and interests and reflect upon the comments. With the comments in mind, the researcher was able to guide each student about possible topics to explore in his/her writing. She used the information to help create a more applicable curriculum for the course, exercising attention in caring.

In relation to relatedness, Noddings (1984/2003) addresses the idea that both the teacher and the student recognize the connection between curriculum and the real world. She claims,

It is in the relaxation of the detached and reflective self, in this engrossment, that the one caring assumes her full individuality in relatedness. . . . The teacher who encourages receptivity wants the child to look, to listen, to touch, and, perhaps to receive a vision of reality. When we speak of receiving reality, we do not deny that each human consciousness participates in the construction of reality, but we give proper emphasis to the relatedness that must be perceived and accepted before any coherent picture can be constructed (Noddings, 1983/2003, p.60).

The researcher practiced relatedness by offering students the opportunity to determine reading materials. While a textbook was selected for the course, the researcher asked students to determine which specific essays they wanted to read and discuss. Each student offered suggestions in a discussion format in Blackboard. Those essays with the most votes were selected. All classmates and the researcher read the assigned essays. In order to enhance relatedness, the researcher conducted further research about the essay's focus, the topic, in order to provide other examples as comparison. For example, a student selected essay related to gun violence in schools presented a minor, contemporary view. The researcher then presented more ideas such as dated examples of gun violence in schools as a way to introduce more discussion which was applicable to the present.

During a non-survey semester, both the researcher and participating colleague offered an extra credit assignment which was based on student suggestions. Students, as a class, identified a movie (usually contemporary) that they were interested in viewing. The researcher presented just one question as a guide for choosing a movie: What movie represented issues that were applicable to contemporary society? For example, during the spring 2018 semester, one class chose the movie *Black Panther*. Students determined that the class had one month to watch the movie. Then they asked if a class discussion could be conducted about the movie; the discussion was led by a student. Finally, students developed a 3-4 page report that applied specific elements of fiction (character, conflict, point of view, setting, theme, language, and tone) to the movie. The result of the movie and essay discussions was a more in depth analysis of the film in connection to societal issues and excitement on both the researcher's and students' parts. This excitement, or joy, is highlighted by Noddings. She explains,

I suggested that joy often accompanies a realization of our relatedness. It is the special affect that arises out of the receptivity of caring, and it represents a major reward for the one-caring. Feeling joy in relatedness—whether in relation to persons, other living things, or ideas—encourages growth in the ethical ideal. Our joy enhances both the ideal and our commitment to it. We want to remain in direct contact with that which brings us joy and, somehow, with that joy itself. (Noddings, 1984-2003, p. 132).

This joy tends to encourage personal as well as academic growth.

However, for the purpose of this study, both the researcher and participating colleague agreed to offer students extra credit for completion of the pre and post FCS surveys only.

In connection to responsiveness, Noddings (2013a) stresses the importance of establishing a relationship with the student. This is accomplished through careful listening and dialogue. Noddings (2013a) clarifies, “When a teacher asks a question in class and a student responds, she receives not just the ‘response’ but the student. What he says matters, whether it is right or wrong, and she probes gently for clarification, interpretation, contribution. She is not seeking the answer but the involvement of the cared-for” (p. 176). With this idea in mind, the researcher consciously made an effort to ask students at least two questions during discussions. When a student offered insight about an essay or short story, the researcher followed the comments with simple questions such as “How so?” or “How does that relate to the author’s purpose?” In addition, the researcher stressed that no interpretation was incorrect; as long as students were able to support their views, their thoughts were validated. Rather than tell students the author’s purpose, the researcher encouraged students to offer their interpretations, encouraging them to prompt the researcher to view the selected reading differently. The

researcher clarified that she wanted students to prompt her to view a work from their perspective. As students recognized validity in their ideas, they began listening to other classmates' ideas, encouraging more discussion. Ultimately, responsiveness was evident between students and the researcher and between all students.

Students also responded well to encouraging and complimentary words. Therefore, the researcher made a point of locating an uplifting quote which was posted in Blackboard each Sunday. The quotes varied, depending on the course and current discussions. For example, the researcher offered an encouraging quote related to writing or offered a comic strip related to a student assigned reading. These posts were sent as email Announcements, so all received the content. Students generally mentioned the posts in class, which, again, encouraged more discussion and a responsiveness as the researcher was focused on locating quotes, comics, etc. that related to student chosen work.

Syllabus Criteria

Course syllabi emphasized readings were selected by students chosen from the required course text. Each student submitted five specific essays they were interested in reading and posted these selections in a discussion forum in Blackboard. After the deadline for submissions passed, the researcher tallied votes and incorporated those with the most votes in to the tentative daily reading schedule. Meeting each class twice a week meant that one day was devoted to discussions of essays while the other served as a writing day. Thus, during the 16-week semester, the entire class read 16 different selections. While the researcher prompted initial discussions, the students quickly took over and led class discussions.

Course syllabi emphasized students selected their own topics for specific essays.

Course syllabi also emphasized professor availability both in and outside of the office. Policy at the community college of focus required professors to hold one office hour per class taught. These hours were listed as well as other options to meet with the professor. These options included a telephone call, the opportunity to meet in the office other than the days and hours listed as official office hours and the opportunity to Skype at a convenient time.

Procedure

During a two-week period in fall 2018, potential participants enrolled in the primary researcher's three English classroom courses and those enrolled in a colleague's three English classroom courses were sent an email requesting voluntary participation in the Faculty Caring Survey. Participants reviewed 18 instructor behaviors related to care and determined which, from a community college perspective, were most relevant to them and their perceptions of a caring professor. This survey was conducted at the beginning as well as at the end of the 16-week semester.

Sampling Procedure

The study took place at a community college located in Central Texas. The college is composed of eleven main campuses and various satellite locations. The study, conducted during fall 2018, initially focused on 62 students enrolled in the researcher's three English autonomy-based classes as well as 72 students enrolled in an English professor colleague's three instructor-controlled classes. No students under the age of 18 years participated in the study. The populations varied in ethnicity, gender, and age based on the two participating campus locations.

The survey was generated and disseminated through an online Qualtrics survey instrument. Qualtrics is an online data platform for collecting and analyzing research data.

Because Qualtrics offers the opportunity to remove an IP address, the survey remained confidential.

Participants

The participants in this study were students enrolled in the researcher's English courses (autonomy-based group) at community college located in central Texas during the fall 2018 semester and students enrolled in a colleague's courses; he taught English in an instructor-controlled classroom setting. A target of 125-150 participants was projected; because each class was capped at 28 students, this meant a total of 98 would potentially participate. However, a minimum target of 60 total participants was projected.

The role of participants varied based on the two groups. Those in the autonomy group selected readings that were then assigned to the class; they selected their own topics for essay assignments, and they determined how discussions was conducted. Those in the instructor-controlled group were assigned specific readings; they were asked to write about specific topics; they developed assignments according to structured directions, and they were instructed on how discussions would be conducted. While the structure and function of the classes were different between both groups, the student learning outcomes were the same for all classes.

All students enrolled in the researcher's and colleague's college freshman English courses received an email developed by the researcher. The email introduced the purpose of the study and invited students to participate. The email included a location for students to type their consent agreeing for the researcher to use data. The email introducing and inviting students to participate was delivered through Qualtrics.

The community college students had access to computers at different locations on campuses; therefore, they had accessibility to use a computer to complete the survey. However, Qualtrics offered the opportunity for the survey to be completed on a mobile device, allowing students the convenience to use their cell phones, or other devices, at any location to complete the survey.

The researcher (in her classroom courses) introduced the purpose of the study by reading the prepared classroom script. The same script was provided to the participating colleague to read to the students enrolled in his courses.

Students' overall grades in the classes nor status at the college was affected by participation or non-participation in the study. The identity of the participants was known to the primary researcher only for the purpose of determining if an autonomy-based classroom setting affected student performance versus student performance in an instructor-controlled classroom setting.

Students voluntarily completed a survey created in Qualtrics. The survey identified demographic characteristics of the students to determine qualifications for participation. Students enrolled in the primary researcher's classroom English courses (a total of three) at a campus located on the east side of the city and students enrolled in a colleague's English classroom courses (a total of three) at a campus located in a suburb on the north side of the city were included in the study using protocol review of the IRB. Only students 18 years of age and older were allowed to participate. No specific demographics limited the participation of students. At no time were the identities of the students used in the report. Students' identification numbers known only to themselves and the primary researcher were used to identify final grades

in the courses. Students were not required to participate. In no way was the students' status at the college affected by either participation or non-participation.

Instrumentation

Survey

Permission was granted by the Internal Review Board (IRB) of the university and the review board of the community college where the study was conducted. The community college's approval provided the researcher the opportunity to invite college English students to participate in the surveys.

The study instrument (see Appendix A) used—The Faculty Caring Survey—was developed by Garza and Overschelde (2017) “to measure undergraduate and graduate preservice teachers’ perceptions of instructor behaviors that demonstrated caring” (p. 3). The development of this instrument “could facilitate an informal or formal assessment of instructors’ caring dispositions at different higher education institutions nationally as well as globally” (Garza & Van Overschelde, 2017, p. 3).

Garza and Van Overschelde (2017) used purposeful sampling to gather qualitative data and convenience sampling to gather quantitative data; the researchers’ mixed methods approach helped shape their instrument. The researchers sent an email to preservice graduate and undergraduate students who had not yet started student teaching inviting them to complete the survey which was comprised of open-ended statements about teacher caring. The open-ended questions asked the participants to describe how they show or would show their students they care about them, how their professors have illustrated caring and uncaring behaviors towards them.

Constant comparative analysis was used to analyze the results, a trained research assistant analyzed responses to the questions “and labeled student comments during an initial reading and made notes as the data were interpreted;” based on the notes, the data was analyzed further, using axial coding, to refine the descriptive statements (Garza & Van Overschelde, 2017, p. 9).

Garza and Van Overschelde (2017) “determined the FCS can be effectively summarized using a single factor that accounted for 78% of the variance. The single factor showed high internal consistency (0.85). The results of [their] study highlight the behaviors university preservice teachers perceive as ways a faculty member demonstrates caring” which include

- Is willing to help me
- Is encouraging in class
- Is patient with me
- Ensures that I understand material in class
- Listens to me in class

(p. 12-13).

Students in the researcher’s and colleague’s classes were asked to rank the behaviors in the survey (Appendix A) using a 4-point Likert scale with 1 = not at all important and 4 = very important. A link to the survey was included in the email with directions on accessing and submitting the survey. The instrument was made available for two weeks for completion of the survey. A reminder email was sent once more three days before the survey ended. A clear statement was made in the invitation for voluntary participation, confirming the confidentiality of participants' identities and that the survey and/or use of data collected through the survey was not in any way harmful to the participant. All students attending the community college had

access to computers in the library, tutoring labs, and computer labs offering them the opportunity to complete the survey at their convenience and without pressure.

The demographic survey section was used to collect personal and college data from the participants. The participants were asked questions about their ethnicity, age, gender, and parental level of education.

At the end of the semester, during a two-week period, students were, again, asked to complete the FCS.

Interviews

Towards the end of the semester, the researcher, via email, asked two students from each of the researcher's three autonomy-based classroom courses (total of 6) to participate in one-on-one, open-ended interviews (See Appendix B). Each in-depth interview lasted from 30-45. Interviews were conducted at the end of the study, so students offered insight about the semester's activities.

To ensure accurate responses, the researcher sought participant permission to audio record interviews which were then transcribed. Using a voice recording app on the researcher's iPhone, she recorded and then downloaded each file to her password protected office computer. A list of interview questions asked of the participating colleague is provided in Appendix C.

Using topical interviews, the researcher presented questions in such a way that students were offered specific insight about their experiences in the autonomy-based classroom. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), "The goal of topical interviews is to work out a coherent explanation by piecing together what different people have said, while recognizing that each person might have his or her own construction of events" (p. 11). Rubin and Rubin (2005)

further clarify that since a researcher is hoping to acquire specific answers that relate to the topic of focus, “questioning in topical interviews is often somewhat more directive and aggressive . . .” (p. 11). Thus, using final results from the FCS (See Appendix D), the researcher shaped questions to highlight some traits that ranked highly in the surveys. Students shared thoughts about their comfort level of having autonomy and if they felt having autonomy improved their overall performance.

The primary researcher used a transcription service to have content transcribed, identifying individuals with a number between 1-7 (i.e. Participant1). At no time were participants asked to provide their names nor were their names included in this study. The colleague, whose students participated in the study, was also interviewed using the same app to record, as he gave permission. Again, using a topical interview format, the researcher asked him questions related to what determined his assignment choices, how he determined teaching in an instructor-controlled classroom was effective, and student perceptions of a caring professor, using the behaviors identified on the FCS. The primary researcher, again, used a transcription service and identified the colleague in the same manner addressed above, and used the same storage procedures.

All participants were sent a copy of the transcription associated with their interview to review content for accuracy.

While the interviews helped clarify student quantitative responses, the results of the interviews also addressed a connection to the quantitative results identified at the end of the study. Thus, the researcher incorporated the use of a convergent parallel design as she “used concurrent timing to implement the quantitative and qualitative strands during the same phase of the research process, prioritized the methods equally, and kept the strands independent during

analysis and then mixed the results during the overall interpretation” (Creswell & Clark, 2011, pp. 70-71). This process allowed a more thorough understanding of the connections between student perceptions and performance outcomes.

The researcher also used the students’ school identification numbers to identify final course grades in the six college English courses identified in the study.

To facilitate the mixed methods approach with a convergent parallel design, guidelines were developed. Creswell and Clark (2011) clarify the four step process which includes:

1) the researcher collects both quantitative data and qualitative data about the topic of interest; 2) the researcher analyzes the two data sets separately and independently from each other using typical quantitative and qualitative analytic procedures; 3) the researcher reaches the point of interface and works to merge the results of the two data sets; and 4) the researcher interprets to what extent and in what ways the two sets of results converge, diverge from each other, relate to each other, and/or combine to create a better understanding in response to the study’s overall purpose (p. 78).

Feldon and Kafai (2008), for example, used the mixed methods approach with a convergent parallel design in their analysis of “user’ avatar-related activities in a virtual world” (p. 575). The authors collected quantitative data by focusing on server logs that “recorded keystroke-level activity for 595 participants over a six-month period in Whyville.net, an informal science website” (p. 575). In addition, the authors collected data from surveys and qualitative data from interviews where participants were asked about their experiences. In the discussion section of their article, they concluded that “Interpreting each source of data in light of the other and integrating the analysis of both allow[ed] us to understand users’ engagement with their

virtual world as a complex cultural entity from which generalizations can be drawn to inform future research and the development of new computer-mediated educational environments” (Feldon & Kafai, 2008, p. 590). Understanding users’ engagement by analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data was the focus of this study.

Data Analysis

In using a mixed method approach, data analysis was addressed from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective. For quantitative, Creswell and Clark (2011) explain that “the investigator begins by converting the raw data into a form useful for data analysis, which means scoring the data by assigning numerical values to each response, cleaning data entry errors from the database, and creating special variables that will be needed . . .” (p. 204). Using a sequential explanatory mixed methods design, quantitative data gathered from the pre and post-surveys was incorporated into the interviews. Creswell and Clark (2011) indicate the explanatory design clarifies how the qualitative data helps explain the quantitative results. Based on data results, participants, during face-to-face interviews, expanded on the data offering more insight extensively.

Quantitative Analysis

The dissertation used a paired *t*-test to identify the statistical differences between the pre and post surveys (FCS). Hedge’s *g* was used to measure the effect size—indicating how the controlled group differed from the experimental group. A priori power analysis using G*Power 3.13 statistical power analysis program (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) was used to determine the number of participants needed to establish statistical power for the research design at the .80 level given $\alpha = .01$. Preliminary analysis, descriptive statistics, coefficient alpha, mean

scores, and standard deviations were computed. Recoding and computing were completed using a statistical computer program known as SPSS (Statistical Program for the Social Sciences).

The dissertation also accounted for the final course grades for students in both the researcher's and participating colleague's classes. Both instructors determined grades using the same numeric point system. Because there were several possibilities related to a final grade, a continuous variable reflected this practice.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data analysis required transcribing text from interviews. Interviews for two participants per section in the autonomy-based classes were recorded—total of six. The data was transcribed by a service, and the researcher developed codes. Data was then organized categorically and chronologically, reviewed repeatedly, and continuously coded to ensure accurate representation.

Ideas that emerged were used to continue research and guide the study. Coding was done both inductively and deductively to address any variations regarding the research focus. Critical theory was used as a lens to frame questions and analyze data to determine student perceptions of care in connection to autonomy. The researcher conducted one open-ended interview with six participants—two from each autonomy-based classroom course. Using responsive interviews, the researcher presented questions in such a way that students offered specific insight about their experiences in the autonomy-based classroom. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), “[R]esponsive interviewing is about learning what people think about their experiences and what rules they operate under” (p. 37). They also emphasize “the researcher is the instrument, the tool of discovery. The researcher’s self-confidence, adaptability, and willingness to hear what is said

and change direction to cast each a wisp of insider track down anything are what make responsive interviews work” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 37). However, it was important that the researcher, as the interviewer, avoided imposing her views on the interviewees. Rubin and Rubin (2005) further clarify “Because the interviewer must listen intently and follow up insights and new points during the interview, the interviewer must be able to change course based on what he or she learns” (p. 36). While specific, predetermined questions were used, the researcher recognized the answer to one question prompted further exploration of that answer.

Student responses offered insight about their comfort level of having autonomy and if they felt having autonomy improved their overall performance. Responses also offered insight about student perceptions concerning care in connection to autonomy.

Through the process of open coding, the researcher examined participant responses. Strauss and Corbin (1990) define open coding as “the part of analysis that pertains specifically to the naming and categorizing of phenomena through close examination of data . . . During open coding the data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, compared for similarities and differences, and questions are asked about the phenomenon as reflected in the data” (p. 62). To avoid distorting ideas, each answer provided by interviewees was read several times to identify one or more labels. The first transcribed interview became the basis for generating these ideas. Once these concepts and themes were finalized, it became necessary to look for the same ideas in the other interviews. At the end of this process, it was necessary to refine definitions so that they were consistent.

After using this technique, the researcher re-examined the data and used axial coding which Strauss and Corbin (1990) define as “A set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories. This is done

by utilizing a coding paradigm involving conditions, context, action/interactional strategies and consequences” (p. 96).

According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), “Coding allows you to sort statements by content of the concept, theme, or event rather than by the people who told you the information” (p. 219). Coding might be developed based on one or two words representing a theme; however, it was the interviewer’s responsibility to read content carefully and determine what interviewees inferred rather than directly stated. Once the coding process was complete, the data was then analyzed through sorting, summarizing, ranking, and comparing.

The key research question guiding the study was do students in an autonomy-based classroom demonstrate statistically significant differences in perceptions of care when compared to students in an instructor-controlled classroom. Using the Faculty Caring Survey, the researcher focused on rankings for caring behaviors students measured based on a 4-point Likert scale. The survey allowed for raw data which was then converted to a SPSS file. Results were analyzed for the student led, autonomy classroom and for the instructor-controlled classroom participants.

To understand students’ perceptions of care, the researcher focused on the top six professor caring behaviors based on students rating items as “strongly agree” on both the pre and post-surveys. Please see Appendix D for the percentages of all ranked behaviors. The six behaviors that most students strongly agreed conveyed faculty demonstrated caring, on the pre-survey, included the following:

- Is open to questions in class
- Is fair with me

- Is willing to help me
- Is encouraging in class
- Is available during office hours
- Is prepared for class

During the post-survey, most of the behaviors listed above were ranked in the top six; however, two behaviors replaced those identified on the pre-survey, and there was a tie for the fifth highest behavior. The behaviors most students strongly agreed conveyed faculty demonstrated caring, on the post-survey, included the following:

- Is open to questions in class
- Is available during office hours
- Is willing to help me
- Is available for extra help when needed
- Provides constructive feedback on assignments
- Is prepared for class

The data gathered from the pre and post-test surveys was reviewed and incorporated into the interview process. Based on gathered data, interview questions also reflected those results, mainly in connection to the top ranked behaviors. Thus, participants were asked to offer further explanation of ideas based on data.

In addition to interviewing students, the researcher interviewed the colleague whose students were included in the study. Again, using an open-ended interview format, the researcher asked him questions that addressed what determined his assignment choices and how he determined that teaching in an instructor-controlled classroom was effective (Appendix C).

Conclusion

This comparative mixed methods study explored how community college student autonomy affected student perception of care in writing and literature courses. Using Garza and Van Overschelde's Faculty Caring Survey as the key instrument to conduct the researcher's study, student feedback offered insight about their perceptions of care and how it related to an autonomy-based classroom environment. A paired *t*-test identified the statistical differences between the pre and post-surveys (Faculty Caring Survey). Hedge's *g* was used to measure the effect size—indicating how the controlled group differed from the experimental group. Final grades were used to determine if there was a difference in how students scored in the student led, autonomous classroom as compared to those in an instructor-controlled classroom.

For qualitative analysis, the researcher used open ended interview questions with six students from the autonomy-based classrooms to gather more specific insight about their perceptions of care and what type of connection they made between care and an autonomy-based classroom. To clarify these perceptions, the researcher focused on the top six behaviors that most students strongly agreed conveyed ways instructor demonstrated care. These traits offered guidance through the interview process with participating students. In addition, the researcher interviewed the participating colleague asking open ended questions that addressed what determined his assignment choices and how he determined that teaching in an instructor-controlled classroom was effective. The top rated behaviors also contributed to the questions asked of him during the interview.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Introduction

This mixed methods study was based on quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data was retrieved through an electronic survey and distributed to students in both instructor-controlled and student-led, autonomous classrooms while the qualitative data was retrieved through interviews conducted with a participating colleague and six students—two from each researcher’s student-led, autonomous classroom courses. In this chapter, the findings for the quantitative data gathered during a pre and post Faculty Care Survey are presented first. Then the findings for the qualitative data gathered at the end of the semester in interview format are presented.

Analysis one: Quantitative, Faculty Care Survey

As mentioned in the Research Design section of chapter 3, students from the researcher’s student-led, autonomous classes and those in the participating colleague’s instructor-controlled courses were asked to complete a survey during the beginning and at the end of the semester. The survey, titled “Faculty Care Survey,” was developed by Garza and Van Overschelde (2017) for a study they conducted with preservice undergraduate and graduate students at the college level. The survey identifies eighteen traits that students tend to associate with a caring professor. Please refer to Appendix A for identification of specific traits associated with each number and Appendix D for percentage rankings of all traits based on pre and post Faculty Care Surveys (FCS).

In order to address research questions, participant characteristics are first provided in order to offer background about those who participated in the pre and post surveys.

Participant Characteristics

Total participants included in the study were 35 community college students (23 females, 65.7%; 12 males, 34.3%) who were enrolled in a 16-week Composition I or II class located in Central Texas, United States. Participants were predominately White/Caucasian ($n = 17$; 48.6%) with others identifying as either Hispanic/Latino ($n = 9$; 25.7%), Black/African American ($n = 6$; 17.1%), Asian American ($n = 2$; 5.7%), or *other* ($n = 1$; 2.9%) ethnic identities.

Participant Characteristics, Instructor-controlled classes

The participating colleague began the semester with a total of 72 students: three sections of Composition II. Two classes consisted of 27 students each; the third class was comprised of 18 students. At the end of the semester, one of the two Composition II courses that began with 27 students was comprised of 21 students, reflecting 6 drops; the second course that began with 27 students was comprised of 14 students, reflecting 13 drops. The third course that began with 18 students was comprised of 15 students at the end, reflecting 3 drops.

Table 1 identifies descriptive statistics for students in the ICC who completed the pre and post FCS.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for students in the ICC who completed pre and post FCS

Variable	n	%	M	SD
Age	21		21.00	3.86
Gender				
Male	7	33.3		
Female	14	66.7		
Ethnicity				
Hispanic/ Latino	4	19.0		
White	10	47.6		
Black/ African American	4	19.0		
Asian	2	9.6		
Other	1	4.8		

Participants in the Instructor-controlled classes (ICC) were 21 community college students (14 females, 66.7%; 7 males, 33.3%) with a mean age of 21 years ($SD = 3.86$) who were enrolled in a 16-week Composition I or II class located in Central Texas, United States.

Participants were predominantly White/Caucasian ($n = 10$; 47.6%) with others identifying as either Hispanic/Latino ($n = 4$; 19%), Black/African American ($n = 4$; 19%), Asian American ($n = 2$; 9.5%), or other ($n = 1$; 4.8%).

Participant Characteristics, Student autonomy classes

The researcher began the semester with a total of 62 students: two sections of Composition I and one section of Composition II. One Composition I course initially consisted of 25 students; the second Composition I course was comprised of 18 students. The third course was a Composition II and was comprised of 19 students. At the end of the semester, The Composition I course that began with 25 students was comprised of 21 students, reflecting 4 drops; the Composition I course that began with 18 students was comprised of 10 students in the

end, reflecting 8 drops. The third course, Composition II, that began with 19 students was comprised of 16 students at the end, reflecting 3 drops.

Table 2 identifies descriptive statistics for students in the SAC who completed the pre and post FCS.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics for students in the SAC who completed pre and post FCS

Variable	n	%	M	SD
Age	14		22.07	4.12
Gender				
Male	5	35.7		
Female	9	64.3		
Ethnicity				
Hispanic/ Latino	5	35.7		
White	7	50.0		
Black/ African American	2	14.3		
Asian	0	0		

Participants in the student autonomous classes (SAC) were 14 community college students (9 females, 64.3%; 5 males, 35.7%) with a mean age of 22 years ($SD = 4.12$) who were enrolled in a 16-week Composition I or II class located in Central Texas, United States.

Participants were predominantly White/Caucasian ($n = 7$; 50%) with others identifying as either Hispanic/Latino ($n = 5$; 35.7%), Black/African American ($n = 2$; 14.3%), Asian American ($n = 0$; %).

Quantitative research questions that guided the studied included:

1. Do students participating in an autonomy-based, classroom learning environment demonstrate statistically significant differences in perceptions of care when compared to students in an instructor-controlled classroom?
2. What are the practical differences in this perception of caring between students in an autonomy-based, classroom learning environment and those in an instructor-controlled classroom?

Paired *t*-test results

To answer the first research question, explanation is provided related to the paired *t*-test results. Table 3 clarifies data related to the paired *t*-test, including means, standard deviations, *p* value, and Hedge's *g*.

Table 3

t-Test Results that address means, standard deviations, *p* value, and Hedge's *g*

Learn. Environ.	<u>Pre</u>		<u>Post</u>		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>g</i> (95%CI)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
ICC	26.42	7.81	26.31	8.10	1.63	.11	.52 (CI 95% = -1.78, 2.84))	
SAC	25.42	5.87	22.64	4.37				

A paired *t*-test was conducted to compare students in the ICC to those in the SAC who completed both the pre and post-surveys. The analysis produced a *t* value ($t = 1.63$). An examination of the means revealed that students in the ICC who completed the pre-survey had slightly higher scores based on the answers to the survey ($M = 26.42$) than scores for students in

the SAC ($M = 25.42$). An examination of the means for students in the ICC who took the post-survey, again, revealed higher scores ($M = 26.31$) than scores in the SAC ($M = 22.64$).

The p value of the study was calculated as .11, which indicated there was no statistical significance between data.

Effect Size

To answer question 2, Hedge's g was used to measure effect size. Based on p values associated with Hedge's g where .2 is considered small, .5 is considered medium, and .8 is considered high, inspection between both groups for the Pre and Post subscales revealed a medium effect size associated with completing the Faculty Care Survey (FCS) ($g = .52$). This finding suggested that participants in the ICC favored this type of classroom as opposed to the SAC. This outcome was not consistent with previous studies as the effect size was smaller. For example, several studies have been conducted by Deci and Ryan (1985) about self-determination theory which focuses on student autonomy as well as an autonomous supportive instructor. These studies have consisted of 100 or more participants. Most studies by both Deci and Ryan (1985) were conducted with children participants.

The researcher's study used the FCS developed by Garza and Van Overscheldes (2017). In their study, the FCS was used to determine undergraduate and graduate preservice teachers', at the university level, perceptions of care identified in faculty behaviors. A total of 172 participants responded to the FCS. The researcher's study intended to include more than 35 who completed both pre and post-surveys. However, due to drops and the elimination of incomplete surveys, the sample size was much lower.

In addition, all self-determination, autonomy, or care related studies have resulted in more positive results favoring these practices. Research by Deci and Ryan (1985) and Noddings (2003/1984) indicate autonomy supportive instructors, student choices, and care theory have a positive impact on students because they were able to recognize that their ideas mattered and that their instructors cared for them.

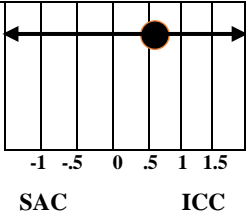
Quantitative research question 3 was if student autonomy affected community college writing and literature student outcomes.

Student Outcomes

To answer the third research question, final grades for students in the ICC and SAC were determined. Table 4 identifies means and standard deviations for final grades for students in the ICC and SAC.

Table 4

t-Test Results that address means, standard deviations, p value, and Hedge's g for final grades

Final Grades	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>g</i> (95%CI)	
ICC	435.36	52.89	1.770	.087	.60 (-15.22, 16.44)	
SAC	406.42	35.56				

The analysis produced a *t* value ($t = 1.770$). An examination of the means revealed final grades for students in the ICC was calculated at 435.36 while the mean for students in the SAC was calculated at 406.42 suggesting that students in the ICC earned higher grades than those in the SAC.

The p value of the study was calculated as .087, which indicated students in the ICC earned higher final grades than those in the SAC. This suggested there was statistical significance between data.

Hedge's g was used to measure effect size. Based on p values associated with Hedge's g where .2 is considered small, .5 is considered medium, and .8 is considered high, inspection between both groups revealed a medium effect size associated with final grades ($g = .60$). The .60 calculation suggested students in the ICC earned higher final grades than those in the SAC. However, in referencing the grade scale provided below, it is evident that both means were within the B category range (402-445 = B). The college where the study was conducted does not offer the opportunity to submit plus or minus letter grades. Thus, both the participating colleague and the researcher submitted grades of B to students whose final, accumulated points fell in the 402-445 range.

Students in both the ICC and SAC developed a total of five essays, each worth 100 points for a possible, maximum total of 500. Thus, the grade scale in Table 5 is based on the maximum total.

Table 5

Grade Scale for both the participating colleague's and researcher's courses.

Grade	Points Range
A	450-500
B	402-445
C	350-395
D	300-345
F	299 and below

It was possible for a student's final accumulated points to fall in the "in-between" grade scales range. For example, the highest amount of points to earn a B was 445, but the least amount to earn an A was 450. If a student's final points totaled 447, awarding an A or B was determined by the student's overall performance in the class. Criteria such as when students submitted assignments, attendance, and participation were considered. Most likely, the student's grade would be rounded up to the higher grade.

While the quantitative data suggested students in the ICC favored this type of learning environment, qualitative data results are consistent with the outcome of other studies suggesting students find a caring environment beneficial to their learning.

Analysis two: Qualitative Findings

In analysis two, qualitative results determined the following themes emerged for both the participating colleague and researcher's classes based on course policies. These findings are introduced and detailed in this section based on the interview with the colleague.

The qualitative research question that guided the study included:

Research question 4: How do community college writing and literature students perceive care in connection to autonomy?

Student responses to the survey questions guided the researcher in the development of the interview questions for both the participating colleague and students. For a list of interview questions for participating students, please refer to Appendix B. For a list of interview questions for the participating colleague, please refer to Appendix C.

Because the participating colleague subscribed to an instructor-controlled classroom, the researcher was interested in learning about his course policies. Interestingly, course policies about late work/essay submission policies, attendance, and email submissions were exactly the same for both the colleague and the researcher. The colleague reminded the researcher that they had discussed these policies years ago, and he had adapted the discussion into policies. Therefore, policies were relevant to the instructor-controlled classroom (ICC) and student-led, autonomous classrooms (SAC).

The codes analyzed in addressing course policies for both the participating colleague and researcher are included below (Table 6).

Table 6

Codes for course policies

Both professors' course policies	
Late_wrk/Ess sub	Professors identified specifics about late work/essay submission policies.
Attend	Professors identified the impact of excessive absences.
Email_sub_line	Professors identified requirement for content that should be included in email subject lines.

Before addressing specific policies for his classes, the colleague stressed the overall importance of strictness with course policies, identifying trial-and-error experience for the basis of those policies. He explained:

Colleague: I'm pretty strict about the policies I state in the syllabus; they're very well thought out. I don't just randomly choose a policy because I'm a control freak. I choose the policies because of very specific reasons. I've been teaching for over 20 years, so I know which policies are necessary and which ones aren't, which ones are effective and which ones aren't. Through sheer trial-and-error of experience, I found that the policies I have right now, even though they [students] may not understand why I have them, are very important.

The colleague emphasized that when people understand what the rules are, then they're more comfortable. They know what is expected of them, and they know what to do. He believed that his policies benefitted students for the rest of their lives as they learned about responsibility and maturity.

Late work/Essay Submission Policies. The colleague was adamant in expressing his strict policy of no late work. He emphasized his belief that school wasn't just focused on learning material. He clarified:

Colleague: It's [School's] about responsibility. These are things you're gonna [sic] have to know for the real world anyway. It's not like in our jobs, deadlines are irrelevant. Deadlines are important, so I don't take late work.

While he associated the students' responsibilities of submitting work on time, he also admitted to his flexibility in specific situations. He explained:

Colleague: When there are issues that students deal with, of course, if someone is hospitalized or, God forbid, a loved one passes away like the day of or the day before the assignment is due, I recognize emergency situations. I will make judgment calls on those individual moments. I do not take late work simply because a student forgot about a deadline or wasn't prepared. Those are not acceptable excuses.

He indicated that these types of situations did not happen too often nor did he announce to students that he would make such exceptions. Instead, he presented the urgency and importance of submitting work on time stating:

Colleague: I don't accept late work, and I make that very clear not only in my syllabus and in the assignment documentation that I give them but also in my lectures and in my opening day spiel. I make a big deal out of it. That way, nobody walks out of there wondering, "I wonder how he feels about late work." I make an emphasis on it so that it's imprinted in their heads.

He stressed the importance of constantly reminding students of this policy, so there would be no confusion, citing one example of a student who wanted to submit all work during the first month of class and be done for the semester. He explained:

Colleague: If I allow students to turn in assignments whenever they want, one of the most important things, in my opinion, that they're gonna [sic] miss out on is development. You can't turn in everything at once because if you did, then you wouldn't learn anything. What if a paper earns an F? Then you're probably gonna [sic] come to me upset and say, "Well, I didn't know I had all these problems. If I did, I wouldn't have turned in the second, the third, and the fourth."

Thus, submission deadlines were heavily emphasized in the colleague's instructor-controlled classroom.

Like her colleague, the researcher emphasized the importance of assignment deadlines. While students determined what would be read, the types of essays they would develop, and the topics for assignments, the researcher preset deadlines for each assignment. She, too, shared her colleague's mentality of having students learn from one assignment before having them transition to the next paper. Students also recognized they needed some form of guidance related to deadlines to prevent having an overwhelming amount of work due at one time. Through qualitative student interviews, participant five identified he recognized how one assignment built upon another. While addressing instructor feedback, he stated:

Participant five: We started off at the very base level and built on each paper, which was preparing us for the final exam. In the end, I felt I was over prepared for the exam; that was really nice.

Thus, students learned to recognize the validity of the deadlines' policy as their learning was built upon each assignment.

Again, like the participating instructor, the researcher was flexible in particular situations. If an emergency occurred near the deadline for an assignment, the researcher was flexible with the student(s), ensuring that an extension would be offered. The participating colleague's and researcher's willingness with flexibility is related to Noddings' (2003) idea that the relationship between instructor and student must be reciprocal. Flexibility is one way to achieve this reciprocal relationship. Thus, even though the participating professor controlled much of what occurs in his classroom, he, like the researcher, practiced flexibility when necessary.

Attendance Policies. Both the colleague and researcher supported setting forth strict policies based on trial-and-error experience. One policy heavily stressed in both the colleague's and researcher's courses was attendance. Both colleague and researcher conveyed that each class was comprised of material that ensured successful completion of the course. Therefore, they developed the following attendance policy:

Excessive absences would affect grades in the following manner:

- *4 absences lowered a student's semester average one letter grade
- *5 absences lowered a student's semester average two letter grades
- *6 absences or more earned a student an automatic failing grade for the semester

Withdrawal Policy: It was a student's responsibility to fill out all forms necessary if he/she wished to withdraw.

The sense of instilling responsibility in students was emphasized through the attendance policy. The researcher's classes were developed based on student choices. While she subsidized with material that related to types of essays students would develop, all else presented in class was

from student perspectives. It didn't take long for classmates to tell someone who missed a class that they recognized he/she wasn't in attendance and, therefore, wasn't able to benefit from discussions. This type of mentality, as the participating colleague mentioned, instilled not only a sense of responsibility but also maturity in students. During the fall 2018 semester, no students in either the participating colleague's or the researcher's classes were penalized for excessive absences.

Email subject line. Another policy enforced in both the participating colleague's and researcher's classes related to emails. Both colleague and researcher asked students to include specific information in subject lines when sending them messages. Students included their name, course name and number, synonym number, the day and times their course met, and subject of the email's focus. For example, an email subject line would look like the following:

Sample: Jane Doe, ENGL 1301, 45632, MW9:00, question about essay 1

Both the colleague and researcher emphasized, to students, the importance of including this information because it distinguished them from other students in other classes. This also offered the professors the opportunity to quickly identify the student and his/her needs before opening the message.

The participating colleague and researcher shared similarities concerning course policies, which demonstrated they both showed caring professor behaviors towards students.

Demonstrations and Perceptions of Care

In answering research question four, the researcher first recognized the following themes which emerged for each of the participant groups based on interviews collected at the end of the sixteen-week semester from a colleague who adheres to an instructor-controlled classroom and

students who experienced a student-led, autonomous classroom. These findings are introduced in this section and then detailed in the sections that follow.

Participating Colleague: The participating colleague stressed an instructor-controlled classroom allowed him to show he cared in various ways. The following major findings emerged from professor data:

- The colleague expressed care through grading.
- The colleague responded to emails quickly.
- The colleague offered constructive feedback.

The codes analyzed in addressing behaviors of care demonstrated by the participating colleague are included below (Table 7).

Table 7

Codes for instructor caring behaviors

Colleague caring behaviors	
Care_grade	Professor demonstrated care through a grading procedure
Care_email	Professor demonstrated care in answering emails quickly
Care_feed	Professor demonstrated care by providing appropriate and detailed feedback

Students: All six participating students were asked about their perceptions of how their instructor demonstrated care within the classroom. However, only three directly responded to the question; the other three identified the instructor demonstrated care in their responses to other interview questions.

- Participants associated instructor care with the opportunity to make choices.

- Participants identified care through the instructor's willingness to listen to them in class.
- Participants recognized care through the instructor's willingness to help them in class.
- Participants associated care with the instructor's openness to questions in the classroom.
- Participants identified instructor care through feedback provided on assignments.
- Participants associated instructor care with the instructor being available in the classroom and during office hours.

Perceptions of care, participating colleague

The researcher collected data from the participating colleague in an interview format at the end of the semester. The analysis was based on interview data, and interview questions reflected some caring professor behaviors identified on the FCS.

Care through grading. The participating colleague stressed his demonstration of caring behaviors to students by emphasizing, to them, his concern for their work. He clarified this concern with grading their assignments.

Colleague: I've told my students on many occasions, "I shouldn't care more about your essays than you do" . . . That's why, as an instructor, I can get frustrated grading their papers. If I didn't care, I wouldn't get frustrated, but I do and so, I convey that to them.

The participating colleague clarified that he did not convey his frustration about grading to the students; however, he did convey that he recognized that they did not seem to care and/or were not putting effort into their work. When he identified these students, he encouraged them to

attend his rough draft workshops, where he offered the opportunity to have drafts reviewed in detail.

Care through emails. The participating colleague emphasized the importance of responding to student emails. He recognized students mainly used their mobile devices to communicate. Even if they were not at a computer, they would have immediate access to his reply. He explained his mentality about emails.

Colleague: I respond to emails every day of the week, even Saturday and Sunday, and I reply to emails all day long. My phone beeps every time I get an email, and I am on the spot when it comes to emails . . . I could be out having dinner and I shouldn't, but I will reply to an email, and it's because I know how important it is. For example, a student might be working on an essay, and I know that people work on the essays, a lot of times, when they have the free time. If I don't reply immediately, if I wait three hours, well, then, they may not be working on the essay anymore. They may be onto something else and so, my reply isn't as effective anymore, so I think that's one of the other ways I show that I care.

The professor clearly associated the response time of emails with his caring behaviors, even referring to himself as “an email maniac” who replied quickly even while participating in non-school related activities. He emphasized an instructor's willingness to communicate with students was significant when demonstrating care.

Care through feedback. While he did not directly identify caring with behaviors included on the Faculty Caring Survey, the researcher asked questions about specific behaviors,

including providing feedback. As indicated below, his feedback was specific to the detailed guidelines for assigned essays. He explained:

Colleague: I write a lot in the margins. The feedback that I provide them, I think, it's specific. When it comes to grammar, it's not real specific. I'll mark for the first paragraph, and then, I'll write at the top of the paper, "You have lots of grammar problems throughout." I'll even mention what the main culprits are throughout the paper and leave it at that. I don't really get bogged down too much in marking all the grammar problems.

He clarified that he expected students in his Composition II courses to have a higher level of control concerning grammar. His grading procedure, discussed in Analysis four, Grading and grade-time section, offers more clarification of grammar's role in his classrooms.

He continued with discussion about what types of comments he did provide students.

Colleague: I write things like, "poorly integrated quote, doesn't follow the grammar rules, missing a claim." With the handout, the claim, the quote, and the analysis, I will comment directly on those things.

I will also comment on questions of clarity. Sometimes, they'll have an example that I don't understand how it's relevant to the point they just made. Usually, the comments are a little bit more brief [sic], but they should know what they mean based on my lectures in the class. If their paper's really bad, I'll write at the top of the paper, "Come see me" because some of the problems need more thorough explanation. I can't simply cover that with little comments in the margins, but I'm a big margin marker.

I'll also, on occasion, write what they should have talked about. For example, I'll have a paragraph where I'm asking the students to talk about a character being childlike rather than an adult. If I see that the paragraph, the examples don't seem to be focusing on childlike or immaturity, I'll write at the bottom of the paragraph, "You probably should've discussed" and I'll mention a couple of the examples in the story that would've been appropriate so that they can get a better idea of what it is they should've been talking about. Students always love that. They're always like, "Oh. *Now* I know what you mean."

The professor indicated his focus concerning feedback related to specific expectations with assignments. This is one of his reasons for having all students write about the same story in the same format. Because he asked students to develop topic sentences a specific way, for example, he reviewed drafts in the same manner for all students, focusing on what should have been included in the topic sentences.

The participating colleague also addressed feedback in association with rough drafts. However, his procedure for viewing drafts is different than the procedure used in the student-led, autonomous classroom, so this focus will be addressed in the section titled: Differences between the instructor-controlled and student-led classrooms.

Perceptions of care, student participants

In continuing to answer the fourth research question, the researcher focused on the top six caring professor behaviors identified on both the pre and post FCS, based on student responses of "strongly agree." Table 8 lists the specific behaviors as well as percentages based on all students who completed the pre or post surveys or both.

Table 8

Rankings of top six behaviors associated with care, pre and post survey

Questions	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
1 Is open to questions in class	78.08%	79.25%
2 Is fair with me	69.86%	73.08%
3 Is willing to help me	68.49%	71.70%
4 Is encouraging in class	64.79%	69.23%
5 Is available during office hours	64.38%	66.04%
6 Is prepared for class	63.01%	64.15%

One of the three behaviors, #17 on the FCS, "Is open to questions in class," ranked first during the pre and post-survey based on students selecting "strongly agree." Behavior 13 on the FCS, "Is fair with me," ranked second on the pre-survey; however, on the post-survey, it was replaced with behavior 11, "Is available during office hours." Interestingly, behavior 13 on the FCS, "Is fair with me," decreased by 5.71% between the pre and post survey. Behavior 10 on the FCS, "Is willing to help me," ranked third on the pre-survey; for the post-survey, the behavior remained the third highest characteristic, with an increase of 3.21%. Behavior 18 on the FCS, "Is encouraging in class," ranked fourth on the pre-survey; however, on the post-survey, it was replaced with behavior 12, "Is available for extra help when needed." Behavior 11 on the FCS, "Is available during office hours," ranked as the fifth highest behavior; on the post-survey, it was replaced with two behaviors that tied for fifth. The first was behavior 4, "Provides constructive feedback on assignments," while the second was behavior 9 on the FCS, "Is prepared for class." Behavior 9 on the FCS "Is prepared for class," was ranked sixth on the pre-survey, which, as previously stated, was tied for the fifth highest behavior on the post-survey. Behavior 13 on the FCS, "Is fair with me," ranked sixth on the post-survey. Several of the highest ranked behaviors remained in the top six during pre and post-surveys.

Most of the highest ranked behaviors on the pre-survey are included as the highest ranked behaviors on the post-survey. Behavior 18 on the FCS, “Is encouraging in class,” is the only behavior identified on the pre-survey that is not included in the top six for the post-survey. Table 9 reflects the top six behaviors identified on the post-survey.

Table 9

Rankings of top six behaviors associated with care, post survey

Questions	Post-Survey
1 Is open to questions in class	79.25%
2 Is available during office hours	73.08%
3 Is willing to help me	71.70%
4 Is available for extra help when needed	69.23%
5 Provides constructive feedback on assignments	66.04%
6 Is prepared for class	66.04%

The post-survey not only included five pre-survey behaviors but also two additional: “Is available for extra help when needed,” behavior 12 on the FCS, ranked fourth at 69.23%. Both this behavior and “Is available during office hours,” behavior 11 on the FCS, related to instructor availability, a behavior that students found important. The second additional behavior identified on the post-survey, “Is prepared for class,” behavior 9 on the FCS, tied for the fifth highest ranked behavior.

Again, Table 8 reflects all students who completed the pre-survey, post-survey, or both. However, only those students who completed both the pre and post-surveys are considered in the data discussion that follows.

Participating Students

Before asking participants specific questions related to caring traits, the researcher began the interviews for each student participant with a question about autonomy. While the word was mentioned and defined in class, the researcher asked each participant to clarify his/her understanding of autonomy. Four of the six participants answered without asking the researcher for clarification. The other two, enrolled in the same course, asked for clarification about the word. Because the researcher did not want to lead the students to answer a particular way, the researcher responded by asking the students to think about the course and the role of the students and researcher. Both students then identified the opportunity to select assignments as an example of autonomy. The other four participants offered similar responses about autonomy.

Participant one: My understanding of it is that it's more when the professor lets the students choose more of their not just topics but like how the assignments are really going to go.

Participant two: Having the freedom to choose the essays and everything else.

Participant four: Autonomy in the classroom, I would imagine—I guess independence of oneself in the classroom. Autonomy with you in the classroom, meaning my assignments are kind of my own thing with you. Almost an independent relationship with you.

The next participant answered the autonomy question a bit differently than the previous three students.

Participant six: Autonomy, in my interpretation, is the class is together. Having all your classmates participate instead of just one or two, answering all the questions. The whole of the classroom learns about the subject together.

The student associated autonomy with the class working together.

Many of the remaining interview questions related to specific professor caring behaviors identified on the Faculty Care Survey. See Appendix A.

The codes analyzed in addressing caring behaviors recognized by the participating students are included below (Table 10).

Table 10

Codes for student identification of professor caring behaviors

Students' identification of professor caring behaviors	
Care_choice	Students associated care with the opportunity to make several choices in the classroom.
Care_listen	Students associated care with the instructor's willingness to listen to them.
Care_help	Students associated care with the instructor's willingness to help them with work.
Care_quest.	Students associated care with the instructor's openness to answer questions in the classroom.
Care_feed.	Students associated care with the type of feedback provided on assignments.
Care_avail.	Students associated care with the instructor's availability in and out of the classroom.

Two students from each of the researcher's student-led, autonomous classrooms, total of six, were selected to participate in interviews conducted at the end of the semester. Questions were generated about the autonomy offered in the classroom and highlighted specific areas of the Faculty Caring Survey. The survey identified eighteen professor caring behaviors. As provided earlier, Table 8 clarifies the six highest ranked behaviors associated with care, based on students who responded strongly agree on both the pre and post FCS.

Initially, during the interviews, students were asked the general question: “In what ways did you perceive the instructor cared?” This offered students the opportunity to share overall thoughts before the researcher asked them to focus on the specific top-ranking caring behaviors. Half the participants identified care with the opportunity to make choices in the classroom. Responses included the following:

Care through choices. Three students directly associated instructor caring with the opportunity to make choices about assignments—one key element of an autonomy-based classroom.

The first student who associated care with choices explained she felt the researcher encouraged students to think for themselves. They were responsible for not only selecting their own topics but also for determining the structure of the assignments. This sense of individuality prompted participant one to associate it with care. She explained:

Participant one: I felt a lot more connected with you . . . Because I feel like you can have your own voice and use your own words in the writings . . . You cared enough to give us our own thought process for essays we read and wrote, really for everything. It helped me retain a lot more information than I did previously in the same class.

Participant three who associated care with choices offered a similar response to participant one in that she associated care with the opportunity to select the stories that the class would read throughout the semester. She commented:

Participant three: I liked having the variety of getting to pick stories. It gave us a lot of flexibility with our time in the classroom and then outside of classroom [sic], which, I think, showed you cared.

Her perception indicated the importance of the researcher taking her schedule into account when offering choices.

Participant five associated care with choices directly acknowledged freedom as the connection. He indicated:

Participant five: . . . [Y]ou recognized that we probably wanted a little bit more freedom, and you respected that. That, in a sense, is an example of care.

While these three participants associated care with having choices, all participants addressed their experience with having choices in the section titled: Experiences in the student-led classroom.

Care through listening. The FCS identified listening as a caring professor behavior. Participant one recognized the researcher listened, especially in connection to writing assignments. She explained:

Participant one: Being that we got to choose our own topics, I got to speak on a personal level for all my essays. When I went to you with questions about the topics, you listened to me. You let me talk, and you just listened. I remember one time, you just listened and then asked one or two questions, and then I was answering my own questions! Sometimes, that's all we need—somebody to listen.

Participant four recognized listening as an important caring behavior and identified the connection to the researcher's decision to offer the students the opportunity to help shape the curriculum. She indicated:

Participant four: When we're choosing, you have to react to our choices, so I think it also lets us know that you listened to our choices, and you're engaged with us as a class. You come to class prepared to talk about the story just like we do, or the essay; so clearly, you've read our choice. I think it even reflects a little bit back to autonomy. I think it helps to support the autonomy in each individual student, because each one of us has made our own choices, and each one of us then interacts on that choice with you.

The student recognized that offering choices meant the researcher was taking direction from students, listening to their wants and needs. She connected this quality with autonomy and individualism.

Like participant four, participant six associated listening with having input with the course curriculum. He stated:

Participant six: The instructor let us have many choices which, especially from the beginning, puts my mind at ease at least for letting me know that this teacher's gonna [sic] listen to us because she gave us this section that was "Okay. This is up to you. I'll listen to you, and I'll do what you say, because this is what you wanna [sic] learn."

He, like participant four, associated the researcher asking students about what they wanted to read and write as a direct connection to listening.

Care through help. The pre-survey identified an instructor's willingness to help as an important caring professor behavior. Student participants offered examples related to this behavior.

Participant one associated help with the researcher's procedure for clarifying assignments. She explained:

Participant one: Whenever you would give us an essay, the next class we would talk about an example of that essay. It wouldn't just be, "Let's talk about the structure of this essay and why it's that." We had a full-on discussion about it which is really good because it just opens your brain for ideas for your own paper. I found that to be very helpful for my writing.

This student was one who sought help with every essay assignment, visiting the researcher in the office throughout the semester. She submitted multiple drafts for each essay, ensuring a successful outcome.

Participant three associated help with having the opportunity to express her own voice and with the approachability of the researcher. She indicated:

Participant three: I feel like you just give people or students the opportunity to talk and speak their mind, which helps a lot as well . . . I feel like whenever you have someone who's approachable, someone who's very respectful and knows how to talk to people, I feel a person is going to go look for help from them.

Like participant one, this student sought help with every essay assignment and visited the researcher in the office and submitted multiple drafts for each essay.

Participant five associated help with the researcher's encouragement to show drafts as well as her willingness to view many drafts. He explained:

Participant five: You also reiterated countless times, "Show me your drafts." Every day we walked into class, you'd ask "Any drafts? Let me see them." You'd pass them back. It was really helpful because it was so encouraging. That was also a way to show "I care. I don't have to be looking at your rough drafts. I could be letting you float out there in the

ocean. I don't have to help you, but I do" . . . I think for that long essay, I sent in, I don't know, at least eight rough drafts. You read all of them. It was never like, "Don't send it until it's done." You never complained or anything. That was really cool. I was so comfortable sending it in. I always looked forward to the feedback.

Care through questions. The survey identified this behavior as "open to questions in class," behavior 17 on the FCS. As mentioned earlier, this behavior remained the highest ranked characteristic for both pre and post surveys. As Table 9 illustrates, 78.08% identified the behavior as important, during the pre-survey. On the post-survey, the percentage increased by 1.17% to 79.25%. Most participants recognized their instructor's willingness to answer various types of questions in a variety of ways.

Participant one associated the researcher answering questions with her perception of the class environment. She clarified:

Participant one: You were definitely open for any type of question. I was never afraid to ask because we were all, all of us, I feel like the entire class was more on a personal level than I have ever experienced with a professor previously.

She felt comfortable in the class environment which then prompted her, as well as others, to ask questions in class.

Participant two associated the researcher answering questions with the opportunity to make choices. She explained:

Participant two: Being able to pick them [reading and writing selections] gave us a sense of freedom that we were able to ask questions, and since we did have that opportunity to pick and to talk, there was more discussion, which led to people feeling more comfortable

asking stupid questions or repetitive questions, and it also made us, or at least me, feel like you would actually answer the question.

Participant two explained that in previous classes, she was more reluctant to ask questions in class because she felt like instructors would disregard her questions or answer with the standard “It’s on the syllabus.” She perceived, “That’s 90% of what you get with all of the teachers is ‘It’s on the syllabus.’”

Participant four associated the researcher answering questions with the instructor-student relationship. She explained:

Participant four: It [established relationship with the instructor] makes you more comfortable asking questions in class, and being somewhat vulnerable, because the nature of a class where you’re presenting your creative ideas. And knowing that you were supportive, as an individual instructor, and that you approved of my writing, helped me not be shy about just asking questions, engaging.

This student was engaged in class throughout the semester. In one instance, the class was addressing diction, and she asked about the use of gender fluid pronouns. She wanted feedback about appropriate pronouns associated with individuals who might not identify as male or female. While she asked the researcher the question, several students responded to her.

Participant five associated the researcher answering questions with approachability. He indicated:

Participant five: I know that I can ask you even a stupid question, and you won’t scream at me . . . I don’t have to worry about that with you.

Similar to participant two, participant five did not have previous positive experiences with asking instructors questions. He used the instructor's personality to determine whether or not he would ask questions. If an instructor made him feel comfortable, he was more likely to answer questions. He indicated that approximately only half his professors had been approachable.

Participant, six associated the researcher answering questions with accessibility. He explained:

Participant six: The instructor would always have certain time periods where we could always ask questions no matter what question it is. It could be a punctuation or just simple formatting throughout our whole essay, especially with our research paper and our works cited. I found it very accessible and very helpful for my education.

The phrase "certain time periods" reflected class time where the researcher would ask the class what questions they had about class focus that day. The question was posed at the beginning and at the end of class. Sometimes, students did not ask questions, and the class continued with the day's focus. Other times, students posed several questions.

Care through feedback. The survey identified this behavior as "Provides constructive feedback on assignments," behavior 4 on the FCS. During the pre-survey, 58.90% selected "strongly agree" for the caring behavior. However, during the post-survey, 66.04% selected "strongly agree," which moved the behavior into the top six. All six participants expressed a connection between instructor care with the kind of feedback provided on assignments.

Participant one associated obtaining constructive feedback with feeling comfortable with the researcher. She expressed her willingness to share personal information and welcomed feedback in whatever form it was provided. She explained:

Participant one: I felt a lot more comfortable coming to you about specifics in my paper like how does this look, and you always gave really good feedback, so it just definitely helped with the individuality part of it. Feeling like an individual, you can go to your professor on an individual level and feel a little more like coached through it . . . I need that because I'm the kind of person that needed a pat on the back. "Oh. You're doing something right," so I keep the motivation going. I really like your positive feedback along with your, "Okay, but let's tweak this a little bit."

She recognized essay content might require clarification because while she was familiar with the topic, the researcher might not have been as knowledgeable, so more questions would be posed about sections of a paper.

Participant two associated obtaining constructive feedback with the researcher's clarification of what or why an assignment section required more development or organization. She indicated:

Participant two: Obviously, there were some [comments] that were straightforward like "fix this grammar." But then there were other ones that were a bit more in depth. But it wasn't just "this shouldn't be here;" it was "this shouldn't be here because of this, this, this, and this. This should change because it would have made more sense or the sentence would have made more sense here" or something like that. There was a bit more explanation instead of just "change or get rid of", or "this was useless" . . . giving us the proper feedback made it easier for me to be like, oh. Okay. This is what my teachers were trying to tell me all these years, because someone actually gave me more explanation. Not just, "this needs to go away." Why does this need to go away? You can't just tell me to take something away without giving me a reason as to why.

The student was able to recognize what previous teachers had suggested, through the explanation provided by the researcher. The student indicated she was looking for the reason for why something required change or clarification. She admitted, in the past, she had been told:

Participant two: Almost 90% of my papers were “this shouldn’t be here. This shouldn’t be here. I understand the emotion you were going through; you don’t need to analytically explain.”

She admitted she did not understand these types of comments and, thus, began writing for the teacher. Whatever the teacher wanted her to write, she wrote. She found it easier not to ask questions about comments.

Participant three associated obtaining constructive feedback with the idea that comments provided were applicable to future assignments. She clarified:

Participant three: I really liked how you responded on the first response. I didn’t even know until one of my classmates was like, “Did you see her comments?” I was like, “What? I didn’t even know she had commented back.” To hear your thoughts on that, it made me feel good, or it made me think, okay. For the next paper, I have to make sure to include this. That definitely helped me out a lot. There wasn’t any harsh criticism. It was more good criticism to focus on for the next personal response. The personal responses were only a page, but your feedback was a pretty good chunky paragraph.

She recognized the researcher offered a good amount of comments even on a one-page response—a response was an assignment where students were asked to write about specific stories selected for the semester. They would indicate if they liked the story and tell why or why not. They could ask questions. They would identify fiction elements, etc. The feedback provided,

as participant three indicated, was related to the response but could be applied to essay assignments.

Participant four associated obtaining constructive feedback with the researcher's understanding of her writing style. She explained:

Participant four: I felt like the feedback was really personalized. All the feedback I got was very relevant to my writing. You clearly read what I wrote and understood what I was getting at. If you didn't understand what I was getting at, you made sure I knew you didn't understand. I feel like you developed an understanding of the way I want to write, so when I would come to you for feedback, it was always helpful. It didn't take very long to get helpful feedback because it was like, "Here's my question," and you would understand; "Okay. This is the direction she wants to go with this; here's some helpful feedback." I didn't feel like I had to be under your wing constantly, but I knew I could get what I needed when I needed it . . . I think that knowing that you care about our learning, you care about our education . . . You get our drafts back so fast. I have so many students I've known from art class and my psychology class that have other professors—English professors too—they'll wait for a month to get their grade on a paper . . . That would hurt my feelings, really. I would be like, "What? How can I write the next one? Did the last one suck, or was it okay?" It helps me a lot when you say, "You did amazing. You get a 100." Then I'm like, "I'm capable of this! In my next essay, I can write it." I respond well to positive reinforcement.

Participant four acknowledged the researcher's composition course as her first college writing class. Due to an eclectic background, she did not attend public school, so she did not have experience with previous instructors providing feedback. She was enrolled in a psychology

course at the time she was enrolled in the researcher's class; however, she indicated that there was little required writing in that class. She initially felt trepidation in the researcher's course because she didn't know what to expect. However, she became comfortable in developing a writing style and improving upon it. As expressed, she needed feedback in order to determine how to improve.

Participant five associated constructive feedback with the clarification it offered about assignments. He explained:

Participant five: The personal responses I liked a lot because you read the story. Then you gave your opinion. At the beginning of the semester, I would worry, "Oh. This is going to be wrong, but I always think about how you said, "It's your opinion. If you can prove it, then it's not wrong." That brought a lot of comfort and relieved a lot of stress.

Participant five indicated he had never been told that his opinion was never wrong as long as he proved his views. He'd always been offered explanation for reading content.

Participant six associated constructive feedback with content that allowed him to improve his writing. He clarified:

Participant six: I remember the first rough draft I turned in. It was marked full with corrections, but not one correction was, "Oh. What is he talking about?" Or "This doesn't make sense at all," and through those corrections, I revised my paper, and I don't think I would have gotten a 94 on that essay. I remember looking at it; it was my first college essay. I was like, "Oh my God. I got a 94!" I texted my mom and dad!

He acknowledged the need to submit drafts in order to improve upon them. The type of feedback provided allowed him to feel proud about the final product.

Care through availability. The survey identified this behavior as “Is available during office hours,” number 12 on the FCS. During the pre-survey, 64.38% selected “strongly agree” for availability during office hours. However, during the post-survey, 73.08% selected “strongly agree,” which moved the behavior into the top six. Yet, only two students directly addressed office availability during the interviews.

Participant three indicated she found it helpful to visit during office hours.

Participant three: Working on it [essay] and coming to your office after class and asking for your help—that was a lot of guidance. It helped me a lot, and the other students, I would say.

Participant three was enrolled in the researcher’s Composition II course which was the last course of the instructor’s day and ended at 1:20 p.m. Therefore, the class had an advantage as afternoon office hours began at 1:30 p.m. Many, like participant three, followed the researcher to her office in order to seek guidance for assignments.

Participant six also stressed the importance of an instructor being available during office hours. He indicated:

Participant six: With the instructor, I could tell that if I did have troubles with essays or anything, that it is easy to come to her office hours. She had easily access [sic] office hours, and she would always be available for any questions. This allowed for a very easy, accessible relationship.

This student took advantage of the researcher’s office hours on a regular basis. As mentioned in the care through feedback section above, he recognized the importance of submitting drafts in order to improve his writing.

While only two participants directly addressed office availability during interviews, all six took advantage of the researcher's office hours.

Differences between the instructor-controlled and student-led classrooms

Assignment Expectations in the instructor-controlled classroom. The participating colleague initially highlighted the importance of maintaining control of his classrooms. He associated complete control with the idea of having confidence in what he was doing and how he was doing it. He maintained there was no confusion on the students' part about his expectations. He described his classroom:

Colleague: Controlling a classroom your own way is a lot more natural, a lot more organic, and you don't even really have to be completely prepared in your classroom. You can easily improvise when things come up in the classroom.

He further explained the control in connection to assignments.

Colleague: I like to keep the assignments the same because I'm comfortable with them. I like to make them better as we go, add to them. If I change things too often, then I feel like I'm playing catch up, and I don't wanna [sic] do that when I'm teaching students. I don't wanna [sic] experiment on my students like that . . . I have all my students do the same one [story]. I usually lecture on the story that they're gonna write the essay on. They're all gonna [sic] write, for example, a point-of-view essay on "The Tell-Tale Heart," and they're gonna [sic] have to write the same paragraphs and the contents of each paragraph. I'm very specific about what I want. I give them a handout; I write thorough explanations of different structural parts of the essay, like topic statement, and I'll have an explanation of what that is; a claim, which is the reason, the point—I'll have

an explanation for that; quote, I'll have an explanation for what type of quotes you should use; what's their function; then analysis—I'll have an explanation for that. All the structural points, I have a thorough explanation for what they are. I also have a handout that shows how claims, quotes, and analysis should be integrated together. When I grade their essays, they know exactly what it is I'm looking for because I've already pretty much outlined it on the instructions of what I'm emphasizing.

The colleague maintained this type of format offered students the information they needed to successfully pass the course.

Rough draft procedures. The colleague also explained his procedure for offering students the opportunity to show him rough drafts. He designated one or two days per essay as workshops. While students were encouraged to attend and bring rough drafts, not all took advantage. The colleague admitted that approximately one-third to half the class took advantage of the rough draft workshops. He explained his procedure for the workshops.

Colleague: Every essay, I have one or two workshops, and that's a day where the class is completely devoted to them bringing in rough drafts. I don't require them to do it, but I tell them, "I'm here, and bring your rough drafts. I encourage you to do it because it's always a good idea to know whether or not you're going in the right direction before you waste your time writing an entire paper. Bring me one paragraph, and show me what you're doing, so I can see if your claims, quotes, and integrations are flowing right and if you're understanding the purpose of the paragraphs." I find that the students who don't take advantage of it are the ones who do poorly in the class. Every time workshops come up, I say the same thing. I say, "Some of you are coming, and your papers are good. I really encourage you to come see me. You know who you are because you're having

problems, and there's no way we're ever going to get it worked out unless you come see me." I emphasize the same things. It's almost like I'm begging without calling them out. The ones who come, their papers are good or they drastically improve. I don't think I've ever had anybody come to workshops and not improve.

The professor stressed the importance of encouraging students to attend workshops by making a general comment about students whose work obviously required his input. The professor's rough draft procedure is similar to the researcher's in that both stress the importance of showing drafts, even a partial one, to professors for feedback. As the colleague mentioned, viewing drafts in advance allowed for students to learn if they were on track with the assignment. The main difference in rough draft procedures between the participating colleague and researcher will be discussed in the Assignment expectations in the student-led, autonomous classroom below.

Class Discussions. The participating professor addressed a specific method in generating classroom discussion, one that he felt established a friendly environment.

Colleague: I have my students get into groups and go research questions about short stories that we've read. I give them a lot of leeway. When I listen to what they're talking about when they're in the groups, they're having a good time. They're laughing, and they're chatting, and they're talking about their own lives in relation to what a character did. They seem a lot more relaxed about making fun of the characters or judging the characters. Through this, they get a lot more done, and they're a lot more honest, and they spend a lot less time trying to figure out what I should or shouldn't say. Instead, they're just saying. It's a more natural free-flowing process of learning. No one's afraid to raise their hand. No one's afraid to speak up because everyone's saying things, and

everybody's being goofy and honest. That just works. Anybody who's inhibited is going to be disarmed by that kind of environment.

The professor clarified that group discussions were held for just about every story discussed. However, there were times where students were able to discuss stories as an entire group—an entire class rather than in small groups.

Grading and grading time. The participating colleague used his specific assignment guidelines to determine how grades were established. His main concern was determining if students followed his specific guidelines exactly. In connection to development and organization, the professor explained his methodology.

Colleague: I'm looking for those clear claims. I'm looking for quotes that are integrated properly with the claim, and I'm looking for analysis that doesn't just repeat the quote or the claim but actually provides extra analytical information. That structure, the internal paragraph structure is the primary source of points in these assignments.

While the primary source of points stemmed from structure, the professor also took grammar into account. He explained:

Colleague: I always tell my students, "Look. I'm not even gonna [sic] lecture on grammar because I expect it to be solid. If your grammar's poor, then the whole paper's gonna [sic] suffer because of it. I'm not gonna [sic] understand your claim. It's gonna [sic] be integrated incorrectly with your quote. There's gonna [sic] be a comma splice, or it's gonna [sic] be run-on, or something, and your analysis might not make sense." I explain to them that grammar is like this cloud that hovers over your entire paper. I don't care how brilliant your ideas are. If your grammar's bad, everything suffers.

The professor clarified while he didn't lecture on grammar, he expected papers to be free of mistakes. If a student followed structural guidelines but the essay contained an overwhelming amount of grammatical mistakes, the student would not earn a passing grade. However, there was an opportunity for students to earn additional points through revisions. He indicated that students had the opportunity to revise the first two assignments for a possible, additional 10 points each. This opportunity impacted his grading time. He explained:

Colleague: They turn in an essay; it's gonna [sic] take a couple of weeks. I'd like to get it back faster. But, sometimes, a week-and-a-half . . . it's usually gonna [sic] be a couple of weeks. They'll get it before the next essay is due. I need to make sure they get it back before the next one's due, so they know what they did wrong, so they can improve on the next one. I also give them an opportunity to revise it, so they need to receive it in time to revise before the next one is due.

The professor recognized the importance of providing students with the opportunity to improve upon their work and kept future assignment deadlines in mind when grading. The main goal, as indicated, was to return an assignment before another was due, so students had the time to make changes and resubmit. The usual amount of time provided to students before the next assignment was due was one week.

Assignment expectations in the student-led, autonomous classroom. The researcher offered both Composition I and II students the basic guidelines for essays. Those enrolled in Composition I were given the opportunity to select the types of essays they wanted to develop. Based on the top three selected, the researcher would develop a handout with guidelines aimed at the specific method of development. All Composition I students were expected to generate an argumentative essay that included research and a rhetorical analysis which mirrored the

mandatory, departmental final exam. Those enrolled in Composition II were given the opportunity to select stories as a focus for specific essays. Since the focus in Composition II was the study of short fiction, essays were focused on the seven elements of fiction: character, conflict, point of view, theme, setting, language, and tone. Again, students were provided basic guidelines about expectations including identification of the selected story and its author, the inclusion of appropriate examples from the story, and the need for clear topic sentences and thesis statement. Unlike the participating colleague, none of the students in the student-led, autonomous classrooms were specifically told how to develop each paragraph.

Participating students offered differences between the student-led, autonomous classroom and other classes they had been or were currently enrolled in. In one instance, a participant was able to offer insight related to a previous Composition I course where she was enrolled, but dropped, and offered differences between that specific class and the researcher's classroom. In another instance, a participant admitted she had taken the researcher for Composition I and because of the environment in that course, she decided to enroll in the researcher's Composition II course (one of the classes that participated in this study). Until the interview, the researcher did not realize the participant was an ex-student as it had been three years since the student had completed the researcher's Composition I class. In connection to assignments and expectations, participants offered the following comments:

Participant one: I really liked to be able to use my own voice and my own topics based on a topic that you let us choose. Rather than saying, "This is the paper you have to write in this way," I could say, "Oh look. This is an argumentative paper, and you gave us free reign for whatever topic we wanted to use," so I got to pick something that was important to me. The topics I picked were very personal, on a personal level for me, so because I

was so attached to it, I learned more; our argumentative [paper] was the one that I learned a lot on.

The student continued with comments addressing her previous experience in a different Composition I course.

Participant one: In my previous Composition I class, we had draft deadlines. We had outline deadlines. We had very specific deadlines to follow. It was definitely beneficial to me having a little bit of a looser timeframe. You'd say, "You guys have a week and a half to finish this paper; do it however you please, but I would like to see a draft before you turn it in." You're more open to people doing it in their own way, really. Just not on their own time but in their own way. I remember in my Composition I class before, he [the professor] would have quizzes on specifics about that structural type of essay, but it didn't benefit me in any way. I didn't retain any of that information. It was stuff that I had learned and known, but I feel like putting it into action was definitely a lot more beneficial for me learning wise. That professor would say, "This is exactly what it [the essay] needs to look like. This is what everything needs to be." We had no freedom to use our own thought process to write our essays.

As mentioned before, participant one associated her own voice with selecting her own essay topics. She felt more connected to the topic personally and had the desire to develop effective essays.

Participant two identified assignments and expectations with the opportunity to select the types of essays the class would develop. Students identified their preferences, and those with the most votes were designated as the assigned essays. In participant two's class, students selected

narration, cause and effect, argumentation, and description. Participant two addressed the method of development she did not prefer and those she selected.

Participant two: Overall, the class got to do what the overall class wanted to do. But as a person, I had to write a narrative. I don't like writing narratives, so it was kind of "Ah!" for me. I had to deal with other persons' choices. But for an overall class, that was nice. And to be able to have that opinion, "No. I don't want to write a narrative," was nice as well. I was able to write the argumentative, cause-and-effect and description which were the ones I selected.

The student clarified her reason for not enjoying narrative writing, claiming, in the past, it had always been scripted. She was expected to include certain phrases offering one specific example.

Participant two: When you were writing a narrative, you had to say, this changed me because . . . You didn't have the freedom to actually just write, so in the first paragraph, you need to have this. You need to say this in the body of the paragraph. You had to say, "This is what changed me," but not actually explain how it changed you.

While she admitted she did not like developing narratives, she did clarify that having the option to select her own topic made the experience more enjoyable. She clarified that previous narratives were based on the prompt of "Talk about a moment in your life that changed you." In the student-led, autonomous classroom, she was able to select a topic that "wasn't so surface level," and she found herself developing an essay that had nothing to do with the previous narrative topics she developed in other classes.

Like participant one, participant three, identified the essay topic selection to assignments and expectations. While participant one was enrolled in a Composition I course, participant

three was enrolled in a Composition II course. The main goal in Composition II is the study of short fiction. Thus, students were offered the opportunity to select any story included within a required textbook as the focus for their essays. Participant three explained:

Participant three: I thought that picking short stories was a good idea. I'm glad we didn't discuss all the ones that I chose. I'm glad that others got to have their opinions as well.

That definitely furthered my knowledge with writing more. Most of the stories I chose for my essays were from the ones we discussed in class.

She clarified that some of the stories addressed in the classroom were not necessarily stories she voted on reading. Through discussions, however, she gained insight about work she might not have ever read, and it was through this experience that she was able to develop essays about topics that were of interest.

Participant four was the oldest of the six interviewed. She noted her age, 36, during the interview. The researcher, until that moment, did not recognize she was older than the other participants. The fact that she was an older student seemed to impact her responses. At one point, she stated, "I think I might be taking it [college] a little more seriously. I don't have that kind of time. I'm 36. I'm here to learn. I'm here to get As only." When addressing differences with assignments, she admitted her initial insecurity about the course.

Participant four: This is my first writing class I've ever had; this is my first semester of college, ever. Any writing, in the past, that I've done has been book reports; any writing I have done has been assigned topics. I am currently taking a psychology class. We did have to write one research paper. We got to choose our topic, but it needed to be about a psychological disorder. In your class, we chose everything we read, and we chose

everything we wrote; we literally chose everything. As long as we operated within the guidelines of the assignment that was given to us, I feel like everything else was under the realm of our control.

The student also admitted that while she enjoyed selecting topics for each of her essays, she found selecting a topic more difficult than developing essays. She explained her view.

Participant four: I take it [writing] seriously. I view any time I write as an opportunity to express something important or that I find important. For instance, with the compare/contrast essay, I wanted to do a simple one on pie versus cake. I thought it'd be cute. I thought it'd be fun, but I couldn't do it. I just don't care, and I can't pretend to care. I would sit down and try to write about it, and I thought, "This isn't cute; this is boring."

The student initially felt compelled to generate an essay on what she thought would be a simple and fun topic. However, after unsuccessful attempts, she changed her topic to something that interested her and was more serious—bullying. She developed a claim that suggested while a bully and victim are the same, temperament and reinforcement from society are the differences that separate them. For participant four, this subject was much more appealing and interesting even if it was more serious and complicated than addressing pie versus cake.

Participant five indicated he had never taken a class where choices were provided. Because the experience was new, he initially found it difficult to adapt. He had grown comfortable with having instructors tell him what to read and write. He admitted that he initially thought he'd prefer that the researcher tell him what to read and write. However, as the semester progressed, he preferred the choices that had been given.

Participant five: I never doubted you cared less because you didn't give us specific instructions on what stories to read. I feel like it was more of a comfort thing. You were the professor, and you would guide our learning. You wanted us to be in control as much as possible. That was really nice. It almost seemed like you cared more. My other professors, it's kind of like, this is the assignment. You can do it. It's due today.

He expressed having more leeway with choosing topics and with the development of essays allowed for less stress. He felt enough was provided about specific assignments, so he did not wonder about any expectations.

Participant five: In class, you would give us the baseline instructions for an essay. Then throughout the day and weeks, whatever you were talking about that day [in class], you would reiterate in connection to the assignments. I never wondered, does she want this? Does she want that? I knew.

Baseline instructions for participant five's class usually included overall content expectations. For example, students were instructed to offer at least two examples from the selected story to support their main focus. They were instructed to include analysis of the examples. They were instructed to determine the order of paragraphs. They were instructed to use MLA guidelines for quotes within the papers as well as a Works Cited page. They were also instructed to include clear topic sentences and to include a clear thesis statement. The content of paragraphs would vary from student to student. These basic guidelines allowed for various writing styles for participants to develop.

Participant six stressed the importance of having choices in connection to reading and writing assignments because he approached college with the mindset that he wanted to learn

about subjects that interested him. He was also aware that reading and writing essays that everyone, as a class, selected would introduce him to new material. He felt time in the classroom was used constructively. He expressed his experience with class time in connection to other courses.

Participant six: Previous instructors gave what we needed to read and what assignments we had to do and how we had to do them. I feel like my other instructors are lazy. If we finished early, they would just let us go. Or they would put so much stuff into our lesson plan that every day we were working from 6:00-7:20, packed full of information that we had to memorize for the next test. Or at one o'clock, instead of 1:20, it was "Okay. We can leave now," instead of going over if we had any questions.

He clarified his preference for having the opportunity for the class to review essays and focus on what they were doing.

Rough draft procedures. While the participating colleague offered students the opportunity to revise essays, they were allowed to revise only the first two essays. All students in the researcher's classes were provided the opportunity to revise two essays as well. However, students determined which two they would revise and submitted them no later than the end of the semester designated deadline date. Students were asked to highlight corrections in yellow which allowed them and the researcher to visually focus on those areas. Like the participating professor, the researcher awarded up to an additional 10 points for each revision which would be applied to the essay grade.

Participant one associated flexibility in connection to submitting rough drafts. She indicated:

Participant one: Because everybody writes a little different, you were open to one kid might turn in a draft the day you start the paper, and one kid might turn it in the day before it's due. You were flexible enough for that to work, and I don't feel like a lot of professors are like that.

The student stressed the importance of flexibility in connection to rough drafts because she is married and has children. She was able to adjust in a way that allowed her to submit drafts at different stages of the writing process.

The next participant expressed the lack of desire to show professors rough drafts. She explained:

Participant two: I don't really like showing rough drafts. While I was able to show rough drafts to teachers before, most of the time, you would show it, and they would give you one word answers of "take this out; add something different. This needs more explanation; this is not the statement I'm looking for."

The student also indicated she considers herself a perfectionist and does not like showing a draft until it is at its best. Still, she did show the researcher a one-page draft for each essay with the aim of learning if she was on track with the assignment.

Class discussions. Because participants in the student-led, autonomous classrooms selected all readings, class discussions were led by students. The researcher also participated, and, at times, initiated discussion. However, the majority of discussions were initiated and led by students.

Participant one offered an example when expressing her thoughts about class discussions. She explained:

Participant one: There was a girl who asked about gender fluid pronouns, and you were okay with that. That was all discussed in class, so being that it was discussed in class, I feel like anybody could've come to you with pretty much anything.

She highlighted the idea that students could discuss anything within the classroom, and all benefitted.

The next participant expressed her perception of class discussions with the fact that she and her classmates selected what was discussed. She clarified:

Participant two: Having the freedom to choose the essays was nice. We were able to have much better discussions. I talked to other classmates, and they said it made them want to actually pay attention more, especially if their essay was the one that was picked. With the choices, you were able to talk more. It made everything more concrete, having that discussion back and forth about the author's purpose and because people were more willing to talk about things that they already showed they liked. The back and forth discussion set a very laidback attitude in class. We could ask questions. We could share opinions.

Participant two also indicated that class discussions held in the student-led, autonomous classroom differed from the discussion held in her Effective Learning (EDUC) course. She explained:

Participant two: The discussion was actually what the [English] class was about. With my EDUC class, we would have discussions, but it was never about the actual thing that we were talking about. We could have been talking about self-help, but then we would move onto this whole spiel of schizophrenia. That was an interesting class. We got

nothing done, but we learned a lot about schizophrenia, but we didn't learn a lot about self-help. Being able to stay on topic made me pay more attention. Another problem I was having in my EDUC class was she [the instructor] would go into other topics, and then I would just go on a totally different brain tangent. I was not paying attention, so I didn't notice when she went back and actually taught EDUC.

She offered further explanation about discussions she'd experienced in previous courses, indicating the instructors were more controlling of discussions.

Participant two: It wasn't just a "sit down; I'm giving you the information. This is the only way you can interpret it." It was nice that there was actual discussion. In a lot of English classes, we are told this is the purpose for this paper. This is what you will use. In a lot of classes, they [instructors] asked, "What's your guys' opinion?" Ultimately, the teacher would just say, "All your opinions are wrong, and this is the actual meaning." We didn't actually get to choose what the author's purpose was. We just had to play guess and check. That's what most of my English classes were. It's why I don't really like English. That also made me not pay attention; it didn't make me want to participate. I didn't want to have a discussion because even if I did say my opinion, the instructors already had their own opinions. There was no back and forth. There was no trying to prove my point.

In previous classes, participant two was reluctant to share her voice about topics for fear of being ridiculed. She indicated that she had been much quieter in previous classes than she had been in the researcher's class.

The next student expressed a desire to have classroom debates or discussion about differing interpretations of readings. She commented:

Participant three: I felt like we had a lot of group debates, which I liked. You got to hear everybody's reasonings, opinions. I thought it was really cool to see not just from one point of view but learn something that I would have never thought about from another person's point of view.

This participant indicated she learned much about specific stories; in many cases, they were stories that she would never have selected to read. However, she stressed the discussions helped her understand the material. She felt more confident to participate.

Like previous participants, participant four recognized class discussions with the researcher's willingness to have students select discussion material.

Participant four: I think that when you have people who invested their opinion in what they're interested in doing, you're at least, gonna maybe get better classroom participation. As a teaching tool, it probably makes it easier to hold the class accountable to their participation, because you're like, "Y'all chose this, so what you think of it?" I feel that the classroom discussion never took on a contentious note, which is impressive. Not once. But we didn't shy away from talking about what we were reading and learning. I do feel like pretty much everyone was offered the opportunity to voice their thoughts and ideas, and with the exception of a very few, I think most people did.

Participant four also offered a direct comparison between discussion conducted in the researcher's course and discussion that occurred in her psychology class.

Participant four: I feel engaged in our class. I do not feel like I'm wasting my time when I come to class. I feel like I'm either participating in classroom discussion that helps develop my understanding of how to write my essay, or I'm writing my essay, and I'm getting help in drafting. I feel like I'm wasting 90% of the time that I'm in my other class because the way the material was represented. It's redundant. There's a PowerPoint presentation, but we also have a handout that matches, and then it's read to us, and for me, that's a huge waste of time because I can't learn that way. I'm just bored trying to stay awake. I do engage in whatever classroom discussion happens, but I have to then do a lot of learning at home. When we get the test review, then I'll learn. I'll get the test review, and I go through the chapter, and I find the information myself, and I learn it. But it's really hard to learn in class, because it's so monotonous and so unengaging. They're drastically different classes.

She continued explaining how discussion is generated in the psychology class, highlighting the PowerPoint method previously mentioned.

Participant four: It's really based on the PowerPoint presentation. Because it's psychology, there will be a lot of anecdotal . . . She likes to get us engaged on our personal experience as it relates to the material we're discussing. It wanders off a lot. I find it to be interesting to learn about my classmates from the perspective of someone who's interested in psychology. I do not find it helpful for the material. It doesn't necessarily relate to the material, and it does frequently place us a little behind on the learning path, so we don't actually even get to all the PowerPoint presentations before it's time for the test. I feel like my English class was a lot more purpose driven, a lot more oriented to the actual task of learning the material.

The student associated discussions in the researcher's class as "purpose driven." Based on all her comments about class discussions, it is evidenced that students selecting what they would read influenced a purpose for those discussions.

Participant five perceived early semester discussions as a bit less engaging, but he also explained becoming comfortable with speaking.

Participant five: I would say the very beginning of the semester, it was new. It was fresh. We weren't comfortable with each other yet. As the semester continued on and developed, we did become more comfortable. We kind of knew if someone said something that you didn't agree with, you wouldn't yell at them. There were times when we would argue over diction for 20 minutes. It was really nice that we got to do that because it's a healthy dialogue. That doesn't really happen often, I think. That was awesome.

He indicated that he had been reluctant to speak in previous classes because he felt instructors were looking for specific answers or interpretations about assigned work. He further explained:

Participant five: In my Comp I, we had class discussions, but it didn't come as naturally. Not everyone's opinions were sound. I guess you could say it was almost not a mature enough group. The discussions were always interrupted by the teacher, so that she could try to guide us in ways that we really didn't see. With you, we had the practice from the first half of the semester knowing what we could say. We could have the discussion in the way that we wanted to talk about what needed to be talked about.

The student recognized the researcher was not prompting particular comments about assigned stories and then felt more comfortable sharing his thoughts with the class. He realized his voice would not be ridiculed.

Grading and grade time. Because “Returns graded assignments in a timely manner,” behavior 5 on the Faculty Care Survey, did not rank as high on both the pre and post surveys, the researcher did not specifically ask interviewees about the behavior. However, two participants addressed the role of grading in their responses to other questions. Interestingly, both participants were in the same course.

Participant two made reference to grading while discussing her thoughts about instructors offering constructive feedback. She explained:

Participant two: A lot of my teachers, they would grade off of personal preference. So, I was like, “Is this because of your own dislike for adding this in, or is it because this actually did not need to be added?” In your class, having explanation was helpful. This is going to help me write papers. This [explanation] was also something that I could continue to keep inside my writing.

She recognized that feedback provided not only benefitted the assignments developed for the course but also her future writings.

Participant six made reference to grading but in the context of the grade time; his comments were also mentioned during his discussion about constructive feedback. He indicated:

Participant six: I remember turning in my essay the day before it was due, and then I got a grade literally within an hour. And if I did turn that essay in late at night, I knew I was

going to have a grade probably within the next day or two, which is outstanding for grading. I think I have a teacher that hasn't even posted grades yet.

This student felt the return time was important enough for the researcher to read, offer comments, and submit the assignment as quickly as possible. In this way, the student would have immediate feedback that could be applied to the next assignment.

It was the instructor's practice to return graded work within 48 hours after it was received. Most of the time, assignments were graded and returned before the 48 hour time frame.

Relationships with instructors and classmates

Relationships in the instructor-controlled classroom. While the Faculty Care Survey does not directly mention relationships, many of the behaviors could be associated with the establishment of relationships. The researcher was interested to learn how students in both types of classrooms developed relationships with their instructors as well as with each other. Because the participating colleague's students were not interviewed, the development of those relationships was explained based on his perception.

Established relationship with instructor. The participating colleague was asked to explain how relationships were established with his students. He identified his classroom environment as the key to generating this relationship. He explained:

Colleague: I've always developed a closer student-teacher relationship. The students seem to be more comfortable, at least in my particular case. My classes run in a more informal environment, one that's more comfortable for the students, more relaxed. We have a good time. There's no reason why teaching has to be boring. It should be fun, and it should be engaging. While I have complete control of what I'm doing, I can create that

kind of environment, and it makes the students much more comfortable to approach me and ask questions because I'm more of a human being rather than someone who's simply following step-by-step instructions from some outside authority, which is a lot less authentic.

The professor identified creating an environment where he felt students were more relaxed. This sense of relaxation encouraged students to engage with him, thus establishing a relationship.

Established relationship with classmates. The participating colleague's discussion method addressed previously was also his method for establishing a close relationship between students. In placing students into groups, they worked closely together to complete research about specific stories. They discussed specific characters and drew connections between them and their own lives. The professor clarified:

Colleague: It's much more engaging when students can be comfortable and friendly and become friends. Then the learning environment is that much better.

He maintained that small group work naturally allowed students to connect with each other, establishing closer ties. He recognized these connections within the classroom.

Relationships in the student-led, autonomous classroom. Nel Noddings (1984/2003) stresses the importance of the established relationship between the instructor and students in a caring environment stressing the carer (professor) must engage with students early on by asking about their needs and wants. The professor then reacts based on those students' needs. The key to effective care and the establishment of an effective relationship between professor and student is the recognition by the student that the professor shows she/he cares, accepts that care, and

responds to it. In order to determine if care theory occurred in the researcher's classroom, she directly asked participants about their perceived relationship with the researcher.

Established relationship with instructor. Again, the researcher was trying to determine how relationships between an instructor and students developed in a student-led, autonomous classroom. Each interviewee offered his/her insight about this relationship.

Participant one developed a relationship with the researcher based on comfort. She explained:

Participant one: You were great about making everybody feel very comfortable. Even if somebody said something that might have been a little off track, you didn't say, "Nope. That's wrong." It was "Okay. I like where you're going with that, but this is the direction I'm going." It never made anybody feel like they couldn't speak up, so it was a very comfortable class. I enjoyed coming to class just because of the relationship between the students and you.

She also associated the relationship with breaking down barriers between students and the instructor.

Participant one: I really feel like the way you let us speak freely and use our own brains just broke down a lot of professor/student barriers that really interfere with not just how much information you retain and keep but with how much information you actually learn because you can learn a lot from your professors if you get to know them on a semi-personal level. You can learn a lot from them if you break down that wall, and I feel like the way you structured this class, the wall was broken down from week one.

The student associated the idea of breaking barriers as the main reason for establishing a relationship with the researcher. She recognized the freedom to express her voice as the beginning of breaking the identified barriers. She also associated remaining on a personal level with students as another way relationships were established. She indicated:

Participant one: You were great with being on a personal level with, I feel, all your students—definitely with me. I felt very comfortable coming to you about very personal topics. My first paper was about getting kicked out of my house. That was a big deal for me. I definitely wouldn't have felt comfortable writing and sharing it if I wasn't comfortable with my professor or if I didn't feel like my professor would take to that story well. You definitely made us all feel very comfortable.

The relationship between the researcher and participant is what Nel Noddings (2012b) identifies as caring as relation, which occurs when the student (cared-for) recognizes she is being care for by the professor (carer) and responds to that care. Noddings argues a student who does not respond to care does not participate in caring as relation. In this case, the student recognized the researcher encouraged her to pursue a topic that was important. The student, in turn, responded to the researcher's demonstration of care and generated an essay she felt represented her role in the real world—the world outside of the classroom. Similar to participant one, participant two associated a relationship with the researcher with her comfort level with asking questions, something she struggles with in any class. She indicated:

Participant two: The relationship with the instructor was easier because I did feel like I was able to ask all my stupid, little questions. That made it easier to ask bigger questions than I would have felt a little bit more anxiety about asking, and I knew I was going to get an answer back.

This participant acknowledged previous instructors had not acknowledged her questions or ideas favorably. This, then, instilled a sense of trepidation in asking questions in future classes.

However, in the researcher's course, the student recognized an environment that was open and welcoming, which contributed to her acceptance of the carer's (researcher's) demonstration of care, and she responded accordingly. The fact she felt she could ask any type of question and not be ridiculed allowed for a relaxed relationship with the researcher.

Similar to participant two, participant three associated the relationship with the researcher with comfort in asking questions. She clarified:

Participant three: It's a very comfortable bond that we have. I don't feel shy or uncomfortable when it comes to asking questions about schoolwork or even if it's non-schoolwork.

The student, like the previous two participants, associated comfort with the researcher, which allowed for a positive relationship to occur between them. She stressed that she did not usually talk in class and was reluctant to ask questions about assignments. However, acknowledgment of an established bond between the researcher and participant influenced her to overcome any trepidation; she sought the researcher's help, ensuring the relationship between the two would grow. Once the semester ended, the student asked the researcher if she would be willing to be friends on Facebook. Because the participant was no longer a student, the researcher agreed, suggesting the student valued the established relationship and wanted to pursue it further.

Participant four associated a relationship with the researcher with feedback. She explained:

Participant four: I feel like I developed a pretty cool relationship with you! I feel like I got to know-- not you, necessarily, as a human, but you as a professor-- probably better than I got to know any of my classmates. I care more about engaging with you because I want your feedback, and I'm very goal oriented right now.

Like other participants, this student acknowledged the opportunity to work closely with the researcher as contribution to the established relationship. The researcher's attention to the cared-for's (student's) wants and needs concerning feedback served as the basis for the relationship.

Participant five addressed the student/instructor relationship by first offering an example related to arriving late to class. His comments suggest he had a previous experience where his late arrival had not been received favorably. He explained:

Participant five: The very second I walked in the class, the very first day, I was two minutes late. I was like, "She's going to kill me." I was like, "Oh God." Then I knew that I would like you because you talked, and you would make jokes, and you would laugh. I was like, "Yes. I can 100% see myself being completely comfortable." I love it when I'm able to talk to my professor and make jokes. I love the comfort that I can find in that. It also helps a lot during my class. If I can talk to my professors like this, I do. If I can't talk to my professors like this, then I keep it professional. I do the work in class. Then I go.

For this student, establishing a relationship with his professors stemmed from the instructors' willingness to joke and laugh. In connection to the researcher, participant five felt at ease early on due to the researcher's personality. He acknowledged previous instructors who joked and laughed were easier to talk to, and he took advantage of this type of behavior to determine the

type of relationship he would establish with a professor. Similar to other participants, he felt comfortable with the researcher, which allowed for a more engaging relationship.

Participant six associated accessibility and passion with establishing a relationship with the researcher. He indicated:

Participant six: I found that a very easy, accessible relationship. She was very accessible, and what I like to look for in a teacher is passion—passion about what they’re teaching. Once I see passion about what they’re teaching, it automatically sets me on the course to, “Okay. I really want to receive a good grade.” And seeing that makes me motivated to get a better grade in class and also not to be afraid to approach the teacher in any aspect throughout the course. I could tell that if I did have troubles with essays or anything, that it’s easy to come to her office hours. She had very easily accessible office hours, and she would always be in the classroom for any questions. So, I found that a very easy, accessible relationship.

Participant six was the only interviewee to mention passion as an important caring trait.

The participant’s association with accessibility also contributed to the established relationship with the researcher. He addressed his previous experience with a dual-credit English instructor whom he did not find accessible. He based this comment on his perception that the instructor did not express passion for the material, which he found discouraging. Therefore, when he recognized the researcher’s passion for material, he felt naturally motivated to perform well.

Established relationship with classmates. While the relationship with the instructor is heavily highlighted with care, the relationship between classmates is just as, if not more,

important. The researcher explored how these relationships were established in the student-led, autonomous classroom. Each interviewee offered his/her insight about relationships they established in the researcher's classroom and how they impacted them.

Participant one admitted to her openness during classroom discussions. She felt compelled to contribute to every class discussion, which, she explained, made it easier for her to develop friendships with classmates.

Participant one: I actually had a great rapport with two girls, specifically, in class. I felt comfortable with them since we were the more outgoing girls in the class. If I ever needed help, I felt very comfortable going to those girls and asking their opinions. I might ask, "I can't really think of a topic sentence for this paragraph. What should I do with my thesis? Do you have a title idea?" It was great. With another girl, we would bounce different words off of each other about replacement words. And with another, I had really good topic conversations. If we were having a hard time choosing a topic, her [sic] and I would bounce topics off of each other. I definitely had a much closer relationship with the kids in this class than I did in my other classes this semester.

Participant one developed a closer relationship with the first student she identified in her comments. When the classmate knew she would not be able to attend class the day the researcher would address the mandatory, departmental exam in more detail, participant one offered to record the discussion. She brought her laptop to class, and, with the researcher's permission, video recorded the discussion. She admitted:

Participant one: I just didn't have a relationship with anybody in my other classes where that would be something I would even think to offer.

The fact that she went out of her way to ensure her classmate obtained important information demonstrated the importance of the established friendship. She shifted responsibility from the researcher to herself in ensuring her classmate received and understood information discussed in class.

Participant one also associated the discussion as the opportunity to learn more about her classmates, which then made it easier for her to connect to them. She explained how the discussions helped.

Participant one: It [discussion] helps break that barrier between students, so you can help each other out a lot more. I built a couple of friendships, which is pretty cool.

In essence, she associated breaking barriers with the establishment of a comfort level with other students. The open discussions allowed for students to learn about one another, which, then, encouraged engaging friendships.

Participant two was the only one who did not speak favorably about established relationships with classmates. She explained:

Participant two: I wasn't really able to form a relationship with my classmates because I didn't feel connected to most. It was easier to actually talk back and forth with classmates, but I didn't find a new best friend.

The student admitted that she found it difficult to open up to other classmates because she found them immature. While participant two is 18 years old, she displayed a higher maturity level in the classroom. She was business-like, which may have contributed to the lack of close friendships.

Participant three addressed being comfortable with classmates that would encourage discussion with them outside of the classroom. She indicated:

Participant three: I feel like some of them were students that I would definitely talk to outside of school. I like the relationship that I had with him [a specific classmate] as well. It all started with us just asking each other about schoolwork we had related to your class about personal responses or essays. It built upon that.

She briefly mentioned the establishment of a close relationship with one specific classmate. While she did not expand on the extent of their relationship, the classmate, participant five, offered more insight about their relationship in his comments below.

Similar to participant one, participant four highlighted class discussion as the way in which she was able to establish some relationships. She indicated:

Participant four: I did get to know the people that sat next to me, and we helped each other. That girl [specific classmate], I got to know her, and we would talk and discuss readings. The day I forgot my book, she let me use hers . . . I did feel like the more outgoing people in the class that participated in class discussion, I kind of got to know because we talked about our ideas.

The oldest student at 36 years, participant four clarified that she did not initially enter the classroom with the intention of developing social relationships. She entered as a serious student who already had established social relationships. However, because she and others were comfortable with expressing their ideas during discussions, she generated a few unexpected relationships with others. Her comfort level extended to her willingness to share personal background, related to specific readings, with the class.

As mentioned above, participants three and five developed a close relationship. Participant three did not expand on the relationship, but participant five offered a bit more clarification. He explained:

Participant five: I definitely developed a friendship with the person that sits next to me. It wasn't always like that. It was a new class, new people. Our friendship started off, I think I was like, "Hey. How did you do this? What did you think of this?" Slowly we became more comfortable with each other. Then eventually we were like, "Hey. Do you want to go to Highland and possibly spitball ideas off each other?" That is when we started the 20-page essay, the long one. Then the friendship just became more, even outside of class. We got more comfortable.

Participant five indicated he usually kept to himself in classes. But he was excited about his new friendship. They spent time out of class working on school material together. At one point during the semester, he visited the researcher's office to ask if it was acceptable for them to meet and discuss stories. Once the researcher encouraged the relationship, he was open to spending time with his classmate whether or not they focused their time together working on school material.

Participant six addressed his established relationships with helping others in the class. He explained:

Participant six: With my classmates, I actually made a really good friend. I tried to help him out as much as I could, because he was having a hard time. Because we had the same class after this class [English], afterwards, we would go play ping-pong and got to know each other. I also talked to anyone that was in the class. If they needed help on their essays, or if I needed help on my essay, I would ask them.

He was comfortable enough to offer and ask for help about assignments. In a traditional classroom environment, students might be inclined to seek help from the instructor only. However, participant six felt connected enough to others to seek their guidance. He also stressed the close relationship established with one other classmate. Because they were able to bond on a more personal level, playing ping pong, he went out of his way to help the classmate who was struggling. He wanted to guide his friend with assignments in hopes of him successfully completing the course.

Experiences in the student-led, autonomous classroom

Student participants were asked to offer insight about their experiences in the student-led, autonomous classroom specifically in connection to learning based on established relationships with the researcher and classmates. Two themes emerged based on the responses. One related to learning experiences and how the classroom environment influenced student learning. The second theme addressed overall experiences.

Effect on Learning. All six student participants addressed how the classroom environment impacted their learning. A commonality related to the idea that students retained more information.

Participant one identified a writing assignment and the relationships with classmates in connection to learning. She explained:

Participant one: I learned a lot on the argumentative paper because it was something that was close to me—all of them [essays] were really like that but specifically the argumentative paper. I actually learned a lot about the kids in my class too, which was awesome because you don't typically get that in a writing atmosphere, but we had a lot of

personal discussions in class based on the essays we were reading, so I learned a lot about the students in class, and we got to know each other on a personal level as well.

Participant one's previous experience in a composition I class was her basis for selecting these learning traits. She indicated that she did not have the type of freedom in connection to writing assignments nor did she establish relationships with classmates from which she could learn. She emphasized the freedom of choices as a key component with learning.

Participant one also consistently associated knowledge retention as a significant result from the student-led, autonomous classroom. She explained:

Participant one: I retained a significant amount of more information than I did previously. I feel like it was the same information covered, but it was all new to me when I was learning it with you. You would give us our handouts for the type of essay we chose, but not only give them to us, you would go to the board and explain. "Okay. Now let's go through what an example of what this could be." That really helped, but, again, it was just examples. It wasn't like, "This is exactly how it has to be." You let us use our own brains to mold our papers into something that you would give good feedback for. I am definitely going into Comp II with a lot more knowledge of essay structure and writing.

Again, the student emphasized her previous experience in a composition I course as the basis for recognizing what she learned in the student-led, autonomous classroom. She retained more information because she was participating in the development of the curriculum, an idea initially presented by Dewey (1930). She was invested in the what she could and would learn.

Participant two also associated learning with the opportunity to make choices. She indicated:

Participant two: It [having choices] made it easier for me to learn. Being able to have those choices caused me to put more in to it. I was able to actually pick what I wanted to see, which, ultimately, made me pay more attention. Being able to choose something that I was already passionate about made it easier for me to talk about it and learn from your feedback. I learned how to make it [the paper] better, clearer.

This student emphasized that while in previous English courses, she was not provided the kind of feedback that allowed her to learn based on instructor feedback. As she mentioned in the care through feedback section, she began writing for the teacher, including specific content based on instructor expectations rather than develop an assignment which allowed her the freedom to determine development and organization.

Participant three associated learning with the fact that she read stories classmates selected that she would never have chosen. She clarified:

Participant three: I feel like my learning really increased. For example, reading literature by Edgar Allan Poe was something I couldn't really comprehend. To hear other students explaining it, their interpretations, I thought that was really helpful for me. I think that affected my learning because I would not normally read his work. I learned how to read his work.

The student emphasized learning how to read Poe's work, but this idea was one that was applied to all stories. Being introduced to material that the entire class selected expanded her knowledge about authors and stories and introduced her to new ways of reading those stories.

Participant four associated learning with accountability and freedom of choice. She explained:

Participant four: For me, it [learning] has a lot to do with accountability. For some reason, being asked to choose automatically feels like you're being asked to invest more, and I personally really enjoyed being able to choose what to write about.

The student recognized that choices meant she was a part of developing the course curriculum, which encouraged her to invest in what she was learning.

Participant five addressed an increase in learning with a decrease in stress. He explained:

Participant five: I feel like there's probably a certain amount of stress that students get when we have the opportunity to choose on our own taken away. If we're given an opportunity to choose, that helps. It would affect our performance and learning.

Similar to the other interviewees, participant five associated freedom of choice with an increase in learning. For him, having choices lessened the amount of stress experienced in the course. He then felt more relaxed and open to learning new material.

Participant six recognized an increase in learning with not having to memorize material. He indicated:

Participant six: I feel like it [learning] was more of a hands-on [experience]—we were all in a learning together experience compared to a, “This is what we're doing throughout the whole semester” experience. I felt like I learned instead of memorized the things that I had to memorize in order to pass a test.

The student had to learn material that would be presented on the mandatory, departmental exam. However, the material was not presented in a memorization method. Instead, he and his classmates learned the material through application. They learned about methods of development through their selection of what types of essays they would develop as well as the discussion of selected readings.

Overall experience. When participants were asked to address their experiences in a student-led, autonomous classroom in connection to established relationships, they all offered comments that related to more of an overall experience in the class environment, which are worthy of mention.

Interviewee one previously stressed the importance of having choices in the classroom. She indicated:

Participant one: This is really the only class I've had that offered many choices. I retained a significant more amount of information than I did previously [in a previous Composition I course]. I really enjoyed the class. I enjoyed writing my papers. I didn't dread sitting down and writing them because I got to pick my own topics. The way you structured the class made it a much more enjoyable class for people who are like, "Ugh! Essays." It was a much more enjoyable situation than what most people would think about Comp. I.

This student's mentality about what most people think about composition courses is one main reason the researcher decided to experiment with the class environment. When students approach a composition course with "Ugh! Essays" in mind, it establishes a stressful situation early on.

However, if students have the opportunity to identify what they want to learn, they are more invested and enjoy a course much more.

Participant two associated the classroom environment with ease in performing student activities. She explained:

Participant two: Overall, everything was a lot easier to do. Not just ask questions—it's hard for me to sometimes ask questions because I'm like, I wonder what answer I'm going to get back. Are they [professors] actually going to answer me or not? And being able to discuss more freely. All of that made everything easier to understand and easier to retain, knowledge wise.

Asking questions, participating in discussions, and retaining knowledge are traits that all instructors hope to instill in students. Participant two specifically identified the ease in engaging in these activities with the idea that they naturally occur in a student-led, autonomous classroom.

Participant three also identified the classroom environment as a positive experience. She indicated:

Participant three: I definitely had more connection in this classroom. I loved the environment of the classroom. I loved the learning styles; that really furthered and developed me as a writer, and even as a reader as well. It was comfortable, and it was fun.

She mentioned what other participants addressed in interviews—the idea that comfort was established in the classroom environment—which then applied to an overall, positive experience. Participant three felt connected to classmates, the instructor, and content of the course.

Participant four associated support with her positive experience in the student-led, autonomous classroom. She explained:

Participant four: I had a super positive experience. I really enjoyed the class. It was a really supportive environment where people could just write and not feel silly. I don't think anyone's idea was ever put down. I don't feel like anyone was ever condescended to or by you or by other students. For me, it was an atmosphere where I was able to really learn. It had a huge impact for me. I think the relationships all contributed to that. I think this is a particularly supportive and positive classroom dynamic.

The student felt supported by both the researcher and her classmates. She recognized her classmates felt as comfortable as she in the classroom environment that they were willing to share their thoughts, no matter what they were. They recognized the opportunity to share their voices without ridicule.

Participant five also identified support from the professor and classmates with his overall, positive experience in the course. He indicated:

Participant five: You were definitely the most involved professor that I've had, whether it be coming in to read rough drafts, or "Hey. Email me anytime." Your response times were always great . . . I think the big thing for me is comfort. I became friends with a classmate, and it was great. That made me more comfortable. The fact that it was someone I could text and be like, "Are we thinking the same thing?" It was like I could rely on someone for help or clarification. If not, I could email you. You would totally be okay with giving me an answer. I was completely comfortable in the class, which is why I came every single time.

This student, as previously mentioned, continuously stressed the importance of comfort for him. He associated performing well and participating in the class as key components for him in order to successfully complete a course. He felt comfortable in asking questions of both his classmates and instructor. For him, this comfortable environment impacted his attendance. He never missed one class during the semester.

The student also clarified that while he was initially uncertain about how the class would be structured, he, at the end of the semester, recognized the difficulty he might have in not having the same type of class structure in the future. He claimed:

Participant five: It [class structure] was kind of harder at the beginning because I wasn't used to it. Now, it's probably going to be hard to go back because of the freedom. The freedom was nice. It made me feel good to have choices.

The student recognized that most future classes might not offer the same freedoms explored in the student-led, autonomous classroom and also recognized that not having the same type of freedom might be difficult in adjustment.

Participant six associated the professor's passion with his positive classroom experience. He indicated:

Participant six: Seeing the first day and how the instructor was so passionate about what she was doing, I realized that this was going to be a good class for me. It really encouraged me to do well because of this first-time class type of experience.

Participant six previously addressed an instructor's passion for his/her subject as a significant caring trait. He explained that the instructor's passion was, in a sense, contagious and encouraged him to perform well in the course. This was his first experience in a student-led,

autonomous classroom, and the environment was one he preferred to a traditional classroom setting.

Conclusion

The quantitative data resulted in a medium effect size. While the independent t test suggested students favored the instructor-controlled classroom, one possible reason might be related to what Noddings (1984/2003) refers to relational view—the idea that students share their wants and needs with an instructor and realize their voices determine what will occur in a classroom. In essence, these actions propose caring occurs between student and instructor within the classroom. Many tend to resist the relational view because, according to Noddings (2005a), in education, the mentality of “teacher knows best” is widely accepted (p. 3). Therefore, students in the instructor-controlled classroom might view caring traits in a professor based on this mentality. However, there wasn’t enough data to offer an unquestionable determination.

The qualitative data, on the other hand, suggested students not only recognized they were given choices but also these choices encouraged an autonomous experience. They contributed to the class curriculum and recognized the researcher was autonomous supportive. The interviewees addressed their classroom experiences in connection to choosing types of essays they would read and write, selecting topics for essays, participating in class discussions, developing relationships with the researcher as well as their classmates. They also offered comments about specific caring behaviors listed on the FCS and stressed how behaviors such as the researcher’s willingness to listen to students, help them with their work, answer questions in class, provide constructive feedback on assignments, and be available in and out of the classroom related to their positive classroom experience. They all recognized the freedom associated with the classroom

environment, and as other self-determination, autonomy, and care theory studies indicate, they, too, benefitted from participating in a student-led, autonomous classroom.

The interview with the participating colleague provided indication that while he preferred an instructor-controlled classroom, he still exhibited behaviors that demonstrated he cared about his students. He expressed verbally telling students he cared about their work and performance, stressing they seek his guidance in the development of assignments. He stressed the importance of answering email messages as soon as he received them. He also expressed the importance of providing valuable feedback to students, so they understood what they could or should have done to improve assignment content.

While learning environments differed in how course content was conveyed and taught, students in both the ICC and SAC recognized benefit based on those paradigms. This supported the idea that teachers will use various methods they feel best generates an effective learning environment. Various teaching methods are effective at the community college level.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Introduction

As Chapter 2 discusses, several studies have been conducted to determine how Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET) (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and Care Theory (Noddings, 1984/2003) apply to classroom students. However, the majority of these studies have been conducted with primary and secondary students. Others were applied to nursing students. Those that are relevant to this study focused on care at the university and college level with a primary emphasis of how instructors perceived or established caring relationships with students. However, few studies exist where the focus addressed student perceptions of caring behaviors in professors in an instructor-controlled classroom as compared to a student-led, autonomous classroom. In order to determine similarities and differences, the researcher engaged participation from a colleague whose classes were instructor-controlled. His students participated in the Faculty Caring Survey (FCS), ranking identified caring behaviors that were developed by Garza and Van Overschelde (2017) based on how undergraduate and graduate university students perceived caring behaviors. The colleague was also interviewed about his instructor-controlled classrooms. These findings were then compared to the researcher's students' responses on the same survey; the researcher also interviewed two students from each of the autonomous classes, total of six, to learn more specific information related to their perceptions of care that occurred in the classroom.

Interpretation of Results

Questions guiding the research were:

Quantitative:

1. Do students participating in an autonomy-based, classroom learning environment demonstrate statistically significant differences in perceptions of care when compared to students in an instructor-controlled classroom?
2. What are the practical differences in this perception of caring between students in an autonomy-based, classroom learning environment and those in an instructor-controlled classroom?
3. How does student autonomy affect community college writing and literature student outcomes?

Qualitative:

4. How do community college writing and literature students perceive care in connection to autonomy?

Perceptions of care. The first research question posed for this study was if students participating in an autonomy-based, classroom learning environment demonstrate statistically significant differences in perceptions of care when compared to students in an instructor-controlled classroom. In order to answer this question, the Faculty Care Survey was used to determine student perceptions of caring behaviors recognized in professors. Students from the participating colleague's instructor-controlled classes and those from the researcher's student-led, autonomous classes responded to the same survey at the beginning and end of the semester. Because students were not yet familiar with their instructors when they took the pre-survey, they were using past experiences with instructors as a basis for responding to the prompts. However, when they took the post-survey at the end of the semester, they had become familiar with their

current English professors and considered them, as well as other professors, when responding to prompts.

As Table 8 in Chapter four reveals, the highest rated caring behavior in both the pre and post surveys was “Is open to questions in class,” behavior 17 in the FCS, with 78.08% selecting strongly agree on the pre-survey and 79.25% on the post-survey. The behavior ranked first in both surveys and showed an increase of 1.17% during the post survey. The ranking and percentage increase suggested students, no matter the classroom environment, placed importance on a professor’s willingness to answer questions in the classroom; this can be connected to Noddings’ (1984/2003) idea of establishing a relationship between professor and student. If the student recognizes the instructor’s willingness and availability to answer questions in class, the student becomes more comfortable in asking those questions. Recognition and acceptance of what the professor offers is the key component, according to Noddings (1984/2003), in establishing effective care theory.

A paired *t*-test was calculated to compare students in the ICC to those in the SAC who completed both the pre and post-surveys. The analysis produced a *t* value ($t = 1.63$). An examination of the means revealed that slightly higher scores in the ICC based on the answers to the survey ($M = 26.42$) as compared to students in the SAC ($M = 25.42$). An examination of the means for students in the ICC who took the post-survey, again, revealed slightly higher scores ($M = 26.31$) than in the SAC ($M = 22.64$).

The *p* value of the study was calculated as .11, which indicated there was no statistical significance between data.

While the independent t test suggested students favored the instructor-controlled classroom, one possible reason might be related to what Noddings (2005) refers to as relational view—the idea that students share their wants and needs with an instructor and realize their voices determine what will occur in a classroom. In essence, these actions propose caring occurs between student and instructor within the classroom. Many tend to resist the relational view because, according to Noddings (1984/2003), in education, the mentality of “teacher knows best” is widely accepted (p. 3). Therefore, students in the instructor-controlled classroom might view professor caring behaviors based on this mentality. However, there was not enough data to offer an unquestionable determination.

Practical significance in perceptions of care

The second research question posed was if there were practical differences in perception of caring between students in an autonomy-based learning environment and those in an instructor-controlled classroom. To answer this question, Hedge’s g was used to measure effect size.

The quantitative data results resulted in a medium effect size. Initially, all students (134) enrolled in both the participating colleague’s and researcher’s classroom courses were invited to complete the survey. At the end, only 52 completed both the pre and post-surveys. After eliminating responses that did not include “I consent,” or responses from students who did not complete both the pre and post surveys, and accounting for student drops, the final number of participants was 35.

Based on p values associated with Hedge’s g where .2 is considered small, .5 is considered medium, and .8 is considered high, inspection between both groups for the Pre and

Post subscales revealed a medium effect size associated with higher scores on the Faculty Care Survey (FCS) ($g = .52$). This finding suggested that participants in the ICC favored this type of classroom as opposed to the SAC. However, this outcome was not consistent with previous studies as the effect size was smaller.

Student outcomes. The third research question posed determined how student autonomy affected community college writing and literature student outcomes. In order to answer this question, the researcher obtained final grades from the participating colleague for those students who were included in the study and identified final grades for students from her classes that were included as well. Because students were required to develop five essays worth 100 points each, a grade scale (see Table 6) was generated to reflect points associated with final grades. The mean for final grades for students in the ICC was calculated at 435.36 while the mean for students in the SAC was calculated at 406.42 suggesting that students in the ICC earned higher grades than those in the SAC (see Table 5). However, in referencing the grade scale (Table 6), both the means for the ICC and SAC were in the B range ($402-445 = B$). The college where the study was conducted does not offer professors the opportunity to designate grades with a plus or minus; therefore, the participating colleague and the researcher submitted grades of B to students whose final, accumulated points fell in the 402-445 range.

Perceptions of care related to autonomy. The fourth research question considered was if community college writing and literature students perceive care in connection to autonomy. To answer this question, participants were asked about their perceptions of care in connection to autonomy early in the interview and later asked about relationships established with classmates and instructor based on the structure of the course.

Participants interpreted perceptions of care in connection to the relationship with the researcher, and all participants mentioned key words, such as “connected, comfortable, personalized, choices, freedom, engaging, flexibility, and respect” in their responses to perceptions of care. Several participants connected perceptions of care to the relationship with the researcher claiming they were able to generate a closer bond because they felt connected to, comfortable and engaged with, and respected by the instructor. They, and other participants, also connected perceptions of care to opportunities with choices and flexibility. Most of these traits were not only identified on the FCS but they are also related to Deci and Ryan’s (1985) idea of an autonomy supportive classroom as well as Noddings’ (1984/2003) relational theory addressed in the Discussion section. Participants explained their perceptions of support and care in similar ways, most perceptions relating back to the established relationship with the researcher.

Participant one and four, in the autonomous classroom, for example, identified their perceptions of care by explaining their connections to the researcher. Participant one claimed she felt more connected because her voice was recognized and acknowledged by the researcher. She further stated she felt more comfortable visiting the researcher because she was able to select her own topic and felt this choice validated her individuality. This then led her to feel she was approaching the researcher on an individual basis. She felt supported in her choices, and she recognized the researcher’s acknowledgment of what mattered to her. Participant four associated care with the relationship to her the researcher because she recognized the researcher acknowledged her thoughts mattered. For example, like her colleague, the researcher provided feedback for each student’s assignment. She claimed, “I felt like the feedback was really personalized,” which she connected to the established relationship with the researcher stressing the researcher recognized her writing style and provided feedback based on the student’s style

and focus. Not only did participants one and four express the importance of having choices as a way to establish a relationship with the researcher which they perceived as care but these sentiments were shared by three other participants.

Comments stated by participants two and four, in the autonomous classroom, as well as those expressed by the other participants as reported in Chapter 4 support Deci and Ryan's (1985) concept of autonomous support. However, they also relate to their Cognitive Evaluation Theory addressed and Noddings' (1984/2003) relational theory, comprised of receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness, all of which are addressed in more detail in the Discussion section.

Discussion

Colleague's demonstration of care

The colleague's demonstration of care in class discussions related to Noddings' (2012b) focus on establishing dialogue through listening. She stresses the importance of listening claiming, "Listening to the ideas of students is clearly important pedagogically. It is the very foundation of the powerful method of over thinking" (Noddings, 2012b, p. 774). She maintains that when students work together in pairs or in small groups, "the teacher may listen, remind them to treat each other with respect, make small suggestions, and even join the dialogue" (p. 774). This established dialogue is also related to Noddings' (1986) second component of her theoretical model for care-centered teachers. Noddings (1986) established the importance of generating discussions between instructor and students, suggesting small groups as one way to generate conversation. However, the participating colleague also emphasized maintaining control of ideas associated with specific stories. If he felt students were not on track with what he

considered the author's main point in a story, he would steer discussion in a direction in order for students to recognize the intended purpose, again, relating this practice to the controlled environment.

The colleague's practice with assigning specific stories for assignments and outlining contents for each paragraph also supported the controlled environment. Black and Deci (2000) clarify that an instructor who engages in a controlled environment might coerce students to use a particular method to solve a problem in order to perform well on a test, or in this case, an essay. This type of action can limit students' competence and improvement of learning outcomes. For example, Eric Mazur (2009), a physics professor at Harvard University, realized his students were memorizing material rather than learning it. They could recite Newton's third law of motion, for example. However, when tested about understanding the law using a conceptual problem, Mazur (2009) learned students struggled to solve the problem or did not understand it; fortunately, he changed his teaching style to one that was more student centered and experienced vast success. While the participating colleague did not directly ask students to memorize specific content, he did ask that all assignments be developed in a specific way, with key phrases, specific content in topic and thesis statements, introduction of quotes, etc. In this way, Mazur (2009) scripted their writing, a form of memorization.

Mazur's (2009) control of assignments also related to the idea that the colleague assumed students' needs. Students, most likely, were accustomed to formally, structured classes where instructors asked that they develop specific types of essays and/or read instructor selected works. Most were comfortable in this type of environment because that is all they had known. Noddings (2005a) makes reference to the idea that "teacher knows best," which prevents the establishment of a caring relationship (p. 5). In the colleague's classroom, Noddings might claim a true, caring

relationship does not develop. The colleague predetermined specific criteria he felt students should learn. While most instructors are responsible for determining this type of information, it is also possible to make this determination based on students' wants and needs. However, not asking students for input about those wants and needs is then reflected in assumptions made by the professor. Noddings' (2012b) describes a teacher's moral credit for caring based on assumptions. She explains,

When a teacher works conscientiously, perhaps very hard, to help her students to succeed, we often give her moral credit for caring. She seems to know what her students need, and acts faithfully on those beliefs. However, these are *assumed* needs, rather than expressed needs . . . (p. 773).

The researcher's classroom, on the other hand, was based primarily on asking students what they wanted and needed and listening to their responses, which encouraged them to not only develop but also express their voices. The importance of voicing one's ideas is also connected to Noddings' (1984/2003) Care Theory, or Relational Theory. She argues that in order to establish effective care theory, a relationship between the carer (instructor) and cared-for (student) must be established. This relationship, identified as Relational Theory, or view, is established only if three requirements are achieved.

The first requirement in Relational Theory is what Noddings (1984/2003) terms engrossment, also termed receptivity, which she defines as having an *understanding* of the individual's knowledge and needs, so the instructor can adapt curriculum to meet the student's needs. The researcher engaged in engrossment from the very beginning with first asking students to select all readings and types of essays they would develop. She introduced the idea that their voices mattered and that she would follow their lead in how to develop part of the course

curriculum. One participant, for example, identified her past experiences in a Composition I course as one where the professor identified what would be completed. There was not an exchange in dialogue to determine the student's specific needs. However, in the researcher's course, the student's knowledge and needs were expressed in her selections of readings and types of essays. More importantly, she *recognized* she was heard and that her voice was validated.

The researcher's grading practices are also associated with Noddings' (1984/2003) idea of engrossment. In this case, the researcher had an understanding of each student's knowledge and needs so she could adapt to meet those needs. Students were not expected to include a specific number of sentences in the introduction, for example. They were not expected to generate a specific format in each body paragraph, etc. Each student developed his/her paper with the basic guidelines in mind. However, organization and development varied from student to student *because* each is different. Thus, the type of comments provided varied from student to student based on the researcher's understanding of each one's choice in development and organization.

The second requirement expressed by Noddings (1984/2003) is identified as motivational displacement, or relatedness. At this stage, the professor's behavior is *determined* by the student's needs. The researcher listened to student voices and altered her behavior to consider those needs. Once each class identified selected readings and types of essays they would develop, the researcher created a daily schedule which reflected those choices. In identifying types of essays students would develop, they determined topics which allowed for more interest in the subject. While the researcher provided guidelines for essays selected by the class, they were basic guidelines, which allowed each student to develop and organize content according to their specific topic. In developing a comparison/contrast essay, for example, the researcher

provided information about how this type of paper might be developed—subject-by-subject or point-by-point. Students, however, determined if they would develop a comparison, contrast, or comparison/contrast essay. Their decision helped them determine which method of organization might be more appropriate. In essence, the course curriculum was adjusted to reflect specific student wants and needs. One participant, for example, felt she gained much from developing the argumentative paper because she was able to select a topic that was important to her. The student made reference to her chosen topic that alkaline water had health benefits, and consumers, therefore, should drink it. During a class discussion, she revealed a family member had been diagnosed with breast cancer, and in conducting research about how to help the family member's journey through remission, she learned of the effects of alkaline water. The researcher understood the importance of the subject matter and the student's purpose; their one-to-one time in the classroom allowed the student to determine the type of argumentative essay she would develop based on her purpose, and, through the writing process, the researcher "coached"—the interviewee's word choice—the student in developing the paper.

The third requirement identified by Noddings (1984/2003) is what she terms responsiveness, or reciprocation, from the cared-for (student). Again, in order for effective care theory to occur, the student not only recognizes but also accepts the care provided by the instructor (carer), thus ensuring the establishment of the relational view, or theory. Noddings (2005a) claims most people tend to reject the relational view because they have been taught that "teacher knows best" (p. 5). Several participants addressed their past experiences in classrooms where this mentality was the established norm and explained that in that type of environment, they were not given the opportunity to express wants and needs but rather told instructor expectations based on the instructor's *assumed* student wants and needs. Noddings (2005b)

admits that while the teacher-student relationship is unequal, teachers should view the world the way students view it. Noddings (1984/2003) claims, “Good teachers do not reject what students see and feel but, rather, work with what is presently seen and felt to build a stronger position for each student” (p. 107). These positions are easily identified in the classroom environment.

Noddings (2005b) explains that classroom environments should encourage students to participate in “a rich variety of purposes, in which wonder and curiosity are alive, in which students and teachers live together and grow” (p. 12). She further clarifies, “When a teacher asks a question in class and a student responds, she receives not just the ‘response’ but the student. What he says matters, whether it is right or wrong, and she probes gently for clarification, interpretation, contribution. She is not seeking the answer but the involvement of the cared-for. The student is infinitely more important than the subject matter” (Noddings, 2003, p. 176). In relation to the participants, they recognized the value in their ideas expressed during classroom discussions, and, therefore, they were able to accept the form of care provided by the researcher.

While Noddings focuses on responsiveness of the cared-for towards the caring, a form of responsiveness between classmates was established in the researcher’s classroom for some students. One interviewee emphasized the opportunity to learn about her classmates on a more personal level based on discussions. This student participated in engrossment as she learned, from class discussions, the needs of other classmates. Because a student shared insight, sometimes personal, related to a selected reading, others were more open to sharing personal connections as well. This, then, allowed students to identify those who shared similar experiences, and those students sought input from those classmates. The same interviewee stated, “She [a classmate] and I had really good topic conversations; [we] would bounce topics off of each other.” In this case, both students engaged in motivational displacement as the participant

and her classmate, also a participant, “needs help with the solution to an academic problem” (Noddings, 2012b, p. 772). The student then experienced responsiveness when she recognized and accepted care provided by her classmates.

Noddings (2012b) offers further clarification of the cared-for’s role stating, “His role is both simple and crucial. He shows somehow that the caring has been received. He does not have to express gratitude. He may simply pursue an agreed-upon project with renewed energy, ask further questions, or smile and nod. The response of the cared-for completes the caring relation. Without it, there is no caring relation—no matter how hard the carer has tried to care” (pp. 772-773). For the previously mentioned participant, she developed topics that were personal; she also identified the relationship with the researcher as personal and comfortable, which allowed her to feel connected to the researcher. This connection was based on her recognition that the professor indicated her voice mattered and that she was viewed “on an individual level.” The interference of instructor-student barriers was eliminated. This elimination highlights what Noddings (2005b) claims teachers should become—constructivists. She contends:

Constructivists believe people are internally motivated and that they construct their own mental representations of situations, events, and conceptual structures. Constructivist teachers, then, usually spend time trying to find out what their students are trying to do and why. They are ready with suggestions and challenges that will help students to make strong and useful constructions (p. 154).

The participant engaged with the researcher in a way that allowed the professor to offer suggestions based on what the student was trying to express and develop in her essays and gave her renewed energy in approaching assignments.

Participant four, also enrolled in the same class, expressed similar experiences in connection to reciprocation. She recognized the researcher understood her writing style and intended focus and offered appropriate feedback. When she sought help, she felt her questions were heard and understood. She experienced what Noddings (2012b) expresses is a key component in developing a caring relationship. She explains that listening is asking “students to think aloud. The teacher urges the student, ‘Let me hear you think’” (Noddings, 2012b, p. 774). In the participant’s case, she approached the instructor and stated, “‘Here’s my question,’ and you would understand, ‘Okay. This is the directions she wants to go with this. Here’s some helpful feedback.’” The researcher listened to the student and her intentions with the assignment and then presented suggestions that were relevant to *the student’s* work. The student recognized she had been heard and, thus, acknowledged and accepted care provided by the researcher.

In addition to Noddings’ (1984/2003) care theory, interviewees experienced what Ryan and Deci (2006) term Self-Determination Theory (SDT), an empirical approach to motivation and personality. SDT is concerned with “the nature and consequences of autonomy” and identifying how autonomy develops and determining how it can be “diminished or facilitated by specific biological and social conditions” (Ryan & Deci, 2006, p. 1562). Thus, SDT focuses on different types of motivation a person possesses—specifically autonomous motivation and controlled motivation.

Autonomous and Controlled Motivations

Autonomous motivation, according to Deci and Ryan (2008), incorporates intrinsic motivation and an extrinsic motivation that occurs when students recognize the value of an assignment and incorporate this value into their sense of self. Participant one, for example, recognized the value in being able to voice her ideas in a variety of ways. Participant four recognized the value of the personal feedback offered on her assignment, and participant five recognized the value of being able to interpret work in his own way rather than an instructor determined interpretation. In each of these instances, participants internalized the value of an assignment.

Controlled motivation, on the other hand, is comprised of external regulation and introjected regulation (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Deci and Ryan (2008) explain that behaviors that are determined by “external contingences of reward or punishment” are considered external regulations (p. 182). Introjected regulation occurs when an action is internalized partially enabled by elements such as “an approval motive, avoidance of shame, contingent self-esteem, and ego-involvement” (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p. 182). These regulations were reflected in the participating colleague’s classroom. He lectured on the story associated with a specific assignment to ensure students understood it and its theme, as *he* had interpreted it. Students then developed assignments in predetermined formats. In this case, the students’ behaviors were controlled because they felt compelled to think and write a certain way. As Deci and Ryan (2008) explain, both types of motivations direct student behavior, but only one is directed by students. Still, the students recognized merit in having assignments predetermined as most are comfortable with this type of teaching—it is what they have been taught. The colleague’s guidelines were not misleading but rather outlined a specific format which allowed students to learn about specific

works and develop papers in the traditional five-paragraph essay format, a guide that can be applied to most types of writing assignments. His actions suggest caring about students' future success in other classes where writing is a component.

As previously discussed, Deci and Ryan (1985) claim that in order for students to feel autonomous, they must also recognize their professors provide autonomy support. Autonomy support means that an individual in a position of authority (e.g., an instructor) takes the other's (e.g., a student's) perspective, acknowledges the other's feelings, and provides the other with pertinent information and opportunities for choice, while minimizing the use of pressures and demands (Black & Deci, 2000, p. 742). Participant comments indicated the researcher engaged in autonomy support by acknowledging their perspectives and feelings and then offering choices based on students' wants and needs.

Cognitive Evaluation Theory

A sub-theory of SDT identified by Ryan and Deci (2000) as Cognitive Evaluation Theory must also be addressed in connection to the autonomous student and autonomous classroom. Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET) focuses on the fundamental need for competence and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Competence cannot be enhanced unless it is associated with a sense of autonomy. This means a student should experience self-determined behavior in order to experience autonomy. Ryan and Deci (2000) claim that social or contextual events such as "feedback, communications, rewards" that contribute to feelings of competence during a specific action may magnify intrinsic motivation for the action (p. 70). Participants consistently stressed constructive feedback, the researcher's willingness to listen and answer questions, and the opportunity to engage in choices influenced their sense of autonomy. Participant two, for example, acknowledged beneficial communication with the researcher especially focusing on

constructive feedback because previous instructors, in her opinion, had not provided with information that was valuable to her and her writing. Feedback provided in the autonomous classroom allowed her to feel competent.

Ryan and Deci (2000) further explain that a student's feelings of competence do not enhance intrinsic motivation unless it is associated with a sense of autonomy. Thus, students "must also experience their behavior as self-determined for intrinsic motivation to be in evidence" (p. 70). As repeatedly mentioned by all participants, the opportunity to choose much of what occurred in the autonomous classroom allowed them to view their self-determined roles. They were in control of their classroom, assignments, and readings.

Implications

The study suggests there is merit in offering students the opportunity to influence course curriculum based on their wants and needs. Students in the student led, autonomous classroom were engaged in discussions because they chose assigned readings. They were interested in what their classmates had to say and often shared personal connections to readings. They developed connections which encouraged closer relationships—relationships that prompted them to engage in a form of responsiveness as described by Noddings (2003). They were encouraged to seek the researcher's guidance because they selected their essay topics and determined organization and development for assignments, which resulted in better developed essays. This may suggest when students are given choices about assignments, they are more engaged and care about the development of the assignments. Even if grades do not differ between the ICC and SAC, offering students choices appeals to their sense of autonomy which could result in them experiencing less stress about the work and the course. The open communication might encourage them to step

outside of their comfort zone and interact with classmates and the instructor in ways they thought unimaginable.

Also, the study shows a higher retention of students in the autonomous classrooms than in the instructor-controlled courses. A combined total of 15 students dropped from the researcher's classroom courses. In the colleague's case, a combined total of 22 students dropped from the instructor-controlled classroom courses. This might suggest a student-led, autonomous classroom is appealing even if students might not successfully pass the course. Once close connections are established with classmates and an autonomous-supportive instructor, the environment could be viewed as inviting and the main reason to continue attending the course. These students may view discussions as a way to voice and validate their ideas; therefore, they see value in remaining in the class rather than dropping it.

Limitations

Primary limitations relate to the small beginning and ending sample sizes in both the colleague's and researcher's classes.

Students in the instructor-controlled classroom were included in the pre and post Faculty Care Survey. While the participating colleague began with a total of 72 students, only 35 or 48.61% completed the pre-survey. Thus, 37, slightly more than half, did not participate in the initial survey. After student drops, 50 remained enrolled. Of those, 29 or 58% completed the post-survey. Thus, 18 students did not participate in the post-survey. However, only students who completed both the pre and post-surveys were considered for this study, which was reflected by 21 students.

In the researcher's classes, all classroom courses were also invited to participate in the Faculty Care Survey. While the researcher began with a total of 62 students, 34 or 54.83% slightly more than half completed the pre-survey. Still, 28 students did not participate in the pre-survey. After student drops, 47 students remained enrolled. Of those, 22 or 46.80% completed the post-survey. Thus, 25 students, more than half, did not participate in the post-survey. Again, only students who completed both the pre and post-surveys were considered for this study, which was reflected by 14 students.

In addition, information about students' perceptions of care in the instructor-controlled classes were not verbally voiced but rather identified using a Likert scale. Instead, the participating colleague provided *his* perception of how he demonstrated care in the classroom. His perceptions were also provided about the development of relationships, assignment effectiveness, and constructive feedback.

While students in the autonomous classrooms were interviewed, only two were selected from each course, a total of six. These students represented a small portion of the classes; their responses may not be generalizable for all student perceptions.

The two students from each SAC were purposefully selected based on their consistent, class attendance and vocal participation as the researcher hoped to gain rich and robust comments during interviews. Thus, there was a level of subjectivity used in selecting participants.

During the interview process, participants were initially encouraged to consider the questions in an objective manner rather than directly referencing the researcher by name or with pronouns such as "you" and "your." While a couple of participants consistently mentioned "the

professor” in responding to questions, most made reference to the researcher as “you,” which prompted the researcher to remind them to think of the researcher objectively. The researcher also rephrased content, so the participants could respond in a less subjective manner. The researcher was self-aware that there was a lack of objectivity due to the students being in classes taught by the researcher.

Also, three composition, classroom courses taught by two professors from two campuses at different locations reflected a small minority of the eleven main campuses and several satellite locations.

Recommendations for Future Research

A similar or replicated study should be conducted to include student voices in the instructor-controlled classroom. While the participating colleague’s comments suggested aspects of care theory did occur in his classroom, student perceptions of care in a controlled environment would help determine if there was a vast difference in student perceptions of care.

Also, a study that includes more student input in the autonomous classroom would help the validity of this study. Having insight from more students, or all, in each classroom would help determine if care theory, autonomous motivation and support are recognized by all in the autonomous environment.

Conclusions

Quantitative data statistically reveals students in the instructor-controlled classroom favored this method of learning than a student-led autonomous classroom, and the final grades for those who completed both the pre and post surveys suggested students in the instructor-controlled classroom earned slightly higher grades. However, the means for final grades in the participating colleague's class was 435 and 406 for the researcher's; both means are measured in the B range (402-455). Thus, average grades issued in both classes was a B.

Based on the responses expressed in Chapter 4, the colleague clearly expressed the importance of an instructor-controlled class, especially in connection to assignments. He lectured about the work, and then he asked all students to develop the same type of essay about the same story; students developed the same paragraphs that included the same type of content. He felt asking students to develop assignments a specific way ensured a positive outcome. He also held revision workshops where he encouraged students to attend and seek his help on writing assignments. He expressed providing what he felt was constructive feedback, so students would understand how to improve their writing, and he also stressed the importance of communication. He explained the importance of responding to email as soon as it was received, stressing that he would respond using his cell phone, even if he was at dinner. These actions all reflected his perceptions of caring behaviors.

The researcher, on the other hand, subscribed to a student-led autonomous classroom where students had input with the curriculum based on their wants and needs. Initially, most students seemed unsure, confused, and even uncomfortable when the researcher explained how the course would be conducted. However, they quickly adapted and preferred selecting the works they wanted to read, the types of essays they wanted to write, topics for those essays, and

determining the structure and format for those essays. The researcher addressed these wants and needs by providing constructive feedback that was personal, offering many opportunities for students to show her rough drafts, and communicated with students on an equal level, usually blending in the class by sitting at one of the tables near a student. They also associated choices with the researcher as caring as they recognized autonomous support. Therefore, their experiences in an autonomous classroom positively affected their reading, thinking, writing, and research skills. Some were able to use previous experiences in controlled classroom settings as a comparison to the autonomous setting. One interviewee admitted he had never had the opportunity to make choices in a classroom and indicated he would probably find it difficult to return to a controlled environment.

When students in the student-led, autonomous classroom were provided the opportunity to contribute to course curriculum, they experienced high levels of competence and autonomy. The classroom environment allowed them to engage in an autonomous supportive professor which encouraged effective, care theory to occur. The first step, receptivity, was to *understand* students' wants and needs, and this was established in the autonomous classroom when the researcher asked students to determine reading and written assignments. When the instructor listened to those choices and adapted the course schedule and assignments based on needs and wants, she engaged in relatedness, the second step. Responsiveness or reciprocation, the third step, occurred when students recognized care occurred on the researcher's part and acknowledged and accepted that care. Students also participated in Cognitive Evaluation Theory by experiencing self-determined behavior which then led to them experiencing autonomy. Participants recognized constructive feedback and established communication with the researcher supported their competence in learning.

While the small group of participants did not represent the majority of students at the college or all Composition I and II courses taught there, their interview responses supported that they felt the autonomous, classroom environment positively contributed to their reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. Their thoughts also reflected the importance of having a voice in learning material and developing key relationships.

While the overall effect size was medium, it did not necessarily provide an accurate measurement of student perceptions of caring behaviors in professors. In order to gain more accurate results, further studies should be conducted with a larger sample size. This study was conducted at two different campuses at a central Texas community college district. More reliable assessments can be obtained if further studies that include more campuses and more students in other professors' classroom courses were included. In addition, interviews with students in an instructor-controlled classroom would offer further insight about how students perceive caring behaviors in professors.

What this study did determine is that both the participating colleague and researcher exhibited caring behaviors towards their students. The participating colleague consistently expressed different ways he felt he showed his students he cared even in an instructor-controlled environment. He claimed having control of assignments and readings was his way of ensuring students learned necessary material related to the course. The researcher, on the other hand, offered the students the opportunity to make choices about their assignments and readings. Students recognized this opportunity as a form of care and felt they gained much from this type of learning environment. In both cases, student outcomes were the same.

The student interview comments were consistent with studies that indicate there is positive benefit in giving students autonomy. They recognized their voices mattered and that

offering input for the course curriculum meant the researcher was interested in their wants and needs. They were able to establish relationships with both classmates and the research which allowed for participating students to express how the relationship with the researcher was viewed as a form of caring. They also expressed the connections between classmates prompted them to share personal information as they were comfortable in the classroom. By having a more hands-on role in the classroom, they learned and retained information they which they recognized applicable for future courses. In essence, students had a more positive experience and found themselves engaged in the student-led autonomous classroom.

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Appendix A

Faculty Care Survey, Caring Behaviors

Include directions here:

Please read each trait carefully. Based on your perception of caring, rank each trait

Rank each of the traits using the 4-1 scale based on your perception of how each trait relates to caring.

1. Respect my opinions

4 = strongly agree 3 = somewhat agree 2 = somewhat disagree 1 = strongly disagree

2. Provides positive reinforcement

4 = strongly agree 3 = somewhat agree 2 = somewhat disagree 1 = strongly disagree

3. Interacts personally with me in the classroom

4 = strongly agree 3 = somewhat agree 2 = somewhat disagree 1 = strongly disagree

4. Provides constructive feedback on assignments

4 = strongly agree 3 = somewhat agree 2 = somewhat disagree 1 = strongly disagree

5. Returns graded assignments in a timely manner

4 = strongly agree 3 = somewhat agree 2 = somewhat disagree 1 = strongly disagree

6. Listens to me in class

4 = strongly agree 3 = somewhat agree 2 = somewhat disagree 1 = strongly disagree

7. Is patient with me

4 = strongly agree 3 = somewhat agree 2 = somewhat disagree 1 = strongly disagree

8. Is enthusiastic about his/her teaching

4 = strongly agree 3 = somewhat agree 2 = somewhat disagree 1 = strongly disagree

9. Is prepared for class

4 = strongly agree 3 = somewhat agree 2 = somewhat disagree 1 = strongly disagree

10. Is willing to help me

4 = strongly agree 3 = somewhat agree 2 = somewhat disagree 1 = strongly disagree

11. Is available during office hours

4 = strongly agree 3 = somewhat agree 2 = somewhat disagree 1 = strongly disagree

12. Is available for extra help when needed

4 = strongly agree 3 = somewhat agree 2 = somewhat disagree 1 = strongly disagree

13. Is fair with me

4 = strongly agree 3 = somewhat agree 2 = somewhat disagree 1 = strongly disagree

14. Is flexible

4 = strongly agree 3 = somewhat agree 2 = somewhat disagree 1 = strongly disagree

15. Is approachable

4 = strongly agree 3 = somewhat agree 2 = somewhat disagree 1 = strongly disagree

16. Ensures that I understand material in class

4 = strongly agree 3 = somewhat agree 2 = somewhat disagree 1 = strongly disagree

17. Is open to questions in class

4 = strongly agree 3 = somewhat agree 2 = somewhat disagree 1 = strongly disagree

18. Is encouraging in class

4 = strongly agree 3 = somewhat agree 2 = somewhat disagree 1 = strongly disagree

Appendix B

Final Interview Protocol for Students in the Autonomy Based Classroom

1. What is your understanding of having autonomy in the classroom?
2. What were your experiences in a classroom that offered many choices?
3. In what ways did having many choices affect your learning experience? How did having many choices in learning relate to the idea that the instructor listens to you in class and was open to questions?
4. In what ways was this class different from other classes you have taken?
5. Based on the structure of the course, what kind of relationship were you able to develop with your classmates and instructor? How did the established relationship with the instructor connect to the instructor's willingness to help in the classroom?
6. How did these relationships contribute to your overall experience?

Appendix C

Final Interview Protocol: Instructor Controlled Classroom, Participating Colleague

1. What are advantages of an instructor controlled classroom environment? What type of relationship does this allow you to develop with students? And students with each other?
2. How variable are course assignments between semesters?
3. How do you address late work? Any flexibility?
4. What is your procedure for grading? What type of constructive criticism is provided on assignments? What is the approximate time for an assignment to be graded and returned to the student?
5. How strictly do you abide by specific policies stated in the syllabus?

Appendix D

Faculty Care Survey Results

	Strongly agree PRE	Strongly agree POST	Some what agree PRE	Some what agree POST	Some what disagree PRE	Some what disagree POST	Strongly disagree PRE	Strongly disagree POST
1	57.53%	48.08%	36.99%	48.08%	5.48%	1.92%	0.00%	1.92%
2	49.32%	54.72%	46.58%	33.96%	4.11%	11.32%	0.00%	0.00%
3	35.62%	50.94%	46.58%	37.74%	16.44%	9.43%	1.37%	1.89%
4	58.90%	66.04%	35.62%	24.53%	4.11%	7.55%	1.37%	1.89%
5	52.05%	50.94%	43.84%	33.96%	4.11%	11.32%	0.00%	3.77%
6	61.64%	60.38%	35.62%	35.85%	2.74%	3.77%	0.00%	0.00%
7	54.79%	60.38%	42.47%	32.08%	2.74%	5.66%	0.00%	1.89%
8	52.05%	49.06%	41.10%	45.28%	6.85%	5.66%	0.00%	0.00%
9	63.01%	66.04%	34.25%	28.30%	2.74%	3.77%	0.00%	1.89%
10	68.49%	71.70%	30.14%	20.75%	1.37%	5.66%	0.00%	1.89%
11	64.38%	73.08%	28.77%	21.15%	5.48%	5.77%	1.37%	0.00%
12	54.79%	69.23%	43.84%	26.92%	1.37%	3.85%	0.00%	0.00%
13	69.86%	64.15%	28.77%	30.19%	1.37%	3.77%	0.00%	1.89%
14	47.95%	50.94%	45.21%	39.62%	6.85%	9.43%	0.00%	0.00%
15	51.39%	54.72%	37.50%	41.51%	9.72%	1.89%	1.39%	1.89%
16	52.05%	54.72%	38.36%	35.85%	8.22%	7.55%	1.37%	1.89%
17	78.08%	79.25%	19.18%	20.75%	2.74%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
18	64.79%	60.38%	29.58%	32.08%	5.63%	7.55%	0.00%	0.00%