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THE PERCEIVED IMPACT OF RELATIONAL CARE ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL
GROWTH OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES IN AN ALTERNATIVE
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM IN SOUTH CAROLINA

By
Robert Smalls

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Approval Page

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Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation with deepest appreciation to my family. My wife and daughter have supported me in this journey from beginning to end. Their love and support have encouraged me to endure and complete this work.

I also dedicate this work to the young African-American male who struggles in the traditional learning environment. It is my hope that all are educated according to their needs.

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I express my sincere gratitude to my dissertation committee who have been generous with their time and expertise. The successful completion of this task would not have been possible without them.

I would like to thank the selected school district and the many supportive colleagues for allowing me to conduct my research. Your dedication to the students in the alternative setting is greatly appreciated.

Abstract

THE PERCEIVED IMPACT OF RELATIONAL CARE ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL GROWTH OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES IN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN SOUTH CAROLINA. Smalls, Robert, 2019: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University.

Alternative schools/programs are prevalent throughout this country; however, some struggle to meet the holistic needs of the students. Many alternative schools in this country are disproportionately populated by children of color. The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how alternative education teachers in an urban school district in South Carolina embody the ethics of care to support the psychological growth of the students. Second, the study sought to understand the perceived influence of caring on student motivation and behavior. Using criterion sampling, the student population consisted of five African-American males who received their education in an alternative school for at least 9 weeks or 45 days and five teachers with more than 1 year of experience as an alternative education teacher. This research study is grounded in two theories: Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Noddings's care theory. While the student responses were far less numerous than the educators, the data clearly showed that all five students believed the teachers embodied care when they supported the students in getting their school work done. While the teachers offered a broader perspective of how they displayed care to students, the heart of caring manifested itself through nurturing behaviors and even serving as a second parents to the students when needed. In the words of the teachers, acts of concern for the students demonstrated care.

Keywords: *caring, alternative school, African-American males, relationships*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Alternative education programs span from coast to coast in this country. In 2008, a survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2008) reported nearly 11,000 alternative schools nationwide. Nonetheless, the demand for alternative school space for students described as “disruptive and dangerous” is greater than the supply (Vanderhaar, Munoz, & Petrosko, 2014, p. 2). In principle, alternative school programs should provide viable educational options to students for which the regular educational setting is inappropriate. Many alternative schools do not have the provisions necessary for addressing the holistic educational needs of their clientele. Surprisingly, the South Carolina Department of Education spent \$11 million funding alternative school programs in the 2006-2007 school year (South Carolina Department of Education, 2007).

South Carolina is one of five states in America where the male suspension rate for every racial or ethnic group is above the national average (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, 2014). African-American students are three times more likely to be suspended or expelled in South Carolina than their White counterparts (Self, 2016). For 2 consecutive years, in the annual report on Alternative Schools in South Carolina, Coleman and Smith (2015, 2016) reported 72 alternative school programs located throughout the state.

In the 2014-2015 school year and the 2015-2016 school year, 7,830 and 7,833 students respectively received their education in alternative school programs in South Carolina. The former data is a decline in numbers from the 2013-2014 school year, when 9,393 students were educated in alternative school programs. Demographically, of the

students served from 2013 to 2015, approximately 70% were males and approximately 30% were females. Children of color comprised 67% of the alternative school population served in 2014 and 2015 (Coleman & Smith, 2015, 2016).

School District 111, the pseudonym assigned to the South Carolina school district chosen for this study, educated 261 students in alternative school programs designated for students with disruptive and dangerous behaviors in 2016-2017. Of these, 64% were African-American males, and 33% were African-American females. In 2015-2016, School District 111 served 310 students in alternative school programs; 86% of the students were African-American males, and 12% were African-American females. In 2014-2015, 218 students were educated in alternative schools; 67% were African-American males, and 32% were African-American females. Thus, over the past few years, a disproportionate number of African-American students, especially African-American male students, received their education in alternative school settings in School District 111.

The legislation for alternative schools in South Carolina, South Carolina Code § 59-63-1300, reads,

The South Carolina General Assembly finds that a child who does not complete his education is greatly limited in obtaining employment, achieving his full potential, and becoming a productive member of society. It is, therefore, the intent of this article to encourage district school boards throughout the State to establish alternative school programs. These programs shall be designed to provide appropriate services to students who for behavioral or academic reasons are not benefiting from the regular school program or may be interfering with the

learning of others. It is further the intent of this article that cooperative agreements may be developed among school districts in order to implement innovative exemplary programs. (Alternative School Programs Established, 1999)

Further, South Carolina Code § 59-63-1310 requires that these programs must be at sites that are separate from other schools, must operate at a time when those schools are not in session, and must be housed in another building on the school campus that would provide complete separation (Alternative School Programs; Individual or Cooperative Programs; Funding; Sites, 1999).

The mission of School District 111 is to assist students in achieving the knowledge and skills to reach their highest potential. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory defines reaching one's highest potential as self-actualization (McLeod, 2016). Self-actualization occurs after all subsequent and lower level needs are satisfied. The basic needs or physiological needs of food, water, warmth, rest, and safety are mostly met in the home and, to some degree, at school. Next in accordance with Maslow's hierarchy are the psychological needs which include friendship, trust, acceptance, affiliation or being part of a group, achievement, self-respect, and respect for others (McLeod, 2016). Some psychological needs could go unmet in South Carolina alternative schools because the state guidelines foster separatism (i.e., maintaining separate sites and operational times different from traditional schools). Separatism could deny students opportunities to establish meaningful relationships (friendships) with positive peer role models and limit positive affiliations. Stewart (2008) proposed,

As adolescents associate with friends who value education and are committed to

academic pursuits, they create attachments to school and conform to the ideals associated with it. Furthermore, positive peers provide important reference points for students and help them invest in their education. (p. 197)

Nearly 80% of the students in School District 111 live in poverty (Self, 2016).

Children who live in persistent poverty are less likely to have social and emotional competence. Poor children suffer from emotional and behavioral problems more frequently than children who do not experience poverty; they may display behaviors such as aggression, fighting, acting out, anxiety, social withdrawal, and depression (Brooks-Gunn, 1997). The affective deficits can significantly enhance, inhibit, or even prevent student learning. Affective deficits negatively influence student motivation, attitudes, perceptions, and values (Science Education Resource Center at Carleton College, 2016).

School District 111's mission is to assist students in achieving the knowledge and skills to reach their highest potential through individual, flexible, and structured educational programs that foster lifelong learning. A goal of the alternative education department is the creation of a "family" environment of student supports in all programs. While the state code for alternative schools makes provisions for "services to students who for behavioral or academic reasons are not benefiting from the regular school program or may be interfering with the learning of others" (Alternative School Programs Established, 1999), it includes no specific guidance for addressing the affective needs of students. Educators in alternative schools naturally emphasize academics by teaching the state standards in reading, mathematics, and other core areas; however, the capacity for addressing the affective needs of students is not as innate to educators. While intellectual development of students is important in schools, it cannot be the first priority of schools

(Noddings, 2005). Noddings (2005) asserted that if schools have one main goal, a goal that guides the establishment and priority of all others, it should be to promote the growth of students as healthy, competent, moral people. Schools cannot ignore the children—their purposes, anxieties, and relationships—in the service of making them more competent academically (Noddings, 2005). Positive peer role models may be scarce in some alternative schools. Fostering relationships (with teachers) is especially important for students who find school challenging (Noddings, 1984). Barrow (2015) explained that positive teacher-student relationships could be the difference between failing and succeeding. Further, Noguera (2003) noted that if students do not believe that teachers care about them and their success in school, the likelihood of their success is diminished.

This research explored the extent to which care ethics exist in an alternative school in South Carolina by interviewing select students and teachers. Ransom (2015) stated, despite the large number of students attending alternative schools and programs and the importance of race and gender as specific factors, much of the literature regarding alternative schools has not included the voices of African-American male students. This study will embrace the voices of African-American males in alternative school programs in South Carolina.

Problem Statement

In 2014-2015, nearly 8,000 South Carolina students attended alternative school programs (Coleman & Smith, 2015, 2016). These educational programs remain disproportionately populated by African-American males (Coleman & Smith, 2015, 2016). District 112, a neighboring South Carolina school district to School District 111, along with School District 111 ranked third and fourth respectively in the state for

suspensions of African-American students. The students in School District 111 were suspended at a higher rate than White students for 10 straight years (from 2004-2005 until 2014-2015; Self, 2016). That fact helped pave the way for the high number of students served in the alternative school in School District 111. The number of students served in the School District 111 alternative school from 2014-2017 ranged from 218 to 310, with the percentage of African-American males served ranging from 64% in 2017 to a high of 86% in 2016. The disproportionality of the above statistics is concerning and should provoke questions from parents, educators, and stakeholders. Parents and stakeholders might question whether it is prudent to serve large numbers of at-risk African-American males in settings where there are no positive peer role models. To what degree are the psychological needs of these students being appropriately met? In many cases, the students' placements in alternative settings have more to do with affective deficits than academic deficits. Affective deficits or disorders can include varying degrees of depression, bipolar, and anxiety disorders (Healthline News, 2016). Schools cannot obtain their academic goals without first attending to the fundamental needs of students, continuity and care (Noddings, 2005). Maslow believed lower level needs must be satisfied before needs that are more sophisticated. In the absence of positive peer-to-peer friendships/relationships, relational care relationships or ethical care is critically essential. "The desire to be cared for is almost certainly a universal human characteristic" (Noddings, 2005, p. 17). Because alternative schools and programs may operate with limited resources, questioning the presence and adequacy of provisions for addressing the affective needs of the students is not only warranted, but also appropriate.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand (a) how alternative education teachers embody the ethics of care to support the psychological growth of the students and (b) the perceived influence of caring or relational ethics on student motivation and behavior.

Theoretical Base 1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Maslow categorized a variety of human needs into a conceptual hierarchy consisting of five levels of developmental needs. These include a person's physiological survival, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow suggested that people are not likely to be motivated to pursue intellectual challenges or develop a sense of positive self-esteem until the more basic or lower-level needs have been regularly satisfied. (Daniels, 1992, p. 105)

The third and fourth levels of need entail belongingness and love needs and esteem needs respectively. The need for affiliation, relationships, and friendships, as depicted in the Figure, relate to level three; and prestige and feelings of accomplishment are level four (McLeod, 2016). Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory describes reaching one's highest potential (level five) as self-actualization. Maslow asserted that basic needs must be met before moving to higher level needs such as self-actualization (McLeod, 2016).



Figure. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (McLeod, 2016).

Alternative education advocates may question whether the South Carolina statute for alternative schools undermines the third and fourth levels of Maslow's hierarchy by including language of separatism such as separate sites and operational times different from traditional schools. The legislation may prohibit alternative students from satisfying aspects of their psychological needs. A caring school culture that is built on respect and caring relationships may help students educated in alternative school programs reach their potential. "Caring is important to consider for Black male students as they are more likely to experience negative schooling environments" (Ransom, 2015, p. 23).

Theoretical Base 2: Relational Ethics

The second theory supporting this research study is Nel Noddings's ethics of care. The ethics of care theory characterizes caring as relational (Noddings, 1984). Many teachers say they care about their students, but do the students feel that care? "No matter how hard teachers try to care, if the caring is not received by the student, the claim, '[the teachers] don't care' has some validity" (Noddings, 2005, p. 15). In caring relationships, caring develops from a natural desire and is not viewed as perfunctory. The one caring

(or the carer) is, first, attentive. He or she listens, observes, and is receptive to the expressed needs of the recipient (or the cared-for; Noddings, 2012, p. 52). Noddings referred to this attention as *engrossment*. “Engrossment is nonselective receptivity to the cared for” (Noddings, 2005, p. 15). Engrossment allows the carer (teacher) to receive and understand the feelings expressed by the one cared for (student). The receptiveness opens the carer to motivational displacement (Noddings, 1984, 2010). The energy of the carer is directed away from his or her personal projects and instead is directed toward the needs of the cared-for (Noddings, 2012).

When I care, my motive energy begins to flow toward the needs and wants of the cared-for. This does not mean that I will always approve of what the other wants, nor does it mean that I will never try to lead him or her to a better set of values, but I must take into account the feelings and desires that are eventually there and respond as positively as my values and capacities allow. (Noddings, 2010, p. 670)

“Reciprocity and mutuality are important in relational ethics” (Noddings, 2012, p. 52).

“A caring relation is a connection or encounter between the two humans—a carer and a recipient or cared-for. In order for this relation to be properly called caring, both parties must contribute to it in characteristic ways” (Noddings, 2005, p. 15).

In a caring relationship, the cared-for distinguishes the caring and responds in some detectable way. For example, the student may acknowledge the teacher’s caring by desisting inappropriate behavior while in his or her presence. The carer is able to see affirmation of his or her relations with the cared-for through the actions of the student. Noddings (2012) explained that entering into caring relations with students has both

cognitive and affective dimensions. Noddings (2005) stated, “Students will do things for people they like and trust. Relation, except in very rare cases, precedes any engagement with subject matter” (p. 36). Relational care provides the foundation for successful pedagogical activity (Noddings, 1999). As the old saying goes, students do not care how much you know, until they know how much you care.

Maslow’s hierarchy for psychological needs, belongingness and love needs, and esteem needs in conjunction with Noddings’s care theory comprise the theoretical framework for this study. The researcher explored the extent to which the alternative school in this study embraces the ethics of caring in support of meeting the psychological needs of the African-American males who attend the school. One-on-one interviews with participating students and teachers facilitated data collection. The data collected answered the research questions that follow.

Research Questions

1. How do alternative education teachers embody the ethics of care to promote the psychological growth of students?
2. What are the perceptual evidences of caring relationships in the alternative school setting according to the students and according to the teachers?
3. How do caring relationships influence student motivation and student behavior?

Professional Significance of the Study

In accord with Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory, this study is significant because it explores the extent to which the psychological needs of African-American male students are being met in alternative school programs in the state of South Carolina.

In spite of the millions of dollars allocated to alternative education annually, are the holistic educational needs being addressed at least parallel to the extent they are addressed in regular schools? Or have alternative schools become holding cells that add little or no value to the growth process of African-American male students? This study gives voice to some of the consumers: five African-American males who spent at least 45 days in a South Carolina alternative school. The data collected may urge policy makers to assess whether the human and financial resources available to students in South Carolina alternative schools are adequately aligned to their needs and whether alternative education teachers possess the capacity and training for promoting social and emotional growth in areas delineated by Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The findings of this study may serve as a catalyst for conversations about the extent to which alternative schools in South Carolina support the psychological growth of African-American males.

Site of the Study

This study took place in School District 111, which is a pseudonym for a large urban, ethnically diverse school district in the midlands of South Carolina. The school district, which consists of 52 schools and special learning centers, serves approximately 24,000 students. There is currently one alternative school serving middle and high school students. Twenty-six spoken languages are represented in the school district. The demographic makeup of the student population is 1.1% Asian, 71.2% African-American, 5% Hispanic/Latino, 0.1% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 3.5% two or more races, 0.1% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and 19% White. Since the 2015-2016 academic year, all students in School District 111 have received free lunch.

The alternative school served as the school site for this study. This school was

opened a few decades ago for students seeking alternative pathways to success. The instructional design of the school allows for small class size, individualized instruction, small groups, differentiated instructional delivery, interactive educational programs, and a variety of educational offerings through Edgenuity. At the time of this study, the school served 58 students (38 males and 20 females).

Overview of Methodology

Structured interviews served as the data collection method for this study. Using criterion sampling, the student population from which the sample was drawn consisted of African-American males who received their education in an alternative education program for at least 9 weeks or 45 days. Participants were age 14 or older. From the available pool, seven students were purposefully selected as prospective participants based on their adherence to or closest match to sampling criterion. Purposeful sampling is predicated on the assumption that the sample is one from which the researcher can learn the most (Merriam, 1988). The researcher selected five students for actual participation, retaining the remaining two students as standby participants in the event that one or more of the five failed to complete the study. In addition, five alternative education teachers who taught in alternative education for at least 5 years took part in this study. Teachers described as caring by student interviewees comprised the pool of teacher participants for this study. Participation on the part of the selected teachers was voluntary, and teachers could have opted out of study without fear of reprisal.

Definitions of Key Terms

To avoid confusion and to ensure clarity for the readers, the following definitions are provided.

Affective deficits. Affective disorders are a set of psychiatric diseases.

Cognitive domain. The development of our mental skills and the acquisition of knowledge, including the categories of knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Sincero, 2011).

Criterion sampling. The selection of cases (participants) that meet the predetermined criterion of importance for research (Patton, 2002, p. 238).

School District 111. The pseudonym given to the urban school district in the midlands of South Carolina that served as the site for this study.

Ethics of care theory. A feminist philosophical perspective that uses a relational care context-bound approach toward morality and decision-making (Dunn & Burton, 2017).

Holistic educational needs. Students' academic, cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral needs.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. A motivational theory in psychology comprising a 5-tier model of human needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid (McLeod, 2016).

Motivational displacement. Describes the carer's bracketing of self-interests to focus on the particular needs, wants, and interests of the cared-for (Cheney, 2011).

Relational ethic or ethic or caring relationships. A set of relational practices that foster mutual recognition and realization, growth, development, protection, empowerment, and human community, culture, and possibility. These practices of caring occur within relationships (Gordon, Benner, & Noddings, 1996).

Limitations of Study

When conducting any type of research, there are limitations, which are potential weaknesses of the study that affect the results (Creswell, 2013). Evaluating this national concern using only one school district in one state may invoke geo-cultural bias, thus limiting the feasibility of generalizing the results of this study to other areas. Second, the researcher is an employee of the district, which could have caused bias on the part of the students and teachers, as they may have provided answers in accordance with the perceived expectations of the researcher instead of being truthful. Finally, this study acknowledges gender restrictions because the participants were all males; therefore, the findings may not apply to females.

Organization of the Dissertation

In Chapter 2, the researcher reviews the related literature, including the following topics: history of alternative education, the need for alternative learning schools or programs, the various types of alternative education programs, salient features of effective alternative schools/programs, and noteworthy alternative schools and programs. Finally, the researcher synthesized the related literature and the two conceptual frameworks, Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and Noddings's care theory. Chapter 3 examines the methodology used in this study. Chapter 4 presents the findings of this study; and in Chapter 5, the researcher discusses the conclusions as well as implications and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Alternative schools or programs should offer alternative learning solutions for the varying categories of students when the traditional school setting is no longer appropriate. Prevalent in this century are alternative settings/programs that house students who are considered dangerous and disruptive. In the state of South Carolina, African-American students are three times more likely to be suspended or expelled than their White counterparts (Self, 2016). South Carolina is one of five states in America where the male suspension rate for every racial or ethnic group is above the national average (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, 2014). As of this writing, South Carolina has at least 72 alternative school programs (Coleman & Smith, 2015, 2016). In the 2014-2015 school year, 7,833 students received their education in alternative settings in South Carolina, which shows a decline from the 2013-2014 school year, when 9,393 students were educated in alternative school programs. Demographically, of the students served from 2013 to 2015, approximately 70% were males and approximately 30% were females. Children of color comprised nearly 98% of the population served in 2014 and 2015 (Coleman & Smith, 2015, 2016).

School District 111, the South Carolina school district chosen for this qualitative study, educated 261 students in alternative educational settings for students with specific behavior deficits in 2016-2017. Of these, 64% were African-American males. In the previous school year, 2015-2016, School District 111 served 310 students in alternative school programs, and 86% were African-American males.

Many of the students educated in alternative settings are already socially and/or emotionally incompetent. The affective deficits could include varying degrees of

depression, bipolar, or anxiety disorders (Healthline News, 2016). In alternative schools, positive peer role models are few, thus minimizing opportunities for students to satisfy their psychological needs of friendship, trust, affiliation with groups, achievement, respect for self, and respect for others (McLeod, 2016). How are alternative students expected to satisfy these psychological needs as iterated by Maslow when they are separated from positive peer role models? The legislation for alternative schools in South Carolina (Alternative School Programs Established, 1999) requires an appropriate education for students for which the traditional setting is inappropriate. Alternative School Programs; Individual or Cooperative Programs; Funding; Sites (1999) declares that these programs must be at a site separate from other schools, must operate either at a time when those schools are not in session, and must be housed in another building on the school campus that would provide complete separation. The pervasiveness of separatism that permeates the state codes further exacerbates the social and emotional status of students served in alternative schools in South Carolina. In the absence of positive peer groups and affiliations, the importance of positive caring relationships is even more acute. “Caring is important to consider for Black male students as they are more likely to experience negative schooling environments” (Ransom, 2015, p. 23). Noddings (2012) posited that entering into caring relations with students has both cognitive and affective dimensions.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand, through the voices and perceptions of African-American males, (a) how alternative education teachers embody the ethics of care to support the psychological growth of the students and (b) the perceived influence of relational ethics on student motivation and behavior. Further, this

study explored whether participating teachers perceive that the culture of the school embraces caring relationships, thus addressing the psychological needs of students in accordance with Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory.

The review of related literature, which establishes the backdrop for the research study, includes the following topics: history of alternative education, the need for alternative learning schools or programs, the types of alternative education programs, salient features of effective alternative schools/programs, and noteworthy alternative schools and programs. Finally, the researcher synthesizes the related literature and the two conceptual theories, Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and Noddings's care theory.

History of Alternative Education

Alternative schools began to emerge in the 1960s, and they were first popular in the private sector and eventually moved to the public sector all across the nation. Further, alternative schools were usually found in urban and suburban areas and were less likely to be located in rural areas (Raywid, 1999). The same holds true today. There are more alternative schools in cities, suburban areas, and towns than there are in rural areas: Only 56% of the school districts in rural areas have alternative programs, compared to 94% in cities, 66% in suburbia, and 77% in towns (Carver & Lewis, 2010). The early programs focused on creating an environment that would help unsuccessful populations, such as minority and impoverished youth, succeed. The programs developed in suburban communities were created to develop new and innovative ways to educate students (Raywid, 1999).

In the 1960s, two different types of alternative programs were developed—those inside the public schools and those outside the system. Well-known external programs

included the Freedom School Programs and the Free School Movement (Hughes-Hassell, 2008). Each school focused on a particular area of need. According to Hughes-Hassell (2008), the Freedom Schools provided a high-quality education to minority students, whereas Free Schools allowed students the freedom to learn without restrictions. Educators continued offering alternative education in the 1970s as 1980s as public schools became more diverse. In contrast, alternative schools or programs in the private sector began to diminish because of limited funding (Neumann, 2003). The alternative schools in the public sector evolved into schools that dealt with the influx of increased violence and vandalism (Young, 2007).

In the late 1980s and 1990s, the focus of alternative schools shifted to provide support to at-risk students who were on the verge of dropping out of school (Hughes-Hassell, 2008). A variety of strategies and models were implemented, attempting to find the best programs/models for motivating at-risk students. The pattern of creating a variety of alternative education programs has continued to this day because of our ever-changing society. Unfortunately, many of today's alternative programs have taken on the negative connotation of dumping grounds for at-risk students (Kim & Taylor, 2008).

The Need for Alternative School Programs

Vanderhaar et al. (2014) asserted that the demand for alternative schools is much larger than the supply. Behavioral issues, academic deficits, dysfunctional social skills, chronic absenteeism, and disruptive or conflictual family life are some of the reasons students require alternatives to mainstream educational environments (McCall, 2003). Further, zero-tolerance policies passed in many states have placed a demand on alternative school space. Many people view this policy as the “get tough” approach to

discipline (Skiba, 2000). According to the National Council of La Raza for Models for Change (2011), “students are pushed out of the mainstream educational environments and placed on a path toward incarceration through the use of suspensions, expulsions and arrests” (p. 1). Further, zero-tolerance policies have caused school districts to lower their tolerance for violence in schools; all children have the right to learn in a safe and secure learning environment. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2010), during the 2009-2010 school year, at least 85% of the nation’s schools reported one or more crimes. When school-age students commit reportable crimes, school districts must offer an alternative place to educate them.

For the first time in the history of public education, in the fall of 2014, less than 50% of the school population in this country was White (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017b). More than ever before, children of color now populate our schools. “Meeting the needs of students disenfranchised from the traditional education setting is becoming more and more important as we are faced with a growing population of students for whom status quo education is not successful” (Lehr, Tan, & Ysseldyke, 2009, p. 19). Disenfranchised students are often targeted for placement in alternative education programs or schools at an early age. Students characterized as at-risk are more likely to drop out of school. Many of the same reasons that place them at risk of dropping out of school are the rationale for their placement in alternative learning settings. The U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2011) suggested creating more personalized learning environments for students at risk of dropping out of school. Alternative learning programs may provide such environments. Providing support for students at risk of dropping out of school is a

major justification for establishing additional alternative programs and schools.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2017a), overall, the dropout rate in this country has decreased. From 2010 to 2015, the dropout rate fell from 7.4% to 5.9%. Between 2000 and 2015, the male dropout rate declined from 12% to 6.3%, whereas the female dropout rate declined from 9.9% to 5.4%. The dropout rate for White students remains lower than for Black students, and the rates for both groups were lower than the rate for Hispanic students. From 2000 to 2015, the dropout rate declined for Black students from 13.1% to 6.5% and for Hispanics from 27.8% to 9.2%; thus, the gap between White and Black students narrowed from 6.2% in 2000 to 1.9% in 2015, whereas the gap between Whites and Hispanic students narrowed from 20.9% in 2000 to 4.6% in 2015. While the overall decreases in dropout rates are commendable, the need for a high school diploma is more pronounced than any other time in history, especially for minority students. The National Council of La Raza for Models for Change (2011) showed that dropouts will earn \$375,000 less over their lifetime than nondropouts. Alternative schools have shown success in redirecting dropouts and in improving student attitudes toward school (Smink & Schargel, 2004); therefore, the rationale for this study is not to denigrate alternative schools but to illuminate needs and to help initiate steps to improve services rendered to students. Graham (2013) stated,

Since their inception in the 1970's, alternative schools and their various forms have risen in popularity across the country, even as funding to operate them has remained relatively stagnant. Alternative schools are designed to ensure that students at risk of dropping out receive the support they need to stay in the

classroom through graduation. Whether they cater to pregnant teens, frequently absent students, those struggling academically, or others who just can't seem to adjust to traditional schooling, alternative schools ensure at-risk students receive the attention and guidance that make them not only want to receive a diploma, but enable them to achieve it. While very few long-term studies have been done to corroborate their overall successes, and despite the misperceptions about the abilities of the students, educators at alternative schools have seen firsthand how these schools work to transform lives. (p. 1)

With regard to students with individualized education plans (IEPs) for academic and behavioral needs, IEP committees may decide that an alternative school or program is the least restrictive environment and place the students in an alternative setting (Indiana Department of Education and Science, 2017). Nevertheless, teachers must have the skills to address the IEP goals. Not following the IEP becomes an issue of noncompliance with the law. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) states the importance of adequate teacher training to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments, 1997). IDEA also requires that schools conduct functional behavioral analyses (FBAs) and develop positive behavior interventions for exceptional students whose behavior interferes with learning (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments, 1997).

Some alternative education students may benefit from FBAs, which can be defined as “a systematic process of identifying problem behavior and the events that (a) reliably predict occurrence and nonoccurrence of those behaviors and (b) maintain the disruptive behaviors across time” (Sugai, Horner, Dunlap, & Hienemen, 2000, p. 137).

This component is pivotal in identifying deep-seated problem behaviors and in establishing interventions that directly address the identified needs. Students with documented behavior or emotional issues are three times more likely to be placed in alternative education settings than students without documented disabilities if the use of an FBA is required by federal law (Turton, Umbreit, & Mathur, 2011). Further, it is also important to note that students with disabilities cannot be excluded from alternative programs or schools on the basis of their disabilities.

Many schools have zero tolerance for violent behavior, and many schools are populated with students who not only have behavioral needs, but also have diverse learning and social needs. Because of the diverse learning needs of at-risk students, it is incumbent upon the citizens, boards of education, and other stakeholders to ensure an equitable learning environment for all students. To educate all students, alternative schooling is not an option, it is a requirement.

Types of Alternative Education Schools and Programs

The U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2008) provided the following categorical definition for alternative schools and programs:

Alternative schools and programs are designed to address the needs of students that typically cannot be met in regular schools. The students who attend alternative schools and programs are typically at-risk of educational failure as indicated by poor grades, truancy, disruptive behavior, pregnancy, or similar factors associated with temporary or permanent withdrawal from school. (p. 1)

Similarly, the Indiana Department of Education and Science (2017) explained that alternative education is designed to provide a variety of options for meeting the needs of

highly at-risk students who are not succeeding in the traditional school setting.

Notwithstanding, alternative education programs or schools vary from district to district and state to state. First, there is a distinction alternative programs and alternative schools. Alternative programs are considered part of the regular or traditional school, whereas alternative schools have a separate school number and operate as standalone schools (Indiana Department of Education and Science, 2017). Hefner-Packer (1991) described five models of alternative schools:

- 1) The Alternative Classroom, designed as a self-contained classroom with a traditional school, simply offering varied programs in a different environment; 2) The School-Within-a-School, housed within a traditional school, but having semiautonomous or specialized educational programs; 3) The Separate Alternative School, separated from the regular school and having different academic and social adjustment programs; 4) The Continuation School, developed for students no longer attending traditional schools, such as street academies for job-related training or parenting centers; and 5) The Magnet School, a self-contained program offering an intensified curriculum in one or more subject areas such as math or science. (“What is Alternative Schooling,” para. 3)

Raywid (1994) is credited with grouping alternative schools and programs into the following three types:

- Type I: Schools of choice, sometimes resembling magnet schools, based on themes with an emphasis on innovative programs or strategies to attract students;
- Type II: “Last chance” schools where students are placed as a last step before expulsion. Emphasis is typically on behavior modification or remediation; and

Type III: Schools designed with a remedial focus on academic issues, social emotional issues, or both. These schools ascribe to more of a non-punitive, therapeutic approach. (p. 60)

Alternative schools that are considered innovations, or Type I, are schools of choice centered on changing the educational environment (Raywid, 1999). Aimed at motivating and challenging young people, student-centered schools are usually popular. Type I schools include theme schools, some private and charter schools, magnet schools, commercially owned schools, and home schools. These programs offer students full curricula that are challenging, engaging, and relevant through integrated curriculum and interdisciplinary projects. Students are able to meet state graduation requirements while experiencing environments different from their local high schools. Programs may include hands-on learning opportunities, vocational and career training, and community service components. These schools promote a strong sense of student responsibility and shared decision-making about the goals and plans of the student. High academic and behavioral expectations are placed on all students, especially because many Type I schools are schools of choice (Raywid, 1999). Staffing in these schools by teachers may be voluntary and not assigned (Gregg, 1999). This allows teachers to take ownership in the program and feel motivated to work toward the success of the program. Educators in this role assume the responsibility of not only teachers, but also mentors and counselors. In these types of settings, teachers and students tend to bond and build relationships. This is partly due to the shared decision-making about the plans for the student, but it is also due to the small student-teacher ratio.

Type II alternative schools are considered last-chance schools. These schools

focus on changing the child's behavior, and they separate students with severe behavioral issues from their home school (Raywid, 1999). Students are not given a choice to attend these schools. They are assigned usually for a short term to try to remediate and modify their behaviors. As with Type I alternative schools, the student-teacher ratio is small. The atmosphere in Type II schools is highly structured, requiring students to follow strict guidelines and rules. Student compliance is demanded, as behavior modification is the focus for this type of program. The instructional program is focused on covering basic skills. In some instances, the home school determines lessons to be covered. Examples of Type II programs range from a few hours of in-school suspension (ISS) to long-term assignments to an off-campus site (Raywid, 1994).

Type III alternative schools are considered remedial-focused programs. These programs focus on students who need remediation or rehabilitation in academics, social/emotional health, or both (Raywid, 1994). Students are referred to this type of program; however, in some cases, the students can opt out or refuse services. These are short-term programs where some students receive therapeutic sessions or counseling. The expectation is that students will return to their regular educational settings upon successful completion of the program. Type III programs offer small group settings to ensure personal attention to the needs of the students. The ideal class size is four to five students with a limit of 10 to 12 students in each setting or group (Raywid, 1994). These programs may be offered in a setting separate from the home school site, or they may be offered on campus in a separate classroom. The teaching of basic skills helps remediate the students (Raywid, 1994).

Most alternative schools can be categorized under one of these three taxonomies;

however, Raywid (1994) stated that a program might fall into two categories or be a combination of all three types. A program's most prominent features determine which category it belongs to and how the school or program will be evaluated. One feature that sets alternative settings apart is how the students are selected for placement in the program: Type I programs acquire students by choice; Type II programs acquire students by assignment; and Type III programs receive students through referral. Type II and Type III programs are designed to fix the student, while Type I programs aim to enhance the educational environment.

The three categories have been helpful over the years in providing a framework for understanding alternative schools, but it is unclear if they capture the complexity of today's alternative schools (Lehr & Lange, 2003). While all three types of alternative programs exist in this country, researchers believe some have more of a positive impact than others. Research seems to indicate that Type I schools have a better success rate than Type II and Type III alternative schools. This is most likely because they focus on changing the educational environment as opposed to changing the student (Lehr & Lange, 2003). Often, when the focus is put on schools rather than students, districts are forced to examine themselves in addition to examining the needs of the students.

In summary, states differ significantly in the definitions of alternative education and how students are selected (Lehr et al., 2009). Raywid (1999) postulated three categories of alternative learning environments, which provided a framework for understanding alternative learning settings, but alternative learning programs vary in their operational styles and characteristics. As of this writing, there is no definitive best model; however, educators should question why some alternative schools or programs

tend to experience more success than others.

Salient Features of Successful Alternative Schools/Programs

The related literature illuminated many differences among alternative learning programs and schools. Some alternative schools specify the number of students who can attend, the type of curriculum, who can teach, and the program hours along with other stipulations pertaining to the operation of the alternative settings (Aron, 2003).

Regardless of the differences, some key characteristics and features are prevalent in successful programs.

Many successful schools or programs have “small enrollment, one-one-one interaction between teachers and students, supportive environments, opportunities and curriculum relevant to student interests, flexibility in structure, and an emphasis on student decision making” (Lange & Sletten, 2002, p. 60). Tobin and Sprague (2000) identified the following effective practices necessary in alternative settings: low student-teacher ratio, highly structured classrooms, use of positive methods, school-based mentors, FBAs, instruction in social skills, high-quality instruction, parent involvement, and positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS).

Small class size is important to the success of alternative education. For social and emotional growth, many students need ongoing opportunities to interact and build relationships with their teachers. Often, students with behavior or emotional issues are overlooked in regular education classes because of the large number of students.

Presumably, individualized attention will correspond to higher levels of school engagement, bonding, and commitment than may be achieved in a more traditional setting (Flower, McDaniel, & Jolivet, 2011). It has been shown when teachers and

students bond, healthy development is promoted and problem behavior is prevented because of the established trust in the relationship (Catalano, Haggerty, Oesterle, Fleming, & Hawkins, 2004).

Classrooms should be highly structured; and according to Flower et al. (2011), expectations and schedules should be taught and reinforced so students understand what they are expected to do. Positive methods tend to work better for students who are placed in an alternative setting rather than exclusionary practices (Flower et al., 2011). For example, PBIS has been successful in many school settings (Flower et al., 2011). Positive behavioral support is “a general term that refers to the application of positive behavioral interventions and systems to achieve socially important behavior changes” (Sugai et al., 2000, p. 133). The PBIS model focuses on the following 3-tier system of support: Tier 1 supports all students in the school with proactive behavior management practices; Tier 2 focuses on the behavioral needs of a small group of students who display behaviors that are not responsive to Tier 1 supports and require more targeted assistance; and Tier 3 supports individual students whose behaviors are not responsive to Tier 1 and Tier 2 practices and require more intensive, specialized interventions to be successful (Crone & Horner, 2003; Simonsen, Jeffrey-Pearsall, Sugai, & McCurdy, 2011).

Tobin and Sprague (2000) posited that school-based mentors can be important additions to alternative settings. Many students who are placed in alternative settings are unaccustomed to receiving praise. Building a positive relationship with an adult mentor can be beneficial (Flower et al., 2011). These students need someone they can depend on and who can encourage and help them develop skills for making better decisions. School-based mentoring helps students and faculty bond and helps prevent dropouts

(Sinclair, Christenson, Lehr, & Anderson, 2003).

Unfortunately, many children in poverty find themselves in alternative learning environments. The related literature suggested that poverty thwarts social and emotional growth in children of all ages (Hetzner, 2010). Teaching students positive social skills is crucial to the rehabilitation process while in alternative schools. According to Tobin and Sprague (2000), social skills instruction means “teaching appropriate ways to get along with other individuals” (p. 8). Alternative students often require instruction on handling conflict, problem-solving strategies, and strategies for anger management (Tobin & Sprague, 2000). Initiatives that are successful in helping students acquire positive social skills include group counseling, individual counseling, peer counseling, and academic counseling (Young, 2007); therefore, counselors are necessary in alternative settings. In addition, counselors help set up peer groups, and these have proven effective in helping students to adjust and thrive in alternative settings. Stewart (2008) found that forming positive peer relationships was a predictor of student achievement in alternative settings. Students flourished academically when they had positive relationships with other peers:

As adolescents associate with friends who value education and are committed to academic pursuits, they create attachments to school and conform to the ideals associated with it. Furthermore, positive peers provide important reference points for students and help them invest in their education. (Stewart, 2008, p. 197)

On the other hand, as in regular classroom settings, peer relationships can also have a negative influence on students in the alternative setting. Because of negative peer pressure, students are often encouraged to misbehave and not perform well academically (Goldsmith, 2004). When positive peer-to-peer relationships are not possible, the

student-teacher bond can be vital to students' affective and cognitive development.

Students in alternative schools or programs deserve high-quality instruction just like students in the regular education setting. The staff at alternative schools plays an important role in the success or failure of students placed in these settings. According to Aron (2006),

Instructors in successful alternative programs choose to be part of the program, routinely employ positive discipline techniques, and establish rapport with students and peers. They have high expectations of the youth, are certified in their academic content area, and are creative in their classrooms. They have a role in governing the school and designing the program and curriculum. (p. 12)

Thus, alternative school administrators must not only employ staff members who are knowledgeable in their field but who also are willing to help students build social and emotional skills. Staff members must know how to forge relationships and engage students who typically have no interest in school (Aron, 2006).

Successful alternative education programs provide instructors with ongoing professional development activities that help them maintain an academic focus, enhance teaching strategies, and develop alternative instructional methods. Staff development involves teacher input, work with colleagues, and opportunities to visit and observe teaching in other setting. (Aron, 2006, p. 12)

D'Angelo and Zemanick (2009) noted that two strategies were utilized when employing staff at Twilight Academy, an alternative school in Pennsylvania: The administrators hired teachers who desire to work with alternative students, and they hired teachers from diverse backgrounds. These approaches offer students well-rounded

experiences and adults with whom they may identify, especially if a large number of minority students attend the school.

Flexibility and choice, along with differentiated methods of instruction, are key elements in an alternative setting (De La Rosa, 1998). Students in alternative settings need additional motivation to keep them on track academically. Marzano (2003) stated,

The link between student motivation and achievement is straightforward. If students are motivated to learn the content in a given subject, their achievement in that subject will most likely be good. If students are not motivated to learn the content, their achievement will likely be limited. (p. 144)

Parental support can be a vital part of a child's academic achievement. Parental support and involvement are even more important in the lives of alternative school students. Some ways families can show their support include assisting students with homework, discussing school and education with students and teachers, providing students with enrichment activities, and establishing behavioral boundaries at home (Scales, Benson, Roehlkepartain, Sesma, & VanDulman, 2006). Further, Ingram, Wolfe, and Lieberman (2007) found that how parents interacted with their children at home had a great impact on school achievement. Jeynes (2003) postulated that parental involvement positively affects student achievement in minority students; however, Jeynes did not specify the kind of parental involvement that had the greatest influence on student achievement. Nonetheless, when schools and families unite, a bond is created that helps to foster an engaging and motivating learning environment for students (Weaver, 2007). In alternative settings, the collaboration between the home and the school can mean the difference between success and failure for some students.

Experts have varying ideas about what constitutes an effective alternative program. Aron (2006) discussed the following features of successful alternative education programs:

Successful programs have a clear focus on academic learning that combine high academic standards with engaging and creative instruction and a culture of high expectations for all students. Learning must be relevant and applicable to life outside of school and to future learning and work opportunities. Applied learning is an important component of the academic program. This is often where employers can play important roles as partners. The curricula address the education and career interests of the students. The curricula are academically rigorous and tied to state standards and accountability systems. The students, staff, and parents know learning goals. Students have personalized learning plans and set learning goals based on their individual plans. There are opportunities for youth to catch up and accelerate knowledge and skills. A mixture of instructional approaches is available to help youth achieve academic objectives. (p. 12)

Like Tobin and Sprague (2000) and Lange and Sletten (2002), Henrich (2005) and others believed that a small student-teacher ratio is key to the success of alternative learning programs or schools. Along with Tobin and Sprague, Flower et al. (2011) and Henrich realized the value added by mentoring youngsters and investing time in building relationships with them. Many successful alternative programs are structured to the point that students understand the rules and expectations but are also flexible enough to meet the holistic needs of the students. Henrich and others advocated for a curriculum that not only covers basic skills, but also offers the elasticity of self-paced courses and courses

that are tied to vocational goals and real-life work. Finally, alternative learning programs cannot balance the needs of its clientele without ongoing counseling and support to advance their psychological and affective domains.

Noteworthy Alternative School Programs

Although there is no “one size fits all” when it comes to the structure and implementation of alternative education, some programs have been commended for their accomplishments. For example, Franklin, Streeter, Kim, and Tripodi (2007) looked at the effectiveness of a solution-focused alternative school (SFAS) located in Austin Independent School District. The experimental group for this study included 46 students in the SFAS. The control group for this study was a sample of 39 students from one of the comparison high schools. All of the students had previously attended one of the three local high schools prior to attending the SFAS. The control group and the experimental group were similar in ethnicity; the control group had 25 White students and the SFAS group had 28 White students (Franklin et al., 2007). However, the SFAS group had twice as many Hispanic students than the control group and a larger population of 18- and 19-year-old students who were eligible for free and reduced lunch (Franklin et al., 2007). The students in the control group were chosen because they were matched individually with students from the experimental group based on attendance rates, number of credits earned, participation in the free lunch program, race, gender, and whether the student was defined as at risk according to the Texas Education Code (Franklin et al., 2007).

One mission of the SFAS was to offer ongoing individual interactions between teachers and students (Franklin et al., 2007). In order to achieve this mission, the school implemented (a) a nonthreatening environment for learning; (b) caring and committed

staff who accepted personal responsibility for student success; (c) a school culture that encouraged staff risk-taking, self-governance, and professional collegiality among teachers; and (d) a low student-teacher ratio and small class sizes. The comparison high school was a large public high school located in an urban area with a traditional teaching philosophy. The high school's goals were to increase overall student and staff attendance. Like the alternative school, the high school provided small class sizes (Rumberger, 2004).

This study was conducted over the course of 2 school years, between fall 2002 and spring 2004 and focused on credits earned, attendance, and graduation rates. The results indicated that students from both schools improved the number of earned credits (Franklin et al., 2007). The data showed that the students from the alternative school earned more credits over time than the control group, and they had a significantly higher average of credits earned to credits attempted. The students who attended the SFAS earned .47 standard deviations more credits than students who attended the high school (Franklin et al., 2007).

There was also a statistically significant difference in attendance rate between the SFAS group and the high school group (Franklin et al., 2007). The SFAS group had lower attendance than the high school group at each data point. For the students of the SFAS, the correlation between attendance and credits earned was low for all semesters with the exception of one. The control group students, on the other hand, showed a strong correlation between attendance and credits earned. One explanation given for the poor attendance rate of the students at the SFAS was the students are on a self-paced curriculum (Franklin et al., 2007); therefore, some SFAS students may have earned the

needed credits at a faster rate than the traditional students. Once the credits were earned, the students had no reason to continue attending classes; however, the school district still counted these students as absent (Franklin et al., 2007).

Of the 67 students who were classified as seniors in the final year of the study, 37 were from the SFAS, and 30 were from the control group or traditional high school group. The graduation rate for the SFAS was 62% (23 students), and the graduation rate for the comparison group was 90% (27 students). The researchers studied the 14 students in the SFAS group who did not graduate. The data showed that nine of the 14 students were enrolled in the SFAS the following year; of these, seven graduated at the end of the next school year, bringing the graduation rate of the SFAS up to 81% (30 students). Considering that the SFAS is a self-paced program, it is likely that some students would take more time than the usual 4 years to graduate (Franklin et al., 2007).

Considering the fact that many of the students at the SFAS were in danger of failing and falling behind in their credits at their home school, they made considerable gains in credits earned by catching up to and eventually passing the comparison group in credits earned (Franklin et al., 2007). Though some students took longer than the traditional 4 years, in the final analysis, 81% of students who graduated from the SFAS program may not have graduated had they remained at their home school.

A second noteworthy school is the Twilight Academy, which was implemented in a large, southeastern urban high school in Pennsylvania in the early 2000s. This school was designed to help reach a growing number of students in Grades 9-12 who were unsuccessful in the traditional classroom or school for reasons such as failing multiple grades, falling behind in class, disruptive behavior, weapon possession, fighting,

vandalism, disrespect, insubordination, and high rates of absenteeism, all of which placed them at risk of dropping out of school (D'Angelo & Zemanick, 2009). To provide a different learning atmosphere and to meet the needs of the population, the school implemented numerous specific strategies. Twilight Academy established a small teacher-student ratio. Creative and experienced teachers with diverse backgrounds who desired to work with this population of students were selected to teach the students. Professional development specific to alternative education was a mainstay for the instructional staff. All classes were located in close proximity to limit student movement and to reduce opportunities for inappropriate behavior. Counseling services were provided to the students. The school executed a well-developed and broad-based curriculum that was applicable to the real world to include work experiences. Finally, security personnel helped maintain a safe and orderly environment (D'Angelo & Zemanick, 2009).

The school measured its success in terms of the number of graduates. Of the 12 students who were eligible for graduation in the first year, 11 achieved this goal. The 12th student earned her diploma after enrolling in summer school. This was the most rewarding aspect of the program because many of the teachers from the traditional schools gave these students little hope of graduating. Of the graduates, four enrolled in a local community college, an achievement these students would have never believed possible at the beginning of the school year. The ultimate measure of the success of the program was the wait list of students aspiring to get into the Twilight Academy Program for the following year.

Another noteworthy alternative program was the Big Bayou Association (BBA),

which served at-risk middle school students in Pensacola, Florida. This program was developed because the

district recognized the need for educational programs to provide services for some juvenile adolescents who posed a serious risk to staff or peers or who were unable to succeed in regular or special education classroom and who were at serious risk of dropping out of school. (Vann, Schubert, & Rogers, 2000, p. 32)

The BBA instituted an alternative school grounded in providing holistic services to its clientele. Approximately 80% of the candidate pool came from low socioeconomic households, and the targeted candidates were at-risk middle school males. Additionally, candidates with emotional or physical handicaps; with specific learning disabilities; and who had faced criminal charges related to drugs, assault, weapons violations, or sexual assault were eligible (Vann et al., 2000).

The intake and orientation process for the BBA took approximately 20-30 minutes initially but was quickly expanded to a 2- to 4-hour process in order to comply with IDEA regulations. During this process, parents and students were informed of their rights as well as program requirements, which included daily attendance, academic classes, daily physical training, uniforms, monthly parent-teacher meetings, information about the use of crisis prevention intervention on students if deemed necessary, and the use of the sheriff's department to handle on-campus violations of the law (Vann et al., 2000).

Students at the BBA received positive reinforcement if they met their daily and weekly goals. The BBA collaborated with other agencies to provide counseling and social services, which supported the candidates as well as their families. In terms of

academics, the program focused on remediation in math and reading as well as real-life skills. At times, the student-teacher ratio was 1:3, which facilitated individualized instruction.

The students' daily routines consisted of silent reading time and uniform inspection before breakfast (all uniforms were provided by the BBA). If a uniform violation occurred, the student lost points on his daily checklist. After breakfast, all students participated in physical training and then moved on to occupational skills, followed by math and reading remediation classes. During lunch, as well as breakfast, students at specific levels received privileges, such as talking while eating. Students were provided with opportunities after lunch to receive social skill remediation that included computer time, quiet time, basketball, football, or scheduled field trips to nearby parks for fishing and hiking (Vann et al., 2000). At the end of the day, students received daily feedback and counseling before boarding the buses to go home.

The BBA used the Kauffman Test of Educational Achievement (KTEA) to measure student progress in math, reading, and spelling. Upon entering the program and when exiting the program, the students took the abbreviated version of the test to track their progress. The BBA listed the following results for the first 2 years of operation: on average, 2.5- and 3-point annual grade-level increases in reading and mathematics scores respectively. Because of time constraints, spelling was not emphasized at the BBA, and as would be expected, the scores languished. Whereas the county's dropout rate remained 2-3% behind the state average, the precise impact made by the BBA was difficult to ascertain because of the newness of the program (Vann et al., 2000). The BBA attributed the students' successes to a combination of factors that included

structure, social skills intervention, discipline, practical- and/or vocational-oriented experiences, and academic remediation as well as counseling services provided to students and their families (Vann et al., 2000).

These noteworthy alternative schools experienced varying levels of success. Specific features of the schools paralleled the findings delineated in the Salient Features of Successful Alternative Schools/Programs section of this chapter. The successes demonstrated by these noteworthy schools/programs provide rays of hope as well as positive strategies for implementation for 21st century alternative education programs and schools.

Summary

The review of related literature revealed there are different types of alternative learning programs, and students are placed in alternative schools for various reasons. Raywid (1994) asserted that alternative schools could be categorized as follows: Type I (schools of choice), Type II (last chance), and Type III (schools with a remedial focus). Large numbers of alternative programs/schools focus on remediating at-risk students either for cognitive or affective reasons. The related literature presented many quality features of alternative schools: highly skilled and caring teachers who desire to work with and mentor alternative education students; relevant yet flexible curriculum that is tied to work or vocational components; counseling focused on improving character, social, emotional, and behavioral skills (this component may include the use of PBIS and FBAs); and small classes that facilitate positive student-teacher relationships.

Many alternative programs/schools implemented mentor–mentee programs and/or intentionally maintained small class size to promote positive relationship building

between students and teachers. Noddings (2012) said that with ethics of care, caring is comparable to the relationship between a mother and her baby where the mother is the carer and she puts aside her work or projects to care for the needs of the baby. The same should hold true in caring relationships between the teacher and the student. Noddings (2012) called this motivational displacement. Caring relationships require the carer to be more attentive to the needs of the cared-for than her own. The responses of the cared-for are important to the relationship as the cared-for responds in such a way that the carer understands that his or her caring has been received or recognized: “Reciprocity and mutuality are important in relational ethics” (Noddings, 2012, p. 52). In a caring relationship, the cared-for distinguishes the caring and responds in some detectable way. Noddings (2012) explained that caring ethics is not about the warm fuzzies, but that caring is grounded in relationships. Words like attention, empathy, and reciprocity all have special meaning in care ethics (Noddings, 2012).

Students often feel that teachers do not care about them. In the absence of reciprocity, the students may be right. In ethics of care, not only do the cared-for’s responses complete the caring relations, but the responses often provide further information about his/her needs and interests and how the carer might deepen or broaden the caring relation. The responses often provide the building blocks for the construction of a continuing caring relation (Noddings, 2012).

“Maslow stated that people are motivated to satisfy certain needs and some needs take precedence over others. Our most basic need is physical survival; once satisfied, the next level up is what motivates us, and so on” (McLeod, 2007, p. 1). Maslow’s second stage of motivation, psychological needs, consists of love and belonging. The goals are

friendship, intimacy, trust, acceptance, and being part of a group of friends. The rung of psychological needs includes esteem needs, such as the need for achievement, mastery, prestige, self-respect, and respect for others (McLeod, 2007). Students educated in alternative settings in South Carolina, specifically in School District 111, may be at a disadvantage when progressing through Maslow's stages because state codes dictate that alternative schools must be in separate buildings or separate settings, thus limiting positive affiliations, friendships, and trust.

It is difficult for students who are highly impacted by histories of failure and a life of poverty to develop positive self-esteem. Noddings's ethics of care could be a prominent footstep in uplifting the cognitive and affective status of African-American males.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Alternative schools/programs are prevalent throughout this country; however, some operate on limited budgets and struggle to meet the holistic needs of the students. Many alternative schools in this country are disproportionately populated by children of color. In South Carolina, African-American students are three times more likely to be suspended or expelled than their White counterparts; thus, in the 2013-2014 school year, more than 9,000 students, mostly minorities, were served in alternative educational settings (Coleman & Smith, 2015, 2016).

School District 111, the South Carolina school district chosen for this study, educated 261 students in alternative schools/programs designated for children with behavior challenges in the 2016-2017 school year (see Appendix A). Of these, 64% were African-American males, and 33% were African-American females. In 2015-2016, School District 111 served 310 students in alternative school programs; 86% of the students were African-American males, and 12% were African-American females. The year prior, 2014-2015, 218 students were educated in alternative schools; 67% were African-American males, and 32% were African-American females. This same school district ranked fourth in the state for suspensions of African-American students at a higher rate than Whites for 10 consecutive years from 2004-2014 (Self, 2016).

This research study is grounded in two theories: Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Noddings's care theory. Maslow categorized a variety of human needs into a conceptual hierarchy consisting of five levels of developmental needs. These levels include a person's physiological survival, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow suggested that people are not likely to be motivated to pursue

intellectual challenges or develop a sense of positive self-esteem until the more basic or physiological needs have been satisfied (Daniels, 1992).

Noddings (2012) believed that a caring relationship with a teacher, which is essential to—and maybe even a prerequisite for—intellectual achievements for many students, is comparable to the relationship between a mother and her baby, where the mother is the carer. The carer puts aside his or her work or projects to care for the needs of the baby. The same must hold true in caring relationships between the teacher and student. Noddings (2012) called this motivational displacement. Caring relationships require the carer to be more attentive to the needs of the cared-for than her own. The responses of the cared-for are important to the relationship as the cared-for responds in such a way that the carer understands that his or her caring has been received or recognized. “Reciprocity and mutuality are important in relational ethics” (Noddings, 2012, p. 52). In a caring relationship, the cared-for distinguishes the caring and responds in some detectable way.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand (a) how alternative education teachers embody the ethics of care to support the psychological growth of the students and (b) the perceived influence of caring on student motivation and behavior.

Three research questions guided this study:

1. How do alternative education teachers embody the ethics of care to promote the psychological growth of students?
2. What are the perceptual evidences of caring relationships in the alternative school setting according to the students and according to the teachers?
3. How do caring relationships influence student motivation and student

behavior?

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), “qualitative research is any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (p. 17). Qualitative research is grounded in words and stories (Butin, 2010). There are neither predetermined hypotheses nor manipulated variables. The researcher crafted the stories of select alternative education students based on the data obtained from the interview sessions. Creswell (2013) defined qualitative research as follows:

Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/ theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people or place under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. (p. 44)

Structured interviews served as the data collection method and took place on the campus of the alternative school in School District 111.

Participants

Using criterion sampling, the student population from which the sample was drawn consisted of African-American males who received their education in an alternative school for at least 9 weeks or 45 days. This specified length of time could have been consecutive days or cumulative days over more than one assignment or placement. Participants were age 14 or older. From the available pool, seven students

were purposefully selected as prospective participants based on their adherence to or closest match to sampling criterion. Purposeful sampling is predicated on the assumption that the sample is one from which the researcher can learn the most (Merriam, 1988). The researcher selected five students for actual participation, retaining the remaining two students as standby participants in the event that one or more of the five failed to complete the study. Parent permission was obtained from all seven participants at least 30 days prior to the beginning of the study (see Appendix B).

Three of the students selected for the study were age 15, whereas the other two were age 14. They were all African-American students in Grade 9. The number of days in the alternative school ranged from 45 to 95. Table 1 displays the demographic information of the student participants.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Student Interviewees

Student	Age	Gender	Race	Grade	Days at Alternative School
1	14	Male	African-American	9	90
2	14	Male	African-American	9	45
3	15	Male	African-American	9	60
4	15	Male	African-American	9	95
5	15	Male	African-American	9	73

In addition, five alternative education teachers who have taught in alternative education for at least 5 years took part in this study. Teachers described by student interviewees as caring comprised the pool of teacher participants for this study. In the event more or fewer than five names emerged, the researcher selected the teachers who had the most years of service or who were the most acclaimed by the student

interviewees. Participation on the part of the selected teachers was voluntary, and teachers were able to opt out of participation without fear of reprisal.

Two of the teachers in the study were male, and three were female. The teachers ranged in age from 30 years of age to 60+. Four of the five teachers were African-American, and one teacher was Caucasian. Their years in education ranged from 10-30+, but their years in the alternative education setting ranged from 1-30+. Table 2 shows the demographic information of the teachers who participated in this study.

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Teacher Interviewees

Characteristics	n	%
Gender		
Male	2	40
Female	3	60
Age		
20-29	0	0
30-39	1	20
40-49	2	40
50-59	1	20
60+	1	20
Ethnicity		
African-American	4	80
Asian	0	0
Hispanic	0	0
Caucasian	1	20
Other	0	0
Years in Education		
1-9	0	0
10-19	2	40
20-29	2	40
30+	1	20
Years in Alternate Education		
1-9	2	40
10-19	2	40
20-29	1	20
30+	0	0

The structured student and teacher interviews occurred over a period of 4 weeks in the conference room of the alternative school. The Interview Protocol found in Appendices C and D were used to facilitate the data-collection process. Each interview session was audio taped, commercially transcribed, hand coded, and organized by theme (see Appendices E and F). Using the Dedoose Analytical Software Suite, a frequency word search helped to determine the strength of each

theme. Dedoose is a qualitative software program used for analysis of textual and audiovisual data. The software expedited the identification of emerging themes.

Instruments

The related literature served as the foundation for the creations of many of the questions found in the data collection instrument (i.e., the Interview Protocol). The researcher, in collaboration with a team of student support staff members, created the Interview Protocol. To validate the student instrument, the researcher conducted a pilot study by interviewing five students who did not participate in the actual study. The participants in the pilot interview included a group of five African-American males aged 14 and above who represented varying academic tiers. Additionally, the pilot interview participants were asked to share thoughts regarding the comprehensibility of the interview questions, word choice, and the need to revise any of the questions. As appropriate, the input obtained from the participants was used to revise the original instrument.

Data Collection and Data Analysis Procedures

The researcher read a prepared statement to each interviewee and explained the purpose of the study. Participation was voluntary; and at any point in the study, candidates could opt out of the study without fear of reprisal. The researcher asked each student participant to sign a statement verifying his full understanding of the study's purpose and of his option to discontinue participation at any time during the study (Appendices G and H).

Once transcribed, the data were organized by theme. Using the Dedoose Analytical Software Suite, a frequency word search helped to determine the strength of

each theme. Dedoose is a qualitative software program used for analysis of textual and audiovisual data. The researcher used the emerging themes to answer the research questions.

Limitations

There are limitations and potential weaknesses in most studies that may affect the results (Creswell, 2013). Evaluating this concern using only one school district in one state may invoke geo-cultural bias, thus limiting the feasibility of generalizing the findings of this study to other areas. Second, the researcher is an employee of the district. This could have caused bias on the part of student and teacher participants, as they may have provided answers in accordance with their perceived expectation of the researcher instead of being truthful. Finally, this study acknowledges gender restrictions because the participants were all males; therefore, the findings may not apply to females.

Summary

Chapter 3 included a description of and the rationale for the methodology that was used in this research study. Further, Chapter 3 described the procedures and criteria for selection of participants, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures as well as instrument protocol. The companion protocol used for one-on-one interviews served as the research instruments in this study. Data collected during the interview sessions for both teachers and students were commercially transcribed and uploaded into Dedoose software for electronic verification of themes.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how alternative education teachers in an urban school district in South Carolina embody the ethics of care to support the psychological growth of five African-American male students. Additionally, this study sought to understand whether relational care influenced student motivation and behavior. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do alternative education teachers embody the ethics of care to promote the psychological growth of students?
2. What are the perceptual evidences of caring relationships in the alternative school setting according to students and teachers?
3. How do caring relationships influence student motivation and student behavior?

Five ninth-grade African-American male students and five alternative education teachers were interviewed for this study. The related literature served as the foundation for composing the interview protocol (see Appendices C and D for interview protocols). Upon completion of the interview sessions (see Appendices E and F), the raw data were commercially transcribed. Following close reads, the researcher coded each set of data and analyzed each for themes. Using the Dedoose Analytical Software Suite, a frequency word search helped to determine the strength of each theme. From the student data, the following themes emerged as prominent in prioritized order: care/caring, helped me get my work done, respectful relationships, and listening (see Appendix I for Dedoose Student Word Frequency Table). The students defined caring teachers as those teachers who helped them get their school work done or who addressed their lower level needs in

preparation for getting their school work done. The students showed a willingness to build relationships and show respect for the teachers they perceived as caring. The students displayed more positive behavior and motivation for teachers with whom they respected and had built relationships.

The following sections of Chapter 4 present the results of this study. Beginning with student data, the results are organized according to research questions. In some cases, quotes have been edited for brevity and grammatical clarity. Names have been redacted to protect the participants' identities.

Student Results by Research Question

Research Question 1: How do alternative education teachers embody the ethics of care to promote the psychological growth of students? To the students, the teachers exemplified the ethics of care by helping them with their school work and making sure they were successful in school. Student 3 believed the teachers cared for the students and would help them “no matter what.” Student 2 expressed that the teachers wanted to see them (students) grow, so they made strong efforts to keep the students in school. Student 3 conveyed his thoughts about caring in the following manner: “Mrs. E. helped me a lot. She helped me with my work and made sure I got it done even if it was not for her class.” Student 5 stated, “I did my work for all of my teachers because of Mrs. P.”

Student 3 added, “Yes, they [the teachers] do care. They care because they are there to teach us. Some of them are not there for the money; some of them are there because they want to see kids grow and prosper.” Another respondent explained that “the best thing about the school is that they actually care, and they actually want to see

everybody do better.” All five students verbalized that the teachers displayed care by listening. One student felt that teachers cared by listening and trying to understand student issues.

Student 1 shared that the assistant principal would buy lunch for him: “She would get me ready for school.” According to Student 5, “Mrs. P. definitely cares.” Student 3 depicted the teacher’s care in the following words: “It’s like a love from a mother.”

Student 4 offered the following information:

Mr. H., he showed me and told me a lot. He said you just have to show them that you can be better because they expect the same thing [negative behavior] every time they see you. You can’t keep doing the same thing because if you keep doing the same thing, then they’re going to expect the same thing when they see you again. So, you just have to change.

Student 3 also revealed that there’s stuff that he told Mr. H. that he never told anyone.

The student believed that Mr. H. helped him a lot.

Research Question 2: What are the perceptual evidences of caring relationships in the alternative school setting according to the students? All of the students named at least one teacher who embodied relational care. Each student readily named a teacher or educator who had a positive impact on his behavior and/or success at District 111 High School. All interviewed students believed that they made stronger attempts and were more motivated to complete their class work because of a particular teacher or the teachers at District 111 High School.

One student said it had to do with the tone of voice they use with the students. Student 2 said, “You can feel the care by their gestures.” Student 3 stated, “Mrs. E.

actually cares for me, and she taught me how to control my anger.” Student 5 believed that care was evident when teachers showed concern for them beyond the school environment:

They ask me about my family and my friends. Mrs. P. definitely cares.

Everybody loves her. She is a teacher here. If I needed something, she got it for me. Sometimes, she would give me food and snacks if I told her I was hungry.

She was kind of like a mother to all of us.

One student responded that care is when they know your name. Student 4 shared that “Mr. W., the principal, was pretty good too. He knew our names and would check up on us.” Student 5 further noted that Mrs. P.

always gave me things; she called me when I was out of school, and she asked how I was doing. Mrs. P. listened to me. I did not feel like she was judging. I would hug Mrs. P. all the time. I even told her I loved her, which I do. I would give Mr. W. a hand shake or dap him up a lot.

Student 4 stated that “Mr. H. helped me. I did work for him because he’s not just like a teacher; he actually helps, and he tells you stuff he’s been through that you can relate to.” Student 5 shared,

What it feels like is, when they care about you, it feels like you can be open to them. Showing them, I don’t know. Just changing. Just showing them that you care about what they are telling you or are helping you with.

Student 5 also stated, “I think at least a couple [teachers] do [care]. They ask about me. They ask about my family and my friends. They check up on me to make sure that I’m doing what I’m supposed to be doing.”

Research Question 3: How do caring relationships influence student

motivation and student behavior? Student 2 revealed the following: “I am a better person because of all of the teachers at District 111 High School.” Student 3 admitted, “My behavior is better, and I can control myself.” Student 3 also shared that “If the teacher is respectful, I’ll be respectful to them and you know, try to work with them as much as I can. Mrs. E. taught me how to control my anger through breathing techniques.” Student 4 stated, “I show them what they show me like love and stuff and I don’t take it for granted. I don’t just play with it, I actually show them that I changed a lot.” Student 5 shared, “It [my behavior] has changed a good bit. I try to think a little before I just get upset. I try to walk away from negative people now. I’m trying to watch who I hang with.”

All five of the students interviewed indicated that they think of a specific teacher(s) before getting into trouble, wondering what that particular teacher would think of them if they committed a negative act. The implication is that the relationship or respect they had with or for a particular teacher deterred negative behavior. Students repeatedly used the word respect to explain the reciprocal relationship held with teachers who helped them with academics or behaviors.

Ironically, in the beginning of the interview, Student 1 voiced that he did not believe District 111 High School helped him become the student he desired to become academically or behaviorally. Nevertheless, that student later shared that a strong relationship had been established between him and Mrs. H: “I do my best at the school ... and I avoid trouble because Mrs. H. cares about me.” The student further discussed the trust that he had in Mrs. H. Consequently, he responded to Mrs. H. with respect.

Student 5 said, “I avoid trouble because I want Mrs. P. to be proud of me.... She told me to see her face before I do something crazy, and so I do.” Student 5 further explained,

You could tell [Mrs. P and Mr. W.] wanted you to get back to your regular high school. They wanted you to do good, so I would come to school sometimes even when I didn’t want to because I knew they would call my mom and check up on me if I didn’t show up.

Student 1 explained, “I am better off because of the assistant principal.”

Teacher Results by Research Question

Upon identifying the themes from the teacher interviews (see Appendix F), the researcher ran a frequency word search using the Dedoose Analytical Software Suite to determine the strength of each theme. In prioritized order, the following themes were most prominent: care/caring, helped me get my work done, relationships, behaving/behavior, and respect. Minor or subthemes included listening, nurturing, and concern (see Appendix J for Dedoose Teacher Word Frequency Table).

Research Question 1: How do alternative education teachers embody the ethics of care to promote the psychological growth of students? The five teacher interviewees all expressed that the embodiment of care includes concern for and taking care of the holistic needs of the student. According to the teachers, caring includes using a soft or therapeutic tone when speaking to students instead of yelling at them. Caring is being nonjudgmental. Teacher 5 implied that the adults at District 111 High School will not give up on them (the students). For example, a phone call, a hug, a listening ear, words of counsel about life lessons, or taking an extra step to understand the needs of

students and what goes on with them in or out of school comprise ways in which teachers show care.

Teacher 1 stated,

We have very short memories for the negative things that a child might do, and that's just kind of how we approach the child. It's not unusual to see us [teachers] walking down the hall putting our arms around a child. This could be the child that got into an incident the day before. We'll put our arms around a child and ask how s/he is doing ... that kind of thing. We are always saying positive things, as much as we can, about every student's ability. "Thank you for coming to school today. This has been a great opportunity. Thank you for working hard in class; I know it was a tough class."

Teacher 1 shared the following:

Many of the teachers are very nurturing and see themselves as a second parent, if you will, because the kids, for the most part, need that. I've seen a lot of that in the teachers that we have and in this environment; that's very important.

Teacher 4 expressed an example of nurturing by stating,

One young lady came back to school because I called. She wanted to drop out this year—very bright girl. I spoke with the grandmother, and the grandmother passed the phone to the mother, who said we can't get her to come to school. So I asked the mother to pass the phone to the student, and when they did, I told her that I wanted to see her at school. She said she'd be there on Tuesday after Labor Day. I said I love you, and I want you to come on back to school. She said yes ma'am, and I love you too. She came back. Not only did she come back, but she

came back with an enthusiasm that you would not believe.

Teacher 4 stated, “My colleagues actually show the students that they care. They demonstrate it, and they actually physically say it. I care about you. I care about your future; I want you to do better than you’re doing.”

Teacher 5 stated,

For us, once kids truly feel like the teachers and staff are concerned about them and truly care about them, our kids seem to do more for them. They do it because they don’t want to disappoint the adult or the teacher or the administration. One of the strategies I think we use often is to just have complete buy-in in the emotional state of the kids who come. We show that it’s okay to be who they are, and it’s okay that they made a mistake. If we can remove those barriers, they tend to open up, and they are willing to make mistakes and be okay with that. They’ll be okay with failing and recuperating a loss that they may have had in a particular class. It comes down to the relationships that the teachers and the staff have with the students. Another thing that we have seen work with our students is the whole point of resiliency. We’re always trying to give kids an opportunity to correct their behavior. It’s never you did this, and this is going the end. We want our kids to always feel like they have another chance.

The embodiment of care is shown when teachers help students get a haircut before going to court, or when teachers allow students to wash their clothes using the classroom washing machines. “These little things go a long way in helping build their self-esteem,” explained Teacher 3. In the words of Teacher 2, “Teachers reach out to their students, making sure that they understand the information that’s being delivered ...

as they are trying to build a rapport with students throughout the year.”

Building solid relationships with students emerged as a strong theme and as a symbol of care. One respondent felt that building caring relationships with students comes from the top (administrative level), as the principal sets the example and models expectations for teachers. Two respondents credited the principal and administration for establishing a culture of care. “Mr. W. cares, and I think it starts from the head.... It just trickles down to even our coordinators.” Teacher 1 said the following about the principal: “He’s a very involved principal, and so because he’s that way, it helps establish a foundation for teachers and others who work here to have the same relationships with the children.”

Four of the five participants believed that caring is embedded in the school’s culture. One teacher shared that she spends the first week of school articulating the expectations and rules and observing students to help them understand who they are and how they get along with others. This time gives teachers the chance to build relationships and get to know their students. Another respondent implied that ongoing communication with students and parents is an essential component for building relational care. Teacher 5 said,

About 70% of our teachers really do truly, truly care, and we have what we consider to be a kind of “I Care” understanding in the building. That’s kind of a personal philosophy that I have and that I brought to this whole idea of alternative education.

One teacher responded,

Caring is absolutely embedded in the culture here at our school.... We pride

ourselves on building relationships with our students. On the average, student/teacher ratio in each class here is about four to five students at any given time. It allows the teachers to not only teach but fosters an environment of closeness with the students.

Several respondents believed that the small size of the school facility enables relationship building and a culture of care. All of the respondents believed that teachers take advantage of opportunities for building teacher-student relationships. For example, on Fridays, through male and female initiatives, students are grouped in activities to bolster teacher-student relationships. Teacher 4 affirmed,

That's the best thing I like about being here [at this school]. The size of the classes are smaller. Teachers can develop a relationship at the onset of school and/or work toward building a relationship. The average teacher here, if you talk to them, can tell you what's going on with the student, why this student is not doing as well as s/he could be doing, even down to if the student has personal issues, if they're just angry, if they're just upset, if they're working, everything.

When asked who the students would identify as the most caring teachers in the school, the following teachers were identified: P, H, S; other teachers named were M, H, R, and B; and Teacher 3 and Teacher 4 self-identified. When asked how the teachers embody the ethics of care, students gave the following descriptors: nurturing, using a gentle tone of voice (no yelling), bringing things for students (gifts, food, school supplies, uniforms), staying in touch with students, communicating with the students, and going out of their way to care for the students. These teachers visited students in their homes and served as confidantes yet showed tough love. According to Teacher 3, "Many of

these students come from broken homes. Most of the time, the school can be their way out of negative environments.” Whereas the psychological needs of the students vary from student to student, two teachers suggested that in addition to the caring culture and caring teachers at the school, students need more exposure to environments other than their homes and communities. As succinctly stated by Teacher 4, “To grow psychologically, the students need someone, a therapist who can listen to their day-to-day needs.” Teacher 2 stated, “There are a lot of factors that happen outside of the school, at home, or in their community (drugs, alcohol, bullying, and suicide), but I think students really need to know that we’re there for them.”

Several of the teacher participants believed that the students need people who are trained in traumatic and therapeutic services. They need mentors and positive influences and “people who could offer [therapeutic] support to the students.” Teacher 5 believed that caring is convincing the students that

It’s okay to be a child and do the things they do, but there will come a time when s/he has to grow out of that [state of mind]. There has to be that [positive] influence, something that they can see that makes them say, I want to be like that or do that, or I can be that if I just work toward that end.

Research Question 2: What are the perceptual evidences of caring relationships in the alternative school according to the teachers? Teacher 5 perceived that caring is evident in the classroom when teachers sit in a family circle with students to hold a community conversation or when students’ faces light up when they see certain teachers. Caring is evident when teachers show up for students’ football games or cheerleading tryouts.

When asked how students know that teachers care, Teacher 5 expressed the following:

Caring looks like being nonjudgmental. We don't judge students as they come through the door, no matter how they got here. An example of that is that when they come through, we greet them like we greet all other students. We don't have a look of disdain on our faces ... when a certain child comes in who may have caused some problems.

The teachers go out of their way to reach out to students. For example, a phone call, a hug, a listening ear, or even words of counsel about life lessons. One interviewee discussed how she teaches her students to positively behave and interact with each other. Consequently, when she observes students displaying this preferred behavior, she is quick to acknowledge and praise the students.

Teacher 4 voiced the following example of showing concern:

If one of my students misses more than 2 days, I'm phoning their home, asking where they are. In fact, just recently, one young lady came back to school because I called. She wanted to drop out this year—very bright girl. I spoke with the grandmother, and the grandmother passed the phone to the mother, who said we can't get her to come to school. So, I asked the mother to pass the phone to the student, and when they did, I told her that I wanted to see her at school. She said she'd be there on Tuesday after Labor Day. I said, "I love you, and I want you to come on back to school." She said, "yes ma'am, and I love you too." She came back. Not only did she come back, but she came back with an enthusiasm that you would not believe. Now, with all the days that she missed from school,

she still outscored the students that were here in August. She made 100 on her Mastery Connect test in English yesterday; she made 90 on her Mastery Connect test in my room yesterday. This student was not here when school started, and she did not get all the information. She's the student that definitely needs to know that not only that you care, but that you're genuine, that you're not just doing it, going through the motions, but that you genuinely care. She's motivated by that.

The minor theme of nurturer was articulated by the teachers as evidence of caring:

They give me hugs, and I give them hugs. They come to me. I'm not the disciplinarian; I let others take on that role ... so they know that when they come to me, they get sound counseling, and they do get correction, but it's not in a punitive way.... I'm more of a nurturer ... and so that's how they know that I really care about them. I teach life lessons, but not in a punitive way.

One participant stated, "Having a positive interaction with them every time ... I reach out to them and just let them know that if they're able or willing to speak, I will listen."

The teachers believe building a strong relationship with students is indicative of care. According to Interviewee 3, "Literally, just by building those positive relationships with the students, ... the students know I care."

When asked about their perceived rating of relational care on a scale of 1-10, one respondent rated relational care in their school at 8.5, and one respondent rated it at 8. Two respondents rated relational care at 7, and one respondent rated it at 6. The five teachers represent 23% of the staff. The teachers articulated positive acclaim for embodying the ethics of care in interview questions 1 and 3; not one of those teachers rated himself/herself a 10 in relational care. The mean rating for relational care was 7.3.

Teacher 5 voiced the following:

Because of the diversity of staff, I would say we're probably right around a 7, because we still have staff here who haven't been trained to be in a setting like this. They were sent here for whatever reason or assigned here for whatever reason, and they haven't really bought into the whole notion that alternative education is not a prison. It is not a punitive punishment place as they say or perceive. So, they haven't really bought into it; but on the other hand, there's that certain set of staff members who will do anything for a child.

Teacher 1 stated, "It's about an 8.5. I think with the most recent trauma informed training that's been put forth, teachers are getting on board with teaching from a trauma informed perspective."

The interviewees implied that students perceive teachers care about them by the manner in which they speak to them, their tone of voice, and even the way they handle crisis situations. Teacher 1 said, "Oh my goodness. Well, Ms. P. is one that comes to mind. She is like the caring mother. I've never heard her yell at a student. It's her tone. It's her demeanor. She's very loving."

Teacher 1 also referenced herself as a caring teacher:

And I would say myself. I know how to address the students. They know that I care about them, and I don't care what they've done to get here. They know that I'm always going to listen to them and care for them. Of course, I feed them too, and I make sure they have their uniforms and things they need. And also, not that I'm tooting my own horn, but I've gone to many homes and I think when you go to someone's home, you kind of meet them in their environment. It helps my

relationships with students because they can say, ok, you've been to my home.

Meeting them in their environment helps my relationships with parents as well.

Interviewee 5 felt that students know teachers care when they address their primary need for nutrition. Phone calls and communication between teachers and students are indications of care. "Students tend to gravitate to [respect/build relationships with] teachers with whom they feel comfortable discussing their life (both good and bad)." Teacher 5 also stated,

Mr. B., who is affectionately known as coach, is one that they [the students] flock to because he's very upbeat and makes the students feel good about everything when they're in his presence. He never has anything negative to say about any kid. Every kid has potential is kind of his motto.

Research Question 3: How do caring relationships influence student motivation and student behavior? The theme of relationships was especially pronounced in the data collected from the teachers. All five teachers articulated their belief that the class sizes were small enough to facilitate trust-building and caring relationships. One teacher said, "Kids will do more for teachers from whom they feel care." The implication is that the students do not want to disappoint them (the teachers or administration).

Teacher 5 implied that a strong teacher-student relationship is essential in helping students build positive self-esteem, an important component of psychological growth. Her theory is that these students need to know that it is okay to make mistakes, and they also need to know that someone still believes in them. As expressed by Teacher 5,

Kids feel better when they know people care about them. For example, a kid may

not have any ability at all, but when the coach works with them and finishes with them, you may think they'll be the best baseball player or a person going to the NFL or the NBA. The coach has a natural ability to make the kids feel good about the qualities they have ... that gives kids that feeling that I can do anything and that I can conquer anything because I won't be criticized. I won't be put down because I made a mistake.

Teacher 3 shared that a strong teacher-student relationship is the reason one student in particular felt compelled to express to her that he needed to be more positive. He acknowledged that his present state of being was the result of his own doing. The teacher saw growth in the student's self-perception. He now wears a bow tie to school. She emphasized that such an example is why relationships and trust are important.

Teacher 2 added,

One thing we do pride ourselves on is small class sizes where the average is about 4-5 students per teacher, where they again can definitely form some positive relationships and are able to ask questions and not feel like they have to compete with a large class or be heard when they're having educational issues.

Additionally, according to one participant, in small settings the teacher quickly learns names as well as other important information about the students, and this can help build trust.

Teacher 3 expressed the following: "With the class sizes being so small, by just doing our normal daily work, that stuff comes out." Teacher 2 implied that the students yearn for acceptance from teachers.

The raw data showed that all five teachers believed that students behave better for

caring teachers than for those who do not show care. One teacher reported that it is a matter of expectation. According to Teacher 1, “If you build relationships, that child will not want to disappoint you. You [the teacher] have instilled something in that child that makes them believe in him/herself.”

When it comes to the impact of relational care on student motivation and student behavior, Teacher 5 expressed the following:

It’s all about building that dynamic relationship. Again, it comes down to that trust factor. I’ve noticed the teachers who have that relationship with the kids, they [the kids] will do anything for them [the teachers]. I have personally seen a child come down a hall and not speak to a teacher but speak to the teacher right next door.... I don’t know that it was so much being rude as just not having a relationship with that particular teacher. They don’t think the teacher likes them, and they don’t so much like that teacher because of that particular fact, but they will go out of their way to speak to the next teacher.

Teacher 2 stated,

There is actually one particular teacher on our middle school hall that always gives the students high fives, and when you see these students actually approach this particular teacher’s classroom, they kind of light up. They’re happy to go into that classroom because they know they’re going into a positive environment, an environment where they can learn. They’re supported, and so I can definitely see by the students’ reactions the effect that this teacher has on them.

Teacher 4 stated, “They’re children there who are misguided and maybe not shown a lot of love, but they’re not bad. So, I’m there to help encourage them, and that’s

my job, and I love it."

Four of the five interviewees referenced Mrs. P. as the most caring teacher in the school. Teacher 5 felt confident that because of Mrs. P.'s demeanor and relationship with the students, even the toughest boys get their feelings hurt when she confronts them. She can have a positive impact when she says, "I'm disappointed in you." Teacher 5 stated, "That same teacher or any teacher that they care about can walk through a classroom when a raucous is brewing, and the unrest will cease." Teacher 5 continued,

Let's not kid ourselves; we have physical altercations sometimes, and it's usually that teacher(s) or support staff that have favorable relationships with students, that can get in there and just stop all of that nonsense and have kids go on to class or go on to where they need to be.

The theme of relationship and respect extends beyond its impact on student behavior. Solid teacher-student relationships affect student motivation, especially as it pertains to the completion of schoolwork. One interviewee explained that students will fight to maintain certain grades if they know the teacher really wants to help them. Teacher 2 expressed,

At this particular school, we actually have quite a few programs that we offer for students. Recently we started an initiative with young males where on Fridays, if they don't have any discipline issues, they're able to go into the gym and shoot basketball with some of the teachers. That actually helps to build relationships with them. For the females, we have a similar program where again, if they don't have any discipline issues for the week, on Fridays, we have labs here. We also have a studio, with sewing machines, and things like that. The students are able

to utilize those resources, but the important piece of that is that teachers are actually assisting them with these activities that can build relationships with their students.

Teacher 3 added to this by stating,

It also helps to play a little basketball with them every now and then, to show them what's going on, not to break their spirits, but just to show them that we can have fun too as adults. But the kids, from my perspective, just want to know that someone cares about them. Literally, when I was walking up the hallway, I tapped on one of the teacher's door, and I saw the kid with his shirt untucked, and so I said look, you need to get that shirt tucked in. I talk to the kids. So, it becomes a relationship building factor, and I'm not going to talk to the kids really loud because I don't want my other kids to know what we're talking about. But say you and I are doing our stretches, and I might say what's going on? How was your weekend? What did you do? Is everything all right in the community, just to see what's going on with the students, kind of build up a relationship with them, and that goes a really long way. The kids see that you care, you care to know about them, you care to know about what's going on in their lives, and it's not like you're just there to teach them and then get them on out the door. But, after the kids leave my class, I'll randomly check on them in their other classes, too. I don't know if other teachers do this or not, but I'll go to and knock on doors, and I'll ask the teachers how they're doing and if they're doing their work because I want the students to know that I have their back, and I want to check on them. Most of our students in the alternative setting come from broken

backgrounds and all that stuff, so if they feel like they're being cared about, they want to come to school, and most of the time, the school can be a way out for them. So, like I tell them, I have one kid who's trying to get back into the school and play football, and I coach football. So, I tell him you need to do this, this, and this. I have a girl that's trying to play basketball at her home school when she goes back, so I tell her you need to do this, this, and this. So, we talk about different things all the time, and I'm still teaching them what they need to do in class.

Summary

Although the theme of care/caring was prominent in both the student and teacher data, in the student data, the students narrowly defined a caring teacher as one who supported them in their schoolwork or one who helped them succeed in school. The sentiment of the five students was that caring teachers embodied care by helping them "get their work done." The students further believed that any gesture on the part of the teachers that facilitated "getting their work done" was an indication of care. The gestures of facilitation may have ranged from ensuring that a hungry student was fed, to making a phone call when a student was absent, to saying "We want you back in school," to taking the time to extend a listening ear to a troubled student. All students named at least one teacher who cared for them in all of the above ways. It is notable that the students felt that the manner in which teachers talked to them and their tone of voice were also indicators of care. All the delineated behaviors facilitated solid relationships between students and teachers. The reciprocal behaviors displayed by the students toward caring teachers were respect, improved behavior, and motivation to succeed academically.

From the teacher interview data, the researcher identified five major themes and three less prominent themes. The major themes were care/caring, getting the work done, relationships, behavior, and respect. The less prominent themes as substantiated by word frequency were listening, nurturing, and showing concern. Although the Dedoose frequency count categorized listening, nurturing, and showing concern as lesser themes, those subthemes helped the researcher re-story the teachers' information and add depth and insight to the individual experiences (Creswell, 2012). Further, for the teachers, the subthemes helped defined the embodiment of care. The subthemes also overlapped as perceptual evidences of care per the teacher respondents. The teacher data showed that relationships and respect resulted from relational caring. As a result, positive behavior changes and stronger motivation to work in school developed among students.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how alternative education teachers in an urban school district in South Carolina embody the ethics of care to support the psychological growth of five African-American male students. Additionally, this study sought to understand whether relational care influenced student motivation and behavior. Chapter 5 contains discussions, areas for future research, and a final summary. The research questions below guided this study.

1. How do alternative education teachers embody the ethics of care to promote the psychological growth of students?
2. What are the perceptual evidences of caring relationships in the alternative school setting according to the students and according to the teachers?
3. How do caring relationships influence student motivation and student behavior?

Interpretation of the Findings

The theme of relational care has dynamic dimensions throughout the responses collected from both the students and the teachers in this study. Additionally, the themes common to both teacher and student data were help with getting school work done and respect that came from healthy teacher-student relationships. According to frequency of use as calculated in Dedoose, listening was the fourth major theme for the students; but for teachers, it ranked fifth and was categorized as a minor theme by Dedoose. However, the importance of having a listening teacher was articulated by three of the five students and referenced by four of the five teachers; thus, in spite of the actual word frequency, listening was a significant “foot-print” and had substantial implications in the overall

findings.

One additional theme developed from the teacher data to answer Research Questions 1 and 2 (see Research Questions above). The theme was nurturing. Whereas Dedoose categorized nurturing as a minor theme, the strength of its implications resonated as a major theme by the teacher respondents. Students, on the other hand, associated nurturing with gestures that helped them get their school work done. In accordance with Maslow's theory, nurturing on the part of the teachers helped fulfill the lower level needs of the students (see Dedoose Frequency Count in Appendix J).

Discussion and Alignment with Conceptual Framework and Literature

Maslow categorized a variety of human needs into a conceptual hierarchy consisting of five levels of developmental needs. These levels are (a) a person's physiological survival, (b) safety, (c) love and belonging, (d) esteem, and (e) self-actualization. Youngsters need to feel loved, recognized, and valued and have a sense of belonging. The culture of care in the alternative school in this district helped fulfill those needs for the students in the study. The students' needs for higher levels of emotional care were accentuated in this study when Teacher 4 explained the following:

To grow psychologically, the students need someone, a therapist, that could listen to their day to day needs. Some of these children leave home not knowing if they are going to go back home. Someone may have sold the food stamps, and there's not enough food. All of that is going on.

Overall, the teachers in this study created a genuinely caring atmosphere at school that proved important and motivational to the students. Maslow suggested that people are not likely to be motivated to pursue intellectual challenges or develop a sense of positive self-

esteem until the more basic or lower level needs have been regularly satisfied (Daniels, 1992, p. 105). Many educators may agree in the absence of positive peer-to-peer relationships, which is often the case in alternative schools, relational care from the teacher is critical.

Noddings (2005) asserted that the desire for care is a universal human characteristic. The teachers in this study understood the environmental challenges from which the alternative education students evolved. The data revealed the teachers' willingness to supply lower needs such as food, safety, love, or whatever necessity was lacking if it stood in the way of learning. These teachers realized a haircut, clean clothes, or even a word of advice or counsel might make the difference in how a student feels about himself. Somehow, the teachers understood that taking the time to address the lower level needs of these students may have helped move them to the next level of success or the next rung on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Prior to attending District 111 High School, getting their school work done had been nothing less than an ongoing struggle or, for most, a failure. Perhaps for the first time, the African-American males in this study encountered at least one teacher/adult who cared, took the time to get to know them, believed in them, and/or validated them. It is entirely possible that for the first time in their educational career, a teacher was not hesitant to be around them or sit next to them while offering support. Noddings (2012) posited that entering into caring relations with students has both cognitive and affective dimensions. Ransom (2015) indicated that caring is important to consider for Black males because they are more likely to have had negative school experiences.

Noddings (2010) stated the following regarding relational care:

When I care, my motive energy begins to flow toward the needs and wants of the cared-for. This does not mean that I will always approve of what the other wants, nor does it mean that I will never try to lead him or her to a better set of values, but I must take into account the feelings and desires that are eventually there and respond as positively as my values and capacities allow. (p. 670)

Noddings (2012) said, “Reciprocity and mutuality are important in relational ethics” (p. 52). To answer Research Question 3, when the students in this study found caring teachers who were vested in their success, they reciprocated by giving their best efforts academically and behaviorally (respect). Equally as profound, and parallel with Noddings’s (2012) assumptions, the students respected the teachers because the teachers cared. Respect emerged as the third most articulated theme from the students and the fourth most articulated theme from the teachers. This study provides evidence that alternative schools can redirect dropouts and improve student attitudes toward school (Smink & Schargel, 2004).

Implications for Educational Practice

The teachers in this study displayed care toward alternative education students. The students felt loved and cared for because the teachers took the time to support them in their educational endeavors. It is difficult to image the numerous times in traditional schools when these same students felt educationally impoverished, school insecure, and devoid of a sense of belonging. Consider the countless students who have similar experiences daily.

The study offers far-reaching implications for educators. Teachers must understand and internalize the strong suggestions of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory.

His theory is one way to conceptualize and understand student behaviors. Simply put, failure to address the primary needs of students hampers learning. Second, the results of this study reiterate what educators have heard for years but may have forgotten or ignored: Students do not care how much you know until they know how much you care.

One way to help the teachers learn to show care may be the implementation of the Restorative Justice Program.

Restorative Justice is a broad term that encompasses a growing social movement to institutionalize peaceful and non-punitive approaches for addressing harm, responding to violations of legal and human rights, and problem-solving.

Restorative Justice has been used extensively both as a means to divert people from official justice systems, and as a program for convicted offenders already supervised by the adult or juvenile justice system. (Fronius, Persson, Guckenburg, Hurley, & Petrosino, 2016, p. 1).

Restorative Justice in schools encompasses a community approach to correcting behavior such as apologies, restitution and community service as opposed to punitive ways of exclusionary punishment such as suspension and expulsion. It gives the students and the community an opportunity to talk about the harm that was caused and how the harm can be repaired as well as restore the student's status as a member of the community in the classroom and the school (Fronius, et al., 2016). Choosing these options could lead to more positive relationships students so desperately need in the alternative school setting.

Another implication from this study is the significance of solid teacher-student relationships, a prominent theme in this study. "Meeting the needs of students

disenfranchised from the traditional education setting is becoming more and more important as we are faced with a growing population of students for whom status quo education is not successful” (Lehr et al., 2009, p. 19). A stable teacher-student relationship can make a difference in a child’s effort and behavior. Why teachers fail to use the strength of relationships is an enigma to educators. Annually, school districts across this country spend millions of dollars on the latest educational innovation. Is it reasonable to conjecture that many schools and teachers may be blind to the significance of strong teacher-student relationships? Perhaps training educators how to build positive relationships with students is the missing piece of the school reform puzzle.

Training in the use of culturally relevant teaching may be a step in helping teachers learn how to build relationships with students. Some experts may agree that it is difficult, if not impossible, to develop strong relationships with people you know nothing about. Ralston and Waggoner (2018) offered several principles for and reasons for implementing culturally relevant teaching. Teachers gain an understanding of cultural differences that impact the lives and learning of their students. The training helps teachers seek to understand these differences and reflect on how one's differences affect teaching and learning. The teachers are trained on how essential it is to dialog about diversity as a means of building relationships and to make important connections with students of color. In the absence of healthy teacher-student relationships, students may quickly assume that teachers do not care about them.

A prerequisite to the implementation of culturally relevant teaching may include walking into the neighborhoods where students live, striving to see the strengths of these communities. Immersion of the culture and the communities where students of color live

is critical for the acquisition of cultural-responsiveness skills. The benefits of this experience include exposure to varied cultural backgrounds; family structures; interpersonal relationship styles; and perspectives on discipline, time, traditions, and holidays. Such experiences allow the teacher to include students' culture, heritage, and experiences into classroom learning. Teachers are better able to shape curricula around student needs and use course materials, texts, and practices that are meaningful to the various ethnic groups within the classroom. As a result, positive connections ensue and students are more apt to be engaged in school in meaningful ways. Student self-esteem and self-confidence improve when course materials and practices are culturally inclusive. Culturally relevant teaching may go a long way in eradicating negative stereotyping, implicit bias, and biased educational materials.

On the other hand, a framework for helping students learn how to build relationships with teachers is Social and Emotional Learning Training. Social and Emotional Learning is a process where students acquire the knowledge and skills needed to understand and manage emotions. CASEL (2015) found that students need to be competent in the following clusters: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. CASEL showed that students receiving quality Social and Emotional Learning had (a) better academic performance; (b) improved attitudes; (c) greater motivation to learn; (d) deeper commitment to school; (e) better classroom behavior; (f) fewer negative behaviors, especially disruptive behaviors; and (g) reduced emotional distress. Many of the competencies that are principle to Social and Emotional training align with the principles of Maslow.

This study failed to prove that the students experienced profound educational

leaps as a result of relational care; however, the results of the study revealed that caring teachers can certainly set the tone for a positive learning environment in at least one alternative school. Hence, educational decision-makers must ensure that once the climate for learning is in place, the alternative teachers have the capacity to impart instruction that will help students progress to the next levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. While very few long-term studies have been done to corroborate their overall successes and despite the misperceptions about the abilities of the students, educators at alternative schools have seen firsthand how these schools work to transform lives (Graham, 2013, p. 1).

Study Limitations, Trustworthiness, and Recommendation for Further Study

As stated in Chapter 1, when conducting any type of research, there are limitations, which are potential weaknesses of the study that affect the results (Creswell, 2013). Evaluating this national concern using only one school district in one state could have invoked geo-cultural biases, thus limiting the feasibility of generalizing the results of this study to other areas. Second, the researcher is an employee of the district, which could have caused biases on the part of the students and teachers, as they may have provided answers in accordance with their perceived expectations of the researcher instead of being truthful. Finally, this study acknowledges gender restrictions because the participants were all males; therefore, the findings may not apply to females. Lincoln and Guba (1985) believed that the quality of an investigative study and its findings are indicators of trustworthiness. Also, trustworthiness includes the credibility of the findings and whether or not the findings are transferable or generalizable. To help ensure the trustworthiness of the study instrument, the researcher conducted a pilot study by

interviewing students who did not participate in the actual study. The participants in the pilot interview included a group of five African-American males aged 14 and above, representing varying academic tiers. The pilot interview participants were asked to share thoughts regarding the clarity, comprehensibility of the interview questions, word choice, and the need to revise any of the questions. The feedback and recommendations obtained from the pilot study participants helped validate the Interview Protocol. Further, audio taping each interview session served as an additional safeguard of trustworthiness. Consequently, it is reasonable to believe that the results of this study are sound and usable for the district that served as the site for the study. Further, with caution, the results may be generalizable to similar alternative schools.

The researcher recommends replication of this study. The replication may include a larger number of student participants from a more diverse population. Also, the researcher recommends adding a quantitative component to this study. The quantitative component could include a survey designed to corroborate the interview data. When considering a future study, the researcher would further recommend including a larger number of adults or all teachers and instructional staff instead of a select group of five teachers. Using a larger pool may reveal a correlation between age and degree of relational care. The recommendations as mentioned above may strengthen the replicated study.

Summary

Until the data are collected and analyzed, the researcher cannot be sure which of the external forces will become prominent in the findings (Creswell, 2012). While the student responses were far less numerous than the educator responses, the data clearly

showed that all five of the students believed that the teachers embodied care when they supported or helped them get their school work done. As implied by the students, the following descriptors symbolized traits and evidences of caring teachers: respectful teachers (respect is derived from healthy teacher-student relationships). While the teachers offered a broader perspective of how they displayed care to students, their explanations as well as the perceived evidences of care aligned with the categorical descriptors found in the discussion above. The heart of caring manifested itself through nurturing behaviors and even serving as second parents to the students when needed. Further, in the words of the teachers, nurturing behaviors, building relationships, ensuring the holistic needs of the students are met, and helping the students experience success in completing their school work demonstrate care. Noddings (2012) believed caring is comparable to the relationship between a mother and her baby where the mother is the carer and she puts aside her work or projects to care for the needs of the baby. In the eyes of the students in this study, caring behavior facilitated getting their work done. Further, caring meant getting to know the students through ongoing communications, going the extra mile, and paying attention to their holistic needs. Getting to know the students was not limited to in-school activities, but it often involved the home environment to support student success. The student data and teacher data implied that solid relationships and respect stemmed from relational caring. Consequently, positive behavior changes and stronger academic motivation developed, especially when supported by teachers who displayed relational care.

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Appendix A

Letter to Superintendent Requesting Permission to Conduct Research

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Ph.D. Accountability, Assessment, Research and Evaluation
Executive Director [REDACTED] Administration Building

March 9, 2018

Dear Mr. Smalls,

The Research Committee of [REDACTED] County School District [REDACTED] has approved your research request regarding *"The Perceived Impact of Relational Care on the Psychological Growth of 5 African American Males Educated in a South Carolina Alternative School."* The study is valid for the 2017-2018 school year only. You are free to coordinate with the school's principal to get the necessary data and participants at [REDACTED] Learning Center.

Lastly, please maintain the confidentiality of the data and do not make public the name of the district or schools. We ask that you provide us with a copy of your completed research.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Dr. [REDACTED] Ph.D., Chair
[REDACTED] Research Committee

CC: Mr. [REDACTED] Learning Center Principal

[REDACTED]

Appendix B
Informed Consent Form

Gardner-Webb University IRB
Parent/Guardian Informed Consent/Student Assent

Title of Study

Case Study Research: The Perceived Impact of Relational Care on the Psychological Growth of 5 African American Males Educated in a South Carolina Alternative School

Researcher (name and role/department)

Robert A. Smalls, Researcher and Gardner-Webb University Doctoral Candidate
Kathi Gibson, PhD-Committee Chair, Educational Leadership

Purpose**The purpose of the research study is...**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand, from the voices and perceptions of African-American males, how alternative education teachers embody the ethos of relational care to support the psychological growth of the students and secondly to understand the perceived influence of relational care on student motivation and behavior.

This study will contribute to the researcher's completion of his dissertation.

Research Procedures

Should you decide to allow your child to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This study consists of an interview that will be conducted with individual participants at Olympia Learning Center. Your child will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to how alternative education teachers embody the ethos of relational care to support the psychological growth of the students and secondly to understand the perceived influence of relational care on student motivation and behavior. The interviews will be audio taped.

Time Required

Participation in this study will require 1 hour of your child's time. The interview will take place after school in the administration conference room. District transportation will be provided for your child at the conclusion of the interview if you are unable to provide transportation.

Risks

The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your child's involvement in this study. A guidance counselor will be available should participation in the study cause discomfort. Trina Offing, District Coordinator of School Counseling Services can be reached directly at 803 – 231-6940 or you may contact the researcher for assistance.

Benefits

This study gives voice to 5 five African American males who spent at least 45 days in a South Carolina alternative school. The data collected may urge policy makers to assess whether the human and financial resources available to students in South Carolina alternative schools are adequately aligned to their needs and whether alternative education teachers possess the capacity and training for promoting social and emotional growth in areas delineated by Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The findings of this study may serve as a catalyst for conversations about the extent to which alternative schools in South Carolina support the psychological growth of African American males. Thus, the benefit your child will obtain from the research is knowing that he has contributed to the understanding of this topic, and the opportunity to discuss your feelings about your future after this program.

Payment

Participants will receive no payment for participating in the study.

Confidentiality

The results of this research will be presented at Olympia Learning Center with the school administrative staff as well as various stakeholders at the district level. Your child will be identified in the research records by a code name or number. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. When the results of this research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your child's identity. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all information that matches up individual respondents including audio recording with their answers will be destroyed.

There is one exception to confidentiality we need to make you aware of. In certain research studies, it is our ethical responsibility to report situations of child abuse, child neglect, or any life-threatening situation to appropriate authorities. However, we are not seeking this type of information in our study nor will you be asked questions about these issues.

Payment

Participants will receive no payment for participating in the study.

Right to Withdraw From the Study

The following statement will be read aloud to each participant prior to the data collection session:

Participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If the participant chooses to withdraw from the study, the audio tape will be destroyed.

How to Withdraw From the Study

If the student wants to withdraw from the study, he may ask the researcher to stop the interview and leave the room.

If you have questions about the study, contact the following individuals.

Researcher's Name: Robert A. Smalls

Department: Doctoral Candidate

Gardner-Webb University

Boiling Springs, NC 28017

Researcher Telephone Number: XXXXXX

Researcher Email Address:

Faculty Advisor Name: Kathi Gibson

Department: Educational Leadership

Gardner-Webb University

Boiling Springs, NC 28017

Faculty Advisor Telephone Number: XXXX

Faculty Advisor Email Address: XXXXXX

If the research design of the study necessitates that its full scope is not explained prior to participation, it will be explained to you after completion of the study. If you have concerns about your rights or how you are being treated, or if you have questions, want more information, or have suggestions, please contact the IRB Institutional Administrator listed below.

Dr. Jeffrey S. Rogers

IRB Institutional Administrator

Gardner-Webb University

Boiling Springs, NC 28017

XXXXXXXXXXXX

Giving of Consent

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of my child as a participant in this study. I freely consent for my child to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

☐ I give consent for my child to be audio recorded during their interview. _____
(Parent Initial)

My child will not need transportation after the interview. Please explain.

_____ (Parent Initial)

Name of Child (Printed)

Name of Parent/Guardian (Printed)

Name of Parent/Guardian (Signed)

Date

Name of Researcher (Signed)

Date

Student Assent

I have read the consent form and understand what tasks I have been asked to complete. All of my questions have been answered and I agree to participate in this study. I have been provided with a copy of this document.

Name of Student (Printed)

Name of Student (Signed)

Date

Appendix C

Interview Protocol (Students)

Interview Questions for Student Participants

Student Number: _____ *IEP: Y/N* *FREE/REDUCED LUNCH:*

Y/N

Age: _____ *Grade* _____ *Black/Male* _____ *First Time*

Assignment to Alternative Setting: Yes/NO

Number of Days Assigned to Alternative Setting: _____

Reasons for Placement:

Number of Retentions: _____

Number of Suspensions: _____

Number of Expulsions: _____

Other Information:

<u><i>Question</i></u>	<u><i>Notes from Response</i></u>	<i>Pertinent comments or non-verbal behavior observed during response</i>
	<p><i>*N=Question Based on Noddings' Theory</i></p> <p><i>M=Question Based on Maslow's Theory</i></p> <p><i>1,2,3=Indicates Corresponding Research Question</i></p>	
1. Why were you assigned to the alternative school? Explain all reasons.	<u><i>M</i></u>	
2. Did the Alternative School help you become the person you desire to become academically and behaviorally? How? or Why OR Why not?	<u><i>M,1</i></u>	
3. Has your school behavior changed since attending this school? Explain your answer.	<u><i>M</i></u>	

4. Were you suspended, written up, or expelled while at the alternative school? Why or why not? What caused the suspension or expulsion? Was it your fault or the fault of someone else?	<u>M,3</u>	
5. Do the teachers at your school try to get to know you and understand your needs?	<u>MN,1,2,3</u>	
6. Do the teachers care about you? What do they do to let you know they care? Explain your answer.	<u>N,1,2,3</u>	
7. Is there a teacher, principal, counselor, or person at this school who cares about you? Who was that person? How do they show you care?	<u>N,1,2,3</u>	
8. Who is the best teachers at this school? What makes him/her the best? Is that teacher a caring teacher?	<u>N,1,2</u>	
9. I do my best work at this school because (TEACHER'S NAME) cares about me.	<u>N,1,2,3</u>	
10. Describe your relationship with that caring teacher. Do you trust that teacher? Explain.	<u>N,1,2,3</u>	
11. Do the teachers at this school listen to you and try to understand your needs?	<u>N,1,2</u>	
12. Does the teachers at this school try to build a caring relationships with you?	<u>N,1,2</u>	
13. Have you met good friends while attending this school? Who are your friends? Describe them	<u>N</u>	
14. I am a better person because (TEACHER'S NAME) cares for me.	<u>N,2,3</u>	
15. What does a caring teacher do to show care?	<u>N,1,2</u>	
16. Would you say there is a teacher, principal, counselor or person at this school who is responsible for helping by building relationships and caring about you?	<u>MN,1,2</u>	
17. What do you do when a teacher shows care? How do you respond to that teacher?	<u>N,3</u>	
18. How do you let your caring teachers know that you feel their care?	<u>N,3</u>	
19. Do you have friends at this school who are positive role models for you? How many?	<u>M,2</u>	

20. What does it feel like when a teacher cares about you? What does it look like when a teacher cares?	<u>N,1,2</u>	
21. I avoid trouble at this school because I want (TEACHER'S NAME) to be proud of me.	<u>N,3</u>	
22. Is there a teacher who motivates you to do your work? Who? Will you work for him/her when you will not work for other teachers? Why?	<u>N,2,3</u>	
23. Did you feel like you were making accomplishments at this school? Explain	<u>M,3</u>	
24. Does the caring teacher make you feel good about your achievements? How?	<u>MN, 1,2,3</u>	
25. Has anyone at this school helped you learn how to handle anger? Make better decisions? Avoid Conflict? Be successful when you return to your home school? Who and how?	<u>MN,2,3</u>	
26. Before getting in trouble or involved in conflict, is there a teacher that you think about? Do you wonder what will (TEACHER'S NAME) think if I do this?	<u>N,3</u>	
27. Would you like to be placed at this school again, or would you prefer your home school? Why or why not?	<u>MN,1,2</u>	
28. What was the best thing about this school? Explain why. What was the worst thing about this school?	<u>MN,2</u>	

Appendix D
Interview Protocol (Teachers)

Teacher # _____ Years in Education _____ PBIS School: Y/N

Years at Alternative School _____ Subject Area _____

Age Range: 20-30 40-50 Over 50 Male/Female Race:

Are functional behavior assessment administered as needed at this school? Y/N

Were you placed at this school by the administration, or did you apply to teach here? Explain

1. Do you perceive that teachers at this school care about the students? Explain	N,1,2	
2. What additional services/strategies would help students overcome their academic deficiencies? Affective deficiencies?	M,1	
3. Do you care about the students? How do the students know that you care?	N,1,2	
4. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate relational care when it comes to the student-teacher relationships?	N,1	
5. How do the students know that the teachers care about them?	N,1,2	
6. How do teachers at this school build caring relationships with the students?	N,1	
7. How do the students respond to the teachers who care about them?	N,3	
8. Who would the students identify as the most caring teacher(s) at this school and why?	N,1,2	
9. Is caring embedded in the school culture, or would you say a limited number of teachers really care about the students?	N,1,2	
10. What do these students need to grow psychologically?	M,1,2	
11. Do the students have positive peer role models at this school?	M	

12. Are students more motivated to complete their work/assignments for teachers that show care? How do you know? Give examples.	N,3	
13. Are the students more likely to stay out of trouble in the presence of caring teachers? Explain	N,3	
14. Are the class sizes small enough to allow teachers to build trust and caring relationships with students?	MN,1,2	
15. Do the students behave better for caring teachers than those who do not show care? Why?	N,3	
16. Who is the most caring teacher in the school? Explain your answer	N,1,2	
17. Have you seen the self-esteem of students grow because of caring teachers? Explain	M,2	
18. How do the students let you know they feel cared for?	N,3	
19. What does caring look like at this school? Give an example	N,1	
20. Other		

Appendix E
Student Interviews

Interview #1

time: 5:25

File Title: "As"

I=interviewer

S=student interviewed

My name is Robert Smalls, this is a research study on the Perception of the Impact of Care on Psychological Growth of African American Males In an Alternative Education Program in South Carolina. The purpose of this survey is to understand and voice the perception of African American males on how alternative education teachers embody the relationships of care and support the psychological growth of students, and secondly, to understand the perception and influence of relational care on student motivation and behavior. Any time that you feel that you don't want to answer any more questions, you have the right to withdraw your interview.

I: Question 1

S: I was an incarcerated juvenile.

I: Question 2

S: No.

I: Question 3

S: It didn't change.

I: Question 4

S: They said it was my fault because I was walking the halls with no pass and I was just me.

I: Question 5

S: No, they don't care about you.

I: Question 6

S: No.

I: Question 7

S: Mrs. H[REDACTED]. She's the assistant principal. She just would have my back and help me out.

I: Question 8

S: Yes. Mrs. H[REDACTED]

I: Question 9

S: Yes

I: Question 10

S: Yes, I trust her. She graduated school in the class with my momma.

I: Question 11

S: No.

I: Question 12

S: No, not at all.

I: Question 13

S: No. Just the people I knew off the street.

I: Question 14

S: Yes.

I: Question 15

S: They make sure my grades are up and make sure I'm not failing or slacking.

I: Question 16

S: No

I: Question 17

S: I respond with manners and respect.

I: Question 18

S: I don't. I just go with the flow really.

I: Question 19

S: Nope. None.

I: Question 20

S: I don't know.

I: Question 21

S: Yes, I tried.

I: Question 22

S: I don't know.

I: Question 23

S: No

I: Question 24

S: Yes. She will buy me school lunch. I didn't have to eat [REDACTED] lunch. She tried to get me ready for school, but I just didn't make it.

I: Question 25

S: No.

I: Question 26

S: Not at the time, no.

I: Question 27

S: Home school. There's more freedom.

I: Question 28

S: Not doing anything good, and the worst thing was failing.

I: Okay, thank you.

Interview #2

Time: 07:09

My name is Robert Smalls, this is a research study on the Perception of the Impact of Care on Psychological Growth of African American Males In an Alternative Education Program in South Carolina. The purpose of this survey is to understand and voice the perception of African American males on how alternative education teachers embody the relationships of care and support the psychological growth of students, and secondly, to understand the perception and influence of relational care on student motivation and behavior. Any time that you feel that you don't want to answer any more questions, you have the right to withdraw your interview.

I: Question 1

S: I was assigned to [REDACTED] because I got expelled from [REDACTED] because I was fighting.

I: Question 2

S: It helped me change a little bit, but not all the way.

I: Question 3

S: Yes sir, it changed because I'm wiser, and I want to stay in school now and get my high school diploma.

I: Question 4

S: Yes, I was expelled from the alternative school because I didn't want to go to school, and I was skipping school. It was my fault.

I: Question 5

S: Yes, they do.

I: Question 6

S: Yes, they do care. They care because they are there to teach us. Some of them are not there for the money, some of them are there because they want to see kids grow and prosper.

I: Question 7

S: I feel like all of them cared.

I: Question 8

S: I can't name who's the best.

I: Question 9

S: I do my best at school because I know my mom and my family care about me.

I: Question 10

S: I honestly don't even remember their names honestly.

I: Question 11

S: All of them. They listen all the time.

I: Question 12

S: Yes sir.

I: Question 13

S: Yes sir. I did meet three friends there. I met this boy named J[REDACTED]. We call him J[REDACTED]. He's a cool person. He's smart. He stayed in school, but I didn't. That was probably the only person I'd hang around.

I: Question 14

S: I am a better person because of all the teachers. They were all there for me, even though I didn't want to be there.

I: Question 15

S: They help me study. They help me work, and they were just there for me every day.

I: Question 16

S: I guess I can say the principal. I can't remember his name, but he was the one who really cared about me and wanted to keep me in school every day and kept talking to me about it.

I: Question 17

S: I just stay respectful.

I: Question 18

S: I never let any of them know. I just stayed quiet all the time.

I: Question 19

S: I have one.

I: Question 20

S: You can feel the feeling, when somebody cares. You can tell by the gestures of them or the way they go by you every day.

I: Question 21

S: Not really

I: Question 22

S: I wouldn't say it was no teachers. I would really just say it's the principal because the principal used to always.. you know, stay on me and wanted to help me do better, and I would work for him.

I: Question 23

S: No... I really didn't feel like I was making any accomplishments because I was bad on myself. I didn't want to be there so I didn't grow.

I: Question 24

S: Not really.

I: Question 25

S: It was a teacher. I don't remember her name though. She did help me out with my anger, other issues and my behavior.

I: Question 26

S: The principal. I would always wonder what he would do.

I: Question 27

S: I would prefer my home school because I don't honestly like being around people anymore and I don't like being aligned with a lot of people.

I: Question 28

S: The best thing about the school is that they actually cared and they actually wanted to see everybody do better. The worst thing, was probably just the kids and the bus.

I: Okay, thank you.

Interview #3

Time: 06:49

File Title: "New Recording"

My name is Robert Smalls, this is a research study on the Perception of the Impact of Care on Psychological Growth of African American Males In an Alternative Education Program in South Carolina. The purpose of this survey is to understand and voice the perception of African American males on how alternative education teachers embody the relationships of care and support the psychological growth of students, and secondly, to understand the perception and influence of relational care on student motivation and behavior. Any time that you feel that you don't want to answer any more questions, you have the right to withdraw your interview.

I: Question 1

S: I was fighting and had baby problems.

I: Question 2

S: No because it was basically like jail for me. That's what it felt like.

I: Question 3

S: Yes sir. My behavior problems got better. I can control myself now.

I: Question 4

S: No sir. I was just a good student at [REDACTED].

I: Question 5

S: Only one of them that I know did that.

I: Question 6

S: No. Only one, Mrs. E [REDACTED]. She actually helped me, even with work that was not in her class, she helped me.

I: Question 7

S: Mrs. E [REDACTED] because she, like I said, she helped me a lot. She helped me with my work. She made sure I got it all done, even if it wasn't for her class.

I: Question 8

S: I'd say Mrs. E [REDACTED] because she's helpful in my opinion. She's really helpful and she's caring.

I: Question 9

I: Question 10

S: Yes I do. How do I explain this? Like I said, she's caring. She's really caring. She cares about all her students. She'll help them no matter what.

I: Question 11

S: Yes sir.

I: Question 12

S: Yes sir.

I: Question 13

S: No. No sir. I mean only one. That was [REDACTED] actually. I've known him since I was out here. We got there, and he was one of my only friends, along with [REDACTED].

I: Question 14

S: Mrs. E [REDACTED], she actually cares for me and she taught me how to control my anger.

I: Question 15

S: They help me with my work.

I: Question 16

S: No sir.

I: Question 17

S: If the teacher is respectful, I'll be respectful to them and you know, try to work with them as much as I can.

I: Question 18

S: It's like love from a mother basically. Mrs. E [REDACTED] is an example.

I: Question 19

S: Yes sir. There are two people that I would say are my friends.

I: Question 20

I: Question 21

S: Yes sir. That's true.

I: Question 22

S: Mrs. E [REDACTED] motivates me to do my work. I do my work for the other teachers, but I do better in Mrs. E [REDACTED] class.

S: It makes me feel good. I can tell that Mrs. E [REDACTED] cares by the way she acts.

I: Question 23

S: Yes. I wanted to actually go to [REDACTED], and you know, try to learn better because they said it was going to be a better environment to learn in and work on your behavioral problems which it is, that helped me but I didn't learn anything.

I: Question 24

S: Yes sir. I can tell that Mrs. E [REDACTED] is proud of me.

I: Question 25

S: Mrs. [REDACTED]. She taught me techniques like breathing techniques and just to walk away, talk to somebody, you know things that will help me before I get into a fight.

I: Question 26

S: Yes sir.

I: Question 27

S: I prefer my home school because [REDACTED] is like jail.

I: Question 28

S: The best thing is, I got out of school early. The worst thing is, it feels like jail.

I: Okay, thank you.

S: You're welcome.

Interview #4

Time: 07:16

File Title: "J [REDACTED] "

My name is Robert Smalls, this is a research study on the Perception of the Impact of Care on Psychological Growth of African American Males In an Alternative Education Program in South Carolina. The purpose of this survey is to understand and voice the perception of African American males on how alternative education teachers embody the relationships of care and support the psychological growth of students, and secondly, to understand the perception and influence of relational care on student motivation and behavior. Any time that you feel that you don't want to answer any more questions, you have the right to withdraw your interview.

I: Question 1

S: I was assigned to [REDACTED] Learning Center for fighting. That's it, just fighting.

I: Question 2

S: A little bit but not a lot. There were certain teachers there like Mr. H [REDACTED]. He helped with some stuff but other than changing, no. It's still the same.

I: Question 3

S: It changed a lot because I know I never wanted to go back to [REDACTED], so, I had to change for the better. I don't want to go back there because there's no help there.

I: Question 4

S: I never got suspended. I've been to [REDACTED] a couple times, but I never got suspended or none of that last year because I knew I didn't want to really get into any trouble. Before that, I got expelled for things that weren't really me. For instance, somebody threw a paper ball, and they suspended me for it. Stuff like that, but other than that I didn't get into any trouble.

I: Question 5

S: Yes sir

I: Question 6

S: They help. If you need help with work, they'll come help you. But at [REDACTED], they don't help you, you have to do it yourself.

I: Question 7

S: Nobody.

I: Question 8

S: Yes, Mr. H [REDACTED].

I: Question 9

S: I guess you can say that.

I: Question 10

S: Yes I do because there's stuff that I told him, personal stuff, and he never told anyone. Stuff like that. He did help me out a lot with getting out of [REDACTED].

I: Question 11

S: Mr. H [REDACTED] did.

I: Question 12

S: He did.

I: Question 13

S: I have one friend. We call him [REDACTED]. We're just trying to do the right thing.

I: Question 14

S: Yes.

I: Question 15

S: They check on you to make sure you're ok. They help you do your work.

I: Question 16

S: Mr. H [REDACTED]

I: Question 17

S: I show them what they show me like love and stuff and I don't take it for granted. I don't just play with it, I actually show them that I changed a lot.

I: Question 18

S: I don't know. I just show them that I changed.

I: Question 19

S: Everybody who goes there, they just want to do the same thing. They don't want to really get out. So, no, nobody.

I: Question 20

S: What it feels like is, when they care about you it feels like you can be open to them. Showing them, I don't know. Just changing. Just showing them that you care about what they are telling you or are helping you with.

I: Question 21

S: Yes.

I: Question 22

S: Mr. H[REDACTED]. He helped. I did work for him because he's not just like a teacher, he actually helps, and he tells you stuff he's been through and you can relate to it. Just shows you, you can change for the better. The other teachers really don't want you in their faces, just get some work and get it over with.

I: Question 23

S: Yes. I am staying out of trouble and trying to do my work.

I: Question 24

S: Yes, they do because, say if Mr. H[REDACTED] wasn't there. I'd probably be in a different situation right now. I'd probably still be at [REDACTED] because the rest of them don't help. That's how I feel.

I: Question 25

S: Mr. H[REDACTED]. He showed me a lot and was like, "You just have to show them that you can be better because they expect the same thing every time they see you", like Mrs. P[REDACTED]. Well, like Mrs. P[REDACTED] is probably blackmailing me right now because she worked at Olympia when I was the bad kid that she knew. Do you know what I'm saying? But, Mr. H[REDACTED] told me that, you can't keep doing the same thing because if you keep doing the same thing, then they're going to expect the same thing when they see you again. So, you just have to change.

I: Question 26

S: I don't know what he would think. He'll be like "Man you're just paving over what I told you.". That's just him. He'll just feel like I didn't take what he said and run with it. He'll just feel like I paved over it.

I: Question 27

S: Oh, I'll never go back to [REDACTED]. It's not the same. There's no socializing with other kids. You are really separated from others. They treat you differently. You have to wear the uniform like you're in prison. You have to keep wearing that junk over and over and over. I really like my home school better. It's more freedom.

I: Question 28

S: All right, I'll start with the worst. The worst thing about the school was the uniform. I don't want to wear it. There are certain teachers who are going to knick-pick with you to get you out of there, to get you kicked out of there. Then there's certain teachers that's going to help you get out of there in a good way like Mr. H [REDACTED]. He's going to help you get out of there. But, the rest of them I don't know. Mrs. S [REDACTED], she's all right, but she can be knick-picky sometimes too.

Interview #5

time: 6:10

File Title: "Student 5"

I=Interviewer

S=Student Interviewed

My name is Robert Smalls, this is a research study on the Perception of the Impact of Care on Psychological Growth of African American Males In an Alternative Education Program in South Carolina. The purpose of this survey is to understand and voice the perception of African American males on how alternative education teachers embody the relationships of care and support the psychological growth of students, and secondly, to understand the perception and influence of relational care on student motivation and behavior. Any time that you feel that you don't want to answer any more questions, you have the right to withdraw your interview.

I: Question 1

S: I had gotten into trouble at school, mostly for fighting.

I: Question 2

S: Well, I would say that it did help me some. There were a couple people there that really tried to look out for me while I was there. They really helped me get back on track.

I: Question 3

S: It has changed a good bit. I try to think a little before I just get upset. I try to walk away from negative people now. I'm trying to watch who I hang with.

I: Question 4

S: When I first got there, I got into trouble. I got written up. I just was angry. I didn't want to be there. I mean I knew I was wrong, but I still didn't want to be there, and so I wasn't really wanting to listen to anybody.

I: Question 5

S: Some of them do.

I: Question 6

S: I think at least a couple do. They ask about me, they ask about my family and my friends. They check up on me to make sure that I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing.

I: Question 7

S: Mrs. P [REDACTED] definitely cares. Everybody loves her. She is a teacher there. If I needed something, she got it for me. Sometimes, she would give me food and snacks if I told her I was hungry. She was kind of like a mother to all of us. Mr. W [REDACTED], the principal, was pretty good, too. He knew our names, and he would check up on us.

I: Question 8

S: Mrs. P [REDACTED] is the best teacher. I think she show her students that she really cares about them.

I: Question 9

S: For sure.

I: Question 10

S: Well, like I said, Mrs. P [REDACTED] and Mr. W [REDACTED] were both cool. You could tell that they wanted you to get back to your regular high school. They wanted you to do good, so I would come to school sometimes even when I didn't want to because I knew they would call my mom and check up on me if I didn't show up.

I: Question 11

S: Mrs. P [REDACTED] does.

I: Question 12

S: Mrs. P [REDACTED] did, and so did Mr. W [REDACTED].

I: Question 13

S: I knew one of the kids there from my neighborhood, and we were pretty cool. I didn't make any new friends there really.

I: Question 14

S: Yes. I would say so.

I: Question 15

S: Well, like Mrs. P [REDACTED] always gave me things, she called when I was out, she asked me how I was doing, and she listened to me. I didn't feel like she was judging me.

I: Question 16

S: Mrs. P [REDACTED] and Mr. W [REDACTED] would be my answer for all of these questions. They tried to build relationships with all the kids there.

I: Question 17

S: I care back. I show respect. I make sure I try to make them proud.

I: Question 18

S: I would hug Mrs. P [REDACTED] all the time. I even told her I loved her, which I do. I would give Mr. W [REDACTED] a hand shake or dap him up a lot.

I: Question 19

S: I can't really say that I had any friends there who were positive role models.

I: Question 20

S: It feels good. It makes you want to work hard.

I: Question 21

S: Yes, I tried.

I: Question 22

S: That would be Mrs. [REDACTED] I did my work for all of my teachers because of Mrs. P [REDACTED].

I: Question 23

S: Yes, because now, like I said earlier, I think about what I'm going to do. I actually care more.

I: Question 24

S: Yes. I just care more.

I: Question 25

S: Yes, you already know that it's Mrs. P [REDACTED] and Mr. W [REDACTED].

I: Question 26

S: I always think about Mrs. P [REDACTED]. She told me to see her face before I do something crazy, and so I do.

I: Question 27

S: I would prefer my home school just because I get to see my friends and be with the rest of the kids.

I: Question 28

S: Well, the worst thing was that it wasn't my regular school. The best thing was that I feel like I'm doing much better. I'm not as negative.

Appendix F
Teacher Interviews

Teacher Interview 1

Time: 16:02

File Name: S W

I=Interviewer

T=Teacher

My name is Robert Smalls, this is a research study on the Perception of the Impact of Care on Psychological Growth of African American Males In an Alternative Education Program in South Carolina. The purpose of this survey is to understand and voice the perception of African American males on how alternative education teachers embody the relationships of care and support the psychological growth of students, and secondly, to understand the perception and influence of relational care on student motivation and behavior. Any time that you feel that you don't want to answer any more questions, you have the right to withdraw your interview.

I= Question 1

T= I do...I can see the way that they interact with students, how they manage behavior, so that shows that they really do care about students.

I= and this is Teacher 0001

I= Question 2

T=I believe that different teaching modalities such as using music to teach concepts, the arts like poetry, things like that.. you have to meet the students where they are, so if you use something they're interested in, and something they can relate to, I think they're able to learn in those ways.

I=Question 3

T=Yes, I care about the students. I think the students know that I care about them because they give me hugs, and I give them hugs. They come to me.. I'm not the disciplinarian.. I let others take on that role, so they know that when they come to me, they get sound counseling, and they do get correction, but it's not in a punitive way.. I'm more of a nurturer..and so that's how they know that I really care about them.. I teach life lessons, but not in a punitive way.

I=Question 4

T=At this school? It's about an 8.5. I think with the most recent trauma informed training that's been put forth, I think that teachers are getting on board with teaching from a trauma informed perspective.

I=Question 5

T= I think the way they speak..even the way you speak to a child lets them know that you care.. your tone of voice..how you handle crisis situations.. children know you care about them when you feed them, when you address their needs, whether it's hunger, or fatigue, or not understanding a concept, they know how you communicate with them that you care about them..If you call them or call their parent when you don't see them, that's how they know that you care about them.

I=Question 6

T= Well, part of it is it's a small environment. That helps us build strong relationships. Also, I think it starts from the top, down because Mr. W[REDACTED] is very caring. He's a very involved principal, and so because he's that way, it helps establish a foundation for teachers and others who work here to have the same relationships with children.

I=Question 7

T=They work for them. They're able to calm down if there's a crisis, They're easily redirected when they're addressed by a teacher they know cares about them. They seek that teacher out if there's some type of issue. They will inform the teacher they have a good relationship with if something is brewing, if there's some type of altercation in the works, you know when they have that trust and rapport with someone.

I=Question 8

T=Oh my goodness, Well, Ms. P[REDACTED] is one that comes to mind. She is like the caring mother. I've never heard her yell at a student. It's her tone. It's her demeanor. She's very loving. She feeds the student.

Dr. S[REDACTED] is another one. She keeps in touch with her students, and they know that she will go above and beyond to make sure they have what they need.

And I would say myself. I know how to address the students. They know that I care about them, and I don't care what they've done to get here, they know that I'm always going to listen to them and care for them. Of course I feed them too, and I make sure they have their uniforms and things they need. And also, not that I'm tooting my own horn, but I've gone to many homes and I think when you go to someone's home, you kind of meet them in their environment, and it helps my relationships with students because they

can say, “ok, you’ve been to my home” and it helps my relationships with parents as well.

I=Question 9

T=Like I said before, I think it’s embedded in the culture because Mr. W■■■■■ cares, and I think it starts from the Head, so he cares. And even our Chairman of our Board, she cares.. how she’s so personable..I think it just trickles down to even our coordinators, yourself, I think it’s just the culture of the District, and I’m new to the District so that’s something I can say that honestly. That’s something that I’ve really been impressed with.

I=Question 10

T=I think they need exposure to things outside of their immediate environment. I think they need more people who are trained in trauma who operate from a trauma informed perspective. I think they need more mentors, and like I said exposure to different aspects of life because I think that sometimes their environment can be so closed that they think the whole world operates their whole environment is and if it’s not a good environment, they’re not able to see beyond that. So I think more opportunities to be exposed to different aspects of the world.

I=Question 11

T=I would say they do. As a matter of fact, today, I was walking down the hall with one of the students, and one of his peers encouraged him to stay on the right path, so that was encouraging to me because one of his peers tried to get him to maintain good behavior.

I=Question 12

T= I would say yes..definitely yes. I’ve been in classrooms where..I always say that aggression begets aggressions. So, I have witnessed where a teacher who may talk a little firmer has difficulty getting students to respond, and then I’ve had Ms. P■■■■■ come peek her head in, or in her classroom, and encourages a child and the child responds.

I=Question 13

T= Yes, I would say so. Yes, because if it’s somebody that you really respect and you care about, you’ll perform better and what they think about you matters to you. If children know you care about them, they’ll behave better because they don’t want to hurt you or disappoint you. They don’t really want to disappoint you. So I think they will perform better for someone that they have a good relationship with.

I=Question 14

T= Definitely, I would say so.

I=Question 15

T= Yes, they do behave better for teachers that are caring.

I=and the second part of that was why?

T=Why? I think it's just expectations. They know that it's not so dogmatic, that somebody thinks highly of you and they have high expectations for you. And if you've built that relationship, that child won't want to disappoint you and you've instilled something in that child where they believe it for themselves that they can be better, and so I believe they will perform better.. Because maybe before that teacher, they never even knew that they had those abilities to do better.

I=Question 16

T=That's kind of relative, but I would say Ms. P [REDACTED], or we have Ms. M [REDACTED]. She's very caring.. and myself. Yes, I would say probably Ms. P [REDACTED] because she's motherly and very nurturing. She's very patient.

I=Question 17

T= Oh definitely yes.

I=Explain.

T= Like I said There have been some cases when students have never even heard they're smart and that they're capable. And so I think when you can boost someone's self-esteem and have them delve into self-discovery, I've definitely seen students perform better when they're given praise, when they're told they are doing a great job. Even it's in small increments. So it doesn't have to be you passed the whole class, but you're here today, you did all of your work, so those little increment of praise, I've seen go a long way.

I=Question 18

T= They hug you. I get lots of hugs. They check in, too. I'll have students come knock on my door and let me know that they're here because they know that I'm concerned about their attendance, and not in a punitive way. The parents will call me and mention something that I've told their child, some high praise. I've had students leave here and ask people how I'm doing or check in with me to let me know they're doing ok.

I= Question 19

T= Caring looks like feeding a child that's hungry even when the cafeteria is closed. It's caring enough about a student to give him a clean t-shirt. Caring is classroom observation if a child is upset. It's going above and beyond. Caring is using a soft tone, I call it a therapeutic tone and not so much yelling. Caring is non-judgmental, so no matter what brought the student here, or nobody what's going on, that student still knows you care about them, so it's kind of operating in a non-judgmental way.

I=Is there anything else that you'd like to add about caring as it relates to [REDACTED] Learning Center?

T= I think we do a good job in caring for our students, and I think I said this earlier about the trauma informed care.. definitely that training has been very helpful and it's not something that people buy into overnight if they don't come from that perspective, but it's something that over time, you can see that it's really making a difference.

Teacher Interview 2

Time: 15:19

File Name: K B

I=Interviewer

T=Teacher

My name is Robert Smalls, this is a research study on the Perception of the Impact of Care on Psychological Growth of African American Males In an Alternative Education Program in South Carolina. The purpose of this survey is to understand and voice the perception of African American males on how alternative education teachers embody the relationships of care and support the psychological growth of students, and secondly, to understand the perception and influence of relational care on student motivation and behavior. Any time that you feel that you don't want to answer any more questions, you have the right to withdraw your interview.

I= Teacher 0002: Question 1

T= I believe for the most part that teachers have a genuine care and concern for the students that they work with daily. I do believe that there are also some instances, because we are an alternative setting, that teachers may have preconceived notions about students they are working with, and may be a little hesitant to reach out initially, but overall I believe the teachers effectively build strong relationships with their students here.

I= Question 2

T=Well, we do provide a lot of behavior intervention services, academic intervention services here at our site. We offer classroom guidance activities, we have a full time social worker on staff, we also have various members of support personnel here as well that assist students behaviorally and academically to assist them in being successful.

I=Question 3

T=I care greatly about my students. I believe that every student has potential, and I try my best to let them know that I care by having a positive interaction with them every time I see them. I try to have a smile on my face every time I see them. If I notice that a student may be looking down or something like that, I reach out to them and just let them know that if they're able or willing to speak with me, then I'm more than willing to listen, but even if they aren't ready at that time, to just encourage them that I am there for

them, so in the event that they are ready to talk or just discuss whatever it is that they're dealing with, that I'm there for them academically or socially.

I=Question 4

T= I would probably rate that on a scale of maybe a 7, and I think in a lot of ways, teaching has kind of changed a little bit, specifically in regard to differentiating between discipline and care.. because in some instances, I know teachers feel like as soon as you let your guard down, and students may see your soft spot, they may try to take advantage of you, so I do see the struggle with some teachers, just kind of understanding when to kind of let the disciplinarian drop a little bit and show students care and concern as well so that they can build a relationship with them.

I=Question 5

T= Well, I believe it starts of course first thing in the day. Teachers should always welcome students into their classroom. I think it's important even throughout instruction to just make sure teachers are reaching out to their students, making sure that they are understanding the information that's being delivered, and that they're not just up there for the sole purpose of delivering information, but also making sure that the students are understanding as well, and just being there for them and trying to be a rapport with students throughout the year.

I=Question 6

T= At this particular school, we actually have quite a few programs that we offer for students, Recently we started an initiative with young males where on Fridays, if they don't have any discipline issues, they're able to go into the gym and shoot basketball with some of the teachers actually to help build relationships with them. For the females, we have a similar program where again, if they don't have any discipline issues for the week, on Fridays, we have labs here, we also have a studio, we have sewing machines, and things like that so students are able to utilize those resources, but the important piece of that is that teachers are actually assisting them with these activities, so again they're building relationships with their students.

I=Question 7

T= Well, I believe students respond in numerous ways, based off of why they were sent here. Some students are sent here by the hearing office based off of some sort of behavior issue, others are here by choice, others students are paced here through our Special

Services department through an IEP and things like that, so it really kind of depends on the mindset of the student and why they were sent here. I would say that on average though, most students have a pretty good relationship with the faculty and staff here, but it's day to day. A student can have a bad morning and they can come in and you can tell and some students are like that the duration of their time here because they don't understand why they're here in the first place.

I=Question 8

T= Wow, that would be difficult. There are quite a few teachers here honestly who show a lot of care and concern for our students. We have a middle school department here, and we also have a high school, so the teachers don't see the same students. I don't know if I can name just one teacher. A lot of the teachers really do a lot to assist the students here, so I would give all of them credit for that.

I=Question 9

T= I would say that caring is absolutely embedded in the culture here at our school. We pride ourselves on building relationships with our students. On the average, student/teacher ratio in each class here is about 4-5 students at any given time, and so it allows the teachers to not only teach and allows the students to learn, but it fosters an environment of closeness with the students and teachers, building a very effective relationship due to that.

I=Question 10

T= Students need support, first and foremost, There are a lot of factors that happen outside of the school at home, in their community, and I think students really need to know that we're there for them. You know students face a lot of challenges today: drugs and alcohol, bullying, suicide, things like that, so they really, really need our support, specifically socially. I know they need us academically as well, but socially in order to push through and be successful.

I=Question 11

T= There are quite a few student leaders I would say we have here. Generally, though, again, this is an alternative site, so a lot of the students who are here are here for discipline issues, however, I believe that through the support of parents, the community, school leaders, a lot of those students have made some drastic changes and have become positive citizens and so I do believe we have some students here as well serving as great peer leaders.

I=Question 12

T= Absolutely. I definitely believe that students are more willing to put forth the effort when the teachers show that they care and it's because when a teacher really shows you that they care about your well-being, your overall success, it just naturally drives you to want to be the best that you can be. Teachers here actually put students' work out to not only show them that they care, but also their peers that they're being successful, which in turn trickles down to other students to make them want to do the same thing, and I have seen that.

I=Question 13

T= Yes, I believe so. You know, again, I truly believe that if the student feels as if someone cares, they put forth a little more effort to be successful academically, to put a better foot forward with their behavior, and so I believe once the students knows that someone cares about them, we definitely see a different student.

I=Question 14

T= Absolutely, again, one thing we do pride ourselves on here at our site is small class sizes where the average is about 4-5 students per teacher, where they again can definitely form some positive relationships and are able to ask questions and not feel like they have to compete with a large class or be heard when they're having educational issues.

I=Question 15

T= I do believe that students behave better and put forth more effort when they know teachers care about them, and I think it's because just naturally, you wanted to be respected, you want to be cared for, and I believe students kind of find a correlation between teachers who respect and care for them and in turn, do their work and put forth their best effort.

I=Question 16

T= We have a lot of caring teachers here. What I would probably say though is that from the top on down, our principal is a very caring individual, and when he shows of course that he not only cares about the faculty but the students, then it of course will trickle down to the teachers, and when they feel cared for, then they will show the same care for our students.

I=Question 17

T= Absolutely, yes. There is actually one particular teacher on our middle school hall that always gives the students high fives, and when you see these students actually approach this particular teacher's classroom, they kind of light up. They're happy to go into that classroom because they know they're going into a positive environment, an environment where they can learn, they're supported, and so I can definitely see by the students' reactions the effect that that would have on them... that particular teacher.

I=Question 18

T= One thing about students is they're very verbal. They will let you know. They'll come to you and talk to you about different situations and things that may happen of importance to them. If there's a teacher that says something positive, a lot of times they will go out of their way, especially in my office, they'll come to me to let me know something that has happened with them or to them by way of a teacher.

I= Question 19

T= Caring at our school I think is having care and concern for the whole child, caring about them academically to make sure they pass, or maybe even that socially they're doing okay. You know we have a full staff of people from guidance counselors, school social workers, teachers, administrators, other support personnel who want to make sure that the full child is taken care of, and that is definitely something we do at this school. We provide children with uniforms, clothing, shoes, shirts, belts, pants. In addition to of course classroom guidance activities that we have, we call in students individually and speak with them, we have student support teams that meet up with students. So in addition to of course the social aspect, academic aspect, we want to make sure the child as a whole is taken care of here, and that is definitely our top priority.

I=Ok, thank you so much.

T=Thank you.

Teacher Interview 3

Time: 42:17

File Name: C

I=Interviewer

T=Teacher

My name is Robert Smalls, this is a research study on the Perception of the Impact of Care on Psychological Growth of African American Males In an Alternative Education Program in South Carolina. The purpose of this survey is to understand and voice the perception of African American males on how alternative education teachers embody the relationships of care and support the psychological growth of students, and secondly, to understand the perception and influence of relational care on student motivation and behavior. Any time that you feel that you don't want to answer any more questions, you have the right to withdraw your interview.

I= Teacher Number 0003: Question 1

T= I do perceive that teachers care about the students because we are in the alternative setting, and so each student has an individual plan, so we try to set the kids up for success based on the smaller numbers that we have, so the students get what they need, and with that, we get a lot of time, a lot of chances to mentor the kids during the lessons, so the students are getting what they need. They're also getting some extra work or some extra guidance that they might not be getting from the house or the community, and I feel that for the most part, most of the teachers do care, and the ones that might not care might not know how to fully reach the students.

I= Question 2

T=So a strategy that I use is you know I'm in the PE and health world, so a lot of times, the kids want to come down there, and most of the students I have are boys, so they want to come down and participate and do stuff, so we do our warm up, our workout, our stretch, and then we get into our activity, so right now, we're doing table tennis, and so I'm teaching them angles, and Math, and Geometry, and I'm getting the math teacher to help work on that, and then during our times when we're getting our workouts, I talk to the kids. So, it becomes a relationship building factor, and I'm not going to talk to the kids really loud because I don't want my other kids to know what we're talking about, but say you and I are doing our stretches, I might say hey what's going on? How was your weekend? What did you do? Is everything all right in the community, just to see

what's going on with the students, kind of build up a relationship with them, and that goes a really long way because now the kids see that you care, you care to know about them, you care to know about what's going on in their lives, and it's not like you're just there to teach them and then get them out the door. But, after the kids leave class, I'll randomly check on them in their other classes, too. I don't know if other teachers do this or not, but I'll go to and knock on doors, and I'll ask the teachers how they're doing, if they're doing their work because I want the students to know that I have their back and I want to check on them. Most of our students in the alternative setting come from broken backgrounds and all that stuff, so if they feel like they're being cared about, they want to come to school, and most of the time, the school can be a way out for them. So, like I tell them, I have one kid who's trying to get back into the school and play football, and I coach football, so I tell him you need to do this, this, and this. I have a girl that's trying to play basketball at her school when she goes back, so I tell her you need to do this, this, and this, and so we talk about different things all the time, and I'm still teaching them what they need to do in class. So, it opens up the door for me because it's a non-traditional environment anyway, so it's a little bit easier than the regular classes, and for the most part, like I said, the kids want to be down there and they like it. It also helps to play a little basketball with them every now and then, to show them what's going on, not to break their spirits, but just to show them that we can have fun, too as adults. But, the kids, from my perspective, just want to know that someone cares about them. Literally, when I was walking up the hallway, I tapped on one of the teacher's doors, and I saw the kid with his shirt un-tucked, and so I said look, you need to get that shirt tucked in and he wasn't doing any work. So, I randomly check their grades just to make sure they're staying on top of it. In class, I also use that time when we're working on our stretches to talk to them about their grades in other teachers' classes, too so I'm trying to build a good climate for other faculty members, and I'm not really telling other faculty members that because I don't want them to think that I'm taking over their classrooms.

I=Question 3

T= I do care about the students. The big way of how they know is if you pay attention to them, you draw on their interests, you speak to them by name, you understand what they're trying to say. Sometimes, the students speak about things that they have no business talking about, and so I tell them we're not talking about that in here. They ask, "How do you know about this?" I tell them that I know about the community. I know what's going on, so I try to stay abreast of what's going on around them and try to help them out. Literally, just by building those positive relationships with the students, it helps so much in the building and down in the gym. The students know I care about

them because they'll come by, and I'll get a fist bump from them, they'll come by and want to try to beat the teachers. We set up an incentive program with PBIS on Fridays. If the students do well in their classes, then on Friday, for the last 20 minutes or so, the kids that have done well all week, have been in class on time, have completed their school work, didn't get into any trouble, the teachers will bring them down, and we'll do a 3 on 3 or 4 on 4 with the faculty versus the students. We try to get buy-in from them. That's also another time where we can mentor the students, which is great because the kids now have basically a therapeutic session. They're getting education because that's what they're here for. We are teaching them, but they're also getting a little bit of mentoring because they need that. They need to see guys in their life because like I said, most of them have broken homes. By showing them and modeling how we talk to each other, it's helping them, I feel.

I=Question 4

T= I think most people try hard. I'm not sure if a lot of the faculty understand the students fully and their behaviors and their community. The kids growing up now is a lot different from when they were growing up. I would say it's about a 6 here. If you don't take a vested interest in what they like and understand what they're talking about so you can get them to understand that you understand where they're coming from, but this is what I need for you to do.

I=Question 5

T=I think that the students know that the teachers care about them because 1) they know them by name. We track them. We always try to talk to them as much as we can in the hallway, ask them how their day is going and what's going on in class and if they're trying to do the teacher's work. I think we try to be united as far as the faculty goes, but I can't really speak too much on that because I really stay in my area in the gym because I have 5 classes back to back. I can only get out every now and then, so I can't see what they're doing in the hallway with the students. The only time I see that is during planning period or lunch time for a really quick second, but I really think that they try.

I=Question 6

T= So like the first week, I go over tons of procedures. I don't like to call them rules. Whether they tell you or not, they like discipline, structure, and routine, and I am all about discipline, structure, and routine because that keeps them in order, and it keeps me on track as well. We both know everything that's expected of each other and how this is going to work out. From there, we establish our relationship, and during that time, I get

to talk to them. I let them play for a week, and so I see how they interact with each other, I see who gets along, who doesn't get along. I see how this student talks to this person, I see how this student might not talk to this person. I take all these mental notes, and I see personally how I need to approach this student or that student, so it's really individualized for myself. So what I say to this student, they might be able to handle it. If I use the same verbiage with another student, they might not be able to handle that, so it's really individualized as far as my approach because I'm able to build that up; I'm watching them, I'm observing how they interact, and so I can understand where they're coming from. That builds up a ton of stuff because now I'm able to interact with the kids, and they're able to understand and comprehend where we're both coming from, and we get more work done that way. That builds up so much because they feel confident, and they feel like I care, which I do. They need that because when they go home, they might not have anyone to care.

I=Question 7

T= Well, the kids know and will tell you who they like and don't like. You know how that goes. They'll tell you if they do anything. They tell you what's going on, if they're teaching anything, or if they're on their cell phones not doing anything. The teachers who the kids like, they look forward to going to those classes. Sometimes if they're having a bad day, all it takes is today, hey what's going on. I need you to do this. I understand you're not having a good day, I just need you to do this and then we'll pick up later. So, sometimes if they tell me that, I tell them to go sit for a couple minutes, relax, calm themselves down, get a drink of water, use the restroom, and when they're ready, they come back and talk to me. I'll be doing the activity, but come talk to me, and that builds up a ton of respect. That's one thing I try to work on with the kids. I'm going to respect you, but you have to respect each other, and then we're all going to respect. That goes a long way. Firm is fair, but sometimes you have to be fair, but firm with them.

I=Question 8

T= I think they would say Mrs. P [REDACTED], Mr. W [REDACTED], I think they would say Mr. H [REDACTED], Ms. M [REDACTED], and I feel like they would say I would be as well, but I don't want to put myself on the list like that just because we're talking about the faculty.

I=Question 9

T= I think Mr. W [REDACTED] does a good job, as well as his administration, do a good job of trying to promote caring and the well-being of each child because that's one of the things we try to stress and work on: getting to know the children. That's why the administration

put into place that the first week we go over all the rules, regulations, procedures of what's to go on for the students and for what the students are to expect from the teachers because this is a completely different environment, and this is really individualized learning at its finest here. Every student comes here from different backgrounds. We get all the middle and high schools from District One, so each student comes here with their own problem, and so we try to help alleviate those problems and work on solutions so they can get back to their school within their 45 days or how many days they have. So, I wouldn't say rehabilitate because that's not the word for it, but we try to show them and expose them to what those triggers might be for them so they won't get into similar situations.

I=Question 10

T=The students are actually pretty intelligent. They are some of the smartest students I have ever met in my educational career. They use their intelligence for wrong doings, though. It sounds funny and wrong, but they could do so well in books and schoolwork if they applied themselves. I said to a student, "You can tell me every lyric to every song, but you can't do that math work." I asked why that was. They said they only want to learn what they want to learn, and I said they are going to need some of this knowledge so that when they graduate, they can get a job, get into the military, or go to college. Those are the 3 options. You have to do one of those 3. That's tricky. I think that there needs to be buy in at a younger age. That's the way I really feel, and I know that coming from the high school setting, I've seen elementary schools, and they've done really well. Somehow, there's a disconnect when they leave elementary and go to middle school. Somewhere, there's some type of disconnect as soon as they leave elementary and go to middle, and I don't know what that disconnect is. These kids are far beyond intelligence from where I was when I grew up at their age. Plus, they have everything right at their fingertips, in their pockets, on their computers, everything, so whatever they need, they can get.

I=Question 11

T= There are some positive peer role models at this school. The climate changes vastly every day depending on students, when they come in, depending on what went on at their other schools. It can change vastly depending on who comes in and who goes out, so say if there's a student in my class that doesn't get along well with the other student, if one of them is gone, then they'll do just fine. So, there are some students that have positive effects on each other, but it's also the opposite effect. They have negative effects on each other. So, also if I show some type of issues and you're in that class, and you don't have

those issues, you may start developing or showing signs of those issues to take on like a role because you want to be seen just like that other person.

I=Question 12

T= Yes. The students know if the teachers care about them. They know which if the teachers have a genuine interest in them, as opposed to the teachers who just show they care. They have that monitor inside them, and they know if you care or not. I don't want to say that hey teacher please, but they want to make sure they do what they're supposed to do in your class or in that teacher's class. As for myself, I don't have too many discipline issues in gym because they want to be there, but I see kids in other teacher's classes, and they have issues. So, that's kind of one of the reasons why I took it upon myself this year to kind of help the climate out, to knock on those teachers' doors to kind of see what's going on with those students and to try and see if they're doing their schoolwork. That's why I'm always asking in my class how the other classes are going, and if they're doing their work, I want you to do this. There's a teacher in one of the peer classes where they're working on resumes, and the teacher came to me and told me that this person, this person, and this person haven't done their resumes. So, I said let me talk to them. So, I won't tell the kids because I don't want to break any trust that the teacher told me you aren't doing any work, but I'll say, hey looked at your grade, and I see this assignment isn't done, and I'm going to need you to get on that. So, I really want them to buy-in to respecting the other teachers who they may not like or possibly understand, but I want them to get their work done. They know who cares about them.

I=Question 13

T= They are. They want to show you that, it's kind of a respect thing. You treat me with respect, so I don't want to get in trouble out here. One of the kids said that I hadn't seen their bad side yet, and I said what bad side? What are you talking about? The kid said that he was horrible, and I said you are not horrible. It's a choice. You choose to do that; it's an option. You can choose not to do that, or you can choose to make those choices. Those are the type issues I talk to the kids about when we're doing our stuff, and that goes a long way, going back to the other questions about knowing if the teachers care and building that respect and having the students understand. Once the kids know that you care about them, They'll pretty much do what you want them to do, and the greatest thing (I don't know about the classes), but they now police each other in class. So, say there's a student who's not having a good day, and these five kids really like me, and they like everything we're doing in class, and one kid says they're not doing that stuff, they will police each other, which is great because this is the best learning ever. I taught

them this, how to behave, how to interact, and now they're teaching me that they know exactly what I taught them because they're trying to get the other students to come back. So, I love that. That's one of the greatest things I've seen in class, and I'll stop the kids and say you're paying attention to me! I like that! So. I'll let them know I saw that quality, and I appreciate that. So, if I see good qualities like that, I'll stop them and say hey, that was good; I see something in you; what do you want to do in life? So, it's all bonding and building that bridge with them. Going back to the girl who wants to play basketball at Keenan, she has a real rough life, and she's trying to get her life together; she's trying. There are so many things going on in the neighborhood, and the community that she can't fix, but when she comes here, she tries to have a good day. I tell the kids that it's going to be a good day today, and I always try to be real hype with them and really upbeat and positive because they're used to being down. If they don't see any positivity, what's the point? You have to make it fun or at least portray that you like this as well.

I=Question 14

T= Yes. In the alternative setting, you don't get your traditional 30-40 kids per class, which is nice. You learn their names really fast. You learn their names within the first day, within the first five minutes of them coming into class, which is great. The first couple of days, I don't ask them what happened or why they're at [REDACTED], I just want to try to get to know the students. With the class sizes being so small, by just doing our normal daily work, that stuff comes out. So, they'll say hey, do you want to know why I'm here. I'll say, well, yes, since you're talking about it, you opened the door, so yes, what's going on, let's talk about it, and so they'll tell me, and I'll say that's a bad choice. So, they have a yearning to be accepted by the teachers because some of them feel like they're left out and thrown away, and so I tell them you're not thrown away; you're only here for 45 days. That's a quarter. That's nothing. In two months, you'll be back in your normal school, but the thing is they need to know that when they go back to their home school, they'll be accepted back at their home school because here, we accept them and want them to do well, but their peers or teachers or administrators, how are they going to accept them back? I don't know how that works because I'm never involved with that. I do know some students who feel not wanted when they go back to their schools because I've caught a couple students out at the grocery store, and they'll have on their uniforms, and they'll see other students, and they'll try to hide. I'll say don't be ashamed. It's all a learning process. You're just getting something else. You might've done something and got caught, and the other person might've done the same thing, but didn't get caught, but they should've gotten caught as well. So, we just try to make them understand that we're

trying to help them out, and we want them to get back to their home school because this is only a small amount of their time right here.

I=Question 15

T= Yes, that's going back to everything we've discussed the last few minutes. The kids want to have the teachers care about them, whether they show it or not, they love that discipline, structure, and routine because they don't have that at home. A lot of our kids, like we talked about before, come from broken backgrounds, and when they go home, they might not know who they're going to see. So, you might aunt or uncle in the house, and they might not see mom for a few days. They know that from 8:00-5:00, they're going to see that teacher. They know from 9:00-10:00, they're going to see the same teacher, so it's a structure that the students, I think, really look forward to. The kids know who cares about them. They do.

I=Question 16

T= I wouldn't choose myself because I wouldn't want to base it on myself. I would choose Mrs. P [REDACTED]. The reason for this is Mrs. P [REDACTED] is a little bit older teacher, and so most of our students are male students, and she has more of that grandmother effect on the students, so the kids listen to her because a lot of kids are raised by grandma. A lot of the students don't do well with the younger lady teachers because a lot of them have some type of issue with mom, so a lot of the students do well with the younger guy teachers and the guy teachers who care about them. Most of the male faculty members are always out in the halls, we're always talking to them, building relationships with them, so we're always around them, but I really see the students take well to Mrs. P [REDACTED] because of that wisdom. They don't really feel like she's threatening to them and that she's open and inviting to the students.

I=Question 17

T= I have. That's easy. We get in this business because we care. We don't get into this business for anything else, and the ones that are in this business that don't care, you see they quit. Being in this type of environment, I've worked in a Title One school now for 11 and a half years, my whole career. I have had opportunities to leave, I've chosen not to talk to the other people...I always want to hear what they have to say, but I feel like I understand the students. From my own background, I understand where they're coming from. Just because we may not look alike doesn't mean I don't understand. I grew up just the same as they did. I'm from outside of Detroit, Michigan. I grew up in a rough

environment, and so I know what goes on. I know how the kids relate to each other, and it really goes a long way to understand where they're coming from,

I=Question 18

T= They talk trash to me. They try to invoke like a challenge because they've always been challenged their whole life, so they feel like if they talk trash to me, I can handle it. So, I'm like you can't do that today, so I flip it on them and use it to see how much work I can get out of them that day or to see if they can do this new skill, and so I like that because they feel comfortable with me and they've accepted me as the teacher and my role to educate them. It goes back to that relationship. If they're comfortable enough to talk to me how they talk to their peers and there's a fine line, too. I am not your peer, I am the adult, and I am your teacher, but within that, you have to give a little bit. You have to meet the kids where they're at. You can't tell them this is what we're going to do; it doesn't work like that anymore. The teacher is looked at differently nowadays. So, you have to give and take where you can, and some things, when I was younger, I wouldn't have that. As I got older, I say let me take a step back; I'm still getting the same outcome that I wanted. It's not how I personally wanted it, but it's still the same outcome, so you have to give and take, and monitor and adjust, I can teach first block the way I want to teach first block, but second block, I may have to say, ok, I'm going to need you to get this done today. I know you don't want to, but this is how we're going to do this. Can you help me out with this. So, it's really knowing your students and how you're going to motivate them, and motivation is key because they have a lack of motivation coming in here, and they already feel like they've been thrown away.

I= Question 19

T= One of the teachers uses incentives. He helps the students out with their hair. He's a barber. One of the students may have to go to court, and he'll pull them in before school or after school, and he'll make sure they get a haircut. The other teacher has a washing machine in the classroom. If a student has dirty clothes, they'll say, let's go ahead and get those washed up for you. I know you're probably not going to get those washed up at the house, so let's just go ahead and get that taken care of for you. That way, you're not going to feel like you can't learn. Those little things go a long way, that Hierarchy of Needs, goes a long way with the students. Some teachers have snacks for the students to make sure they're awake and alert. Some students might come late to school, and they're supposed to go one way, but they go in the opposite direction and knock on a teacher's door so that they can get a snack because they didn't eat. We have a food pantry for students that they get on Fridays for the students whose parents may not have the funds

necessary. We try to make sure the students have food for the weekends so they can eat. If the students need socks, the social worker and guidance counselor have all that stuff for them. We try to really get to know students, and sometimes the students think being placed here is bad for them, but they might not be on grade level, and we can help them get back on grade level and get back on track so they can get set up to graduate within the appropriate four years of high school. Also, the regular school setting might not be appropriate for them, so this might be the best setting for them because it's a small environment, or we will find the right environment for them so that they will have success and so they can graduate. There are a lot of examples through the alternative learning settings that we have. There are four or five programs right there that we try to get so that all the students can succeed. Not each student learns the same way, and so whatever we can do to help that student get through, that's what we try to do. That's our job as educators. That's our role. We're here to teach and educate. Whatever task or track that the student might take, that might be their only way to learn, so we try to make sure that they get what they need. Also going back, we do a lot of mentoring. A lot of the teachers do mentoring. We have the PBIS with the incentives on Fridays. As long as the students have everything they need, we'll play three on three or four on four basketball. That's going to turn into badminton, table tennis, and whatever other sport we're going to be doing. We're working on getting a PBIS incentive for the young ladies, so we're working on getting some lady teachers to work with some of the young ladies that we have for different outlets for them. There are different group sessions, counseling. We have L [REDACTED] here for students who have problems with drugs. There are a lot of good things here that people don't even know about, and I think you came down to the gym one day when we were building the weight room. I sat on it last year, but this is kind of what I talked about earlier. I wanted to know what I could do to help the whole faculty because I get a little more pull than the other teachers. I don't like to talk about that or admit that, but the students want to go to PE because they want to participate, so I get a little more pull from the students, and so I try to use that by knocking on the doors with the kids, saying I need you to get this done for me, etc. That goes a long way with the relationships again. I like to say this is one of the best kept secrets in the district. It'll make you open your eyes, but you have to understand the environment to get through it and to get the students' attention and to get the best out of them. The one time you came around, you saw that I am building up a weight room for the faculty and the staff. I'm trying to build the community up right now. So, I'm trying to give the students an outlet to teach them how to lift weights and how to properly breathe, and trying to get the faculty an outlet and get them moving, so that we can be a little healthier as well. I know with movement it helps produce a lot of all the brain-based movement, it helps with

storage, memory, sleep, and so our students need to move. That's kind of another reason why I feel like I don't have the discipline problems down in the gym because they're moving while they're learning. The new student nowadays can't sit for more than 10 minutes. They lose attention. Their attention span is short, so you have to draw them in within the first five minutes or they're gone. So, you have to say something randomly funny or something they understand, and then you have them; you hooked them. So, like I said, I feel like this is one of the best kept secrets in the district. We do so many things that no one even knows about.

Interview 4

Time: 21:02

File Name: Mrs. P

I=Interviewer

T=Teacher

My name is Robert Smalls, this is a research study on the Perception of the Impact of Care on Psychological Growth of African American Males In an Alternative Education Program in South Carolina. The purpose of this survey is to understand and voice the perception of African American males on how alternative education teachers embody the relationships of care and support the psychological growth of students, and secondly, to understand the perception and influence of relational care on student motivation and behavior. Any time that you feel that you don't want to answer any more questions, you have the right to withdraw your interview.

I= Good Afternoon. This is Teacher 0004, and we will begin this survey right now:

Question 1

T= Yes, they care about their students here. I think if a teacher did not care, that they would find some place else to go.

I= Question 2

T= I believe an important factor is the factor of getting the right food, and I know people think of that as not important, but it is very important at this age and in this age group. I think if we could feed them more of a variety and with substance, that they would perform better academically and behaviorally.

I=Question 3

T=I certainly care about my students. They know that I care because I demonstrate it verbally and physically. They know that I truly care about them. If one of my students misses more than two days, I'm phoning their home, calling their parents, asking where they are. In fact, just recently, one young lady came back to school because I called, and she wanted to drop out this year, very bright girl. I spoke with the grandmother, and the grandmother passed the phone to the mother, and she said we can't get her to come to school. So, I said to pass the phone to the student, and when they did, I told her that I wanted to see her at school, and she said she'd be there on Tuesday after Labor Day. I said I love you, and I want you to come on back to school, and she said yes ma'am, and I

love you too. She came back. Not only did she come back, but she came back with an enthusiasm that you would not believe. Now, with all the days that she has missed school, she has outscored the students that were here in August. She made 100 on her Mastery Connect test in English yesterday, she made 90 on her Mastery Connect test in my room yesterday, and she was not here when school started and did not get all the information. I believe that she needs to know that you care. She's the student that definitely needs to know that not only that you care, but that you're genuine, that you're not just doing it, going through the motions, but that you genuinely care. She's motivated by that.

I=Question 4

T= About an 8.

I=Question 5

T= My colleagues actually show the students that they care. They demonstrate it, and they actually physically say it. I care about you. I care about your future, I want you to do better than you're doing. I've actually heard the teachers say this to the students. I don't think they're doing it because they're doing it because they're earning a paycheck. I believe they do it because they care. They truly care. Just yesterday, I could tell another colleague of mine was hurt by the fact that the student only scored a 50 on her English exam, and she was upset about it.

I=Question 6

T= By talking to them 1 on 1. They have one on one conversations. That's the best thing I like about being here is because of the size of the classes are smaller and you can develop a relationship at the onset of school and work toward building a relationship. The average teacher here, if you talk to them, can tell you what's going on with the student, why this student is not doing as well as he could be doing, even down to if the student has personal issues, and they're just angry, they're just upset, they're working, everything.

I=Question 7

T= Very positively. Yesterday, I was surprised when another student tried to give me a handshake. I said no, I'm germophobic, let's do a fist bump, so when I put up my fist, he just grabbed me around my arms and hugged me, and so we both laughed. He's been

here for quite some time, and I just like the fact that he felt comfortable enough to do that.

I=Question 8

T= I think I would be one of them that they would identify as being the most caring person. I've been told that I'm just so nice, but I have expectations, and I use that to my advantage. I know that there are other teachers that they would say care. Their math teacher, definitely.

I=Question 9

T= I believe it's embedded. I think as new teachers come on, they have to work on building that relationship because they kind of stand back, and I understand that because they don't really know the students. Some of our students are repeaters, so we already know them.

I=Question 10

T= To grow psychologically, the students need someone, a therapist, that could listen to their day to day needs. You have children leaving home not knowing if they're going to go back home. Someone has sold the food stamps, and there's not enough food, you have all of that going on. I had one teacher ask me a couple years back how I know so much about the students, and it's because I sit down and one on one conversations because I honestly believe I cannot teach someone who is so troubled unless I address what's troubling them, I just believe that.

I=Question 11

T= Some of them do, and now there are two boys in my class who have made a really good connection, and they want to continue their relationship after this school. They're calling each other brothers, they're helping each other with their lessons, and even girl-boy relationships, and that was good to see.

I=Question 12

T= Of course, Yes, they're more apt to do the work unless something is just troubling them, then there's hesitation, but if a teacher's positive, she can get them to do the work that needs to be done. For example, I have this child who sleeps constantly in the class, and she told me she has a sleep disorder, so we were working on that. She went to another teacher's class and fell asleep, so they know that we care and work and try to have interventions to help them be successful.

I=Question 13

T=Yes. If they know you care, you can check them. You can say, now you know you shouldn't be doing this, and they'll listen. They'll calm down.

I=Question 14

T= Yes. That's what I enjoy, the classroom sizes. Of course, even when I had 100 students a day, I still managed to build a relationship with all of my students. I just think that's crucial.

I=Question 15

T= Yes. When you show that you care, and they genuinely know that you care, they're going to be better, but it has to be genuine.

I=Question 16

T= Other than myself, there are several that are very caring. The most caring I would say is one of the English teachers. She's very, very caring. The math teacher is very caring. I think women tend to show more outwardly than men. The science teacher is very caring. These are high school teachers that I'm speaking of.

I=Question 17

T= Oh yes. Just recently, I had a student who was really down on himself and his home situation, and have what I call motivational Mondays, and we listen to E ■ T ■, who used to be the hip hop preacher. Now, he's a motivational speaker. Initially, I told them at the beginning of the school year that we'd be having motivational Mondays, and if they wanted to do something for Tuesday or whatever day, we'd call it that day. So initially, the student was listening to Mr. T ■ said that he didn't like it, he didn't want to hear all that. So, that afternoon, when he had me for 5th period, he said can we listen to that man again? I said, ok, what was your take-away from him? He said that I need to be more positive and that it's not anyone else's fault and that I need to stop making excuses. So, today, he said Mrs. P ■, I went to bible study last night, and we tied what I learned here with the bible study, and I said isn't that wonderful! You're getting it from both ends. So now, he's learning his bow ties. He's wearing is bow ties, and he's feeling better about himself. So that took building a relationship.

I=Question 18

T= They tell me oh Mrs. P [REDACTED], you're the coolest teacher, and I say no, I don't want to be the coolest teacher. I want you to do your work, and they'll say, yeah, but you're still cool. So, they let me know that I'm doing a good job, and that's why I'm here.

I= Question 19

T= Caring looks like good morning, how are you feeling, asking a student (and all the teachers do that) how are you doing today, what's up, you don't look good, you're feeling down, what's going on with you. That's when you can see caring. When you get to see it and hear it, because they're looking at the child's face, and the child seeing the adult's face and knowing, yeah, they're really interested in what's going on. I had an incident last week where one of the students said he can't see, so I sent him to the nurse, and the nurse did a preliminary eye exam, and she said yes, he definitely needs to see the doctor, and so she gave him the forms to take home for Happy Learners. He came back the next day and said, see my grandmother cursed me out because I brought home those papers, and I say what do you mean she cursed you out? He said she asked me why I brought home all these "f'ing papers" home for her to sign. I sign, no, let me have your grandmother's number, and so I called her and told her that the forms were coming back, we want your signature on them, and then I'll call you and we'll go over the forms together, and that's what I did. How can you deny free glasses for a child who can't see? So, I'm not accepting that from a parent. That's your responsibility to take care of your child.

I= Question 20

T= Well, I think I've talked you to death already, but what I wanted to add is when I say I work at [REDACTED], people say oh, you're at the bad school. I say, no I'm not at the bad school. They're children there who are misguided and maybe not shown a lot of love, but they're not bad. So, I'm there to help encourage them, and that's my job, and I love it. They are shocked, but it shuts it down and so I don't entertain them putting the school down or putting the students down, and that's what I tell them. When people are out here talking about the, putting them down, I'm going to bat for them. I'm constantly telling them that this is part of their journey, they made a mistake, but that's in the past, Let it go, and move forward. We have to have that attitude. You can't stay in the past. You have to move forward, and I tell them don't let anyone in their family put their thumb on their neck about the situation you're in. You made a mistake, and sometimes the mistake is trying to help family members. I had one boy who was here because he stole meat out of Food Lion, and he did it to feed his brother and his sister because his mother was a

crack user, I told him the next time you're in the store, you ask someone to help you. At least do that. Don't just steal.

Interview 5

Time: 30:01

File Name: N W

I=Interviewer

T=Teacher

My name is Robert Smalls, this is a research study on the Perception of the Impact of Care on Psychological Growth of African American Males In an Alternative Education Program in South Carolina. The purpose of this survey is to understand and voice the perception of African American males on how alternative education teachers embody the relationships of care and support the psychological growth of students, and secondly, to understand the perception and influence of relational care on student motivation and behavior. Any time that you feel that you don't want to answer any more questions, you have the right to withdraw your interview.

I= Teacher number 0005 Question 1

T= Yes, the teachers generally care simply because they know that the students coming here are coming here as the result of last chance opportunities, and so they have been trained, if you will, and worked with, to make sure that they give kids every advantage to succeed as to not have the same or show the same pattern of behavior when they came as to when they go back, so generally, they come in with that feeling of really wanting to help and support the children. Many of the teachers are very nurturing and see themselves a second parent, if you will because the kids for the most part need that, and I've seen a lot of that in the teachers that we have, and in this environment, that's very important.

I= Question 2

T= I think you said it first. For us, once kids truly feel like the teachers and staff are concerned about and they truly care about them, our kids seem to do more for them. They do it because they don't want to disappoint the adult or the teacher or the administration, and that's one of the strategies I think we use often is to just have complete buy-in in the emotional state of the kids who come and show that it's okay to be who they are and it's okay that they made a mistake. If we can remove those barriers, they tend to open up, and they are willing to make mistakes and be okay with that. They'll be okay with failing and recuperating a loss that they may have had in a particular class, and that comes down to the relationships that the teachers have and the staff has with the students. Others things that we have seen work with our students is the whole

point of resiliency. We're always trying to give kids an opportunity to correct their behavior. It's never you did this, and this is going to be the end of it. We always say that there's something else that we can do, and kids always feel like they have another chance. People here at [REDACTED] Learning Center won't give up on them.

I=Question 3

T=Oh absolutely. This has been kind of my love for over 30 years. Like many of us who started in a traditional setting, felt like we weren't doing enough and had an opportunity to come here to create something that I thought was worthwhile, which is to save or work with or bring back those children who are disenfranchised. That whole sense of both giving all that I can to see that a child is supported and will be successful is kind of like a personal drive of mine because I could've been one of those kids, my kids could've been one of those kids, and so when I'm with a kids or I'm seeing a kid coming through the front door, the first thing I've got to say is hey, young man good to see you today, or hey, young lady, you're looking nice today. I am so glad that you actually came to school today. This is going to be a fabulous day for you! Or, I noticed you had a few issues yesterday. What can we do to make this a better day for you today? Or, how are your parents doing? How is your sister doing? I noticed you had a baby picture on your shelf or on your bookcase or your book bag. Is that your child, or is that the family's new child? So, I try to give them a sense of letting them understand that I really do care about their well-being. The 1,2,3s and A,B,C's, we know how important those are, but what is more important in my opinion is that the kids know that you care about them, and they are willing to really, really work with you when they know you have that affection for the things they do and who they are.

I=And the second part of that question was how do the students know that you care?

T=Well because of how they open up to me. They feel like I'm the person that they can go to, or I get that warm smile when I'm walking through the halls and they don't feel like they have to run away from me, and I'm someone who's looking for a way to get at them. So, they'll often strike up a conversation about their day or about a particular class. They want a sense of pride coming from me to them or from them to me, letting them know that that relationship, that bond, is still there. Even though there are occasions when kids have to be corrected and discipline has to be administered, they know it's not an I got you kind of thing, and more times than not in a setting or meeting that we may have, they will express their appreciation for me working with them, even when they're angry, after maybe things have calmed down. So, through their personal expression, they let me

know that they really, really feel welcomed being here, and they feel like they're in a place where they're really cared for and cared about.

I=Question 4

T= Because of the diversity of staff, I would say we're probably right around a 7 because we still have staff here who haven't been trained to be in a setting like this. They were sent here for whatever reason or assigned here for whatever reason, and they haven't really bought into the whole notion that alternative ed. is not a prison. IT is not a punitive punishment place as they say for kids to do right. So, they haven't really bought into it, and then there's that certain set of staff members who will do anything for a child.

I=Question 5

T= Again, you always know the teachers and staff members that they care most about because those are the staff members that they actually gravitate to. Whenever there's an opportunity to not be in class, they'll be in that particular teacher's room or if we're having lunch in the cafeteria, and the teachers are there, they'll sit at their table and talk with them. When there are special things going on in the building like Valentine's Day, or Christmas, they give cards, they give a little present, things they may make or buy, and they give them to their favorite teachers, I see a lot of that going on.

I=Question 6

T= A variety of ways. One that sticks out more than others are the phone calls that they make to students' parents, telling the parents how great of a day their child has had. This is not a bad phone call, this is a good call to let you know how well your child did today. Again, just the whole notion of relational trust. Most times, if a teacher says they are going to do something, they do it. So, it's not just I don't believe what you're saying or I don't trust what you're going to do, you're out to get me kind of thing. So, that's kind of how that relationship is built.

I=Question 7

T= That's a good question. With the teachers I don't see a whole lot of that because of what I'm doing day to day, but what I mostly see is the coming together during special times. They find their way to those teachers, within their zones, and I hear a lot of what happened over the weekend or what happened at the game, or did you come see me at the football game, that type of thing. That's kind of what I notice.

I=Question 8

T= Wow, now you're putting me on the spot. There is a teacher by the name of Mrs. [REDACTED] P [REDACTED] who would probably be the overwhelming favorite because she is very nurturing. She is a Career and Technology teacher, and her major role is to give them information about careers, if possible, things they consider to be real life opportunities, and so she's always extending beyond that particular lesson that she may be doing to talk about how this will work in their if something has happened in their homes, they go to her and she'll talk with them. adult lives in the future, She's one that they go to when they need to be consoled if something's happened in their homes, they'll go to her, and she'll talk with them. She's another one, who every once in a while, she'll come and she'll bring things for the kids, like sometimes they'll be out of uniform or they may need things for school, she'll give them paper, pencils, she'll have uniform stuff like belts and socks. She's just one of those people that you can look forward to doing things. The second person that I can say that about now more than ever is my social worker, Mrs. H [REDACTED]. She's another one that's extremely nurturing, She's no nonsense when it comes to working with those kids. She tells them the truth about what needs to happen, and she loves them as she's telling them. It's not a beat down kind of conversation, but she won't lie to make them feel better. Another teacher I would have to say is Mrs. R [REDACTED]. She's another good teacher, an English teacher. Kids seem to gravitate to her because she has a lot of kids their age and so she can understand what they're going through. She's not as nurturing as other teachers, but she is one that kids confide in because she's had that experience with kids around that age. Mr. B [REDACTED], who is affectionately known as coach, is one that they flock to, because he's very upbeat and makes you feel good about everything when you're in his presence. He never has anything negative to say about any kid. Every kid has potential is kind of his motto. Mr. H [REDACTED] is another teacher of ours who works with the behavior, PBIS. He's another one that the kids gravitate to. He has a great rapport with the students, he speaks their language, so to speak. Even though he's a little bit older guy, he stays in tune with what's happening in the kids' world, and he can relate to them. He does a fine job of doing a lot of one on one with the kids to get them out of their negative behaviors if they have any or some negative situations they may have experienced out in the street. He's there for them, he can walk them and talk them through most of that. He's just a mellow person that the kids kind of hold onto when they need some extra support.

I=Question 9

T= About 70% of our teachers really do truly, truly care, and we have what we consider to be a kind of "I Care" understanding in the building, and that's kind of a personal philosophy that I have that I brought to this whole ideal of alternative education. Before

we can teach the kids, we have to let them know we care, and so everything we do is centered around PBIS. It's not necessarily giving kids an incentive for what they do right, but it's more so becoming a cheerleader supporting the things that they've done right and not so much harping on the things they've done wrong, but pointing out the things that they can improve on out of what they've done wrong. Those are the kinds of things that we build in our culture of caring that helps kids understand that this is not just a place of punitive punishment, and they really appreciate that. Many of our kids will often talk about wanting to stay here because they don't get that same kind of affection and that same kind of caring when they go back to their home schools because there are so many other students to deal with.

I=Question 10

T= In my mind, I think they really need more positive influences, not just here at the school, and I think that's why we kind of roll into that whole mentoring piece that we do here as well. Kids have to have a positive image or something in their lives that shows them sometimes the way to behave or sometimes to be that person that they want to become as an adult. Psychologically is being able to be convinced that it's okay to make mistakes, it's okay to be a child and do the things they do, but at some point in time, there will come a time when you have to grow out of that and again, there has to be that influence, something that they can see that makes them say, I want to be like that or do that, or I can be that if we just work toward that end. Other than that, I can't point to any one thing that will have that type of affect, except for that personal relationship with another person.

I=Question 11

T= Yes. We pride ourselves on giving every single child that walks through the door a role model. We try to say role model/mentor for several reasons. With the size that we have here, I find it almost deplorable if we can't find somebody standing for a kid no matter what the situation is because we're so small here at [REDACTED]. But, we do, as they're coming in, we have what's called a n MTSS/Transition team that are assigned to students as they actually enroll, and their job is to introduce themselves, to welcome them here to [REDACTED] from , another point of view, not just from orientation, but to say we're glad you're here, you're going to have a wonderful stay, even though you're only here for 45 days or less, we can make your experience worthwhile and to get you to doing the things that will get you back to your home school.

I=Question 12

T= Absolutely, it's going back to an earlier question about those students who came to us who weren't doing very well. We analyze every transcript of students who come to us, and let's just say we notice that 80% of the course work that's been taken has been in the negative area of 50% and down, some as low as 25% in particular classes. So they've already come here defeated, and what I've noticed in some of our teachers is that they'll say we will start from day 1. You're at 0, and you have no place to go but up. Or, some teachers will say, look, today, you're starting off with an A. You can keep this A, and here's what you need to do to keep it. They may go down to a B, they may go down to a C, but a kid will fight to keep at least a C, and so they know that teachers really want to help. Now I can't say that about 100% of my teachers, but I can say that about 70% of them really want to help and will take that extra step to make sure that the kid feels like they have an equal or better chance to be successful, and that's in all the core subjects, that's in all the elective courses that we have, and that's in the middle school that we have. They all feel like they have a chance.

I=Question 13

T=Oh man, that's a good one. We have had some heated situations that may have gone on in the neighborhood. Well, let me answer your question first, yes. Say that the incidents we have had in the neighborhood, they come to school, and many of the kids are from the same neighborhood or they may be from a rival gang or a rival neighborhood, and so they bring those tensions into the building, and if no one is present in the hallway, particularly a teacher that they have built a rapport with, there could be a problem, a very serious problem. What we have noticed, our teachers who come out in the hallway, or during breakfast, or when it's lunch time, if they're visible, they're playing chess, or they're playing some type of game with the kids, and you hear that something might be going on, a teacher may just walk by, and they'll stop. They will stop. Now, there are some teachers that they don't care whether they're there or not because they don't necessarily have that same kind of relationship with them, but especially if I walk through there or Mr. H [REDACTED] walks through there or Mr. W [REDACTED] walks through there, or Mrs. P [REDACTED] walks through there, or any of those teachers that they care about, oh, they'll stop. Or, if it gets going, a teacher of that caliber will say, come on guys, we need to get to class, or get where you're going, they will stop and move on. It's easy to break up incidents. Let's not kid ourselves; we have physical altercations sometimes, and it's usually that teacher or teachers or support staff that have that relationship that can get in there and just stop all of that nonsense and have kids go on to class or go on to where they need to be

I=Question 14

T= Right, we have a 15:1 ratio. That's the max, but we rarely see 15:1, except in maybe some of the core areas where kids have taken repeated courses. We sometimes get as low as 7:1, and that builds an opportunity for great relationships where teachers are actually sitting down at the desks with students, or they are in a circle where they are having what I consider to be a community type conversation. Where they talk about life and jobs, and opportunities, and careers, so the answer to that is yes, the smaller we are, the more into the kid that we can be because that time now doesn't have to be as divided.

I=Question 15

T= Yes they do again because of the relationship that they have created. It's all about building that dynamic relationship. Again, it comes down to that trust factor. I've noticed the teachers who have that relationships with the kids, they will do anything for, and I have personally seen a child come down a hall and not speak to a teacher, but speak to the teacher right next door to them, and they are all out in the hall, monitoring during transitions. I don't know that it was so much being rude, but it was that they just don't have a relationship with that particular teacher. They don't think the teacher likes them, and they don't so much like that teacher because of that particular fact, but they will go out of their way to speak to the next teacher. "Hi, Ms. So and so" or "Hi, Mr. So and So." It shows on their face, the brightness of the smile that they bring when they see someone that they really care about and really want to say something to or strike up a conversation with.

I=Question 16

T= If you talk about teacher only, it would have to be Mrs. P [REDACTED]. She is the most caring person, and the major reason why is because she is extremely nurturing. She truly, truly, truly cares about the kids, so much so that she goes by doing home visits, and it's not just the kids that are in her classroom that she may go by to see, it may be another kid that she has a relationship with from a cafeteria conversation or from one of the activities we may have around the building. She'll actually go to the house and visit. She'll go to one of the community functions or activities, she may go to a football game where they may be playing, or she may be watching them do a cheerleading routine. She just likes being that one person in the building who the kids can absolutely trust. Don't get me wrong, she's no pushover. Mrs. P [REDACTED] has been around a while, and she knows how to separate that from what needs to be said when a kid is out of line, and that's what I call the tough love piece that she presents. They know that she means it, and often times, they don't get mad. Even my toughest kids, even my tough, tough, tough boys get their feelings hurt by her because she will say, "I'm disappointed in you. I thought you were

better than that.” You can see the disappointment in that child’s face and how they work to get back that trust. You don’t see that very often. There are very few teachers I see that from.

I=Question 17

T= Yes, absolutely. Kids feel better when they know people care about them. Coach B [REDACTED], for example, who a kid may not have any ability at all, but when he works with them and finishes with them, you may think they’ll be the best baseball player or a person going to the NFL or the NBA or whatever it is that they ‘re doing, the greatest soccer player. He has a natural ability to make the kids feel good about the quality they have and that kind of thing. Other teachers, too will do the same thing. They make them feel like what they’re doing is the most important thing at the time that they’re doing it, and again, that gives kids that feeling that I can do anything, that I can conquer anything because I won’t be criticized. I won’t be put down because I make a mistake, or I don’t do it as well as somebody else, so that works well for us.

I=Question 18

T= Again, just the presence. When they see the people they really care about, you see a lot of smiles, you seem them going by classrooms. During transitions, you’ll see them going into classrooms to say hello, not in the hallway. The teachers may be doing something else in the classroom, and they’ll go in to say hello, or during lunch, they’ll eat with that particular teacher. Again, they’ll give Christmas cards, or birthday cards, if they know the birthday. Sometimes we have what’s called a shout-out board, and kids can put on a sticker, “hello Ms. So and So, just thinking about you today. Have a nice day.” A teacher can do the same thing for students. So, that’s kind of how the kids show they care, and I’ll tell you another thing that really works well: when we have the parent-teacher conferences, sometimes when kids bring their parents up, and the parent will say my child talks about you all the time, so I just had to meet you! We need to find out who you are because you’ve been such a positive influence in my child’s life. This has kind of been a good thing

I= Question 19

T= Caring looks like being nonjudgmental. We don’t judge students as they come through the door, no matter how they got here. An example of that is that when they come through, we greet them like we greet all other students. We don’t have a look of disdain on our faces when a certain child comes in who may have caused some problems. Caring looks like, and this is a little more tangible for us, because we don’t show anger.

We have very short memories for the negative things that a child might do, and that's just kind of how we approach the child. It's easy to see us when you're walking down the hall putting our arms around a child. This could be the child that got into an incident the day before. We'll put our arms around a child and ask how they're doing, that kind of thing. We are always saying positive things, as much as we can, about every students' ability. Thank you for coming to school today. This has been a great opportunity. Thank you for working hard in your class; I know it was a tough class. The most difficult times are our assessment periods where we know kids really struggle, we make sure we have things like mints and water, things that will refresh them, breaks that we allow them to take, if the assessment will allow us to do that. We just give a lot of support in the areas where they need support, and every person that we have on staff, particularly noncertified staff, they're function is not to be in their offices all of the time. They have to be out in the classrooms and making those connections with the students and the teachers so that they can offer something different than the teacher can offer.

I= Thank you, Mr. W[REDACTED]. That ends the questions. I want to thank you for participating in this study, and if you have any other questions or comments, please feel free to reach me at any time.

T= Absolutely, thank you.

Appendix G

Statement to Students

**The Perceived Impact of Relational Care on the Psychological Growth of 5 African
American Males Educated in a South Carolina Alternative School**

Dear Participant,

I invite you to participate in a research student entitled: The Perceived Impact of Relational Care on the Psychological Growth of 5 African American Males Educated in a South Carolina Alternative School. I am currently enrolled in the doctoral program at Gardner-Webb in Boiling Springs, NC, and am in the process of writing my dissertation. The purpose of this research is to determine how alternative education teachers impact the psychological growth, motivation, and behavior of students through the implementation of caring characteristics.

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. Participation will require 1 hour of your time. Interviews will take place at Olympia Learning Center on _____, between the hours of _____. District transportation will be provided for your child at the end of the interview if you are unable to provide transportation.

There are no known risks to participation beyond those encountered in everyday life. Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all information that matches up individual respondents including audio recording with their answers will be destroyed.

If the student wants to withdraw from the study, he may ask the researcher to stop the interview and leave the room.

If you have any questions about this study, feel free to contact Robert A. Smalls at XXXXX.

Thank you for your assistance in this important endeavor.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Smalls

Researcher

Appendix H
Statement to Teachers

Gardner-Webb University IRB
Teacher Consent Form

Title of Study

Case Study Research: The Perceived Impact of Relational Care on the Psychological Growth of 5 African American Males Educated in a South Carolina Alternative School

Researcher (name and role/department)

Robert A. Smalls, Researcher and Gardner-Webb University Doctoral Candidate
Kathi Gibson, PhD-Committee Chair, Educational Leadership

Purpose

The purpose of the research study is...

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand, from the voices and perceptions of 5 African-American males, how alternative education teachers embody the ethos of relational care to support the psychological growth of the students, and secondly to understand the perceived influence of relational care on student motivation and behavior.

The number of students served in the SC alternative school in this study over the past three years ranged from 218 to 310 from 2014-2017, with the percentage of African-American males served ranging from 64% in 2017 to a high of 86% in 2016 (School District 111 Alternative Education Statistical Report, 2017). The disproportionalities of the above statistics are concerning and should provoke questions from parents, educators and stakeholders.

The legislation for alternative schools in South Carolina, SC state code §§ 59-63-1300, reads:

The South Carolina General Assembly finds that a child who does not complete his education is greatly limited in obtaining employment, achieving his full potential, and becoming a productive member of society. It is, therefore, the intent of this article to encourage district school boards throughout the State to establish alternative school programs. These programs shall be designed to provide appropriate services to students who for behavioral or academic reasons are not benefiting from the regular school program or may be interfering with the learning of others. It is further the intent of this article that cooperative agreements may be developed among school districts in order to implement innovative exemplary programs. (SC General Assembly, 2016)

Further, South Carolina Code 59-63-1310 requires that these programs must be at sites that are separate from other schools, must operate at a time when those schools are not in session, and must be housed in another building on the school campus that would provide complete separation (SC General Assembly, South Carolina Code 59-63-1310).

The psychological growth of many alternative education students may go unnourished in educational settings that foster *separatism* [-*separate sites* and *operational times different from traditional schools*-.] *Separatism* could deny students of opportunities to establish meaningful relationships [friendships] with positive, peer role models as well as limit positive affiliations.

This research study is grounded in two theories: Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Noddings's care theory. Maslow categorized a variety of human needs into a conceptual hierarchy consisting of five levels of developmental needs. These levels include a person's physiological survival and safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualization. Maslow suggested that people are not likely to be motivated to pursue intellectual challenges or develop a sense of positive self esteem until the more basic or physiological needs have been satisfied (Daniels, 1992). Noddings (2012) believed that a caring relationship with a teacher, which is essential to—and maybe even a prerequisite for—intellectual growth..

Procedure

What you will do in the study:

Structured interviews will serve as the data collection method for this study. Five African American males, ages 14 or older, who received their education in this alternative education program for at least 9 weeks or 45 days will be purposefully selected for interview sessions. The research questions below will drive the study:

1. How do alternative education teachers embody the ethics of care to promote the psychological growth of students?
2. What are the perceptual evidences of caring relationships in the alternative school setting according to the students and according to the teachers?
3. How do caring relationships influence student motivation and student behavior?

Additionally, five alternative education teachers who have taught in alternative education for at least 5 years will take part in this study. Teachers described as caring by student interviewees will comprise the pool of teacher participants. In the event that more or fewer than five names emerge, the researcher will select the teachers who have the most years of service or who are the most acclaimed by the student interviewees. Participation on the part of the selected teachers and students is voluntary, and teachers or students can opt out of participation without fear of reprisal. Parent consent will be required for student participation.

The structured student and teacher interviews will occur over a period of 4 weeks in 60 minute sessions in the conference room of the alternative school. The *Interview Protocol* (attached) will facilitate the data-collection process. Each interview will be audio taped, commercially transcribed, anonymized and uploaded into *Dedoose*, a qualitative software suite, used by many social scientists for coding and processing transcripts. This software will expedite coding, queries, and the identification of emerging themes.

Confidentiality

Data will be kept private and confidential.

Risks

There are no anticipated risks in this study. All responses will be kept anonymous and confidential including any information shared with the researcher during student interviews.

Benefits

This study gives voice to 5 five African American males who spent at least 45 days in a South Carolina alternative school. The data collected may urge policy makers to assess whether the human and financial resources available to students in South Carolina alternative schools are adequately aligned to their needs and whether alternative education teachers possess the capacity and training for promoting social and emotional growth in areas delineated by Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The findings of this study may serve as a catalyst for conversations about the extent to which alternative schools in South Carolina support the psychological growth of African American males.

Payment

Participants will receive no payment for participating in the study.

Right to Withdraw From the Study

The following statement will be read aloud to each participant prior to the data collection session:

Participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If the participant chooses to withdraw from the study, the audio tape will be destroyed.

How to Withdraw From the Study

- If participants choose to withdraw from the study, they may notify the researcher verbally or in writing. There is no penalty for withdrawing.

If you have questions about the study, contact the following individuals.

Researcher's Name: Robert A. Smalls

Department: Doctoral Candidate

Gardner-Webb University
 Boiling Springs, NC 28017
 Researcher Telephone Number: XXXXXXXXXX
 Researcher Email Address: XXXXX

Faculty Advisor Name: Kathi Gibson
 Department: Educational Leadership
 Gardner-Webb University
 Boiling Springs, NC 28017
 Faculty Advisor Telephone Number: XXXX
 Faculty Advisor Email Address: XXXXX

If the research design of the study necessitates that its full scope is not explained prior to participation, it will be explained to you after completion of the study. If you have concerns about your rights or how you are being treated, or if you have questions, want more information, or have suggestions, please contact the IRB Institutional Administrator listed below.

Dr. Jeffrey S. Rogers
 IRB Institutional Administrator
 Gardner-Webb University
 Boiling Springs, NC 28017
 XXXXXXXX

Voluntary Consent by Participant

I have read the information in this consent form and fully understand the contents of this document. I have had a chance to ask questions about this study, and they have been answered for me.

_____ I agree to participate in the interview session(s). I understand that this interview will be audio-taped for purposes of accuracy. The audio-tapes will be transcribed and destroyed after a 5-year period.

_____ I do not agree to participate in the interview session(s).

_____ Date: _____

Participant Printed Name

_____ Date: _____

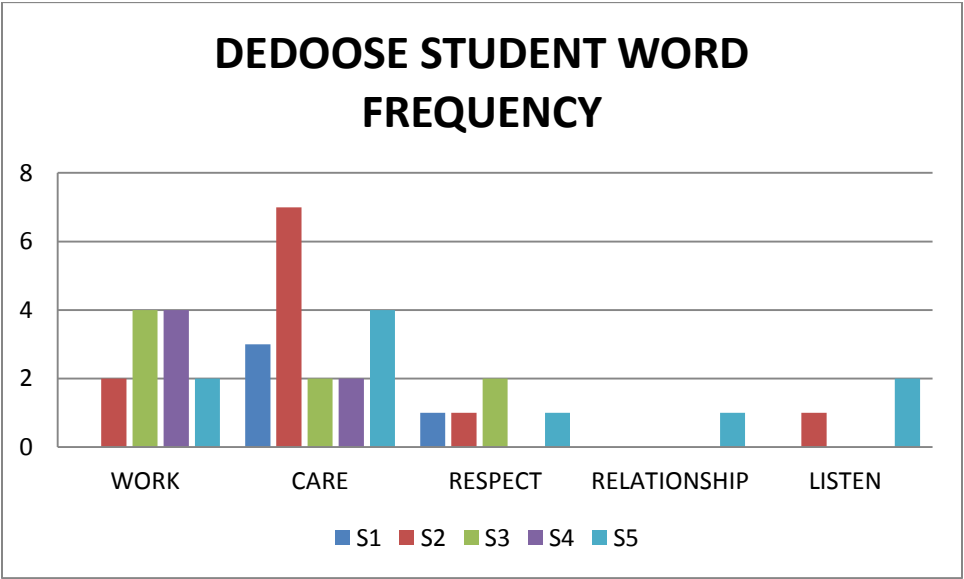
Participant Signature

You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Appendix I

Dedoose Student Word Frequency

	WORK	CARE	RESPECT	RELATIONSHIP	LISTEN
S1	0	3	1	0	0
S2	2	7	1	0	1
S3	4	2	2	0	0
S4	4	2	0	0	0
S5	2	4	1	1	2



Appendix J

Dedoose Teacher Word Frequency

	Care/caring	Listen	Nurturing	Concern	Behave/behavior	Respect	Work	Relationship
T1	29	1	1	1	4	1	4	7
T2	25	1	0	4	5	2	6	8
T3	28	1	0	0	2	8	30	7
T4	27	5	0	0	1	0	9	7
T5	25	0	5	1	5	0	16	12

