

A STUDY OF 'CARING' ACADEMICS  
AND THEIR WORK  
WITHIN A UK UNIVERSITY

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by

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# **A Study Of 'Caring' Academics And Their Work Within A UK University**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This researcher investigated three academics perceived to be caring, in the naturalistic setting of their everyday work in a UK university. The three academics were selected using LeCompte & Preissle's (1993) Reputational Case Selection methodology. Two purposes framed this investigation: 1. To gain an in-depth understanding of the educational and pedagogical beliefs and practices of higher education academics who are perceived to be caring and 2. To examine how identity is constructed through autobiography.

Using a dual phenomenology and life-history methodology, data sources included a series of interviews, teaching metaphors, observations, participants' personal writing, research notes and other salient material. Dialogue between the researcher and participants played a major part in ensuring the rigour of the study: throughout, participants were given the opportunity to critically assess their portrayals within the thesis.

Results indicated that the participants differed in their views about being perceived as 'caring' and possessed a range of beliefs related to its place in academic work. In addition, there was variance in the cultural context of the academics' work, revealing a difference in the conceptions of institutional prerogatives about 'the value of caring'. The academics' autobiographies shaped their values and ethics, and these played a significant role in how their pedagogic identities and practices were conceptualized.

This empirical study assists in understanding academic identities at a time of profound change in higher education. It can also contribute to a currently under-theorized account of academic work that weaves values and pedagogic scholarship and examines its effects on students' experiences. Implications are offered for future research involving the investigation of caring pedagogies in relation to students' achievement, retention and the values and ethics that might develop as a result of caring teaching.

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**1.1 Background To The Study**

Expert teachers and their teaching matter: through the way that such teachers speak to students, the questioning strategies that they adopt, the level of expectation and aspiration that they engender, the way that their classes are organized, such teachers appear to make a difference (Hattie, 2003; Skelton, 2007). Tsui (2009) suggests that the critical differences between expert and non-expert teachers are manifested in three dimensions: their ability to integrate aspects of teacher knowledge in relation to the teaching act; their response to their contexts of work; and their ability to engage in reflection and conscious deliberation. Nevertheless, the studies concerning 'expert teachers' across all sectors of education are beset by contention and controversy. On the basis of what and who should define the nature of 'expertise', and in addition, whether or not 'excellent' teaching is a subset of 'expert' teaching (Welker, 1991; Pollard and Tomlin 1995; Skelton, 2005), the field of qualitative assessment of teaching quality is intensely problematic.

In spite of this however, the literature on both 'expert' and 'excellent' teachers suggests that teachers classified as 'expert' and 'excellent' exhibit a bounded array of practices and behaviours an important core of which is characterized by students as 'caring' (Agne, 1992; Hattie, 2003; Sawatzky et al, 2009). As Isenbarger & Zembylas (2006) point out, in the way that these teachers worry both about the prospects of students who do not achieve and those who do, from caring about standards of work to grade profiles of their students, from being concerned to maximise time spent in scaffolding of particular concepts rather than others, through to creating particular classroom climates, caring teaching manifests itself as mattering about a diverse range of issues, incidents and individuals. Students value such teachers for their caring teaching: to them, it is teaching that is experienced as that which goes to any lengths to ensure that they learn (Duffy,

2005; Larson, 2006). By extension therefore, a caring teacher must be defined as one who is motivated to do all that it is possible to do to maximise a student's chance of success (Fjortoft, 2004; Walker et al, 2006a).

So caring evidently matters. Even so, the literature suggests strongly that it is unclear just what experienced and specific dispositions and actions are interpreted as caring rather than other types of affect, such as trust, or kindness, or love. Related directly to that, there are conceptual gaps in understanding whether the perceived caring on the part of the student is always accompanied by intended caring on the part of the teacher. Indeed, there are few studies of caring teachers and their teaching that are based concretely on evidence either from the classrooms of the perceived 'caring' teachers, or the testimonies of 'caring' teachers themselves, and especially so within the context of teaching in higher education. Indeed, precise descriptions and theorizations of possible links between teaching, affective outcomes and learning progress are sparse (see for example in this precise respect, the exceptional work of Ladson-Billings (1995), Thayer-Bacon & Bacon (1996), and Goldstein (1999)).

This researcher investigated three academics perceived to be and subsequently classified as, being caring, in the naturalistic setting of their every day work in a UK university. The three academics were selected using LeCompte & Preissle's (1993) Reputational Case Selection methodology. Two purposes framed this investigation:

1. To gain an in-depth understanding of the educational and pedagogical beliefs and practices of higher education academics who are perceived to be caring, and
2. To examine how identity is constructed through autobiography.

## **1.2 The Nature Of This Thesis**

The central thesis of this study is concerned with the journey in defining and understanding academics perceived to be caring and their teaching within higher education specifically. Three threads of research are examined: theories of care in education and teaching especially within higher education; the role of teachers' and academics autobiographies in the formation of teacher identity; and finally, the role of experiences and beliefs in becoming and being a perceived or actual caring academic.

To address shortcomings in the research literature, the issue of academics' experiences and beliefs concerning the purpose of caring is the major focus of this thesis and accordingly, it examines the relation between educational theory and educational practice in view of the topic of how care and caring shape the work of academics who teach within a faculty of a medium-sized university - Rowan Tree University (RTU) in the North of England. Proceeding from the study's purposes, the research had the following objectives:

- To examine the nature of care as a value in society, an educational principle, a professional standard, an institutional mission, a personal ethic, and a pedagogic disposition and practice.
- To examine how values and beliefs as a function of autobiography lead to construction of self and academic identity.
- To examine the nature of values and beliefs that shape perceived caring academics' identities and work within a University Faculty, in the North of England.

This study therefore explored four main research questions:

- I. What are the personal and pedagogic meanings and experiences of being a perceived



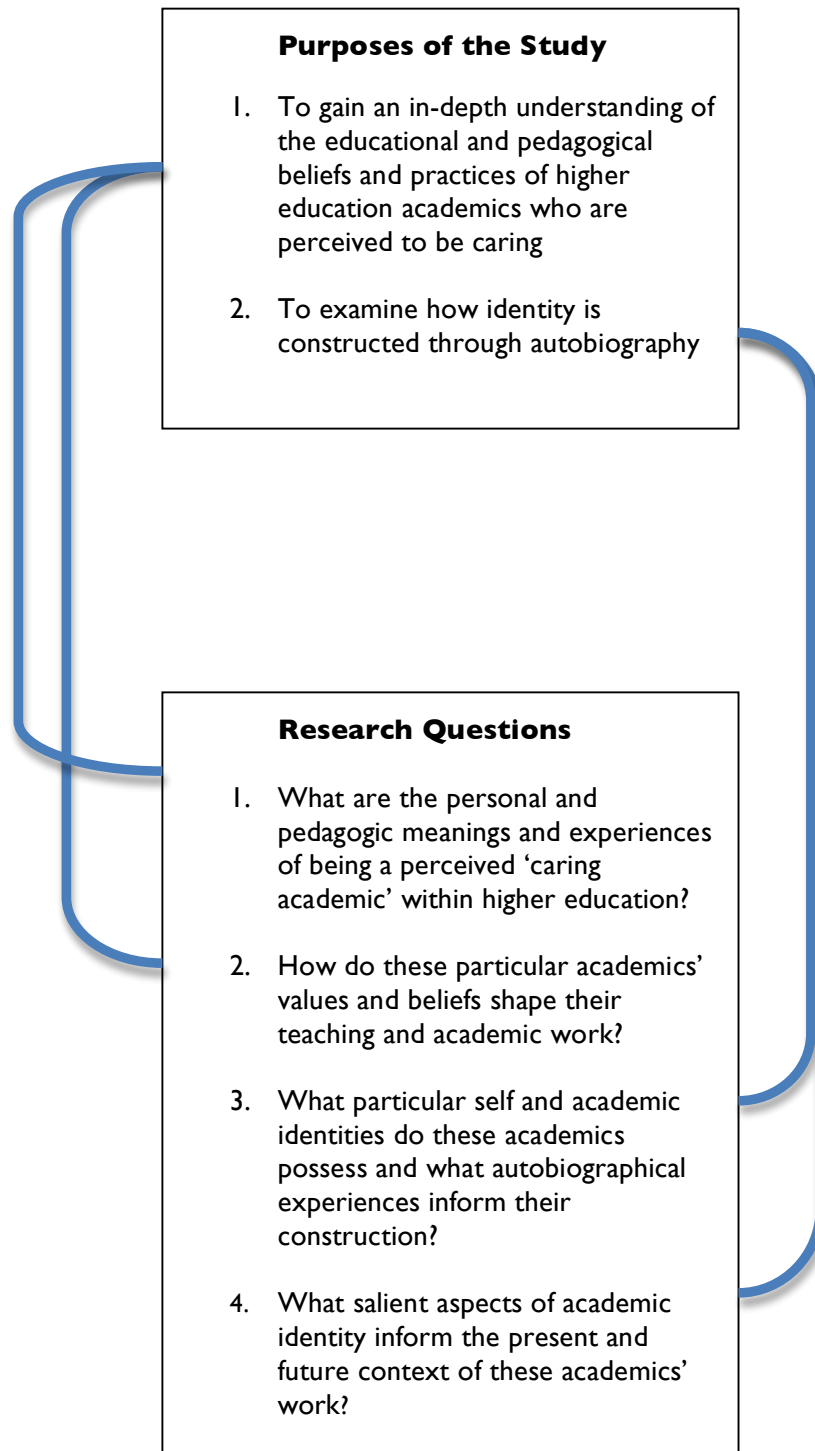
‘caring’ academic within higher education?

2. How do these particular academics’ values and beliefs shape their teaching and academic work?
3. What particular self and academic identities do these academics possess and what autobiographical experiences inform their construction?
4. What salient aspects of academic identity inform the present and future context of these academics’ work?

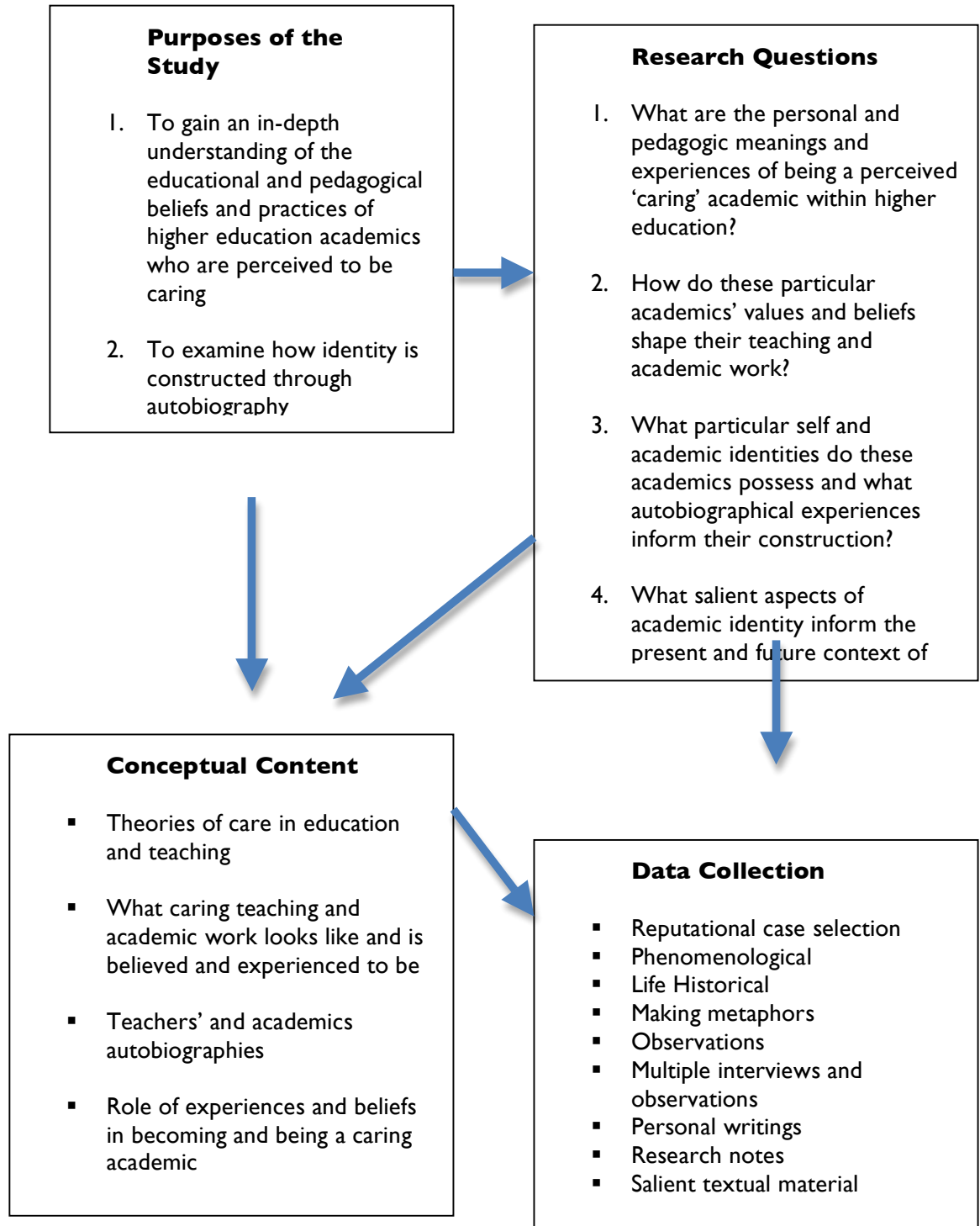
Initially selecting the participants using LeCompte & Preissle’s (1993) reputational case selection, this research used qualitative methodology, principally a phenomenological life history approach, to examine the philosophies, principles, perspectives, perceptions, and practices of a group of academics for whom care and caring was, or appeared to be, central to their work. Data sources included a series of interviews, the construction and analysis of teaching metaphors, observations, participants’ personal writing, research notes, and other related and salient material. Dialogue between the researcher and participants played a major part in ensuring the rigour of the study: throughout, participants were given the opportunity to critically assess their portrayals within the thesis.

Figure 1 is a diagrammatic representation of how the research questions addressed the study’s two major purposes. Figure 2 is a diagrammatic representation of the whole study, showing the relationship between Research Purposes, the Research Questions, the Conceptual Content and Data Collection.

**Figure 1. Representation Of How The Research Questions Address The Study's Two Major Purposes**



**Figure 2. Representation Of The Whole Study**



### **1.3 The Contribution Of This Thesis**

Fine (2007) suggests that caring may exist both as a set of idealized values and at the same time, a set of concrete actions and practices. However, embracing a view of caring teaching as practice alone allows us to escape its theorization and as a result prevents us from fully understanding its complexity; conversely, viewing caring teaching as a set of 'internal' idealized values makes it invisible and reinforces the view that it is only attainable or desirable by exceptional teachers and those with particular dispositions, or by those only able to contribute in a 'pastoral' way.

There is a tendency in models of pedagogy within higher education to polarize affective domains, and present them either as dispositional values, which cannot be taught or developed, or as mainly technical processes that perhaps aim to model desired attributes for particular vocations. Such a state of affairs has been particularly germane for this study: as Rowland (2002) has asserted, personal values and dispositions do not have a comfortable home in an autonomous and arguably principally disciplinary model of higher education.

Precisely because of these conflicting accounts of caring within the literature, this research has adopted a more illuminating and exploratory approach, one based on the notion of perception of others in terms of its impact on identity formation, what Cooley (1998) terms 'the looking glass self', and whose purpose has been to expose and examine the experiences of 'caring' academics without judgment against the rights and entitlements that usually frame such discussions. Adopting a qualitative phenomenological life historical approach, the overall intent of the investigation has been to analyze and understand the educational and pedagogical beliefs and practices of higher education academics that are perceived to be caring, through an examination of both their experiences and lives.

The weaving of beliefs and biographies and the tensions between them have implications for the

way in which academics construct and give value to their work and consequently to the culture that they create. Whether or not that culture affects students' cognitive development within their studies in higher education will be discussed only in terms of academics' perceptions and theoretic inclination: it is not the intention of this thesis to elucidate a possible causal relationship between caring teaching and learning success.

The academics in this study were teachers within a Faculty of Rowan Tree University (RTU) the North of England that comprised Social Science, Culture and Education. As with most qualitative life story-based studies, this study was designed to examine a small group of individuals' lived experiences in a specific context (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Given that the literature demonstrates that care and caring approaches to teaching are particularly found within teacher education and to a lesser extent health and social care disciplinary contexts within higher education, the particular and unique characteristics of this setting and the selection and number of the participants are acknowledged in that although chosen purposively with great attention to disciplinary balance, they may therefore limit the transferability of the findings. Certainly, anyone wishing to draw comparisons with this study should consider its sociological and political context, the characteristics of the students whom these academics teach, and the small number of academics' experiences that have been examined in this study. However, it is a significant issue within this research that although it has been conducted within a Faculty that is home to a department of education, the diversity of departments and academic programmes has meant that the majority of staff within the Faculty was not actively engaged in Teacher Education.

Therefore, the study does not simply add to existing research on caring teaching in the context of compulsory schooling, or Teacher Education and Social Care within post compulsory education, which are the main preoccupations of the current research literature; it contributes new knowledge and original insights into the complex and significantly under-researched area of higher

education academic work dealing with teachers' affect and resting on autobiography. The research does this in three particular ways. First, this research illuminates the epistemologies of higher education teaching, and in particular, the role and significance of caring within such knowledge. Second, this research adds to an existing body of information concerning the effect of higher education academics' beliefs and experiences on their teaching practices and philosophies in action. Finally, data gathered as part of this study is of importance to both academic educators of higher education and to university policy makers, who may reconceptualize the spaces and places in curricula and teaching and learning environments where differently conceived pedagogies might flourish.

The review of the literature that follows is divided into three sections and presents the major conceptual and theoretical framework. The three strands of research that are examined comprise: theories of care in education and teaching especially within higher education; the role of teachers' and academics' autobiographies in the formation of teacher identity; and finally, the role of experiences and beliefs in becoming and being a perceived or actual caring academic. Throughout, the review moves from general pedagogic principles to specific higher education ones. The literature review concludes by describing the areas neglected in previous studies of caring teachers and their teaching, noting the dearth of research both on the diversity of pedagogic practices perceived as 'caring', and on how higher education academics' past and present experiences may have led them to consider caring to be an intrinsic part of their teaching.

#### **I.4 Defining The Terms Used In This Thesis**

In this thesis, there are many references to the main participants in the study – the academics themselves, and also to the learners whom they teach – their students. In most sections of the thesis, the literature for example, for the sake of simplicity and in order to prevent convolution, 'teachers' is used as a generic term to encompass professionals working in educational institutions

whose principal duty is to educate and teach. This therefore includes those teachers working in higher education. Likewise, the term 'teaching' is used generically to denote activity within an institution, whether in school or university. However, acknowledging that working activity in a twenty first century university is no longer (arguably it has never been so) easy to categorize, the word 'academics' is used in some instances where 'teacher' no longer conveys the full meaning of academic work. The term 'students' is used to describe those learners within higher education, whilst the word 'pupils' will denote those within the school context. However, it is important to point out that the words 'Academic' and 'Teacher' for the person and activity of teaching within the Higher Education context as frequently used by the participants themselves during the research process, has some significance and carries social and cultural weight in the context of their everyday work, including relations with colleagues as well as students.

## **1.5 Organization Of This Thesis**

This thesis is organized into six chapters. Chapter 1 presents an introduction and background of the problem as well as an overview of the purposes, research questions, methodological details and limitations of the study. Chapter 2 contains the major conceptual and theoretical framework. Three threads of research are examined: theories of care in education and pedagogic contexts; the role of teachers' and academics autobiographies in the formation of teacher identities; and finally, the role of experiences and beliefs in being and becoming a caring academic in practice. Chapter 3 contains a description of the qualitative research undertaken, justifying the reputational case selection and phenomenological and life historical approaches. In addition, the chapter discusses the procedures and methods of collecting and analyzing the data. Chapter 4 includes the findings in the shape of detailed narratives for each participant with accompanying textual and other salient findings. Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the findings aligned with the two original purposes of the study and located within the original conceptual threads of the field of literature. Chapter 6 contains the conclusions and implications of the research study related to its original

aims and purposes as well as suggestions for further work in the field.



## **CHAPTER 2:        REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **2.1     Literature Overview**

The selection of articles, books, chapters, reports and other publications were based on the following general criteria: (1) research that examined and sought to understand the philosophical and practical bases of care across all educational sectors; (2) research that examined the autobiographical nature of teachers' and academics' values, beliefs and identities; (3) research that contributed to a furtherance of knowledge and understanding about why and how academics perceived to be caring in education appear to care, and how this caring identity interweaves with their teaching practices as a result.

The theoretical model most appropriate for grounding this research combines a 'structural ethics' with an 'identity development' framework. The ethics model of caring encompasses values and principles that academics have cultivated and adopted within their context, so that they are shaped by a framework of external ethics and working practices. These comprise the rights and affordances of individuals' and groups' fair treatment so that they receive impartial shares of the benefits of society, including the right to a just and democratic education, as well as examining the spiritual missions that explicitly pursue a caring pedagogic ethos at a growing number of educational institutions.

I also consider the ethically predicated statutory elements of professional standards for teachers, lecturers and academics within the sectors of education in the UK. This element also addresses an equal but different ethic, that of the 'structural obligation' framework that sits in contrast to a 'rights' interpretation of caring education and teaching: this is the need of the institution to maximize its visible contribution to the 'learner experience' and in so doing, position individuals as customers and therefore recipients of care as a transaction.

It is important to point out however, that although the rise of 'the learner experience' and the concomitant redefinition of learners as customers have largely risen in parallel with 'managerialist' movements in education, managerialism will not feature as an important theoretical frame within the study. Likewise, caring has historically been located within 'nurturing' and 'feminine models' of teaching, and as the literature will show, feminist critics have been highly visible in questioning the balanced contribution of 'care' scholars to the field of pedagogy. However, this literature review will not include a detailed discussion of either concept. The essential core of the work is one of lived experience, and nuanced narrative; an over-emphasis on external and structural constructs, however influential, would detract from the phenomenological nature of the research, and ultimately, undermine the sense of participant-owned testimony and dialogue, which have played such a major role in the study.

In contrast to this, I present an 'identity development' framework. This is predicated upon the premise that teachers' and academics' development and their consequent practices and behaviours are both personalized and context specific. As such they are the product of a frequently long, complex and socially and emotionally negotiated journey that equally balances values, beliefs, experiences and culture. As such, such teachers' and academics' development can be told in stories of lived experience, where narration of episodes can give rise to and exemplify growing identities. As Sutherland et al (2009) point out, though, although becoming a teacher implies some form of core stable identity that may gradually emerge over time, in practice, identity is neither static, not invariant, nor unitary, and is continuously reconstructed in the form of life stories negotiated through interactions with both individuals and the institutions in which individuals work.

But the question central to the thesis is why is an active pursuance of caring teaching frequently regarded as peripheral at best to learning enhancement? And why is care itself frequently seen as

an optional virtue in a profession - teaching - that is, as Noddings (2003) argues so clearly, a function of human relations that in turn, are so clearly the fundamental basis upon which teaching and learning rest? To be able to answer these questions, it is important to fully understand the widest possible interpretations of care across all education sectors, from school to higher education, and this is the purpose of the first section of this chapter.

## **2.2 Care In Pedagogic Contexts: Philosophies, Principles, Purposes And Practices**

### ***2.2.1 Caring As An Educational Aim: Personal Ethics, Professional Standards, And Institutional Missions***

According to Fine (2007), the origins of the work 'care' illustrate its complex and contested use in modern society. In Greek, the etymological root of the word 'care', 'charis', was used to signify grace or favour. The Greek word 'charitas' signified that someone or something was of grace or kindness. The Latin term 'caritas' is a derivation of the Greek word 'charitas' and is commonly translated as love or charity. The conflation of the word 'care' to the Latin 'caritas' was probably due to the Roman Catholic Church (Reich, 1995) who fostered the relationship between faith, hope and charity and privileged them as the tenets of the Christian faith. According to Reich, the Latin word for care is 'cura', and it was used in literature in opposing ways, but ones that give a clue to the dichotomy that care presents in modern society. For example, cura was used as an adjective to denote the weight of a mission or activity; it was used as a noun to describe a responsibility that weighed heavily on people; and finally, it was used as a noun to mean a liberating force that enabled people to be empowered to their fullest possibility, a use of the word particularly common in the writings of Seneca. In other words, it presented many of the contradictions that are so evident in current debates on its place in education and society.

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED, 2009) meaning sheds further light on care's etymology. The OED attributes care's origins to Old English words – the noun 'caru' meaning 'a worry or a care'; and a verb 'carian' that meant to trouble oneself. In sum, to care meant 'to worry over or about'. Even these meanings have not remained static however, and as with almost all linguistic conventions, have changed to reflect society's concerns and norms. Consequently, the trajectory of meaning assigned to 'care' altered in Victorian times, in which 'care' referred to the constant monitoring of the sick to prevent the spread of disease to the general population. In this sense, the personal meaning of caring as being troubled by expanded to cover a universal solicitousness.

Care and caring have deep roots in education. As a matter of social relations in wider society, care has existed comfortably side-by-side values of compassion and social responsibility over the past 100 years. However, since the late twentieth century the world has arguably become increasingly led by the pursuit of profit and self-interest, concepts that are perhaps discordant with the nature and actions of care (Sennett, 1998; Fine, 2007). Nel Noddings (2002, 2003) asserts that this is a deeply troubling situation for education exacerbated by the frequently repeated mantra that education's main aim is to maintain a nation's economic health, as illustrated by the increasing numbers of qualifications having explicit skills and employability outcomes (Knight & Yorke, 2003). Nevertheless, there are dissenting voices. Noddings (2003) herself writes: 'there is more to individual life and the life of a nation than economic superiority' (p. 84), and later on, 'to be happy, children must learn to exercise virtues in ways that help to maintain positive relations with others, especially with those others who share the aim of establishing caring relations' (p. 160). Noddings cites teachers as playing a major role, perhaps *the* major role, in doing this.

The importance of caring in teaching is well documented in the literature. It appears as a central factor in almost all studies of excellent and outstanding teachers and teaching and academic work,

and across all educational sectors, some rather more than others. In Early Years Education, caring is associated with high levels of attachment and nurture (Freeman & Swick, 2004). At the compulsory schooling level, many studies confirm that teachers express an overwhelming desire to care for pupils and enact caring pedagogies, on the basis that such teaching will benefit their pupils in a multiplicity of ways: cognitively, socially, affectively, physically, and morally (Wentzel, 1997; Monzo & Rueda, 2001; Larson & Silverman, 2005). In post compulsory education and training, studies attest to the power of caring and compassion and emotional recognition of non-traditional 'learners' stories' (Avis & Bathmaker, 2004; Jephcote et al, 2008; Robson & Bailey, 2009), stressing the life histories of learners and suggesting that marginalized adult learners need 'different' sorts of pedagogies, ones that are more relational and responsive, and perhaps less theorizable, that Fenwick (2006) has termed 'poorer pedagogies'.

But it is in higher education that the meaning and practice of care and caring is most puzzling and intractable: Thayer-Bacon & Bacon (1996) and Weston & McAlpine (1998) both argue for example that caring academics can and do make a difference to students' learning and lives in a very profound way. However, there is scant research to confirm this, and to complicate matters, some research maintains that caring is simply a disposition and that as a personal quality it plays a confusing and confused role in teaching in higher education (Macfarlane, 2002), apart from in those circumstances where an academic is a social or virtuous role model (Fenwick, 2006).

What is evident already from this review is that caring is often seen as a form of positive and wholly beneficial relational social justice. From national reports and strategy documents (for example DfEE, 2001; DfES, 2002, 2003, 2007; Ofsted, 2003; SENDA, 2001) most reform initiatives continue to be predicated on the belief that teaching needs not only to be predicated upon a 'caring' and responsible relation to pupils and students and all those who teachers encounter, but that this is embedded within an overt goal of social justice and consequent societal reform (Poplin

& Rivera, 2005).

This complex weaving of caring teaching as societal preparation, achievement, and moral and spiritual growth is explicit in the curriculum for the preparation of schoolteachers within the UK. In the UK, teachers have legal responsibilities in the area of their duty of care to pupils arising out of three sources (NUT, 2005) that must be evidenced in practice and adhered to before the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) by the relevant Secretary of State and subsequently maintained throughout Professional Practice, under the aegis of the General Teaching Council for England (GTC). These three sources of care arising out of law are:

1. The common law duty of care;
2. The statutory duty of care; and
3. The duty of care arising from the contract of employment.

In the first case, civil law has evolved the concept of 'in loco parentis' and in any occurring legal action a judge may use precedent casework to assess whether a teacher has acted, as would a reasonably prudent parent. In the second case, The Children Act 1989 section 3(5), defines the duty of care to the effect that a person with care of a child may do all that is reasonable in the circumstances for the purposes of safeguarding or promoting the welfare of the child. In the third case, care is defined as the process of carrying out the professional duties of a schoolteacher as circumstances may require under the reasonable direction of the head teacher of that school.

An examination of the professional standards in the Post-Compulsory Education and Training (or Further Education) Sector of the UK Institute for Learning (IFL) provides a contrast in the way that teachers and other professionals are expected to work and behave in relation to care. Whilst currently having no statutory basis then, the values and mission encoded in the IFL Code of

Professional Practice are listed as six areas of 'behaviour' that practitioners are expected to 'know' as follows:

- Integrity
- Respect
- Care
- Practice
- Disclosure
- Responsibility

However, in the expansion of these in the more detailed code, there is little explicit recognition of the individual relational behaviour of a professional toward a student within this code, any professional obligation only making reference to external ethical and statutory structures, such as the importance of anti-oppressive practices and acting in accordance with anti-discriminatory legislation.

The changes in funding in the further education sector have been keenly felt as pressures on the quality of relationship between students and lecturers at an individual level (Avis & Bathmaker, 2004). However, the relative cushioning of academics within higher education from issues of recruitment and retention until relatively recently, has led to quite a different trajectory in terms of the development of the academic's role in the 'student learning experience' (McWilliam, 2007).

During the last 50 years higher education in the UK has expanded and diversified, and as a result, it has gone through a series of complex changes which are affecting its organization structure, its traditional practices and the moral bases on which it has stood (Nixon et al, 2001). Whilst it is well documented elsewhere (see for example Nixon et al, 2001) there is consensus amongst the

literature that it is the market and the business of learning which have become the dominant discourses, and that in this context, 'the actual practice of education becomes detached from a moral perspective' (Pring, 2001, p. 102). Fitzmaurice (2008) asserts that the moral basis of higher education is its attention to justice, goodness and integrity, whilst Barnett & Coate (2005) suggest that academics' practice should be predicated upon common and shared agreements as to the universality of 'good teaching'. In turn, this should be predicated at least upon, for example, well-established models of teacher knowledge, such as theorized by Shulman (1987). However, Skelton (2005) argues that in the case of higher education, a 'standard' model of education is insufficient given the increasing complexity and conflicts of accountability of the whole UK context. Fitzmaurice (2008) goes on to suggest that an Aristotelian view of morality that assists the academic in maintaining and making ethically consistent practices and decisions is highly desirable. Such a core set of values that actively and explicitly translate the conclusions of work that has significance for caring pedagogies and the beliefs of academics that hold them would hopefully assist in fewer damaging assumptions about students and their capabilities (Matusov & Smith, 2007). Macfarlane (2002) concurs asserting that 'such a framework will encourage professionals to engage with decision making in an ethical way' (p. 19).

These fluidities and complexities are reflected in 'The UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education' (HEA, 2009). Currently however, notwithstanding the application of these standards across the whole of the sector, the Professional Standards have no statutory power and indeed have become the subject of deep cynicism and resistance within many universities (for example Kolsaker, 2008). However, although the standards are presented as descriptors to fit alongside the institutional aims and values, examining the descriptors in the light of the focus of this thesis, caring, tells us that the Core Professional Values should be applied to the practices of individual academics, not in any consistent sense, but as guiding principles. These Core Values are:



1. Respect for individual learners
2. Commitment to incorporating the process and outcomes of relevant research, scholarship and/or professional practice
3. Commitment to development of learning communities
4. Commitment to encouraging participation in higher education, acknowledging diversity and promoting equality of opportunity
5. Commitment to continuing professional development and evaluation of practice

Arguably, the need for establishing standards of professional behaviour that are constantly fluid and responsive has led to ambiguity and vagueness at the level of the academic, who ironically, is the point of contact with the 'market' – that is, the students. In an age when it has been suggested that UK universities need to 'codify' their obligations to these students as well as having the public's expectations made transparent, it has been suggested that we need something of a Hippocratic Oath (Ashby (1969); Watson (2007)). Given that as Carnell (2007) points out, there are increasing demands on academics' time and a proliferation in the responsibilities that they are expected to carry, choosing to care might seem like a perplexing choice to make. I shall now address those perspectives that deal with elements of personal choice – the dispositional-attribution domain, and the pedagogical action one.

## **2.22 Care As A Personal Disposition**

Originating from the Greek root word 'Charitas', much education theory supports the essentiality of kindness in teaching, as a form of 'caring for' one's students. Fine (2007) remarks that kindness towards other human beings is a hallmark of a developed society and cannot be separated from other activity wherever there is a relational quality. In educational terms, this line of thought originates in the US with the work of Gilligan (1977), and later Noddings (1984a) and Goldstein (1999). These perceptions of care are strongly evidenced in the body of research that both

theorizes models of behaviour for the predominantly female early years and primary school workforce, and in higher education, seeks to find a counterpoint to the masculine and adversarial climate of much academic work (Harley, 2003; Bown, 1999; Blaxter et al, 1998). Research suggests that the teachers who actively promote such caring and community already have a predisposition to caring in general terms, and certainly a commitment to social justice. Barber (2002) in her study of high school teachers' caring, suggests that caring teaching is a form of personal and deep seated compassion to better the life chances of children who 'don't get it anywhere else' (p. 388).

It is Gilligan (1977) and Noddings (1984a, 2003), however, who have been most influential in terms of the impact of dispositional themes in the analysis of caring teaching. As a result of the gains made in the workplace by the feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s, feminist theorists suggested that the values and ethical codes that had characterized women's largely invisible and unacknowledged work within the home had encountered a moral vacuum in the mainly masculine workplace. Gilligan (1977) suggested that an 'ethic of care' would both expose and validate this alternative ethical universe within women's emergent presence in the work place, and give authority and legitimization to the daily issues of moral responsibility and relationships within the home. These ideas are encapsulated in Gilligan's definition of care as 'a responsibility to discern and alleviate the real and recognizable trouble in this world' (1982, p. 100). Gilligan, whose work was predicated on the theory that care is a form of moral reasoning, suggested that a strength of compassionate and responsive behaviour, regardless of gender, is its very ability to be subjective, but that sophisticated moral responses and specific behaviours, such as caring, are not necessarily predicated upon the possession of and ability to articulate complex moral language. Put simply, although someone's behaviour may be entirely internally consistent and adhere to complex implicit personal philosophies, it is not necessarily logical that someone (child or adult) can explain and justify their ethical and moral code. In her later work, Gilligan noted that:

The logic of an ethic of care is a psychological logic of relationships, which contrasts with the formal logic of fairness that informs the justice approach...the ideal of care is thus an activity of relationships, of seeing and responding to need, taking care of the world by sustaining the web of connection so that no one is left alone. (Gilligan, 1982, p. 73)

Thus, the essence of care, to Gilligan, was its relational quality, and she was careful to point out that no value judgment, no claim of moral superiority, was implicit in defining care as such. For Gilligan, the experience of caring was not only about emotion and feeling, or comfort and support, it was precisely about the kind of discomfort and challenge that is essential to growth and to learning. In this sense, she echoed Vygotsky's (1962) writing on affect and cognition as equally important aspects of learning.

Noddings (1984a, 2003) has been equally influential in the development of care ethics, but for quite different reasons. For her, no such quandary about re-balancing the ambiguity of care versus justice exists. Instead, Noddings argues for a re-positioning of care ethics and recognition of women's achievements as carers and givers of care, so that rather than emulating men in the work place, for example, men may come to value and embrace the universality of a care ethic, one that places human relationships as central to every endeavour. Significantly, though, it is within her work of 1984 that Noddings presented an idea that has resonated throughout research on caring ever since:

An ethic based on caring, is, I think, characteristically and essentially feminine  
– which is not to say of course, that it cannot be shared by men any more  
than we should care to say that traditional moral systems cannot be shared

by women. But an ethic of care arises, I believe, out of our experience as women, just as the traditional logical approach to ethical problems arises more obviously out of masculine experience. (Noddings, 1984a, p. 8)

Although Noddings has clarified these statements, still, the notion of ‘caring’ being central to women’s identities persists, throughout all education sectors, with little regard for the context or status of the teachers or academics concerned (Smedley & Pepperell, 2000). Not only this, care has become conflated with natural dispositions vital for such roles as pastoral tutors, learning support officers, and myriad other roles identified with the broadly affective and experiential, rather than the cognitive and theoretical. These in turn have uncovered myriad ways in which caring has become an unspoken element of women’s expertise (Acker & Feuerverger, 1995; Walker et al, 2006a). It is important to point out though, that despite this, studies have revealed the discomfort of male teachers and academics who are not only ‘caring’ but regard it both as a critical part of their work, and as a positive attribute. Such teachers, according to Barber (2002) are much more likely to define their ‘caring’ as a function of professionalism and high academic standards, and avoid notions of caring as a part of the ‘emotional labour’ (Hochschild, 1983) of teaching. Even so, Hargreaves (1998) has argued that the divorce of the self from one’s feelings and distancing oneself from caring attachments, though helpful at times may result in estrangement and loss of authenticity. Constanti & Gibbs (2004) have argued that this is no less true of higher education, and indeed, is a growing concern to academics within the new education ‘market’.

### **2.23 Care As A Pedagogic Action**

Despite the proliferation of occupational standards within all sectors of education, the growing concern for matters of ethics and morality in everyday life, and the need for teachers and academics to make increasingly profound moral judgments affecting learners, nowhere is it

expanded what it means *actually to teach* according to such standards and ethical frameworks.

Significantly though, whilst the literature is equivocal on the exact ‘specification’ of caring teaching in action from a well-theorized perspective, there are many studies either attesting to the importance of caring teaching as it is felt and experienced by pupils and students, or exemplifying ‘caring teacher behaviour’ as modeled by particular teachers who have become defined almost solely by their dispositions and attributes. For example, the studies of Wentzel, (1997); Weston & McAlpine, (1998); Gomez et al, (2004) and Larson, (2006) all discuss what students value within their teachers’ practices and behaviours. Set in the context of diverse cultural norms and expectations, the studies demonstrate consistently that teachers who develop relationships with students that transcend academic development and achievement are identified not simply as ‘good’ teachers, but as ‘caring’ teachers. Moreover, some studies, Uitto & Syrjala (2008) for example, suggest that encounters with teachers appear extremely significant in pupil recall of teaching episodes, the absence of ‘caring’ relations being particularly acute in pupils’ memories. It is of course, important to point out though, that such pupil and student experiences and memories are a function of culture and context. Where pupils are used to, and expect, high levels of teacher interaction one should expect more studies citing its importance in learning success (Monzo & Rueda, 2001). Likewise, in contexts where pupils may be at risk and have traditionally depended upon teachers for the growth of protective resilience, one should probably expect that studies of caring teachers are significant in elucidating the success of pupils within school areas with high levels of deprivation (Barber, 2002). Nevertheless, taking account of such variation, and bearing in mind the exact etymology that reflects its complex nature, it is overwhelmingly the case that the significant majority of studies concerning caring teaching appear to agree that it has seven ‘dimensions’:

- Listens to students

- Shows empathy
- Supports students
- Is active in the processes of learning in class
- Gives appropriate and encouraging feedback and praise
- Has high expectations in standards of work and behaviour
- Shows an active concern in students' personal lives

However, from these 'dimensions', it becomes possible to understand the complexity of the subjectivity that is caring teaching, and to ask what mode of behaviour would constitute an active relationship; certainly it is not immediately evident that any kind of relationship may contain an element of causality, that is, caring may lead to the kind of authentic learning that is predicated in a truly Vygotskian (1962) view of learning.

In fact, caring teaching is predicated upon a socio-relational view of pedagogic practice (Edwards & D'Arcy, 2004), one that privileges the principle that cognition has an emotional element, and learning has a socio-relational basis, and thus in order to enhance a student's learning, a teacher must attend to, and promote, an explicit affective climate whilst teaching. This pedagogical position asserts that caring is both a practice and measurable activity that is predicated on the basis of 'good work' and in so doing, transforms process concerns into rational and self-legitimizing actions that have as a 'product' a transformed pupil or student.

Hollingsworth et al (1993) has termed caring as 'good work' a form of 'relational knowing', and in practice therefore, caring is a dynamic, fluid intersection of 'teacher knowing' and 'student knowing'. Although suggesting that such a form of teacher behaviour is wholly vague and opaque, Hollingsworth et al (1993) suggest that indeed this is a complex and sophisticated view of caring that they have termed 'relational epistemology'. Significantly, though, they also stress that not

every teacher or academic is caring or able to care, and not every student responds to a teacher's caring, but that when they do, both teacher and student are changed as a result. The notion of a set of coherent actions that legitimize a caring relationship emanate from a dual Confucian – Vygotskian framework. In this sense, teaching is Confucian in that a teacher must individualize their teaching method in order to make it relevant to each learner, so as to cultivate their students' characters (Ames & Hall, 1987) and lead them to being more receptive to the possibilities of relational epistemologies. The holistic cultivation of character, according to Confucius, must be carried out 'harmoniously', so that students will develop 'self-will' and the eagerness to learn. According to Confucius, the only consistent way in which to do this is through acting mindfully (Shim, 2008), contemplating critically the continual external impact of one's teaching, so that one's beliefs and practices are coherent. Noddings (1986) has written of such a process, terming it 'fidelity' suggesting that it is a staged cycle of modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation.

Complementing and building upon this model, caring teaching is also Vygotskian in its centrality to cognitive development. In *Thought and Language* (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 8), Vygotsky resisted the separation of cognition and affect, emphasizing instead 'the existence of a dynamic system of meaning in which the affective and the intellectual unite', demonstrating that he viewed cognition and affect as integrated and interdependent. As both Tappan (1998) and Goldstein (1999) have argued, Vygotsky believed that a practice that enables this to be made possible rests on the notion of relationships, whereby intellectual growth is generated by emotional-motivational processes, and relationships are reinforced through the 'engrossment' and 'motivational displacement' (Noddings, 1984b) required to properly engage in scaffolding a learner in the Zone of Proximal Development. Buber (1965) expanded upon the relational aspects of learning, suggesting that a relationship can only be formed and maintained if it is built upon trust. Buber asserted that trust could only be attained if a teacher participates freely and voluntarily within

their students' lives, and by the same token, exposes themselves and their views for scrutiny. Indeed, Buber's interpretation of a relationship within learning echoes elements of caring synonymous with solicitousness, labour, and the grace to accept others without judgment.

## **Summary**

This section of the literature has examined the philosophical and practical bases of care across all educational sectors. Drawing variously on studies that both privilege or alternatively marginalize caring, it has examined care's importance as an ethic, a structural obligation, and a personal belief. The literature demonstrates that whilst students and pupils might agree on what caring teaching 'looks' and 'feels' like, there is no such agreement on where such a caring moral might originate within teacher preparation, nor how it might be enacted, for the benefit of all learners. Equally, there are no recipes for how to change one set of cultural models and professional expectations within teaching into another. That is, how to change the existing models and expectations into ones that are more 'caring'. Nevertheless, the concepts that I have sought to expose and examine can serve as constructs to critically explore, within this study, the academics' beliefs and goals concerning their teaching.

## **2.3 Teachers And Their Teaching: Identities And Autobiographical Accounts**

### ***2.3.1 Teachers And Teaching: Identity Development In Perspective***

According to McAdams (2001), identity can 'take the form of a story, complete with setting, scenes, character, plot, and theme' (p. 101). In McAdams's (1993, 1996, 2001) life story model of identity, identity emerges in adolescence and is narratively formed by reconstructing past experiences, present experiences, and anticipated future experiences. Identity is formed in an evolving meaningful self-story that is integrated with unity and purpose. Bruner (2003) has



asserted that the life story is a personal psychosocial construction of self in which the cultural context of the individual's life is embedded and given meaning.

In all fields of teacher education, the use of stories, biographies and autobiographies in addressing teachers' development and identity formation has become increasingly popular (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994; Schrader, 2004). An important function of biographical and autobiographical narratives is that they can situate 'selves' in their social and educational contexts, and better document the formation of identities.

According to McAdams (1993, 1996, 2001), identity does not emerge until adolescence and is defined synchronically and diachronically, up until a point that narratives can be cohesively developed and linked together to explain events in meaningful ways. Narrative stories by this age incorporate the past and exhibit the self with temporal, causal, and thematic coherences (McAdams, 2001). Research examining the development of a teaching identity often uses a variety of phenomenological techniques to address the lived experiences of identity formation of individuals in during, for example, practice placements or periods of reflective or experiential learning (Ben-Peretz, 2002; Alger, 2009). The development of self as a teacher is one of the hallmarks of teacher development (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991) but it is unique, dynamic, and personal.

There appears to be three significant experiences that contribute to a developing sense of self as a teacher: early childhood experiences, early experiences with teachers as role models, and experiences of teaching aligned with immersion in the field, either through disciplines or work (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991). Significant early experiences typically in the form of family experiences can contribute to how strongly one relates to self as a teacher. Early experiences of home exert a powerful, positive or negative, influence on a beginning teacher's emerging identity

and classroom practices, and these can instill behaviors and values, including spiritual ones, that shape subsequent interactions in class (Higgins d'Alessandro, 2002; Lindholm & Astin, 2008).

Perhaps the most significant experience in the formation of self as a teacher however, is from prolonged experiences with teachers and academics (Schempp et al, 1999). Teachers and academics, as role models, either positive or negative, influence the inner pattern of behaviors and thoughts about self as a teacher. Lortie (1975) theorized that beginning teachers serve a protracted 'apprenticeship of observation' that serves as a means of socializing and inducting individuals into ways of relating to others, ways of behaving as a teacher and as a person, and ways of teaching particular disciplines. Elements of this prolonged informal socialization are the positive or negative images and beliefs concerning teachers or academics that later may be a strong component in constructing a teaching identity (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991; McNamara, 2008). This is equally true of academics' identity formation, though of course this is complicated by affiliation with occupational identities. McNamara (2008) for example, speaks cogently of the effect of belonging to a 'profane' profession, nursing, in an avowedly 'sacred' context, an 'ivory tower university', and of the struggles to reclaim an independent identity.

What is learned from family interactions, lifetime of experiences in schools, colleges and universities and knowledge about schools and teaching are embedded into an emerging sense of self as a teacher or an academic. Self as a person and self as a teacher are critical components in the process of *becoming*, and during the course of formative experiences of work, training, or orientation into a new role, any development will be interpreted within the framework of these emerging identities. This personal sense of self as a teacher will serve as a mediator and a means of organizing new information in the process of becoming a teacher or an academic (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991). As a result, identity formation is continually reconstructed as storied work of development, experience, reflection and culture (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991; Fottland,

2004).

### ***2.32 Images Of Teaching And Academic Work***

Often a teacher's and academic's images of and beliefs about teaching have been influenced by deeply imprinted images of teaching that pervade in the wider culture (Alsup, 2006). All teachers, academics, whether novice or experienced, bring to their roles more than their desire to teach. They bring their implicit institutional biographies - the cumulative experience of their lives - that in turn, inform their knowledge of their learners' worlds, of institutional structure, curriculum. Many new teachers and academics' conceptions of their roles and identities appear to be self-referential and have an unrealistic view of themselves as being the sole architect of their teaching and learning environment. As a result, their views of their own pedagogical authority are frequently flawed, and compromised in practice (Harjunen, 2009).

Societal images of teaching as projected by print and visual media stereotypically portray teaching and academic work in an oversimplified and generalized image (Alsup, 2006). Alsup also states that there is a 'cumulative cultural text' of how teachers and teaching are portrayed by modern medias such as television, children's popular reading, movies, records, and even toys. Simplified teaching and academic images and stereotypes emerge from this cumulative cultural patchwork and shape and distort the beliefs that existing teachers and academics hold; but very importantly, they also shape and mediate the views and beliefs held by the pupils and students that they encounter, and these can damage encounters within their classrooms. Mello (2004) has asserted that such views and beliefs are intensely cultural to the extent that seeking to make relational meanings in pedagogy can hasten a collision between teachers and taught.

Weinstein (1998) speaks of one her student teachers being influenced by images of teachers as 'wanting to be with them; of being comfortable and interested in them, getting to know them and

their backgrounds' (p. 154). However, the student's experiences in the classroom rapidly overturned such idealistic views of everyday teaching, as it became clear that pupils did not want to be known or to be friendly, and concerns of behaviour management became paramount. The student ultimately lamented 'I want to be nice, but I have to be mean' (p. 161). Likewise, in a higher education context, Tompkins (1996) speaks poignantly of the devastating disappointment at discovering that not all the students at her affluent American liberal arts college want to be 'cared for', 'saved' and awakened'. As a result, she retreats into her newly enlightened view of the academic she has become on discovering that Ehrenreich (1989) is correct in stating that whilst the middle class would like to imagine their interactions can be characterized by 'otherness', the fact is, making reference to feelings, emotions and affect explicitly represents 'what the middle class feared most in itself: softening of character, a lack of firm internal values' (p. 51).

Faced with the dichotomy of wanting to be affecting, and of wanting to imagine that teachers and academics are capable of empowerment and of reaching all students, it is therefore unsurprising that in studies of teachers' and academics' metaphors, there is a great emphasis on the idealized role of the teacher as a loner. In this view, the teacher is architect of their own destiny with the sole power to change lives, rouse schools and universities from their misguided slumbers into liberation or even anarchy. Whatever else they are, teachers' metaphors are active in overthrowing whatever current vicissitude ails the institution. But arguably, the underlying message from such portrayals is that teaching is a natural talent or gift that is more related to emotional disposition and attributional fit than to serious and prolonged reflection and critical examination of one's practices.

This is especially true for academics' biographies, which, although they clearly impact on and involve other people's lives, are invariably portrayed as singular journeys. The highly contextualized and biographical nature of academics' pedagogical caring can be told in stories of

lived experiences (Bruner, 2003). The propensity to care, the ability to care, and the working theorization and practice of caring within teaching may well begin as incidental reactions to autobiographical events. However, the research demonstrates that they collectively require such an investment both in personal principled and pedagogic practice terms that they can not be seen simply as perpetual response to external actors or events, nor as static and unwavering ethics (Taylor, 1999; Fitzmaurice, 2008). Indeed, such ethics as they illuminate and shape caring academics' teaching are neither static, nor invariant, but are dynamic, culturally and contextually dependent and are continuously reconstructed in the form of narratives, both academics' own, and those of the students with whom academics interact.

It could be argued of course, that concerns with individual students' narratives of higher education, and the place of affect within such narratives have always played a defining part in the experience of higher education. The appearance of university life in literature, for example in the work of Kingsley Amis (*Lucky Jim*), Malcolm Bradbury (*The History Man*), Anne Oakley (*The Men's Room*), or David Lodge (*Changing Places*) illustrates this, although it is worth pointing out that in terms of interactions with tutors and lecturers, there are few positive instances. Those that are, such as in *Educating Rita* by Willy Russell, are characterized by idiosyncrasy and apparent eccentricity rather than normality. As the number and diversity of students entering higher education has increased however and the moral climate of universities has changed, reason would dictate that toleration of such cavalier behaviour is no longer an option, and that to court the possibility of there being a more caring, more humane, and more progressive approach to teaching in universities, might be a good thing.

### **2.33 Disciplinary Cultures And Beliefs**

Forming a teaching identity is a complex, culturally based process, which occurs within a specific context, time, and place within multiple learning institutions. Being and becoming a teacher or

academic is a function of growth within a complex social and cultural environment where discourses and identities are in constant tension (Walker et al, 2006a; Day & Kington, 2008). Social contexts of schools and workplaces can impede or impel the growth of teachers' learning and development throughout their career life span. It is within these multiple learning and work contexts that the teacher or academic develops a cultural and professional sense of a teaching identity. According to Day & Kington (2008), the psychosocial identity process evolves in stories that are jointly crafted by the individual, their lived experiences, and the culture, and as a result, within this process, the individual's life story develops meaning.

The larger professional, disciplinary and societal group of teachers and academics also influences collective identity formation (Samuelowicz & Bain, 1992; McNamara, 2008). Adopting a collective identity requires a collective affiliation with the larger societal group of professionals, and it is certainly necessary to regard oneself as a member of a 'community of practice' in being accepted as one of the community, regardless of the theoretical basis on which identity is viewed. Bernstein (1996) regards secure academic identities as being situated in strong boundaries between disciplines and as functions of those disciplines. Lave & Wenger (1991), on the other hand, see secure identities as being lived and participatory. Nevertheless, professional identity requires the mastery of knowledge and abilities essential to professional performances, but it also involves assuming essential norms and values of the profession (Fitzmaurice, 2008; McNamara, 2008). Developing a collective identity is highly dependent upon contextual experiences with others in the teaching profession and the recognition by others as having qualities, knowledge and dispositions of the profession (Jawitz, 2007; McNamara, 2008).

## **Summary**

This section of the literature has addressed the nature of teacher development, and interrogated studies concerning the formation of teacher identity as a function of experience, context and

culture. It stresses that identity development is frequently problematic and incoherent, ultimate identities being in tension particularly in strong existent communities into which a novice teacher or academics might enter. Literature on academics' values systems suggests that critical incidents affect the way that new academics conceive of pedagogy within higher education and are important in their demonstrable and enacted teaching behaviours (Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001). As such, teachers and academics may need structures that assist in developing critical perspectives on what it means to teach; one such vehicle may well be the process of reflecting upon, or 'storying' their identity, and a productive structure might well be predicated upon examination of particular values and beliefs.

## **2.4 Caring Academics: Experiences, Beliefs And Practices**

### **2.4.1 The Purpose Of Caring Teaching In Higher Education**

Many in the field of research into teaching within higher education believe that caring teaching and being a caring academic, is a purely personal preference and in addition, that as a somewhat elusive value judgment, caring has little cognitive significance within an arena perceived to be purely a matter of knowledge and skill development (Postareff et al, 2007). Indeed, recent literature suggests that less credence be given to values and experiences that have shaped the way that academics teach and more credence be given to privileged other external values, such as tolerance for others' views and understanding of differing cultural contexts that may preclude many relational aspects of pedagogy (Postareff et al, 2007).

Shapiro & Stefkovich (2005) acknowledge the tensions in reconciling 'inner' and 'externally imposed' values systems and suggest that academics and teachers should critically compare their own values to certain ethical paradigms to see how best theirs fit, bearing in mind professional codes of practice and institutional accountability. This trend of institutional ethical awareness is

underpinned by the increasingly central role that universities now play in the development of society and the cultural role that they play in the lives of people that take part in higher education in greater numbers than ever before. The Bucharest Declaration (2004) concerning Ethical Values and Principles for Higher Education in the Europe region frames this ethical and moral dimension of universities' work. In addition, such ethical reform agendas have begun to permeate frameworks for Academic Development and Training, and have recently emerged as being a critical concern to the whole way in which higher education academics practice (Stephen et al, 2008).

Certainly, the increasing diversity of students entering higher education in the UK, particularly over the last decade, the complex circumstances within which many students learn, and the ever greater economic and emotional sacrifices that students make in embarking upon their studies have all illuminated some compromised and indeed impoverished (Malcolm & Zukas, 2001; Haggis, 2003) views of teaching and learning. As a result, some teaching methodologies often inadvertently both devalue the cultural capital that students bring with them (Longden, 2004; Quinn et al, 2005) and fail to see the wider educational and pedagogic relevance of differently conceived views of knowledge and learning, (Yorke & Longden, 2004). This notion of the undercurrent of compromise within contemporary universities has been explained by Trowler (1998) who noted that much of the recent research into change and higher education adopts 'top down' managerial perspectives on institutional change, and he has called for researching and theorizing the 'underlife' of universities as new management practices take hold and policy innovations - such as the emphasis on 'the student experience' - are implemented.

However, a decade on from Trowler's work, comparatively few studies exist which critically discuss the wider possible impact of reconceptualized, indeed, caring, pedagogies. Taking a more enlightened and responsive view of teaching, Walker (2005) for example shows there are many



kinds of institutional gains to be made. These include increased retention rates (Georg, 2009) and therefore the possibility of higher levels of eventual student achievement (Thomas, 2000), to improved ability to recognize and respond to student mental health and other issues (Peelo & Wareham, 2002) through to better academic staff support leading to models of more effective student engagement in learning (Haggis, 2004; Hixenbaugh & Thomas, 2006).

However, there is another domain of teaching within higher education that aligns itself with caring teaching, and this is the issue of what is define as 'excellent' teaching. Studies concerning 'excellent teachers' in higher education are beset by contention and controversy, As Skelton (2005) notes, defining 'excellence' in teaching is difficult enough, but the plethora of roles under the umbrella of 'academic' makes a definition intensely problematic. Nevertheless, the documentation of excellent and exceptional teaching, especially through the increasing publicity given to teaching awards such as the UK National Teaching Fellowships (Higher Education Academy, 2008) and the US Carnegie Scholars Programme (Carnegie Foundation, 2008), together with the growth in awareness of movements such as The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (see for example Kreber, 2003; Nicholls, 2004) suggests that a key attribute of such academics is the ability to care and enact their practice of a caring pedagogy.

As such, the importance attached to differently conceived pedagogies that encompass affect as well as traditionally cognitive approaches to teaching and learning has grown, and research has emerged over the last two decades that explores the links between these and the needs of students, all within the broad notion of 'learning enhancement'. The concept of 'learning enhancement' has risen imperceptibly within the higher education agenda in the UK over the last 20 years, with the introduction variously of the National Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher Education in 2003 (HEA, 2009), the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in 1997 (QAA, 2009) and more recently, in 2005, The

National Student Survey (NSS, 2009). These developments run in parallel with the rise of public ethics and the civic role of the university, and the concomitant expanding commercialization of education (Bok, 2004; Robinson & Katulushi, 2005; McWilliam, 2007; Kolsaker, 2008).

In institutional terms, caring may well be demonstrated as much through a mission to respond sensitively and appropriately to all, as demonstrating pursuance of a particular spiritual ethos. In particular, the Human Rights legislation of the EU (Human Rights Act, 1998), the various anti-discriminatory laws that have been passed over the last decade (for example the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, and the The Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) Regulations 2003 amongst the various Acts of Parliament), and the increasing awareness of cultures of responsiveness and respect in institutions, have brought about cultural shifts within many institutions. In addition, the widening participation mission of higher education as a whole (Leathwood & O'Connell, 2003) together with the increasing internationalization of curricula and student bodies (Koehne, 2006), have sought to bring to the fore issues of relational conduct, and the way that this conduct is realized in practice, clearly has a bearing on the ultimate outcomes for students and their achievements.

#### ***2.42 Being A Caring Academic In Practice***

As this review has established, there are very few studies that are explicitly concerned with the exploration of caring teaching within higher education, and those that exist to date, are primarily concerned either with caring as a 'discourse of difference' (Akyea & Sandoval, 2004; Walker et al, 2006b; Fenwick, 2006) and support (Rhodes & Nevill, 2004; Stephen et al, 2008), or as an emerging ethos within teacher education programmes of study (Goldstein & Freedman, 2003). Partly, this situation has arisen out of a historical, structural and legal concern with the initial training of teachers within the compulsory sector. As a result, through and unwillingness of caring academics to identify themselves as such, or lack of importance attached to care, caring academics

are rarely heard and caring practices and their effects on learners are therefore only poorly understood. Indeed, caring can be a dangerous occupation, attracting in equal measure calls of self indulgence and egotism on the one hand and unprofessional conduct and blurring of boundaries of equity on the other (Aultman et al, 2008).

However, many of the expressed aims of teaching in higher education do have a very particular form of intent that is partially aligned with some interpretations of care, that of 'service'. In institutional terms, it manifests itself as a kind of 'structural obligation', that is, to maximize visibility in various forms of quality measures in very particular ways, such as 'ensuring the standards of quality learning enhancement within higher education' (QAA, 2009) so that students 'enjoy the highest quality learning experience in the world' (HEA, 2009). However, an examination of the discourse of 'the learning experience' within higher education shows clearly that there is a preoccupation with a specific pedagogic consequence – to use the visibility of 'learning enhancement' to maximize institutional funding. In turn, this pedagogic consequence is frequently extrapolated to determine the best-fitting pedagogy, irrespective of whom is 'delivering' it. In terms of 'service', this is undoubtedly a form of customer-led variety, but rarely does it respond to the particular and specific needs of individual students making pedagogy a structural affair that appears to concentrate on matters of monitoring and auditing (Longden, 2004; Quinn et al, 2005; Jacklin & Robinson, 2007).

What is also evident, and has an important bearing on this thesis however, is how many studies locate students' experience in a causal or structural model (however complex) of pedagogy, and how so few of them relate autobiographical narratives of interwoven objectives that may have a personal salience but have little seeming outward bearing on institutional objectives (Walker et al, 2006b; Waller, 2006; Roman et al, 2008). In addition, although these are now gaining in number and popularity, there exist even fewer accounts in higher education, with the exception of, for

example, Cartney & Rouse (2006) and Christie et al, (2008), that demonstrate the possible affective and persistence-related impact of academics' teaching, particularly in the co-related sense of linking affect and relationships to cognition and retention. For many students in higher education, learning success only seems to be pertinent to achieving their unique objectives of participation, and so if these are not visible or measurable, we by extension, fail to understand the fullest effects of pedagogy wherever they are experienced and felt.

In turn, during this time, academics that teach in our universities have been repositioned subtly and discursively, whether through reward (prizes and promotions), coercion (outcomes-based funding, national league tables), personal curiosity and enthusiasm for innovation, or performative compliance (visible feedback systems, public take-up of institutional expectations such as attendance at open days, online 'presence'). The moral and civic purpose that Fitzmaurice (2008) speaks of has spawned a conflation of care with customer service. However, truly 'caring' learning enhancement may well be, costly, time consuming, and have no ultimately positive financial outcome for the institution. As a result, universities may well claim that they are indeed 'caring' institutions with the mission of enhancing every aspect of students' learning, whilst marginalizing those activities that exemplify 'quality' as both students and academics feel it intuitively and demonstrate it, that is, through sustained contact and ongoing personal responsiveness.

First-hand student testimony illustrates this tension, by exposing the consistent exhortation from many students that an increase in contact time with academics is their priority, but the university's priority might well be the signing of 'learning contracts' with the aim of supposedly enhancing their learning experience. Indeed, for most students, personal contact is not only a defining factor of a 'higher education', but one that in many cases mediates the diverse pressures that many students in twenty first century education feel and makes persisting in their studies bearable. As Christie et al (2004) suggest: 'more attention needs to be paid to the extent to

which the decision to continue in the face of financial and other difficulties is intrinsically related to the quality of relationships with other students, tutors and support staff...' (p. 633). Likewise, Hixenbaugh & Thomas (2006) assert that 'Students can get a great deal of information from written documents. What they want is what human beings have always wanted: personal contact.' (p. 2).

As a result, in the discourse of mass higher education, learning contracts, and minimal funding, it has become somewhat inevitable that 'what the students want' is not interpreted as caring and teacher-initiated, but as learner-facilitation with comprehensive but discrete adjunct support. Coaldrake & Steadman (1999) have called this movement one step toward a model of 'indifferent teaching', which despite protestations to the contrary, views teaching essentially as a mechanistic process, that, if carried out according to procedure, will guarantee students satisfaction and ultimate success. Ironically, students themselves speak of their learning experiences in similar terms to their earlier counterparts, focusing on personal psychosocial needs and expectations (Cartney & Rouse, 2006; Sander et al, 2000).

### **2.43 *Caring Teaching In Action***

The ethic of care has been defined as 'an approach to ethics originating predominantly from feminist writing which focuses on close personal relationships and emphasizes emotional commitment as a basis for acting rather than reliance on abstract rules and principles' (Tadd, 1998, p. 367). In analyzing caring teaching in action, one defining characteristic is that it has at its heart, a relational encounter, where one is changed as a result (Noddings, 1984b). In studies of most caring teachers, this is an inadvertent outcome of the impact of an affective approach to teaching, whether through being a moral exemplar, through being culturally responsive in a particularly resonant manner, or through facilitating a deeper trusting bond of authentic learning. However, some teachers, whether motivated through social concern and reform, vocational

persuasion or personal history beliefs, actively pursue some facets of caring in order that they may foster and precipitate change. To do this for purely personal inclination with extreme calculation is arguably unethical. However, for many vocational degree programmes, it is taken as read that some professional behaviours and values will be developed in preference to others, and indeed, through exposure to their consequences, educators will seek to create, modify and even attenuate some 'inappropriate' ones (Goldstein & Lake, 2003; Sawatzky et al, 2009).

Notwithstanding these instances however, the issue of whether students' values are held up for scrutiny is becoming increasingly important in almost all disciplines, with the rise of the autobiographical and learning journal approach to assessment (Gleaves et al, 2007; 2008). If we are cognizant of Bishop's (1996) views, and wonder that we ask our students to divulge perhaps too much of their inner lives that is not in the sole aim of learning, then perhaps we as academics should in turn, examine the origins of own values and beliefs more carefully. Lindholm & Astin (2008) assert that academics' values related to spirituality may be a good place to begin examining their impact on students' learning. especially so since spirituality, they argue, appears to be a bridge between elements of 'teacher centredness' in academic life, and relatedness in students' learning. But if academics do persist in opening up classrooms for autobiographical purposes, then as Curzon-Hobson (2002) asserts, we urgently need to examine the possibility of a 'pedagogy of trust' in higher education, or at the very least, we need to ensure that our classroom are 'harmonious' where even the discomfort of scholarship can be explored happily.

Noddings (1984a) argues that teachers and academics should not define happiness for their students, and not pursue particular virtues or values as ends other than to care for others and for them to acknowledge that caring. Noddings is careful to point out though, that it is not the explicit practice of the act of caring that makes it so central to teaching – this, she argues, is a form of narcissism - it is its situated-ness, what she terms 'response-ability', that elevates care into

a virtuous and authentic relational interaction, one that privileges the 'other' over oneself. It is this subtle difference in care as 'cura' that so completely demonstrates the complexity of care and caring as it is theorized and practiced. However, academics' personal experiences of relationships, no matter that they may be in the context of academic scholarship, are often positioned as indulgences within literature on higher education on the basis that they do not and should not impact on what is learned and how it is learned within the higher education classroom and collapse ultimately into what Ecclestone (2004) has called a 'therapeutic discourse'.

Indeed, such a notion of a 'caring' academic demonstrates a common fallacy about caring's place and power in the cognitive sense, and it is arguable that were there more evidence within the higher education context to demonstrate that caring encounters improve motivation and academic achievement, then caring pedagogies might become more culturally acceptable.

However, there are other, more cultural, aspects of care's scope that point toward its status as being significantly misunderstood and misused, and in addition, being under-researched, particularly in educational terms. These cultural issues stem from care's overlapping meanings, its significance as an emotional response, and the lack of precision that often characterizes its use in social communication and which contrasts markedly with the positivist and precise language used in much scientific discourse. This is a critical point in considering care's status in academic terms: Wager (2001) suggests that the epistemological separation between 'emotions' (of which care is just one) and 'reason', which characterized the development of science and technology was taken up by rational scholars who wanted to cast doubt on any kind of irrationality that did not use the 'reason' of physical sciences such as physics and chemistry. Beard et al (2007) have argued that this separation has led to 'rationality' becoming a 'masculinized' ideology devoid of feeling, empathy, and compassion.

Indeed, Akyea & Sandoval (2004) have spoken of the dilemma of enacting caring pedagogies on 'relational epistemology' claiming that although they can frequently be justified on the grounds of humanistic principles of growth and self-awakening, they ultimately undermine the very ambitious educational aims they set out to overthrow. Considering that caring pedagogy has been associated with experiential and autobiographical journeys for disempowered learners, it is perhaps no wonder that caring pedagogies have become conflated with low academic standards.

## **Summary**

The section has discussed the conflicts and contradictions inherent in a higher education system where care is frequently seen to be the very antithesis of the detached scientific mind - and its quest for scholarship, truth and objectivity – a system in which 'reason' is frequently regarded as indispensable for the acquisition of truth. Haggis (2003) and Malcolm & Zukas (2001) take exception to such movements, and both are critical of models of the teacher and learner in higher education that fail to take account of a diverse student body. Indeed, echoes of caring as a transformative pedagogy that allows a flowering of students in classrooms that are characterized by emotional difficulty, marginalization or trauma are found in much literature on teaching, as if the 'care' has a deeply redemptive quality: Tisdell & Tollver (2003) for example speak of caring teaching as a way of allowing students to claim their 'sacred face'; whilst Pryer (2001) speaks of caring teaching as a form of life-giving that is almost erotic in its intention.

Through analysis of these diverse meanings and intentions, this section of the literature has illustrated that the role of teachers and academics in facilitating care and caring pedagogies is embedded far deeper in our educational psyche than the behaviours of individual pedagogues. Although contested, it hinges on what teachers are actually *for* and the responsibilities that they have in enacting those purposes.



## **2.5 Chapter Overview**

The theoretical and conceptual framework for this study has been built from separate but interrelated fields of research in the areas of care theory and philosophy, teacher autobiography and values development, and finally, caring teacher identity and practice within higher education. Becoming and being an academic who is perceived to be caring, and in addition, holds caring values that are consistent with their behaviours and actions is a highly complex and frequently fraught process and practice that exists in discourse-rich contexts. Fragments of positive and negative experiences combine with residual beliefs about the purposes of academic teaching to produce values that modify with time and context. Existing academics' views of caring teaching serve to organize their practices of caring through dissonance or agreement with professional, disciplinary and institutional norms and morality. Moreover, becoming and being a caring academic is a constantly negotiated process in which academics are reflecting on and re-writing their experiences, dilemmas and thoughts toward capturing their own unique understanding of academic work.

## **CHAPTER 3: DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

#### **Overview**

This study is designed to examine the beliefs and work of caring academics in the naturalistic setting of their every day working lives in a UK university in the northern region of England. The three academics were selected using LeCompte & Preissle's (1993) reputational case selection. This study had two purposes,

1. To gain an in-depth understanding of the educational and pedagogical beliefs and practices of higher education academics who are perceived to be caring.
2. To examine how identity is constructed through autobiography.

This study explored four main research questions:

1. What are the personal and pedagogic meanings and experiences of being a perceived 'caring' academic within higher education?
2. How do these particular academics' values and beliefs shape their teaching and academic work?
3. What particular self and academic identities do these academics possess and what autobiographical experiences inform their construction?
4. What salient aspects of academic identity inform the present and future context of these academics' work?

In this section, I will address the research design.

### ***Research Design In Practice***

No one likes to be thought of as uncaring, whether in their private or their professional lives. As a virtue, its value in teaching is undisputed, if implicit (Noddings, 1994; Wentzel, 1997; Fitzmaurice, 2008). Within educational institutions, whether as a teacher, lecturer or academic, caring is also an important attribute in terms of demonstrable actions, in that professionals in these spheres would almost certainly be offended and concerned if there was a perception that they were uncaring, toward their work or their students. Nevertheless, not only is it possible to define caring as a motivation and an intent as well as a value and belief, it is also possible, as Goldstein & Lake (2003) point out, to attest to caring behaviours whilst rarely demonstrating them. Noddings (1984b) terms the dissonance between behaviour and inclination or disposition one of 'fidelity'. Likewise, teachers and academics may well behave consistently in such a way and carry out their work with what appears to be a form of particular social relations based on ethics and conscience, so being perceived to be caring, yet holding no particular system of beliefs that identifies relational pedagogy as being significant (Wager, 2001). Consequently, a major methodological issue concerns fidelity and validity: the research design must capture the possible inconsistencies between objectified aspects of what is being researched, and what those phenomena mean as lived experiences and perceptions to the participants and others.

A second matter concerns the affective dimension of researching a difficult topic. Whilst it is certainly true that the negative associations of being thought uncaring would elicit strong personal emotions from the academics concerned (Wager, 2001), equally, perceptions of being caring elicit emotional reactions, from the perceived caring individuals as well as others, including colleagues. Research reviewed in the literature demonstrates for example that being caring is frequently associated with high student satisfaction rankings (Wentzel, 1997; Uitto & Syrjala, 2008), and although analysis of these demonstrate low reliability and validity with eventual grades and other quality indicators, the use of particular subjective teacher attributes such as 'caring' in teaching

quality assessment gives rise to suspicion and sometimes jealousy among faculty, and so as Walker et al (2006a) demonstrate, 'caring' faculty frequently seek to silence themselves whilst becoming disillusioned and angry at caring's misinterpretation in their work.

A study carried out by the researcher in 2006 (Walker et al, 2006) assisted in the design and development of this study and clarified many of the issues related to the difficulty of defining and acting with care, and of being consistent in subjective descriptions of identifying caring teaching itself. The research demonstrated that presenting oneself as caring even if defined in a way that its sole purpose was for cognitive development reasons, was problematic for academics, and may unwittingly align them with a pastoral and perhaps even spiritual school of thought within the institution. Indeed, seeing oneself or being perceived by other as 'caring' seemed to undermine academics' claims to be 'serious' researchers, by the insinuation that time spent with students is to the detriment of focused scholarship (Walker et al, 2006). As a result, there were important methodological considerations in studying a concept that is often the subject of not only limited disclosure, but also is also susceptible to the earlier stated difficulties of self-classification of virtues, and of simplistic classifications of values and behaviours.

What the literature and my theoretical framework of caring demonstrate is that caring itself is a complex synthesis of values, beliefs, and actions. Experiences of care and caring as recounted by teachers and students alike give rise to palpable relations between emotions, hopes and fears and the personal, political, economic and social contexts of education. As such, they are complex subjects to research, and as DeMarrais & Tisdale (2002) point out, require approaches that seek to not necessarily 'straighten out' meanings, but to explicate the implications of emotions and beliefs on actions. DeMarrais & Tisdale call such an approach 'entangling' and assert that it is only through seeing entanglement in its situated and lived context that it becomes meaningful.

This is a particularly important matter within studies of caring teaching, where the very definition is itself contested, and research exposes rich seams of experience drawing on ethics, past experiences, and spirituality. Such research forms the bedrock of this thesis, where forms of inquiry and analysis that are qualitative and broadly naturalistic are combined to shed light on complex, sensitive and difficult issues in social contexts. Bearing in mind these considerations, the research design chosen for this study is a dual phenomenological life-historical methodology. In addition, the academics in the study were selected using LeCompte & Preissle's (1993) reputational case selection (see below).

As a study of principled and practiced caring in pedagogical contexts, this study is by definition subjectivist in its epistemological orientation, ordered by a framework of phenomenological and life-historical, and purposefully 'grounded' and exploratory in the analysis and interpretation that emerges out of the three participants' 'lived experiences'. Speaking of how researchers make use of the phenomenological approach within, particularly, pedagogically orientated contexts, van Manen (1990, pp. 1–2) says that:

When we raise questions, gather data, describe a phenomenon, and construct textual interpretations, we do so as researchers who stand in the world in a pedagogic way ... pedagogy requires a phenomenological sensitivity to lived experience [that contributes] to one's pedagogical thoughtfulness and tact.

In the case of caring teaching, these lived experiences, or 'lifeworlds', are insights into people's conscious lives as they are lived through experience, and reveal complex themes but surrounded by shifting values, some dissonant with the participants' inner lives, but always a source of response to their impact on the students whom they teach.

Phenomenological life historical methodology therefore involves a portrayal of a person's lived experience and how meaning is constructed within the context in which they function and communicate (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Rossman & Rallis, 2003) but critically, with regard to a specific phenomenon, in the case of this thesis, care and caring teaching. In structural terms, within this research, the underpinning aim was for the participants, once identified, to recount, tell and explain care and caring teaching as the phenomenon under study, but to do so through anchoring it in the overarching structure of the participants' lifeworlds. Van Manen (1990) explained the concept of the lifeworld as 'The world as we immediately experience it pre-reflectively rather than as we conceptualize, categorize or reflect upon it. (p. 9)'

However, there are many positions from which one can engage with phenomenology as both a philosophy and a research methodology, ranging from the purely philosophical to the thoroughly interpretive. This study, contextualized as it is within an explicitly 'applied' discipline, namely academic work within higher education, is orientated towards what Van Manen (2002) terms a 'Phenomenology of Practice', signifying that it is characterized by an interpretive response, rather than, for example, an existential response as in Giorgi (1985). Ontologically, it therefore stands as a study in which consciousness is distinct from observed reality, but than can only be understood as being mediated through reality.

But as Sadala & Adorno (2002) emphasize, because a person experiencing a phenomenon is most consciously connected to the experience they are best suited to describe it and to define the meaning of it but without exclusion of any aspect of themselves or their lived and encountered experience in the real world.

Phenomenology was also selected as a methodology for another reason however, and that was to give practicing 'caring' academics as they were selected by others, a voice in describing what for

them, may well be a meaningful experience in terms of a concept – caring – that is predominantly described in subjective terms by students and pupils, and in perceptual or subjective terms by other colleagues. It is something of a paradox that although literature points to expectations of teachers and academics to care, enacting a principled practice of care or not, for anything other than cognitive or sound business reasons may be viewed with suspicion at worst, or as being self indulgent at best. Phenomenology thus permits a phenomenon that is frequently undisclosed and that maintains a concealed quality for the participants themselves, to be clarified and to establish a validity for personal experience. In many ways, this situation amounts to a problem of ‘naming’ caring – precisely because there is a problem with identifying its realization and intent, notwithstanding actually admitting to it lest it be misunderstood and misinterpreted. Phenomenology has particular strengths in this context, related to how it can alert one to existing understandings and sharpen one’s reflective lens. As Thompson (2008) argues:

It is all to do with how phenomenologists “name” the object of their reflections and/or research. Approaching an aspect of practice (...) and speaking about it in this way, using a language quite different from routine descriptions of it, can work to subtly sharpen a lens of objectivity unexpectedly available despite the apparently overwhelming degree of subjectivity embedded in the actual process of “uncovering”. (p. 3)

In spite of the strengths of subjectivity and the meaningful personal participation facilitated by phenomenology however, its purpose in this study is not only to expose caring values and behaviours, it is also to contribute to a more rounded and richer understanding of how experiences within an autobiographical frame shape the identity of caring academics in practice. As Moustakas (1994) explains, ‘the point of phenomenology is to gain a better universal understanding of phenomenon ‘From the individual descriptions general or universal meanings

are derived, in other words, the essence of structures of the experience.’ (p. 13)

The life history approach with which phenomenology combines in this study offers great advantages due to the presentation of text in its wider and more ‘lived’ context. In life history research, the context is critical to comprehending the place of historical motivations and explanations within the present actions of an individual’s lived experience (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Goodson & Sikes, 2001). According to Goodson, a life history approach involves telling a story ‘with an equal concern to provide a broader context for the location, understanding, and grounding of those stories’ (p. 243). According to Cole & Knowles (2001), placing life history within a particular context, in this case, caring teaching within higher education, assists researchers in coming to examine complexities of social conditions and ‘to more fully know and understand the uniqueness and complexities’ (p. 23).

According to Cole & Knowles, life history takes:

...narrative one step further, that is, it goes beyond the individual or the personal and places narrative accounts and interpretations within a broader context...draws on individuals’ experiences to make broader contextual meaning. (p. 20)

According to Marshall & Rossman (1995), life history researchers depict the complete journey of one’s life course so that a reader might enter into the life more fully and be aware of its subtleties and complexities. As such, this methodology does not privilege one episode over another; it allows a layered approach to understanding the interrelation of short stories, narratives, critical incidents and longer episodes which are even more potent when several histories are accumulated (Cole & Knowles, 2001). Finally, and very importantly, life history can also provide



new insights into the influence of autobiographical experience on teachers and teaching by revealing instances and episodes that shape belief and practice (Goodson, 1992).

Researchers have a unique role in the methodology adopted for both phenomenological and life history research. They not only engage in theme-oriented dialogue where the outcome of the research, 'depends on the knowledge, sensitivity, and empathy of the interviewer' (Kvale, 1996, p. 105), but they are also required to 'bracket' - to review and suspend preconceptions and biases that they bring to the research (Polkinghorne, 1989; MacKnee, 2002). In addition, in life historical terms, researchers provide the collective interpretation of life history stories. As a result, the researcher's own experiences and beliefs must be subject to critical reflexivity (Goodson & Sikes, 2001).

### ***The Researcher's Role And Beliefs***

As a practicing university academic and a former teacher, I hold a particular view of education and teaching that rests on actively relational pedagogy and knowing one's students deeply. Still, my practical views on how I would proceed within this research were not rigidly decided in the beginning. There was certainly ample room for new insights and even changes of direction along the way. It therefore goes without saying that intrinsic to this study has been the eventual aim of ensuring a meaningful, well planned and ethical outcome for all those involved in this study. Fundamentally, within this research, I was an 'insider' (Merton, 1972); but an insider in two ways, as an individual teacher with a desire to care about all my students; and as an insider who processes *a priori* intimate knowledge of the community. In the case of this research, although the university under study (Rowan Tree University, or RTU) was not my own, I had a knowledge of its curriculum as a result of professional collaborations and regional research within another of its faculties. Kvale (1996) argues that as an insider the researcher does not have to deal with culture shock, enjoys enhanced rapport with the subject, is able to measure the accuracy of the

responses to questions, and is seen by the respondent as empathetic. However, there are potential difficulties with the issue of sharing 'insider' knowledge. As Mercer (2007) points out, during a study of faculty appraisal: 'I think I was usually seen as more of an insider when interviewing my fellow teachers than when interviewing members of management, although the power dimension was also affected by my pre-existing rapport with the specific person in question' (p. 4).

But there were other, cultural reasons why I occupied such a privileged position in this research, and they centre upon the use of the phenomenological method. As professionals sharing at least, some common belief systems, that is, caring pedagogy, I hoped that these academics would consider me appreciative of the issues that they faced in communicating some very difficult and moving accounts.

But the views and beliefs that I hold are not, and were not, in this research, always held by others, despite the seeming obviousness that the participants were selected precisely because they were, or at least, perceived to be, 'caring'. I found that in practicing pedagogy that is informed by specific values and located in one's carefully framed philosophy of teaching, one has to do two things: first, one has to articulate it in theory and in practice, to examine from all sides the ways in which such ideas are made real. But second, because the outcomes of caring are enacted and felt across all dimensions of the pedagogic relationship, I had to listen harder and with ever increasing sensitivity to what the participants were trying to tell me.

### **3.2 Selection Procedures**

According to Cole & Knowles (2001), in qualitative research, the researcher aims to collect and signify representative, rich and truthful information about people, settings, and social processes and discourses based upon the research questions, in order that an in depth analysis can be

undertaken (Cole & Knowles, 2001). In describing how the setting, context and participants are selected we establish the scope and limitations of the research as well as the boundaries of which we enhance a study's transferability (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

### ***Setting Of The Research***

The purpose of this study was two-fold - to gain an in-depth understanding of the place of care in education and teaching especially within higher education and to examine how academics' identities are constructed as autobiographies. As such, the researcher purposefully sought a UK university that offered a faculty whose representation was potentially varied enough in pedagogic experience background, as well as being multidisciplinary enough to facilitate a diverse range of views and practices on academic work and pedagogy in the twenty first century. The researcher's geographic location also limited and circumscribed the choice and accessibility of the University chosen for this study. Within an hour's drive of the researcher's home, there are nine institutions of higher education. During the year prior to the start of the present study, an analysis was carried out of the faculties, departments, variety of disciplines and demographics of academics and students working and studying within each university. The data were analyzed in particular with respect to the disciplinary backgrounds (for example whether in certain faculties academic staff were from traditional 'caring' disciplines), balance of research and teaching, working contracts (for example, academic lecturers or teaching fellows), the breadth of the student body in each case (for example in age, class, minority ethnicity and disability), the possibilities of inter- and multi-disciplinary working across departments and faculties, and finally, in terms of the universities' stated aims and mission. For this analysis, data were drawn from the Universities' own web sites, internal and external working papers and documents drawn from the Universities' Freedom of Information Public Repositories, HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) documents, QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) Inspection Reports, and HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) reports. From this data, one faculty within one university was chosen as the

setting for the research, on the basis of its size, student and staff diversity, and balance of its activity, both in mission terms (no overt aim related to for example nurturing or caring for students) in the balance of the type of teaching activity (no concentration for example on online delivery), and in the balance of teaching, research and commercial activity (no individual emphasis on being a 'teaching' or a 'research-led' university for example). This University is given the alias Rowan Tree University (RTU). In the next section, I outline the University context in which the academics, the participants in this study, work. I give a brief description of the institutional history and structure, mission statement and policies on teaching and learning and academic staff development. As for the research participants, the three lecturers who form the sample of 'caring academics' that provide the basis for analysis in this thesis, I give a brief biography, comprising their career history, current roles within the faculty and details of their current teaching commitments.

### ***The University In This Study***

Rowan Tree University (RTU) is situated in a city in the North of England. Originally a Polytechnic, it was formed in the 1960s from the amalgamation of three regional technical colleges, the main activity of each complementing and reflecting the industrial heritage and activity of the region. Building on these foundations, the Polytechnic incorporated a regional teacher training college in the 1970s. The training provision continued to expanded and by the late 1980s encompassed social work, nursing and allied health disciplines. Perhaps the greatest change for RTU came in 1992 when it became a University, or a 'New University' as ex-polytechnics are frequently termed in the media. By the year 2000 RTU had a wide portfolio of courses serving approximately 30,000 home and 3,000 overseas students within the city campus, and a further 3,500 studying on University programmes in their own countries. There are currently approximately 3000 staff in the university, around one third of which are principally employed on full-time equivalent 'academic' contracts. The faculties within the University cover broadly

conceived subject areas, the faculty chosen for this study, Society, arguably being the most diverse in disciplinary and scholarly terms and taking in three named departments – Culture (including Literature, History, Language, Politics); Education (comprising Teacher Education across all sectors – Primary and Early Years, Secondary, Post Compulsory and Higher Education); and Social Science (encompassing Social Work, Youth Studies, Criminology and Sociology). There are 76 full time academic members of this faculty engaged in a range of pedagogic activity, from Foundation Degrees through to Doctoral work, and from completely Online Tuition through to solely Face to Face Teaching.

### ***The Participants In This Study***

The potential participants in this study included seventy-six full time members of academic staff within the Faculty of Society. The faculty itself occupies three buildings on a city campus. Although the faculty comprises three departments, Culture, Education and Social Science, they do not exclusively occupy one building each. Indeed, all three departments are spread throughout all buildings, so the faculty members have cross-departmental contact on a daily basis. In addition, there is a large amount of interdisciplinary activity within the university at large; it has a large Combined Honours Programme, and many degrees are Joint Honours or Major/Minor Subject Combinations. Consequently, there is a great deal of shared activity, knowledge and professional and disciplinary practice within the Faculty.

### ***Process Of Selection Of Participants***

For this study, participants were selected using Reputational Case Selection. I will now describe the process and follow this with descriptions of the participants that were eventually selected. A sample of three purposeful ‘cases’ was investigated. This type of sampling enabled the selection of participants who could best facilitate the research aims and objectives and thus allow investigation into the phenomenon of caring. All the participants were nominated by knowledgeable

professionals in their field, a process known as 'Reputational Case Selection' (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). As outlined previously in this section, caring is a complex phenomenon to investigate using the beliefs and experiences of academics themselves yet utilizing student feedback in assessing such a subjective quality as a means to identifying academics in the first place is also unreliable. 'Reputational Case Selection' seeks to militate against these difficulties by harnessing 'expert' and 'professional' judgments on subjectivities, where possibilities of bias and favouritism are minimized. As a result of the selection, students' views can then be sought, either formally, or through the use of particular textual material in the participants' testimonies. In the case of this study, since there was no particular disciplinary focus, the experts and professionals were defined as Faculty Colleagues, including those in the Faculty Executive Team.

A letter (Appendix A) was sent to the Faculty members briefly discussing the purpose of the study and asking each to recommend a caring faculty academic and indicate the reasons they considered the academic to be caring. Sixty-five responses out of a possible seventy-six were obtained, thus representing 85.5% of the total respondents. These responses generated the nomination of fourteen individuals along with recommendations for each in the form of short paragraphs.

Each of the recommendations was then analyzed for a numerical breakdown of their support; an academic would only be chosen for the next stage of the case selection if they were nominated once in at least each of the three departments comprising the faculty. This process left eight potential candidates. These candidates were then scrutinized in terms of the level of agreement of their written recommendations with the literature on caring teachers and academics. In this process, criteria were generated from the literature on students' perceptions of caring teaching. This literature is fully discussed on page 29. The criteria identified in this way (that I have termed 'Caring Exemplifiers') were essential in serving the purposes of the research. First, they allowed

the reputational data to be ‘corroborated’. This was critical, since during the data analysis stage, the raw data would be interrogated in terms of concepts and constructs from the literature, and representations of caring from the student voice occupy a major theoretical strand within the field. Secondly, the use of student-generated judgments ultimately contributed to the validity of the ‘cases’ selected, since it provided checks and balances to any skewing of recommendations due a particularly unusual or subject-specific interpretation of care and caring. These ‘Caring Exemplifiers’ therefore had great significance within the research design, partly because they shaped the selection of candidates numerically from eight to four. Equally, however, they both grounded the study to a much greater degree within the literature, and gave much more scope and space for the lived experiences of those eventual participants to emerge, through continual dialogue and reflection on their stories.

The seven separate ‘Caring Exemplifiers’ are as follows:

- Listens to students
- Shows empathy
- Supports students
- Is active in the processes of learning in class
- Gives appropriate and encouraging feedback and praise
- Has high expectations in standards of work and behaviour
- Shows an active concern in students’ personal lives

The participant recommendations were then analyzed with respect to whether their nominations matched all of these and the process generated four participants. These remaining four were then contacted about participating in the research as ‘caring academics’ (Appendix B). Out of these, one declined to be part of the research and three subsequently became part of the project and

stayed throughout the whole period of the study. As a result, each participant was then sent a more detailed Research Study Information Sheet and a first meeting was set up in which the researcher obtained Informed Consent and finally, set up a meeting to record detailed contextual information regarding the academic's biographic details, and their role and work within the institution. At this meeting, each participant was asked to select a pseudonym for the entire study. The three 'Caring Academics' chose the aliases Eachann, Charity and Fenella. Finally, each participant was given a 'Topic Information Sheet' that outlined the major areas that the study would address over the academic year.

### ***Informed Consent And Permissions***

Appropriate procedures for obtaining informed consent and permissions are critical for the ethical conduct of the researcher (Rossman & Rallis, 2003) and in addition are required by the University's Internal Ethics Committee Procedures. According to Rossman & Rallis (2003) all informed consent should rest on four principles:

1. Transparency of the purpose of the research, to the audience and the research community;
2. Full understanding of the participant's agreement to participate;
3. Willing consent;
4. Right to withdraw without penalty or consequence.

All of the forms and questions developed within the study were written with these principles in mind and the project and the forms were reviewed and approved by the researcher's doctoral (Leicester) and home (Sunderland) universities' Ethics Committee in the academic year 2005-2006.



### ***Assurance Of Confidentiality***

According to Rossman & Rallis (2003), informed consent and permissions can serve to protect the participants of any research study in two ways – by assuring privacy and by concealing identity. All the forms and procedures used in this study aimed to satisfy both requirements. There are two other aspects of confidentiality that any study should address however, and they are protection of the data collected, and protection of the reputations of the participants. Every attempt was made to protect the confidentiality of the data collected. All notes, recordings, writings, and interview data were kept in a secure location at the researcher's home. As a further measure, a pseudonym was used throughout the research for each of the three participants. In addition, any place names or locations that could identify the participants or their place of work was either replaced with an alias, or simply removed and replaced by ellipsis points, i.e., ....

Within this study, protection of the reputations of the participants was also crucial, given that reputational case selection method was used. To honour confidentiality, the names of all the recommendations were confidential to me, and no disclosure of the results of the study took place in any way that could identify either the nominations or the eventual participants. Indeed, in data collection procedures, whether interviews or observations, the confidentiality of the participants was paramount and every effort to accommodate this was made.

This research utilized phenomenological life historical methodology, and in so doing, participants were asked to share both their 'lived experiences' (Daniluk & Hertig-Mitchell, 2003; MacKnee, 2002) and reconstruct their life stories. Without careful design and due consideration, interviewing that necessitates drawing upon one's life experiences can create feelings of vulnerability, especially when they are linked to how the past has shaped or will perhaps shape the future (Daniluk & Hertig-Mitchell, 2003). In addition, the particular words that the participants use in interviews, while precisely critical in representing lived experience, may enhance that

vulnerability, through the possible sense of exposure. In this study, where there are comparatively few subjects identified as having the necessary 'exemplifications' of caring academics, the possibility of exposure is potentially great, so aside from the mechanisms designed to protect the confidentiality aforementioned, great care was taken to respond with sensitivity to all data collected and discussed at each stage of the study's progress. In particular, dialogue between the researcher and participants played a major part in ensuring both the rigour and the representational quality of the study: throughout, participants were given the opportunity to critically assess their portrayals within the thesis.

### ***Gaining Access And Entry***

The professional background of this researcher as a teacher educator within a School of Education eased access and entry to the university that is the location for this study. The researcher has colleagues within the university in question and has colleagues in administrative and management divisions. All of the formal gatekeepers in the university were both supportive of and fascinated by the research project.

Thorough preparation prior to entering the institution under research is necessary to facilitate access to the participants, and part of this process includes establishing a rapport with the gatekeepers, establishing reciprocity, and establishing and maintaining professional credibility and reputation. In this study, the researcher had no difficulties with the latter due to extended research and project work with other senior colleagues in the institution. However, a significant gatekeeper to the study was the Director of the Staff Development Unit at RTU. Salient to this study was the Director's concern at the visibility of participants involved and any repercussions in terms of perceived teaching quality within RTU. Meetings with the Director took place on two occasions at the researcher's institution, in the September before its commencement, and as a result of these meetings, the Director was both fully informed and assured of the validity and

integrity of the research process.

### **3.3 Data Collection Procedures**

In this research design, there were four basic methods of collecting data or coming to know the participants' lives and experiences that could illuminate the concept of 'caring': multiple interviews; observed teaching sessions; written material in the form of personal writings and other textual material; and finally, the researcher's notes. Data were collected from the beginning of September 2006 and continued until June 2007. In the next section, each of the four major data collection procedures is described, and in addition, I make an exposition of their justification for use within this research study. Figure 3 displays the alignment of the research questions with the data collection methods.

**Figure 3. Study's Research Questions And Data Collection Methods**

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Data Collection Methods</b>	<b>Time Frame Of Study</b>
1. What are the personal and pedagogic meanings and experiences of being a perceived 'caring' academic within higher education?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reputational Case Selection</li> <li>2. Initial Participant Meeting (IPM)</li> <li>3. Interviews</li> <li>4. Reflective Piece</li> <li>5. Researcher's Journal</li> <li>6. Personal Communication</li> <li>7. Other Salient Textual Material</li> </ol>	IPM – week 2 Interview 1 – week 5
2. How do these particular academics' values and beliefs shape their teaching and academic work?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Initial Participant Meeting</li> <li>2. Interview 2</li> <li>3. Personal Communication</li> <li>4. Other Salient Textual Material</li> <li>5. Teaching Observations</li> <li>6. Metaphors</li> <li>7. Researcher's Journal</li> </ol>	IPM – week 2 Interview 2 – week 8 Observed Teaching Sessions once each term of the study
3. What particular self and academic identities do these academics possess and what autobiographical experiences inform their construction?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Initial Participant Meeting</li> <li>2. Interview 3</li> <li>3. Teaching Observations</li> <li>4. Other Salient Textual Material</li> <li>5. Personal Communication</li> <li>6. Researcher's Journal</li> </ol>	IPM – week 2 Interview 3 – week 22 Observed Teaching Sessions once each term of the study
4. What salient aspects of academic identity inform the present and future contexts of these academics' work?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Initial Participant Meeting</li> <li>2. Interviews 1, 2, 3 &amp; 4</li> <li>3. Personal Communication</li> <li>4. Other Salient Textual Material</li> <li>5. Researcher's Journal</li> </ol>	IPM – week 2 Interview 1 – week 5 Interview 2 – week 8 Interview 3 – week 22 Interview 4 – week 33

## **Interviews**

Rossman & Rallis (2003) assert that the interview is 'the hallmark of qualitative research' (p. 180). Interviewing is a method through which one gains understanding of the participant's world through experiencing their speech and response. As such, it provides a means of 'seeing' and 'experiencing' the participant's experiences, and as Patton (1990) argues, 'Its fundamental principle is to provide a framework in which respondents can express their own understanding in their own terms'. (p. 205). Within the research study, this notion of expressing understanding in one's own terms is critical to entering the participants' life worlds. Therefore, as part of the research process, particular topics were examined to assess their potential for inclusion in particular types of interview.

Within this research study, the research purposes encompass past beliefs and experiences and present identities and practices. In addition, the research seeks to elicit the lived experiences of a particular phenomenon, caring academic work. As such, the interviews required a systematic structure that was thorough but allowed for probing and provocative questions. The study therefore utilizes two interview 'frames' that complement and overlap. One is aligned strongly with the phenomenological nature of the experience of being caring and based on the work of Kvale (1996) in terms of phenomenological sensitivity. The other frame is predicated upon the life study model of identity, based on Seidman's (1998) model.

Seidman (1998, p. 72) asserts that the 'social relationship', that is the conscious awareness of the intersubjective nature of the interviewing context, and existent or emerging power relations, is of critical importance'. In the phenomenological interview, however, the researcher aims to provoke, through possibly only one or two governing questions and sporadic prompts and requests for clarification, a narrative-style response to the experience of the phenomenon under study. As Thompson (2008) explains, when asked to describe his/her experience of a

phenomenon, an ideal phenomenological interviewee would then go on to describe, unselfconsciously and fluently, their experiences, inadvertently (because that is the nature of story telling) locating these descriptions in physical actions and behaviours. Such a goal in phenomenology works from the premise that, normally, what one expresses in speech is what one thinks. Merleau-Ponty (1968, p. 126) puts it this way:

So the goal in phenomenological interviews is to capture the experience of the phenomenon through that which is spontaneously and unwittingly given, rather than through a thoughtful, intellectualized response.

Despite however, the spontaneity and disarming implicit in this type of interview, there is still a clear need for the structure and concretization of the autobiographical life history interviews. For these I turn to Seidman (1998) who recommended an interviewing model comprising three interviews. According to Seidman (1998) a series of three interviews with each participant assists in gaining an understanding and context of their experiences, particularly in different settings and stages of the participant's life. With this in mind, I selected to use a phenomenological questioning for the first 'caring focused' interview and subsequently use the three-stage structure for the remaining interviews. In addition, I had an initial informal meeting with the participants where I elicited biographical and concrete occupational data.

Although only one of the interviews was thus designed to establish lived experiential qualities of being perceived to be caring and perhaps, being caring in practice, in addition, contextual, personal histories of the participants were used side by side with other data to provide a rich, layered descriptions of the participants, their lives and their practices, centered upon caring.

The first informal meeting – the Initial Participant Meeting (IPM) is presented as Appendix C. The

meeting took place at the beginning of the academic year in which the study occurred. The Initial Participant Meeting was a focused, documentary-based interview with closed questions that sought to provide the context for the participants' occupational backgrounds and descriptions of academic life within RTU – the university within this study. It also contained a question (approximately how many hours do you devote to supporting students (in whatever way) outside the classroom?) that formed part of the basis for gaining an in-depth understanding of how academics come to construct the concept of student centered support, a critical topic in studies of caring teacher behaviour from the literature. In addition, the participants were asked to recount some life experiential matters but as linear narratives with temporal ordering.

The first formal interview (II in the text) (Appendix D) was a specifically theorized approach to gaining a deep understanding of the lived experiential qualities both of being described as a 'caring' academic and making sense of that experience as a living quality. The interview occurred in Week 5 of the study and participants were asked to bring along a short, informal reflective piece about why they felt that they had been selected as a 'caring' academic. Although the questions in the interview schedule were set out in advance, there was no attempt made to rigidly enforce the direction or scope of the interview; as such, the questions were vague aide-memoires to me to prevent me from the inevitable influential hearing that one carries out as a researcher. My own beliefs and experiences were and are so woven into the fabric of this research that it was critically important to consider how I would elicit the lived experiences of participants in spoken and unspoken ways, whilst reducing the impact of my subjective influence.

So although the primary question for this interview was 'So, you're a caring academic – what does it mean to you?' the overwhelming aim of keeping the interview on track had to be balanced with the contemplations and sidetracks of the participants. Kvale (1996) contended that 'the outcome of the interview depends on the knowledge, sensitivity, and empathy of the interviewer' (p. 105)

and so throughout this interviewing process, I had to diminish my own input. Nevertheless, despite a concerted effort to diminish researcher input, there was an inordinately strong temptation to constantly fill silences and lengthy pauses, and to 'get through' all the questions on the schedule, regardless of the possible revelatory nature of this particular interview context. Both Kvale (1996) and Van Manen (2006) draw attention to the processes of phenomenological interviewing as a suspension of certainty.

The second interview (I2 in the text) (Appendix E) was designed to focus on the concrete details of the participants' present teaching practices. The interviews for all participants took place in November of the academic year of the study. Seidman (1998) recommended that participants be asked for specific details of the context in which the research is located in order to gain full meaning of the participants' experiences. During this interview, values and beliefs about teaching were explored in relation to how they affected the participants' every day teaching practices. Finally, participants were asked for metaphors of themselves as teachers, building upon the work of Shulman (1998) in articulating a coherent basis for personal and professional intersections of pedagogic content knowledge. Critical to the use of metaphor in this interview was the necessity to understand how the participants' metaphors not only illuminated their identities, but also positioned others in relation to them. In the case of caring viewed as a relational act, this sense of reciprocity is clearly very important.

The third interview (I3 in the text) took place in February of the academic year of the study, for all three participants. This interview was a joint focused life history and identity interview in which participants were asked to recount their life experiences in the light of their thoughts about their identities as academics. In this interview guide (Appendix F), questions asked of the participants reflected early experiences impacting upon perspectives about teaching, and the formation of themselves in identity terms as academics. During the interview, the concept of the 'ideal



academic' was also explored.

The fourth interview, (I4 in the text) (Appendix G), conducted in May of the academic year, was a reflective interview, what Seidman (1998) refers to as a 'reflection on meaning' (p. 12) interview. In this interview, participants were asked to reflect on various factors of the research study, the conceptual basis of care in their work, effects on teaching, research and their relationships with colleagues, and not least, a retrospective consideration of their decision to participate in the study.

In all, fifteen interviews, five with each of the participants, were conducted during the academic year 2006-7. Interview durations were variable, but most lasted no more than 70 minutes, with occasional ones lasting 90 minutes. During the interviews and meetings, digital recorders were used to record speech, and these recordings were transcribed as quickly as possible afterwards. Transcriptions were offered to each participant after their interviews to confirm or clarify data.

### ***Observed Teaching Sessions***

During the study, each participant was observed teaching a class of their choice, on three occasions during the academic year. No requirement for the number of students or type of class was stipulated in advance, except that the session had to be face to face. The focus of all the observations was broadly relational, or encounter-based (Uitto & Syrjala, 2008), but this included a diverse data set, since it encompassed questioning, instruction-giving, discipline, and so on. However, and very importantly in this research, because I as a researcher would be ultimately making interpretations of a pedagogical act that is intensely personal to the academics concerned, I decided to adopt a naturalistic ethnographic stance to the observations. As Walford (2008) has pointed out, 'Ethnographers work on the premise that there is important knowledge which can be gained in no other way than just 'hanging around' and 'picking things up'...The idea is that

participants 'perform' less, and, as trust builds, reveal more details of their lives' (p. 66). Ultimately, data collected during these observations amounted to 55 pages of hand-written observation notes that were transcribed and stored.

### ***Personal Experience Writings And Other Relevant Material***

Cole and Knowles (2001) stated that a personal experience writing is an 'anecdote or story told or written by a person about an experience...and do not necessarily represent epiphany or pivotal moments, nor are they contextualized or theorized'. (p. 21). Denzin (1989) suggested that these writings are often about the trivia of every day life and need not be revelatory in the sense of being critical incidents. Such writings can be autobiographical or narratives of events.

For this research study, participants were asked to communicate with me, the researcher, once every fortnight about any incidents, events, thoughts, feelings, indeed anything that seemed relevant to the general research topic. Although all participants missed two week 'deadlines', two – Fenella and Charity - wrote more frequently, on average 160 words, and the third - Eachann - wrote very little for long periods, but then sent very long (on average 865 words) missives containing a mixture of story, critical incidents, personal observations and autobiographical elements.

Diverse textual material, documents and material objects are all further ways in which a person's life can be represented. In addition, they are other ways both to seek clarification of understanding or expression, and therefore to aid triangulation. In life history research there are three types of artifacts: primary data sources, representational sources and contextual sources (Cole & Knowles, 2001). Whilst primary data sources are revealing about a person's life (e.g. in the case of birth certificates) they may also reveal other qualities about the person. Representational artifacts such as journals, diaries, films, are often supplied by the participant at

the behest of the researcher, and constitute an attempt to crystallize a life in present terms. Finally, contextual sources, such as meeting minutes, discussion papers, but also gifts and cards, document the lived context of the participant and lead the researcher to have a deeper understanding of the effect of context on the participant's life.

For this study, one type of artifactual data was used, that of representational sources. In particular, participants were requested to select and share student feedback, colleague feedback, minutes, testimonies and any other material that would supply depth to the context of the research.

### ***Researcher's Field Notes***

Field notes are key evidence of the researcher's activities in the field and are a means of faithfully documenting all types of conversations, observations and incidents at the research site (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). But in addition, field notes are important in recording contextual material that represents impressions about the process of the research. In this study, the notes provided details for the thick descriptions so key in properly attending to the phenomenological nature of the core concept, caring teaching and academic work.

During the data analysis stage of any research, a researcher's journal can provide unique insights. Reviewing the information in the journal can lead to new levels of reflexivity as emergent themes and subjectivities begin to emerge. Within this study, this last element was particularly critical during the phenomenological caring interview, where my attempts at 'bracketing' (Thompson, 2008) were critical to understanding the way in which the concept of 'caring' was allowed to emerge. Furthermore, during analysis the field notes served as another data source to test consistency within the data.

### **3.4 Data Quality Procedures**

Within a research study, data quality is achieved through trustworthiness of the transparent and systematic collection of data, using credible and ethical procedures throughout, and finally, allowing the findings and procedures to be openly and freely scrutinized by others (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). In this section, I examine the procedures for enhancing data quality in its widest sense.

#### ***Credibility***

Several strategies for enhancing credibility of the research process and the findings have been employed in this research, including adherence to ethical protocols, protection of the confidentiality and rights of the participants, liaison with individuals providing access to the participants, prolonged exposure to the participants, deep immersion in the field, participant access to interview schedules in advance of meetings, member checks and authorization of release of subsequent research findings, and not least, triangulation. Rossman & Rallis (2003) stressed that prolonged engagement in the field ensures that the researcher acquires an encompassing view of the phenomenon under study. In addition, life historical methods require a depth of understanding that can only be achieved with few participants over a long period of time. Both approaches were employed in this research, and throughout, the researcher took every opportunity to meet with, interview, observe, or collect data from the participants. Including scheduled interviews and observations, the researcher visited the institution on 27 occasions throughout the year. It is important to point out also, that some visits, particularly observations, were scheduled well in advanced, but then had to be cancelled at the last minute and hastily rearranged. The researcher was always responsive to the situation of all the participants, making every possible adjustment to the research timetable.

Member checks or participant feedback is one of the single most important aspects of ensuring

credibility in research (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). These allow for interpretations of the participants' viewpoint by ensuring a good fit between the interpretation placed on the data by the researcher and the precise content of the feedback. Participant feedback occurred three times for each participant during the research, in December, March and June of the study. The process was continual and iterative in that the researcher's knowledge and understanding of the context was growing throughout the study so clarifications became fewer and accuracies became the main focus of the checks. In addition, there were constant dialogues between the researcher and each participant, by email and occasionally text messaging.

Triangulation is another mechanism by which research credibility may be enhanced. There are four types of triangulation: methods, data, investigator, and theory (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Accordingly, two of these may significantly improve the credibility of any study – method and data triangulation. Method triangulation is the use of multiple research methods to gain sources of information to study a particular phenomenon, whilst data triangulation is achieved by collecting data multiple sources with multiple participants, over a period of time. Within this research study, both forms occurred through the use of multiple interviews, multiple sources of writing, multiple exposure to the three participants, and not least, other multiple methods, such as observation and metaphor. All of these were carried out over the period of one academic year, from September through to July.

### ***Transferability***

Transferability refers to how well a researcher exposes their findings and provides sufficient detail in order that other subsequent researchers may determine the utility of the findings for their own research (Houston, 1990). According to Geertz (1973) analysis is a determination of the significance of findings that may be enhanced with thick, rich description of the culture, and as a result, this is a mechanism that ultimately aids transferability. Every effort was made to write and

analyze using thick descriptive frameworks within this research.

Purposive sampling within research also assists with trustworthiness, integrity and credibility (Patton, 2002). With purposive sample, the context, the events and the participants are chosen based upon their ability to provide a wealth of research information concerning the research question (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The sampling technique used in this study is Reputational Case Selection (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) where participants are selected through a long and complex process of seeking nomination through 'experts' and professionals in the field – in this case, academic work – together with reasons for their nominations. Subsequently, the nominations are analyzed with respect to conceptual agreement from the literature of the field, and the resulting nominees are contacted in relation to becoming participants in the research.

However, there are issues with data integrity, trustworthiness and transferability in such a procedure, and as they applied to this study, the researcher attempted to ensure their minimization. The first such problem is the notion of selectivity or 'content fit', a situation identified in work in sociological theorizing and academic predecessor selection (Camic, 1992). This research demonstrates that academics fit their theories of what works and what is important around concepts that fit their epistemological and experiential schema. Given that academics' work in many higher education institutions is so heavily politicized and skewed toward models of process delivery rather than the endeavours of teaching and learning as forms of scholarship (Kreber, 2005) and transformation (Kinchin et al, 2008), it would be likely that some academics in leadership positions may nominate those that hold sympathetic views, or indeed, very particular views about the purpose of caring in the first place. To avoid such stratification of recommendations, the entire faculty were chosen as potential 'experts'. The nominations were opened to the entire faculty for another reason too however, due to the highly subjective nature of care and caring pedagogies.

Especially where intangible and highly individual attributes such as caring are concerned, the literature demonstrates that academic esteem is maintained mainly through external validation of work, such as awards and honours, rather than through student grading or programme quality indicators. Because some faculty members were award winners, but were known to be so only in departmental teams, I decided to open the selection to all the faculty, to balance potential use of external indicators with personal experience of caring. This process not only allowed for better representation of possibly differing disciplinary understandings of caring, but the procedure also became significantly more trustworthy in that multiple sources of data were obtained. The faculty is very cross and interdisciplinary – there is a common practice of cross-disciplinary teaching, research and quality procedures, whether at boards of study, programme assessment boards, quality enhancements boards, learning, or teaching and assessment development boards. There is also a cross faculty peer review policy and ‘observation circle’ policy in action.

There is one last issue that is important to consider in this section, and that is the problem of defining ‘expert status’ of professionals who recommend colleagues by reputational selection in the first place. In the case of these academics, expert status is a contentious concept. The whole notion of academic work having an agreed body of knowledge is a subject of continual disagreement within the sector, being encapsulated by the tensions between pedagogic knowledge, disciplinary knowledge, professional knowledge and academic practice knowledge. Pedagogic scholarship is still in relative infancy in theorization terms (Kinchin et al, 2008). It was felt, therefore, correct to class all the respondents whose reputational case selection was being sought in this study, as being able to exercise professional judgment across some areas of academic work as well as expertise in those and other areas, such as subject disciplinary pedagogy. All the faculty who responded possessed some form of teaching qualification, and these included a PGCE, PGCE FE, Cert Ed FE, Cert Ed HE, MA in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, City and Guilds 7307, Social Work Practice Teaching Diploma, BA Education, or a

### ***Dependability***

This concept addresses the consistency of data and processes over time within the research study (Kvale, 1996). Methods for establishing dependability in qualitative research include the triangulation of data, the transparency of research, and the maintenance of systematic and transparent records, databases and audit trails.

Triangulation of data occurred through the use of multiple interviews, multiple sources of writing, and multiple exposures to the participants, and, not least, other multiple methods, such as observation and metaphor. All of these were carried out over the period of one academic year, from September through to July. Transparency occurred through the extent to which the researcher has described precisely how the raw data were collected, how the data analysis was carried out, and finally, how the findings were derived from the data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Keeping detailed records and establishing a clear audit trail is another method of establishing dependability (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). In this research study, records have been meticulously maintained throughout, with archives of recordings, personal textual material, field notes, personal writings and transcriptions. In addition, databases containing details of dates, times, places and other information have been maintained and backed up for safekeeping and the researcher's desire to make them available for auditing purposes.

All researchers need to establish high standards for integrity, trustworthiness, credibility and rigour in their work. I have aimed to do this throughout my project, making every effort to be highly self-critical and transparent in all my practices, and spending a great deal of time in cross



checking every procedure and process carried out.

### **3.5 Data Management And Analysis**

In any research project, data management and analysis is informed by the research questions of the study. In the case of this particular study they are:

1. What are the personal and pedagogic meanings and experiences of being a perceived 'caring' academic within higher education?
2. How do these particular academics' values and beliefs shape their teaching and academic work?
3. What particular self and academic identities do these academics possess and what autobiographical experiences inform their construction?
4. What salient aspects of academic identity inform the present and future context of these academics' work?

#### **Data Management**

Data needs to be coded according to the source of information, since this is important within the later analysis process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). All the data for this study were coded with a descriptive coding system comprising the source of the collection, the participant's name, the page number and line number of the data, and the assigned document code. Lincoln & Guba (1985) also suggested that the site of data collection be included, and although the institution was the same for all participants in that they were part of a 'case', the room and where it was located was also noted for the researcher's records. As data began to be collected throughout the academic year, databases of raw data, their origin and a meta-level log of the research process was also established and maintained. Miles & Huberman (1994) suggests that this transparent and rigorous collection is a critical aspect of the whole research process.

Three copies were made of all data. The first copy of each type of data (for example, observational data, interview data) was kept as hard copy and was managed chronologically over the course of the academic year, spanning 44 weeks. At the same time, electronic copies of all the data were made, keeping separate databases with unique identifying codes for each type of data. For the third copy of the data, at the end of January, when three out of the five interviews had been completed, and two out of the observed teaching sessions written up, individual participant electronic files were created to assist in on-going organization of material as well as beginning the coding process of each individual's personal life and academic practices. During the on-going data analysis in the spring and summer of 2007 through into Winter 2008, two copies of these data were used for data categorizing, one according to participant, and one according to themes across all participants.

### ***Data Analysis***

There were four coherent data sets within this study: the observation data from the participants' teaching sessions; interview data; personal writing and other diverse textual data; and research notes. The constant comparative method was chosen for the overall data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), although some data, for example, phenomenological, was analyzed primarily in terms of particular processes fitted for the sensitivity of the data gathering methodology. According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994), the constant comparative method is an 'inductive category coding with simultaneous comparison of all units of meaning obtained' (p. 134). This approach assists in identifying codes and patterns in the data and then in categorizing the findings (Anfara et al, 2002). The constant comparative method enables the researcher to determine similarities and differences through each new unit of analysis from which categories can be created. This iterative and incremental data analysis process allows for clarification and honing of categories during the analysis process. Interrogation of the categories may reveal patterns and relationships across categories that can be integrated to gain a

greater understanding of the phenomenon of interest. For this research study, there were four primary sources of data: transcriptions of interviews, observations, writing and other personal textual material data, and research notes. All of the data were thus in word form.

In terms of the observational data, tentative analysis of the material started immediately and continued during the entire data collection period. The aim of this data analysis was to identify recurring patterns of the participants' behaviour and thoughts (Fetterman, 1998). The result of this process was that the participants' practices could be clustered into four themes or categories. Parallel to the analytic process of categorizing the participants' practices into themes, there was also a continuous comparison with relevant theory to obtain a deeper understanding and interpretation of the data material. This was to ensure that instances of behaviours and beliefs that did not seem immediately or easily classifiable were properly understood in terms of the literature. This was a particularly important process given the complexity and breadth of the theoretical frames used within this research. In the search for appropriate, analytic concepts, the researcher kept within the framework of ethical/autobiographical theory that is the overall theoretical framework of the study. These two processes, analysis of the data material and re-reading of theory, continued during the entire research period. The outcome of this analysis formed part of the overall analytical framework that encompassed all the forms of data.

Concerning the interview transcript data, the primary source of data for each participant was the five recorded interviews which were personally transcribed and coded as soon as possible after each interview with the interview number, participant information, and location. Data analysis was an on-going process during the academic year. There were however, two distinct frames for analysis of the interview data.

In the first formal interview, the one dealing with the experience of being a caring academic,

which took place in the October of the study, the researcher had to carry out ‘phenomenological reading’ (Ray, 1994) in which the swirling meanings of the text become its strength. Although there are many variations of the way in which phenomenological data analysis can be undertaken (Giorgi, 1985; Dowling, 2007), the process applied in this study followed the five broad steps identified by Fischer and Wertz (1979):

- (1) Familiarization with the transcripts by re-readings;
- (2) Demarcating transcriptions into numbered *natural meaning units* (NMUs);
- (3) Casting these units into temporal order;
- (4) Organizing clusters of units into scenes; and
- (5) Condensing these organized units into non-repetitive narrative form with non-essential facts dropped.

*Natural meaning units* represent “distinguishable moment[s] in the overall experience of the phenomenon” (Fischer & Wertz, 1979, p. 144). These moments can be understood structurally as the words that make up a sentence. Together they constitute a whole, but between each is a minuscule but distinguishable ‘space’ – and recognizing these spaces is as important to appreciating the whole sentence as is seeing each word for what it is, as without both space and words there would be no sentence. Determining just where one moment begins and another ends, however, does depend entirely on the researcher’s ‘felt sense’ of the ‘spaces’ described above. As arbitrary as it may at first sound, there comes a point in one’s immersion in the words of the participants at which moments do become noticeably distinguishable from one another and when speech means one thing rather than another. Fischer and Wertz (1979, p. 144) note that the purpose of demarcating NMUs ‘is not for technical reliability, but rather for the disciplined thoroughness and accountability it requires of the researcher – disallowing the rush to conceptual closure’, again highlighting the trust that the researcher must place in the participants’ telling of

their account. These NMUs, through comparison with major coding structures from the rest of the data, helped to construct the organizing structures within which the findings sit in the next chapter of this study.

Within the other three interviews – ‘Talking About Your Teaching’, ‘Talking About Your Identity As An Academic ’, and ‘Reflection On The Meaning Of The Experience’, as well as the other textual data, I employed inductive coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and constant comparison as a means of data analysis. Framed by the research questions and the literature reviewed for this study, I used an iterative process of close reading, interrogation of the data in structured and overall impressionistic ways, to return to the literature again and again to clarify meanings. As a result, initial start codes were developed which consisted of 14 unique words or phrases. Miles & Huberman (1994) recommended a provisional list of start codes, which can be expanded, refined, modified, and discarded, if needed, during the coding process. The initial codes or categories that surfaced in the data represented the first level of analysis. According to Miles & Huberman (1994), inductive coding involves the use of provisional codes during initial data collection. In this study, as the data were collected, each line was assigned a number and this number located with a reference within a paragraph; this process allowed for category development and assignment of quotes for inclusion in the second tier of analysis. Alongside these paragraphs, emergent categories were generated to create a stratified list of codes. For the initial coding process, all interviews were transcribed as soon as possible after the interviews. Coding of each set of interviews occurred immediately after all transcripts in an interview set had been completed. Coding lists were maintained during this repeated cycle of interview transcript set coding. The final list of codes expanded to 110 unique words or phrases.

The second tier of this process is pattern analysis (Anfara et al., 2002). Pattern codes are a way of grouping the initial categories into smaller sets or themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Pattern

codes can be used to delineate themes, explanations, relationships, or constructs (Miles & Huberman). During this level of analysis, codes were constantly compared and contrasted, then categorized. Categories primarily emerged from the codes based on attributes, behaviors and ethics. During this level of analysis, inclusion statements concerning emerging themes were written. Many rules of inclusions were written, discarded, or reformulated during this process until saturation of the categories had been achieved. In addition, a critical aspect of the phenomenological analysis was employed, that of 'impact' (Ely et al, 1997). In this method, the emerging themes could not simply be justified by their presence, and by their adherence to the robustness of the inclusion statement procedure (Miles & Huberman, 1994), they also had to be assessed according to their emotional salience and their position within each participant's testimony. This was a demanding and nuanced process, where the silences and the trailing off of the participants' stories had to be interrogated to distinguish that which was voluntarily offered, that which was internally classified as having meaning related to the lived experience, and that which was invisible but meaningful to the experience. These excerpts were often marked by the utterances 'anyway, as I was saying', or 'but that's another story'.

The third level of data analysis represented the building of evidence and coherence of the data and involved application of the data to theoretical constructs and theories (Anfara et al., 2002). At this stage, the relationship between the data and the literature changed, moving from an initial concern for nuance and subtlety, toward developing a coherent framework synthesizing data, constructs and concepts. In particular, the eight themes arising out of saturation of the data were ordered to reflect major areas – the domains – that accurately and faithfully characterized the participants' beliefs, thoughts and practices. From the analysis and reduction of the data, four major domains were identified:

- Teaching Differently

- Purposeful Pedagogies
- Multiple Selves, and last
- An Academic Life

These closely aligned with the research questions. Figure 5 is a Diagrammatic Representation Of The Relationship Between Research Purposes, Research Questions, And The Major Domains Emerging From The Data. Figure 6 is a chart of the research questions, the corresponding major domains that each addresses, and the eight themes arising out of the saturated interrogation of the data. These themes were:

- Caring as a form of resistance
- Caring as people-centred teaching
- Teaching as a relationship
- Teaching as an active metaphor
- Self as a person
- Self as an academic
- Emotions in academia
- Professional conflict

Within Chapter Four – the Findings – the four domains as outlined above are used to structure the raw data elicited from the individual participants. Subsequently, in Chapter Five, the eight themes are used to analyze the key overarching elements of the research. In the Findings Chapter, presented next, these domains are presented in the context of sections, which are actually the Purposes of the Research Study themselves. After a great deal of thought concerning how best to represent both the themes that emerged out of the transcript data as well as the rich lived narratives of the phenomenological interviews, it was decided that the best structure was as

narrative stories. Each participant's narrative has an identical structure – they speak through their lived experience of being a caring academic mediated through the four domains that emerged out of those very experiences themselves.



## **CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The findings of an investigation into the work, practices and beliefs of a group of perceived 'Caring' Academics within a UK university are reported in this chapter. Two purposes defined this study. One purpose was:

- To gain an in-depth understanding of the pedagogic beliefs and practices of higher education academics who are perceived to be caring;

The research questions guiding this purpose were:

- What are the personal and pedagogic meanings and experiences of being a perceived 'caring' academic within higher education?
- How do these particular academics' pedagogic values and beliefs shape their teaching and academic work?

The second purpose was:

- To examine how identity is constructed through autobiography;

The research questions guiding this purpose were:

- What particular self and academic identities do these academics possess and what autobiographical experiences inform their construction?
- What salient aspects of academic identity inform the present and future context of these

academics' work?

A narrative is used to frame the findings for each participant within this study. An exemplar quote precedes each participant's biographical story and this quote is intended to represent each participant's unique beliefs and experiences of being a 'caring' academic. Each narrative is presented in two sections. Section One, *Being And Seeming To Be A Caring Academic*, is a descriptive analysis of each participant's beliefs and practices, and addresses the research questions tied to the first purpose of the study. In examining the relationship between beliefs and practices, the discussion in this section draws heavily on the participants' metaphors that were offered to the researcher in the second interview. These are presented in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4. Teaching Metaphors Of The Participants**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Metaphor, Image</b>	<b>Explanation Of Significance Within Academic Work</b>
Eachann	Performer, motivator, agitator, provocateur.	I don't teach, I do – that's what my metaphor means. I try to live and act out what I'm trying to say by doing it. My metaphor fundamentally reflects what I feel about my work – people are always saying either a degree is a rite of passage or learning's fun. Well, no! My metaphor says that it can't always be fun but we can have some fun and shake things up a little on the way.
Fenella	Guide, facilitator, empowerer, crusader	I consciously seek to be a campaigner, to show false consciousness and expose the double standards and hypocrisy wherever they may be. I can't think of anything more patronizing than to be a teacher and so my metaphor is one of crusader shaking off the shackles as we go.
Charity	Mother figure, nurturer, wise owl	I'm the one that's always there – the rock – even though I'm not necessarily rock steady myself. Even when I don't have the answer to things I can reflect on things sagely and that seems to always put things in perspective. I have this role – I think it's also projected onto me, as being zen-like, and always having a very considered answer. So this is a sought metaphor and a projected metaphor.

Section Two, *Identities And Autobiographical Accounts*, examines the second purpose of this study, which is an analysis of how each of the participants came to be a caring academic, and examines prior beliefs and life experiences as well as identity formation issues. The first purpose of this study, *Being And Seeming To Be A Caring Academic*, is addressed by the domains 'Teaching Differently' and 'Purposeful Pedagogies'. The second purpose, *Identities And Autobiographical Accounts*, is addressed by the domains 'Multiple Selves' and 'An Academic Life'. In order to clarify the narratives, Figure 5 represents the relationship between research purposes, research questions, and domains from the analysis of findings. Figure 6 illustrates the relationships between the domains and the saturated and interrogated data, to reveal themes within.

**Figure 5. Representation Of The Relationship Between Research Purposes, Research Questions, And The Major Domains Emerging From The Data**

<b>Research Purpose</b>	<b>Purpose 1:</b> To gain an in-depth understanding of the beliefs and practices of higher education academics who are perceived to be caring	<b>Purpose 2:</b> To examine how identity is constructed through autobiography
<b>Research Questions</b>	1. What are the personal and pedagogic meanings and experiences of being a perceived 'caring academic' within higher education?  2. How do these particular academics' values and beliefs shape their teaching and academic work?	3. What particular self and academic identities do these academics possess and what autobiographical experiences inform their construction?  4. What salient aspects of academic identity inform the present and future context of these academics' work?
<b>Narrative Sections in Findings</b>	Being And Seeming To Be A Caring Academic	Identities And Autobiographical Accounts
<b>Domains from Coding</b>	Teaching Differently Purposeful Pedagogies	Multiple Selves An Academic Life

**Figure 6. Chart Of Domains With Emergent Themes, And Which Research Question Each Addresses**

<b>Teaching Differently</b>	<b>Purposeful Pedagogies</b>	<b>Multiple Selves</b>	<b>An Academic Life</b>
<b>Res. Ques. 1:</b>  What are the personal and pedagogic meanings and experiences of being a perceived 'caring academic' within higher education?	<b>Res. Ques. 2:</b>  How do these particular academics' values and beliefs shape their teaching and academic work?	<b>Res. Ques. 3:</b>  What particular self and academic identities do these academics possess and what autobiographical experiences inform their construction?	<b>Res. Ques. 4:</b>  What salient aspects of academic identity inform the present and future context of these academics' work?
Caring as a form of resistance (CR)	Teaching as a relationship (TR)	Self as a person (SP)	Emotions in academia (EA)
Caring as people-centred teaching (CP)	Teaching as an active metaphor (TM)	Self as an academic (SA)	Professional conflict (PC)

#### **4.2 Introducing Charity: “You’re coming with me no matter what”**

Charity is a forty-three year old female working in the Department of Education within the Faculty of Society at RTU. The daughter of a secretary and a father who had never worked due to chronic mental illness, Charity had a turbulent home life with many moves to a variety of privately rented flats and social housing, in a very large city within the Midlands. Charity went to her local polytechnic and originally trained and qualified as a schoolteacher, obtaining a Certificate in Education. After qualification she taught psychology and sociology in schools. Charity later trained as a social worker, an occupation that led to work in child protection within the private sector. She then returned to teaching, this time within a further education college, and ultimately to developing curriculum within social care pedagogy settings. During this time, Charity completed several postgraduate qualifications, including an M.A. in Applied Educational Studies, and an M.A. in Educational Management. A PhD eventually led to a promotion where Charity specialized in Assessment and Learning Issues at Master’s and Doctoral Level. Charity has her own small office that is sparsely decorated but has many posters on the walls featuring inspirational sayings, quotes from literature and poetry, and stills from sixties black and white films, such as ‘Saturday Night, Sunday Morning’. There are three easy chairs.

Charity is employed as a Principal Lecturer within the Academic Staff Development Section, specializing in Assessment and Evaluation principles and practices. Charity has twenty years of teaching experience, twelve at university level, and all at RTU, the university within this study. Charity has been employed in this particular role for the last five years, with each year assuming more academic management and leadership responsibility. Charity’s current teaching involves taught postgraduate modules in Pedagogy, Research Design, Assessment and Evaluation, Research Methods, Reflective Practice, and Mentoring and Tutoring. Charity has won a national award in E-Learning Design and so is engaged in two research projects on the use of Digital Technology in Improving students’ academic literacy skills. Due to the academic levels of Charity’s classes, they

are comparatively small by academic standards, up to a maximum of approximately thirty students on Master's qualifications. On average, over the whole year, Charity has approximately eleven hours contact time per week, although the teaching is almost all done in intensive blocks with very limited contact between meetings, due to the nature of academic development programmes within the university. This year, for example, Charity has seen most of her groups no more than twice within the year, but each contact lasted up to a week. Finally, Charity is involved in many other activities across the university, including planning student conferences and seminars related to teaching and learning; sitting on the university quality board, the learning enhancement board; the ethics committee, and the student accommodation network committee. In addition, Charity is a member of the student-run peer buddy system to interview applicants, and runs a local Independent Visitor Scheme for faculty aimed at getting students paired with young people from the most deprived areas of the city who have no family history of post 16 education.

## **Being And Seeming To Be A Caring Academic**

### ***Teaching Differently***

I think that when I was younger, I really didn't imagine that university was anywhere where anyone was on my side. I mean I think that I had obviously had some pretty ropery experiences and although I blame myself for those it left such a lasting legacy that it has made me want to do things in my own unique way...when I think of that and think of what I'm trying to do, it's very clear to me that I'm trying to get students interested in stuff as a love of scholarly endeavour, and that's difficult to articulate really, because it touches so many ways of doing things that on the whole are quite alien to a lot of things that go on around here. (Charity, II).



Charity drew directly on this initial comment to characterize what she was doing as an academic was “a bit off the wall” (Charity, Reflective Piece) in terms of what “established colleagues” (Charity, II) has said to her in the past, but that she felt “passionately” about. One colleague had for example, over a period of time, “accused” Charity of being “obsessed with academics having to be pastoral tutors when that’s not our job” (Charity, II), whilst another academic had said that Charity’s insistence of putting “tutorial type issues on the agenda was wrong headed and undermined academic objectivity”. (Charity, II). Overwhelmingly, for Charity, being an academic was actually and simply “being a teacher” (Charity, II) and this in turn, was firmly entrenched in the idea that education was for making change, and that that change was only possible at every level, visceral and cerebral. All her reported teaching and academic behaviours were infused with a sense of “pulling” someone or something out of their existing milieu, of “making things different” in a “sensual, almost physically longing” way (Charity, II).

But Charity’s model of caring as a form of difference was embedded not in the sense of being different to other academics, but of her being somehow inextricably bound up with the students for whom Charity had no option but to “make a difference” (Charity, Personal Communication), and this value in turn, permeated all she did as a teacher. For Charity, ‘doing it differently’ meant that the person with whom she had contact would always ‘do it differently’ from then on, quite simply because they were a different person:

This to me is the essence of caring – if that’s what you want to call it. I suppose that I take a very interrupting view of teaching in that it’s there to make students different. And that’s not coming from the perspective of especially student-centred principles. Not really. It’s coming from the notion of Vygotskian sort of interaction. Scaffolding, but not as passive assisting to learn, God no (laughs). I can’t stand the thought of facilitation. (Charity, II)

Throughout the II Charity stressed that what she found motivatory, and this would persist throughout the whole of the research, was pursuing a particular philosophy that related to “teaching as an explicit intervention” (Charity, Reflective Piece). Her work and activities can therefore be summed up in the exemplar quote “You’re coming with me no matter what”. For Charity, university teaching certainly brought forth feelings of responsibility and consummate concern for others’ progress and welfare. The piece of reflective writing that Charity produced detailing her feelings on being selected as a ‘caring’ academic focused on the dual needs both to demonstrate particular behaviours and to show their validity as part of a particular pedagogy that was centred on educationally humanistic principles:

I feel desperately strongly about being a ‘caring’ academic and see no distinction between what that necessitates and how it manifests itself in other forms of teaching, such as school teaching. The whole concept of caring to me is the complete rejection of the dualist sort of thinking that says ‘you can give students knowledge when you’re sad, happy, nice to them, horrible to them, because it’s the knowledge that counts’. (Charity, Reflective Piece)

When the reputational case selection results were shared with Charity, she clearly held some conflicting feelings about the statements used to classify her as caring, stating:

Oh, I don’t know, just tell me a few...no show me the whole lot...no, I don’t really want to know. What sort of general thrust is there? Is there a concentration on kind of the academic stuff, so that I don’t come over as an ‘earth mother’ (laughs) - that’s what I’ve been called. I feel as if you’re not supposed to be caring or at least admit to it as intent. I think that it’s being

kind, warm, expects a lot, demands a lot, can be cruel. (Charity, II)

It was clear from this reflection in action that whilst Charity had mentally set apart her behaviour as an academic from the majority of colleagues with whom she worked, she was conscious of particular interpretations of her behaviour, and specifically, that associated with being a woman:

Oh the things that people have said are very lovely. I'm shocked. If this was students, I'd say that I expected that, or at least, wasn't shocked. But it means more and means less at the same time that it's staff. For example, several of them make comments about my homeliness drawing students out of their shells. Call me paranoid, but what does that mean? It sounds like being a mother figure to me (big sigh). Still, they're lovely aren't they – people don't have to say that. (Charity, II)

To Charity, these comments seemed to be related directly and explicitly to gender and the assumption that “women have a naturally more relational and learning centred orientation” (Charity, II). Charity explained:

There have been many times when I've sat as a senior member of staff, on academic boards and mitigation committees, and it's seemed to be that academics make the flimsiest of judgments about people's lives imaginable, with scant knowledge about how that will affect their future progress. People have said after the boards 'you're like a mother to those students'. And another time, a woman, mind you, said 'well you only have privilege to that because you're a woman. They wouldn't tell a man'. (Charity, II)

### ***Purposeful Pedagogies***

According to Charity, her dynamic and very “interventionist” model of teaching was categorically not as person-centred in learning theory alone, as it seemed:

We’re so used, as academics, to having as a default, a view of learning and teaching that encompasses cognition and little else, that anything else at all, seems a radical departure and so is theorized ‘in opposition to’, rather than ‘as well as’. (Charity, I2)

Descriptions, anecdotes and instances of pedagogic practice concretely framed Charity’s present experiences of teaching and academic work and dominated most conversations and writings. When she spoke of teaching, she tended to focus on impact as being a critical purpose, and in general, the centrality of caring as a compelling element in that purpose. One concrete example of this was in Charity’s explicit linking of student retention issues with her pedagogic approach:

I think, though I can’t prove it of course, that what I do makes a huge difference to retention...I make it impossible for students to even want to leave...not impossible to leave, but to not want to leave...I do every effort in my will to make education make a difference. That kind of governs what I do...it can’t be otherwise...what would be the point? (Charity, I2)

Although Charity had earlier resented the notion of being thought of as a nurturer in association with her gender, she returned to her metaphor as a “zen-like” (Charity, Metaphor) figure to explain her notion of care almost as a spiritual compulsion. Indeed, in almost every conversation each testimony of “compulsive caring” (Charity, I2) was followed by an equally compulsive justification about how much her behaviour was underpinned by a deep love of the students

primarily as human beings and not as learners but that this very view supported her own academic development:

I think professional development...true professional development driven by a desire to share...is caring...loving yourself and your students, about having the ultimate kind of relationship with them...I think that where caring is concerned, this is where it comes off the rails...people stall at the loving stage which probably quite rightly appears...is...narcissistic, but they don't extend that to understand that its motivation is to be better for the students...scholarship. I think that that only comes through a deep reflection of what constitutes a relational view of teaching. (Charity, I2)

In a piece of Personal Communication, Charity spoke passionately about the love with which she envisioned most of her teaching and academic behaviours inside and outside of class. She stated that “this has probably come from my own social work background, you know, Rogerian unconditionalness right or wrong” (Charity, I2). In a very long piece that she sent to me between the Interviews 1 and 2 (with Textual Evidence) she wrote:

There are so many ways in which I could and can convey how I feel about being a teacher and academic. One thing I can do is to produce a ‘top four’ list of my all time favourite feedback’, so here goes in no particular order (with bits of commentary thrown in!):

There are several people who have been integral to the development of this piece of work. First and foremost, I must thank Charity XXX. Her unwavering guidance and support, caring nature, and friendliness have been

inspirational! The extent of her professional knowledge within the field astounds me and has left me in awe, on many occasions. Her direction and advice to read particular literature has not only helped me to make sense of students' lives and their learning, but has transformed the way I view the world and how I understand my place in it, for the better. In (academic) life, there are few individuals who truly take the journey with you: she is one of them. **(this is my favourite since it obviously has touched the student XXX on just about every level and makes me cry )**.

Next up:

Without Charity's encouragement and inspiration I would never have entered this degree never mind complete it. I owe in fact a vast debt of gratitude **(this bit I don't like by the way)** since in my darkest moments - and there have been many – it was Charity who lifted me from despair and helped me find my way back. I am dearly grateful to her.

Next:

So now I am a teacher. Several thousand words, many many observations and several hundred sleepless nights later, I find myself working in a job that I love and finally feel as though I am actually changing children's lives. You have taught me to be considerate and compassionate about other people and their situations in life. I thank you in every way it's possible to thank you because now I can say finally that I am: a teacher. **(I love every bit of this one)**

Next:

I cannot let Friday pass without passing on my heartfelt thanks to you. The

conference was a great success thanks directly to both your presence, which elevated the day into something quite profound and meaningful for all, and of course, your own contributions to the research...Thankyou for making such a special contribution to the conference.

From an academic perspective, these selections were clearly important in that they provided concrete evidence of Charity's persistent claims to be known and valued not only for the affective and relational aspect of teaching but also for the explicit acknowledgement of such relational teaching linked to scholarship. This was evident all the more in the inclusion of the excerpt from an academic colleague within another institution:

In research terms, this has all the more validity because there is no reason this person would want to say anything kind or flattering, no grades, nothing depending on it. Yet what I have said has obviously made so great an impact in the field. (Charity, I2)

Indeed, Charity was very analytical in terms of the reasons that she had included the selection of textual material that she had, fitting each one into a category of the caring nature that she clearly and explicitly valued so highly in her work, even highlighting particular phrases that were the most meaningful:

In the first excerpt, the bit that really echoes in my heart is the one about making the journey with me. I consciously try to do that, but at the same time make every journey the first one, but when someone says it, then it tells me that I have achieved it; I have really seen someone through in their own unique way. In the second case, although I think that the letter is very

moving, it is moving probably principally because I know the ins and the outs of that student. She had cancer mid way and I visited her in hospital and wrote letters, long letters discussing her work. However, I did that because I believed in her as I believe in the truly redemptive power of learning and teaching, so she owes no debt to me at all. I'm saddened because she clearly thinks that she should be thankful. No that sounds terrible as well, like false consciousness. I mean that she has no debt, that's all. The third one is great. I love this letter and every bit of that class I remember so richly, it was one of those classes where you can't imagine how your relationship could have been any better; the students seemed to respond to and fill every fragment of caring that I 'did' and ultimately began to change themselves. The bit I like very best is 'so now I am a teacher'. That's kind of the end point of one journey that I've been privileged to make and go with them on, and now they're set free to begin a journey of their own. The last one is terribly significant for me because it demonstrates how all those incorporated bits of caring into my whole being present themselves to someone else, someone who is actually in a position to question the fundamental nature of their purpose, but clearly has reflected on things. (Charity, 12)

## **Identities And Autobiographical Accounts**

### ***Multiple Selves***

When asked what she had learned about herself during her career as a person and as an academic, Charity stated:

You have to be a really strong person to not let so many dominant ideas erode



your sense of who you are and what you want to do. In fact, it's actually the opposite. You have to have such a strong sense of 'this is me and I know what I'm doing'. (Charity, 13)

Charity spoke little of her childhood and her parents until late in the research process. Then she related a story that lay behind much of the philosophy of teaching and academic life that she had told, and explained the origin of her exemplar quote "You're coming with me, no matter what":

One of my strongest memories as a child – well, a young girl, was when I was at junior school. I hated maths and they had this scheme, cards or something. Basically each card was a topic and I remember there were 24 of them. Anyway, in the 4 years we were there we were supposed to do 6 cards a year and they started off with things like counters, abacus, tape measure and what have you. Because you couldn't get put down a class, you had to be with other children who were way ahead of you. So by year 4 I was on card 10 and my friends were on card 24. But actually, er, it was by year 2 that I started to be behind. I use to sleep walk every night, crying, I had nightmares– I remember them now – I can see them in my mind's eye. Anyway, to cut a long story short, the, er, my mother had noticed my mental state was getting worse and worse and she went up to school to see my teacher, Mrs Cork. Well, Mrs Cork let rip and said I was backward and all the lot, and I, well I was doing p.e. (physical education) at the time in the hall and you could see people coming down the corridor outside. So. You can imagine what I felt when my friends were saying, Charity, your mother's here. I was going 'don't be mad, she's not'. But she was. She stormed in the hall, walked straight past the poor teacher, Miss Kelsey, who was so kind and had fluffy blonde hair, then grabbed me by

the hand and said 'You're coming with me' and dragged me across the entrance hall, into the headmaster's study, Mr White. I remember his face now. He was really red and looked like he was going to explode. Then my mother just went bonkers. Accusing the school of being crap, saying I was not backward and they would all see. Then she turned to me and said 'it'll be ok now Charity, I'll make you learn, no matter what.' (Charity, I3)

Charity stated that this story encapsulated everything about what ideal teacher should do and be:

They just have to come with me: if they don't want to come, they can refuse or not come. But even then, I'm making them think because not to do so would be to simply not care whether they existed or not. (Charity, Personal Communication)

During the interview, the notion of learning through emulating particular people was a major topic in explaining how Charity had developed her "academic self" (Charity, I3). Charity stressed several times that no one in her family had ever been to university and so it was difficult for her to imagine "what an academic might look like" (Charity, I3). Despite these uncertainties, Charity felt that she had used the "authenticity of her lack of knowledge to just be myself and find my own theories of teaching" (Charity, Personal Communication) and extracted important principles that had guided her personality and consequent development as an academic. One was her cultural and religious upbringing:

My mother was very Jewish but not very religious. She had – has - a huge personality and I spent so much of my life trying to compete with her for vivacity, balls, chutzpah...the only thing she couldn't beat me on was being

kind...whilst my father was the opposite, very religious, a Catholic, but very subdued. His obsession was making something of your life. He was very angry and bitter about being ill...I have won awards for teaching and I'm an established researcher and my thoughts are always the same...I hope my mother approves and my father is vindicated – he always banged on about being a scholar. If you can't be anything else, be a scholar. As if it would somehow heal the past. (Charity, I3)

These elements of how Charity learned to be a teacher accord well with going on a journey with her students and it appears that the teacher she has become “is as a direct result of the person that I was and how I've responded to the need to come to terms with it”. (Charity, I3). This was a significant point of clarification for Charity, since she stressed that she was able to pursue a particular ethical ideal without fear of either “looking stupid” (Charity, Personal Communication) or “looking inept” (Charity, Personal Communication).

When asked to explain what she meant, Charity stated that lately she had the impression that if she ever wanted to work at “an old university, where only research esteem matters” (Charity, Personal Communication) then she had to consciously withdraw from so much “relational work...that ultimately seems to cheapen you” (Charity, Personal Communication). For Charity, it was becoming clearer through the research, that it was becoming more difficult to justify ‘caring’ academic work; what began as a certain ideal of an academic who could be caring as an ultimate testament to lifelong scholarship, had slowly emerged as a complex process of having to justify caring as “not simply being a hindrance to high quality work” (Charity, I3). Charity felt that this was particularly the case for her, and that as part of this process, she had deliberately cultivated her scholarship on the basis of her academic ideal, Magdalene Lampert:

Probably because I'm a teacher and she was a teacher, but I love the way that her work is just about a total immersion and no apology for the rigour that she expects of her students. She is simply convinced of the importance of her work and has given it a huge credibility not as a big fuss about nothing, but about really making a difference in the area (maths education). Even to the way she speaks and constructs her papers in journals, I try to emulate Lampert. (Charity, I3)

### ***An Academic Life***

Perhaps as a result of this reconsideration of her pedagogy over the course of this study, towards its completion, Charity began to write far more frequently and significantly, send notes from external examiners' reports that had been submitted. Soon after these, Charity invited me to an observed teaching session, where in a topic covering 'Teaching for Understanding', she featured essays on 'Meaning Making', by two well-known academics and writers, Magdalene Lampert ("who is my kind of hero anyway" (Charity, Post Observation Meeting 3, Researcher's Notes) and Elaine Showalter. In this session, Charity appeared to stress repeatedly to students that it was a teacher's responsibility to organizing knowledge, but it was a shared responsibility to "transform knowledge, especially in the realm of interpreting reality" (Charity, Observation 3). During the class, Charity asked students to work with one another in pairs to draw out the differences and similarities between what "interpreting reality" might look like for both Lampert and Showalter.

After the observation, Charity explained that she had originally planned to use two authors who had "not such a researcher-credibility" (Charity, Post Observation 3 Meeting, Researcher's Notes) but had changed the two academics to reflect "a much more demanding but relational and personal view of understanding." (Charity, Post Observation 3 Meeting, Researcher's Notes).

Charity was careful about her explanation for this:

I have been doing a lot of thinking over this last year and I think that I have perhaps emphasized parts of me as an academic that are not so commendable as I imagined them to be. I work to a very high standard, rigorous academic standard, and I need you to know that this in no way conflicts with or detracts from, other things I have told you about what I do.

(Charity, Post Observation 3 Meeting)

She also indicated that it was extremely critical that I consider the content of one particular piece of External Examiner Content:

The work of these students is far and away of a higher standard than most other programmes of its kind. Most of the work is actually at doctoral level and although commendable I wonder about the precedent that this sets. Notwithstanding, I am particularly impressed by the extraordinary level of analysis of policy documents in discourse terms; in addition, the level of conversational feedback in the annotation of scripts is nothing short of astonishing. (Textual Material Evidence - External Examiner Report)

Charity had by this stage of the research begun to reassess the way in which colleagues communicated with her on the basis of their everyday actions. She had become somewhat preoccupied with characterizing academics on their will to care about what and whether students learned as a function only of their existing motivations.. This issue arose even more forcefully as Charity ended the final interview with a long reflection on why she would have been chosen as a 'caring' academic and how that confirmed to her the difference in the way that she saw teaching

when compared with many of her colleagues:

For me, it all hinges on being moral as part of a wider set of ethical principles that are only circumscribed by the clear mission of academic excellence, since the stated purpose of academic life is surely to study and achieve. It's great if you can develop as well, but that's kind of secondary, and legitimately, people can sort of claim that that's a nice plus. But it is unethical not to cause learning actually. Yes it is...immoral to be cruel by omission of something, I don't know, not replying to emails, not returning work on time, etc etc. but unethical not to try and cause learning through whatever means. That's the difference in how I see teaching. (Charity, I4)

Ultimately, the experiences and activities of Charity as an academic and throughout this study would lead her to quite a different conclusion on the value of her academic work and teaching, from whence she began, one that she felt some considerable discomfort with. She indicated that:

Maybe if I was starting out again I'd do things differently...perhaps be more forensically careful about why I care and what I care about. I feel that I've lost touch with why I'm here in the first place and apparently seem to be spinning off into a disciplinary vacuum and only being judged on what I feel rather than what I know. I'm not sure whether I like what I've become any more. (Charity, I4)

Significantly, Charity could no longer imagine pivotal moments in the next year of teaching that would sustain her through her academic career longer term:

I feel quite tired about it all; teaching is so much a case of constant reinvention and I'm not at all sure that that's professionally sustainable. You can't professionalize your emotional reactions, yet...yet...the alternative is too wearying to imagine. (Charity, l4)

In our final communications, Charity had regained some optimism, predicated upon a significant relational encounter that had echoes of her first conversations with me almost a year before:

I had this student who was very rough and ready, well rough round the edges but a big burly generous hearted ex-miner, and I've been teaching him for two years, and he's graduated and he's become a teacher. Well I've been working in the evening and he came by, just popped in on the way home from school, and after we'd chattered and whiled away some time about things, he got up to go and he said, 'thank you for making me a teacher, it's where I should be'. Quite by chance, my husband just came to pick me up. And tears were still rolling down my cheeks and he was really concerned. And I couldn't explain, but there was at that moment, a collision of my hopes and thoughts about what a caring teacher should be, and somehow, XXX had got it, he'd just got what it was about. (Charity, Personal Communication)

#### **4.3 Introducing Eachann: "It's just about being a professional"**

Eachann is fifty-two year old male working in the Department of Culture within the Faculty of Society at RTU. The son of a fisherman and an illiterate seamstress, Eachann had a very stable childhood in a small town in a remote part of the Scottish Highlands. Eachann originally studied accountancy at university and worked as a chartered accountant in a large city in Scotland. He then trained as a schoolteacher of Information Technology (IT), gaining a PGCE in IT and Business

Education, although he never worked in a school. He took a job lecturing in a further education college and later taught in a university for two years. After some years however, he took a career break, and re-trained in film making and digital multimedia programming and design, completing an M.Sc. in Digital Arts. Eachann's wife wanted to move to the region in which RTU is located and so applied for a position at a regional university. Working for a while on a part time contract, Eachann then secured a permanent position and has been at RTU since. Eachann has his own small office that is filled with stills from films, models made for animations, and photographs of the research field work featuring the young people with whom he is currently working.

Eachann is employed as a Senior Lecturer specializing in Types of Therapy utilizing Digital Media within a Youth Work setting. He has nineteen years of teaching experience, eleven at higher education level and nine at RTU, the university in this study. In terms of his particular role, Eachann has "carved out a niche" (Eachann, IPM) for himself and estimates that he has been in this post for around four years. Eachann's current role involves teaching undergraduate and postgraduate film, theatre arts and applied therapy students; teaching design and particular aspects of film making, such as digital animation, and supervising theses on these and other topics of a wide cultural/therapeutic slant. Eachann has won a University Teaching Fellowship award, as well as a recent HEFCE National Teaching Fellowship, and as such is involved in a pedagogic research project on using animation therapies with some particular underrepresented groups in society, specifically Roma children, and children who are carers. Eachann's class sizes range from supervisions of one student up to large workshop classes with as many as seventy students. On average, he has thirteen hours teaching per week but estimates that this is actually around twenty, comprising approximately five hours face to face, a further ten in project work, and around five in online contact. In addition, Eachann spends time each week doing project work with students centrally that are involved with 'Student Community Action'. This entails being involved in charity work and helping out students seeking contacts locally and regionally then being either actively



involved in their projects or acting as a go-between between them, the University and the charities.

## **Being And Seeming To Be A Caring Academic**

### ***Teaching Differently***

Eachann's first comment as he sat in his office was one of surprise and embarrassment at the visibility of being seen to be different, allied with the invisibility of "not wanting always to be out on a limb" (Eachann, Reflective Piece). He related:

Well, here I am being different again, I always seem to be sticking my neck out...I don't like to think too much about what other people think of me because it's usually judgmental. (Eachann, II)

Eachann was particularly concerned that some colleagues thought that his caring teaching was a strategic response to a particular institutional need and this made it much more important not to acknowledge it:

If you regularly talk with colleagues about for example helping when students have a financial need, or simpler things like asking students if they're ok if they look sad, people imagine that there is some kind of spurious reason for your actions...keeping quiet is so much better because people can't level at you the sort of 'well he's doing that because he wants to be different to the rest of us and show he's an instrument of management' or at the other extreme, 'he's cosying up to students'. (Eachann, II)

Overtly concerned about the tension between the contradiction of wanting to be different but not wanting to be seen and thought of as different in case this aligned with the university policy, Eachann's reaction was to carefully balance strategic visibility with pedagogic need:

...it's about having that deep relationship with students but buffeting them and you with some kind of defence that is defiant in the face of any latest trend but that also affords you some kind of rationale to be a reflective practitioner. This is especially so in recent years because when things like the National Student Survey come round there's palpable tension that many academics are just visibly 'caring' because of the need to get high ratings and then it assumes gradually less importance till the next time. (Eachann, Reflective Piece)

But because Eachann felt that "justified defiance" (Eachann, Researcher's Notes) was something that was central to his conception of being classified as a 'caring' academic and assumed that it was therefore an explicit thread running through any reputation, he was therefore rather perversely disappointed when the reasons for his selection were shared with him. At least three excerpts mentioned his "over and above contribution to student welfare and support in institutional policy" (Reputational Case Selection):

To me, it's just about being a professional and a professional always practices reflectively without having to have some kind of instrumental reason.  
(Eachann, Reflective Piece)

And later, in the II:

This enables me to have a kind of evidence base so that I can say about caring for example ‘well it’s not that this is just a self-indulgent whim, this is founded on well thought out pedagogic practices. But you clearly wouldn’t think that to look at the comments – they seem to imagine that it’s a function of me as a caring person alone, a personal attribute that is spontaneous. (Eachann, II)

However, Eachann also mentioned that there was precisely an instrumental reason for being caring that for him was separate from his own values and ideals, and that this rested on his manner of encountering students as people rather than learners:

My ability to be caring in this way...is a deep desire to commune with students as people and that is really what motivates me. The people part is the subjective me that coincides with the principled me evident in stuff like the teaching standards but I pay lip service to these so I can just say ‘well I did do it’. (Eachann, II)

As such, Eachann separated two distinct forms of caring, one an “official” discourse, that was rooted in resistance and disillusionment yet was very public both in its compliance with “being professional” (Eachann, II), and another, much more personally rooted discourse, grounded in a more humanistic link with his students:

It’s clear to me that there’s a kind of two lane highway thing going on, where students are subject to one form of relationship which clearly isn’t what they believe they’ve come here to experience. I think that that accords well with the notional institutional thing about pastoral support...you know...caring for students...so that they don’t leave...I feel that it’s my role to subvert that

commercial or whatever purpose, and expose something deeper, something that listens to them as people. (Eachann, II)

During an elaboration of these issues later, Eachann stated that he saw the university's interpretation of professional standards as "deeply flawed" (Eachann, personal communication). In particular, he was concerned that "the university...sees itself very much as a commercial enterprise with a focus on appropriateness and satisfaction".

As such, Eachann believed that his reputation as a 'caring' academic was borne out of an integrity to keep faithfully to his aims of "just being a professional" (Eachann, Personal Writing) no matter how different it made him and how uncomfortable that might be with professional colleagues. Eachann stated that in becoming engaged with the classes and students that he currently teaches over and above a disciplinary contact has somehow mitigated the effects of his "very tense" (Eachann, II) relations with colleagues and allowed him to "find some integrity to hold onto in what I do" (Eachann, II):

I think I would be quite disconsolate if the students hadn't been able to say comparable things. I know they do from feedback and this is the bedrock that gives my teaching some meaning and it's why I get involved with the projects that I do (Roma Children for example) because students can see that I walk that talk. (Eachann, II)

### ***Purposeful Pedagogies***

During the course of Eachann speaking about his teaching, he was careful to clarify that teaching his students as people is not for him about cultivating single relationships, where he might cultivate counselling-style interactions. He was careful to distinguish between teaching people as a

matter of an obligation to “student responsiveness” and “individual attentiveness” (Eachann, Personal Communication):

Oh yes, yes, of course I do need students, but not as therapeutic ways to exercise my desires about what I see as important. We need as academics to have a relationship with our students as a critical audience who give significance to one’s teaching actions and demonstrate their impact as if showing through a mirror the gravity of what it is to teach. But there’s a line of course, a distorting mirror of vanity teaching where being a professional is crucial. (Eachann, I2)

When I asked for further clarification about the exact dynamic of the ‘professional values’ that underpinned these teaching actions, Eachann gave as an example student retention and associated pastoral support:

I think these two things are conflated in the university...they have nothing to do with each other is my take on it...we should give pastoral support as a human need and relational sort of concern, and its kind of subjective perception I think affects whether students stay or not. But the key point here is that often it’s the right thing for students to leave, and it’s only caring enough to bother about subjectivity that raises professional values to **being** (Eachann’s emphasis) a professional. (Eachann, I2)

The distinction between teaching as individual contact and teaching as socially constructed and subjective behaviour was important to Eachann. In a requested follow-up meeting to the I2, he brought along two emails from students and classified one - the first below - as making him feel

proud and would maybe one day include in a portfolio for promotion as evidence of “transformatory teaching” (Eachann, Researcher’s Notes), and one of which he derived some very personal satisfaction but disclosed that he would never show another academic because there “is an element of shame” (Eachann, Researcher’s Notes):

This is a special thankyou for being such an inspirational role model to me. I have learned from you not simply how to animate, but to be an animator.  
(Eachann, Textual Evidence)

I owe you Eachann because you’ve gone out on a limb for me. I know you’ve taken loads of chances for me and with me and I can’t pretend that if I were you I would have shipped out long ago. What really matters is that you bothered to think about how I could get back on track after I lost my way. It would have been easy for you to say, oh just take leave of absence or like this is not for you, just withdraw. But you never did. Thanks mate. XXX.  
(Eachann, Textual Evidence)

Eachann felt that the second comment showed him in a “weak light, like I was making this student a victim and not letting them be autonomous” (Eachann, Researcher’s Notes). As such, he was careful to consciously align the emotional quality of his relationships with a well-justified pedagogical explanation, and in this case, Eachann stressed volubly the “sheer raw talent of that student...how could I let him go...he would hate himself for ever” (Eachann, Researcher’s Notes). When I inquired as to whether Eachann would do this with all students, Eachann replied pensively:

This is the hardest and most profound thing for a teacher who professes

care...it isn't what the general consensus is of course, and it's frequently not acting in someone's best interest...it's about having the courage to make a call about the promise of someone's life, but as an individual. But to do that necessitates knowing – really knowing – a student so that you can prevent misunderstandings about decisions that are potentially life changing. I'm not talking about visible learning outcomes...no, they're the kind of superficial we'll measure them because they're there sort of thing. For me especially it's to do with the pride that is my discipline...it's like some other...not many...disciplines, where a very high level of skill and ability is needed merely to be competent...and that is caring about your subject as well. That is to me, what being a real teacher is. (Eachann, I2)

Throughout Eachann's interviews and personal reflective writing, and especially in his metaphor, there was a strong focus on very particular purposes of his chosen pedagogy, but these appeared to be based on generalized statements about the students' attitudes toward learning rather than precise conceptions of a disciplinary nature. In Eachann's case in particular, the particular framing centred upon how he could "unsettle" students' epistemological beliefs through "getting close to them" (Eachann, I2). As such, Eachann suggested that it was necessary to view teaching "always as a relationship because not doing so would preclude the ability of a teacher to see the student holistically" (Eachann, I2). For Eachann, what seemed to be entirely consistent, was his lack of emphasis on structuring knowledge and imparting disciplinary frameworks; for him, this process was subsumed into a general 'role modelling' pedagogy, where his professionalism, approach to problems and his general demeanour was a "studied pedagogy of interaction" (Eachann, Researcher's Notes) that would "give students an attitude to their work that is borne in a sheer perfectionist professionalism" (Eachann, Researcher's Notes). In a later email communication with me, Eachann clarified and substantiated this statement, explaining:

I don't think I've made this clear so far, my job as an academic is not to focus simply on academic achievement. It is to foster a critical curiosity that is akin to lifelong learning. This purpose is not easy for students to grasp and indeed can only be grasped if you have a coordinated performance that cultivates those particular outcomes. I've thought about this and it is exactly for me a belief system borne out of a concern for the little things. I'm not a Methodist, my father was, and he exemplified this, but I do have what I call residual Methodist beliefs! The 'Living Christ' is what my father would have said, and that's what this is. It's simply not enough to intend to do things, it has to be 'in action'. (Eachann, Personal Communication)

Eachann's pursuance of his pedagogy whilst balancing the difficulties inherent in "crossing the line" (Eachann, 12) reveal evidence of a very particular conceptualization of teaching – that in knowing his students personally in order to develop trust in them, he would be able to tailor individual attention and as a result, help them achieve more than they felt capable, through provocation, through questioning and through a deeper dialogue and a persistent attention to small things. Eachann stated many times that this was the very best thing about teaching and would probably characterize almost all his classes one way or another. It is significant that he would refer to the influence of his father's Methodist beliefs time and again in the subsequent interviews. But as a result of holding this particular aim, again, Eachann was concerned about its impact particularly in the context of higher education where the emphasis (to him at least) was on "student centredness, which is perceived by a lot of people to be impersonal facilitatory pedagogy but by me, choreographed provocation." (Eachann, Personal Communication).



## **Identities And Autobiographical Accounts**

### ***Multiple Selves***

“Keeping up your professional standards” (Eachann, I1, I2) was a theme to which Eachann would return many times during the course of the study. Eachann cited his early life as being instrumental in developing the ethic of keeping up one’s professional standards. Although academic life played no part in Eachann’s early experiences, discipline and routines did. Eachann’s memories of his father having to go out on the fishing boats even in the most inclement weather when there was no certainty that he would return recalled in him the explicit sense of often being reluctant to do something due frequently to tiredness, but that was always outweighed by the dual experience of duty to what Eachann’s father called ‘a noble profession’ and of doing the best possible job. In turn, Eachann stated that his father’s Methodist beliefs “drummed into him the principle of ‘the best of intentions is poorer than the smallest of acts’” (Eachann, I2). Eachann’s father was a significant role model in his life and he claimed throughout his story that his academic and professional values and efforts were a reflection of his influence and commitment:

It’s important having a visibly good work ethic. All master film-makers have this, an obsession even. Mastery isn’t easy even when you’ve got natural talent, so you need to attend to the detail constantly and care immensely even about the small things...I feel so strongly about it that it is a bedrock of how I teach. My father had a thing about serving, in his case, it was borne out of a material need to serve the community. But that sense of being careful to serve in every way seems to me to so obvious in teaching. It’s certainly why I became a teacher in a university, to instill that perfection and yet do it through service seems to me to be a luxury. (Eachann, I3)

Eachann made a clear distinction between the way that 'serving' characterized him as a person whilst conflicting with his "academic self" (Eachann, I3):

Well, I think that serving people in a very deep way is a beautiful thing to do, and it's misunderstood and belittled in universities mostly... what some academics fail to understand, to get, is that we have a duty to serve because that's exactly what we expect students to do. To give of themselves at the deepest level, to disclose their very selfhood yet we rarely give of ourselves. (Eachann, I3)

Giving of oneself in order that students might learn in better and more productive and critical ways had shaped Eachann's beliefs about what teaching was for and he had sought to clarify this for himself by consciously including elements of "selfhood" in his work in film and animation. The way that he had incorporated "selfhood" had been based self-consciously on his image of an ideal university teacher, willing to open themselves up to scrutiny, which in turn he had based on his father's work:

I do hang onto stories a lot, not in a self indulgent way, I'm often very critical and self deprecating, but I see it as a way of presenting myself at deeper level in order that I can say 'look, this is me, these are my stories, it's ok for you to do this, let's do it together' sort of thing. And if I'm prepared to acknowledge that there are things to learn, then it's a way of motivating students to do the same. (Eachann, I3)

It is clear that there are many potential sources of conflict both in Eachann's own values and behaviours as a teacher and academic, and in the way that holding these positions his students and

him in relation to those behaviours that students exhibit in relation to Eachann. This has clearly been difficult for Eachann to manage at times. Far from feeling satisfied that professionally, his work is recognized, and even knowing that he himself is concerned with the professional qualities that being defined as a 'caring' academic highlights, he found great difficulty in accepting that any kind of reference to his personal attributes and emotions might be a positive thing. Although he denied that this was a considering factor in him being disturbed by his classification as a 'caring' academic, he told a story as a result of one the teaching observations where I noticed him making an announcement at the beginning of the class and then several times throughout that if the students wanted to see him they would have to make appointments individually because he had to leave as soon as the lesson was finished. When I asked him about the emphasis he had placed on this announcement and whether it demonstrated a commitment to his philosophy of "just being professional academic" (Eachann, II), Eachann replied later in an email exchange:

At the moment, I hate this class. It has a bad feeling...well, there's one student in it who has been awful. He put in a complaint about my feedback on his dissertation being too critical and said that I was unprofessional because I didn't show him any empathy about the feedback might upset him. I mean...I can't believe it, so I'm not predisposed to him. So I wanted both to make clear to them that this time I was stepping back away from them, but also to kind of visibly explain that I did care and that this wasn't a...a kind of extrication from something I couldn't be bothered to do. (Eachann, Personal Communication)

In a later meeting to check a transcript, Eachann believed that this was the most negative feedback he had ever had and that it had shaken his values:

Really made me see once and for all that there were two distinct parts of me, my self and my academic side...I have to really examine myself as a result of this and see if there is something wrong. What is the basis of my caring about students if, they don't care, if they reject my values, then what am I caring about? This place is not a religious experience, I can't expect all students to respond as I'd want them to as recipients of care. (Eachann, Personal Communication)

Eachann had steadily throughout the study begun to draw threads for himself into a deliberate 'self-containment' that was entirely consistent with his personal and academic selves. Indeed, from the beginning of the study, but ever more explicitly as the study progressed, Eachann's constant internal critical reflections on the nature of teaching and academic work, revolved around the tension between just being a professional who had clearly defined limits as to what this involved in practice, and what the possible outcomes of this might be for himself. The outcomes for Eachann existed on two well defined levels, one on the nature of impact of Eachann's behaviour on the students' learning and achievements, whether that was intended or not, and one on the interplay between Eachann's emotions and his longer term, more sustaining perhaps, vision of himself as a 'caring' academic.

### ***An Academic Life***

By the fourth interview, and having been part of the study for almost a year, Eachann's ideas about being a 'caring' academic had almost completely confirmed for him that although caring was a salient part of his personal identity and his teaching, there was a clear sense of ambiguity in his image of himself as an academic. Throughout, there was an increased shift and focus on separating himself, his teaching, and his beliefs from his students' experiences as learners.

There was an awareness that this state of affairs was fragile and was in the process of being dynamically in tension with what Eachann saw as ever greater moves toward the “consumerism of studenthood” (Eachann, Personal Communication) and the “irony of having mission statements put up here, there and everywhere” (Eachann, Personal Communication). With some certainty though, he emphasized that he wanted to remain a teacher for whom teaching was an embedded part of their everyday existence. He credited this research with showing him that professional behaviour could expand over time to demonstrate that in terms of beliefs about teaching and learning, high levels of personal idealism were necessary to model very visible attention to what he was ultimately there to do, and that is, to teach not just to “reach people cognitively, but to do so emotionally as well” (Eachann, Personal Communication). Indeed, it was becoming clearer that Eachann’s motivation for presenting himself at a deeper level was more than modeling students to be deeper learners, instead, its purpose was at the heart of his metaphor as a performer, not just to perform, but that Eachann needed students – to perform for. Toward the end of the academic year of this study, Eachann began to express more clearly than before, the disciplinary basis of his pedagogy and his identity. In an email after one particular interview, he considered that:

I can’t really think of a profession in which someone is so shaped by their past and yet has to so much consciously relegate it during their job. I started this research imagining that I would be able to easily articulate my whole kind of belief system about being caring and now I’m no longer not just sure, but not even sure about what it is that I actually do. I can’t believe that I mocked scholarship of teaching, for example....what a superficial load of nonsense, but now....now...it seems that anything that one does to make learning happen is worthy of thinking about. (Eachann, Personal Communication)

In a final piece of reflective writing, Eachann drew a very strong thread out of his commentary

when he introduced the concept of service as related to a very strong discourse of autonomy within the institution, but in a way that it “glorified process over emotion”:

I’ve seen a lot of academics that either clearly subscribe to the view that learning is the student’s responsibility and even that student centred learning is a solitary endeavour; or else, that teaching is about them and their charisma, their idiosyncrasies if you like, but don’t see any kind of connection between that and the students. (Eachann, 14)

#### **4.4 Introducing Fenella: “If I can, you can”**

Fenella is a twenty-nine year old female working in the Department of Culture within the Faculty of Society at RTU. The daughter of a miner and a homemaker, both with very poor functional literacy, Fenella has lived in a semi-rural mining community within the region all her life. She currently lives two streets away from where she was born and where much of her family still live. Fenella left school at age fourteen, with no qualifications and poor literacy. She had four children by the age of eighteen and a husband with chronic and debilitating illness caused by working in the coalmines. As a result of poverty, Fenella went back to school at sixteen and took a variety of basic courses with the eventual hope of gaining access to university. Her husband’s incapacity and other financial benefits ironically made full time study possible and three years later Fenella graduated with a First Class Honours Degree in IT Applications with Business Computing, fully intending to start her own women-only training company. However, finances became a barrier to this and so she studied for an MA in Applied Cultural Studies and worked in a community college setting teaching aspects of literacy to adults, whilst concurrently studying for, and obtaining, a PGCE in Post Compulsory Education and Training. Within a year a Post Graduate PhD Studentship was advertised at RTU and Fenella had successfully applied for the post. Fenella shares an office with other postgraduate researchers. There are few personal items – if any – but

many books and Fenella's desk is covered with printed papers with liberal annotations.

Fenella is employed as an Instructor and Post Graduate Academic Assistant specializing in Literacy and Numeracy Studies within a Community Education Setting. Fenella has five years of teaching experience, one in a community education setting and four at the university in this study. In terms of this particular role, Fenella has been "really doing my own thing, the community funding seems to be so unpredictable, I pretty much respond to anything and everything" (Fenella, IPM). Fenella's current teaching involves teaching undergraduate and postgraduate modules in literacy, social constructions of literacy, critical thinking, essay writing and adjunct academic skills, and contributing to research methods in social sciences. Fenella's classes range in size from large first year undergraduate groups of up to three hundred students, to specialist single honours and Master's courses with fewer than ten students per class. On average, Fenella has ten hours teaching contact time per week, although she stresses "my actual contact is far, far, far greater than this. I spend time— and love – talking with the students, they're little revolutionaries" (Fenella, IPM). In addition, Fenella has started a student-reading group, and coordinates work experience in the community across the faculty, helping students develop experiences particularly of adult autism into their writing and understanding of literacy as a means of inclusion and exclusion. At the moment, she is helping students work with a group of adults with autism to publish their poetry.

## **Being And Seeming To Be A Caring Academic**

### ***Teaching Differently***

During Fenella's first interview, her concept of an academic as objective and focused emerged strongly:

I'm afraid that this sort of idea, this research, whilst interesting, doesn't speak to me at a conceptual level...I'm more interested in ensuring that the students have a first rate experience of university and become maybe researchers, pushing forward boundaries...so if you're asking me whether I care, yes, I care to get up off my arse and bother to research properly and with integrity rather than playing at sounding like it. (Fenella, II)

Fenella revealed that her feelings about caring teaching and academic work had emerged out of her experiences at college and later through her experiences of teaching in the community. These had made her "angry and resentful" (Fenella, II) about the teaching she had received:

I don't personally care about the people that I teach at all. Only in so far as I would feel self-loathing if I didn't give them the same quality of academic experience as I imagine someone at say...Oxford would receive. I don't think about caring, I don't want to be caring. (Fenella, II)

The alignment of caring with explicitly high academic standards was evident from the Reputational Case Selection Results for Fenella, and when these were shared with her, she was visibly relieved:

Well, as I said in my piece before this interview, the one thing that I was bothered about was that I was seen as mollycoddling some students, specially the ones like me, and letting them get away with murder on the grounds of 'natural justice'. (Fenella, II)

Fenella made it clear that she did not wish to repeat the experiences she had of "lower standards than I could have achieved so as I could just get through on the widening participation ticket"



(Fenella, Reflective Piece). Fenella used the principle of 'Widening Participation' as a starting point from which to resist the "overwhelming" sense of "caring as quota pedagogy" and regarded her behaviour as an "outpost of resistance" against the University's espoused mission of socio-economic inclusion. (Fenella's comments from II). Having encountered this mission somewhat negatively, Fenella reiterated:

What I want is to be not like many others here who kind of teach 'these people' like they should be grateful. As if (laughs in a mocking way). (Fenella, II)

Fenella's beliefs about why she had been selected as a 'caring' academic were supported in her eyes by similar comments made by students. She stated that she was "thrilled" when students decided to stay on for Master's Degrees, and felt "fulfilled" when they stayed behind with her at the end of a class to discuss "some writing or conceptual issue" (Fenella, II). However, less pleasing for her were interactions of a personal nature or when people approached her for advice on the basis of their 'cultural capital':

I'm totally so not interested in their personal lives...really...it has no bearing on what their ideas are...I'm a tutor, not a pastoral support worker, or a classroom teaching assistant...if I can do it, they can. There's far too much of this apologetic and sympathetic behaviour towards students from certain backgrounds. And I totally resent the implication that somehow I should be nicer because of where I've come from. (Fenella, II)

Turning to the significance of these feelings in terms of being identified as 'different', Fenella invoked aspects of curriculum theory:

I don't agree with a lot of socio-cultural based stuff on pedagogic interaction as a matter of fact. I very much take the view of a post-modern structural framework for what I'm trying to do. I reject outright for example social reconstructionist thinking because that seems to me to be patronizing. But I tend to adopt an empowerment curricula model predicated on high academic achievement. (Fenella, II)

Speaking of how empowerment might be possible whilst not being interested in her students' personal lives, Fenella was most adamant that they were mutually exclusive:

Oh yes, I do teach the students as people, no doubt about it. Think about it...I'd be undermining myself if I taught them as apolitical vessels. But it's important that they know that their quest for awakening is only achieved through absolute ruthless rigour in academic terms. (Fenella, II)

Relating these ideas to Fenella's initial reflections about why she felt she had been selected as a 'caring' academic, where she wrote:

At the moment I feel confused about this. I am tentatively gratified that people...colleagues have acknowledged me, but concerned that I'm not sure whether I've now fitted in and if so not in the way I wanted to fit in, as an 'academic'. (Fenella, Reflective Piece)

Fenella seemed to be at pains to say that this whole research should not be seen as being "about me, because it isn't" (Fenella, II). But later on in the interview, Fenella emphasized that:

The way I teach is that I'm teaching people what would be good for them in the longer term. Academic success is what matters most in this world. It is my responsibility as someone who cares that these people are not labeled as failures as I once was, to teach them that they are not important, but what they know is. This is how I interpret the quest for truth. But this is not about me, it could be anyone teaching them. I only care about them in so far as there is an objective level of responsibility. This is why I don't really understand why I've been picked out. Maybe I am different. (Fenella, 11)

Fenella's understanding of being a 'caring' academic was therefore somewhat contradictory. By reiterating that her definition of teaching was in some ways a denial of who she was, yet placing centre stage an "objective body of knowledge" (Fenella, 11) she appeared to marginalize the very resources – the students themselves – who she seemed so desperate to empower.

### ***Purposeful Pedagogies***

Fenella's beliefs and behaviours about teaching stemmed from her understanding that "scholarly outcomes" (Fenella, 12) should be the force that drives an academic's workday. Her definition of teaching in higher education as a job was not based on the way that an academic teaches, but on the final level of academic ability of the students. Fenella would say that she had become "an academic because she loved her subject and thought that it was an area in which there was a limited amount of adequate theoretical work" (Fenella, 12). She declared: "I think that it's important to remember why we're here... there should be a meeting of minds." (Fenella, 12). Academics' motives for teaching were to "further the state of discussion about certain areas" and "prevent people having wrong ideas about concepts, or worse, think that personal experience is an excuse for ignorance" (Fenella, 12).

Fenella's conceptions of an academic's work clearly centred on her idea that academics' teaching is based in content and conceptual knowledge as subsets of discipline; as a result, every class is different depending on the exact nature of the "knowledge that has to be understood" (Fenella, I2). However, the foundation for this understanding clearly originated in the belief that knowledge can only be understood if it is interrogated at an individual level:

I think that what governs my work is that uneasy tension that I feel driven to making a measurable difference in the achievement of the students...I'm not particularly interested in the kind of scale of their achievement, no...what bothers me is that they're on the right lines, thinking the right things and have the right way of saying them. (Fenella, I2)

Fenella knew that all these activities would prepare students for "higher level scholarship that is my real aim" (Fenella, Personal Communication). As a result, this central aim would govern both Fenella's day-to-day practices in teaching as well as the way in which she conducted all her other academic work:

My classes are all pretty much organized round the same central layout, and I don't see any reason to change that, I get results and it's what matters, what students would come here for...I'm an expert in my field so why should they need to do group work and discuss things...we discuss concepts, critique papers. They work alone and then we crit what each other have said and then I correct misunderstandings and tell people when they've gone wrong. It's a very hot-house atmosphere, very personal. (Fenella, I2)

In personal communications, Fenella's images of how and whether teaching should reflect her

values and how this was exhibited in her work continued. She would again use the notion of a particularly academic cultural model of teaching and learning to exemplify this:

There's really no need to talk, everything is self-explanatory. My teaching is an intellectual relationship with students, but through the medium of their work.  
(Fenella, Email Communication)

And later on in that same week:

Anyway, when you have such big groups, it's hard to be caring in the way that I think this research is all about. To give individual attention to each and every student, that's impossible. Also it's condescending...we went through the first semester in one class without even any journals or books...so right away it looks as if we don't care...so it's best to not even go there, it's setting people up for a fall. (Fenella, Personal Communication)

When Fenella was asked to select the best thing about teaching, she stated that it was "the possibility of being a social activist" (Fenella, I2). She spoke vehemently about students making their own way and only needing guidance to show them "that they needn't feel sorry for themselves" (Fenella, I2), and that "there are too many excuses about classed behaviour and attitudes 'being of their context and time' and I reject that completely. I always say to my students 'if I can, you can. No excuses, no apologies'. It's just lazy, drawing on your own cultural baggage " (Fenella, I2). The image of Fenella as an activist meshed completely with her metaphor of teaching as campaigning and by extension, as seeing students as revolutionaries. Unsurprisingly, when Fenella was asked what the best feedback was that she'd ever received, she said with satisfaction that it was "being told I was the female *Dead Poets' Society* teacher, John Keating."

When asked how not “being lazy” or not drawing on “cultural baggage” manifested itself in other, quite specific pedagogic ways, Fenella listed several teaching activities that she associated with this:

Well, that would be, being absolutely on the nail with hand- ins. For god’s sake, I did it with all my kids and a crap husband, if I can, they can...and...writing loads on their work...and asking questions that are not negotiable, and having transparent standards, none of this personalized learning rubbish...and setting time limits on crits in class. All those sorts of things, no woolliness. (Fenella, I2)

This was certainly borne out in an observation where I witnessed Fenella having an egg timer for a particular poetry interpretation exercise, whereupon she picked individuals randomly to give a close reading a line at a time. Later on in the same class, Fenella made individual students come to the front of the class and read passages from an essay offering a reader response view of the poetry. After the class, at a Post Observation Meeting, I asked Fenella whether there was a link between her values and views on teaching and her use of these particular activities:

I’m very active in how I use my classes...I can’t control what’s in their heads when they’re outside the classes, but I need to, it’s urgent that this is got through to them, I think it’s probably quite painful though, but it’s good for them in the end. (Fenella, Post Observation Meeting, Researcher’s Notes)

## **Identities And Autobiographical Accounts**

### ***Multiple Selves***

In regards to her self, Fenella said that she had a “lot of different and possibly conflicting views”

(Fenella, 13). In describing herself, she stated:

Sometimes I dress grunge, sometimes I dress cheapo cheapo and sometimes I experiment with newer things to sort of try out a new me. You know I have a shell suit background so I avoid anything like that. Of course, we all know where I'm from – there are two universities aren't there? The one at the university and the university in the community. (Fenella, 13)

She neglected to mention in that interview that she had more than adequately 'proved herself' through her undoubted academic successes and qualifications. Unlike the other participants in this study, Fenella had a young family to look after, a much wider social and familial circle "which I feel duty bound to socialize with...even though a lot of them are thugs" (Fenella, 13) as well as teaching within the community herself. She was however, very concerned that she had somehow:

Shipped out my kids so that I can do that stereotyped thing and 'find myself'.  
The only person on my side is my mother and that's only because you could tell her anything and she'd believe you...she's a typical sort of Catholic, St. Therese of the Little Way, low expectations. My brothers have mostly been aggressive about what I've done...we had to ban one from the house because of his coming saying I had got above myself and let the family down. (Fenella, 13)

By the end of the term Fenella had really learned more about her own prejudices and stereotypes as well as her own learning styles and teaching beliefs from examining and thinking about her responses to this research. She reported that had learned that she "always professed not to stereotype and in fact everything I have done is so that people can't stereotype, but I have been

doing it all along” (Fenella, I3). She stated that she felt “really sad for my mother, because she’s the only one that has real standards, low ones admittedly, but at least she tries, but I think I have been subconsciously trying to avoid being like her”.

Consequently, her awareness of how others stereotyped her had also increased. Later in this conversation, Fenella would report that one of her colleagues had mentioned, on the basis of her ‘radicalized’ pedagogy, that Fenella had reminded her of another character from a film, Jaime Escalante, in the film *Stand and Deliver*. However, in this film, Escalante:

Connects with his students through culture and seems to imagine that they are better than they are and that he has some kind of a debt to them...although XXX, my colleague, probably meant that as flattering, I was actually insulted because there was some kind of implication that I’m like them (emphasizes the word ‘them’.) Mind you, I haven’t seen it, it just sounds like such a stereotype (Fenella, I3)

In a letter between this statement and an email that Fenella sent, she had softened her stance somewhat and had clearly been collecting her thoughts both about the reputational case selection results that evidently classified her as a ‘caring’ academic, and the vociferously expressed feelings about “ghettoized ideas about academic work in this university” (Fenella, Personal Communication). By a later interview, her beliefs about caring, teaching, culture and academic work had been modified:

I think I have stepped away a bit and come across as too unsympathetic. I just don’t want to be seen as a poor white colliery girl with no brains but is really nice. I’m not ordinary enough to be able to get away with caring because it’s just such a stereotype. So I have to be hard and critical and that’s how I care.



It's simply too important to not be bothered about the students having superb knowledge. This is my defence against the dark arts of academia (Laughs) ...oh and I have seen 'Stand and Deliver' and I am Escalante...a thorn in everyone's side...but what I like best is no excuses. Escalante is now my ideal. He doesn't give an inch. (Fenella, I3)

Fenella possessed a changeable personality that veered between wholehearted enthusiasm and detached gravity. In the past, she said that she had seen:

Loads of films about schools and teachers but not that many about academics, except I read *The Men's Room* when I first did my degree and thought that might happen to me...I wanted it to happen to me because it's what I imagined an ideal academic life to be, even the scorn with which women are portrayed...this to me felt like proper academia. (Fenella, I3)

Fenella clearly valued her students and expressed a repeated desire to "learn more about how I can more deeply and lastingly change their attitudes toward study for its own sake" (Fenella, Personal Communication). She felt however, that she "didn't have enough experience about certain people, especially as a result of doing this research, and was considering "changing the thrust of some of my research to take account of some kind of some kind of autoethnographic context" (Fenella, I3). She said simply that:

I think that I would like to be a great academic, not just a good one, but one who comes to know their students on a personal basis as a part of their makeup as 'scholars' and not just as individuals. I respect other academics who clearly manage to be known as researchers and teachers because I

would just about pull my hair out at the roots if I had to demonstrate the patience they have. (Fenella, I3)

By the end of the term, Fenella's conception of herself as a teacher seemed to change quite abruptly however. She sent a letter in which she expressed some doubt about wanting to be a teacher at all, and was considering applying for a Research Fellowship so she could "concentrate on doing justice to my studies and to the development of my field of cultural literacy" (Fenella, Personal Communication).

In an email exchange, this belief had intensified and it transpired that Fenella had left her husband and children and moved into a flat near the university. She stated:

I would really have to look at myself before I could ever teach somebody. I can't carry on with these modules saying certain things with what's happening...what I've caused in the background. (Fenella, Email Communication)

### ***An Academic Life***

By the fourth and last interview, contact with Fenella had dwindled to a couple of emails over a period of three months, and then only in response to requests to check transcripts. In describing how she felt about her contribution to the research in general, Fenella was quite non-committal, asserting:

It's not really made much difference either way...if anything, all it's done is hastened the feelings I had about academic work in a wider sphere. It's all play acting and grabbing on to the next big thing and if anything...I'm just thankful

that I've seen through it all. I wouldn't have if it wasn't for this research.

(Fenella, I4)

Further emphasizing her growing attendance to a possible student-centred approach, Fenella made reference to a set of minutes from a Board of Studies Review in which Student Representative said of her module:

Fenella has taught this module with the passion and insight that we were all hoping would be par for the course when we got here. She has responded to every criticism, suggestion and request with speed and attention. We love her! (Fenella, Textual Evidence)

However, perhaps what speaks more about Fenella's academic identity and her growing awareness of the complexity of hers and her students' emotional responses to teaching and learning, was the use for the first time, of personal pronouns in her speech and writing. She had begun to refer to "my students" and at some level, was able to see herself identify with them at a deeply relational level.

When asked about the likelihood of remaining in higher education longer term, Fenella was guarded:

I'm just not sure about who I am as a person yet...maybe in a few years and then I'll have the confidence to be...to pursue that sort of 'caring' academic ethos that I think has both credence and standards. I have the principles enough to know what I can and can't do. But not the skill to know what to do with it. So maybe later....

Fenella was apprehensive about choosing to develop herself as a 'researcher' where there would be few opportunities to make an impact with the community given the nature of the disciplinary focus of her own doctoral studies, and opting to become a permanent 'lecturer' grade, where she would:

Be forced to explore more deeply the largely unspoken links between asking us as academics to attend to all manner of ethical and emotional and student experiential stuff...I think the problem with much teaching work and professional development in higher education is that it tells you how to articulate stuff but not how to do it. (Fenella, 14)

Fenella's societal images of academic work in higher education, her own complex and for her, frequently "distressing" family circumstances, and her lingering and potent instilled family values of self-reliance and "self-imposed ignorance" persisted in creating a discord in her longer term feelings about academia and the ethics of what "the institution expects you to do" (Fenella, 14). For Fenella, if she remains in academia, there is a long journey ahead filled with inner contradictions, conflict, and frustrations.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Overview

A discussion of the research findings is presented in this chapter. The framework for this study was built from separate but interrelated bodies of research in the field of higher education pedagogic praxis, and included specific research exploring:

1. The meaning and purpose of care and caring within education and teaching;
2. The formation of academic and teaching identities through the analysis of autobiographical accounts; and
3. The role of 'caring' higher education academics' pedagogic beliefs, values and experiences as they impact on their teaching practices and academic work.

The present discussion weaves the exposition of the beliefs and practices of a group of perceived 'caring academics' in a UK university that forms this study, into the literature on these specific areas with additional references to the complex articulation and interleaving of teachers' theories and practices. The chapter is divided into two major sections. The first section, *Being And Seeming To Be A Caring Academic*, has as its purpose, the in-depth analysis and understanding of the educational and pedagogical beliefs and practices of higher education academics who are perceived to be caring. As such, this section is a discussion of the findings concerning the participants' thoughts and considerations based on the first two research questions:

1. What are the personal and pedagogic meanings and experiences of being a perceived 'caring' academic within higher education?
2. How do these particular academics' values and beliefs shape their teaching and academic work?

In the second major section of this chapter, *Identities And Autobiographical Accounts*, there follows a discussion of the findings regarding the participating academics' autobiographical and identity-related material, based upon the last two research questions:

1. What particular self and academic identities do these academics possess and what autobiographical experiences inform their construction?
2. What salient aspects of academic identity inform the present and future context of these academics' work?

## **5.2 Being And Seeming To Be A Caring Academic**

### **Overview**

A body of research indicates that many academics hold particular ideas about teaching and learning that are predicated on deeply held and in some cases, seemingly immutable, values, and that these serve to organize and filter their interpretations of experiences within the wider context of higher education pedagogic discourse (Macfarlane, 2004; Walker & Nixon, 2004). Likewise, as Chan & Elliott (2004) point out, the cultures of learning within universities frequently collide with personal epistemologies of higher education academics and serve to confirm or question their conceptions not only of teaching and learning in practice, but also, as Macfarlane (2004) has asserted, its whole ideological purpose. Being a higher education academic therefore, is a diverse and demanding role in which individuals are continually challenged both to capture their own personal understandings of teaching and learning, and translate these into effective practices that enhance students' learning within context-laden environments.

This section offers a discussion of the nature of caring teaching and academic work as they have

emerged from this current research study, in terms of the following themes from the data: *Caring As A Form Of Resistance*; *Caring As People-Centred Teaching*; *Teaching As A Relationship*; *Teaching As An Active Metaphor*.

### **5.21 Caring As A Form Of Resistance**

Pryer (2001) suggests that teachers, for whom caring is either subjectively experienced as the perceptions of others, or objectively constructed as praxis, articulate their beliefs in deeply emotional and vivid terms. Beard et al (2007) though, have suggested that the practicality of pedagogic engagement precludes the demonstration of much evidently strong emotion, and attempts to do so in pedagogic settings are met by other academics with caution at best and suspicion at worst. The reactions of the academics in this current study demonstrate these tensions: all felt passionate about their roles as teachers (no matter how varied these were), but all sought to justify their position as academics who cared, through specific means of resistance. Eachann for example, stated that “My ability to be caring in this way...is really what motivates me”, explaining his stance as allowing him “some integrity to hold onto in what I do”, thus invoking his own personal ethical standards over the institutional norms, which had caused “very tense” relations between he and colleagues. The only reason perhaps that he was able to persist is that Eachann was an established academic who could see things in a longer terms perspective. These findings mirror exactly Macfarlane’s (2001) work on the balancing of forms of justice and the expression of lecturer professionalism in practice.

Nevertheless, Eachann felt that his integrity was not simply a personal ethic, and was underpinned by his insistence that he was being a consummate professional. He felt strongly for example that there was a dissonance between the sector values (the Higher Education Academy) and the University ones, particularly those centred around the development of learning communities and the time and the will that these took to foster and maintain. This finding is corroborated in a

study by Carnell (2007) whose academics were exhorted to maintain high standards of academic work for aspects of the university mission such as External Examiner and Quality Assurance Reviews, yet individually, the academics were motivated to keep standards simply because they wished to prioritize engagement at a personal level.

Fenella, on the other hand, regarded her teaching explicitly as an “outpost of resistance” against the University’s espoused mission of socio-economic inclusion. Her acts of resistance centered on high academic standards, and although her teaching behaviours were clearly perceived as caring by colleagues, for Fenella, ironically, they actively resisted the “caring as quota pedagogy” that she felt characterized much academic experience within the university. However, rather than imagining her pedagogy as a ‘poorer’ one, echoing Fenwick’s (2006) notion of more insightful, and empathic pedagogies, Fenella chose to imagine her teaching in marginalizing and inferiority terms. Indeed, caring as a “quota pedagogy” echoes Haberman’s (1991) ‘pedagogy of poverty’, a model of urban school teaching that has come to dominate, he argues, teaching in schools within populations of socio-economic deprivation. In higher education, Walker et al (2006a) have termed teaching in this way a ‘discourse of difference’, but one that is borne out of the dual pressures of somehow adjusting institutional culture to make it accessible to the widest range of lifelong learners (Haggis, 2003) whilst simultaneously, teaching ever larger groups of students with fewer resources, so recalling Haberman’s (1991) pedagogies for ‘homogenized classrooms’.

For Fenella, though, a homogenized approach was evidence of her resistance against the ‘pedagogy of poverty’ – she felt that it was a matter of extreme urgency that “I’m more interested in ensuring that the students have a first rate experience of university and become maybe researchers, pushing forward boundaries... I would feel self-loathing if I didn’t give them the same quality of academic experience as I imagine someone at say...Oxford would receive.”



For Charity, the experience of caring as a form of resistance was conceptually different, and spoke to a different interpretation of caring within higher education, that of its alignment with 'women's work', or as one of Charity's colleagues stated "women have a naturally more relational (...) orientation". Studies of caring teachers over a long period of time and across many sectors suggest that this is a dominant theme in perceptions of caring teaching (Acker & Feuerverger, 1996; Barber, 2002). However, as Barber (2002) points out, 'caring scripts' may be the only ones available to women within the unique contexts of their educational institutions, and as such, the practice of caring may be an extreme exemplification of the only possible pedagogy, particularly if the school is one where there is an expectation of particular and idealized modes of behaviour. This was certainly true in Charity's case: whilst it was accepted by her peers that her espoused pedagogy contributed to "drawing out students" and created a positive climate of learning enhancement, she was similarly mocked for doing so, with accusations that "you have privilege to that because you're a woman".

Wager (2001) reflects on this moral ambiguity and asks '...do we, as academics, really want to be involved in the perpetuation of the academic practices that have a history of excluding women' (p. 16), and calls for a discourse of 'I am different', one that is based upon relational pedagogy, in which academics may be uniform in 'opposing, or even rebelling, against the structures and practices of academia' (p. 17). Arguably though, Wager (2001) fails to fully understand the impact of aligning caring pedagogies with women's work. Barber (2002) has pointed out that 'caring scripts' do not only apply to women: men may just as actively seek attachments as purposeful strategies yet feel that their espoused reasons for doing so must be cloaked as high professional standards. In this study, such a process is very self-evident from Eachann's testimony, with his constant invoking of professional standards to validate his work. Nevertheless, Eachann and Charity also explicitly mentioned the wider interpretations of 'scholarship of teaching' that did not predicate solely on superficial concerns with teaching quality and teacher-led research, as is

suggested in the work of Kinchin et al (2008), but with ethical concerns that attended to working theories in action.

### **5.22 *Caring As People-Centred Teaching***

Literature concerning models of caring identifies two broad ‘schemas’: a pedagogic one, based principally in action-based and behavioural terms, and a dispositional one, predicated on personal attributes and motivations. Studies of caring pedagogies (Wentzel, 1997; Larson, 2006) identify the following pedagogic caring schema behaviours: modeling particular interactions (e.g. democratic, considerate), high expectation, individuality, nurturance (e.g. checking work conscientiously), equity, focusing upon purposeful learning, and informal evaluations that characterize integrity (such as giving praise when success is accompanied by effort). Charity spoke of her “disruptive teaching” that was intended to explicitly “intervene” within the students’ lives and force them to encounter high expectations and become scholars. In this context, more clearly than in almost every other aspect of Charity’s testimony, her words echo those of students who feature in many studies of experiencing the effect of ‘caring’ teachers, for example, Wentzel (1997), Weston & McAlpine (1998), and Larson (2006).

In these terms, what is intriguing from this present study is that although two participants (Charity and Eachann) openly professed intended pedagogic views of caring teaching that reflected their naturally affective tendencies and preferences, in both cases, they partially rejected the caring models associated with dispositions. Both were, in fact, precisely because of the tensions in their dispositions and abilities, struggling with ‘the line’ as described in the work of Aultman et al (2008). Both academics wanted to hold and enact relational pedagogies, but both wanted to be visibly enacting what they perceived to be ‘scholarly and dispassionate’ standards’ in case they were positioned as such by colleagues. Indeed, in Eachann’s experience, the issue of affect had surfaced in a remark from a colleague concerning Eachann’s “self-indulgence”. In Charity’s case,

she was concerned that her reputation was for “the academic stuff, so that I don’t come over as an earth mother”.

Ecclestone (2004) and Beard et al (2007) claim that this stance is indicative of a wider belief that any demonstration of affect in higher education teaching is a collapse into a ‘therapeutic discourse’. This, they argue, is not only viewed as undesirable, but as ‘properly outside the terms of pedagogic engagement’ (Beard et al, p. 250). What is clear for Eachann and Charity, however, is that ‘pedagogic engagement’ has become proscribed to the extent that it has created a climate of humanistic impoverishment that has begun to erode a deeper and productive emotional engagement with students. This view concurs with Fitzmaurice (2008) who has urged a view of pedagogic engagement based on individual awareness of effect and consequence in ethical and practical terms. Chan & Elliott (2004) suggest that feelings of conflict within academics can systematically begin to undermine personal ethics, particularly if these are consistent with overarching philosophical frames of thought, and this is certainly true in the case of the participants in this research, who felt simultaneously the need to entrench their public faces, but re-construct their private faces as a result of the research.

Akyea & Sandoval (2004) have spoken of the dilemma of enacting caring pedagogies and criticize feminist models that privilege the attributes of nurturance and compassion, claiming that although they can frequently be justified on the grounds of humanistic principles of growth and self-awakening, they ultimately undermine the very activist educational aims they set out to overthrow. They assert for example ‘we are uncomfortable with a feminist view of pedagogy that focuses on dialogue at the expense of writing. Writing requires a deeper level of self-analysis’ (p. 11). Fenella’s classroom teaching model mirrors almost exactly Akyea & Sandoval’s arguments: “There’s really no need to talk, everything is self-explanatory. My teaching is an intellectual relationship with students, but through the medium of their work.”

Two activities that repeatedly occurred during the progress of the research were Charity's use of weblogs and continual feedback during her teaching. Charity sought to create an intense atmosphere where students' ideas were continually held up for scrutiny in a variety of ways, through interaction with peers and the public in weblogs. The importance of such a climate is supported in the work of Curzon-Hobson (2002) who has described the need for 'pedagogies of trust' that create environments for academic discomfort and critical thought. In another aspect of her work, through giving short writing pieces for students in class and homework building upon these, Charity created a web of intellectual stimulation that both maintained relationships and also gave individual students the space to innovate and experiment with ideas. This finding accords well with Akyea & Sandoval (2004), who say:

We believe that a caring teacher is not permissive. Rather, a caring teacher provides a safe place for students to experiment with intellectual, social and relational activities, so that dissonance is permitted to be a part of the learning process (p. 12)

Nevertheless, regardless of any perceived cognitive impact of caring pedagogies, what this present study illustrates is that there appeared to be a profound dilemma as to whether care could be both particular behaviors and attributes, in case it threatened the ethos of 'the scholar' that the participants had so clearly cultivated. In so doing, each participant had cultivated a hidden world of people-centredness which accorded well with his or her personal motivations to care, but which appeared, out of cultural and institutional reasons, to be subjugated to the particular caring behaviours that were deemed acceptable. Turning to the next theme, 'Teaching As A Relationship', I will now discuss this further.

### **5.23 Teaching As A Relationship**

In this study, the participants who showed the most explicit attention to relational matters within teaching were Charity and Eachann, who had reflected critically on every nuance of their behaviour if it could feasibly affect their students, their pedagogies being centered almost solely on understanding the act of teaching as a principal causal means of making learning happen. Eachann was careful to unpick these two facets and emphasized that he was careful not to cultivate single relationships that might blur the boundaries of what he termed “counselling-style interactions”. As such, Eachann’s interpretation of relational teaching echoed ‘motivational displacement’ where he regarded “attentiveness” as being key to his teaching. Charity felt that teaching and learning philosophies within the university precluded such a sophisticated view of relational teaching however, forcing academics to hold polarized views of on the one hand, learning as a purely cognitive developmental matter, yet at the same time, to somehow be aware of the emotional impact of learning, especially in relation to student retention. This finding accords well with the work of Edwards & D’Arcy (2004) in recognizing tensions between the needs of the academy as against the imperatives of contemporary studenthood.

What did emerge from this current study however was the importance of each participant’s capacity to engage with students, and thus their ability to attend to the social practices at work within their classrooms. Stephen et al (2008) argue that being concerned with the social life of the classroom covers myriad behaviours, all of which are predicated upon the tutor’s capacities both to notice learning events, and to act appropriately on them. What is significant about the participants in this study is that their response-ability was clearly a function of the classroom environment that they sought to create. Whilst not truly ‘harmonious’ in the Confucian sense (Shim, 2008), each academic’s teaching environment was shaped toward fostering harmony that would ultimately serve the purposes of establishing the most conducive relationship to further the ends of their pedagogy. Looked at in this way, all the participants created their environments as

forms of what might be termed 'macro' level response-ability. At the other extreme, on a 'micro' relational level, the structure of teaching as a relationship for these participants is better understood using a Vygotskian framework, as suggested by both Tappan (1998) and Goldstein (1999).

The concepts intrinsic to these 'response-ability' are well established in the literature, and important aspects of such work corroborate this current research. For example, Hollingsworth et al's (1993) 'relational epistemology' suggests that whatever the intention, teachers enacting such relational pedagogies do so with the belief that there is an 'in between space' where such knowledge and concepts as they are, are not already decided in the minds of the teacher or learner. The implications for practice are thus clear: the teacher is in a state of constant vigilance, or 'engrossment' (Noddings, 1984b) and the student is in a state of always 'becoming' something else. However, what is clear from this study is that there are clear differences between the most appropriate 'relational epistemologies' and in addition, there is a need for a theoretical clarification of the effectiveness and balance between what is clearly an area of great difference between participants: the distinction between 'macro' and 'micro' relational epistemologies.

In Fenella's case, such behaviours manifested itself on being concerned to make sure students could not avoid questioning in class, in case that might jeopardize their progress. Fenella was thus always 'engrossed'. This was underpinned by her assertion that "absolute ruthless rigour in academic terms" was critical. Despite this however, Fenella herself rejected the relational qualities of her teaching, claiming that they were "apologetic and sympathetic" and therefore antithetical to improvement. However, it must be remembered that although such engrossment appears objectively to be grounded in exacting education aims, it is also possible to interpret it in the context of higher education knowledge development, that privileges different discourses of pedagogy.

In this respect, Fenella exposed some of her deep-seated beliefs both about the directionality of teaching (Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001) and the framing of interaction in causing increased levels of motivation amongst her students (Walker et al, 2006a). In addition, Fenella's behaviour had very clear echoes of those teachers in Matusov & Smith's work (2007) that repeatedly 'finalized' pupils, and attributed to them fixed outcomes and behaviours no matter what they themselves did. Similarly, Fenella seemed to believe that her very existence within the university as someone from a "certain background" was justification enough for the finalized pedagogical strategy and consequent relationships that she fostered. She had come to reject any possible co-relation of herself as a person, with feelings and emotions, with the act of teaching, saying vehemently "I totally resent the implication that somehow I should be nicer because of where I've come from".

In sum, there was no doubt from listening closely to the testimonies that all participants presented, that they were engaged in teaching as a sociocultural activity, one where as a result of various forms of engrossment, negotiated through their relationships, all sought to create in their students not simply forms of knowledge or development of skills, but forms of different 'being'. It clearly was absolutely critical to all of them that they were involved in actively making the students 'different' people. Partly, it could be argued, this was as a result of their disciplines and the necessity to make their students aware of the ethical contexts and complex decision-making processes required within them. Unsurprisingly, it was Eachann and Charity who were most adamant that their students should be changed as a result of their studies. However, such a stance also confirms the deeply held, though largely unexpressed notion for some academics (Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001) that students' abilities are mutable and that it is therefore possible to learn, to change and to grow as a result of a deeper interaction with tutors and one's peers. It is for this reason that Fenella's behaviour can be classified with more certainty as being 'caring'.

### **5.24 Teaching As An Active Metaphor**

Over the last decade, due partly to developments within the scholarship of teaching (Kreber, 2002) and increasing research into the bridges between teacher knowledge and student learning (Kinchin et al, 2008), awareness of the significance of metaphors in conceiving learning environments has changed. In particular, many academics are less likely to hold and justify simplistic linear and acquisition metaphors, preferring instead, at least in some studies, to actively theorize for themselves, complex iterative frameworks combining personal preferences, action-based findings, and responsive ideals (McAdams, 2001; McShane, 2002). In the case of this research, particularly illustrative of this is the finding that both Eachann and Charity had very clear images of themselves as directors of the teaching and learning process as a synthesized environment. Eachann spoke of himself for example as a “performer” and “provocateur”, and his particular framing centred upon how he could “unsettle” students’ epistemological beliefs through “getting close to them”. Eachann had clearly reflected in great depth on his metaphor and it was as a result of this that the metaphor had come to life, and served as a compass for almost all of his teaching and learning activities. For example his term “a studied pedagogy of interaction” was necessary for him to communicate to his students the need to attend to the small things in his particular subject – film making and animation.

What is significant from this research is that as Alger (2009) has pointed out, experienced teachers such as Eachann and Charity have teacher-centred metaphors at the outset of their careers, but frequently modify them toward student centredness over time, reflecting a change in the importance of teacher-led pedagogies over the last two decades. In addition, though, and critically for this research, their metaphors change frequently as a result of collisions of images and beliefs from their own personal view of what teaching should be, and the complex social and cultural stage that they find in the classroom. Fenwick (2006) and Alger (2009) suggests that only when teachers and academics can find ways of teaching restoratively and reflectively can they feel



that their pedagogical beliefs are more consistent and purposeful.

The findings of this study are supported strongly in the literature, with many references in the testimonies to how the participants have reconciled their feelings about what ‘should’ be happening in academia, with the individual stories of success. However, whilst it was certainly true that both Eachann and Charity were and are experienced teachers, it is arguable that neither are particularly long-serving academics in absolute terms, and in addition, their metaphors appeared to conflict with some of their espoused personal beliefs, particularly about the relational nature of teaching. Eachann had a most heightened concern with “doing things correctly” and “being a professional” for example, not content just to provoke, and this suggested, along with his emphasis of role modeling and his need to give students a disciplined sense of professionalism, that his metaphor was rooted in his discipline, and was a positive framing, rather than reflecting any relegation of student-centeredness.

Like McShane’s findings (2002), the results reported in this study indicate that the delivery metaphor for university teaching and the acquisition metaphor for university learning were no longer paramount in the minds of the university teachers involved in this study. Instead of relying on simplified delivery and absorption metaphors for teaching and learning, the participants tended to express their educational beliefs using metaphors that reflected more complex processes such as ‘provocation’, ‘agitation’, ‘unsettlement’, and so on. McShane (2002) suggests that new teachers aspire earlier to student centredness, and this fact, along with her problematic relationship with the University’s mission, perhaps explains Fenella’s adherence to “facilitation” as a central part of her metaphor (Fitzmaurice, 2008). Fenella explained several times that she did not see herself as a teacher, and that a sole criterion on which she should be assessed was “the final academic ability” of the students. Consistently, she stated that she did not have the time, the inclination or the will to create discursive communities in her class because this was “patronizing” to learners, and as a

result, her role in developing scholars was to “prevent people having wrong ideas about concepts, or worse, think that personal experience is an excuse for ignorance”. This was confirmed in her classes that were characterized by routines, clear structures and explicit expectation of answering questions, presenting seminars, and taking an active role (Carnell, 2007). Whilst it is possible from this evidence to try and classify Fenella’s teaching as ‘knowledge-led’, and her beliefs and behaviours as very ‘teacher centered’, it is clear that the reality is much more complex. Fenella’s metaphor is striking in its condemnation of “hypocrisy” and “double standards” and this, together with Fenella’s stated mission that she was there to ensure that students are “thinking the right things and have the right way of saying them” reveals a deep seated autobiographical element to her metaphor, one that prevailed throughout all her teaching. Such contradictory findings though, are well supported in the literature where there is a sense of ‘struggle’ in becoming an academic, as in Mello (2004) and Schrader (2004).

In all three cases, there was a very great element of what Charity termed the difference between “a sought metaphor and a projected metaphor”. Alger (2009) makes the case that much of our thinking takes place through the use of conceptual metaphors, and that these both frame and define our experience as a way to continually make and re-make meaning. The connection between conceptual metaphor and experience is dynamic though, and any filtering of more recent experience inevitably colours the significance and meaning afforded it. This difference between “sought metaphor” and “projected metaphor” in this research is thus all the more revealing, particularly given the context of caring teaching. It suggests that some caring teachers make a clear separation between the metaphors they use to explain and possess ‘dispositional’ caring and ‘pedagogical action’ caring. Not only this, but the metaphors of the individuals may well evolve independently as a function of their more public perception, again a salient fact in terms of the ambiguous nature of caring teaching, and quite critical in a climate of professional standards and quality statements specifying explicit measures of student satisfaction. Alger (2009) has also

maintained that metaphors may also be conventional, in that their prevalence is shaped and shared by the culture in which they operate. Eachann's and Fenella's metaphors illustrated the potency of the cultural mores that operate in higher education by their collective emphasis on resistance; in Eachann's case as a "provocateur" and "agitator" against the discourse of outcomes and planned experiences, whilst Fenella operated a "crusade" against the juxtaposition of teaching and supposed participatory nature of the university.

What the findings also demonstrate however, and very potently, is that each academic's metaphor was strongly aligned with the central elements of their pedagogic philosophy. However, this is not to say that their metaphors therefore were transparently 'caring' oriented ones; in many ways, there was a lack of coherency in the co-relation of care with their metaphor. What this research does show however, is that possessing a strong belief such as being a 'caring' academic, may serve to make an individual more resistant to 'conventional' metaphors, and in caring, this is a particularly significant finding.

### **5.3 Identities And Autobiographical Accounts**

#### **Overview**

The second overarching purpose of this research project was to explore the participants' conceptions of themselves as 'caring' academics, and to inquire into autobiography and identity formation that has led these academics to become who they are and who they might be. Research in the literature reviewed for this domain of the study was built upon a common foundation of identity formation. Identities are storied accounts and may be revealed through narrative approaches such as with life stories, biographies, autobiographies and auto-ethnographic accounts (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991; McAdams, 2001; O'Connor, 2008; McNamara, 2008). Narratives of teaching identities are embedded in personal, social, historical and cultural life

history accounts (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994; Sumsion, 2001; Schrader, 2004; Walker et al, 2006a; Tight, 2007) and they originate from a composition of personal beliefs and the cumulative cultural context of teaching itself (McAdams, 2001; McShane, 2002; Ben-Peretz, 2002; Pill, 2005). Individual personal history beliefs comprise experiences in families, schools, universities, with other learners, and with teachers and academics and are critical to the arc of the biography one constructs about oneself as a teacher (Tompkins, 1996; Davis, 2003).

There is a significant body of research in compulsory education contexts that examines the formation of teacher identities, but as Carnell (2007) and Tight (2007) point out, there is far less in a higher education setting, particularly that which examines the effect of specific autobiographic turning points that act as critical factors in the pedagogic direction that academics subsequently take in their academic careers, and as a result, how this affects their conceptions of effective teaching. This section offers a discussion of the nature of these areas of identity formation, in terms of the following themes: *Self As A Person*, *Self As An Academic*, *Emotions In Academia*, and last, *Professional Conflict*.

### **5.31 Self As A Person**

In this research study, the findings make clear that all participants brought with them myriad personal histories that included beliefs about the activities and processes of teaching within higher education, the attributes and knowledge demands of academics, and the expected attitudes and behaviours of teachers working within the higher education context. These appeared to be informed by their prior experiences of schooling, of their own family circumstances, their socio-economic status, their spiritual and religious beliefs, and not least, their own expectations of how academics should 'look' and 'behave', in turn, based upon their own higher education experiences.

In this study, participants' personal histories and the trajectory of experience and meaning

attached to it filtered their understanding and interpretation of academia that consequently contributed to their senses of self, personal and academic. All of the participants presented a clear image of themselves at the outset, and this image led to them interpreting their understanding of being a perceived 'caring' academic within this framework. All the participants were similar to the extent that their parents played a significant role in their identity development. Charity spoke of her mother taking control of an experience of educational failure and of forcing her to learn through a sheer act of will; Eachann disclosed memories of his father's mission as a fisherman and the principle enshrined in the "nobility of serving others" that had shaped his caring attitudes and made him want to replicate those feelings that his father had engendered. Fenella's experiences were much less positive however, being based on the desire to escape the "thuggery that is my family", and thus having "been subconsciously trying to avoid (being like her mother)".

Unlike that regarding schoolteachers (Barber, 2002; Vogt, 2002; Forrester, 2005) there is very little literature concerning the influence of academics' autobiographies upon their beliefs and practices, excepting that in teacher education contexts. The exceptions are the work of Schrader (2004) and Tight (2007), who states 'there is even less that takes avowedly critical, feminist, conceptual or auto/biographical approaches' (p. 2). In accordance with this, the autobiographical literature within teacher education conforms to the pattern of this very exception, much of the literature reporting struggles of a classed, feminist, race or dis/abling nature. Certainly, it is possible to locate the autobiographies of the individuals within this study, along the continuum of struggle. Yet the findings of this study suggest that just as with teachers, it is entirely reasonable to assume that life history plays, for some people, a major role in deciding both beliefs about learning and teaching, and beliefs about what education is ultimately for, thus corroborating the work of for example Knowles & Holt-Reynolds (1991) and Mello (2004) who have demonstrated that people's stories are not fixed in well thought out beliefs and consistent pedagogies, but are re-storied and shifting depending on the social context, and importantly, the recipients of their

teaching. Fenella's testimony bears witness to this most poignantly: "I just don't want to be seen as a poor white colliery girl with no brains but is really nice. I'm not ordinary enough to be able to get away with caring because it's just such a stereotype. So I have to be hard and critical and that's how I care".

A realm of academic life history and its impact on teaching and learning that has growing importance in research within a higher education context is in spirituality. Within Western contexts, the spiritual side of our lives has traditionally been intensely personal, and certainly outside the realm of our professional lives. However, in an era of 'spiritual poverty' amongst the general public (Lindholm & Astin, 2008), in which institutions are more likely both to foster a climate of spiritual tolerance amongst the increasingly diverse student body, as well as to respond to legislation enshrining equality amongst faculty, spirituality has risen up the research agenda in terms of its possible impact on teaching and learning.

Within this current study, all the participants expressed the notion that spirituality played a salient role in their identity. In Eachann's case, his father's Methodism and the precept of "The Living Christ" had made an impact on his personal approach to teaching, which he reconciled within a framework of professionalism, in terms of attendance to particular highly ordered and visible ways of working. Charity's experiences centred upon both her parents, her mother as a "very Jewish" figure with a vital mission to improve her daughter's educational outcomes, whilst her father was Catholic, and due to what he saw as his own failure in life to achieve, imbued all of Charity's motivations to do well with an undercurrent of needing to succeed as a scholar to "somehow heal the past". This is of course, redolent of the concept of a 'wounded healer', useful in explaining the dispositions of teachers in particular concepts. In Fenella's life, her mother's Catholicism played a contrary role – to Fenella it served to evidence low level academic aspirations and the belittlement of her mother's faith more robustly shored up the sense of having

created a different identity to the one which she felt destined to have. These findings are echoed in the work of Lindholm & Astin (2008) and suggested that an appreciation of academics' spirituality is critical to understanding the failure or success of complex missions and values statements that characterize many universities' aims in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, despite this, most academics are silent about the nature and implications of their own spirituality, even though there is an expectation of having to act with empathy and make moral adjustments for their students' beliefs and world-views on a continual and frequently daily basis (Fitzmaurice, 2008). Although this aspect of academics' identities is not well researched, this study suggests that academics do encounter difficulty with this aspect of their identity. It may be problematically resolved through making accommodations with courses taught, relationships with other academics, and not least, interactions with students.

### **5.32 Self As An Academic**

Teaching and academic identities stem not only from individual experiences, whether personal or professional, but also from cumulative and collective life histories, many as a result of the disciplinary context in which the academic teaches (Schrader, 2004; Walker et al, 2006a; Jawitz, 2007). All of the participants in this study had lives that criss-crossed with elements of social justice issues, deprivation and responsibilities to the wider community. Intriguingly, then, all the participants in this study considered that their activities outside formal academic structures were as important as their contractual work, and all sought actively to be involved in the lives of students and the university and its wider community. Lindholm & Astin (2006) made similar findings, discovering that faculty holding some form of strong orientation toward community service frequently aim to secure congruence between their own values and outcomes for students.

An important aspect of framing for individuals' life stories comes from the concept of 'ideals'.

There is disagreement as to the salience of ideals within the formation of teachers (De Ruyter & Conroy, 2002) and more so, within the realm of academia (Pill, 2005; Carnell, 2007). Within this research, an intriguing finding emerged in the participants' articulation of their 'ideal' academic. In all three cases, the academics within this study described an ideal that to a great extent contradicted what they expressed as being a defining feature of their chosen pedagogy. Charity for example, described her ideal as "Magdalene Lampert" on the basis of the "absolute rigour" of her work with students and the "research esteem" in which she is held. On the other hand, Eachann cited his father's influence in the steadfastness of his concern for quiet and stubborn service, although he himself chose to emphasize his academic self as a "performer, agitator and provocateur". Supporting the work of Alsup (2006) who suggested that media has played a very significant role in creating stereotypical images of the 'ideal' teacher, Fenella had as ideals characters from films portraying culturally opposing academics. In one case this was a lower middle class character who worked in a working class school in Los Angeles who believed in high expectations for low aspiration students, and another a cosmopolitan academic in London with a scathing view of non-traditional students. In both cases, Fenella simultaneously loved and loathed both characters, holding them up as ideals but experiencing conflict relating to their personal significance for her as a non-traditional academic.

However, examining the significance of these findings more closely one finds that there are no real contradictions at all. The notion of ideals is a complex one in teaching. De Ruyter (2003) has argued that ideals are 'imagined excellences' (p. 468) and that in all forms of education, they offer direction and meaning to people's lives. In the case of the academics in this study, the ideals that are articulated serve more frequently to illustrate the ideological and institutional distance that they encounter in their academic lives. In this sense, the work in the study almost completely mirrors the work of both Carnell (2007) and McNamara (2008) in suggesting that for some academics, ones engaged in 'other' forms of work outside traditional and tightly defined research



and scholarship, there is a battle between the 'sacred' and the 'profane' (McNamara, 2008) identities. In the case of Fenella, this is clearly the case, and in a second reading of the concept of 'ideals', only one of the three – Charity – expresses the belief that she would like to acquire the scholarship of her "hero", who she perceives to be both a highly credible, esteemed academic, and someone who possesses the personal characteristics that Charity also has, namely, a relational and personal view of understanding.

In each case, the participants' experiences framed their desire to make an individual difference to their learners, one resting strongly on the transformative power of teaching and learning, whether about greater, but perhaps more opaque values, small pedagogic actions, or about disciplinary scholarship and achievement. In this sense, the identities of all the academics in this study began to take shape more clearly; although both Charity and Fenella explicitly criticized elements of the university as holding specific views related to what they saw as the 'discourse of difference' model of teaching and learning non-traditional students, the more eloquently and passionately they spoke of their life histories, the more that positive images of popular discourses began to emerge. These were framed in what Fenwick (2006) has called 'poorer pedagogies'. Not the banal, pedestrian and homogenized 'pedagogies of poverty' that Haberman (1991) describes, but the 'less grand, totalizing, more local and contingent orientations' (Fenwick, 2006, p. 9), that academics such as Eachann, Charity and Fenella hold out for, day after day.

### **5.33 *Emotions In Academia***

The academics' individual beliefs concerning academic identity, their values, and how these were both located within the past but expressed through elements of their chosen pedagogies, all these emerged through the research process. The quotes introduced in their narratives (i.e. "You're Coming With Me No Matter What"; "It's Just About Being Professional"; "If I Can, You Can"), all represented a recurring phrase in the data that encapsulated the participants' experiences,

behaviours and beliefs. Not only did they reveal the participants' beliefs and understandings about caring and how it felt to be perceived as caring, but the quotes also revealed aspects of self efficacy and reconciliation of frequently poignant and troubling ideals and ideologies that are not uncommon but certainly under-researched and theorized within the realm of studies of higher education academics (Nixon et al, 2001; Tight, 2007).

The reason for the frequent apparent incoherence in these academics' accounts of their own identity arguably rests heavily on the way that emotions are framed and understood within academic work. Constanti & Gibbs (2004) have argued that policy and practice in UK higher education 'markets' have given rise to a variety of performances of 'emotional labour' in which individuals academics' ability to cope with students' and service demands is mediated through the lens of whether they hold congruent views with the institution. An important finding from their work that is significant to this present study is in the notion of 'voluntary exploitation'; this concept is held to explain the emotional fatigue of academics for whom high standards of relational and ethical conduct are the predicates of meaningful work. For example, Charity stated that "I desperately don't want to perform but caring is such hard work and I wonder about my ability to be an academic at all when I get consumed by it all", and later, "I feel quite tired about it all; teaching is so much a case of constant reinvention and I'm not at all sure that that's professionally sustainable. You can't professionalize your emotional reactions, yet...yet...the alternative is too wearying to imagine."

Wager (2001) has suggested that occupational self is a central plank in conceptualizing career development, but this notion is increasingly problematic in the context of a fragmented higher education landscape, where incoherent views of the role of an academic nestle uneasily alongside non-traditional student pathologies that in turn require re-conceptualized academic identities to help them succeed. But as I have already argued, embracing new academic identities arguably

means accepting less formulaic and more individualistic pedagogic approaches that are a function of relational encounters, and structurally, many institutions are still simply too far away from that point (Haggis, 2003).

Such confusion is palpable among the three academics in this study. Charity stated “I feel I’ve lost touch with why I’m here in the first place...I’m not sure I like what I’ve become any more”. Eachann expressed great sadness that “I can’t really think of a profession in which someone is so shaped by their past and yet has so much consciously to relegate it during their job”. For all the participants in this research, the opportunity to voice and explain their beliefs and practices as perceived and actual caring academics proved a powerful means of exploring both their academic and self identities and the prospects that these held for the future. By the end stages of the research, all the participants expressed a sense of deep laboriousness associated with their teaching and academic work, but in spite of this, in two cases, the academics’ explicit missions were still providing sustenance and motivating them when there seemed to be little will left at all to actually engage with students on any level.

Fenella was the exception to this: by the end of the research, the actual and symbolic use of the possessive pronoun ‘my’ had marked a major shift in her view of herself in academic developmental terms, and ironically had made her question, perhaps for the first time, the gravity of what sort of academic she might become. Alger (2009) described teachers’ trajectories using metaphors and suggested that in some cases, a withering occurs simply because teachers understand that there is a gulf between actual self as a teacher and the ideal academic enshrined in their unspoken beliefs.

#### **5.34 Professional Conflict**

Universities and other higher education institutions now play a central role in the development of

society, the economy, and culture, and at every level – international, regional, institutional, and individual. Such profound changes in the missions and structures of universities raise questions and possible conflicts about the purposes of education, the ethics predicated by these and by extension, the roles and practices of academics within them (Nicholls, 2004; Kinchin et al, 2008).

The work of the ‘caring’ academics encapsulates many of the complexities surrounding the purposes of teaching and learning within twenty first century universities. The first one concerns the guiding ethic to which each participant purported to work. All the participants were clear about the stated purpose of education, although it differed between them. For Charity, it was to “study and achieve”; for Eachann, to “reach people cognitively, but to do so emotionally as well”, and for Fenella, to have the highest possible level of academic ability of the students. All three participants invoked some kind of ethic to emphasize and validate their purposes. Charity for example, gave as an example the balance of a “wider set of ethical principles” against everyday morality, suggesting that it would be “immoral to be cruel by omission of something, I don’t know, not replying to emails, not returning work on time”. Eachann, in contrast, stated many times that his professional ethic was an overriding concern, one that complemented his personal ethic of “service”; but he felt that both forms of ethic were frequently undermined by the university’s values and “the “irony of having mission statements put up here, there and everywhere”. Fenella’s ethics were based soundly upon academic standards, and all her efforts were so designed “to pursue that sort of ‘caring’ academic ethos that I think has both credence and standards.”

Nevertheless, none of the participants actively endorsed the ethical and professional standards as laid down in the UK professional standards framework. There has been a great deal of criticism over the last decade concerning the utility and application of these standards (Nicholls, 2004), and partly, Tight (2007) suggests, it is because there have been very few published accounts of

individuals' work within the climate of change and complexity that has characterized higher education. Fenella laments this, asserting that academics are forced to "attend to all manner of ethical and emotional and student experiential stuff...I think the problem with much teaching work and professional development in higher education is that it tells you how to articulate stuff but not how to do it."

One area that stands out as illustrating such contradiction is in the concern with retention of students. Most studies of retention draw conclusions that as a policy area it is perhaps too complex to address through simple proactive means, and the myriad reasons for student withdrawal are so deeply ingrained in mostly habitus – based (Bourdieu, 1990) interpretations, that remedial measures can reflect the personally-responsive nature of any retention programme. However, work by Hixenbaugh marks a shift in research in this area, recognizing that in the absence of any consistent outcome trends in retention policy, one possible factor leading to student persistence is the presence of a strong relational element with a tutor.

It is in this context, that caring academics present a paradoxical challenge to the university: the consensus among the executive at RTU is apparently that support remains a central service, and that academics should provide a "responsive and high quality-learning environment". However, as all the participants pointed out, this has largely been interpreted as a procedural matter, with an emphasis on documenting changes to student behaviour, rather than understanding the particular retention rates of some academics. Indeed, retention is possibly the only area where academics are held so accountable, and where personal knowledge of students' circumstances is expected. Yet paradoxically, only a certain type of personal accountability is expected, and indeed, allowed: Charity for example, was derided for having personal contextual knowledge that appeared to put other academics at mitigation boards at a disadvantage; Eachann was "wheeled out" for his responsive reputation, yet berated for it in other circumstances.

One finding that was especially significant given the climate of concern over retention within universities over the last decade was the link between the participants' pedagogic values and issues of strategic importance that held particular salience for them. One such issue was the persistence of students. Charity for example, used her explicit pedagogic approaches of nurturing and relational tenacity to "make it impossible for students to even want to leave...not impossible to leave, but to not want to leave". It is significant that although there is little research to suggest that academics can hold a critical position in the decision making of students, it has hitherto been marginalized compared to habitus –oriented studies. However, with higher education markets being increasingly pressured to find alternative explanations for retention and persistence, ones similar to Charity's views are beginning to emerge as being significant with higher education studies (Beard et al, 2007; Georg, 2009).

According to Fitzmaurice (2008), when academics cultivate reflective practices they are more likely to clarify what they see as purposeful connections with current educational theory, and so become more accepting of the ethical and moral contradictions inherent in their work. For the participants in this current study, caring relationships with students have served an important reflective practice, whereby the actual practices of teaching have been mirrors in which to scrutinize their behaviours and values. Eachann for example, said "We need as academics to have a relationship with our students as a critical audience who give significance to one's teaching actions and demonstrate their impact as if showing through a mirror the gravity of what it is to teach." In this sense, Eachann expressed the notion of fidelity expressed in Goldstein & Lake's (2003) work. However, this was not some hazy and lazy notion of consequentialist teaching without a rationale, since Eachann had critically reflected carefully on the limits of such a process, and stated also that "But there's a line of course, a distorting mirror of vanity teaching where being a professional is crucial." This statement echoes the findings of other studies, for example Aultman et al (2008), which, although in school contexts, confirm the importance of critical

reflexivity in reflecting on the every day ethical and moral pedagogic actions and decisions that potentially conflict with professional and institutional practices.

For all three participants, this study has served as a vehicle for critical reflection, and given each of them both the purpose and space in time to explore their feelings, beliefs, knowledge and intentions concerning both teaching, and specifically, caring teaching within higher education. The controversial place of care and caring teaching within higher education has presented a considerable 'puzzling, or troubling, or interesting phenomenon with which the individual is trying to deal' (Schon, 1983, p. 50). As a result, and due to the iterative and gradually unfolding nature of the interpretive methodology adopted, the framing of reflection has frequently been haphazard and at times, regressive. Nevertheless, it has captured complexity well, and arguably, given each participant a much clearer insight both into their place within the institution, and the factors that motivate them to continue striving to be the particular kinds of academic they are within it.

#### **5.4 Summary**

The academics in this current study were clearly very diverse. Out of the three, two were 'officially' excellent in terms of particular aspects of their work. These two academics were also most content about being perceived and being 'caring', although their interpretations differed, as did their willingness to be acknowledged as such. All the academics though, clearly exhibited pedagogic practices that were widely perceived to be caring and to have specific effects on the students and the culture that they created and maintained. One question that the study raises, however, is whether 'caring' matters to others in the institution. It clearly matters to these academics' students, and in terms of how caring is defined, as a form of pedagogy that does all in its power to help students achieve, it clearly matters, in theory at least, to the institution.

However, two big questions stand behind this notion of whether care 'matters'. First, if this study

had asked colleagues to nominate an 'excellent' academic, would the outcomes have been the same? In terms of ensuring quality learning and teaching, which is more important, the perception of excellence or the perception of caring? And if there is an institutional imperative to improve outcomes for all students, is the university willing to listen to those calls that acknowledge the less procedural and more ambiguous and relational pedagogies of which the academics in this study speak? The answers to these questions remain elusive. But since it matters in almost every possible way, economically, student-experiential, institutional, and purely personal, that our teachers and academics in schools and universities are the best that they can possibly be, it is clearly essential to understand the beliefs and practices of teachers for whom caring is a central element of their pedagogic practice. Hopefully, this thesis has played a part in developing that understanding.



## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS**

### **6.1 Overview And Contribution To Knowledge**

In this chapter, conclusions and implications of this study are discussed. The discussion is framed by three interrelated bodies of research presented in the literature: the philosophical and practical bases of care across all educational sectors; knowledge and understanding about why and how perceived caring academics in education appear to care, and how this caring identity shapes their teaching practices as a result; and last, the autobiographical nature of teachers' and academics' values, beliefs and identities. Implications of the conclusions are offered for university academics, university administrators, teachers of all description and within all contexts, and not least, future researchers.

This thesis has pursued the argument that becoming teachers and academics who choose to care, shape and practice their academic work and teaching as a relationship, where the ones who are 'cared for' and 'cared about' are not only at the centres of the lifeworlds of these academics, but are the recipients of all that they do in their efforts to make a difference in their students' lives. The thesis has demonstrated that such practices and beliefs are neither consistent nor coherent amongst the academics that are perceived to care. However, partly as a result of their 'care' being explicit, their beliefs and practices frequently bring academics into conflict with their colleagues and institutions, since their values and beliefs are predicated on dual grounds leading to frequently acute dissonance between personal and institutional ethics. Despite, or because of, this apparent institutional indifference to these 'caring' teachers, all of them actively pursued their own interpretation of a particular pedagogy that for each of them had internal validity and meaning, despite drawing on a range of ethics and situational factors.

This thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge in two main ways. First, it adds to the

existing research on types of pedagogy that weave ethics and affect, and in so doing, it contributes new knowledge and original insights into the complex and significantly under-researched area of higher education academic work dealing with teachers' beliefs and autobiographies. In this vein, the characterization of 'caring' as a form of academic and professional resistance is original to this study, and one that might well assist future institutional managers and leaders in understanding how some academics position themselves in relation to their work contexts. The validity and fidelity of these findings is endorsed by the participants themselves who had an ongoing critical dialogue with the researcher as to how they were being portrayed within the study.

The second original contribution of this study lies in the methodology adopted. By incorporating Reputational Case Selection, Phenomenology and Life History, the study exemplifies the complex, multifaceted and rich representational qualities that allow the voices of the participants to be fully heard. Indeed, elements of the research design that were used to elicit testimony as well as the instruments found in Appendices E, F and G might well have a purpose in professional academic and staff development at similar institutions.

## **6.2 Care In Pedagogic Contexts: Philosophies, Principles, Purposes And Practices**

### ***Caring Teachers Choose To Care***

At the time of this study, the three academics that agreed to participate in the study had been teaching at the University for varying lengths of time. Whilst all of them shared a passion for their work, they did not have common teaching histories and beliefs about teaching, and nor did they use the same teaching practices or methods in fostering learning. Two of the participants had been recognized within the university at large, and indeed nationally, for their abilities in teaching, but at the same time, their own faculty members appeared to be largely unaware of the exact

nature of their teaching activities whilst simultaneously acknowledging their reputations for high quality teaching and learning, and indeed, 'caring'.

Caring teaching is primarily defined as those emotions, actions, and reflections that derive from a teacher's or academic's desire to do everything in their power to ensure that their learners, whether pupils or students, achieve. All the participants in this study were perfectly clear about what were the most important actions and emotions to express in their pedagogies that would lead to the highest achievement of the students they taught. All three were concerned to be more than just 'competent' and articulated theoretical and practical positions on their pedagogies of choice. Significantly, many of these positions were framed in the concept of 'resistance', interpreted in many forms.

In this study, all of the participants were aware of, and expressed some discomfort with, the dispositional-behavioural dichotomy that caring pedagogies present in practice. None were happy to have their attributes regarded as evidence of 'caring personalities' in practice, and in terms of compromising their reputations as academics, both Fenella and Charity actively took part in what can only be described as 'damage limitation' during the research. Both changed their minds variously about academic ideals, the sorts of evidence they provided as being 'proof' that they were indeed scholars with high standards, not simply for their students, but as research-active academics.

Although all teachers teach with the express intent of helping students to learn and succeed, this study demonstrates that caring is not an inevitable part of teachers' teaching. Neither is it an inevitable disposition possessed by serving teachers, despite the obvious relational nature of teaching and learning. The conclusion seems to be that caring teaching and academic work appears to be much more than a matter of competence and compliance to policies and

institutional obligations. It is for these academics, a matter of choice, but one shaped by complex experiences and beliefs about pedagogy in higher education.

### ***Caring Teaching Is Explicitly Purposeful***

The academics in this study all had values and beliefs that served as both lenses through which their teaching and academic work was focused, and as prisms through which it was refracted. All the participants sought relationships with their students, whether through mediating knowledge, through the use of personal narratives and stories that were meant as guides and signposts to building an array of elements of caring and trust-sharing classrooms. Moreover, the relationships formed were of a socio-cultural nature. They rested upon inducting students into the practices of the institution and of the particular disciplines for which they were studying, and through the prolonged contact that each participant sought to create with the wider student body outside the classroom, they also attempted to shape, in small but nonetheless significant ways, the culture of the institution.

All the participants spent a substantial amount of time with students outside of classes, via email and support or through adjunct activities. The outcomes of such conscientious work allowed all three participants to feed into the more 'legitimized' aspects of teaching where the temporal expansion of their informal contact had positive effects. How the academics in this study did this, however, was through attempting to balance larger, institutional learning aims, frequently coded in the language of 'learning outcomes' and 'retention metrics' with small but meaningful attention to the everyday contingencies that comprised teaching and academic work.

Critically, a central plank of all the participants' behaviours was in their framing of learning outcomes as matters of the students 'becoming' something else, in addition to acquiring knowledge and developing skills. All three of the academics in this study had as a guiding

pedagogic belief that through their teaching, the students should be 'different', or 'be something'. Producing students who are 'different' people, and forming them into something 'better' appeared to be a great motivator for these 'caring' academics. However, the degree to which their students were better, different people, or simply something other than someone who had completed a degree, was extremely variable.

However, acknowledging this seemingly essential aspect of the participants' values and beliefs shaping their work leads to the second conclusion of this study, that is, caring teaching, whether designed or intended or unknowingly enacted, is purposeful. The purposes however, whilst broadly conforming to the underpinning meaning of what caring teaching is for – to do anything in its power to help students achieve – are neither consistent in their design or intention, or necessarily in agreement with institutional aims. This is a significant conclusion since it does two things, both of which go to the heart of the teaching and learning quality within the university.

First, it appears that there is a conceptual gap between what are commonly understood as the basic levels of attention to teaching and learning that help students to achieve their stated learning outcomes, and the levels of conscientious and caring teaching that are characterized by the academics within this study. Whilst their colleagues have acknowledged them as 'caring', there appears to be a lack of dialogue as to what this might mean in practice for the students, and in addition, what this implies as to the difference between 'competent' and 'excellent' teaching, especially given that two out of the three participants are award winning academics.

The second implication of this particular conclusion is that it questions the nature of preparation for being an academic and a teacher. The values and beliefs of these academics clearly have shaped their work, but there appear to be few checks and balances of the extent to which individual academics have the philosophical basis of their work questioned or placed under scrutiny. This is

not to call for some kind of inspection regime or of tighter adherence to external standards, but bearing in mind the increasing complexity of academics' work, a greater appreciation of, and attendance to the scholarship of teaching, might seem to be a positive step.

### **6.3 Caring Academics And Their Work: Identities And Autobiographical Accounts**

#### ***Life History Matters For Academics***

For all teachers and academics, learning to teach is a long and protracted process that begins well before they ever enter a classroom or meet with their first students. For academics, some of whom have never encountered formal 'teacher education' programmes, exposure to ways of teaching and methods of learning occurs through disciplinary means, via their lecturers, whilst they themselves were students. In studies of lecturers' and academics' identities and their orientation to and affiliation with particular theories of teaching, most suggest that substantial effects are felt mostly through disciplines and academic cultures.

In this current study, all the participants were trained as teachers or academics, having undergone some formal qualifying programme prior to joining the university. Despite this, the participants had varied beliefs about what teaching in a university meant, and their identification of self to the academic profession. All of the academics in this study had stories to tell about their lives and of how their personal and professional experiences had entwined to form their self and academic identities. Based on the findings from this study, these academics' lives and their prior life experiences appeared to be significant in a creating self-identities that strengthened and shaped their particular pedagogical practices, and academic identities that shaped the cultures in which they were working. For this group of academics, it would appear that their upbringing had an

impact, in various ways, social, cultural and spiritual.

In this vein, the identities possessed by the academics were not clearly content based to the extent that being affiliated with particular disciplines was the critical element of their self or academic identity. All three had academic identities underpinned by possession of particular labels, such as 'researcher', 'thinker', 'scholar', and in addition, by aspects of these labels that revealed hidden traits, such as having 'rigour' or 'integrity'. Related directly to this, all three academics in the study were explicit about the ways in which aspects of their spirituality had affected their work. However, this is not to imply at all that this embracing of spirituality is inevitable for particular kinds of academics, from particular backgrounds. What this research study does suggest, however, is that for these academics, their 'caring' practices and behaviours somehow seemed to be interwoven with their experiences of spirituality. In addition, for all the participants, their ongoing identity construction seemed not to preclude the idea that spirituality was a key element of their teaching and academic work.

This is an important conclusion since it appears that on an individual basis, some academics are relying on ethical, moral and spiritual frameworks of their own to help them with, and indeed, shape, complex academic work. In universities, such work is becoming more difficult, due to increasing student numbers and reduced time for contact; but also, academics' work is becoming more intensified and decisions that affect students' lives are often made in pressured and ethically impoverished circumstances. That academics can be guided by their own moral and spiritual compasses, which in turn derive from their own autobiographies, is therefore perhaps inevitable. As an implication for universities and senior managers involved in decision-making, it is a profound one, calling to mind the influence, both positive and negative, that academics may have on the students whom they teach.

### ***The Centrality Of Reflection For ‘Caring’ Academics***

Prolonged critical reflection on aspects of pedagogic praxis characterizes much of what literature would suggest is ‘expert’ and ‘excellent’ teaching. Likewise, there is a movement of reflective practice in higher education, but its purpose is far more diverse and therefore far less clear in terms of its ultimate ‘productivity’. Traditionally, it has been associated with learning enhancement and quality teaching practices, but even over the last few years, there have been moves to spell out more clearly the complex articulation of theory and practice, and to unpick the tradition of scholarly teaching as more than a matter of simply learners’ motivations, or on the other hand, academics’ epistemologies or pedagogic content knowledge bases.

The use of a dual life historical and phenomenological methodology to elicit stories about how participants’ beliefs were woven with their practices, and the contextual richness of the data, enabled the participants to experience this study as a form of reflective practice. This was a critical point in the research, because the participants’ beliefs, intentions and actual teaching practices frequently appeared contradictory, not the coherent bodies of knowledge that some researchers might suggest.

One element of this was in the domain of emotions as they impacted upon the academics’ work. Observance to the emotional context in which higher education operates has indeed become more pressing as a result of the growing concern with retention rates, and the judgments of the National Student Survey. However arguably, institutions have not accompanied this by the space and time for academics to make sense of increasing demands, especially in the sense of the growing emotional labour to which many are expected to attend. For the academics in this current study, as ‘caring’ teachers, all of them were more than happy to carry out their emotional labour far in excess of the time and space allowances they were given. In addition, despite their choices to care and their espoused commitment to practices underpinned by values and particular



beliefs, all felt that the effort was somehow justified.

However, the study was clearly giving these academics a deliberative framework in which they could reflect on what for them, were salient aspects of their identities. The degree to which all the academics have expressed some dislocation between their self-beliefs and assessment of their own teaching and espoused beliefs, and those evidenced as part of the reputational case selection reflects the way that their beliefs about their 'caring' teaching have been and continue to be shaped by perception and reflection. A critical element of the reflective process that this research facilitated was in the dialogue between the researcher and participants. This not only played a major part in ensuring both the rigour and the representational quality of the study throughout, but also gave the participants space and time to reflect on their identities and beliefs and how others perceived these.

It is perhaps unsurprising therefore that there was such great reticence in learning about how other people interpreted their pedagogic actions and beliefs. It is arguable that none of the participants had ever previously had their beliefs about themselves held up to scrutiny to this extent. In terms of the reflective power that this research offered, it gave participants a unique opportunity to reflect on a critically important part of their academic working lives, and one that, institutionally, seemed to be largely invisible and certainly little thought-about.

#### **6.4 Improvements For Future Phases Of This Research**

The overall intent of this research was to investigate academics perceived to be caring, in the naturalistic setting of their everyday work within a UK university. The overall research design was to use LeCompte & Preissle's (1993) Reputational Case Selection methodology to select participants and subsequently to use a dual phenomenological and life-historical methodology to both elicit the 'lived' experiences of them and make meaning out of their testimonies and wider

material evidence that they provided. Given the particular and unique characteristics of this setting, the selection and number of the participants are acknowledged in that although chosen purposively with great attention to disciplinary balance, they have therefore limited the transferability of the findings. Certainly, anyone wishing to draw comparisons with this study should consider its sociological and political context, the characteristics of the students whom these academics teach, and the small number of academics' experiences that have been examined. In terms of the experiences of the academics, although observational data was used, an improvement in this respect may have been to use more frequent observations and to use them more systematically alongside the 'reputational case selection' data, to investigate the 'fidelity' of caring from different perspectives, reputation-based, and action-based. A further improvement in the research design may have been to utilize more achievement-led data in the material that participants provided; it would perhaps have added depth to some of the issues raised by the participants in the discussions on conceptual metaphors and professional identities. However, that being said, it was important for the research to reflect the 'lived' worlds of the participants and to make meaning out of the experiences and stories that they themselves constructed.

## **6.5 Directions For Future Phases Of This Research**

Future research recommendations focus on continuing investigations into two main areas: a larger study building upon this current one, aiming to understand the mechanisms by which certain academics actively pursue care and caring practices in their pedagogies, and how these affect and impact upon learners and their achievements; and a second one, aiming to investigate how particular institutional *ethe* affect the perceptions of students as to the quality of pedagogic caring that they experience.

In the first case, autobiographical inquiry could take the direction that much research in teacher education has taken, which is to closely examine a wider sample of 'caring' faculty participants'

personal history beliefs and to examine the co-relation of these with their pedagogic practices through a prolonged series of observations of teaching practices. Such observations could be videoed and followed by interpretation and analysis of participant views on watching the videoed material. This type of pedagogic research could narrowly focus on specific practices that the participants believe exemplifies their values and beliefs about caring and how this is translated into interactions within the classroom. At the same time, student views could be elicited, investigating their perceptions of relational dynamics and other variables associated with caring. Utilizing a wider range of data such as course grades, retention and progression data, would perhaps give a much deeper picture of the ecology of a 'caring' academic and their students' experiences.

Along this same line, given the perceived significance of the cultural impact of actively being a 'caring' academic by the participants in this study, future research could investigate the design and efficacy of institutional staff development and learning programmes, and examine the extent to which they attend to the seemingly powerful link between personal and professional beliefs and values, and cultures of care and spirituality as they shape the institutional ethos. Related directly to this, a study could be carried out to investigate possible links between the importance attached to 'caring' pedagogic praxis by faculty with responsibilities for planning and enhancing students' wider learning experiences, and their eventual decision making processes, particularly in areas that impact directly on the students' achievements and progress.

All of these investigations would not only add to the broader literature on the significance of caring within higher education pedagogy, it would also be of importance to both academic educators of higher education and to university policy makers, who may reconceptualize the spaces and places in curricula and teaching and learning environments where differently conceived pedagogies might flourish.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Request For Research Study Information**

**From:** Caroline Walker-Gleaves – Doctoral Research Study

**Title Of Study:** A Study Of 'Caring' Academics And Their Work Within A UK University

### **Seeking Research Study Information – Explanatory Sheet for Faculty Executive and Faculty Colleagues**

Dear Colleague

I work in the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Sunderland and I am currently seeking information from academic colleagues who might be willing and interested in participating in my Doctoral Study. I am investigating higher education academics who consider caring to be an intrinsic element of their teaching and academic work and as a result I will inquire into how this defines and reveals itself within their teaching and academic practices.

Identifying caring teachers other than through self-disclosure is conceptually very difficult and has limited validity, and so I intend to use a technique of 'Reputational Case Selection' (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) to establish a group of colleagues who might be interested in working with me. This technique involves seeking recommendations by knowledgeable professionals in the field. In the case of this particular study, you are asked to recommend a caring faculty colleague and indicate the reason(s) you consider this person to be caring. In addition, please state your job title and your department within the faculty, and finally, please say whether you have a teaching qualification and state what this is.

The reasons for recommendation will be analyzed for meaning such that they can be compared with criteria generated from the literature on students' perceptions of caring teaching, and in turn, this analysis will be used to guide the final sample selection. All the recommendations collected will remain confidential to me. I look forward to receiving your recommendations.

With many thanks in anticipation,

Caroline Walker-Gleaves

## **Appendix B**

### **Expression Of Interest Form**

**From:** Caroline Walker-Gleaves – Doctoral Research Study

**Title Of Study:** A Study Of 'Caring' Academics And Their Work Within A UK University

### **Seeking Expression of Interest – Information Sheet for Lecturers**

Dear Colleague

I work in the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Sunderland and I am currently seeking information from academic colleagues who might be willing and interested in participating in my Doctoral Study. I am investigating higher education academics who consider caring to be an intrinsic element of their teaching and academic work and as a result I will inquire into how this defines and reveals itself within their teaching and academic practices.

Identifying caring teachers other than through self-disclosure is very difficult, and so I have used a technique of 'Reputational Case Selection' with particular parties in order to establish a group of colleagues who might be interested in working with me. The parties comprised:

- University Faculty Executive
- Faculty Colleagues

Through this process you have been personally identified as a 'Caring' Academic.

My research is qualitative and interpretive, and will be organized around case studies of the lecturers who have been identified as 'Caring' through the same technique as you. Should you wish to take part in the research, your identity will remain confidential to me, and you will be identified in my final thesis, only using a pseudonym.

As a participant in this Doctoral Study, you would be required to:

1. Complete a teaching profile sheet, giving your contact details, teaching history, current teaching commitments, and other roles related to teaching and learning within the university;
2. Participate in 5 approximately one-hour long recorded conversations, plus other informal meetings, spanning a period of one academic year of teaching;
3. Select and share with me feedback, testimonies, and any other materials that you judge to be of importance in articulating your identity as an academic;
4. Communicate with me via email once every two weeks about any incidents, ideas, events that you feel are relevant to this research;
5. Write one short, informal, reflective piece about why you feel that you have been selected as a 'Caring' Academic;
6. Be prepared to have your teaching observed once for each term of the research;
7. Comment on and verify conversation transcripts and interpretive material (optional).

This is not an action research project and there is therefore no expectation that you will engage in any action-reflection-evaluation cycle. I aim to record and interpret your self-perceptions and experiences of the challenges and changes that may occur to your teaching and relationships with students and peers. You are welcome to participate in the interpretive process as far as your time and interest allow. If you are interested in taking part in this research study, you should be available to participate in the study over a whole academic year (3 terms) from September 2006, and be actively teaching groups of students during that period.

This study has full Ethics Approval from my institutions of work and candidature (University of Sunderland, and Leicester University).

My Doctoral Supervisor is John Isaac, email [john.isaac@leicester.ac.uk](mailto:john.isaac@leicester.ac.uk).

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me and I will discuss my project further with you, and in addition, provide you with more information and a consent form.

With many thanks in anticipation,

Caroline Walker-Gleaves



## **Appendix C**

### **Initial Participant Meeting (IPM)**

**Study Title:** A Study Of 'Caring' Academics And Their Work Within A UK University

**Name:**

**Room:**

**Faculty and Department:**

**Tel:**

**Email:**

**Date and time of meeting:**

**Location:**

**\*For reasons of confidentiality you will be identified in this research by a pseudonym. Please suggest a name that you'd like to take:.....**

1. Your discipline
2. Your current title within the university:
3. Your current role and responsibilities:
4. Your current teaching responsibilities, with levels:
5. For each course/module that you teach, state the numbers of students, the contact hours and delivery modes:
6. Approximately how many hours each week do you devote to supporting students (in whatever way) outside the classroom? Please state with the mode of contact (eg. Face to face, online).
7. How long have you been teaching altogether, in what contexts and at what levels?
8. How long have you been teaching at university level, in what subjects and at what levels?
9. How long have you been employed in this particular university and in this particular role?
10. Are you involved in any other roles across the university? Please describe them to me.

Thank you for taking time to provide this information

Caroline Walker-Gleaves

## **Appendix D**

### **Interview Schedule 1: On Being A Perceived 'Caring Academic'**

**Study Title:** A Study Of 'Caring' Academics And Their Work Within A UK University

**Name:**

**Pseudonym:**

**Faculty and Department:**

**Tel:**

**Email:**

**Date and time of meeting:**

**Location:**

**Please bring with you a short reflective piece about why you feel you have been selected as a caring teacher.**

- You have clearly been identified as a 'caring teacher'. Does this surprise you? Why/why not?
- Do you personally consider caring to be an intrinsic part of your teaching or academic work? How?
- What factors do you think were commonly used in identifying you as a caring teacher? (Common factors will be shared with the participant). Do you recognize yourself in them? How?
- If I had done the reputational case selection with the student body, do you think you would have been named as a caring teacher? Why/why not?
- What has motivated you to decide to take part in this study?

## **Appendix E**

### **Interview Schedule 2: Talking About Your Teaching**

**Study Title:** A Study Of 'Caring' Academics And Their Work Within A UK University

**Name:**

**Faculty and Department:**

**Campus:**

**Tel:**

**Email:**

**Date and time of meeting:**

**Location:**

**You are invited to share with me any material that you feel important in articulating your practice as an academic**

- Offer me a metaphor for your role as a teacher and explain its significance in your work
- What particular values (if any) govern your day-to-day practices in teaching?
- What particular values (if any) govern your day-to-day work as an academic?
- How have you learned to teach?
- In your view, what is the best thing about teaching?
- Share with me what you consider to be the best feedback from students that you've had about your teaching. And the worst?
- If I went into a typical class of yours, what might I expect to see you doing?
- What does the way that you organize your classes say about your beliefs?

## **Appendix F**

### **Interview Schedule 3: Talking About Your Identity As An Academic**

**Study Title:** A Study Of 'Caring' Academics And Their Work Within A UK University

**Name:**

**Faculty and Department:**

**Campus:**

**Tel:**

**Email:**

**Date and time of meeting:**

**Location:**

**You are invited to share with me any material that you feel important in articulating your identity as an academic**

- Describe for me your career path, including your studies, your work experience and so on.
- How did you become a university teacher?
- Why did you choose university teaching over other sorts?
- Describe to me an 'ideal' academic – what they do, who they are....?
- Describe yourself as an academic. How does this fit with your view of what an 'ideal' academic should be?
- How is being an academic-related to your identity as a person (if at all)?
- during your career as an academic, what have you learned about yourself?
- Thinking back over your life, tell me one event, person, episode, institution that has had the biggest impact upon your perspective about teaching. Would you classify this as a positive or negative influence and why?

## **Appendix G**

### **Interview Schedule 4: Reflection On The Meaning Of The Experience**

**Study Title:** A Study Of 'Caring' Academics And Their Work Within A UK University

**Name:**

**Faculty and Department:**

**Campus:**

**Tel:**

**Email:**

**Date and time of meeting:**

**Location:**

- Tell me as much as you can, about how you understand caring within academic work now.
- Thinking back to when you were first asked if you would participate in this research, how do you feel about your decision to do so?
- What, if any, impact has participating in this research had on your values and beliefs?
- What, if any, impact has participating in this research had on your teaching practices?
- What, if any, impact has participating in this research had on your relationships with colleagues?
- What, if any, impact has participating in this research had on your relationships with students?
- Have you communicated the experience of being involved in this research with your students/colleagues?
- Thinking now about the future, what will happen in the next part of your life? Do you intend to stay in academic work?