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EDUCATORS’ EXPERIENCES OF CULTIVATING AWARENESS AND RESILIENCE IN EDUCATION (CARE)™

A Dissertation in

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by

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Abstract

There is increasing interest in the use of mindfulness-based approaches to assist school personnel in navigating challenges inherent in their profession. Most research investigating the influence of mindfulness-based programs uses statistical approaches to understand program impact. The present study addressed a significant gap in existing research by exploring the experiences of 8 K-12 educators who completed the Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE)™ program. A qualitative interpretive approach was utilized to investigate how CARE program participants experience the program, what they learn and integrate from the program, and how they are different following participation in the program. Following CARE, participants in this study reported a shift in their approach to students and a shift in how they approach problem situations. They also reported being deeply affected by learning about the biology of emotion, and transferring this information into practice in their classrooms. Research findings are interpreted and recommendations are made for future research and training of counselors.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Schools are challenging places to work because school personnel respond to a host of social, mental, emotional, behavioral and academic issues. In recent years, state and national governments have designed bills that strongly focus on academic success and school accountability for student learning. One of the unintended consequences of a unilateral emphasis on academic outcomes is an increased stress and burden placed upon school personnel who are often already overwhelmed by the demands of their profession (Darling-Hammond, 2001). For example, in addition to covering state-mandated classroom content, an educator may arrange for a student to get school breakfast and provide emotional support because a student had a family member arrested the night before. Such circumstances require that school personnel respond to each of their students in the broader context of their lives in order to maintain an effective learning environment, and this type of responsiveness can be quite taxing. Therefore, the focus of this study will be on school personnel and how they navigate the stresses of their work.

School personnel encounter occupational stressors unique to their profession, such as teaching challenging students, managing the classroom environment, dealing with pressures from parents and responding to student crises (Kyriacou, 2001; Friedman, 2000; van Dick & Wagner, 2001. These stressors are layered atop typical work stressors like interpersonal relationships with colleagues and administrators, overload in work responsibilities, and inability to meet demands placed on them by various stakeholders (Kyriacou; Friedman; Plash & Pitrowski, 2006). Additionally, school personnel are generally expected to display kindness, compassion and empathy to a variety of children and their families (Jennings, 2011). This combination of demands placed upon educators
matches the description of what Maslach (2003) posits as a recipe for burnout. Ultimately, the complex and demanding environment in which school personnel function leads to the question what information and strategies do school personnel need to help them stay strong and resilient (Jennings, 2011; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009)?

Researchers have documented the prevalence of stress and burnout among school personnel (Friedman, 2000; Friedman, 2002; Kyriacou, 2001; van Dick & Wagner, 2001). In recent years, a number of general strategies have been suggested to help individuals cope with work-related stressors. However, few researchers have focused specifically upon concrete intervention strategies designed to address the unique demands and coping needs that arise for school personnel. Therefore, exploring the impact of an educator-focused burnout prevention and stress management intervention could provide unique insight into how to sustain educators’ careers and effectiveness (Jennings et al., 2011). Investigating how educators cope with the demands of their work after participating in a stress management and burnout prevention program may provide insight into one promising approach for equipping school personnel with the tools they need to be able to fulfill the demands placed upon them.

This topic is also personally relevant; in my former position as a school counselor, I found it difficult to bear witness to the pain of students and felt overwhelmed by the emotional demands of my job. In my first year as a school counselor, I experienced the death of a student and reported a severe incest case to Children and Family Services for which I later was subpoenaed. I left my school counseling position four years ago, and since my departure no one has stayed in the position I held for longer than one academic year. So when I learned of the work of Dr. Jennings underway at Pennsylvania State
University, I felt excited about its’ potential to impact school personnel, and help us navigate the difficulties we encounter while working in challenging positions. The Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE)™ program, which will be explored in the present study, is a mindfulness-based intervention designed to promote the coping resources of school personnel and address teacher stress and burnout (Jennings, 2011). CARE is an Institute of Educational Sciences funded intervention undergoing pilot efficacy through the Pennsylvania State University which provides training in mindfulness meditation, stress management, and self-care practices (Jennings).

**Statement of the Problem**

A review of mindfulness-based intervention research indicates that many researchers have looked at the phenomenon using quantitative methods. Scales designed to measure mindfulness like the Five Factor Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ; Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer & Toney, 2006) are generally used to identify group effects, as opposed to individual effects, of mindfulness-based interventions. While quantitative measures are informative in demonstrating what is going on, qualitative approaches are useful in addressing the why and how, once we have identified that something is going on. Qualitative methods provide a tool to “reveal how people experience educational activities” including “what they value, what they reject, what they learn, how they change” (Hull, 1997).

Even though qualitative approaches provide a valuable resource for evaluation of educational programs, few researchers have focused upon illuminating the voices of persons who have participated in mindfulness-based intervention programs and on describing the experiences of those individuals (Hull, 1997). In recent years, researchers
have utilized qualitative approaches to explore the impact of mindfulness on counselors-in-training, medical professionals, medical patients, and other helping professionals (Cohen-Katz et al., 2005; Griffiths, Camic, & Hutton, 2009; McCollum & Gehart, 2010; Shure, Christopher, & Christopher, 2008). However, no one has employed a qualitative approach to investigate the impact of a mindfulness-based intervention on school personnel. An interpretive qualitative approach is particularly well-suited to explore a complex phenomenon like mindfulness (Patton, 2002) given that the nature of the phenomenon is difficult to articulate succinctly (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009). The purpose of the present research is to address this gap in the mindfulness-based intervention literature by describing the experiences of educators who completed the Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE) program. Since the proposed research is descriptive in nature, I intend to employ a basic qualitative interpretive approach (Merriam, 2002) to explore how educators involved in CARE cope with the demands of their work after participating in CARE.

The proposed study is informed by research and theory on burnout, occupational stress, and mindfulness. I am approaching this research from an interpretive lens, and my data collection, analysis and interpretations are influenced by feminist theory which emphasizes providing a space for the voices of marginalized persons (Brabeck & Brown, 1997; Prasad, 2005).

**Research Questions**

Four research questions will be addressed in this study. In the research questions, certain terms such as stress, mindfulness, and CARE will be used. I will elaborate on the terms in the *Definition of Terms* section of this chapter and in chapter 2.
Research Question 1: What key themes/main ideas emerge when educators’ discuss their professional roles?

The purpose of this question is to position me so that I am able to hear the voices that educators bring to the table. Underlying this question is my assumption that although each individual is unique, educators have common experiences, and navigating job roles/responsibilities is one of those experiences.

Research Question 2: What do participants experience as stressful in the context of their professional lives?

This question is designed to discover the stories that participants choose to give voice to and document the need for intervention in the words of CARE participants. The assumption underlying this question is that participants in CARE were drawn to CARE for various reasons. Therefore, an important sub-question under this research question will explore participant motivations for being a part of the CARE training.

Research Question 3: How do educators report integrating and applying mindfulness techniques taught in CARE?

The purpose of this question is to identify and describe how participants generalize training content to daily life. More specifically, I hope to investigate how educators involved in CARE cope with the demands of their work after participating in the CARE program.

Research Question 4: How do CARE participants describe and reflect upon their involvement in the program?
This question is designed to capture what participants “value, what they reject, what they learn, [and] how they change” (Hull, 1997) following their involvement in CARE.

Significance of the Study

This research is significant because it is unique in employing an interpretive qualitative approach to examine the impact of a mindfulness-based intervention upon school personnel. Furthermore, the research seeks to privilege the voices of school personnel and to clarify the ways in which participants use CARE techniques to cope with their work. The current research also has the potential to provide descriptive evaluation of the CARE program that can aid the program developers in modifying the program for similar audiences. If school personnel in the present study suggest that the CARE program provides resources for coping with occupational stress, then the current research may have potential applications for training future educators, and providing professional development for current educators. If research suggests that CARE is an empowering tool to aid in handling stress and managing difficult situations and emotions, then larger scale dissemination of the program may be a promising strategy for equipping present and future school personnel with skills to navigate their chosen profession.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of the study include sample representation and researcher bias. My sample will be recruited from Pennsylvania, which limits geographic diversity. It is important to note that transferability, the extent to which the findings are transferable to other settings, and not generalizability is the aim of the current study (Miller-Day, 2004).
Therefore, the findings of the present study will be transferable to school personnel in Pennsylvania and similar settings.

Additionally, I am trained as a school counselor, and I also believe mindfulness practices are both useful and empowering. My training in school counseling as well as my investment in mindfulness-based strategies may influence my perceptions during the data collection and analysis process. I intend to address issues of trustworthiness in the present study by employing strategies, such as exploring disconfirming evidence, practicing reflexivity, and member checking, to increase both the dependability and quality of the research. In chapter three, I will discuss these techniques to ensure trustworthiness in further detail.

**Definition of Terms**

**School Personnel.** For the purposes of the present research, the following school-based professionals will be included under the term school personnel: teachers, school counselors, school psychologists, social workers, school nurses, and principals/administrators.

**Stress.** The transactional model of stress and coping suggests that stress occurs when perceived demands exceed perceived resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). After evaluating a potentially stressful situation, individuals will utilize available resources to adapt to the stress to the best of their ability.

**Burnout.** Burnout is a term used to describe the depleted state that persons working in human services experience after prolonged engagement in the helping role (Freudenberger, 1974).
Mindfulness. Shapiro and Carlson (2009) posit that mindfulness, also called mindful practice is “the conscious development of skills such as a greater ability to direct and sustain attention, less reactivity, greater discernment and compassion, and enhanced capacity to recognize and disidentify from one’s concept of self” (Shapiro & Carlson, p. 8).

Mindfulness-Based Intervention (MBI). Psychoeducational programs designed to reduce stress and illness (Gross, 2009). These intervention programs focus on teaching participants mindfulness practices and supporting the development of skills to enhance present-centered attention and awareness (Bishop et al., 2004).

Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE). The CARE program is a mindfulness-based intervention designed to increase the coping resources of school personnel and address teacher stress and burnout (Jennings, 2011). CARE is an Institute of Educational Sciences funded intervention undergoing pilot testing through the Pennsylvania State University which provides training in mindfulness meditation, stress management, and self-care practices (Jennings).
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Retention of school personnel may depend on them developing skills to cope with their work, and I will present a promising mindfulness-based approach that has significant potential. Before that, I examine the sources of stress and burnout among school personnel, and briefly discuss how this impacts public schools. Next, I explore possible options to address stress/burnout in the school environment, paying particular attention to mindfulness-based approaches. Finally, I introduce Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education™ (CARE) and describe how this intervention may serve to support and empower the school personnel who have direct, daily contact with students.

For the purposes of the present research, the following school-based professionals will be included under the term school personnel: teachers, school counselors, school psychologists, social workers, school nurses, and principals/administrators. I would like to note that elementary and secondary teachers, special education, classroom teachers and subject-specific teachers are included under the broader category of teachers.

School Personnel, Stress, and Burnout

Stress

Stress occurs when perceived demands exceed perceived resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). According to the transactional model of stress and coping, individuals engage in two chains of evaluative thinking. First, they determine whether the situation is stressful or not stressful, and second, they identify resources available to cope with the situation. After evaluating the potentially stressful situation, individuals will utilize available resources to adapt to the stress to the best of their ability. There are a variety of
stressors school personnel encounter, and those stressors tend to relate job expectations as well as emotional and interpersonal demands.

The emotional engagement required of school personnel can take a toll on professional effectiveness. Kahn (2005) noted that “caring for others, in its various manifestations, places various forms of emotional, physical and mental strain on people. It is exhausting to be constantly present for others, taking them in and helping them with their often difficult tasks of healing, growing, and learning” (p.21). While there is some diversity in job roles and responsibilities among school personnel, all school personnel are required to interact regularly with a large number of children, some of whom have significant academic, behavioral, learning, and/or mental health issues. Regardless of one’s professional role and responsibility in a school, one is likely to (a) interact with students exposed to trauma, (b) make ethically laden decisions in isolation with little or no reflection time, and (c) be accessed frequently by children and families with significant needs and limited resources.

Teachers report that occupational stressors include: amount of paperwork, too many demands/work overload, and issues with class size/caseload (Kyriacou, 2001; Plash & Pitrowski, 2006). The following additional items have been identified as sources of teacher stress (a) teaching challenging students, (b) managing the classroom environment, (c) adjusting to changing demands, (d) navigating interpersonal relationships with colleagues and administrators, and (e) dealing with pressures from parents (Friedman, 2000; Guglielmi & Tatrow, 1998; Kyriacou, 2001; van Dick & Wagner, 2001). Principals report relationships with teachers, relationships with parents, and overload in work responsibilities as occupational stressors (Friedman, 2002). School counselors and
psychologists report their most significant stressors as (a) not having enough time to see students, (b) too much paperwork, (c) too large a caseload, (d) inability to meet demands placed on them by various stakeholders (i.e., parents, students, teachers, administrators), (e) conflict with administration/staff, and (f) student crises (e.g., suicidal ideation, abuse, etc.) (Huberty & Huebner, 1988; Huebner, 1992; Kendrick, Chandler & Hatcher, 1994; Olson & Dilley, 1988; Sears & Navin, 1983).

**Burnout**

Job-related stress has been linked with burnout (Garske, 2007; Huberty & Huebner, 1988; Montgomery & Rupp, 2005; Pierson-Hubeny & Archambault, 1987; Reiner & Hartshorne, 1982). Freudenberger (1974) originally proposed the term burnout to describe “the state of physical and emotional depletion resulting from conditions of work” (p. 160) that volunteers in human services displayed after prolonged engagement in the helping role. The burnout concept has evolved based on theory and research in the human services professions (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

In contemporary research, burnout is conceptualized as having three components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach et al.). Emotional exhaustion refers to the manifestation of physical or emotional symptoms an individual in a draining work situation experiences. School personnel who experience emotional exhaustion generally have devoted a great amount of time and resources to their work, and eventually experience a depletion of those resources. Maslach (2003) suggested that the dimension of emotional exhaustion encapsulates the individual stress experience as explored in other stress research. However, while she indicated that exhaustion is a key component of
burnout, and the most well-known, it alone is not sufficient to explain the phenomenon of burnout; depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment generally occur alongside emotional exhaustion (Maslach, 2003).

Depersonalization describes how an exhausted worker may experience decreasing levels of empathy for the students he or she serves, while growing increasingly detached from them. Both negative feelings and a cynical perspective towards work and one’s students are hallmarks of depersonalization. The final component of burnout, personal accomplishment, measures how workers perceive their job performance and competence (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Personal accomplishment is designed to look at an employee’s feelings of efficacy as they relate to work. Burnout is generally accompanied by feelings of inadequate performance, lower levels of perceived and actual accomplishment, and ultimately, feelings of failure (Maslach, 2003).

Both exhaustion and depersonalization decrease a professional’s effectiveness (Maslach et al., 2001). Furthermore, when school personnel feel fatigued from their work and less invested in the students they work with, it follows that they would accomplish less. This is because they have passed the tipping point at which their perceived demands exceed the available resources. Once demands exceed resources, stress occurs (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), and individuals generally make attempts to cope with that stress. However, when school personnel do not employ productive coping strategies, they are at a heightened risk of burnout (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Tsouloupas et al., 2010).

**Burnout among school personnel.** Previous research has examined burnout among school personnel and connected it with demographic and organizational factors
Burnout is more likely to occur among young, single individuals who are new to a profession, and among those who have intense jobs, limited social supports and feelings that they are unappreciated (Maslach, 2003; Savicki & Colley, 1982). In a study exploring burnout among elementary and secondary teachers, emotional exhaustion predicted teachers’ thoughts of leaving one’s job, seeking training for new occupations, and actually leaving their jobs (Jackson, Schwab, & Schuler, 1986). Forty percent of school counselors surveyed scored in the high range on the emotional exhaustion subscale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory—Educators Survey (MBI-ES; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006).

Research examining burnout among school psychologists has come across similar findings; in a national survey of school psychologists thirty-three percent scored in the high range for emotional exhaustion on the MBI-ES (Huebner, 1992). When school personnel experience stress from task overload and are unable to meet the demands expected of them, it logically follows that their job performance will be negatively impacted (Sears & Navin, 1983; Baggerly & Osborn, 2006). In fact, emotionally drained school personnel “are at risk of becoming cynical and callous” (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, p.492) when they are unable to successfully navigate the demands associated with their professional responsibilities.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that, “chronically difficult job demands, an imbalance between high demands and low resources, and the presence of conflict (whether between people, between role demands, or between important values) are consistently found in situations in which employees experience burnout” (Maslach, 2003,
Thus, the working conditions for school personnel and the nature of their jobs match those same conditions under which professionals are most likely to develop burnout.

**Consequences of stress and burnout.** Kyriacou (2001) suggested that “unpleasant, negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration, and depression” (p. 28) often occur when perceived demands exceed resources available to cope with those demands. Kyriacou (2001) indicated that school personnel cope with stress in some of the following ways: by relaxing outside of work, attempting “to keep problems in perspective,” and discussing problems and feelings with supportive others (p. 30). Unfortunately, not all school personnel are successful in their attempts to cope with occupational stress. Burnout has been linked with thoughts of leaving one’s job, seeking training for new occupations, and actual job leaving (Jackson, Schwab, & Schuler, 1986). Indeed, school personnel reported that both emotional stress and poor emotion management lead to job dissatisfaction and exiting the education profession (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Montgomery & Rupp, 2005). Thus, once emotional exhaustion sets in, school personnel may begin exploring other career opportunities and contemplate leaving the education profession (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

When school personnel feel supported and valued, they likely will pass this support and care along to their students. Conversely, when school personnel are dissatisfied and feel devalued and unattached to schools, they are less likely to invest in children. They are more likely to put in the minimal amount of hours, get their paychecks, and go home; creating the sort of environment where emotional distancing is the norm. Therefore, it seems particularly important to equip school personnel with
concrete strategies designed to help them cope with the unique challenges inherent in schools because this is an essential step in creating schools that foster learning (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). If we want to help student learning and outcomes, we have to support the school personnel who have daily, direct contact with students. By investing in educators, they will be equipped to work more effectively with students and better able to maintain an optimal learning environment. One way to invest in school personnel is by providing them with concrete strategies to regulate their emotions, as inability to regulate one’s emotion in response to classroom stressors may be linked with burnout (Jennings & Greenberg). Mindfulness practices offer a promising approach for investing in school personnel by providing them with tools to cope with stress (Gross, 2009; Mind/Body Medicine, 2002).

**Mindfulness and Managing the School Environment**

Researchers have documented negative consequences connected with stress and burnout among school personnel; therefore, it seems necessary to explore strategies to help school personnel cope with stress. A number of strategies have been put forth to help individuals cope with work-related stressors. Some of these suggestions include engaging in hobbies, physical exercise, journaling, personal therapy, perspective taking/reframing situations, artistic and spiritual activities, and peer supervision/support (Brems, 2000; Butler & Constantine, 2005; Mahoney, 1997). Additionally, the following techniques have been suggested to aid individuals in managing stress and emotions: muscle relaxation, biofeedback, meditation, relaxation, cognitive-behavioral skills, yoga, mindfulness techniques, and induction of positive feelings (Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel, 2008; Garske, 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2003). While there is a menu of
techniques from which school personnel can choose to cope with stress, interventions that connect one or more of these coping strategies in an organized framework may be particularly relevant to school personnel. One promising avenue for managing stress and potentially alleviating burnout is mindfulness practice (Gross, 2009).

**Mindfulness**

Kabat-Zinn, (2003) one of the pioneers of mindfulness in the United States, described mindfulness as “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding experience moment by moment” (p. 145). He further described mindfulness as a compassionate curiosity and a willingness to be open to whatever unfolds without judging, fixing, or changing it. Shapiro and Carlson (2009) elaborate on this, suggesting that “knowing the state of your mind in this moment, without judging it, evaluating it, thinking about it, or trying to change it, is mindfulness. Knowing your emotional state in the moment—joy, sadness, fear—is mindfulness” (p.5).

Mindfulness practice involves being awake, paying attention, and showing up for whatever life brings. Teachers of this practice posit that we have the ability to change our relationship to our consciousness, and that shifting our relationship with our mental consciousness can profoundly impact our daily lives. Kabat-Zinn (2006) suggested that mindfulness involves tapping into all of our senses, including our sixth sense of mind. Through this sense of mind we can develop insightful meta-awareness of human nature and suffering, and an ability to perceive thoughts, emotions, and experiences more clearly. Mindfulness practice provides a medium through which we learn to watch ourselves in a caring, yet detached manner and see that as humans we get caught up in
habitual thought patterns, emotional reactivity, and repetitive behaviors. However, mindfulness practice pushes us a step beyond detached observation; at the heart of the practice is balancing awareness of the mind’s activity with an attitude of gentle curiosity and kindness.

Kabat-Zinn (1990) provided some additional detail in explicating mindfulness by describing the seven attitudinal tenets of mindfulness: non-judging, patience, beginner’s mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go.

- Non-judging entails watching the action of the mind in the manner of an impartial witness without being pulled by thoughts or feelings.
- Patience is “to be completely open at each moment, accepting it in its fullness, knowing that, like the butterfly, things unfold in their own time” (Kabat-Zinn, p. 35).
- Beginner’s mind is a way to approach our moment-to-moment experiences as if we are seeing them for the first time, with a curiosity to discover each moment anew.
- Trust involves having confidence in your self and a quiet knowing that your intuition will guide you.
- Non-striving is paying attention without seeking to achieve a goal, but with a radical present-ness. Further, it consists of recognizing that our life is a string of present moments, and dwelling on the past or planning for the future pull us away from what is.
- Acceptance is embracing the reality of the present moment and expressing a “willingness to see things as they are” (Kabat-Zinn, p. 39).
• Letting go can be described as non-attachment to our thoughts and feelings, and a conscious effort to release all of the noise of our thoughts and emotions.

Shapiro and Carlson (2009) go a step beyond Kabat-Zinn (2003) to differentiate between what they call “big M mindfulness” and “little m mindfulness.” They describe big M mindfulness or mindful awareness as “an abiding presence or awareness, a deep knowing that manifests as freedom of mind (e.g., freedom from reflexive conditioning and delusion)” (p. 4). This notion of mindful awareness fits with Kabat-Zinn’s description of mindfulness above, which has a feeling of expansiveness to it and focuses on quality of mind and presence. Shapiro and Carlson describe small m mindfulness, or mindful practice as “the systematic practice of intentionally attending in an open, caring, and discerning way” (p. 4) and specify that “mindful practice refers to the conscious development of skills such as a greater ability to direct and sustain attention, less reactivity, greater discernment and compassion, and enhanced capacity to recognize and disidentify from one’s concept of self” (p. 8). Small m mindfulness then includes the strategies through which attention is focused and emotion is regulated.

Bishop et al. (2004) synthesized theory and research to develop a definition of mindfulness that features two components: self-regulation of attention, and adoption of an orientation to one’s experience that is open and curious. The first component, ability to regulate attention, involves sustained attention (keeping one’s attention in one place over a period of time), attention switching (the ability to shift one’s focus from one object of awareness to another), and the “inhibition of elaborative processing” (ruminative thinking) (Bishop et al., p.233). The second component of mindfulness, orientation to experience, is characterized as maintaining an attitude of openness, curiosity and
acceptance to the thoughts, feelings and sensations that come into one’s field of awareness (Bishop et al.)

**Situating mindfulness.** Modern-day conceptualizations of mindfulness sprang from Buddhist teachings that are over 2500 years old (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009). However, many Western scholars utilize the work of Benson and Kabat-Zinn to situate secular mindfulness in the West. Mindfulness in the United States is built upon the foundational work of Herbert Benson, a cardiologist at Harvard who was one of the first medical professionals in the United States to recognize that environmental stressors impact our health and well-being (1975). In the late 1960s, Benson began collaborating with a physiologist, Keith Wallace, to explore the impact of mental focusing techniques on physiological processes. His collaborative research with Wallace and practitioners of transcendental meditation resulted in the release of *The Relaxation Response* in 1975. Benson (1975) posits that meditative techniques (e.g., tai chi, yoga, diaphragmatic breathing, transcendental meditation, etc.) elicit the relaxation response, which includes slowing brain waves, the rate of breathing, and heart rate.

Using Benson’s work as a platform, Kabat-Zinn founded the University of Massachusetts Stress Reduction Clinic in 1979 as interest in the relaxation response gained momentum in the United States. Like Benson, he noticed that there were many people experiencing illness, disease, and chronic pain who were not responding to standard medical treatment and whose needs were not being met by the health care system. Despite completing recommended treatments, many patients still experienced significant limitations stemming from a variety of chronic conditions. Initially, the stress reduction clinic was developed to see if behavioral practices could empower clients with
the ability to do something for themselves as an adjunct to their medical treatment (Kabat-Zinn 1990, 2006).

**Mindfulness-based Interventions**

Mindfulness-based interventions provide a potential way to help re-establish the connection between body and mind. They are designed to bring awareness to the notion of lifestyle as one of the key determinants of health, and they pay particular attention to stress management practices (Mind/Body Medicine, 2002). Mindfulness-based interventions are a promising option providing some sense of agency in challenging work environments and for helping individuals cope with environmental stressors. Mindfulness-based interventions are broadly designed to teach participants how to disidentify with thoughts and emotions and focus their attention.

Research suggests that byproducts of regular mindfulness practice are an increased ability to regulate emotion and decreases in self-focused rumination (Goldin, 2009). Mindfulness-based interventions have been utilized with a variety of clinical and non-clinical populations, including persons experiencing substance abuse, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety disorders, depression, obesity, binge eating, chronic pain, high levels of stress, various types of cancer, psoriasis, and stress-activated health conditions (Kabat-Zinn 1990, 2003; Mace, 2008). Research across samples suggests that mindfulness-based interventions are generally associated with reductions in stress reactivity, pain, negative affect, anxiety, and depressive symptoms, as well as increases in acceptance and openness (Baer, 2003; Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004; Kabat-Zinn, 2003). While mindfulness-based interventions were originally developed for clinical populations, they have been researched and applied with many non-clinical
samples, including teachers, counselors, and college students (Astin, 1997; Jennings, Snowberg, Coccia, & Greenberg, in press; Shapiro, Brown, & Biegel, 2007).

The use of interviews and focus groups has shed light on how participants enrolled in mindfulness-based intervention programs and employing mindfulness practices are impacted by engaging in those practices. Counselors and educators who report engaging in mindfulness practice regularly indicated that their mindfulness practice led them to engage in more intentional living and also increased their feelings of gratitude and connectedness with others (Rothraupt & Morgan, 2007). One of the processes inherent in cultivating mindfulness that participants perceived as important was their tendency to slow down and practice patience. Other themes that have emerged through qualitative exploration of mindfulness interventions include changes in thought patterns and one’s relationship to one’s thought patterns, the ability to observe difficult feelings without judging or avoiding them, and an increased awareness of the body and mind-body interactions (Griffiths, Camic, & Hutton, 2009; Winship, 2007).

Mindfulness-based stress reduction. Kabat-Zinn (1990) developed mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), which is the most well-researched and widely practiced mindfulness-based intervention program in the United States. MBSR is an eight-week course developed at the University of Massachusetts Stress Reduction Clinic, and offered throughout the world. The course is designed to introduce participants to both formal and informal mindfulness practice through eight 2.5 hour class meetings and a day of silent meditation. Formal mindfulness practices of the MBSR program include sitting meditations, movement-oriented meditations, and group dialogue. Sitting meditations may focus on awareness of breathing, body sensations, thoughts, or
sounds. Movement-oriented meditations included in the MBSR curriculum include walking meditation and gentle hatha yoga. The MBSR group instructor guides students through sitting meditations, movement-oriented meditations, and group reflections to orient them to the practice of being present. The teacher plays a particularly important role of modeling mindfulness and establishing an environment of nonjudgment and openness.

Informal practices introduced in MBSR include mindful engagement in daily activities (i.e., paying attention while engaging in the tasks of daily living such as eating, cleaning, and driving) and contemplative activities (e.g., reflecting on poems, aesthetic experiences, pausing) (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Mace, 2008). Group facilitators incorporate poetry, quotes, and readings from a variety of sources (e.g., Thich Nhat Hanh, Pema Chodron, Rumi, Mary Oliver, Oriah Mountain Dreamer, etc.) to remind participants that they already have everything they need and that the greatest moment to live is this moment. A final key component of MBSR is collaborative learning and dialogue, which enables group participants to process their experiences collectively.

While MBSR is considered by many practitioners to be the mother of Western mindfulness, many mindfulness-based interventions (e.g., Dialectical Behavior Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy) have sprung from the growing interest in mindfulness. Literature across helping disciplines, such as psychology, counseling, behavioral medicine, and nursing indicates that mindfulness training has been utilized as a form of stress inoculation or prevention to help prepare professionals for the stress inherent in their work (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009).
Applications of mindfulness-based interventions. Mindfulness-based interventions have been explored using both quantitative and qualitative methodology. Astin (1997) used a wait-list control research design to explore how participation in an eight week MBSR reduction program impacts psychological symptoms. Astin reported that participants showed significant reduction in overall psychological symptoms, as well as reductions in a number of subscales examined, including depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive, and interpersonal sensitivity.

Shapiro, Brown, and Biegel (2007) used a cohort-controlled research design to examine the effects of MBSR on counselors in training, and to examine whether increased mindfulness connected with positive mental health outcomes. They report that the MBSR intervention group reported significant decreases in negative affect, anxiety (both state and trait), perceived stress, and rumination, as well as significant increases in positive affect and self-compassion. Shapiro et al. suggested that MBSR may “enhance the ability to regulate emotional states” (p. 111) and they suggested that it could be particularly useful for beginning helping professionals to “inoculate [them]…against the stress of their new demanding profession” (p.113).

Schure, Christopher, and Christopher (2008) adapted MBSR to fit a semester-long class format for Masters level counselors-in-training. Their adapted class included mindfulness, yoga and meditation, all of which are parts of MBSR. However, they added both a qigong component and readings drawn from relevant subjects including behavioral medicine and psychology. Schure et al. asked students to participate in an end of semester journaling activity. They used content analysis to identify themes that emerged in students’ reflections. Students reported physical changes, emotional changes,
attitudinal changes, interpersonal changes, and increased spiritual awareness resulting from course participation. Participants also reported that as a result of their involvement in the course, they developed increased comfort with silence, a greater ability to center and stay present with clients, and a shift in how they view the counseling process.

**Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE)**

Jennings et al. (2011) point out that building capacity of school personnel is a crucial piece of improving conditions in schools that has generally been neglected in policy initiatives and directives for school reform. Therefore, Jennings and colleagues developed the Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education™ (CARE) program because they believed that advancing the work of schools inherently involves paying attention to the development of school personnel. CARE is an Institute of Educational Sciences funded intervention undergoing pilot testing through the Pennsylvania State University which provides training in mindfulness meditation, stress management, and self-care practices. However, CARE is unique because the scope of skills delivered through the CARE program goes beyond the scope of published mindfulness/stress management trainings. In addition to teaching participants mindfulness, CARE supports teachers by honoring their commitment to the profession and works with them to cultivate their skills in emotion regulation and total empathic presence and listening (Jennings et al., 2011).

Jennings (2011) posited that the skills and support provided through the CARE program are vital to sustaining educators’ careers and preventing burnout. The CARE program is built on the notion that school personnel need to be equipped with tools and strategies that facilitate the development of a school climate that is conducive to learning.
By teaching school personnel skills to manage their stress, we are equipping them to be better prepared in managing the emotional landscapes of their own classrooms, offices, teaching teams, and caseloads (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

The backbone of the CARE program is four days of training in emotion skills regulation, mindfulness/stress management practices, and caring and listening practices (Jennings et al., 2011). During the training, content is delivered through lecture, small group discussions, dyadic interactions, and experiential activities. In addition to training, the CARE program provides participants with telephone consultation session between training dates to assist participants in integrating CARE practices into professional practice.

Mindfulness practices taught in the CARE program are quite similar to those employed in MBSR. However, two particularly unique components, emotion skills instruction and caring and listening practices are particularly relevant to school personnel. Jennings et al. (2011) described emotion skills instruction in the following manner:

This [emotion skills instruction] involves a combination of didactic instruction and experiential activities (e.g., reflective practices and role-plays) to support teachers’ recognition of emotional states and their exploration of their “emotional landscape” –their habitual emotional patterns. They also practice self-induction of positive emotions to promote resilience and help reappraise emotionally provocative situations (p.38).

Therefore, instruction in both the neuroscience of emotion and emotional skills addresses emotional rumination, which Roger and Hudson (1995) suggested plays a significant role in stress. This segment of the training normalizes emotional responses by grounding
them in neuroscience, while also presenting school personnel with strategies designed to help increase their control over emotional reactivity. Jennings et al. (2011) describe the final component of CARE as follows:

The third and final component of CARE training consists of caring and listening practice. Caring practice involves silent reflection focused on generating feelings of care for self and others by mentally offering well-being, happiness and peace - first to oneself, then to a loved one, then to a neutral colleague or acquaintance, and finally to a person who one finds challenging, such as a difficult student, parent or colleague. Practiced over time this activity produces increases in daily experiences of positive emotions and decreased illness and depressive symptoms. Mindful listening exercises develop the skill to simply listen to another and notice (without acting upon) emotional reactions such as urges to interrupt, offer advice or judge (p.39).

CARE goes beyond other mindfulness-based interventions and is designed to specifically address the occupational challenges unique to school personnel. Since the CARE program is innovatively tailored for school personnel, research seeking to give voice to those program participants may offer unique feedback for the program developers and descriptive, textual data providing insight into how the program is impacting participants.

**Summary**

The current research is designed to privilege the voices of educators who experience CARE and to clarify the ways in which participants use CARE techniques to cope with their work. Focusing on individual participants’ experiences of the CARE
program, as well as their contextual experiences of coping with stress may provide unique insight into how school personnel utilize mindfulness strategies to navigate the challenges of their professional lives. I believe that developing a more in-depth understanding of participants’ experiences of the CARE training could shed light on how school personnel learn, practice, and apply mindfulness, emotion regulation and self-care techniques. The proposed qualitative exploration of CARE participants’ experiences provides the opportunity for CARE participants to reflect upon and articulate the ways in which and through which they use and apply mindfulness practices. This study is designed to directly address one of the key topics called for in future mindfulness research: the “how is mindfulness helpful” question (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009). In chapter 3, I further describe the proposed research design as well as my rationale for selecting an interpretive qualitative approach to explore the experiences of persons impacted by the CARE training.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Researcher Lens

Maines (1993) suggests that social scientists are narrators, and that as such we are narrating our own stories as well as those stories of our research participants. My life experiences, and the ways in which I have made sense of those experiences impact this study. In fact, my experiences as a school counselor gave birth to my research interest in how educators navigate stress. In recognition of research as a narrative endeavor, I will share my story of how I became interested in the present research before addressing the details of the current study.

My sheltered life did not prepare me for some of the horrors I saw and heard about as a school counselor. Bearing witness to people’s pain inherently holds some power in it; as a witness to the suffering of another, we have often gained their trust in our ability to listen and not to judge them. Despite the power in bearing witness, I often felt overwhelmed by the helplessness that accompanied bearing witness to another’s pain. As a school counselor I had no idea how to deal with the feelings of helplessness that emerged when I heard stories of my students’ lives, including narratives of death, rape, and abuse. With each one of the stories of grief, loss, or trauma, I felt myself becoming sadder and questioning my ability to provide support when young people’s coping systems were overwhelmed. Some students visited me to share their triumphs, insights, and accomplishments; but something in me could never shake the pain that I felt when children disclosed some of the most challenging elements of their lives to me. And disclose they did, every day of the week, most periods of the day. In my first year as a counselor, I saw between 33% and 50% of the student population in my office, primarily
through self and teacher referrals, and I got so tired. I became so tired, and I did not, at that time, have the skills it took to bear witness to the pain students shared. My concern and care led me to thinking about my students beyond the contract day. Would [student] be safe at home tonight? Would [student] have a meal outside of school? I was trained in the national model of school counseling, at one of the top ten ranked programs in the country, and yet I felt ill-equipped to deal with the emotional responsibilities of the career I had chosen; this is what fuels my research.

Young people, who want to share knowledge and care deeply about educating our next generation of children, grow up dreaming of being educators who positively impact the communities in which they live; however, aspiring educators do not learn in school how to replenish our emotional reserves. Those emotional reserves are the very core resources of work in the field of education; they are the resources that are not measured by standardized tests and they are not explicitly talked about. I believe that educators deserve to know how to build and restock their emotional reserves, because we cannot assume that educators have learned this lesson elsewhere.

So, it was not until after I emerged from my position as a school counselor and returned to a doctoral program in counseling that I began to see the promise of connecting mindfulness and school counseling. After all, I returned to graduate school to find a way to “do better” the education I had received, and to revise practice in the area of school counselor preparation. With these goals, I serendipitously learned of the CARE program, and connected with Dr. Jennings. My connection with Dr. Jennings at Pennsylvania State University, my own lived experience, and my knowledge of the lived experiences of other school counselors and teachers, affirmed the value, importance and
necessity of the work in which I was engaged. The CARE program is an exciting intervention program that addresses an area of counselor preparation that is currently unaddressed; it also offers the potential to minimize the burnout that is quite common in the field of education.

As a woman who has at times prioritized bearing witness to other people’s pain while neglecting care of myself, I was also drawn to CARE because it provides one potential remedy for addressing the notion of “woman-as-selfless caregiver” (Brabeck & Brown, 1997, p. 27), which is an enduring expectation of women in my family. Therefore, I approached this research, with professional and personal motivations, from an interpretive position. Interpretive research is conducted “to understand social life” and how people make meaning of their lived experiences (Fossey et al., 2002, p. 719). The purpose of the present research was to understand how people understand and make meaning of their involvement in the CARE program.

The interpretive paradigm, also sometimes referred to as constructivist, “maintains that human beings construct their perceptions of the world, that no one perception is ‘right’ or more ‘real’ than another, and that these realities must be seen as wholes rather than divided into discrete variables that are analyzed separately” (Glesne, 2006, p. 7). One of the crucial assumptions undergirding this paradigm is that social reality is constructed by human beings in and through their social interactions, and that human interpretations are shaped by shared meanings and cultural symbols (Glesne). Therefore, interpretivist research is designed to understand phenomena from the vantage point of the participant (Glesne, 2006; Merriam, 2002). More specifically, by using an interpretive approach I will seek to describe how participants make sense of phenomena
and situate meaning-making activity within the broader contexts of participants’ lives. Guided by this paradigm, I will acknowledge that the processes of meaning making are dynamic and change over time (Fossey et al., 2002); therefore, the research design must allow for both responsiveness and adaptability (Patton, 2002). An additional key assumption of the interpretive paradigm that researchers make is that variables are complex, interrelated, and therefore often difficult to measure (Glesne, 2006). Instead of seeking to examine variables in isolation, researchers employing interpretivist approaches generally examine phenomena in their natural contexts without manipulating them (Patton, 2002).

All research approaches are built upon philosophical assumptions regarding ontology, epistemology, and axiology (Baptiste, 2001). Epistemology addresses what we know and how we know it (Baptiste, 2001). In interpretive approaches, knowledge is seen as co-created by researcher and research participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). The interview and texts resulting from the interview are co-constructed by interviewer and interviewee, and arise within a relational context (Kvale & Brinkman). My role in producing knowledge continued throughout the transcription and analysis process, because my values, assumptions and beliefs impact the decisions made in transcription and analysis.

Ontology addresses what is real or the nature of what exists (Baptiste, 2001; Glesne, 2006). The nature of social reality is fluid, and people label and make meaning of situations through their social interactions with others (Fossey et al., 2002). Because people have various vantage points, truth appears differently depending upon where one is standing. Therefore, in the present research what “resonates or feels right” to study
participants is considered to be true (Fossey et al p. 719). My intention is not to check the factual accuracy of each statement a participant makes; instead I assume that participants use language purposefully to communicate about topics of relevance, value or meaning. Here, it is crucial to articulate that multiple realities that may conflict with one another are considered real (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Axiology addresses values and ethics in research (Baptiste, 2001). Research guided by an interpretivist paradigm is considered value-laden; therefore, making my values transparent is one way to I intended to enhance trustworthiness of the research (Glesne, 2006). This transparency allows the reader/reviewer of research the opportunity to evaluate the influence of my values, beliefs and agendas on both the research design and analytic process. Throughout the entire research process I intended to be both personally involved and empathically engaged in the research inquiry (Glesne, 2006). I did not simply focus on learning about the cognitive dimensions of human experience; instead I sought to gain insight into the ways in which feelings are interwoven into human understanding of phenomena (Patton, 2002). Rapport building is central in interpretive research because demonstrating a level of care and interest in participants under study is one way through which the trustworthiness of data can be enhanced (Glesne). Therefore, it was my intention to embody a stance characterized by respectful curiosity and nonjudgment as a way to enhance rapport with research participants (Glesne).

**Research Design**

I employed a basic interpretive qualitative study (Merriam, 2002). A basic interpretive qualitative study focuses on discovery, description, and understanding of a
phenomenon, process or perspective (Merriam, 2002; Miller-Day, 2004). This approach involves collecting data through interviews, observations, focus groups and/or artifacts. Analysis of data focuses on identifying common, reoccurring patterns and/or themes (Merriam). This approach fits with my intention to examine participants’ experiences of the Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE) program. The CARE program is unique, and therefore, the responsive research design approach used allowed a great deal of flexibility so that I could adopt the research design to whatever came up throughout the research process (Patton, 2002).

Given the uniqueness of the CARE program, I conducted exploratory research designed to describe the experiences of persons impacted by the CARE training. I utilized a qualitative interpretive study to examine the CARE program to: (a) address a gap in the literature, (b) fit with the phenomenon of mindfulness, (c) focus on participants’ voices, (d) use textual data to explore embodied experience, and (e) honor my experience with mindfulness. Each of these reasons will be discussed individually in subsequent paragraphs.

First, I have identified a gap in the literature. A review of the mindfulness based intervention (MBI) research indicates that many researchers have looked at the phenomenon using quantitative methods. There has been significant growth in survey instruments that measure mindfulness within a quantitative paradigm; some examples include the Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (KIMS; Baer, Smith & Allen, 2004) and the Five Factor Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ; Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer & Toney, 2006). However, the survey instruments are generally utilized to identify a composite group effect in previous studies.
I, on the other hand, want to illuminate the voices of school personnel, and use language as a medium to communicate about teachers' experiences of mindfulness. While other researchers have utilized qualitative strategies to explore the impact of mindfulness on counselors-in-training and other helping professionals, no one has looked more broadly at school personnel. Additionally, no one has used a qualitative approach to investigate a mindfulness-based intervention that integrates both caring and listening practices and emotion skills training in the unique way that CARE does. Therefore, the proposed study is designed to address this gap.

Second, the nature of the phenomenon under study, mindfulness, lends itself to qualitative exploration. Mindfulness is training in paying attention to what unfolds in the present moment. Kabat-Zinn (2003) defines it as “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding experience moment by moment” (p. 145). The nature of the phenomenon is experiential, process-oriented and difficult to articulate (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009). Interpretive research approaches are well-suited for exploring complex phenomena (Patton, 2002).

Third, an interpretive qualitative design approach honors the voices of program participants. K-12 educators are typically and traditionally middle class women who have been marginalized in the conversation in developing and changing educational policy. Therefore, I think it is important to seek out the voices of people working on the frontlines in schools to find out how they are different (or not) as a result of an intervention. Exploring how educators cope with stress, how they describe the training program, and how they integrate mindfulness techniques taught in CARE will provide an
“in their own words” approach that privileges the educators who have often been overlooked in development of contemporary educational policies and practices. I view the proposed research as an opportunity to advocate for a group of professionals who are often undervalued.

Fourth, mindfulness integrates the body, the senses, the emotions, and relational/social aspects of people (Siegel, 2010). These marks of our humanness are often left out of the equation in crafting recipes for school success. An interpretive qualitative approach provides an avenue for exploring embodied experience, and honoring the whole educator (van manen, 1997; Patton, 2002). A qualitative approach extends beyond cognitive ways of knowing toward embodied holistic ways of knowing that are well-suited for an exploration of the CARE program and other MBI programs.

Fifth, my own experiential involvement with mindfulness guides my selection of an interpretive qualitative research design. I have participated in multiple mindfulness-based intervention courses and established a mindfulness practice, and I do not believe that my own experiences with mindfulness can be fully accounted for through a solely quantitative research methodology. I believe that the strategies and tools shared through MBI have been helpful to me in managing anxiety, stress, and difficult emotions. Therefore, my own experiential involvement in mindfulness practices also informs my design choice.

Largely due to the nature of the phenomenon under study, mindfulness, as well my desire to foreground the voices of educators, I have selected to use a basic interpretive qualitative research approach. These factors layered atop my hope to illuminate a
process-oriented phenomenon made an interpretive qualitative research approach a fitting choice for exploring the experiences of participants in the CARE program.

**Research Questions**

The present study addressed the following research questions:

**Research Question 1**

What key themes/main ideas emerge when educators’ discuss their professional roles? The purpose of this question is to position me so that I am able to hear the voices that educators bring to the table. Underlying this question is my assumption that although each individual is unique, educators have common experiences, and navigating job roles/responsibilities is one of those experiences.

**Research Question 2**

What do participants experience as stressful in the context of their professional lives? This question is designed to discover the stories that participants choose to give voice to and document the need for intervention in the words of CARE participants. The assumption underlying this question is that participants in CARE were drawn to CARE for various reasons.

**Research Question 3**

How do educators report integrating and applying mindfulness techniques taught in CARE? The purpose of this question is to identify and describe how participants generalize training content to daily life. More specifically, I hope to investigate how educators involved in CARE cope with the demands of their work after participating in the CARE program.
Research Question 4

How do CARE participants describe and reflect upon their involvement in the program? This question is designed to capture what participants “value, what they reject, what they learn, [and] how they change” (Hull, 1997) following their involvement in CARE.

Method

Participants

This study was designed to collect qualitative data that would supplement quantitative data that were collected as part of a larger research study. The participant sample in this study was drawn from those participants who received CARE program training 2010-2011. To determine how to draw my sample from the larger pool of CARE participants, I used criterion sampling, which focuses on the selection of information-rich cases based upon some criterion that is deemed to be important in the study (Patton, 2002). Through consultation with Dr. Jennings, Principal Investigator of the larger research study, we determined that the criterion for inclusion in this study was demonstration of positive change following the CARE intervention. This determination was made based on my interest in learning how CARE participants apply what they learned through the training. In order to explore how and why participants apply what they learned in the CARE training, it seemed necessary to select participants who reported some sort of change following the intervention. So, eight educators who participated in the CARE training and demonstrated positive change following the intervention were included in the present study. All participants
Through consultation with Dr. Jennings, we determined that positive change could be operationalized by computing z scores for each CARE participant on a battery of measures administered prior to and following the CARE intervention in the larger study. A z score provides a way of standardizing raw scores and comparing the scores in standard deviation units (Urdan, 2005). Dr. Jennings shared that her research team found statistically significant effects on five survey measures employed in the larger CARE study, and suggested examining how participants changed on these five measures. Through dialogue we decided that looking at those five measures seemed to be a fitting criterion by which to measure change. The measures included the Time Urgency Scale: General Hurry (Landy, Rastegary, Thayer, & Colvin, 1991), the Maslach Burnout Inventory for Educators: Personal Accomplishment (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996), the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire: Reappraisal (Gross & John, 2003), the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire: Observe (Baer, et al., 2006), and the Daily Physical Symptoms inventory (Larsen & Kasimatis, 1991). Z scores on the five measures listed above were computed for the entire pool of persons who completed CARE 2010-2011. Since I was interested in interviewing the CARE participants who demonstrated the most change following the intervention, I computed z scores for each individual on the each of the five measures recommended by Dr. Jennings (see Appendix A). Then, a composite z score, “change” was computed for each individual; this score averaged the z scores of all 5 measures from pre to post intervention. Those individuals who had positive “change” scores and who consented to being contacted to participate in a follow-up survey about their CARE experience were invited to participate in individual interviews.
Data Collection

Participant-observation of the CARE trainings as well as focus group and individual interviews informed the development of the interview questions (Glesne, 2006; Patton, 2002). My observations of CARE trainings provided a foundation through which I was able to ground participants’ responses to and experiences of the CARE program. In addition, I engaged in two preliminary activities to assist me in determining how I could effectively interview participants. First, I facilitated four focus groups in which participants reflected upon and discussed their reactions to CARE and the ways in which they used what they learned in CARE. Second, I conducted one hour long pilot interview to refine the interview questions in this study. The participant in the pilot interview was a 33 year old White male who completed CARE approximately one year prior to our interview. This participant was located through convenience sampling, as Dr. Jennings identified him as a CARE graduate who was accessible because of his enrollment in graduate study at Pennsylvania State University.

The pilot interview assisted me in refining and contextualizing my interview questions. One piece of feedback the pilot participant provided was that it would be helpful to preface the first question by acknowledging that it is a “really big question.” Based on his feedback, I developed an introduction to the grand tour question (first question) that was designed to help participants understand that the interview would start with broad questions and move to more focused questions as it progressed. The pilot interview also made it clear that I would need to tailor questions as I am sitting with interview participants. This reinforced my commitment to using a semi-structured
interview format where I pair interview questions developed ahead of time with responsive interviewing practices.

Data were collected through the use of semi-structured interviews. All interviews were conducted face-to-face in either the participant’s classroom or at a neutral location near his/her place of employment. Interviews ranged from 40 to 85 minutes in length. The training observations, focus group interviews, and pilot interview served as a road map in helping to shape the questions utilized in the present study. Seven initial questions were used to guide the interviews:

1. Take me through a typical day in your life, discussing both your personal and professional roles and responsibilities in the process. (Have you heard the saying about wearing many hats—where one puts on a hat for each different role he/she assumes. Can you describe to me those different hats you wear throughout your day at school?)

2. Now that you have identified those roles and responsibilities in your daily life, can you help me understand what challenges (struggles, tensions) arise in the context of you navigating your day?

3. How is it that you became involved in the work that you do?

4. So, I’m curious…have you made changes in the way you do things, in navigating your day or in your work setting following the CARE training?

   4a. (Yes) Tell me about the changes you have made following the CARE training.

   4b. (No) Help me understand the barriers that you have encountered that keep you
5. Is there a recent example of a challenging work situation where you’ve applied a CARE skill?

6. If CARE were to be offered again, how would you describe it to one of your co-workers?

7. How do you do what you do and stay sane?

Follow up questions were used to increase depth of participant responses and clarify responses (Appendix C clarifies how each interview question connects with my research questions).

**Data Analysis**

Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. I analyzed transcripts and audio recordings from individual interviews using thematic analysis which involves “identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). The purpose of this particular thematic analysis is to describe the data set using a primarily inductive approach, in which themes are developed without attempting to fit them into a predetermined framework (Braun & Clarke). That is, the data collected rather than existing theories about mindfulness, stress, and stress reduction were employed to develop data categories. In staying close to the data, I employed more of a semantic analytic approach in which I focused on visible explicit meanings contained in transcripts. This choice was made because of the focus on describing participants’ experiences, and a perception that staying close to those experiences provides the most relevant feedback for CARE program evaluation and refinement.

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that thematic analysis consists of six phases: (1) familiarizing yourself with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes,
(4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. While I utilized Braun and Clarke’s phases identified in thematic analysis, I recognize that there is a moving back and forth between parts of the transcribed text in an iterative, non-linear process. However, I used their template for thematic analysis because it is user-friendly and has been used by other mindfulness researchers in my field (McCollum & Gehart, 2010).

**Phase I: Familiarizing yourself with the data.** First, I familiarized myself with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I listened to the audio recording of the transcribed data because I sent all interview recordings to a professional transcription service. Therefore, I read carefully through each transcript while listening to the corresponding recorded interview to verify that each interview was transcribed verbatim. When I found any discrepancies between a transcribed interview and the corresponding audio recording, I adjusted the written transcript to more accurately reflect the interviewee’s statements. Upon completion of listening to each audio recorded interview, I composed a memo in which I noted my preliminary thoughts, the key ideas I heard within that interview, and noted my questions and ideas that developed throughout listening to each interview. In my initial reading and re-reading of the transcripts, I noticed that the instances in which participants used stories to illustrate how they applied CARE were much more engaging and descriptive than their non-contextualized (e.g., “I think breathing helped me) responses.

As an additional step in familiarizing myself with the data, I composed mini-case studies for each one of the interview participants. In the mini-case studies, I included the interviewee’s demographics, described the participant’s family life, work responsibilities
and general sentiments about his/her responsibilities, and his/her reactions to CARE. In addition, I also summarized the interviewee’s work-related frustrations and sources of support. In the process of composing the mini-case studies and reflective memos, I highlighted participant comments referencing the CARE program, and realized this action moved me into the second phase of analysis.

**Phase II: Generating initial codes.** The second phase in thematic analysis is generating codes to begin making sense of the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A code is a tag or label assigned to a chunk of data featuring a “constellation of words or statements that relate to the same central meaning” (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004 p. 106; DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch, 2011). This chunk of data may involve a phrase, sentence or paragraph that connects with the phenomenon under investigation (Graneheim & Lundman). A code can be developed from existing theory or ideas (a priori, or theory-driven codes) or they can come directly from the raw interview data (data-driven codes) (Ryan & Bernard, 2003; Kvale & Brinkman, date). The current study focuses primarily upon developing data-driven codes, and attention to letting the data drive code development is documented throughout phase II of analysis.

My first pass of coding through the entire data set was focused on coding interview content with attention given to content addressing the research questions. I did not develop any a priori codes since the current research was focused on letting the data drive the analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009); instead, I chose to develop code names as I came across them within the data set. Therefore, as I went through the interviews, more codes developed, such that there were fewer codes
developed after I finished coding the first interview (11 codes) as opposed to when I had completed coding the eighth interview.

For the first pass of coding, I used a printed copy of each interview transcript. On the interview transcript, I highlighted and tagged segments of text that I found interesting and/or relevant to the research questions. Due to the focus on letting the data drive my findings, I used placeholder labels to sort my codes (i.e., waking up, teaching tensions, etc.). Some of these labels became code names as I saw them across interviews, whereas other labels dropped out as more finely tuned code names developed as I made my way through the entire data set. For example, in the first coded interview I used the labels “workload/responsibilities” and “professional roles”; however, both of these labels dropped out as I coded more interviews and determined that these labels were not quite as sharp as I wanted my codes to be.

Upon completing manual coding of each transcript with highlighters and colored pens, I transferred my coded material to electronic documents. To do this, I cut and pasted coded segments of text into electronic word documents sorted by code. At this point, I had over 30 separate documents labeled by code (e.g., “self-care/balance” and “challenges/frustrations”) with the corresponding coded material pasted into the matching document. At this phase of analysis, participants’ statements may have been coded for more than one code. During this process, I did my best to retain the spirit of the original statement by including not just the individual unit of meaning, but the context that helped situate it within the data.

Throughout the coding of the eighth interview, I developed a codebook, which “functions as a frame or boundary that the analyst constructs in order to systematically
map the informational terrain of the text” (MacQueen, McLellan, Kay & Milstein, 1998, p. 33). In the codebook, I listed the name of each code, provided a definition of that code and included an example of material coded in that fashion (see Appendix D). I waited to develop the codebook until I had made a complete pass through my data to fit with my idea of having data-driven analysis. The development of the codebook at this juncture enabled me to clearly demarcate the codes and identify how they overlapped with or were distinct from other codes (MacQueen et al., 1998). It also provided an accuracy check—so I could go back through the data once the codebook was established to ensure that the way in which meaning units were coded was consistent with the codebook.

Once I made one pass for coding through all the data and developed the codebook, I made a second pass through the data with the intention of coding all interviews (1) for all codes that had developed through the first pass of coding (2) to code for emergent content that was not related to the research questions. This second pass of coding proceeded in a fashion very similar to the first pass of coding in that I used a freshly printed copy of each interview transcript. On the interview transcript, I highlighted and tagged segments of text that I found interesting and/or relevant to the research questions. However, in this second pass I utilized the data-driven codes to tag text. During my second pass of coding I developed electronic tables in which I pasted coded segments of text and identified both the description assigned to the coded text as well as my interpretation of the coded text. In these tables, I left space for moving toward categories, or what Braun and Clarke label candidate themes. Construction of these analysis tables led me into the next phase of data analysis.
**Phase III: Searching for categories.** The previous phase of analysis focused on reducing data into small meaning units; in contrast, this phase of analysis shifts toward synthesizing data. While Braun and Clarke (2006) title this phase of analysis searching for themes, I have amended their language to better fit with my committee’s preferences; my committee suggested I clearly differentiate between the terms category and theme in alignment with Graneheim and Lundman (2004). Graneheim and Lundman suggest that “a category refers mainly to a descriptive level of content and can thus be seen as an expression of the manifest content of the text” (p. 107). Content in a category identifies codes that share a commonality, answers the ‘what’ question, and enables researchers to “structure large interview texts into a few tables and figures” (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p. 203; Krippendorf, 1980). Categories often include subcategories and sub-subcategories to further describe and organize text (Graneheim & Lundman). My committee encouraged me to utilize the term categories for the initial phases of data synthesis and to delay the use of the term theme until phase V of data analysis.

Once initial grouping of data was complete, I sorted the codes into categories. At this phase of analysis, data should generally fit into only one category and categories should be mutually exclusive (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). I did not throw any data out at this phase; however, I became aware of how I had coded some meaning units under multiple codes, and in the process of developing categories I was able to collapse overlapping codes into broader categories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). (For example, the two codes time at home and weekends were collapsed into one category because both of them dealt with how participants spent time outside of school.) To move me into and through this stage of data analysis, I adapted a content analysis table template developed
by Graneheim and Lundman that included space for the interview segment coded, brief meaning of the coded segment, interpretation of that segment, subcategories, and categories. See Appendix E for a sample of the table I used to categorize data.

**Phase IV: Reviewing categories.** In phase four, I examined categories and the data placed underneath those categories to see if they formed coherent patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Then, I re-read the data set to figure out whether the generated categories accurately reflected the data set, and whether additional data needed to be coded. After re-reading the data set, and coding a few extra statements, I did some rearranging and re-organizing of my established categories and codes.

**Phase V: Defining and naming themes.** During this phase of analysis, I defined and named the themes and specified what was interesting about each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme is defined as a “thread of underlying meaning” (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p. 107) that cuts across categories with “recurring regularity” (Polit & Hungler, 1999, as cited by Graneheim & Lundman). Themes unify and summarize patterns in the data, and provide a succinct way of representing those patterns. I worked back and forth between the themes generated, the codes and categories relating to those themes, and the transcribed interviews to help me determine what each theme captured. This phase of analysis was both exciting and challenging. After arranging and rearranging the data it in multiple ways, I decided on naming and defining three themes.

**Phase VI: Producing the report.** The data analysis process concluded with a written report in which the themes and categories were articulated and described “in a way which convinces the reader of the merit and validity of analysis” (Braun & Clarke,
In this phase, I connected the themes back to the research questions. This sixth and final phase of thematic analysis is presented in chapter 4.

**Researcher Focus**

Throughout the analytic process, my intention was to allow the data to represent the voices of participants, and not lose the voices of individuals in the analysis process. I sought to incorporate my voice in reporting the findings. Since the researcher is the instrument in qualitative research, I believe it is naïve and misrepresentative to obscure my role in collecting and analyzing the data; therefore, I believe it is essential for my voice to come through in reporting the findings. Thus, my hope was to balance my voice with the voices of the participants to create a representation of the findings that honors each person’s role in constructing the data.

**Trustworthiness**

Validity has been defined in various ways by qualitative researchers. Maxwell (2005) suggests that validity is the final key component of research design, and essentially refers to “correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account” (106). Eisenhart and Howe (1992) define validity as “trustworthiness of inferences drawn from data” (p. 644). Lincoln and Guba (1986, as cited by Patton 2002, p.546) match quantitative terms associated with research quality and rigor with qualitative terms. While validity and reliability are terms used to measure research quality in quantitative research, trustworthiness is the comparable umbrella term that is used to encapsulate research quality and rigor in qualitative research. Therefore, the term “internal validity” is replaced with “credibility,” “external validity” is replaced
with “transferability,” reliability” is replaced by “dependability,” and objectivity is replaced with “confirmability” (Anfara, Brown & Mangione, 2002).

Creswell and Miller (2000) suggest that the strategies a researcher employs to demonstrate validity ought to be guided by “the lens researchers choose to validate their studies and researchers’ paradigm assumptions” (p. 124). The proposed research is grounded within an interpretivist paradigm. Given this paradigm, Creswell and Miller indicate that disconfirming evidence and thick description are two key procedures to address validity, or trustworthiness. Based on multiple perspectives of qualitative researchers, I used the following strategies to enhance trustworthiness of my research: (a) disconfirming evidence, (b) reflexivity, (c) purposive sampling, and (d) triangulation of theories.

First, I looked for disconfirming or negative cases. Disconfirming evidence involves going back through the data once themes have emerged through data analysis, and looking for evidence that is inconsistent with the descriptions and themes (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This strategy is designed to enhance credibility.

Second, I practiced reflexivity throughout the research process. Reflexivity is an awareness of the researcher’s biases, beliefs, and assumptions (Glesne, 2006; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Others suggest that reflexivity is awareness that the researcher has an impact on the quality and process of the research (Fylan, 2005; Maxwell, 2005). Reason (1988 as cited in Maxwell) captures both definitions in his description of critical subjectivity:
a quality of awareness in which we do not suppress our primary experience; nor
do we allow ourselves to be swept away and overwhelmed by it; rather we raise it
to consciousness and use it as part of the inquiry process” (p.12).

I demonstrated reflexivity by keeping a self-reflective journal throughout the research
process and engaging in consultation with a research team and colleagues (Morrow,
2005). In my memos, all decisions and rationale for those decisions were recorded; this
includes decisions about research process (e.g., site selection, participant selection) and
research methods used (Glesne). See Appendix F for a sample researcher memo.

In addition, I utilized purposeful sampling to ensure that I obtained both an
adequate and appropriate sample. This was discussed in greater detail above when I
proposed the number of participants I hope to interview. A final strategy I used to ensure
trustworthiness was triangulation (Denzin, 1978 as cited in Creswell & Miller, 2002).
Glesne (2006) indicates that “triangulation in order to increase confidence in research
findings may also involve the incorporation of multiple kinds of data sources, multiple
investigators, and multiple theoretical perspectives” (p. 36). I used multiple
perspectives/theories to interpret the data, thus demonstrating how interpretation may
shift when different theories are privileged while others are deemphasized (Johnson,
their data in more than one way, demonstrating that there are multiple plausible
interpretations and that shifting one’s theoretical vantage point can lead to different
explanations.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences of school personnel participating in the CARE program, and to describe the ways they incorporate CARE practices into their lives. Through a series of individual interviews, I documented the experiences of eight CARE participants. Interviews were conducted with seven women and one man ages 29 to 51. Six participants were regular classroom elementary education teachers (grades 2-5) and two participants were secondary education specialist teachers (grades 7-12). Participants in this study had six to 13 years of teaching experience. All participants worked in public schools; five participants worked in a large, urban district, one worked in a midsized suburban district, and two worked in a large suburban district. All participants were Caucasian. Seven of the participants were married and one was single. Participants were assigned pseudonyms to maintain their confidentiality, and will be referred to by those pseudonyms throughout this study.

Excerpts from interviews included in this chapter are generally presented verbatim, with two exceptions. First, statements that involve repetition of words that interfere with readability of results have been eliminated. Second, persons whose names were mentioned in interviews will not be included; instead, their names will be replaced with relationships to the participants to protect the anonymity of those persons not involved in the study. Brackets will be used to clarify the roles of persons to whom participants are referring (e.g., [sister], [work colleague]).

I used thematic analysis to explore the experiences of CARE participants, and will present their experiences in relation to the research questions explored in this study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The research questions were intentionally broad due to the
study’s exploratory design. Each research question, the intent of that research question, and findings corresponding to that question will be presented individually in numerical order.

**Research Question 1:**

What key themes/main ideas emerge when educators discuss their professional roles?

Research question one focused on educators’ experiences regarding their professional roles and responsibilities. Underlying this question is my assumption that although each individual is unique, educators have common experiences, and navigating job roles/responsibilities is one of those experiences. This question was designed to highlight the experiences of participants in the study and to determine what themes cut across the data when educators discuss their work. The themes that were most salient in the current data set all related to coping, or how people navigate stress. Those themes included: (a) having an outlet outside of work, (b) setting limits around work, and (c) navigating balance.

**Theme 1: Having an Outlet Outside of Work**

Each participant in this sample had one or more outlets outside of work. They each found a way to channel their energy into outlets, and these outlets were a source of positive feelings. Participants discussed a range of outlets, including exercise, time spent with family or friends, engaging in hobbies, and having something to look forward to. Participants frequently engaged in these outlets before and/or after school, and on weekends.

*Exercise.* Kasey, Nadia, Emma and Sandy all talked about weaving exercise into their daily routines either before or after work. Nadia wakes up at 4:00 a.m. three days
during the week to exercise and explained why it was important for her to do that; “I feel good because I’m working out and taking care of my body, but also because I have that time to prepare myself for the day before it begins instead of just starting immediately.”

Even though Nadia has to wake up early, she decided that the benefits of exercising in the morning outweigh the costs. While Kasey, Emma, and Sandy also agreed that it was difficult to get to the gym and squeeze exercise into their schedules, they also identified exercise as a source of stress relief and positive feelings.

**Time with family and friends.** Every participant incorporated family, friends, and/or pets into their time away from school. The configurations of people’s families varied; however, there tended to be one or more beings outside of school with which participants were eager to connect. I incorporated pets into this category because several participants described at length how time with their dogs was a crucial part of their time away from school.

**Hobbies.** For several of the participants, hobbies were a relaxing outlet outside of work. Kasey crafts, Emma cooks, Rayleen volunteers, and Elena runs a small business. One of the patterns across the different hobbies was that each participant looked forward to spending time engaging in her hobby, and thoroughly enjoyed it. Elena described her business and how she much she enjoyed it:

> I started a business this summer. It’s a dog business. It’s all natural, homemade, gourmet dog treats with no preservatives, no chemicals, and no dyes. And then we also have dog couture, like dog collar covers and little poop bag dispensers, gift baskets, totally unique and unusual toys and that kinda stuff … I enjoy
baking. I really do. I love to sit in my kitchen and just listen to Pandora and just bake. And I can just zone out. So it’s kinda nice. So it is relaxing.

Elena’s description of her business and the time she devotes to that business illustrate the characteristics that were typical of the ways in which participants discussed their hobbies. They tended to identify their hobby, describe what they really enjoyed, and share a recent story or highlight related to their hobby. It is interesting to note that none of the participants who talked about their hobbies had children.

Something to look forward to. Regardless of what the participant’s specific outlet was, it was something they looked forward to. This category was not discrete from the other categories under this heading; the outlets that many participants looked forward to were time with family and friends and time to engage in their hobbies. For some participants, like Kasey, what she looked forward to was quite simple; “There are certain things like my morning coffee and my Friday night glass of wine and all of those things that just make you happy, finding things that make you happy.” For others, like Gabrielle, the something they looked forward to was time to unwind:

I read, take naps, pet the dogs, watch TV, watch all the TV I didn’t watch during the week because I was in bed. More of those solitary activities that just kind of...I don’t have anything that I have to do or anywhere I have to be. No one’s depending on me for anything and because I’ve so, so many kids here, people here, depend on me for so much every day, that it’s nice to have that freedom of knowing no one’s going to need me right now. No one’s going to need me to drop everything and do anything. I’m not going to have to solve anyone’s problems. I just can be. That’s pretty much what I do.
Across participants, having a way to channel their energy into outlets outside of school was a source of positive feelings and something to which they looked forward.

**Theme 2: Setting Limits around Work**

The majority of participants in this sample set limits around their work. These limits may be imposed at school or during their time at home. However, the limits they set were generally related to: (a) when to take work home, (b) how much work to do at home, (c) how the morning prior to school was spent, (d) how the evening following the contract day was spent, and (e) what work is considered necessary. Some people’s limits were firmer than the limits of others; however, participants in this study tended to draw boundaries around their work.

During the school day, those limits may involve figuring out how to have breaks during the day. Elena described a limit she set for herself during the school day:

For a while there, I was keeping my kids who weren’t doing their homework, which is most of them, I was keeping them during special. But then that’s my prep period. So I didn’t get a break. So I finally just stopped. I said I can’t do it anymore. I need that break, because I don’t get time to get my stuff done and my thoughts and just have downtime [time without kids]. I’m still doing a gazillion things, but I just don’t have to deal with children. And so then I can kinda regroup mentally and then face them again and then face all their problems that come up after special.

Elena decided that keeping her students in class took away from her downtime, and chose to protect that time. She recognized that giving up her prep period added to her stress,
and that the time away from students was important in preparing her to have them return from specials.

Other participants set limits about when to take work home (e.g., never, only around the end of the quarter, or when they were behind). These limits were imposed for peace of mind, to “have a life outside” of school, or because participants were able to delineate their priorities. Emma explained how her ability to prioritize helped create boundaries around her work:

Projects, that type of thing, I don’t make examples, because I want them to be creative. I don’t want them to just do exactly what I did. And the same thing, I know students have different abilities with the artistic. I can let that slide. And I think that’s a lot of it. I know what’s important to me. I do hold them up to those standards, but there are other things that I can let go, and I think that’s one of the biggest things.

These limits were generally self-imposed; however, for Emma and Gabrielle, their schools imposed limits which helped them clarify their own limits. Emma limited the amount of time she was in the building without heat, while Gabrielle figured out how to get all of her work done by 7pm (or earlier), the time when all school personnel are required to leave the building in which she works.

I noticed that it was harder for the participants who did not have children to limit the amount of time they spent at school and the amount of time they spent on work at home. Half of the participants reported spending one to three hours daily in their classrooms after school, and none of these participants had children living in their homes. For the two participants in the study who had young children, it was very clear to them...
that they switched into parent mode after they left the building and that their parental role was the priority. Thus, participants employed a variety of strategies designed to set limits around their work, and these limits were tailored to their particular life circumstances.

**Theme 3: Navigating Balance**

Each participant in this sample discussed the ways in which they navigated balance. Chronologically speaking, this was the last theme I identified, and I believe that is because the ways in which participants discussed “balance” were both diffuse and highly individualized. For participants in this sample, they tended to address balance in relation to personal and professional responsibilities, so much of the data related to the tension that exists between managing time for self and for the rest of one’s responsibilities. Sometimes the process of striving for balance feels difficult or overwhelming. Nadia expressed that she sometimes feels exhausted from running the household and arranging child care for her daughter, which she described as “a whole second job.” Nadia creatively portrayed her feelings about navigating all of her responsibilities in the following statement:

> There really is [a lot involved in running a household] and sometimes it makes me feel insane. It really does. Like what am I doing? Let’s go to Africa and just live on the savannah. You can fight off the lions and I’ll…whatever.

Nadia’s statement nicely illustrates the tension that some participants experience. I do think it is important to note though, that she did end her comment with laughter.

Upon closer examination of the data relating to balance, it became clear that balance was not a static concept. Instead, the participants in this study are engaged in an ongoing dialogical process, whereby they are constantly negotiating and renegotiating
how they spend their time and energy. Decisions about how to direct limited resources and energy are not easy; these decisions are made through practice, through conversation with partners, through self-reflection, and sometimes simply out of necessity. One of the ways that participants in this study cope with the ongoing balancing act is by developing routines, and those routines may relate to walking the dog, going to the gym, leaving school by a certain time, or designating time to be with their partner and/or child. So, the ways in which participants in this study balance their personal and professional responsibilities begin to overlap with the two previously discussed themes of having an outlet and setting limits around work. Aiden illuminates this interplay among themes:

And of course, you try to balance everything, but I would say that that might be one of the reasons why I started cutting back things because I realized my stress level. And I’m starting to not be the same person I was at school, as a teacher, if I don’t take some more time for myself. And even though it’s for my kids, it’s still almost for myself because that’s what’s making me feel better right now. And it might have to do with even losing my mom and stuff because now my family is a little bit more important to me. Not that it wasn’t before, but it’s just it’s a little different.

Aiden’s statement illuminates his process of finding a new balance in response to life’s stressors; he “started cutting back” because of his stress level and how that impacted his ability to be present in his teaching position. His statement also illustrates that evaluating and prioritizing responsibilities is a key part of the ongoing struggle for balance.

Research Question 2:

What do participants experience as stressful in the context of their professional lives?
Research question two focused on the events, situations, and challenges that participants experienced as stressful in their professional lives. This question was designed to discover the stories that participants chose to give voice to and to document the need for intervention in the words of CARE participants. Responses to this question situate individuals in the context of their lives as they identify the stressors unique to them, and also identify the range of stresses that educators involved in this study experience. Findings related to this research question are reported at the categorical level of analysis. This decision was made because a lower level of data abstraction seemed to address the research question in a clear and direct fashion. The majority of participants addressed work-related stressors, so those will be the focus of this section. However, a few participants talked about the stress that arose from the intersection of the personal and professional; therefore, to honor their voices I will conclude this section by reporting these responses.

**Work Stressors**

**Being watched.** One of the experiences that two participants in this study found stressful was their perception of others closely watching and critiquing their actions. Emma brought this concern up throughout her interview. In discussing her struggle to respond effectively to student conflict situations and emotional outbursts, while minimizing loss of instructional time, Emma stated that “no matter what you do, you don’t handle it correctly either, to the victims or some other parents’ point of view.” She mentioned helicopter parents and suggested that several parents do not work outside of the home, and shared multiple examples of the ways in which she receives feedback from parents. Emma’s experiences in a suburban district differ from those of Elena in an urban
district, who focused on administrators paying close attention to whether their students performed proficiently on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment.

Expansion of role. Only one participant, Elena, commented directly about the expansion of her role during her tenure in the profession (10 years). When I asked her what roles she took on at school, she replied,

Oh, we’re their nurse, their mother, their counselor, and their social worker. We clothe them. We feed them. We make sure they do their homework because they don’t do it at home. I’m just wondering what their parents do. We all feel like we do it all. So we don’t have the role we all want, which is just to teach.

It may be helpful to note that Elena served in a leadership position in the school’s union, and that involved listening and responding to the concerns of many different people in her building. Therefore, it is difficult to determine whether her position enabled her to have unique insight into the expansion of a teacher’s role in her district, or whether her perspective had been blurred by her position. However, it is interesting to note that, Elena worked in an elementary school in which 86% of students received free or reduced lunch (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010).

Lack of support. School personnel in this sample experienced stress when they believed they were working hard to do their jobs well, and their colleagues or administrators failed to provide the desired or expected support. Nadia shared an example of feeling unsupported while she was doing her assigned duty of supervising students as they were catching their buses at the end of the school day. Nadia and her friend were the only people who showed up to do after school bus duty during severe winter weather, and a fight broke out between students that attended the neighboring
middle school (not the elementary school in which Nadia works). Nadia explains the lack of support she felt and her accompanying feelings:

it just got to the point where I couldn’t even talk to them for a couple of days because I was so angry because the one day something happened out there and they weren’t there. Like there was a fight between kids and they were standing inside waving to me while I was outside handling the fight by myself.

Elena also expressed concern about how the breakdown in support adds an extra layer of difficulty to her job:

Yeah, and you just do the best you can. But it’s – we just wanna teach, but we’re not getting any support from the administration, from the principals, from downtown, so it falls down on us. And so, I mean – the teachers’ morale is so low that people are giving up, and so then when they give up, it makes it even harder on us who haven’t yet given up, because now we have to try and control their children because they’ve just stopped.

Elena and Nadia experienced the initial frustration of not being supported by colleagues assigned to bus duty (Nadia) and in leadership roles (Elena). They both experienced another layer added atop of their initial frustration; that additional frustration occurred when other people did not do their jobs and there were no consequences for their inaction. As a result of their colleagues evading their job responsibilities, both Elena and Nadia expressed further frustration about doing more than their fair share of work.

**Student-related stressors.** Elena made more contributions to the student-related stressor category than any other participant in this study. In fact, she alone accounted for over half of the data included in this category. Rayleen and Emma each made a comment
about their students; however, frustrations that were student-related were not topics that were major talking points of their interviews. In contrast, Elena talked at length and gave numerous examples of the ways in which students frustrated her and challenged her patience. I will organize this section by sharing examples from Rayleen and Emma, who seemed to retain some sense of empathy toward students, and end with Elena whose statements seemed to illustrate the depersonalization component of educator burnout (Maslach, 2003).

At the time I interviewed Emma, she had been dealing with a bullying situation which had been ongoing and quite complex, so one of her stressors related to the developmental stage of her students. She expressed concern about the challenges that result for school personnel when students are focused on social status and peer relationships, and how responding with sensitivity was sometimes difficult.

With the drama, it really gets into a lot of emotions, and it’s not as easy to separate and work it out. But a couple of these situations lately, we had a bullying situation that has been going on for about three weeks now, and once we got all the stories, there were about eight students that saw these incidents happen, clear as day, and didn’t say anything to any teacher. And even the student that was being victimized was afraid to say anything. So we’ve been dealing with a lot of that.

As a former middle school counselor, I empathized with Emma’s description of the drama that coincides with students in late childhood and early adolescence. My experience in working with elementary and middle school educators is that these frustrations are typical, and that in addressing them school personnel may teeter back and
forth between wanting to respond with sensitivity and wanting to shrug their shoulders, roll their eyes, and walk away in a manner that mirrors the behavior of their students.

Like Emma, Rayleen’s student-related comments seemed typical based on my experience of working with emotional support teachers. She commented, “there’s a lot of gentle redirection and a lot of trying to help the students understand what they need to do, why they need to do it. They're not very self-motivated to do the right thing.” What is interesting about Rayleen’s statement was that there was still some gentleness and compassion laced into it. Sandy too retained threads of compassion for her students throughout her statements; she talked about how their behavior bordered disrespectful and gave one example of when she was addressing a student’s defiance. While she did express frustration, Sandy also expressed warmth, a sense of humor, and compassion towards the circumstances of her students. Elena, on the other hand, seemed to be so taxed by the demands of her work that her student-related statements lacked warmth. She stated, “I have 15 kids out of 30 who are behavior issues – abnormally bad behaviors.” In addition to commenting on the behavior of students in her class, she further elaborated about the poor behavior from students:

I’ve never seen anything like these children. I don’t even know – like most of us, we – the teachers kind of look at each other and go, “Where did they come from?” Some of them were here last year, but a lot of them came because they closed down [school], so they came. They closed off learning support and alt ed – and these are kids who don’t have basic manners, basic common courtesies, like they’ll belch in your face. Or they pass gas in class or they just bump into each
other on accident and flip out. Like they have no people skills. They – it just boggles my mind, it really does.

The texture of Elena’s student-related comment seems much more negative and impersonal than the student-related comments of the remainder of participants in this sample. Elena’s student-related comments had both an edginess and harshness; it is difficult to determine the extent to which the students themselves are the main stressor, and the extent to which the larger context of a challenging work environment contribute to her experiences of stress, and potentially burnout. Elena, as were other school personnel from the same district, also discussed a range of system-related stressors.

**System-related stressors.** I think it is important to note that the participants working in the struggling urban district made the most contributions to this category. I used this categorical label to capture stressors that could be classified to be organizational, institutional or structural in nature. For example, Sandy talked about how her building’s policies around eating breakfast impacted her morning routine with students. However, while Sandy mentioned two different system-related stressors, she did not discuss them at length; therefore, the only participant not working in the large urban district whose system-related stressor seemed to particularly stress her out was Gabrielle. Gabrielle explained that upon completion of the regular school day she did all of her planning, copying, and preparation for the following school day. Due to her district’s desire to conserve energy and cut costs, they recently set a firm time by which all teachers had to be out of the building. Gabrielle explained how distressed she was when she first got the news, “I was stressed out whenever the school told me I had to be out of here by 7:00, I lost it. Like I thought that was ridiculous.” Gabrielle explained
that it took some time for her to adjust to this as the shift initially created a lot of anxiety and interfered with her desire to stay at school until she was ready for the following school day.

As previously stated, the majority of the system-related issues were raised by the participants working in a struggling urban district. One of the participants, Nadia, astutely captured the frustrations of herself and other participants in her district when she explained:

there’s lot of things that go on with the kids, but none of those are the things that I’m really frustrated with. It really comes down to adults not holding up their end of the bargain and then the kids, of course, they’re going to act like that because they know nothing’s going to happen. So that’s where most of my school frustrations lie, is people just don’t do what they say they’re going to do or what they’re supposed to do and I do. I do do what I’m supposed to do. So it’s sometimes too much to even take.

Nadia gave two specific examples of her doing what she is supposed to do, while others did not. The first example involved a concern where she had made several discipline referrals for one student, and was told by the administrator that the student was suspended. However, the student showed up the next day, and Nadia was disappointed that the student was learning that he could behave however he chose and not have consequences for his actions. The second example Nadia provided was of how she will plan to be absent for a day, leave plans for a substitute teacher, request a substitute, and then return to her classroom to find her sub plans untouched and to learn that no
substitute was provided for her classroom. Kasey also weighed in on the issue of teacher absences and how that impacted her:

This morning, we come in and we find out that the person across the hall is not here, there’s not a sub, so we had to split the class and then I had to go to that meeting and then once they used subs for that meeting, then they decided they were going to put one of those subs then back in her room, and then we had to refashion her class back into her room. I don’t feel like it’s things that are necessarily our job to deal with, that’s someone else’s job to deal with.

Multiple participants discussed that they had to help figure out how to deal with an absent grade level teacher, and bring students from the classroom of the absent teacher into their classroom. Elena added that this situation happened on top of their class sizes swelling to 30 students, as well as English Language Learners and students in special education being placed in regular classrooms without support.

There were two particularly disturbing pieces of information Elena shared with me during the course of our interview in regards to how her grade level had been impacted by decreased support. First, she told me that there were multiple students who spoke no English placed in regular classrooms and they received no services for English Language Learners. Second, she expressed relief about getting rid of one of her special education students, a boy with autism, as his violence was no longer a threat to herself or others. Elena talked a lot about both system-related and student-related challenges, and also described this school year as the worst one she has had in 10 years of teaching.

**Teaching vs. managing.** Five of the participants discussed the tension that existed for them between teaching and managing behaviors/student needs. This is one stressor
that required constant navigation on behalf of the participants in the study; on a daily basis they experience situations that arise in which they balance instructional time and student concerns. Sandy suggested that one of the adjustments she frequently makes is taking some time on Monday mornings to put morning work aside and let the students share about what is going on in their lives:

there’s days I just sit on top the table here and chitchat with them. Like forget the morning work. I just sort of let them tell me everything and visit each other because getting anything done in the morning’s not going to happen anyway which is really hard for me.

This adjustment created stress for Sandy because in her previous building, her students did not need direction or supervision to begin their morning work. However, in her current position, Sandy indicated that providing some conversational time was one of the preliminary actions that helped get her current class going in the mornings. Sandy and Gabrielle both shared the idea that sometimes it was necessary to adjust teaching plans or delay teaching in order to respond to an event in the classroom. Gabrielle explained why she often chooses to prioritize student concerns, “Number one, I’m not going to get through to the kids who are involved because they’re focused on something else and second of all, it’s causing a distraction to everybody else.” Even though Gabrielle reports that she typically chooses to be responsive to student concerns, she described this ongoing tension as something that was one of her bigger challenges:

whenever I have something and when I’m trying to be that teacher and educate the students and something comes up that requires the counseling side of things or the emotional piece that something that takes away from the learning and
academic piece, that’s always a challenge. Like when there’s someone starting to break down on me, behavior starting to escalate, anything that takes away from the purpose of learning and teaching. That is a big one…

Particularly with the pressures associated with Pennsylvania System of School Assessment and curricular pacing, determining when to teach and when to stop in order to address emotional or behavioral concerns seemed to be a stressful decision for participants in this sample to make.

**Miscellaneous.** While there were clear patterns, repetition and certain levels of intensity that led to my decision to label the work stressors discussed above as categories, there were also stresses discussed that did not fit neatly into any category. I will simply list the stressors that were identified to give the reader some sense of the range of what participants perceived as stressful. These stressors included: last minute changes throwing the day off, taking students to specials, chaotic classroom environment, difficulty finding something to wear to work, and being in a job position that does not fit. I have chosen not to further discuss this miscellaneous category because it does not seem to cut across individuals; however, if I were presenting data by individuals in a narrative format, this list of concerns would be portrayed differently.

**Work/Life Stressors**

**Home vs. school.** One of the patterns that developed as participants talked about their work was that there was a tension between time spent at home and time spent at school. Gabrielle confessed, “I spend a lot of time here” and that creates tension with her husband. She explained further:

Like my husband, he does coach and stuff so he has stuff going on after school,
but it’s like “why do you spend so much time there?”… so even when he has stuff after school, it might only keep him after school till like 5:00. Whereas for me, that means I’ve only had not even an hour after school. He’s already had two and a half and I’m still, you know, just finishing and just starting my time…He always says that I care more than he does about it [work]. Not that he doesn’t care about his job and what he does, but he doesn’t obsess over it or put the time for it like I do and doesn’t spend the hours and he does a much better job just saying, “Okay, I’m done for today. I’m leaving.” Whereas I have to make sure I have done everything I can do and then some before I can go – that kind of thing.

Gabrielle reported that the amount of time she spent at school was an ongoing stressor in her relationship because her husband had difficulty understanding why she often worked late. While Gabrielle spent a lot of time at school, that was one of the strategies she used to avoid bringing work home. In contrast, Rayleen talked in a different way about how her job interfered with her time at home:

I feel like I’m always in that mode of trying to troubleshoot and problem solve. Which, again, I love doing; I just don’t love doing it 17 hours a day. And so trying to find that balance of like just try to leave work at work, and it feels like that’s impossible because it could honestly go – I could leave my job and work for six or seven hours every night and still feel like I’m not quite caught up.

Rayleen and Gabrielle talked explicitly about balancing time at home and time at school. Other participants talked more about balancing responsibilities and making decisions about how to focus their energies outside of school.
Finances. Two of the participants in this study, Aiden and Kasey, identified finances as a source of stress. Aiden explained that his financial situation was “really, really tight” and that he and his wife were refinancing their home. To address this financial stress, Aiden delivers pizza two nights a week “just to make up some of the financial burden.” Kasey also identified financial stress, but did not provide as much detail as Aiden did; she simply talked about how she had renewed her interest in crafting and was making “stuff for people’s birthdays rather than going out and spending money.”

Research Question 3:

How do educators report integrating and applying mindfulness techniques taught in CARE?

Research question three focused on identifying and describing how participants generalize training content to daily life. What people use, how they use it—that is as unique as the people who participate in CARE. I will discuss each participant individually. However, I noticed a pattern across participants; they generally discussed strategies used, ways in which their mindsets have shifted, and provided examples of how they have integrated their learning at school and/or outside of school. After exploring how each participant integrated and applied their learning from CARE, I will briefly reflect on patterns across the group.

Kasey

For Kasey, the attractive CARE strategies were those strategies that did not require a daily commitment:
Some of the other things that I am doing, I think the reason I am doing them is because they’re not something you have to do every day. So, I’m using them as I need them, but they’re not things that I have to commit to doing every day.

For her, what makes something she learned in CARE feasible is if she can use it without having to create a new habit. When we discussed what Kasey was using from CARE, she began by saying “I would say that I don’t use it the way it should be used. I don’t use it proactively. I definitely use most of the strategies reactively.” However, she went on to clarify, “I let my elevator get too high and then I stop and ground myself and breathe. Or my body is aching and I do a body scan after the fact.” While she reports not using CARE strategies how they are supposed to be used, her explanation illustrates that she has adopted some of the strategies in a way that fits for her. It is interesting to note that the strategies that were most appealing to her were those to which she did not have to make a daily commitment, and she later reported that she uses one strategy, deep breathing “almost on a daily basis” in response to a “very, very challenging student.”

She gave a concrete example of how she uses breathing in response to this particular student:

I really just need to pause so I don’t say things that I shouldn’t say because it’s that bad. Not because he’s saying things to me, it’s what he says to his peers. He has really bad peer relations and so it would be so easy for me to give back to him what he’s giving to his peers that I really have to stop and take a breath and find alternate solutions in my mind of what I can do at that moment with him.

In this example, Kasey demonstrates use of deliberately pausing, taking a deep breath, and brainstorming for solutions despite being emotionally activated by the student’s
behavior. In her discussion about other ways in which she has integrated CARE into her classroom, she reported:

I feel like I assess the situation a little more before reacting… I guess maybe just using all different possible avenues before the lectures, all the things I know that I should do, proximity and all of those things, a light touch with the hand, something like that rather than reacting and giving it time, and giving the student time to settle down or whatever they need before reacting. Before giving a consequence or something like that.

In this example, Kasey demonstrates how her approach to students has shifted with her involvement in CARE. In addition to using CARE techniques during the school day, Kasey uses them outside of school; she described how she uses one technique with her husband:

At home when I get angry, my husband will come in and be like why are you going to sleep? I’m like I’m not going to sleep; I am laying here thinking about my breathing and like my body scan now, eventually some of the times I do, I go from angry to asleep because I’m so exhausted, but I’ve been using that at home as my coping mechanism, when I get angry, I go lay in the bed and I do a body scan and normally after that I lay there a little longer and think about what I need to say or what I need to do, and then we’re pretty good about not holding onto anything, so that helps me think it all through quickly, so we can get on with whatever is the problem.

For me, the use of CARE strategies outside of school seems to be a significant marker of the program’s impact. My interview questions focused on how participants have applied
CARE practices at school, so when Kasey offered up her example of how she uses CARE with her husband, I saw that as evidence that she has generalized her learning from CARE and is using it in multiple locations.

**Rayleen**

Like Kasey, Rayleen talked freely about the extent to which she used CARE, “I’m definitely not using CARE every day and using five things. It’s not like that.” Instead Rayleen indicated:

> I find it popping up just different places like, “Hey, I’m really learning how to breathe in a situation where I wouldn't have before. I would have just reacted.”

Or, “I'm really learning how to be in the moment when I’m feeling stressed about what the parent just called and told me about or whatever or accused me of or whatever.” It’s all kinds of situations.

Rayleen shared examples of breathing in reaction to difficult responses from students, walking mindfully in the hallway, and using wait time when she realizes she’s clutching her teeth. I also believe that her description of CARE as popping up in unexpected places suggests that she has internalized the practices that work for her, and is able to draw upon those as needed. However, the strongest evidence for Rayleen’s integration of CARE is best demonstrated by an example she shared. She reported scheduling multiple meetings with a parent, and the parent missed those meetings. However, the parent showed up at school while Rayleen was teaching, and Rayleen invited her to come up to her classroom to talk briefly. Rayleen greeted the mother at the door to her classroom and positioned herself in a way that she could see her class, and also interact with the visiting parent, who stayed in the hallway. At first, Rayleen and the mother talked; then, the mother,
while still standing outside of the classroom, began asking her daughter, who was sitting inside of the classroom, questions while Rayleen’s class tuned into the conversation:

So she [parent] started asking her daughter, “I don’t see you bring homework home. Doesn’t your teacher give you homework?” I’m like, “Yes, we have homework. Not always every day.” She’s [student] like, “No we don’t. No we don’t.” Then she’s asking her peers, “Do we have homework?” [Her peers respond,] “No, we don’t have homework.” Like it was just kinda the whole class was against the teacher in front of this parent.

Rayleen remained calm, and chose not to get pulled into the back and forth dialogue between students and the parent. In response to the mother’s question, she simply stated, “We definitely get homework here. Most of you don’t do your homework, but we have homework here.” Rayleen’s conversation with the mother continued, and then she wrapped it up explaining that she needed to get back to her class. The mother left Rayleen’s room, after giving Rayleen a sharp parting gift:

she’s like, “Okay, well, next time I’m here, I hope I see some more teaching going on.” I’m thinking, “Okay. Just breathe and walk quietly into your room. There’s nothing you can do about this parent’s opinion at the moment.”

Rayleen described her thinking around the incident, throughout which she demonstrated the ability to take perspective on the situation:

she saw our classroom for 10 to 12 minutes at a point where the children weren’t very focused to begin with. And then she came and took me away for longer than I thought she was going to take me away for and kinda getting her daughter and the students involved in – you know it was just a bad situation. And I think a lot
of other times I would’ve beat myself up and felt like I have to defend myself…and I chose to breathe and walk quietly back into my classroom and continue teaching the math that we were doing. And that’s just one example, I think, of being able just to let it go, to breathe and not feel like defending myself was actually going to take care of myself. To just kinda let it go.

In Rayleen’s story about this interaction with a parent, she could have allowed herself to become quite emotionally activated and taken on a defensive stance; however, she maintained her ability to address the situation in a productive way. What is most impressive to me is her ability to let the situation go, as I think I probably would have personalized the mother’s comment and ruminated about it. In this example, Rayleen demonstrates bringing presence to a difficult interaction, staying present in that interaction, and letting go of the situation, all of which are markers are mindfulness.

**Emma**

Emma entered the CARE training with a focus on what practices she could incorporate at school to improve the functioning of her classroom. Emma articulated that one of the barriers to using evidence-based strategies in the classroom was that while she had heard about strategies that may be effective, “we haven’t really had the time to practice them, find uses for them.” While Emma was cognitively aware of teaching techniques that may assist the functioning of her classroom, she was uncertain how to implement those in her classroom. For Emma, the CARE training provided a way to see effective teaching practices modeled and then practice the strategies modeled in the training (e.g., wait time) in her own classroom. She described the CARE training as providing an opportunity to practice strategies that she could use in her classroom and
suggested that “you just kind of leave [the training], because of all the practice—some of it is just ingrained in you, the ones that you bring away.” Emma explained how she moved from knowing about wait time to implementing it following her CARE involvement:

the wait time with the students, through the education classes that was always important, but it kind of came up more after CARE, especially with the students that do take even longer to answer. And I’ve got myself where I can ignore the kids in the back waving like monkeys, and just letting that student taking the time that they need, and I found that the more that I’m doing it and the longer that I wait, and the students have become aware now, “She’s not going to call on anybody else. She is going to sit and let this student answer.” And I feel that the students know now that, okay, if they need the extra moment, they have it.

In this statement, Emma also demonstrates a shift in how she approaches students; she has made her environment more learner-friendly in that she has created and modeled the classroom norm that students have time to think through their answers before responding.

In addition to using wait time, Emma reported giving herself “more time not to feel rushed” during her morning routine and using deep breathing to address situations in which she found student behavior challenging. Emma also described developing an enjoyment in cooking that she connected with her involvement in CARE:

Again, not stopping and thinking, “Oh, I’m doing this,” but just kind of internally looking for those spices, those flavors, developed an interest in cooking, and I don’t know that it’s because of that, because I’m taking more time to stop and thinking about what I’m eating and thinking about how it tastes, but I’ve found an
enjoyment out of cooking now too, which I think my husband appreciates. So that kind of spurred from that.

Her description of paying attention to spices and flavors suggests that she has developed an ability to bring embodied, moment-to-moment awareness into her cooking. I believe that these unintentional ways in which mindfulness pops up in daily life demonstrate that the attitudinal tenets of mindfulness practice have seeped into one’s life. Emma confirmed this, “I do them so much during the day, when I’m with the students, that I’m using them outside also. Wait time with my husband. Take deep breaths. All that.”

Nadia

For Nadia, the CARE practices were not the most useful part of the training; instead learning about the neuroscience of emotion and how that applies to students in her classroom was much more informative. Nadia was direct in stating, “I don’t think I have adopted too many of the practices. Like I don’t sit down and say, “Okay, now I’m going to do my CARE stuff.” However, despite her statement that she does not do many of the practices, she reported using deep breathing on a daily basis:

I do the breathing, every day I do the breathing…Sometimes it’s deliberate, like those times and other times it’s just sort of automatic transitioning time. Like let’s say I finished the reading lesson and I’m going to sit down at my desk and then call kids up to talk to me at my desk. I’ll find myself doing it at times like that to just sort of regroup and then move on, but it’s not like the whole counting.

In the context of the CARE training, participants were often invited to take five deep breaths at the beginning of the training day, when the group came back from a break, and at other transition times. While Nadia is not counting to a specific number of breaths, she
is aware of using breathing during transition times. She also shared an example of using deep breathing in response to a situation with a student:

I did send him to take a break again. I don’t know why because he didn’t go. [Student] Wanders the hallway again and security caught him again. So then that’s when the breathing began (small laugh) because I’m filling out the thing [referral] for the second time in one day and I’m like…That’s when I was doing the breathing, at my desk. So it wasn’t as if, I didn’t need it to calm me down so that I could talk to him because he was gone. I needed to calm down because I was so angry at the situation.

In her description of the situation, Nadia brings clarity to what is most emotionally activating about this particular incident. Nadia was not angry at the student; instead she was angry because there is a discipline referral policy in her building, and she believed that the administration was failing to follow through on that policy. The ability to be aware of, in the moment, what is triggering one’s anger demonstrates that Nadia has the ability to bring mindful presence to situations that are difficult in her classroom. What is particularly interesting to me is that she went on to report that “aside from the issues with my student yesterday, I really haven’t had that much situation where I would need to do any of that because it’s been pretty calm.” I suspect that her increase in understanding emotional reactions (both hers and those of her students) has led to a greater level of compassion in her classroom that has, in turn, diminished her need to use mindfulness strategies responsively. Evidence of Nadia’s compassion and care for her students will be discussed later in response to research question four.
Gabrielle

One of the most influential pieces of the CARE training for Gabrielle was getting validation that it is productive to do nothing and simply do something that she enjoys. Gabrielle explained that she has always felt drained from being at school all week, and that each weekend she takes what she calls a “lazy day.” In the following statement she discusses her involvement in CARE and how that has shifted her perspective about taking lazy days:

I’ve always done it [take a lazy day], but I feel more justified since CARE. Like I made sure I told my husband. Before, I’d feel guilty like I should be doing something. I mean there should be something. I mean never around the house. I never feel bad about that, but maybe there’s something for school I should be doing or there’s somewhere I should be going. Now, I don’t feel as guilty about it. I feel like this is what I have to do for my own well-being and that’s just the way it is and sometimes my husband doesn’t understand it, but I’m like it’s what I need. I need to be able to just sit around and I mean sometimes it’s all day. Sometimes it’s just for an afternoon and then I’ll do something, but it’s definitely more justified and it has more meaning since CARE because I’ll really shut my mind off and be in the moment.

It is as if CARE gave Gabrielle permission to stop thinking about school during part of her weekend and to do whatever she needs to do to replenish her resources. Gabrielle identifies as a perfectionist, an introvert, and someone who tends to be goal-oriented. Gabrielle and I have those tendencies in common. For me, validation of the need for down time and encouragement to give myself permission to relax are always welcome
from friends, and I value the reinforcement from people I trust that it is acceptable to engage in self-care. For Gabrielle getting validation through CARE, particularly when her partner does not understand why she takes her lazy days, was a really powerful experience for her.

This was not the only area in which Gabrielle felt validated by what she learned from CARE. She indicated that she has always tried to incorporate classical music in her classroom, and intuitively sensed that working with student emotions as opposed to against them (or as if they do not exist), was the right thing to do; however, CARE solidified that being responsive to students was crucial for her classroom environment. Gabrielle also expressed that CARE has given her the tools to navigate situations when she feels “like everything is going awry.” She explained:

I just take a minute before I react and just kind of, okay. I don’t know what else to say other than just pull it all in. Take a minute. Pull it in and be like, “Okay. What would be the best way to go from here? How can I handle this without making it worse? How can I do this without getting a reaction?”

In this statement, Gabrielle demonstrates the knowledge of how to assess difficult situations in her classroom, and pause before taking action. In addition to having the knowledge, Gabrielle also provided a concrete example of her ability to implement deliberate pauses before responding to situations. Gabrielle shared that she recently had a student with major behavior issues who moved, and that since that student’s departure she has become aware of minor behavior issues. She explained:

I was starting to get really frustrated at the students when I was like maybe they don’t know what I expect of them right now. Maybe it’s my communication, so I
could feel myself getting ready to be like, “Okay, no recess for the rest of your lives,” kind of thing, but I took a moment and I just thought, okay. Step back and think and think about it. They’re not taking a test, so a little bit of noise isn’t going to be the end of the world. Just kind of put it in perspective. Why am I getting upset over a little bit of noise when before I had things being thrown? It’s that kind of stuff, and that really helped calm me down and kind of move my elevator back down and be like, okay, I can handle this. This isn’t worth getting upset about. This isn’t worth reacting to kind of thing.

This example illustrates Gabrielle’s ability to take a moment to assess a situation in her classroom, and shift her perspective before responding purely from and frustration. Instead, when she had a bit of internal dialogue with herself, she was able to recognize that her classroom was relatively calm and students were on task. She was able to reappraise the situation, and move on.

**Elena**

Elena talked at length about her work-related challenges and struggles. These seemed to be the most salient components of our interview; therefore, less of the interview centered around CARE and more focused on Elena’s present circumstances. In describing her present circumstances, she reported that what she learned from CARE was essential to coping with her challenges at work:

This year, I realized that in order to survive, I had to do it. In the past, it’s just been – like last year during CARE, it was like oh, this is fun. I deserve this. I’m gonna do this. Did I need it to survive? No. This year it’s the only way I get back up the next morning and go. I have to do it to make it through because the
burnout rate from this year is gonna be a killer. I know we’re gonna lose teachers. So it’s a survival thing.

So, what Elena learned in CARE is currently a lifeline to continuing to navigate a position in which she feels overwhelmed and under supported. For Elena, the most important strategy she adopted from CARE was bringing moment-to-moment awareness to her morning routine. She reported revamping her morning routine in response to reoccurring feelings of dread about going to work. She explained, “really, honestly, it’s hard to get up in the morning and come to work a lot of the time” and “I have found myself getting really depressed, really frustrated.” So one of the most useful strategies she uses is “not allowing myself to think about school when I’m getting ready in the morning, because that just really puts a bad start to your day.” The way in which Elena kept her feelings of dread and negativity about work at bay was by being present moment to moment throughout her morning routine:

I have purposefully worked at the minute I start to think about stuff that’s happening at school, I make myself stop and just think about what I’m doing right at that moment. And I can’t remember the name of what that’s called…there’s a specific name for it that we called it in CARE. But I’m like literally focusing on the water, focusing on my breakfast, focusing on what it feels like to dry my hair, just so my mind does not venture back. And I have found that on the days that I’m successful with that, I come into work in such a better mood.

While Elena discussed her morning routine, she used hand gestures to accompany her narrative. She mimicked herself standing in the shower and having the water hit her torso. She also lifted her dominant hand above her head as if holding a blow dryer. I
interpreted her actions as a demonstration of how she brings embodied awareness to her morning routine, and considered them to be expressions of moment-to-moment mindfulness. In addition to using the morning routine, Elena also sporadically uses the CARE strategy of taking five deep breaths. However, she further explained that her students behavior as well as her inability to trust them (if she turns her head away for a moment) were significant barriers to utilizing deep breathing and other CARE strategies while she is with her students.

**Aiden**

Aiden varied from the rest of the participants in multiple ways. First, he was the only male participant in this study. Second, he was the first participant I interviewed. Third, his position involved helping high school students develop and maintain job placements, so he only taught two classes each day to very small groups of students. Fourth, he spoke about how significant losses, including the loss of his daughter and his mother, impacted his stress level and his ability to manage his responsibilities. Aiden weaved these experiences of grief and loss into his explanations of how important it was for him to prioritize time with family. For Aiden, it was not the techniques from CARE that he integrated:

> taking the deep breaths and all that, I don’t do all that stuff, but I do try to contemplate what I’m doing, kinda a thoughtfulness about it. A thoughtfulness about it, a thoughtful walking. You know you can – it just changes your mindset about things…

What seemed to be the most applicable piece of the CARE training for Aiden was his ability to shift his mental approach, or “mindset” towards situations he encounters. He
described this new mindset as “almost more of an objective view of yourself.” What was particularly interesting to me is that Aiden acknowledged that he reverts to the old mindset, where he focuses on “how did they do this to me?” However, when he is in the new mindset, he takes a different approach to situations, where he is more likely to ask, “What can I do to be calm, to think this through, to relax, to get centered, to be in control?” I love the way he uses simple language to describe how he goes back and forth between the new and old mindsets. It illustrates how, when we start to change our approach or perspective, we struggle to navigate between a promising new way to conceptualize situations and our habitual approach that is more familiar.

Aiden also articulated his struggle between old habits and new perspectives in relation to the idea of having time for himself and making decisions about which extra responsibilities/activities fit with his current situation/needs:

I mean this year, and just like I was talking about getting too much on my plate – well doing CARE at that particular time was really good for me because a couple of years – it’s been about five years since my daughter passed – but that was maybe about three or almost four years after that. Because you get more and more on your plate and pretty soon it just gets to be too much.

Throughout our time together, Aiden talked about his need to reevaluate how much was on his plate, and cut back when he notices that he is “rushing around a lot,” “running around like a crazy person,” or his stress level has gotten too high. This reevaluation of activities/priorities went hand in hand with his commitment to being present for his kids at school and at home:
things will pop into my head at different times. In class, feeling grounded and all that kind of stuff, maybe I don’t even think of it of it that way anymore. But just, “I'm here. I’m present. I’m gonna do the best I can. And I’m not gonna be panicky trying to make kids do stuff. I’m just gonna relax and be the best teacher I can.” You know, I think that’s still a part of kinda what CARE was getting at. I think that was part of it because sometimes you just have to breathe and be grounded and try to do the best you can.

In this snippet of our interview, Aiden demonstrates a sense of being present and a capacity to stay with whatever situation or circumstances are there in the moment. His comment seems to illustrate a sense of present-centered awareness, where he is showing up and doing his best.

Sandy

Sandy seemed to suggest that the biggest shifts she made following CARE were in relation to how she approached her students and herself. Similar to Aiden, Sandy did not really talk about the specific techniques that she used. Instead, she mentioned a couple of things she had tried, and focused on her larger picture thinking to describe how CARE had impacted her. One of the ways she has integrated CARE teachings into her life is by paying more attention to herself. For Sandy, paying more attention to herself closely tied into her reports of using opportunities in her normal routine to practice mindfulness:

I recognize more now how important it is, that like quiet time when I walk the dog without being on the phone. So it’s almost like the phone interrupts that time. Not that I’m – It’s just sort of meandering around town in the dark, in the cold
usually or rain or whatever and I don’t know, just – I don’t know – sometimes thinking about things, sometimes not but just sort of clearing my mind. And then what’s kind of funny is now that my husband’s home, I mean he could walk the dog in the morning before school but I still choose to do so because it’s just part of that getting out, having that fresh air and just kind of – I don’t know what it is. Like I guess it’s like I said, that mindful thinking, just meandering around a little bit. Now if it’s like super cold sometimes I bail out of it or if I have an early morning meeting I do. But I still do that because that’s kind of my time.

This seemed quite noteworthy to me, because when Sandy first became involved in the training she was skeptical about the whole idea of focusing on herself, and was concerned that it was selfish. She appears to have shifted her perspective and now has started to tune into her own needs, like for quiet time before school and as she winds down at the end of the day.

Sandy also talked about how, since CARE, she has chosen not to overreact to situations that would have previously gotten a rise out of her:

You know the other thing I find that – I don’t know if this is good or not but I think the new word I learned in the last few months was stoic where sometimes – I don’t know if I have a big reaction to things sometimes because I just choose to – I do it because I choose not to like get – I don’t want to say upset but get frazzled or make a big deal out of things that happen. So I just kind of don’t really say too much. And like oh well and move on and sometimes I just feel like – I don’t know sometimes if the kids expect me to have a whole lot bigger reaction than what I do to things but it’s just part of life and things that happen.
And I don’t get too excited or anything anymore. It’s just like the little glitch in your radar screen of life for the day.

This statement illustrates a sense of being able to let go and not become phased by the events throughout the day; throughout our time together Sandy had an attitude that I could best summarize as “I’ll deal with whatever’s here.” It was as if she had developed some sense of solidity that she could draw from regardless of what came up.

**Application of CARE across Participants**

I chose to discuss how each educator in the study was impacted by CARE individually and will conclude this section by briefly reflecting on two patterns that emerged across participants. One of the most salient pieces of data that demonstrated participants had internalized learning from CARE was their use of language. Many participants used metaphors that were introduced in the training to further promote understanding about emotional responses. “Elevator going up” and “flipping my lid” were two metaphors that were introduced in the CARE training to talk about emotional activation increasing, and emotional outbursts that follow unchecked activation.

Statements including CARE metaphors were used throughout interviews by at least six of the participants. Two brief examples were provided by Nadia and Gabrielle. Nadia was talking about her use of deep breathing. I asked her when she tended to do the breathing, to which she succinctly replied, with laughter, “When I’m about to flip my lid!” In this statement Nadia demonstrates awareness of her emotional activation, and also applies a CARE strategy in attempt to self-regulate. Gabrielle’s statement also demonstrates awareness of emotional activation. Gabrielle reflected, “I know my elevator’s going up. Isn’t that what we said? Yeah. And I know I can’t just burst. I feel
it and I need to go back down before I do anything.” In addition to awareness of her emotional state, her statement suggests that she makes a deliberate choice to suspend action until she’s less activated. This intentional pause described by Gabrielle leads me to the second pattern that was present across participants.

A second pattern that I noticed across participants is closely linked to present-centered awareness of emotions; in response to emotional awareness, participants tended to describe the ability to zoom out or take a step back before assessing their current situation. Participants used a variety of approaches to shift their relationship to the problem immediately in front of them. Examples of these are illustrated throughout the individual descriptions of how participants were impacted by CARE. I will reiterate two brief examples mentioned in the individual sections to illustrate this pattern. For example, Kasey explained that she exhausts a wider range of classroom and behavior management practices before reacting to and giving students a consequence. Gabrielle talked about taking a moment “to pull it in” and ask herself “What would be the best way to go from here? How can I handle this without making it worse?” So, the second pattern that I became aware of was CARE participants’ ability to reappraise situations and shift perspective in response to present circumstances. This seems to be a particularly promising outcome of the CARE training, as wisdom suggests that “we cannot solve our problems with the same level of thinking that created them” (Albert Einstein).

**Research Question 4:**

How do CARE participants describe and reflect upon their involvement in the program?
Findings related to this research question are reported at the categorical level of analysis. This decision was made based on the evaluative intent of the question; with program evaluation, it is essential that participant voices not be lost in the analytic process. Therefore, a lower level of data abstraction ensures fidelity to participant voices and provides direct feedback for CARE program designers regarding how participants are applying techniques, practices, and teachings from their involvement in CARE. First, I present CARE feedback, which tends to address the descriptive part of this research question. Then, I present reflective feedback to address the second part of research question four.

**Participant Descriptive Feedback**

One of the ways in which participants differentiated their *behaviors* was by discussing it before and after CARE, or comparing their *experiences* before and after CARE. Participants’ framing of their behavior with their involvement in CARE as a distinct marking point in time is telling. If an intervention has no impact on the participants involved, then one can reasonably assume that participants do not mark participation in that intervention as a specific point in time and then differentiate their behavior prior to and following the intervention. It is as if there are two different stories, and the second, more desirable version of the story has come into action with CARE as the catalyst for the revised story. For some participants, like Aiden, the shift was discussed in a more subtle fashion. Aiden reflected, “I didn’t immediately think, ‘Oh, CARE cured me.’ No, I really didn’t. I felt, ‘Well, maybe I just kinda matured or something.’” But it was about a year ago.” One year prior to the date of my interview with Aiden corresponded with the date when Aiden completed the CARE program.
Aiden went on to describe the timing of his maturation as quite curious, and throughout our interview I was able to watch as he continued to link shifts in his attitudes and actions with his involvement in CARE.

Additional evidence supporting the value of CARE emerged through participants’ expression of gratitude for the opportunity to discuss their CARE experience with me. Gabrielle reflected:

I’m glad I had the opportunity to talk about it again because you do this stuff and then you start to get back into things and then part of it’s there, but then at the same time there are other parts that drift off because you’re back into the everyday life. So I like the follow-up aspect of it.

Her comment suggests that engaging in dialogue about the program and its practices was a useful way to reflect on the experience and served as a reminder to reinforce her learning. Other participants expressed similar sentiments and stated that they engaged in reflection in preparation for our scheduled interviews. The participants’ willingness to engage in reflection eight to 12 months following their completion of CARE supports the notion that participants found the CARE intervention to be quite impactful. Given the time pressures and stressors that educators experience, their willingness to schedule interviews with me to discuss CARE also lends credence to the relevance of the CARE intervention to their work lives.

A third indicator of CARE relevance to participants is the fact that each and every participant I interviewed expressed interest in knowing the status of the CARE project, with inquiries ranging from “will other teachers get to experience CARE?” to interest in whether a fellow cohort member was able to get pregnant. Over half of the participants
specifically inquired as to whether CARE project staff would coordinate a follow up get
together for CARE participants as was discussed at the conclusion of their training. I 
believe participants expressed interest in staying connected with other CARE graduates 
and CARE project staff as they saw this as a viable effort to support and sustain what 
they learned through CARE. In addition to providing general feedback suggesting that 
the CARE training was a valuable experience, educators in this study also offered more 
focused feedback about their CARE experiences. I present their feedback using the 
following categorical headers: after CARE, comparison of before and after CARE, 
evaluation and description of CARE, impact on emotional responses, and time 
commitment to CARE.

**After CARE.** Various individuals talked about how CARE provided validation 
that they were using effective practices in their classroom and led to changes at home and 
school. Gabrielle found the training to validate both specific strategies she employed in 
the classroom (i.e., the use of music) and broader perspectives, such as the importance of 
emotions in the classroom, she had adopted through CARE:

I’m more assured that I’m actually doing something right, something that makes 
sense kind of thing, that kind of stuff. Of the CARE piece. Like the emotional 
piece, the well-being of myself and the students. Like I’m realizing how they’re 
feeling and how I’m feeling and how we can make it all work kind of thing. 

That’s what it is.

Gabrielle is crediting her participation in CARE as the way through which she developed 
a broader framework for understanding the role emotions and her own emotional 
regulation had on the classroom environment. Like Gabrielle, Nadia too expressed the
impact of CARE on her classroom environment. One of the environmental shifts that Nadia highlighted was her relationships with students:

It’s much more – I don’t want to use the word ‘friendly’ because there’s still the professional, “I’m the teacher and you’re the student,” but we can joke around. We laugh. We smile. Like a typical day was fun rather than…like yesterday was a stressful day and it was funny because I can’t remember the last time I had a day like that.

What is most noteworthy about Nadia’s description of her relationships with students following CARE is that she describes her job as fun, and included terms such as laughter, smiling, and joking around in describing her work. The way in which Nadia discussed her job clearly reflects that she experiences positive feelings about her work and the students she works with. The presence of positive emotions has been suggested to be an important component of effective teaching and learning (Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002). Researchers suggest that when the curriculum is delivered simultaneously with authentic, emotional content, it creates an environment that facilitates learning (Roeser, Skinner, Beers & Jennings, 2012). Embedded in Nadia’s description of the classroom environment she’s constructed following CARE are hints of community; Nadia’s description also suggests that following the CARE training she has been able to create a model learning community that involves a spirit of playfulness.

Comparison of before and after CARE. Three participants explicitly discussed differences they noticed before and after CARE. Specifically, differences in anxiety around teaching, attitude, and classroom environment were mentioned. After taking CARE Gabrielle reported, “I always kind of thought that the class reacted to how the
teacher was, like if the teacher was calmer then the class would be, but I know how to kind of do it more now.” In her self-assessment, she expressed a sense of confidence in understanding how to use the knowledge that the teacher’s emotional presence in the classroom impacts students. Gabrielle was one of many participants who gave concrete examples of how she uses strategies learned in CARE to impact her own emotional regulation and presence in the classroom. Examples in which participants discuss the use of CARE strategies in their own classroom are captured in response to research question three and will not be discussed further here. While Gabrielle talked a bit more tentatively about her understanding of emotions before and after CARE, Nadia offered more pronounced before and after snapshots of her experience of teaching prior to and following CARE:

It used to be that’s all it was, was like crazy and stressful and I’m sweating and exhausted by the end of the day. That hasn’t happened in a long time. I haven’t felt that in a long time and I realized that when I had that day yesterday. It was like, “Wow! I haven’t felt like this –” Like my chest felt tight, even on my drive home. I was like taking a deep breath and feeling like the pressure in there that felt like I needed to take a deep breath and couldn’t. I used to have a lot and now I don’t.

Nadia’s statement exemplifies one of the aims of the CARE program, which is that CARE program participants will be able to notice their own emotional reactions and use these as a barometer in understanding their role in shaping the classroom environment. Nadia appears to have developed both awareness of her own emotions and the corresponding physical indicators of those emotions (e.g., tight chest). This is
particularly exciting because, while emotional contagion is often used to talk about the spread of negative emotions, we know that positive emotions are also contagious (Fredrickson, 2009). Therefore, Nadia’s attunement to her own emotions provides a model for her class, such that they are learning about emotional responsiveness through the ways in which she interacts with them in the classroom.

**Evaluation & Description of CARE.** While conducting interviews, I asked participants how they would describe CARE to a coworker who was unfamiliar with the program. This question, paired with participants’ feedback integrated into their narrative descriptions of the CARE experience, elicited responses from the majority of participants. I have included evaluation and description of CARE in one category to reflect the way in which participants spoke; their statements about CARE generally combined aspects of evaluation and description. In discussing CARE, participants indicated that CARE helped them become more reflective about their teaching, connect with other teachers, and learn more about emotional responses. Aiden, whose comment was more evaluation-focused, explained:

> it’s a good overall experience. It didn’t completely relax me because I’m a tense person. But on the other hand, it made me start to think about how I am as a teacher and to think about how I react and that type of thing, to be more thoughtful about things.

Again, similar to participant experiences that address research questions three and/or four, Aiden expresses an ability to reflect on his identity and reactions as a teacher. While Aiden did not find CARE to “completely relax” him, Kasey described her CARE experience as very relaxing, “I consider it teacher wellness…it was definitely
worthwhile. It’s as relaxing as a day at the spa, but there were definitely things I took out of it that I wasn’t doing before.” Here Kasey captures what makes the CARE program incredibly unique; it is a professional development program that focused on the well-being of educators enrolled in the program while simultaneously providing concrete information and strategies that they are able to integrate into their work.

Like Kasey, Sandy also talked about how the program emphasized teacher wellness:

I think the biggest thing is that it’s for you. It’s just so different because it’s not about teaching you strategies to instruct your kids. It’s about like finding ways to care for yourself and then in turn it just makes you better like as a facilitator, a communicator, listener, mentor, role model.

In her description of CARE, Sandy talked about how the program was unlike any graduate school course or professional development she had ever experienced, and she recalled her reluctance to embrace some aspects of the program the first weekend she attended. Sandy described the experience as “extremely different” and expressed resistance to focusing on herself. However, despite her initial struggle to understand and fully participate in CARE, Sandy credits the program with drastically increasing her ability to respond calmly to situations that emerge both in the classroom and in her life. A few weeks after her interview, Sandy emailed me to share that her son had been in a car accident, and she commented, “I truly credit CARE for the calmness in which I handled the situation.” She was not the only participant to discuss how the CARE program affected her emotional responses. In fact, the most significant evaluative and descriptive feedback participants provided was in regard to learning about emotional
responses. There was an abundance of feedback regarding this piece of the CARE program, which will be addressed in the next section of this paper.

**Impact on emotional reactions.** The majority of program participants explicitly discussed how the program impacted their emotional reactions. Emma described her frustration in working with elementary school students who sometimes rely on her to get support with situations that she believes students of their age should be able to handle, and concluded “[I] just seem to be more calm with them when I approach those subjects… I think for the smaller things, I’m not getting as agitated as much as I did before.” In her statement, Emma is addressing the CARE program aim of providing teachers with strategies to help them modulate their emotions in the classroom. Sandy goes into further detail than Emma to describe her shift in emotional reactions to students:

I don’t have this rollercoaster of emotions like up and down and I don’t know, kind of like freaking out over things that – if someone spills milk or something it’s like oh well. I just kind of walk away and it’s like guess you have to clean it up. And then like kids are running to me about this or that and I just don’t really choose to get excited about it.

In Sandy’s description, she highlights how she has developed a less reactive approach to working with students. Nadia too commented on the program’s impact on her emotional reactions and described it as the most important part of the CARE training:

the thing that has changed me the most has been just learning about the whole emotional process and how everything works because now when my kids get upset I don’t get upset. I’m just like, “Okay, well, go take a break and come back
when you’re calm,” and before that’s not what would happen. [Before] they would elevate me to the same level that they were and it was like instant… it could happen in a matter of seconds, where I would be fine one second and you're doing something and now I’m totally angry and can’t make a good decision about how I’m going to react, but now that’s not the case anymore and usually if I’m getting that upset, I still tell them to go take a break anyway.

Nadia went on to further explain that learning about emotions “has changed the way I react and I respond…I would say about 70% of the time I respond rather than react.” Nadia’s feedback illustrates how learning basic neuroscience regarding human emotion impacts educators in the way they process their own emotions as well as the emotional reactions of their students. In addition, Nadia’s distinction between reacting and responding refers to a lesson covered in the CARE program, and is one of the hallmarks of bringing mindfulness to one’s interactions (Bishop et al, 2004).

*Time commitment for CARE.* Two educators commented on the time commitment required for involvement in the CARE program. From my own participation in and participant-observation of the CARE program, the time commitment appeared to be one factor that deterred educators from participating in the program; therefore, being able to share comments with potential CARE participants about the experiences of former CARE participants may be one way to address the time-related concerns of future participants. Both Emma and Gabrielle identified that CARE was a big time commitment and described the experience as “worth it.” Emma reflected on the training being scheduled on the weekends:
I know that the weekends are the big thing that everybody – especially with kids and activities and all that – it’s hard to give up, but I do think that it’s worth it, especially for new teachers that are trying to just balance all this out and get it all under their belt.

It is noteworthy that Emma suggests that the program would be particularly worthwhile for new teachers because this is one of the proposed applications of the CARE program. In contrast to Emma, Gabrielle expressed that CARE would be useful the rest of her career:

Taking care of yourself and self-awareness is never going to go away. It’s never going to be replaced by the latest and newest thing. So, you do devote a lot of time to it, but it will benefit you the rest of your career, but I would also say it’s also one of those things where you have to pick what you like. You’re not going to like everything, but you should come out of it with enough that it was worth it.

Gabrielle’s description of the training as something that will continue to be relevant throughout her career is perhaps one of the highest forms of praise for the CARE program. Given the ebb and flow of trends, and the continual emergence of trends in education, positioning CARE as an intervention that will benefit one throughout the longevity of his/her career speaks both to its significance and applicability.

**Reflecting on CARE Involvement**

I believe it relevant to share some of the ways in which participants in this study reflected on the CARE experience. One of the aims of CARE is to increase teacher reflection; in the data I certainly noticed a pattern whereby a mention of CARE (in the form of a CARE skill or applying learning from the CARE training) was generally
connected with a reflective statement about one’s teaching style or habitual patterns. Therefore, one of the biggest challenges in making sense of these data was analyzing it in a thematic way; perhaps presenting my data in the form of narratives would have provided a different way to represent the thoughtfulness that individuals expressed. Interviewees seemed to be constantly engaged in a sort of reflectivity. In reflecting on involvement in CARE, two particularly noteworthy patterns emerged; participants commented on their approach to students and connected their CARE experiences with related efforts.

**Approach to Students.** Strong rapport with students and compassion for students were two of the patterns I noticed within teacher reflections. One of the foundational teachings of CARE is that kids’ emotional reactions are not about the teacher who is on the receiving end of those emotional reactions. Nadia expressed increased compassion as well as her understanding of kids’ emotions: “when I see them freaking out about something…it’s not because of really what just happened. There’s something else. So what’s the point of me even talking to you about what just happened? What’s wrong, you know? What else?” Nadia went on to succinctly state, “There are two kids in my class that do that [freak out] and they have their own issues which cause them to do that.” In this example, Nadia demonstrates the ability to attribute student emotional responses in a way that does not pathologize students and situates their reactivity in the broader context of their lives.

Like Nadia, Sandy also talked about how some of her students have their own issues and she knows not to personalize their behaviors. Sandy discussed her sense of having good rapport with her students this academic year, following her involvement in
CARE. She too discussed one of her students, who she described as an “angry child.” However, Sandy described the strategies she used to work with him, and simply stated, “it’s just his background” and then proceeded to share a recent situation in which she interacted with him:

my angry child he’s like “I wish it were 3:00.” And they get dismissed at 3:10, like 3:10 to 3:20. And I said, “I wish it were 3:20.” And he looked at me and he just gave the biggest grin and I looked back and smiled and I’m like want to top that one?

While Sandy and Nadia shared their responses to students who behaved in challenging ways, this is often much harder to put into practice than some of the other teachings. Students and their behavior can grate on educators, and being able to greet those behaviors with compassion, empathy and/or humor can shift an interaction. Bringing those qualities to a classroom environment and practicing them has the potential to set up a different dynamic for learning. This new dynamic that Sandy and Nadia have brought into their classrooms involves bringing compassion to their interactions with students. It is noteworthy that Sandy and Nadia, the two educators who talked at length about their compassion with students, also talked about their ability to joke with and have fun in their classrooms. Nadia and Sandy provide support for the notion that when educators consistently bring compassion into their classrooms, they may experience fewer challenges.

**Synchronicity with other Efforts.** CARE participants did not see the CARE program as separate and distinct from other efforts in which they were engaged. Many of them connected CARE with practices they already had established and other self-
care/supportive practices in which they were involved. For example, Rayleen talked
about how her involvement in Al-Anon “ties in very closely with what CARE taught as
far as taking things easy and just kinda taking care of yourself.” She described what she
learned in CARE as reinforcing some of what she learned in Al-Anon, and giving her
different tools for self-care. Kasey also saw CARE as synergistic with her broader
wellness efforts:

I’ve been in this whole process of at that point in time of CARE, thinking about
different, like the way I eat and all of that kind of stuff so it just lent itself to
things I was already trying to do in my life. Even the responsive classroom stuff
for kids, it kind of played into that a little as well.

Throughout our interview, Kasey talked about her commitment to maintaining a healthy
lifestyle through proper nutrition, regular exercise, time with family, and engaging in
leisure activities. For Kasey, CARE seemed to fit nicely into her broader wellness efforts
and her focus on cultivating a healthy lifestyle. Thus, the ability to connect CARE with
existing knowledge or synchronistic efforts seemed to facilitate participants’
understanding and assimilation of CARE.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.–Viktor E. Frankl

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of school personnel who participated in the CARE program. The current research had two areas of inquiry. First, I was interested in learning how educators discuss their professional roles and the stress that emerges in the context of navigating those roles. This aspect of the research gave voice to the experiences of participants in the study and demonstrated that educators need support in their efforts to cope with their professional roles. Second, I was curious to discover how participants applied what they learned in CARE and how they reflected on their involvement in CARE. This aspect of the research was evaluative in nature and designed to address the question of how people experience the CARE intervention. In particular, I sought to explore what CARE participants found valuable, what they learned from the training, and how they were different as a result of their involvement in the training. This research is well-timed as experts in the field of mindfulness education have recently issued a call for qualitative assessment of mindfulness training programs (Roeser et al., 2012).

Findings

I used thematic analysis to explore and understand the experiences of educators in the present study. Three themes and six categories developed from thematic analysis. The three themes included: (a) having an outlet outside of work, (b) setting limits around work, and (c) navigating balance. The three themes address my first research question; what key themes/main ideas emerge when educators discuss their professional roles? The six categories included: work stressors, work/life stressors, applying CARE,
integrating mindfulness, CARE feedback and reflecting on CARE involvement. These categories addressed the following research questions: (a) what do participants experience as stressful in the context of their professional lives? (b) how do educators report integrating and applying mindfulness techniques taught in CARE? and (c) how do CARE participants describe and reflect upon their involvement in the program? In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss each of these findings, including how they relate to existing professional literature and their implications for the field of education. Then, I proceed by identifying the limitations of this research and making recommendations for future research.

Coping with Work

All three themes in this study relate to how school personnel cope with their work. The first two themes describe specific coping strategies, while the third theme provides a broader context for understanding the context in which those strategies arise. Coping is “what we do and think in an effort to manage stress and the emotions associated with it” (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994, p. 152). Participants in this sample had one or more outlets, or self-care behaviors, they utilized outside of work. These included exercise, time with family or friends, engaging in hobbies, and general relaxation as outlets outside of work that generated positive feelings. These strategies align with self-care strategies identified in existing literature (Brems, 2000; Kyraciou, 2001; Mahoney, 1997).

Participants in this sample also set limits around their work. Setting limits appears to be a behavior that allowed school personnel in this sample to determine what work is necessary, when it is necessary to complete that work, and what types of
responsibilities can be delayed or skipped. Limits were perceived as important in managing work responsibilities, and setting limits appears to be an important strategy in coping with work. This theme interacts with the third theme of navigating balance, which provides some context for the coping situation school personnel in this study employed.

The participants in this study are engaged in an ongoing dialogical process, whereby they are constantly negotiating and renegotiating how they spend their time and energy. Decisions about how to direct limited resources and energy are not easy; these decisions are made through practice, through conversation with partners, through self-reflection, and sometimes simply out of necessity. Engaging in self-care behaviors and setting limits are two active coping strategies that participants use to navigate the tenuous balance of their responsibilities.

**Work Stressors & Work/Life Stressors**

Findings in the present research aligned with previous research which documents overload in job responsibilities, perceived lack of support, challenging students and organizational stressors as significant sources of stress for school personnel (Kyriacou, 2001; Montgomery & Rupp, 2005). These findings indicate that regardless of how small a sample is, there is a diversity among and intensity to the stressors associated with the work of school personnel. A perception of stress is perhaps one of the best indicators that school personnel could benefit from CARE. Rayleen articulated this:

I would say that it is a program that offers you lots of suggestions for taking care of yourself, but you should only do it if you feel like you're a stressed teacher.
You know like somebody who has the perception that their job isn’t stressful, I don’t think they will benefit as much from CARE.

However, for some of the participants in this study, including Nadia, Aiden, and Sandy, it was not just the work that was a source of stress; it was also their attempts to balance professional and personal roles. Therefore, school personnel who report mild to moderate levels of stress at school, but report high stress loads (when work-related and life stressors are combined) may also benefit from CARE. All participants in this sample used one or more skills/strategies they learned through CARE to navigate stressors at work and/or outside of work.

**Applying CARE & Integrating Mindfulness**

One of the most exciting findings of the present study was that the majority of participants demonstrated the ability to zoom out before assessing situations in which they were involved. This perspective taking was often grounded in their understanding of the neuroscience of emotions and newfound knowledge that the emotional reactivity of students was not personal. Gabrielle demonstrated this process of zooming out as part of assessing a situation:

“I just take a minute before I react and just kind of, okay. I don’t know what else to say other than just pull it all in. Take a minute. Pull it in and be like, “Okay. What would be the best way to go from here? How can I handle this without making it worse? How can I do this without getting a reaction?”

In this statement, Gabrielle demonstrates the ability to focus her mental energy on assessing the classroom situation which has presented itself. Gabrielle, as well as other participants in this sample, exhibited the ability to directly experience events occurring in
their classrooms. This finding connects with previous literature, and supports the idea that, “when it [attention] is released from elaborative thinking, more resources are made available to process information related to current experience. This increases access to information that might otherwise remain outside awareness, resulting in a wider perspective on experience” (Bishop et al., 2004, p.233). This wider perspective was a common experience among the participants in this sample; Rayleen demonstrated it with the parent who visited her classroom. Sandy talked about no longer being on a rollercoaster of emotions. Nadia and Kasey suggested that they approached their students in a different way after taking CARE. In this way, one of the most promising mechanisms of action of the CARE training is its ability to aid participants in broadening their mental perspectives of the situations they encounter.

An additional finding was that long after participants completed the CARE training, they continued to use language learned in CARE. In particular, two metaphors, “elevator going up” and “flipping my lid,” were introduced in CARE to describe increasing emotional activation and emotional outbursts, respectively. Varra, Drossel, and Hayes (2009) suggest that ”figurative speech is used to reframe thinking, evaluating, judging, remembering, and feeling as ongoing human activities” (p. 114) with the intention of shifting the influence of thinking. Participants’ use of these metaphors often corresponded with their descriptions of how they responded to situations in which they were emotionally activated; it is entirely possible that participants’ use of CARE language assisted them in widening their perspective, and subsequently being able to more accurately assess the situations in which they were involved.
In addition to processing information from a broader perspective, participants in the present study also demonstrated other markers of mindfulness. Sandy and Aiden seemed to adopt a new perspective on their experience, an orientation that was characterized by curiosity and openness (Bishop et al., 2004). Their description of events and stories illustrated that they had adapted mindsets guided by the belief “I’ll deal with whatever comes up.” Aiden reflected this attitude during our time together:

In class, feeling grounded and all that kind of stuff, maybe I don’t even think of it of it that way anymore. But just, “I'm here. I’m present. I’m gonna do the best I can. And I’m not gonna be panicky trying to make kids do stuff. I’m just gonna relax and be the best teacher I can.”

In this statement, Aiden exemplifies what Bishop et al. (2004) describe as the second component of mindfulness; he assumes a grounded, present-focused stance characterized by acceptance and receptivity.

**CARE Feedback & Reflecting on CARE Involvement**

Participants’ framing of their behavior with their involvement in CARE as a distinct marking point in time is telling. It is as if there are two different stories, and the second, more desirable version of the story has come into action with CARE as its catalyst. Sandy, Gabrielle, Nadia, and Emma discussed how CARE helped them develop a broader framework for understanding the role of emotions in the classroom, which led to greater capacity to modulate emotions. Their reports of an increased ability to regulate emotions correspond with outcomes of a mindfulness-based intervention for caregivers and a mindfulness-based course for counselors (Shapiro, Brown, & Biegel, 2007; Schure, Christopher & Christopher, 2008). Their feedback also confirms that CARE is effective
in addressing its aim to assist teachers in navigating the emotional landscapes of their classrooms (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Nadia and Sandy reflected on how their relationships with students shifted after involvement in CARE; this finding relates to previous research in which counselors-in-training reported greater capacity for empathy and compassion following a mindfulness course (Schure, Christopher & Christopher, 2008). Also, reports of increased compassion and decreased reactivity after completing CARE align with previous research which identifies these as byproducts of mindfulness-based interventions (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009).

**Implications & Recommendations**

This study was one of the first qualitative assessments of the CARE program, and as such this study lends support to previous research indicating that the program is impactful for educators who enroll in the program. The CARE program goes beyond introducing and explaining techniques; participants have ample opportunities to engage in experiential learning by practicing self-care behaviors and de-stressing techniques. Experiential-based learning addresses the gap between cognitive knowing and applied practice; closing this gap by incorporating mindfulness-based activities into teacher and counselor preparation programs seems to be a promising step in improving training for current and future school personnel. Emma explained the importance of experiential learning in CARE:

> even though it’s strategies that we’ve heard, we haven’t really had the time to practice them, find uses for them... And even if you don’t come away saying, “Okay, every day I’m going to do this, this, and this,” even then, I think you just
kind of leave, because of all the practice – some of it is just ingrained into you, the ones that you bring away.

The emotion skills component of CARE was particularly beneficial to participants in this study, as it appeared to assist them with shifting and widening their fields of awareness, and creating more flexibility in problem solving. Other mindfulness based programs for educators should look to CARE as a model for constructing the emotion skills component of their curricula. Teacher and counselor preparation programs would be wise to incorporate emotional skills instruction into their courses. In addition, I would strongly encourage the incorporation of figurative language in training school personnel as it appears to assist participants in shifting their thinking in the midst of potential problem situations (Varra, Drossel, & Hayes, 2009). This recommendation extends beyond CARE, to teacher and counselor preparation programs as well.

To date, grant-funded CARE trainings have excluded school counselors; however, I believe school counselors are an untapped resource in disseminating CARE. School counselors are uniquely positioned to have their pulses on the social emotional environments of their schools, and we may be among the first to know when teachers are expressing signs of burnout. We get feedback from students, principals and the teachers themselves about their concerns and struggles, as well as the overall school climate. Perhaps one of the best ways we can advocate for our students is to ensure that school personnel have the resources and tools to manage their stress. The school counselor is in a leadership position, and can use her knowledge of what’s going in the school to identify how best to assist staff with stress management and coping. When she is able to use her leadership and advocacy skills to select appropriate coping tools for the school’s
environment, the school counselor is supporting students and teachers as well as the academic learning goals of the community in which she is situated. I recommend that school counselor preparation programs train future school counselors to have their pulses on the emotional landscape of the school by infusing instruction in mindfulness and emotion skills into Masters level programs. Teachers generally do not learn about how their emotions impact their students; I have seen teachers amplify or create student problems due to their inability to regulate their emotions or their lack of awareness of how they impact their students and classes. Therefore, equipping school counselors with information and skills in mindfulness and emotion regulation would enable them to address a weakness in teacher preparation programs. This shift may also help minimize how much time the school counselor spends delivering responsive services, as students may consult the school counselor when they believe their teacher is treating them unfairly, which tends to be more likely when teachers lack self-awareness.

In the present research, one of the most impactful findings was that participants found the information about how human emotions work to be extremely useful. I recommend enhanced training in the biology and neuroscience underlying human emotional responses (e.g., fight, flight, freeze), and how our brains are wired to respond in predictable ways. This information can help counselors in grounding their own understanding of emotional responses, and help them assist teachers in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities in responding to student emotions in productive ways. None of the CARE participants in this sample indicated that they engaged in regular mindfulness practice. Instead, they engaged in sporadic practice of mindfulness when the mood struck. Research suggests that regular, daily practice of mindfulness can create
changes in brain structures; therefore, the potency of the CARE intervention is likely to be increased by requiring a commitment to regular practice of mindfulness. Participants in MBSR, the most researched mindfulness intervention, are required to make a commitment to daily practice throughout their involvement in the eight-week intervention program. Therefore, one recommendation for future CARE participants is that they be required to commit to daily mindfulness practice as that may potentially enhance the effects of the CARE intervention.

School personnel who complete professional development programs like CARE describe their experiences as crucial in shifting their perspective in their classrooms. However, as these programs are currently being developed and piloted in various locations, little has been done to address sustainability. Therefore, it seems important to develop additional structures for CARE graduates to continue to connect with one another and be reminded of what they learned through CARE; while people often have good intentions after completing an impactful development program, they generally need some sort of accountability measures to assist them in maintaining change. I recommend that two graduates of each CARE cohort who are interested in coordinating follow-up meetings be nominated as CARE follow-up coordinators, and be provided with key training content and follow-up exercises. These site or location-based CARE graduates would coordinate follow-up meetings, and serve as ongoing liaisons with current CARE project staff. These follow up groups would also provide a wonderful opportunity to gather additional qualitative data regarding how participants continue to integrate CARE at various time intervals following completion of the program.
Alternatively, sustainability could be addressed through involving school counselors in the CARE program. School counselors are an untapped resource in building capacity and sustaining commitment to CARE practices. School counselors are ideally situated to provide support and potentially organize sustainability groups for graduates of mindfulness programs and those interested in them. Also, because of their training in human growth and development as well as wellness, school counselors may be the most qualified personnel in schools to continue to champion CARE in a school/district after training is complete. Therefore, I believe that expanding training to school counselors is a crucial step in sustaining the effects of CARE training.

**Limitations of the Study**

Limitations of the study include sample size, sample representation, and reliance on self-report data. My sample included eight participants. My sample was recruited from Pennsylvania, which limits geographic diversity. All participants in the study were Caucasian, so there was an absence of racial diversity in this sample. In addition, the sample consisted mostly of women. It is important to note that transferability, the extent to which the findings are transferable to other settings, and not generalizability is the aim of the current study (Miller-Day, 2004). Therefore, the findings of the present study will only be transferable to school personnel in Pennsylvania and similar settings.

While I engaged in participant-observation, and interacted with every single participant in this study face-to-face on at least two occasions prior to recruiting their participation in the study, interviews were the primary source of data used. So, I relied on self-report data through individual interviews to address my research questions.
Therefore, the trustworthiness of this research could have been enhanced by using additional sources of data.

**Directions for Future Research**

This research was designed to address a gap in the existing literature regarding mindfulness-based interventions and their applications with school personnel. The current research employed a qualitative design to give voice to how a group of school personnel experience and integrate CARE. It was designed to address the “how is mindfulness helpful” question on an individual level (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009). Additional research that is designed to tune into the lived experiences of educators who participate in CARE and other mindfulness-based intervention programs is needed.

The ways in which people integrated mindfulness and described and reflected on their use of mindfulness varied in the present study; this illuminates the need for more mixed methods research, where qualitative strategies are utilized alongside quantitative strategies. In addition, the integration of qualitative program evaluation into larger-scale studies may provide valuable feedback for program improvement. Additional qualitative research on CARE has the potential to assist in the development and refinement of measures associated with how people internalize and apply what they learn from CARE, and ultimately to help clarify how participants are different as a result of their involvement in the intervention.

Participants reported using mindfulness with their partners; it may be interesting to corroborate evidence from partners to get an additional perspective from the partner of the CARE participant. Partners of CARE participants may have unique insight into how their CARE-trained partners are implementing strategies, namely by being able to
provide feedback about their behaviors at home. This could include information about the extent to which the CARE-trained partner is ruminating about school, has difficulty managing emotions, and is engaging in self-care sorts of activities.

I am also particularly curious what sort of insight and feedback may arise from explorations of pre-CARE and post-CARE narratives. Exploring narratives of CARE participants prior to and following CARE would provide a unique way to learn more about how they discuss their work responsibilities, work climate, students, and their organizational settings. Narratives would provide a window into attributions about responsibility and blame as well as a more contextualized sense of coping strategies.
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Appendix A

Composite Change Scores Used for Selecting Participants

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Appendix B

Informed Consent

PENN STATE UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO BE A RESEARCH SUBJECT

Improving Classroom Learning Environments by Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE) Qualitative Interview

Principal Investigator: Dr. Patricia Jennings, Prevention Research Center, Penn State University, S 126 C Henderson Bldg., University Park, PA 16802, 814-863-8207, Paj16@psu.edu

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Patricia Jennings, M.Ed., Ph.D. a researcher in the Prevention Research Center is conducting a research study to evaluate the effectiveness of a training program designed to help teachers learn useful skills for dealing with emotions in daily life and to determine whether this results in improvements in the classroom environment. Under the supervision and direction of Dr. Jennings, Jennifer Sharp, M.A., (doctoral candidate in Counselor Education) is collecting additional information from teachers who participated in the 2010-2011 CARE training in Harrisburg, PA. We are seeking to gather information about how teachers apply mindfulness practices following participation in CARE. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a teacher who has completed the Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE) training.

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in the study, the following will occur:

You will be asked to participate in a face-to-face interview lasting approximately 60-90 minutes. Interviews will be audiotaped, and participants will be asked to select a name for the purpose ensuring the confidentiality of the information provided. Approximately 2-3 weeks following the interview, you may be contacted via email or phone for brief follow up questions. (If your email address and/or internet access should change during the course of the study, please notify the CARE project immediately so that this change may be accommodated.)

Total time involved for all research activities will be approximately 1-2 hours.

C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

1. The interview questions are designed to promote self-awareness and reflective thinking, which may be mildly uncomfortable for some individuals; however your participation is completely voluntary, and you may discontinue participation at any time.

2. Confidentiality: Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy; however, your records will be kept confidential to the degree permitted by the technology used. No
guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by third parties. All records resulting from this study will be stored in locked cabinets with only your identification number linked to them. They will be destroyed as soon as the data on them has been transcribed and coded or by January 1, 2016, whichever comes first. Only Dr. Jennings and her assistants will have access to the study records. Records and data collected will not be made available to any others, including administrators or representatives of your school or your district. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study.

**D. BENEFITS**
The opportunity to engage in reflective interviewing may help you process training information and may further the integration of your training experiences.

**E. COSTS**
The costs to you of participating in this study are solely in terms of time involvement.

**F. PAYMENT**
You will be compensated with a $50 Amazon.com gift certificate for your participation in the research activities. Gift certificates will be sent via email upon receipt of the follow-up survey.

**G. RIGHT TO ASK QUESTIONS**
Please contact Dr. Patricia Jennings at (814) 863-8207 with questions, complaints or concerns about this research. You can also call this number if you feel this study has harmed you. If you have any questions, concerns, problems about your rights as a research participant or would like to offer input, please contact The Pennsylvania State University’s Office for Research Protections (ORP) at (814) 865-1775. The ORP cannot answer questions about research procedures. All questions about research procedures can only be answered by the principal investigator.

**H. CONSENT**
PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. Your decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on your present or future status as a student or employee at PSU. You have received two copies of the consent form, one to sign and return to the Principal Investigator and one for you to keep.

By signing below I indicate that I am at least 18 years of age, and I agree to participate in this study. I understand that any of my quotes used in this study will remain anonymous.

Signature (participant): ____________________________  Date: ____________________

Print Name: ____________________________________
Appendix C

Interview and Research Questions

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<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Research Question Link</th>
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<td>Q1. Take me through a typical day in your life, discussing both your personal and professional roles and responsibilities in the process. (Have you heard the saying about wearing many hats—where one puts on a hat for each different role he/she assumes. Can you describe to me those different hats you wear throughout your day at school?)</td>
<td>The purpose of this question is to warm-up participants and get them talking. It is a grand tour question which is designed to be easily accessible and requires minimal reflection to answer (Glesne, 2006).</td>
<td></td>
<td>Question 2: What do participants experience as stressful in the context of their professional lives?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2. Now that you have identified those roles and responsibilities in your daily life, can you help me understand what challenges (struggles, tensions) arise in the context of you navigating your day?</td>
<td>The purpose of this question is to engage participants around the points of tension or stress that come up in their daily lives. The rationale behind this question is that identifying points of tension may provide greater insight into their everyday lives.</td>
<td>stress</td>
<td>Question 2: What do participants experience as stressful in the context of their professional lives?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q3. How is it that you became involved in the work that you do?</td>
<td>The purpose of this question is to build rapport as well as to gain insight into participants’ motivations for entering the profession.</td>
<td>Motivation for entering profession</td>
<td>Question 1: What key themes/main ideas emerge when educators discuss their professional roles.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q4. Will you share a story with me about how you addressed a difficult work situation prior to involvement in CARE?</td>
<td>The purpose of this question is for participants to self-identify a situation in which they applied one or more CARE practices and share that story with me in detail.</td>
<td>Application of mindfulness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q5. Will you share a story with me about how you addressed a difficult work situation after involvement in CARE?</td>
<td>The purpose of this question is to attempt to gain perspective into a participant’s experience of CARE. This question is specifically designed to provide participants with a platform to articulate what they took away from involvement in the CARE training.</td>
<td>Individual frame for mindfulness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q6. A colleague you work with found out you were involved in CARE. She asks you to tell her about your experience. What you would you say? (How would you describe CARE to your colleague?)</td>
<td>A question designed to assess whether participants self-report making changes following involvement in the CARE program?</td>
<td>Self-reported behavior change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q7. Have you made changes in the way you do things in your work setting following the CARE training?</td>
<td>Another question designed to provide participants with a platform to articulate what they</td>
<td>Changes following CARE intervention</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Q7a. (If yes to Q7) Tell me about the changes you have made following the CARE</td>
<td></td>
<td>Question 4. How do CARE participants describe and reflect upon their involvement in the program?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7b. (If no to Q7) Help me understand the barriers that you have encountered that keep you from making changes following the CARE training.</td>
<td>A question designed to allow participants to identify no effect from the intervention and provide Barriers to implementing mindfulness</td>
<td>Question 4. How do CARE participants describe and reflect upon their involvement in the program?</td>
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## Appendix D

### Codebook

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<td>Waking Up</td>
<td>Interviewee makes direct or indirect reference to waking up or getting out of bed, and describes what he/she does in the morning prior to leaving his/her home to go to school.</td>
<td>Wake up – I get everything ready the night before. I’m not a great morning person, so I’ve got everything planned the night before, so pretty much I get up and my routine is shower, breakfast, bags are packed, get in the car, and go. It’s pretty standard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routines</td>
<td>Interviewee refers to arriving to school, activities or events that happen during the course of a normal school day, or describes routines that he/she implements regularly following the end of the school day. All comments related to preparing for the school day (after leaving one’s home) or staying after the required contract day are captured here.</td>
<td>And I will usually leave the house around 6:30 or 7:00 to get to work. We start at 7:30, but it’s really nice to be there by 7:00 or so just to get in the space, just to be in the space while it’s still quiet. I found that to be really helpful in this particular position as well.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schedule/time during day</td>
<td>Description of an event/activity that happens during the course of one’s day that is paired with either reflective or emotional comment. Statements in which an interview expresses time stress are captured here.</td>
<td>Sometimes I get lunch; most times I get lunch. I’m trying to do better at making sure I get that time because sometimes there’s an impromptu meeting or somebody’s having some drama of some sort.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching Strategies</td>
<td>Interviewee describes a specific strategy that he/she implements or has implemented in his/her classroom throughout the school day.</td>
<td>And then when they come back from special we have five minutes of quiet time where they do something to get calm, it’s basically for those days that are gym days too, to kind of get them refocused. They can lay their head down if they want. They can draw, they can read, whatever they want to do with that five minutes to calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escape Fantasy</td>
<td>Interviewee suggests taking on a lifestyle that is radically different than his/her current lifestyle.</td>
<td>There really is [a lot involved with running a household] and sometimes it makes me feel insane. It really does. Like what am I doing? Let’s go to Africa and just live on the savannah. You can fight off the lions and I’ll...whatever.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles in the Family</td>
<td>Interviewee makes a direct or indirect reference to the roles he/she assumes within his/her family.</td>
<td>Then there are the obligations I feel to my family - my parents and my sister - to make sure that they see my daughter because they want us to come visit. So at least one night a week when I could go home with my daughter – the days that my husband’s at work – I go to their house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Statements/New Learning</td>
<td>The interviewee makes an insightful statement that demonstrates understanding of a complex situation/problem. The comment may relate to a behavioral shift, life event or a personal realization.</td>
<td>I always kind of thought that the class reacted to how the teacher was, like if the teacher was calmer then the class would be, but I know how to kind of do it more now. Just kind of just center myself and focus on what I’m doing and be mindful and everything and then just go from there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efforts that connect with CARE</td>
<td>The interviewee connects something he/she learned in CARE with a practice or activity he/she already does. The practice or activity may be work-related or beyond the bounds of work.</td>
<td>I’m a part of a support group. There’s a lot of alcoholism in my family, and so I’m a part of Al-Anon which has helped me to kinda balance life as well and help take care of myself. It ties in very closely with what CARE taught like as far as taking things easy and just kinda taking care of yourself is their whole premise. I’m learning not to be a co-dependent, all of those good things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges/ Frustrations</td>
<td>Interviewee discusses his/her challenges and frustrations related to work.</td>
<td>So things don’t work properly, like the copy machine or people aren’t here. That’s a definite challenge because there have been a lot of sick people this year, teachers-wise, and sometimes they’ll be</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
two of us out on the team in one day and it’s like there’s not subs to cover or nobody called for a sub.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentions CARE training</th>
<th>Interviewee discusses CARE, speaks generally about CARE practices he/she has incorporated in some domain of his/her life, or utilizes specific phrases introduced in the CARE training (e.g., elevator, deep breathing, mindful walking).</th>
<th>I would say that I don’t use it the way – I know I don’t use it the way it should be used. I don’t use it proactively. I definitely use most of the strategies reactively. I let my elevator get too high and then I stop and ground myself and breathe. Or my body is aching and I do a body scan after the fact or I guess really that’s what that’s used for. But I mean, mainly here, I definitely eat more mindfully because I’m not here shoving my food in my mouth in the room like I used to, I’m out amongst people even if they are children and thinking about what I’m eating. I definitely use the breaths all the time and giving myself some wait time and the kids some wait time. I don’t think I’m so (brief pause) reactive, so quick to react as I formally was.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using CARE outside of school</td>
<td>Interviewee provides an specific example of a time in which he/she used something he/she learned through CARE outside of the school setting in his/her personal life. All comments related to how interviewees use CARE in their personal lives are captured here.</td>
<td>At home when I get angry, my husband will come in and be like why are you going to sleep? I’m like I’m not going to sleep; I am laying here thinking about my breathing and like my body scan now, eventually some of the times I do, I go from angry to asleep because I’m so exhausted, but I’ve been using that at home as my coping mechanism, when I get angry, I go lay in the bed and I do a body scan and normally after that I lay there a little longer and think about what I need to say or what I need to do, and then we’re pretty good about not holding onto anything, so that helps me think it all through quickly, so we can get on with whatever is the problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekends</td>
<td>Interviewee makes a reference to his/her weekend or describes how he/she spends time during the</td>
<td>And then even Sunday’s just like I just want to do nothing, just my own – Like because I still have bills to do and usually something</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
weekend. school-wise which I tend not to do. I’m a lot better at that this year. That’s why I get piled up at school. I take it home and I just make up my mind I’m not even looking at it. I’ll figure it out tomorrow and deal with it then but it doesn’t always work. But a lot a times I do. I just want to sit on the couch for an hour or two and watch meaningless TV with the dog.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comments about Students</th>
<th>Interviewee makes a reference to students or describes the students with whom he/she has contact.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>And when my kids come in – I’ve got quite a crew this year. They are the most rambunctious group I’ve had in a long, long time. They – Oh, my gosh. You know, I only have 17 and first grade has 26. So I know like that’s where I’m headed next year. But a couple of people have said to me, “Yeah, but your 17, Sue, are nothing like our 26.” And they’ve always been like this since they were in kindergarten. They’re loud – very loud. They are always in each other’s business. They’re really nice kids and like everyone – individual one’s just really a neat kid but oh my gosh, just literally bouncing off the walls. I mean rolling on the floor, jumping up trying to hit my snowflakes or hearts. I mean laying across the desk. It’s just really unbelievable. The other day my neighbor teacher stood at the doorway. I’m like “Just stand here and watch my kids for a little bit.” And her mouth just dropped. She’s like “Oh, my gosh.” I said “I know. This is how they come in.” I mean you can hear them running down the ramp – like stomp, stomp, stomp. And they are just quite a crew.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time at Home</th>
<th>Description of how interviewee spends his/her time at home.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>read, take naps, pet the dogs, watch TV, watch all the TV I didn’t watch during the week because I was in bed. More of those solitary activities that just kind of...I don’t have anything that I have to do or anywhere I have to be or anyone. No one’s depending on me for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
anything and because I’ve so, so many kids here, people here, depend on me for so much every day, that it’s nice to have that freedom of knowing no one’s going to need me right now. No one’s going to need me to drop everything and do anything. I’m not going to have to solve anyone’s problems. I just can be. That’s pretty much what I do.

<p>| Balance/Self-care activities | Interviewee describes either a behavior or a cognition he/she uses to feel better. Comments regarding a struggle to care for oneself or to negotiate one’s responsibilities with the hope of balance are included here. | I try to go to Curves like two nights during the week and then on Saturday and sometimes it’s just – it’s late because they – like they don’t stay open that long or sometimes it may be a Monday, I’m just too tired so I’ll just wait and go – like instead of Monday, Wednesday, I’ll go Tuesday, Thursday but – And then sometimes when you get home that late – then I have to hurry and eat. So you run out the door to get there in time and then I feel bad because I feel like I hardly spend any time with him. |
| Time Management | Interviewee either explicitly uses the term “time management” or discusses challenges related to time. | Definitely time-management. I’ll plan to come in early to get a certain thing done, or not get it done at night, plan to come in, and then there’s always something that occurs that distracts you from getting that done and prevent you from getting that done. So definitely the time-management and the scheduling. |
| Relational References | Interviewee makes a statement relating to a member of his/her family. It may include a family member’s reaction to the interviewee or the influence of the family member on the interviewee. | I was stressed out whenever the school told me I had to be out of here by 7:00, I lost it. Like I thought that was ridiculous, but he [participant’s husband] really liked it. Because that meant no matter what, I’d be home. I’d be leaving here at 7:00. |
| Job Comments | Interviewee makes a comment related to the | Class size, we went from 22, 23 to 30. They closed the alternative schools, so we have all the bad kids back. We also have – they |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phenomenon</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adjusting Expectations/Shift in Perspective</strong></td>
<td>Interviewee describes either a specific example or a general approach they have adopted that involves adjusting expectations or a change in perspective. Comments evidencing adjusted expectations or a shift in perspective are included here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letting Go</strong></td>
<td>Interviewee’s statement demonstrates non-attachment to an outcome, and/or the ability to accept a situation as it is.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**circumstances or context in which he/she works.**

closed some of the full-time learning support classrooms, so we have a lot of the little kids back. I have a kid — and can’t add and — he can’t add three plus six on his fingers. He’s in fourth grade. We have ELL kids in fourth grade who speak no English, and they’re in a regular classroom.

And I try to tell him [my father] like you should go out, like just once a week go to the senior center, like they have lunch and everything, like you’ll know everybody. And they won’t. And they won’t so I had to sort of give it up and say if this is — Like to my sister and I. She’s like “You know what? If Dad keels over mowing the grass when he has two grandsons that can do it right here in town, then that’s how he’s meant to die.” You hate to be like that, but when you can’t do anything for them and they choose to just not have the social interaction they need, I don’t know what to do. So I have kind of like tried to separate myself in the last year which is hard but it’s just what it is

when the mom left, she’s like, “Okay, well, next time I’m here, I hope I see some more teaching going on.” I’m thinking, “Okay. Just breathe and walk quietly into your room. There’s nothing you can do about this parent’s opinion at the moment.” And I was able just to kinda – she saw our classroom for like 10 to 12 minutes at a point where the children weren’t very focused to begin with. And then she came and took me away for longer than I thought she was going to take me away for and kinda getting her daughter and the students involved in – you know it was just a bad situation. And I think a lot of other times I would’ve beat myself up and felt like I have to
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Checking Out/Time Away</th>
<th>Interviewee describes his/her practices around “checking out” and mentally shifting his/her attention away from work responsibilities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for the most part, I’ll say, “Okay, ten, 10:30, whenever I’m done with it, it’s in the bag, I’m done.” Parents, they can wait until the next day. If there’s an email, because sometimes they’ll pop up later at night, I’m going to read for 20 minutes and then I’m going to go to bed. This is my time, and I’ve just got to let it go. It can wait until tomorrow. It’s not a big deal. Nothing’s going to happen between now and then.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional Reactions</th>
<th>Interviewee makes a statement in which he/she describes his/her emotional reaction to a situation. Instances in which participant explicitly mentions a feeling, and those instances when expression of a feeling appear to be the key purpose of the statement are included here.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>around that time, I changed positions into a learning support position. And that was actually a healthy move because then I didn't have as much – my daily schedule wasn’t as stressful, and then my evenings weren’t as stressful either. So I was grateful, and my husband was very grateful. And I was just a lot happier.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body Sensations/Physical Symptoms</th>
<th>Interviewee discusses experiencing physical symptoms or body sensations either in the past or in the present.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I haven’t felt that in a long time and I realized that when I had that day yesterday. It was like, “Wow! I haven’t felt like this –” Like my chest felt tight, even on my drive home. I was like taking a deep breath and feeling like the pressure in there that felt like I needed to take a deep breath and couldn’t. I used to have a lot and now I don’t.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boundaries/Setting</th>
<th>Interviewee discusses the limits he/she sets with</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have to have a solid break from it and then come back the next day and that my solid break is full of my daughter and my husband, who</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundaries</td>
<td>others or with him/herself around work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tired/Worn Out/Depleted/Burnout</td>
<td>Interviewee makes a statement in which he/she expresses feeling tired, overwhelmed, burdened, or exhausted in relation to his/her job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priorities</td>
<td>Interviewee uses the word “priority” and/or comments about the ways he/she thinks about prioritizing responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples of Using CARE</td>
<td>Interviewee provides a specific example of a time in which he/she used something he/she learned through CARE. (An example includes reference to a particular situation, student, and/or setting in which the CARE skill was applied.) Generic references to CARE or CARE skills are not included in this code.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies for Success</td>
<td>Interviewee makes a general comment about how he/she is able to successfully navigate his/her job. The comment refers to a strategy used outside of the school day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Assessment/Assessment</td>
<td>Interviewee engages in assessment either of their behavior, their skills, or a situation in which they are/were involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in Follow Up</td>
<td>Interviewee expresses interest in connecting with other people who completed the CARE program with them or participating in some sort of CARE follow-up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting with Peers</td>
<td>Interviewee comments about making contact with peers in his/her building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Stressors</td>
<td>Interviewee discusses stresses that fall outside of the school day and that are not directly related to his/her professional responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix E

### Sample Table Illustrating Categorization of Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning Unit</th>
<th>Condensed Meaning unit (Description close to text)</th>
<th>Condensed meaning unit (Interpretation of meaning)</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No matter what you do, you don’t handle it correctly either, to the victims or some other parents’ point of view.</td>
<td>No matter what you do, you don’t handle it</td>
<td>Teacher response judged</td>
<td>Being watched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So my cohort and I are having to do all the work that normally three teachers do – like the planning and the prep – we’ve been having to do it for that room all year, and then that room’s off the chains, so then it throws our kids off because we switch classes.</td>
<td>Impact of temporary teacher in adj. room</td>
<td>Expansion of role</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But nobody was going to duty, but me and my friend and we were out there in the freezing cold by ourselves, fighting with kids and it wasn’t even our kids. It’s the [school name] kids. So they’re middle-schoolers and they have zero…even here it’s all about rapport.</td>
<td>Only one on duty in bad weather</td>
<td>Lack of support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the last minute things here, you didn’t know this was going to happen and someone shows up or someone needs you. There are tons of behavior issues; that TSS I mentioned, her and the student sit there and argue all afternoon. So, not knowing my place because they’re not a school employee, my place in that role to fix the problem, not being able to fix the problem. I feel like I’ve done everything that I can to stop the arguing, and it still hasn’t.</td>
<td>Last minute interruptions; dealing with non-school employees</td>
<td>Last minute interruptions; dealing with non-school employees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So it’s just – it’s just a crazy year, and these kids need your attention 100 percent of the time. Some actually demand it. Others, you don’t have a choice because they’ll hit somebody or kick somebody, or – and they are constantly on each other. With 30 kids in a classroom this size, that’s not surprising, but then when you throw in – I have 15 kids out of 30 who are behavior issues –</td>
<td>these kids need your attention 100 percent of the time. Some demand</td>
<td>Students are incredibly needy</td>
<td>Student-related</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
abnormally bad behaviors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School vs. home challenge</th>
<th>School vs. home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I would say the other biggest challenge would be the school versus home one. I spend a lot of time here. I’m very—I can’t leave. I will never leave right as the day’s…I mean if I’m not here by 7:20, I start worrying that I’m not going to be ready for the day even though I know I didn’t leave without being ready for the day as it was.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjusting plans to connect with students re: their weekends</th>
<th>Teaching vs. responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

there’s days I just sit on top the table here and chitchat with them. Like forget the morning work, let’s just – especially after a weekend. I just sort of let them tell me everything and visit each other because getting anything done in the morning’s not going to happen anyway which is really hard for me. Because when I was at my old building I could lay their paperwork on their desk, their morning work, whatever it was, and they knew – empty their book bag, put their things in their cubby and get started.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kicked out of workplace @ 7pm</th>
<th>System-related</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I was stressed out whenever the school told me I had to be out of here by 7:00, I lost it. Like I thought that was ridiculous, but he really liked it. Because that meant no matter what, I’d be home. I’d be leaving here at 7:00.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No follow through on discipline</th>
<th>System-related</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Appendix F
Sample Researcher Memo

Participant: R  Date: January 19, 2012  Start time: 4:00pm

SELF-REFLECTIVE/RESEARCHER NOTES
This second interview went a lot more smoothly. I felt relieved (and excited) about that.

I appreciated R’s detailed description of her day. She took a bit over 20 minutes to respond to the first part of question 1, so this was the first interview in which I really felt the “grand tour” nature of this question and was able to make mental and actual notes about what to revisit with R.

I appreciated R’s openness and honesty, and really felt empathetic about her situation. I really noticed myself having a sense of admiration toward her for her ability to find positivity and continue to go back to a job that is really challenging to her. I felt sad to hear about her frustration and her reports of mismatch between her skills/comfort zone and her position. I found it easy to interview R because her ability to share, and her answers were a lot more lengthy than those of A (Interview 1.13.2012). I wonder how gender plays into that? I wonder how my nervousness/comfort level played into that? I was at a neutral location for this interview, a place I had been a number of times before (at least 4), whereas with A, I was at his place of employment and we connected only after I thought he’d forgotten about our appointment. I also felt out of place (and like I stuck out) in an urban school in which I was primarily surrounded by African American people, whereas I did not have those feelings tonight with this participant in this interview setting.

There was a part of me that wanted to ask “have you had an abortion” when the participant was discussing how a student accused her of having an abortion as part of one of her examples of how she utilized CARE skills (breathing and wait time) in responding to a student that challenges her patience. I felt a bit inspired by R’s sense of faith and her ability to utilize her faith as a strong source of support despite her challenges with her job.

Are the questions set up in a way to be gender-biased to make them more accessible for women? What were the differences (in the dynamic between me and the interviewee, different personalities, my different level of comfort in the setting (A vs. R)?

This participant was really (raw, open, honest) transparent about currently being in a position that was not good for her.

I was left wondering…was this participant accurately aware of her own strengths and weaknesses? She seemed a bit hard on herself about having ADHD and not being a very good teacher. I wondered how accurate her self-judgments were, and/or whether the extremely challenging context (with emotionally disturbed students and constant behavior management), skewed her perspective of her teaching skills.
I started to wonder what the label “emotional disturbance” consists of, and whether these mostly are children and teens who have experienced trauma(s), attachment issues, etc.

R expressed a lot of overwhelm about her job, and I empathized with her while also feeling really glad not to be in her position.

I incorporated a bit more self-disclosure throughout this interview. I believe that my intention with self-disclosure was to validate the participant, to establish myself as someone who has had shared experiences, and to build rapport. I did notice at one point that I told R “you deserve to be able to use your skills in a way that’s meaningful to you” when she was discussing her frustrations with being the primary teacher and behavior modification manager. I will want to remain aware throughout the research of my tendency to be pulled to validate and normalize interviewee experiences, and be sure to continue to reflect whether I’m shifting into full counselor mode, or whether I’m mostly being authentic and immediate with the interviewee.

Was rapport different with this person during the training? Had I spent more time talking with R during the CARE training? I know I ate at least one meal (probably more) with each of them.

What is the balance of validation/supportive listening? While my goal is not to maintain neutrality (as I don’t think that’s possible), I want to be genuine/immediate with the participant without hurting the interview process. Although, when I think about doing a bit of self-disclosure or validation, it felt really authentic.

I drove back from [city name] after the interview, and it started snowing about one hour before I made it back to State College. In the last hour of the drive, the driving speed shifted between 15-35mph and I slid a fair amount on the roads. In the moment I was a bit afraid of losing control of my car, so in some ways the fear overrode the freshness of the interview content because after leaving [location of interview] I had been bustling with energy and had feelings of satisfaction regarding how the interview flowed. However, I listened to the interview upon arriving home to jog my mind and record the shifting I did with question wording and order since I felt this interview really flowed.

**Methodological Notes**

I did tweek the questions a bit. I shifted the order of questions tonight, and added a new one, which was “how do you do what you do and stay sane?” as a closing question. So, I started with questions 1 & 2, both of which this participant elaborated on and took some time to respond. Her responses enabled me to naturally do follow up questions based upon her statements. R brought up self-care in response to question 2 (which is one of the things I really am hoping to get at), without my using the word. I will want to continue to evaluate whether I’m getting the information I want about work from question 3.
I got rid of question number 4 (will you share a story with me about how you addressed a
difficult work situation after involvement in CARE). I slightly adjusted the wording for
question 6 (a colleague you work with…). I’ll want to listen to the audio and identify
what exactly I said that was different, because I think it worked well. I moved question 7
(have you made changes following CARE). I knew that first interview (with A) didn’t
flow quite like I was hoping it would, so I did my best to bring presence and be fully
attentive in this interview. I did this with the intention of finding a way for the questions
to be strung together in an order that helped the participant progressively reflect (as
opposed to asking her to go in circles) and have her flushing out the topic in more and
more depth, and detail from multiple angles.

Order of questions/adjustments to questions:
1. Take me through a typical day in your life, discussing both your personal and
   professional roles and responsibilities in the process.
   (Have you heard the saying about wearing many hats—where one puts on a hat for each
different role he/she assumes. Can you describe to me those different hats you wear
throughout your day at school?) Used the different hats question—after listening to R
discuss her day (grand tour question).

2. Now that you have identified those roles and responsibilities in your daily life, can you
   help me understand what challenges (struggles, tensions) arise in the context of you
   navigating your day? (I dropped “your day.”)

3. How is it that DID you became involved in the work that you do?

7. So, I’m curious…have you made changes in the way you do things, in navigating your
day or in your work setting following the CARE training?
7a. (If yes to Q7) Tell me about the changes you have made following the CARE training.
7b. (If no to Q7) Help me understand the barriers that you have encountered that keep
you from making changes following the CARE training.

4. Will you share a story with me about how you addressed a difficult work situation
   prior to involvement in CARE?

5. Will you share a story with me about how you addressed a difficult work situation after
   involvement in CARE?
   Is there a recent example of a challenging work situation where you’ve done one of those
   things?

6. A colleague you work with found out you were involved in CARE. She asks you to tell
   her about your experience. What would you say? (How would you describe CARE to
   your colleague?) If CARE were to be offered again, how would you describe it to one of
   your co-workers?

7. How do you do what you do and stay sane?
8. Is there anything that I should ask you that I haven’t asked to reflect on what you’re using?

**ANALYTIC MEMO**

(This is the place to discuss conceptual and theoretical ideas, to discuss what is emerging as well as the processes/mechanisms that I think are going on.)

In response to the participant’s comment about self-care, and deciding when to stay in (stay at home without plans) versus always having “to dos/meetings/volunteer work”, I brainstormed aloud saying something like “I’ve had similar struggles and I kind of wonder whether that has to do with certain types of people, or whether in some ways we’re socialized to do this…how do we end up like this? We really have to work to navigate our roles and responsibilities?” This is definitely one of my questions as I’m attempting to make sense of participant experiences and my own experience. How come it’s such a big struggle for educators to take things off of their plates and set boundaries around our time and energetic resources?

Educators have so many emotionally charged social interactions with folks throughout the day that some sort of strategy/resource for navigating it is advantageous (necessary, I think!).

**OTHER NOTES**

Mention to Tish & Kari that participants seem to be curious about what is going on with the project and how they’re doing.
JENNIFER SHARP, M.A., Ph.D.

EDUCATION
Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision, Pennsylvania State University, Anticipated 2012
Dissertation: Educators’ Experiences of Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE)™

M.A. in Counselor Education, Specialization in School Counseling, Ohio State University, 2006

B.A. in Psychology, Minor in Religion, Denison University, 2002

PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING EXPERIENCE
School Counselor, Weld Central Junior High School, August 2006-May 2008


Doctoral Counseling Practicum, CEDAR Clinic, Pennsylvania State University, 2008

School Counseling Intern, Linden-McKinley High School, 2005-2006

TEACHING AND TRAINING EXPERIENCE
Peers Helping Reaffirm, Educate & Empower (PHREE) Coordinator, Center for Women Students, Pennsylvania State University, August 2009-May 2012

Course Instructor, Pennsylvania State University, 2010
• Organization and Administration of Pupil Services (CN ED 508)
• Individual Counseling Procedures (CN ED 506)

Counseling Supervisor, CEDAR Clinic, Pennsylvania State University, Fall 2009-Spring 2011

PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS


