

MATTERS OF CARE IN ALBERTA'S "INSPIRING EDUCATION" POLICY:
A CRITICAL FEMINIST DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the discursive treatment of care and caring relationships in educational policy in the Canadian province of Alberta. The object of this exploration is *Inspiring Education*, an ensemble of K-12 schooling policies. Feminist ethics of care literature and the work of theorists Joan C. Tronto, Virginia Held, and Hannah Arendt inform a critical interpretation of the policy texts. Closer analysis is achieved through techniques of discourse analysis, drawing primarily from the work of Norman Fairclough. This thesis is guided by the question “How are ‘care’ and ‘caregiving’ discursively represented—or not represented—in the policy texts of *Inspiring Education*?” The purpose of this project is two-fold: (1) to illuminate particular discourses within educational policy texts and to consider the impact of those discourses on care practices across our society; and (2) to consider how the discursive treatment of teachers within these texts influences the possibility of a caring teacher-student relationship. The four discourses identified each constrain the possibility of caring relationships in particular ways. The first two discourses are related to the construction of the “educated Albertan of 2030” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 5): Personally Responsible and subject to Private-Sector Norms. The second set of discourses is related to the construction of the teacher: Neoliberal Professionalism and Teacher-as-Facilitator. The implication of these discourses is that the maintenance of caring relationships will require greater sacrifice, that it will continue to be the hardest work, done by the very people excluded from the political process of assigning care responsibility. By not acknowledging the role of care in our society and in our school system, we risk permitting the *de facto* methods of assigning responsibility to remain undisrupted and unfair.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Laura Bohachyk.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

Recently, there has been a lot of discussion in the media about maternity leave. Last year, Japan's prime minister announced longer maternity leave for new moms.¹ Meanwhile, Sweden and Quebec, in addition to maternity leaves, have "daddy leaves" which can only be taken by new dads.² In the United States, lack of universal leave for new parents is a consistent point of contention.³ Meanwhile, Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook, founded the Lean In movement, which encourages women not to "leave before you leave," referring to a perceived tendency for women to disengage from work earlier than is necessary before having a child.⁴

Culturally, the West spends a great deal of time debating the choices of parents within the intimate space of the family and home. Articles, blog posts, and best-selling books abound, describing "tiger moms" and "helicopter parents," universal daycare, live-in caregivers, whole food diets, and screen-time. Jennifer Senior's (2014) "All Joy and No Fun: The Paradox of Modern Parenthood" spent seven weeks on The New York Times Best Seller list in the year of its publication, and her TED talk has surpassed one million views.

¹ <http://m.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/09/the-economic-case-for-paternity-leave/380716/>

² <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/01/the-daddy-track/355746/>

³ see <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/03/studying-us-families-men-are-where-women-were-30-years-ago/284515/>, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/careers/career-advice/maternity-leave-basics-canada-vs-the-us/article4197679/>, and <http://www.theguardian.com/money/shortcuts/2013/nov/29/parental-leave-rights-around-world>

⁴ http://www.ted.com/talks/sheryl_sandberg_why_we_have_too_few_women_leaders/transcript?language=en#t-239000

For many, the decisions surrounding care—the care of infants, children, the elderly, the infirm, etc.—are considered to be private matters. However, private, familial iterations of care and public, institutional versions are interdependent. In the province of Alberta, for example, where I was born, raised, trained, and am currently employed as an elementary school teacher, “84,000 children under the age of 18 (10.2 per cent) lived below the low income measure poverty line in 2011” (Kolkman & Moore-Kilgannon, 2013, p. 2). In this relatively wealthy province, “less than 50 percent of young children are developing appropriately in all five areas of development when they reach kindergarten” (Early Child Development Mapping Project, 2014, p. 30). Neither treating these social conditions strictly as a problem of individual families, nor strictly as a matter of public policy, will sufficiently address the needs of our children. Once the gravity of these social conditions is felt, the treatment of care and caring relationships in Alberta’s new educational policy ensemble, *Inspiring Education*, seems particularly significant. Care should be a central concern of our political activities, and yet our educational policies seem to be moving further and further away from it.

In the present moment in wealthy countries, understanding about, and distribute of, caring responsibilities is changing dramatically. These concerns are not limited to the care of infants and children. As the population ages, healthcare and long-term care systems are increasingly stretched. Whose responsibility is it to care for the elderly and infirm? Who decides? The state? The marketplace? Other institutions? Each individual? The assignment of responsibility in society is a political matter. In the social field of power where care responsibilities are being contested, there are multiple actors (Apple, 2001) with differing, and sometimes conflicting, interests. Power and influence are divided along gendered, raced, and

classed lines. It should come as no surprise that women, racial and ethnic minorities, and the economically disadvantaged have been marginalized from decision-making regarding distribution of care responsibilities.

Purpose and Research Questions

Questions about care could be approached from any number of perspectives. Because of my personal and professional experiences, I think about care from the perspective of teaching in elementary schools. The object of my analysis is educational policy. In this project, I use discourse analysis techniques to parse out some of the discourses influencing the way we care now, and the way we might understand care in the future.

The purpose of this project is two-fold: (1) to illuminate particular discourses within educational policy texts and to consider the impact of those discourses on care practices across our society; and (2) to consider how the discursive treatment of teachers within these texts influences the possibility of a caring teacher-student relationship. In order to conduct this analysis, I openly position myself as an advocate for caring relationships.

The research question guiding this project is, “How are ‘care’ and ‘caregiving’ discursively represented—or not represented—in the policy texts of *Inspiring Education*?” I will approach this question by also asking the following: Using care theory as a lens, which discourses can be identified within *Inspiring Education* which represent a particular perspective on care? How do these discourses, as well as the specific discursive treatment of teachers, effect the possibilities of a caring teacher-student relationship?

The conversation about who cares, how, and under what conditions, is of interest to anyone discontent with contemporary conditions of care, anyone contemplating the role of caring

adults in children’s lives, or anyone interested in the future of public schooling, or by extension, the work of teachers. Potentially, the audiences which would benefit from an inquiry such as this one would be professional teaching organizations (i.e., the Alberta Teachers’ Association), teacher educators, and policymakers. Further, these questions impact the role of caregivers across sectors, including those who work in daycares, medical facilities, foster care, and private homes, and those who receive care in any number of settings.

Regardless of who finds relevance in this project, the objective is political:

This is what Foucault calls “the real political task” in our society, ‘to criticize the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent, and to criticize them in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked so that we can fight them.’ (Rabinow, 1984, p. 6, as quoted in Ball, 2005, pp. 51-52)

I consider this project to be what Patti Lather (1986) refers to as “openly ideological.” I intend to illustrate the ways in which care—a foundational ethical principle in child-rearing and education—can be “so thoroughly ‘backgrounded’ as a critical part of human life that its role is hardly visible” (Tronto, 2013, p. 139).

Educational policy may not initially seem like the most relevant place to begin when asking questions about the distribution of caring responsibilities, yet I think it reveals a great deal about where these particular policymakers are directing our society:

Education is a process that creates social reality, necessarily producing something new. Education is part of the process that steers a society through historical time. Questions about the goals of education are questions about the direction in which we want a social

order to move, given that societies cannot avoid changing. This is where questions of privilege and social justice in education arise; they are fundamental to the project, not add-ons. (Connell, 2009, p. 226)

Educational policies are productive texts to analyze for discourses because they are normative (Levinson, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009); that is, educational policies articulate what should be. Educational policy is also often authorized policy, “backed by enforcement mechanisms of government” (Levinson et al., 2009, p. 770). Also, policy has loomed large in my professional life as an elementary school teacher. In 2010 the provincial ministry of education in Alberta (Alberta Education) released the “Inspiring Education Steering Committee Report” (henceforth the “Inspiring Education Report”). In that same year I began my first full-time teaching assignment. The “Inspiring Education Report” is the keystone in a policy ensemble described by the authors as a response to the changing needs of students in the twenty-first century. The authors of *Inspiring Education* ambitiously endeavour to characterize the ideal product of the provincial education system come 2030.

The Policy Context of *Inspiring Education*

Inspiring Education is the brand assigned to the Alberta government’s latest approach to education in the province. The brand represents an ensemble of reform policies and initiatives which are described by the authors as a response to the changing needs of students in the 21st century. I am critical of the authors’ myopic treatment of “needs” in these policy texts. While some needs may be changing, certainly Albertans still have a need to give and receive competent care.

The 2008 launch of “Inspiring Education: A dialogue with Albertans” was billed as “a unique public engagement initiative to take place across the province in 2009” (Alberta Education, 2008, para. 1). At its inception, “Inspiring Education: A dialogue with Albertans” was guided by five foundational values, which continue to be “critical to the success of Alberta’s education system” (Alberta Education, 2008, para. 4): *opportunity, fairness, citizenship, choice, and diversity*. The initiative was guided by a steering committee, “with members from provincial government departments and stakeholder groups” (Alberta Education, 2008, para. 7), who put together a number of policy options to be discussed at community events across the province. The steering committee, which I assume was assembled by the ministry, consisted of twenty-one members representing provincial and municipal governments, school boards, post-secondary institutions, First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, industry, and K-12 education. Concurrently, the Minister of Education—Dave Hancock, who briefly took over the premier’s office in 2014—announced “Speak Out: The Student Engagement Initiative,” designed to target the perspective of students.

These two public consultation processes, “Inspiring Education: A dialogue with Albertans” and “Speak Out: The Student Engagement Initiative,” ultimately contributed to the steering committee report, a “broad policy framework document” describing “the overall direction, principles and long-term goals for education in Alberta” (Alberta Education, n.d.-b, para. 8). Released in April 2010, the steering committee report to the minister of education (henceforth “The Inspiring Education Report”), has become the guiding document for many initiatives, including comprehensive curriculum redesign and inquiry into teaching quality.

Defining Terms

Care is a slippery concept to define. Tronto (2013) offers a broad definition of care as “*a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible*” (p. 19, emphasis in original). This definition provides a productive starting point for defining care, because Tronto articulates care as a practice—an activity that is done—rather than a feeling or a principle which can be upheld in the abstract. Noddings (2010) distinguishes between care/caring, “as the fundamental concept in the ethic of care” (p. 72) and caregiving, as “the set of activities associated with an occupation or form of work (paid or unpaid)” (p. 72). The distinction stands, “because caregiving may proceed with or without caring, and caring—as it is developed in an ethic of care—is a moral way of life, one that guides personal interactions in every domain of activity” (p. 72). Throughout this project, I use “care” (the ethical concept) to reflect “the compelling moral salience of attending to and meeting the needs of the particular others for whom we take responsibility” (Held, 2006, p. 10). I use “carework” and “caregiving” interchangeably to emphasize the activities that are done in the service of care, and I use “the ethics of care” and “care theory” to refer to the body of literature that forms the theoretical foundation of this project.

When I use *teaching* and *teacher*, I refer specifically to the particular institutional role of teacher in elementary and secondary public schools in Western countries. This role is exclusive of teachers who teach outside the school system or who teach in post-secondary institutions. While I suppose we are all teachers on some level, teachers employed in public schools are subject to moral and professional codes which may not apply to others. Teachers, as I mean it, have to take responsibility for the greater institutional power of schools.

I also distinguish between the terms *policy* and *policy texts*. When I refer to policy, I refer to “a complex, ongoing social practice of normative cultural production constituted by diverse actors across diverse contexts” (Levinson et al., 2009, p. 770). This emphasizes the practice of policy, which is different from the object of policy, or policy text. Generally, “policy text” refers to the words on the page which is published by an authorized institution (e.g., Alberta Education). However, on occasion I also use policy texts to mean “e.g., conversations and interviews, as well as the ‘multimodal’ texts (mixing language, visual images and sound) of television and the internet” (Fairclough, 2013, p. 180). This broader understanding of policy text is inclusive of texts ancillary to the central documents which may reveal important nuances about “how people see, represent, interpret and conceptualize” (Fairclough, 2013, p. 178) reality. In summary, I refer to *policy* to mean the “practice of normative cultural production,” and *policy texts* to mean the multimodal semiotic representations of the material world.

The word *discourse* has many different meanings. I use it in the manner defined by Fairclough (2013): discourses are “semiotic ways of construing aspects of the world (physical, social or mental), which can generally be identified with different positions or perspectives of different groups of social actors” (pp. 179-180). The power of this definition relative to my purpose with this project is the way it *identifies* language with perspectives of social actors—real people who construct the social world with the words and symbols they choose to use or not to use. Understanding discourses in this manner makes relevant not only the groups of social actors whose interests were valued in the policy process, but also the groups whose interests were not honoured.

Positionality

I was born and raised in an affluent suburb of Edmonton, the capital city of the resource-rich Canadian province of Alberta. My sense of belonging in Alberta motivates this project. My parents are third generation Albertans, and it is the only place I can truly call home. I am personally, politically, and professionally invested in quality public schools in the province.

My father is a loving and attentive father who, over a thirty year career with the municipal police service, provided financially for our family and spearheaded many adventures. When my mother was pregnant with my brother, her first child, she chose to forego paid employment in order to act as a full-time caregiver for our family. My mother returned to paid work seven years later, yet, to this day, she recalls those years as her best. My mother values the maintenance of caring relationships above almost all other parts of social life, and she has consistently taken on the responsibility of caring for those who need help maintaining, continuing, and repairing their world so that they can live in it as well as possible (Tronto, 2013). My mother always wanted to be a school teacher, and I would say her desire to do so was a determining factor in the subsequent graduation of both her children from the Bachelor of Education program at the University of Alberta.

My career as a teacher began reluctantly. I selected it as a course of study because I disliked the other options, my mom wanted me to do it, and I knew I could do it competently. For the past decade I have worked with children and in the field of education, but only five years ago took the plunge and accepted a full-time classroom teaching assignment. My first assignment was at a school in Edmonton which served a vulnerable population. Most of our students were new to the city or the country, the majority were learning English as an additional

language, and many were living in financially precarious households. There was no end to the needs of my students, and I felt not only the moral obligation to help, but the social pressure to be the “caring teacher,” the one whose charisma, optimism, and intense affection for students rescues young lives from the brink of catastrophe, in the style of a Hollywood movie. I still have a reluctant relationship with many aspects of the teaching profession as I experience it.

Primarily, I worry about the influence of the figure of the charismatic, loving, and caring teacher. I am concerned that it is actually dangerous, because it permits us, as citizens in a democracy, to assume that a few people—teachers, mothers, social workers, etc.—will be able to compensate for systemic inequalities and gaps in care.

Teaching as Caring Work

All teachers are expected to be caring. It is stated in the Teaching Quality Standard, the code of professional conduct applicable to teachers in Alberta:

Teachers recognize they are bound by standards of conduct expected of a caring, knowledgeable and reasonable adult who is entrusted with the custody, care or education of students or children. Teachers recognize their actions are bound in moral, ethical and legal considerations regarding their obligations to students, parents, administrators, school authorities, communities and society at large. Teachers acknowledge these obligations and act accordingly. (Government of Alberta, 1997, p. 2)

Teachers are clearly expected to behave as *caring* adults, entrusted with the *care* of students.

Yet, no thorough description of a caring relationship between adult and student has been provided by the government. Ethical concepts such as “caring,” “reasonable,” “dignity,” “trust,” and “respect” (Government of Alberta, 1997) are left largely undefined. In this undefined space,

teachers are encouraged to construct their own ethical framework, one that reflects their unique worldview. Professional judgment, an intangible quality, is established as an expectation in teacher training programs. At the University of British Columbia, for example, the one-credit ethics course EDST 404, required of Bachelor of Education students, poses questions such as, “what does a ‘caring relationship’ look like, and how can educators balance the demands of fairness with the demands of care?” (Faculty of Education Teacher Education Office, 2013).

While each individual teacher’s professional judgment in response to “the demands of care” will vary greatly, it will certainly be influenced by social pressures, including gender role expectations. Caring in contemporary society is the purview of women, and it no accident that teaching is, too:

Statistics Canada data shows a steady increase in the percentage of women teachers: from 59% women in 1989, to 65% in 1999 and 69% in 2005. CTF’s [Canadian Teachers’ Federation] 2008 data shows that 72.6% of teachers across Canada are women. (Canadian Teachers’ Federation, 2013)

The same ratio exists in Alberta, where an estimated 71% of the teaching workforce is female (Alberta Education, 2013). The expectations on women to care is compounded for female teachers, and even further, for female elementary school teachers, whose work most closely resembles mothering. Grumet (1988) describes how female teachers’ submissiveness, self-sacrifice, purity, and domesticity were elevated into moral superiority at the end of the 19th century, justifying the influx of women into the profession. Pushback about the “worrisome” feminization of teaching was countered by the argument that women’s dispositions were more nurturing, more patient, more caring, and so, better suited for the work of teaching young

children. Like mothering, the unpaid work of women everywhere, teaching of young children is still the target for pundits and social commentators looking for a scapegoat for society's ills, and also the subject of exaltation, celebrated for its selflessness and devotion.

As a female elementary school teacher, I felt caught at the intersection of these pressures. I oscillated between feeling that my work was meaningful and important, that my effort and emotional investment mattered in the lives of vulnerable children, and feeling that no matter how hard I tried, how much I cared, I could not meet the needs of these children for whom I was responsible. The feeling of incompetence, of not being able to fulfill caring expectations, frustrated me. Somedays I felt as though the moral weight of taking care of these children rested solely on my shoulders—as though every other institution somehow had no responsibility to bear for the care of these young people. As I seek, through my research and practice, a way to relieve this lingering pressure, I know the appropriate response is not to reduce or minimize the expectation of care. That would be a step backwards. Instead, I suggest that educational policymakers should be held accountable for creating policy environments that encourage caring and empower parents, schools, and other social institutions to act as caregivers. Educational policy should explicitly feature care language and make care ethics relevant to the conversation about education and teaching.

Our society must protect the right of all people, no matter their position in society, to establish and maintain caring relationships. “While individuals, and their liberty, can still matter greatly” (Tronto, 2013, p. 30) in a caring political environment, it makes little sense to imagine individuals as fully autonomous. We all exist *in relationships*, we all are vulnerable and fragile, and we all give and receive care (Tronto, 2013). The risk of marginalizing our nature as

caregivers and care receivers is not that care will cease; caregiving and receiving is a necessity of life. It will continue, but it will continue to be done in the margins. Allowing care to be ignored or devalued in authorized policies removes it from the conversation. Thinking about this, I was struck by this excerpt from the preface of “Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching” (Grumet, 1988):

In this text I am attempting to understand what teaching means to women. Women constitute the majority of all public school instructional personnel; nevertheless, our experience of this work is hidden. You will not find it in the volumes that record the history and philosophy of education. You will not find it articulated in teacher education texts or administrative handbooks. It is hidden from our students, our colleagues, even from ourselves. Its absence is not a mere oversight. Nor is it that we have been so busy doing it that we haven't taken the time to think about it. There is something about the task itself, the way it wedges itself into our lives, the way we place it somewhere between our work and our labor, our friendships and our families, our ambition and our self-abnegation, that has prohibited our speaking of it. (p. xi)

We are, all of us, embedded in caring relationships, and it is nowhere more apparent than in teaching. I am left to wonder—and it is the central question of this project—how care and caregiving is, or is not, represented in Alberta's educational policies.

Theory of Social Change

Social change occurs when people are able to relate the experiences of others to their own, in order to understand not only the differences, deficits, or deficiencies of another social group, but to understand the similarities and the complexities. Change happens slowly, but it begins when people can imagine themselves as subjects of particular injustices. I came to this

theory of change through the work of Tuck (2009), who described the pattern of “damage-centered research” which is nearly ubiquitous in the social sciences. Damage-centered research relies on a problematic theory of change which documents the pain and loss of communities “in order to obtain particular political or material gains” (p. 413). Realizing previous iterations of my research project were built on this problematic theory, I have chosen instead to pursue desire-based research (Tuck, 2009), “concerned with understanding complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives” (p. 416). Oyler (2011) argues social change must come from a capacity-orientation, which, similar to Tuck’s desire-based framework, resists “all-too-easy, one-dimensional narratives of damage in order to expose ongoing structural inequity” (Tuck, 2009, p. 417). One of the outstanding challenges of this project is what to do with the findings, with the unmasked/exposed violence and inequities. I hope that I am able to continue advocating for ethics of care as I continue my work in education.

I think that people know what is true in the social world as a result of language and experiences that are shared with other people. In other words, our relationships shape us. Because of this perspective, I am sure my research project must be a reflexive piece, one in which I am present as an author in a relationship with the reader.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The theoretical grounding of this project comes primarily from ethics of care literature and the work of theorists Joan C. Tronto, Virginia Held, and Hannah Arendt. Additionally, I draw from work around critical policy analysis within educational studies and the sociology of education. In this section, I provide an overview of ethics of care, explore care as I mean it, theorize caring relationships, and discuss the themes from the literature which situate this study within an academic community and provide a launch point for the analysis.

An Overview of Ethics of Care

The ethics of care is a normative ethical theory born out of “feminists’ appreciation of the importance of care and caring labor” (Held, 2006, p. 9). Its origins are commonly understood to have been the 1982 publication of Carol Gilligan’s *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development*. In it, Gilligan argues established theories of developmental psychology—namely those by Piaget, Erikson, and Kohlberg—have “not given adequate expression to the concerns and experience of women” (Gilligan, 1977, p. 481). These theories described normal development as a unidirectional evolution from dependence to independence. As a fully developed adult, one should be able to make moral decisions which regard each individual as equally competent and autonomous, regardless of their relationship to any others. Women who were presented with decontextualized moral conundrums reliably asked for more information about who these people were. Surely, it changes the morality of a situation if one of the actors is, for example, a dependent child or elderly parent. However, the only way conventional developmental psychologists could accommodate this “insistently

contextual” (Gilligan, 1977, p. 482) moral judgement of women was to consider them “as either deviant or deficient in their development” (Gilligan, 1977, p. 482).

In a Different Voice began a tradition of theorizing about the differences in the moral decision-making of men and women. Closely following Gilligan’s groundbreaking book was the publication of Nel Nodding’s *Caring, A Feminine Approach to Ethics & Moral Education* (1984), which articulated a feminine moral theory.

The emerging ethics of care was not without critique. In response to Gilligan’s work, a number of studies have concluded moral reasoning is not determined solely by gender but also by situational factors (see Ford & Lowery, 1986; Rothbart, Hanley, & Albert, 1986). Puka (1990) criticized Gilligan’s early theory of care-as-moral development, suggesting Gilligan’s developmental levels of care are, in reality, sophisticated coping mechanisms for dealing with sexism. Additionally, Card (1990) argued that Noddings’ (1984) care theory falls short of adequately accounting for caring between strangers, and risks “valorizing relationships in which carers are seriously abused” (p. 101). Later, Audrey Thompson (1998) criticized “theories of care [that] fail to acknowledge and address the Whiteness of their political and cultural assumptions” (p. 525) for being colourblind. Through these critiques, and likely in large part because of them, care theory and feminist moral theory has endured, motivated by the persistent material, political, and social inequality experienced by caregivers, and the perennial undervaluing of care.

Through the 1990s there were a number of further publications which contributed to the body of work around ethic of care, each one taking the discussion in a slightly different direction. In 1993, Joan Tronto established a broader political ambition for care ethics in her book, *Moral*

boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care, which called for an expansion of care ethics beyond the “gendered and privatized context” (Bubeck, 1995a, p. 227). Diemut Bubeck, in her book *Care, Gender, and Justice* (1995b) approached Gilligan’s work from the Marxist feminist intellectual tradition, examining the intersection of care, gender, and exploitation. Petra Bowden, in her book *Caring: Gender-Sensitive Ethics* (1996), argued for more concrete discussions of care, claiming grand theoretical treatment of care is distorting (Tronto, 1999): “Bowden provides a precise account of care in four arenas: mothering, friendship, nursing, and citizenship” (Tronto, 1999, p. 116). In the past decade ethics of care has settled into place as political theory. Tronto (2013) calls for a remapping of democracy to include care:

[U]nless democratic theory deals substantively with the question of “who cares,” it results in an account of politics that misconceives citizens and their lives, overvaluing their lives as workers, devaluing their lives as people engaged in relationships of care. No state can function without citizens who are produced and reproduced through care. (p. 26)

Care theory establishes the field of vision I will adopt as I analyze the policy texts which comprise the data for this inquiry. It roots this project in a feminist tradition and defines care as an ethical principle, not a frivolity or a quirk of femininity. Advocates for care ethics argue for “the compelling moral salience of attending to and meeting the needs of the particular others for whom we take responsibility” (Held, 2006, p. 10), and claim that the marginalization of care is a social justice problem—it disadvantages caregivers and care receivers alike. In the following section I explore more of the subtleties of care and caring relationships.

Exploring Caring

How we care, our practice of caring, is contextual and variable. In some caring relationships, as between two competent adults, “we expect mutuality; the parties exchange places as the situation within which the relation exists changes” (Noddings, 2010, p. 46). In other relationships, as between a young child and a competent adult, the responsibility to meet the needs of the other party rests with the adult (not to say, however, that children should not care; they should and they often do). In the following section I briefly address some very important, but subtle, variations in caring relationships, including various types of caring according to Noddings (2010), the role of affect in caring relationships, and the cultural variability of caring practices. Later, I discuss distinctions between paid and unpaid carework, nurturant and non-nurturant carework, and masculine and feminine caring. Finally, I clarify care as I mean it throughout this project: an activity, an ethical principle, and a responsibility.

Noddings (2010) distinguishes between instinctive caring, natural caring, and ethical caring in her theory about the caring relation. These differing types of caring are not to be interpreted as stages of development, as the relation amongst them is neither linear nor progressive. “The first caring relation is our original condition” (p. 37) and, as a species, without the general characteristic among women to care for infants—maternal instinct—we would face a reproductive problem. Natural caring has its beginnings in maternal instinct, but is different from instinctive caring because “it is practiced out of love or inclination” (p. 36). Natural caring “exists prior to formal moral thought; it is there, in the empirical world” (p. 45). It is distinct from ethical caring “in the sense that it is exercised with no need for reference to moral principles or direct reasoning from such principles” (p. 38). Ethical caring occurs when natural

caring fails. Caregiving is complex and caregivers can find their work frustrating and overwhelming. In these cases, “[c]are theory advises us to draw upon our own ethical ideal—one built over a lifetime of natural caring. In effect, we ask, How would I respond if I were at my best caring self? [sic]” (p. 68). Caring which references an ethical ideal is different from caring instinctively or because of inclination. Care theory, notably, does not provide universal rules for making ethical judgments about care. It allows for highly contextualized decision-making based on individual experiences of caring relations.

Noddings' (2010) typology of caring relations provides a starting point to consider the role of emotion—such as “love or inclination” (p. 36)—in caring. Caring “depends on a form of attention that requires continuous interaction between the cognition that assesses needs and the emotion that moves a carer to respond to them” (Noddings, 2010, p. 163). Emotions are central to care, particularly Noddings' concept of natural caring, but they are not the sum of it. Some caring relations are solely instinctual, and many are purely ethical. People care for a variety of reasons beyond feelings of affection. The language in this project will reflect the distinction between care as an ethical concept and care as a feeling. For example, the phrase “a caring teacher” will not refer to a teacher who feels affection and love for her students, or in other words, a teacher who engages in natural caring. Instead, if used in this project, the phrase “a caring teacher” would mean a teacher who fulfills her responsibility toward her students, whether or not she is presently experiencing loving feelings toward them. As mentioned earlier, there remains a distinction between care and caring as theoretical concepts and the tangible activity of “doing” care. The “doing” of care will be signified by the terms “caregiving” or “carework.”

Caregiving-as-activity could fall into any of Noddings three types of care, and while it is not devoid of emotion, it is not solely defined by it.

How caring manifests, or what caregiving looks like, is hugely variable. Audrey Thompson, in her article “Not the Colour Purple: Black Feminist Lessons for Educational Caring” (1998) critiques early care theorists like Carol Gilligan for modelling theories of care on one social group and then applying it to another: “What is notable in colorblind theories of caring is that the cultural specificity of what counts as caring is not taken into account” (Thompson, 1998, p. 527). Theories of care have, to a large extent, described ideal caring relationships and principles according to a White, Western, middle-class standard, accepting “the private/public dichotomy assumed by theories of justice” (Thompson, 1998, p. 527). Noddings, for example, modelled caring relationships after a conception of the private relationship between mother and child, a kind of caring that “requires retreating from society to a space of innocence” (Thompson, 1998, p. 527). As Thompson points out,

White, middle-class culture takes for granted the status of the home as a “haven in a heartless world,” but, historically, there has been no sure place of refuge for African Americans, since racism and poverty can invade any home. (Thompson, 1998, p. 532)

While care theory does not explicitly provide universal rules for making ethical judgments about care, it is biased towards caring of the White, Western tradition. As a challenge to these assumptions, Thompson reimagines the four themes identified in Carol Gilligan’s (1982) *In a Different Voice* according to Black feminist ethical theories which emphasize knowledge rather than innocence. Thompson contrasts caring in the Black family as being, in part, “about the surrounding society, because it has had to provide children with the understanding and the

strategies they need to survive racism” (Thompson, 1998, p. 532), rather than being about retreating from society. On the theme of “The Moral Relevance of the Situation,” Thompson points out that “racism is a moral situation with crucial implications” (p. 533). In other words, racism changes the context in which caregivers make decisions about care: “Idealized versions of affectionate mother love, for example, may be inappropriate models for women putting their life’s energy into earning enough money or otherwise striving to make a better future for their children” (Thompson, 1998, p. 534). Caring traditions in African American communities are not solely governed by oppressive tradition. As Thompson describes, focusing too closely on oppressive conditions experienced by African American women does not fully appreciate the “creativity and richness of the ethical values that Black women have developed” (Thompson, 1998, p. 534). For example, the tradition of “othermothering,” in which childrearing is shared among adults, “is a tradition which enriches communal bonds as well as the lives of children” (Thompson, 1998, pp. 534-535).

I find Thompson’s (1998) critique of conventional care theory particularly compelling because it challenges the notion of the carer who is “engrossed in (or receptively attentive to) the needs expressed in an encounter. In the case of maternal caring, the attention is continual” (Noddings, 2010, p. 47). My own bias, as a middle-class White woman whose mother stayed at home to raise her two kids—a mother whose caring style could have been Noddings’s exemplar for engrossment—is to imagine an ideal caring relationship as the one I experienced as a child. In acknowledging this bias I hope to limit its influence on my understanding of care. As I will expand upon later, I understand a caring adult-child relationship to be one in which a responsible adult demonstrates competency in the carework required to

meet a child's needs. How competency is demonstrated, and what needs are perceived, will vary depending on the context. It is unethical and unproductive to understand a colourblind iteration of caring as universal, essential, or class blind.

Further consideration of various iterations of care requires addressing the distinction between paid and unpaid carework. Some people are suspicious of the priorities which motivate paid carework, as though caregiving which is motivated by economic gain is somehow contaminated or invalid. This perspective would prefer all caregiving be motivated solely by love and affection. We know, however, that care must still be done, even when natural caring fails. Noddings' describes ethical caring as a kind of caring based on an ethical ideal, and I also think caring based on professional expectations must be considered acceptable caring. Ultimately, I will not distinguish between carework which is paid or unpaid, because it is, theoretically and practically, not relevant to the questions at hand.

Further distinctions can be made within the realm of carework. Duffy (2011) helpfully divides care into two categories: nurturant care and non-nurturant care. Nurturant carework, which includes the work of "nurses, doctors, teachers, child-care workers, social workers, psychotherapists, and personal care attendants" (p. 9), demands "intensive relational work" (p. 9). While Duffy is addressing only paid carework in her discussion of nurturant care, I include the unpaid carework done by caregivers for their families and friends. The second category of paid carework Duffy describes is non-nurturant care, which includes "housecleaners, school cafeteria workers, kitchen workers in nursing homes, hospital laundry workers, and building cleaners" (pp. 9-10), whose work requires less direct interaction with those who receive the benefit. My discussion of carework will focus primarily on nurturant carework, as it is most

relevant to the carework done by teachers, parents, and families. My discussion of carework will not extend to what Tronto (2013) defines as “masculine” carework.

Typically, caregiving in contemporary society is the work of women, which has had powerful implications for its value. Men, of course, do carework all the time, and yet carework remains feminized. Tronto (2013) suggests men receive exemptions from care responsibilities because they are responsible for other forms of “non-caring care” (p. 73). Particularly, masculine care manifests as protection: “protection is an element of care insofar as it prevents, and tries to mitigate against harm” (Tronto, 2013, p. 72) and production: “men cared by providing a paycheck” (Tronto, 2013, p. 72). Masculine forms of care—protection and production—are not generally described as care, and so reinforce the “gendered separation that permits care to be feminized and devalued” (Tronto, 2013, p. 12). The distinction between masculine and feminine forms of care is another reminder of “how caring is actually practiced in contemporary society is that caring is *gendered*. Caring is also deeply marked by all other cultural and social values and formations, including race/ethnicity and class” (Tronto, 2013, p. 68, emphasis in the original). The inequality and injustice of actual practices of care in contemporary society call for a focus on feminized forms of care, because it is the feminization of the work which has forced it to the margins. For this reason, I will not be including masculine forms of care in the scope of this project.

Examining any given relationship, how would one know if an ethic of care is central to the interaction? In society generally, caring relationships manifest in many different ways. Sometimes they present as a mother who sharply disciplines her children for challenging authority, because experience has taught her that the consequences meted out beyond her sphere

of influence are much harsher. Sometimes caring relationships look like receptive attention (Noddings, 2010) reciprocated between two adults. Sometimes a caring relationship is evident when a daycare worker plays *one more* game of hopscotch—not because she wants to, but because she feels it is the right thing. Despite their contextual nature, caring relationships generally feature one or more parties taking responsibility for meeting the needs of another. That is, a caring relationship requires a *response* on the part of at least one person. The degree to which the response actually meets the need is a matter of competency. Though a caring act might be initiated, if it falls short of meeting the need, the ethical standard of care has not been achieved. In the following section I expand more on these ideas as they are formulated by Tronto (2013). Narrowing the exploration of caring from the general to the specific, the next section deals with the unique caring relationship between a teacher and a student.

Theorizing the Caring Teacher-Student Relationship

The concern of ethics of care is broad, and not limited to the caring relationship between a responsible adult and a dependent child. In education, however, the adult-child relationship is central to the project of schooling. Teachers, those special adults whose relationships with students occur within the context of educational institutions and who are subject to a professional code of conduct, are assigned groups of children for whom they are responsible. The needs that the teacher is responsible for meeting are primarily academic, but other needs are always present. When children have needs—physical, emotional, or otherwise—which are unmet by other adults in their lives, teachers have a moral obligation to address those needs as well. In order to unpack the particular qualities of a caring teacher-student relationship, I begin this section with a consideration of the social construction of childhood, the distinction between adult and child, and

the significance of authority and hierarchy in the adult-child dynamic. In the second section, I explore the way hierarchy influences the caring dynamic in an adult-child relationship.

Distinguishing childhood from adulthood.

Childhood, along with adulthood, is an evolving social construction (Postman, 1982). Where childhood ends and adulthood begins is variable across time and place. The distinction between childhood and adulthood is relevant to care because it gives a basis for understanding adults' responsibility for the care of children. In this section I will use the work of both Hannah Arendt and Neil Postman to argue that adults and children hold unequal positions in the social world.

In his book, "The Disappearance of Childhood," Neil Postman argues that childhood as we understand it—or understood it from the 1500s to the 1980s—is a consequence of widespread literacy. Prior to the advent of the printing press and the subsequent phenomenon of widespread literacy,

neither the young nor the old could read, and their business was in the here and now [...].

That is why there had been no need for the idea of childhood, for everyone shared the same information environment and therefore lived in the same social and intellectual world.

(Postman, 1982, p. 36)

In an oral culture, like the one preceding mass production of print, a young person would have exhibited command over speech by about the age of seven and, at that point, would be able to understand most, if not all, of the information being passed among adults. Printed language represents a kind of code, which allows for the segregation of information between classes of people. Those who can access the code can access information which can be denied to others:

print closed off the world of everyday affairs with which the young had been so familiar in the Middle Ages. Eventually, knowledge of these cultural secrets became one of the distinguishing characteristics of adulthood, so that, until recently times, one of the important differences between the child and the adult has been that adults were in possession of information that was not considered suitable for children to know. (Postman, 1982, p. 49)

In a literate society, children are able to access all knowledge encoded in written word once they achieve adult levels of literacy, around the age of twelve (if they were provided with an education in written language). This newly extended period when young people could not access adult information was the catalyst to the invention of childhood as a distinct phase of human life.

Hannah Arendt (2006) also addresses the distinction between adult and child. Arendt claims that in modern times, we have experienced a loss of authority that began in the political sphere and is ending in the private. This loss means that “the very term [authority] has become clouded by controversy and confusion” (Arendt, 2006, p. 91). In the case of child-rearing and education, authority is born of inequality, and inequality which favours the adult is considered bad and unjust. Arendt attributes the distinction between adult and child to natality: “the fact that human beings are born into the world” (Arendt, 2006, p. 171). Adults have gained knowledge from being in the world; a kind of competency acquired along the way to adulthood which distinguishes adults from the “new” people.

Arendt’s concept of authority has, as I interpret it, two main premises. First, the “compelling element” (Arendt, 2006, p. 109) of authoritative relationships is the hierarchical nature of the relationship itself. Authority is commonly conflated with “coercion by force” and

“persuasion through argumentation” (Arendt, 2006 p. 92), as these concepts share elements of both obedience and hierarchy. However, in a coercive relationship, the compelling element which ensures obedience is physical dominance. In contrast, the “compelling element” in an authoritative relationship is the “rightness and legitimacy” (Arendt, 2006, p. 93) of the hierarchical relationship—a hierarchy which is recognized and honoured by both parties. In a persuasive relationship, all parties begin as equal, and the compelling element for obedience is the strength of argument. A persuasive relationship could be a suitable model for political relationships, but it is not suitable for adult-child relationships because adults and children are not equal parties. The kind of authority Arendt considers is the kind of authority which could exist in the family, between parent and child, or in the school, between teacher “in locos parenti” and student. Authority relies on the predominance of one party over the other—an inequality “which, from the point of view of human dignity, must never exist” (Arendt, 2006, p. 187) among adults. Postman (1982) sums up the hierarchy differently: “Children are curious because they do not yet know what they suspect there is to know; adults have authority in great measure because they are the principal source of knowledge” (Postman, 1982, p. 89). Whether adult’s position of relative superiority is understood to be a consequence of natality, or a result of the age of public literacy, it is generally accepted that adults and children, for a limited amount of time, are unequal to one another.

The second premise of authority relative to adult and child—or teacher and student—is that,

authority rests on his assumption of responsibility for that world. Vis-à-vis the child it is as though he were a representative of all adult inhabitants, pointing out the details and saying to the child: This is our world. (Arendt, 2006, p. 186)

Adults demonstrate their assumption of responsibility by actively mediating children's exposure to the world. Adults provide the child with "special protection and care so that nothing destructive may happen to him from the world" (Arendt, 2006, p. 182). Protection and care manifest in the holistic practice of education: the gradual introduction of children to the wider world. By virtue of inequality, adults must take responsibility for mediating children's exposure to the broader world in order for dependent children to survive. "This responsibility is not arbitrarily imposed upon educators [or adults in general]; it is implicit in the fact that the young are introduced by adults into a continuously changing world" (Arendt, 2006, p. 186).

Both Postman's (1982) and Arendt's (2006) ideas about adulthood and childhood describe the two groups as not only distinct from one another, but also as unequal. In Arendt's estimation, the political temperament of America is allergic to ideas of inequality, and I am sympathetic to this allergy. I understand the influence of "learner centred" educational policies and I have devoted many professional hours to discovery, inquiry, and problem-based pedagogies. These approaches to education are based around a central theme, "that it is the learner who knows best and that she or he should be the controlling force in her or his learning" (Kirschner & van Merriënboer, 2013, p. 169). I do fear being misunderstood by finding fault in egalitarian discourses. Inequality in a relationship is not the same as coercion or persuasion. A caring, unequal, authoritative adult-child relationship is not tyrannical, but mutually accepted. Both parties accept the legitimacy of the hierarchy and both parties

contribute to maintaining the relationship: “[p]ersons in caring relations are acting for self-and-other together” (Held, 2006, p. 13). This seems intuitive based on my experience working with young children. With rare exceptions, children want to be in relationships with adults. The relationship need not be equal in order to be caring and rewarding for both parties. Despite my intuition about the matter, trends towards levelling, or flattening, of the adult-child hierarchy are still apparent. Both Arendt and Postman lament these changes. Perhaps their anxiety about the breakdown of authority in the family might simply be the time-worn, fearful hand-wringing of older generations who lack faith in the youth of the day. My sense is, however, that we are living in a unique moment of change.

Postman (1982) calls the change “the disappearance of childhood.” Postman uses the “adultified” child and the “childified” adult (p. 138) as figures to describe the flattening of the adult-child hierarchy. Writing in the 1980s, Postman was concerned about the way television, an audio and visual source of information, was degrading the barrier between adult knowledge and children’s knowledge. Suddenly, the adult world (including topics such as “the defense budget, the energy crisis, the women’s movement [...] incest, promiscuity, homosexuality, [and] sadomasochism” [Postman, 1982, p. 81]), which had been carefully segregated from the child’s world for centuries, was shared openly on the *The Phil Donahue Show!* Had Postman been writing this book in 2015, he might be even more impressed with the degree to which young people can access images and sounds containing information that would have been carefully restricted from children only a few decades ago.

Postman’s central concern is that “the structure and authority of the family have been severely weakened as parents have lost control over the information environment of the

young” (Postman, 1982, p. 150). He describes himself as dejected, able only “to stand and wait as the charm, malleability, innocence, and curiosity of children are degraded and then transmogrified into the lesser features of pseudo-adulthood” (Postman, 1982, p. xiii). I do not share Postman’s sense of nostalgia about childhood—possibly because I was born in 1985 and happily came of age in the period which Postman describes as the beginning of the end of childhood. What is relevant to a consideration of the adult-child relationship from a care perspective is the clear distinction between adult and child, and the concomitant responsibility of the adult in a caring adult-child relationship.

Arendt also laments the flattening of the adult-child hierarchy and describes three problematic assumptions on which it relies. The first assumption leading to the flattening of the adult-child hierarchy is that there is a child’s world which is best left undisturbed by adult interference. Tronto (2013) identifies a similar change from the perspective of care:

The end result is that children, except for scheduled times in which they share in activities with their parents, spend much of their time in the company of other children; for many teenagers, virtually all of their waking time is spent in constant electronic connection with other teens. (p. 5)

The assumption of child’s world, in which the will of the child group reigns and the adult plays only the role of helper or facilitator, is problematic because the emancipation of the child from that authority of adults does not so much free the child as subject him or her to the “much more terrifying and truly tyrannical authority” (Arendt, 2006, p. 178) of the majority. Any hope a child may harbour of rebelling requires that child to challenge his peers, other children, instead of an adult. While an adult may hold a position of absolute authority over a child, Arendt

contends that a rebellious child can at least count on the solidarity of other children when confronting an adult, whereas in a child's world, one is forced to challenge one's peers. Arendt's criticism of the child's world, absent of adult authority, could be understood as contrary to Postman's argument. He is, after all, advocating for childhood to regain its distinction as a period separate from adulthood. However, the role of the adult in a child's world need not be devalued. Instead, the adult is a source of information, expertise, and guidance. Adulthood, in a healthy adult-child relationship, is a role that children aspire to achieve.

The second assumption driving the flattening of the adult-child hierarchy, as put forth by Arendt, is that teachers need not be experts in subject matter, but can instead be experts in pedagogy. Without becoming master of a particular discipline or subject, the "most legitimate source of the teacher's authority as the person who, turn it whatever way one will, still knows more and can do more than oneself is no longer effective" (Arendt, 2006, p. 179). I wonder if, in caring relationships, the inability to display competence (as when carework is delegated to another adult) weakens the adult's claim to "superiority" and further mystifies adults' relationship to children.

The third assumption motivating the flattening of the adult-child hierarchy is that we all learn best by doing. If good teaching involves the facilitation of experience, not the passing on of "dead knowledge" (Arendt, 2006, p. 179), good parenting involves the coordination of activities and play-dates. This logic prioritizes play as the most valuable form of "doing" for children. Work, the adult kind of "doing," has gone out of favour (Arendt, 2006). This trend also appears in care practices, with "the emergence of norms of 'intensive mothering' and 'involved fathering' in recent decades" (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2006, p. 61). A new

balance exists between routine caregiving—the custodial care of children, such as feeding of dressing them; what Tronto called “dirty work”—and enriching activities—the activities which represent parents’ investment in their children, and which are probably more enjoyable (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2006, p. 65). Tronto (2013) identifies this shift, describing how parents (particularly of the upper and middle-class) report spending more time with their children now than parents did in the past, “but that time is literally spent engaging in activities that are organized around the children’s likes and dislikes” (p. 5). Annette Lareau describes spending time “talking to children, answering questions with questions, and treating each child’s thought as a special contribution” (as quoted in Senior, 2010, para. 22) as meaningfully different than “having the children engaged with their parents in adult activities such as cleaning and cooking” (Tronto, 2013, p. 5). Instead of a master-apprentice relationship, in which the adult guides the child towards mastering the skills of adulthood, the adult takes cues from the child, resulting either in an adult engaging in childish pursuits (i.e., spending Saturday at the arcade so as to appear like an engaged parent), or the child engaging in pseudo-adult activities (i.e., mother-daughter spa days). As assumptions about the adult-child relationship have changed—in short, as children have gone “from being our staffs to being our bosses” (Senior, 2010, para. 20)—the hierarchy necessary for authoritative and caring relationships has flattened.

Amidst these egalitarian influences, it is uncomfortable to assert the legitimacy of adult’s position of authority relative to children. The strength of child-centred discourses has marginalized alternative views. When I speak of adult superiority relative to children, I do not mean that adults are in all areas better than children, or that children are of less value than adults. The term “superior” is not meant as an evaluative judgement. I mean that adults do, and should,

hold a position of relatively higher responsibility for the world than children. Following from Arendt's work, and my particular focus on adult-child relationships, I mean authority as the mutually accepted superiority of a responsible adult in relation to a child. In many adult-child relationships, hierarchy is the norm, but tension does exist between the real experience of parents and adults who struggle to integrate both ideas of authority and the influence of egalitarian discourses.

The temptation to value the qualities of childhood over adults' experience is seductive. As adults, we marvel at children's sense of wonder and their unique and joyous way of moving through the world. In the contemporary classroom in the developed world, adult teachers observe students' relative ease with computers, smartphones, and tablets and assume those students are "competent or even expert in information problem solving (i.e., that they are information and digitally literate) because they are seen searching the web daily" (Kirschner & van Merriënboer, 2013, p. 176). Who are we, the dinosaurs of the information age, to tell these kids how the world is? However, to discredit the past experience of adults in relation to the children for whom they are responsible is to risk adults' sense of themselves as competent social actors:

On the other hand, modern man [sic] could find no clearer expression for his [sic] dissatisfaction with the world, for his [sic] disgust with things as they are, than by his [sic] refusal to assume, in respect to his children, responsibility for all this. It is as though parents daily said: "In this world even we are not very secretly at home; how to move about in it, what to know, what skills to master, are mysteries to us too. You must try to

make out as best you can; in any case you are not entitled to call us to account. We are innocent, we wash our hands of you. (Arendt, 2006, p. 188)

Adults have lived in the world to this point, and regardless of whether we think our experience is valuable, it is all we have to offer. To abdicate our responsibility to teach and protect children is akin to “washing our hands of them.” The hierarchy of adult over child is as important to a caring relationship as it is to an authoritative one. Adult and child cannot switch roles,⁵ because the caregiver has to be competent to do the care work. Babies cannot feed themselves, toddlers cannot prepare meals for the family, and young children cannot make judgements with the competency of an adult who has “been around the block.” Children, too, must accept their place in the hierarchy. To anyone raising a defiant toddler, the likelihood of placid acceptance may seem laughable, but considered more broadly, children accept their reliance on adults because (until a particular, and variable, point in development) they are dependent upon them to meet many of their needs. Adults and children are not the same, and amidst crises of both authority and care, we may find the way forward rests in acceptance of the legitimacy of this hierarchy.

Hierarchy and care.

Authority is the mutual acceptance of the hierarchy between adult and child. I am not advocating for authoritative relationships just for authority’s sake. Authority reflects the mutual understanding that the adult is responsible for meeting the needs of the child. A caring adult-child relationship features a responsible adult demonstrating competence in the carework

⁵ While adults and *young* children cannot switch roles, the hierarchy becomes increasingly complicated as older children acquire increased competency and efficacy in the world. Young people who, by some standards, are very much still in the midst of their childhood, can (and do) take on the role of caregiver for the very young, the old, and the infirm. Regardless of whether a person is considered an adult or not, however, the person who assumes responsibility for meeting the needs of dependent children is entering an unequal relationship with the care receiver.

required to meet a child's needs. Authority and care in adult-child relationships are closely connected by features of inequality, responsibility, and competence.

Tronto (2013) expands on the caregiving, and on the concept of competency, in her four-step process. The first step in the process of caring is caring about. Simply put, this is the step in which the caregiver "notices unmet caring needs" (p. 22). The second step is caring for, in which the caregiver "has to take responsibility to make certain that these needs are met" (p. 22). This critical step must come before any caring is done. The third step is caregiving, which "requires that the actual care-giving work be done" (p. 22). Through the doing of the activity, the actual work, an adult demonstrates their assumption of responsibility. This work is visible, it is part of the material world, and it is unevenly distributed across gender, race, and class lines. Tronto (2013) aligns the third step, the doing of carework, with the moral quality of competence:

Assuming responsibility is not yet the same as doing the actual work of care; doing such work is the third phase of caring and requires the moral quality of *competence*. To be competent to care, given one's caring responsibilities, is not simply a technical issue, but a moral one. (p. 35, emphasis in original)

The ethical principle of care is unmet if caregiving is attempted, but incompetently executed. Competence is confirmed in the fourth step, care receiving, in which the caregiver is receptive to feedback from the person who has been cared for. Competent caring would result in, over the short or long term, improvement of the condition of the care receiver.

Care is often treated with a kind of *sentimentalism*. Grumet (1988) discusses sentimentalism in relation to female teachers in the late 19th and early 20th century, when numbers of women in the profession first surpassed those of men. Sentimentalism "asserts that

the values a society's activity denies are precisely the ones it cherishes" (Douglas, 1988, p. 12). Industrialization and urbanization in the 19th century resulted in the detainment of women in their kitchens and nurseries (Grumet, 1988). Sentimentalism was a way "to deal with the phenomenon of cultural bifurcation" (Douglas, 1988, p. 12) through the manipulation of nostalgia. Times have changed, but sentimentalism remains an influence in the lives of female teachers. It elevates maternal love to cult status: "the cult of motherhood" (Grumet, 1988, p. 41) to which every female elementary school teacher is subject. We can identify the influence of sentimentalism in the contradiction between the *rhetorically inflated* figure of the loving, compassionate, self-abnegating teacher and the *practically deflated* function of that teacher (Grumet, 1988).

Sentimentalism has little tolerance for hierarchy in teachers' relationships to students. Many female teachers accept "the rhetoric of nurturance, expecting to mollify the reluctant student with earnest affection and good intention" (Grumet, 1988, p. 52). The false narrative of the individual caring teacher, whose maternal love is so potent that she changes students' lives for the better, similarly stigmatizes assertion of authority over a child. A truly loving teacher would never declare the value of authority. She would just love, and through that love, win compliance. The sentimental figure of the loving, caring teacher is a particular kind of egalitarian discourse, and it has left many female caregivers with the impression that their failure to achieve an acceptable level of competency in their work is "a failure of moral fiber, a failure of femininity, a failure of professionalism" (Grumet, 1988, p. 52). Sentimentality about teachers' work, particularly female teachers' work, is different from ethics of care. While sentimental

treatment of teachers' work is a comforting fiction for many, it does not do justice to those who teach, and more broadly, those who do carework.

Tronto (2013) has claimed that in contemporary times, we are experiencing a change in patterns of caring. Tronto's (2013) summary of the trends is that "care no longer seems to be 'at home,' neither literally nor figuratively" (p. 1). According to the distinction between care and caregiving being used in this project, I would restate this as "caregiving no longer seems to be at home." In the last century there has been a move to professionalize care (Tronto, 2013), evident in the professionalization of teaching, nursing, and social work. In addition to "intensive relational work" (Duffy, 2011, p. 9), "'dirty work'—cleaning, preparing food, bodily care, removing waste" (Tronto, 2013, p. 2)—has also left the (middle-class) home, as reflected in the popularity of prepared meals, housekeeping services, and disposable diapers. Ability to access these "outside" care services is not shared by all parents. Paradoxically, "mostly women and disproportionately people of color" (Tronto, 2013, p. 2) are paid to do the dirty work, and yet "are increasingly left behind by economic growth in the bottom rungs of society" (Tronto, 2013, p. 2). The women, for example, who clean the homes of middle-class families are unable to afford to pay for care in service of their own family's needs.

The effect of class on care practices is not limited to the ability to pay, or not, for other people to do the carework. The strength of the adult-child hierarchy also fluctuates by class: "While all children were once told, more or less, to know their place, only the less affluent—who lack power to begin with—are told to think this way today" (Senior, 2014, p. 129). Middle-class children are taught that they are empowered. While lower-income parents are apt to give directives and orders, middle-class parents give choices (Senior, 2014). Negotiation is the norm,

and children are comfortable challenging adult judgment, or giving “the kind of lip discouraged and punished by parents in other eras” (Senior, 2014, p. 129).

In the long run, this attitude may or may not serve them well, because they then enter the world with the sense that no power structure is too formidable to defy or outmaneuver. But one thing is immediately clear: this attitude is not very good for *parents*. (Senior, 2014, p. 129, emphasis in original)

The skills parents encourage in their children can, and often do, lead children to challenge parental authority. Authority may not be absolutely critical to a caring adult-child relationship. Surely, one could meet a child’s needs without it. But without it, the simplest daily routines become up for debate. Mealtime, bath time, and bedtime are exhausting. In the teacher-student context, without authority, it becomes a challenge to keep twenty or thirty children safe in a school without some mutual acceptance that what the teacher says, goes.

Contemporary care practices are in flux. Egalitarian discourses are compelling, and yet caring seems to be in crisis. This flux in patterns of caregiving compounds our collective confusion about what care is, and what characterizes a caring adult-child relationship.

Additional Themes from the Literature

Care ethics and caring adult-child relationships provide the theoretical grounding for this project, and act as a lens for the critical analysis of *Inspiring Education* policies. Critical policy analysis has become a popular approach among scholars who wish to engage in the political task of unmasking discourses. The popularity is an acknowledgment of the importance of the semiotic or “discursive turn” in political theory and analysis (Fairclough, 2013). Within educational studies and the sociology of education, critical policy analysis has taken up a number

of themes—marginalization of care, neoliberalism, inequality and social justice, and individualism and the caring relationship—which overlap with the concerns of the ethics of care. The following review of the literature is intended to situate this study within an academic community and to provide a launch point for the forthcoming analysis.

Marginalization or “Crisis of Care.”

The social condition which is identified as problematic in ethics of care is the gendered, raced, classed patterns which dominate the decisions of who cares, for whom, and under what conditions. The activity of assigning care responsibility has been “so thoroughly ‘backgrounded’ as a critical part of human life that its role is hardly visible” (Tronto, 2013, p. 139). Canada’s live-in caregiving program, for example, is a federal program designed to meet the caregiving needs of Canadians. In 2006, Canada issued 21,489 live-in caregiver work permits, almost all of them to women, and most from the Philippines (Brickner, 2010). These women come into the country to do the “intimate and daily routines of hands-on care” (Tronto, 2013, p. 139) which people already in the country cannot or will not do. Care transcends the personal and private and “involves the larger structural questions of thinking about which institutions, people, and practices should be used to accomplish concrete and real caring tasks” (Tronto, 2013, p. 139). When caregiving is delegated to particular others, or subsumed by the market, it is critical to consider the rationale behind those choices and who is—and is not—part of making them.

This crisis of care is intimately connected to the primary and secondary school system, in Canada and other wealthy countries. As choice, privatization, accountability, efficiency, and other corporate norms come to dominate educational reform movements, we witness a shift in responsibility. The onus on the state to educate and care for children is passed on to the

“individual schools, parents, and children” (Apple, 2001, p. 416). Families are responsible for living in the right neighbourhoods and enrolling their children in the right extracurricular activities. Individuals become responsible for taking care of their own: ““They’re your own. You’re on your own. If you did not make a provision for yourself, then it is your tough luck”” (Tronto, 2013, p. 61). Within the current global patterns of care, the tough luck is concentrated among two broad groups: those who provide care, and those vulnerable people who receive care. Because we all, at some point in our lives, find ourselves in one or both of those categories, it is easy to imagine that our current care practices eventually create tough luck for everyone.

The emphasis in this project will be on care and caregiving, but the role of caregiver is contingent on the existence of someone who is in need of care. Noddings (2010) uses the terms “carer” and “cared-for” to describe the parties involved in a caring relationship. In the original caring relationship, the mother and infant, the relationship is unequal. The parties could not exchange roles. In a typical adult relationship we could expect the roles of carer and cared-for to be fluid, shifting over the course of time (Noddings, 2010). While the carer seeks to meet the needs of the cared-for, it must not be assumed the carer is always a woman and the cared-for always a vulnerable person. In keeping with Tronto (2013), and in the name of consistency, I will use the terminology of “caregiver” and “care receiver” from this point forward to refer to those engaged in caring relationships. Building on the model of the intimate, one-on-one caring relationship, Tronto (2013) formulates a political theory based on the assertion, “We are care receivers, all” (p. 146). We are not only in need of care when young, old, or sick, but we all have needs all of the time (Tronto, 2013). Similarly, in her vulnerability thesis, Fineman (2008)

claims the term “‘vulnerable’ for its potential in describing a universal, inevitable, enduring aspect of the human condition that must be at the heart of our concept of social and state responsibility” (p. 8). Our universal vulnerability arises from our embodiment; we are always at risk of some kind of harm, beyond our control, which could leave us permanently dependent. This perspective is radically different from the autonomous individual as imagined within a neoliberal paradigm.

Neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism is a central theme in ethics of care and critical educational policy studies. Brown (2005) describes the consequences of neoliberal ideology in this way:

not only is the human being configured exhaustively as *homo oeconomicus*, but all dimensions of human life are cast in terms of a market rationality [...] through discourse and policy promulgating its criteria, neoliberalism produces rational actors and imposes a market rationale for decision making in all spheres. (p. 40, emphasis in original)

Larner (2000) thoughtfully distinguishes neoliberal ideology from neoliberalism as a policy framework (in which governments are forming policies to enhance “economic efficiency and international competitiveness” [p. 7] instead of “full employment and an inclusive welfare system” [pp. 6-7]) and as governmentality. While neoliberalism may seek to reduce and limit the power of the state in the name of individual choice, it does not mean there is less governance. “Neo-liberal strategies of rule, found in diverse realms including workplaces, educational institutions and health and welfare agencies, encourage people to see themselves as individualized and active subjects responsible for enhancing their own well being” (Larner, 2000, p. 13). Clarifying these subtle distinctions serve to “shape our readings of the scope and

content of possible political interventions” (Larner, 2000, p. 6). While the object of the study is an educational policy, I do not refer to neoliberalism in the specific sense of a policy framework or kind of government, but instead as a pervasive ideology.

In her chapter, “Care and the Extension of Markets,” Virginia Held (2006) distinguishes between paid work and work that is governed by market norms. A public school teacher, for example, is paid for her work. Her primary daily aim, however, “may be educating children well, not earning as much as possible” (p. 110). Extension of the market into the spheres of education and healthcare, for example, becomes a problem when market norms displace “other-than-market values” (Held, 2002, p. 21). Market logic threatens values such as “sensitivity, empathy, responsiveness, and taking responsibility” (p. 119). Held suggests we must be willing to be explicit about these “other-than-market values” (Held, 2002, p. 21) in order to be equipped to judge appropriate limits of the market.

The works of Ball (2003, 2009) and Apple (2001, 2005) have given shape to my understanding of neoliberalism in educational reform. Over a decade ago Ball (2003) argued:

Education reform is spreading across the globe, as in Levin’s (1998) terms, like “a policy epidemic.” An unstable, uneven but apparently unstoppable flood of closely inter-related reform ideas is permeating and reorienting education systems in diverse social and political locations which have very different histories. [...] The novelty of this epidemic of reform is that it does not simply change what people, as educators, scholars and researchers do, it changes who they are. (p. 215)

To Ball, neoliberal ideology represents the alignment of “public sector organizations with the methods, culture and ethical system of the private-sector. The distinctiveness of the public sector

is diminished” (Ball, 2003, p. 216). Ball goes on to say this type of reform is embedded in policy technologies, including the technology of performativity, “a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change—based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic)” (Ball, 2003, p. 216). These technologies of comparison, reward, sanction, and control—in short, technologies which separate us—are the causes of the inequality and oppression within our current conditions of care.

Inequality and social justice.

Education is inherently political, and educational policy is a result of messy negotiation among multiple actors with stratified levels of power. The “differential relations of power” (Apple, 2001, p. 410), which currently maintain the dominance of neoliberal policy, serve to reinforce inequality in the subjects of that policy. In countries with compulsory state-sponsored schools, the marginalizing impact of these policies is profound, particularly under the watch of educational reformers who believe “nothing can be accomplished [...] without setting the market loose on schools so as to ensure that only ‘good’ ones survive” (Apple, 2001, p. 412). While market logic is treated as a solution, it does not help societies solve the problem of what is to be done about under-performing schools and the people they serve.

The ethics of care considers this situation, critiquing the fiction that all of society’s members are “fully independent, free, and equal rational agents” (Held, 2006, p. 85) who can compete fairly in a free market and easily choose with whom to associate. This fiction distorts, says Held (2006), the reality of vast numbers of people. Despite this seemingly obvious distortion of reality, the fiction of the autonomous and independent individual persists. As the

foundational discourse of neoliberal educational policies, it determines not only “what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority. [...] Words are ordered and combined in different ways and other combinations are displaced or excluded” (Ball, 2005, p. 48). Words related to care and responsibility are often among those displaced and excluded.

Tronto (2013) identifies two deficits in advanced countries, which result in the unequal distribution of care:

The care deficit refers to the incapacities in advanced countries to find enough care workers to meet the needs of people, their children, elderly parents and relatives, and infirm family members. The democratic deficit refers to the incapacities of governmental institutions to reflect the real values and ideas of citizens. (Tronto, 2013, p. 17)

The identification of these two deficits speaks to the political nature of care and caring work. Tronto sees these deficits as symptoms of a failed—and imaginary—construction of private/public spheres, which excludes women and racial groups (“through assumptions about racial and ethnic hierarchies” [Tronto, 2013, p. 140]) from positions of power in the decision and policymaking process.

The relative exclusion of women from the political process has contributed to the deeply gendered character of care in contemporary societies. “It is remarkable how persistently, across time and place, care is viewed through a gendered lens: in our usual sense of the term, ‘care’ is seen as women’s work” (Tronto, 2013, p. 68). In addition to the gendered inequality of care, there are particular racialized inequalities in care unique to the globalized neoliberal era.

Racialized inequality of care is reflected in what Hochschild (2000) calls “global care chains.” Migrant workers, in this case almost exclusively women, leave their relatively poorer countries of origin to do carework in wealthier nations. These women often leave behind their own dependent children or elderly parents, creating a care deficit in developing nations.

From a global political economy perspective, the paradox of caring labor is that migrant populations—often cast as dangerous, disenfranchised, disposable, and undeserving of the rights and privileges of human dignity—are providing much of the care work that the more prosperous world depends on. (Barker, 2012, p. 575)

Racialized and gendered inequality in the distribution of carework is a problem for social justice and for feminist theorists who want to see an ethic of care as “basic to the institutions of the state” (Kittay, 2008, p. 138). One of the primary obstacles to alleviating this inequality is “feminist aspirations for the full range of work/career opportunities” (Kittay, 2008, p. 138) for women, which has “depended on the availability of other women to whom they pass on the work of care” (Kittay, 2008, pp. 138-139). Often, these “racial-ethnic workers” (Duffy, 2011, p. 113) are concentrated in non-nurturant care roles (i.e., housecleaner, cafeteria worker, hospital laundry worker) at the bottom of the economic scale. Migrant careworkers, like those hired under live-in caregiver immigration programs, are further marginalized by their migration status (Tronto, 2013) and are subject to the will of their employers.

Individualism.

The pervasive fiction that all members of society can justly be treated as autonomous and independent citizens—which I will refer to as liberal individualism—undergirds the capitalist system. “The main purpose of the market in a capitalist economy is to produce profit, that is,

wealth” (Tronto, 2013, p. 115). Private accumulation of wealth is problematic from a care perspective for several reasons. First, caregiving fits uncomfortably in the category of “work” in a capitalist sense. Second, caring is resistant to the measures of efficiency which increase individuals’ accumulation of wealth.

Caregiving does not fall neatly into the category of work, because there is always something other than the amount of money being exchanged in a caring relationship. In exchanges of care in which the care receiver is incapable of caring for themselves, the other-than-money presence is an imbalance of power (Tronto, 2013). The market is predicated, again, on assuming the individuals participating in the capitalist system are relative equals. Caring relationships challenge this assumption. Additionally, in many caring relationships—though not all—there is a presence of positive affect. From one perspective, this is the paradox of care: “the affective nature of care implies that it should be its own reward” (Barker, 2012, p. 575). Caring relationships are also “‘sticky’ and do not exhibit the freedom of the open market” (Tronto, 2013, p. 119). It is not so simple as trading off your caregiving spouse, for example, because you can find someone who can do it for a lesser cost.

Another way capitalism conflicts with care is the manner in which those who do more with less are rewarded with increased accumulation of wealth. Doing more with less—less money, less time—is the mantra of the efficiency expert, who works to “streamline” the process of, for example, educating the young or comforting the infirm. Efficiency, in “a globalizing wall-to-wall capitalism” (Fraser, 1997, p. 3) can be seen in the increased demand for migrant workers who can meet more care needs at less labour cost to the employer. Historically, this has also been one of the advantages of hiring women into carework. Nancy Folbre said it well:

“Restrictions on women’s rights were oppressive, but they lowered the cost of caring labor” (as cited in Tronto, 2013, p. 140). While this may be a satisfactory arrangement for the owner of the capital, it creates inequalities and injustices for others. Efficiency of time also rewards the owner of capital. Care is particularly resistant to these measures, because “an important aspect of care is simply spending time with another, listening to stories, observing care receivers” (Tronto, 2013, p. 121). Caregivers are squeezed between the pressures of efficiency and the demands of maintaining caring relationships. Capitalism constantly pits the interests of individuals against each other, and often, with the exception of happy circumstance, against the interests of the collective.

We can identify these same tensions, for example, in debates around public schooling: “In the abstract, people may favor giving all children a fair chance, but at the same time they want their children to succeed in the competition for economic and social advantage” (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 29). Or, as Noddings (2006) describes it, in a liberal democracy, state sponsored schools are always negotiating between two interests: the interest of the state (producing competent workers and citizens) and the interests of the individuals (developing the unique talents of the students). In theory, it should not be so hard to balance these two interests, as “liberal democracies thrive when their citizens’ individual talents are highly developed” (Noddings, 2006, p. 340). In practice, it is much more difficult to balance the two imperatives. Caring relationships are complex relationships which sit in the middle of the self/other dichotomy.

According to Slote (2007), “those who are engaged (together) in building or maintaining a caring relationship are typically motivated by a mixture or combination of egoistic (self-

concerned) and altruistic (caring) motives” (p. 118). Held (2006) echoes this: “[p]ersons in caring relations are acting for self-and-other together” (p. 13). Key to this distinction is the inclusion of a third party in this dynamic: the relationship itself.

Those who conscientiously care for others are not seeking primarily to further their own individual interests; their interests are intertwined with the persons they care for. Neither are they acting for the sake of all others or humanity in general; they seek instead to preserve or promote an actual human relation between themselves and particular others. (Held, 2006, p. 13)

The preservation of the caring relationship demands both the caregiver and the care receiver compromise, checking their most egotistical interests. In a competitive, individualistic world, this compromise has little value. As a caregiver, you can be perceived to have fallen short in your personal responsibility to realize your full potential. As a care receiver, you can be perceived as a burden on someone else's right to flourish, unencumbered by dependents.

As I hope I have demonstrated, care and caring relationships are complex. Highly contextual, care is a political concern with implications on our most personal relationships. The themes I identified in the literature will now serve as the launching point for the analysis of *Inspiring Education* texts.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter I explain my methodology for addressing the research question: “How are ‘care’ and ‘caregiving’ discursively represented—or not represented—in the policy texts of *Inspiring Education*?” In the first section I describe my approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA). In the second section I address the relationships between discourse and material life. In the third and fourth sections, I describe the data and procedure, respectively. Finally, I consider the markers of quality I used to guide this project.

Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA is a form of critical social science, which is envisaged as social science geared to illuminating the problems which people are confronted with by particular forms of social life, and to contributing resources which people may be able to draw upon in tackling and overcoming these problems. [...] CDA has emancipatory objectives, and is focused upon the problems confronting [...] the poor, the socially excluded, those subject to oppressive gender or race relations, and so forth. (Fairclough, 2001, p. 125)

Fairclough’s style of CDA described in the above excerpt draws from many scholars before him, notably the work of Michel Foucault. While I have not directly read Foucault, I acknowledge that the kind of analysis I am doing owes much to his work. What distinguishes Foucauldian analysis from CDA is “attention to concrete textual features [...] according to Fairclough (1992a)” (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000, p. 448). I situate this project at the intersection of several different traditions of discourse analysis.

In his article “CDA is NOT a method of critical discourse analysis,” van Dijk (2013) argues against the suggestion that one can “do” CDA and consider it a comprehensive method for research:

Contrary to popular belief and unfortunate claims of many papers submitted to discourse journals, CDA is not a method of critical discourse analysis. This may sound paradoxical, but I am afraid it isn't. Think about it. Indeed, what would be the systematic, explicit, detailed, replicable procedure for doing “critical” analysis? There is no such method.
(para. 1)

He clarifies that being critical is not part of a method, but instead “a rebellious attitude of dissent against the symbolic power elites that dominate public discourse” (para. 1). Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000) also see CDA as an attitude: “the critical turn in studies of language is by no means restricted to any single approach but represents a more general process of (partial) convergence in theories and practices of research on language” (p. 447).

Discursive and the Material

The operational definition of discourse for this project refers to the semiotic construal of aspects of the world (Fairclough, 2013). The role of the real, or material, world in relation to the semiotic world is not necessarily straightforward. My analysis will focus “on relations between discursive and material elements of social life rather than just discourse” (Fairclough, 2013, p. 177). This distinguishes this work from analyzes done within a post-structural or post-modern frame, which is inclined to treat all elements of the social world as discourse. Ethically, it would be inconsistent to treat all language as purely rhetorical, because it risks devaluing or degrading

peoples' lived experiences. Sims-Schouten, Riley and Willig (2007) capture this ethical aspect well:

We consider this contextualizing of participants' talk as an ethical stance, in the sense that analyzing participants' talk without considering their material existence does not always do justice to the participants' lived experience. For example, considering a mother's justification to return to work because of financial reasons as purely rhetorical (e.g. Himmelweit & Sigala, 2003) may be deemed inappropriate to a participant who is struggling to feed her family. (pp. 103-104)

Using language (or other semiotics) to represent the material world is a "practice of power" (Levinson et al., 2009, p. 767). By doing policy, policymakers

exercise power through a production of "truth" and "knowledge" of discourses [...]

Discourses are about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority. Discourses embody the meaning and use of propositions and words. Thus, certain possibilities for thought are constructed. Words are ordered and combined in different ways and other combinations are displaced or excluded. (Ball, 2005, p. 48)

The practice of policy produces "normative discourse for the reproduction of inequality, hegemony, and subordinated political subjects" (Levinson et al., 2009, p. 774).

Data

Choosing which policies are and are not a part of the analysis has been an evolving set of choices. "[T]he boundaries of the discourse, or the object of study, for those engaged in discourse analysis is not clearly and externally delineated" (Herrera & Braumoeller, 2004, p. 18).

As such, I used the theoretical framework of care ethics, and the concepts from the literature review, to decide which texts from the *Inspiring Education* ensemble would be most relevant. Beginning at <https://inspiring.education.alberta.ca>, the website for the *Inspiring Education* initiative, I downloaded a copy of the “Inspiring Education Report.” It is a fifty-six page document, but the body of the report ends at page thirty-nine. The remaining pages are endnotes and appendices and I did not include these sections in the analysis. In seeking more data regarding the discursive treatment of teachers, I downloaded a copy of the “Task Force Report,” also available from the Inspiring Education website. A 228 page document, this report consists of two parts: “Part I: Report to the Minister of Education, Government of Alberta” and “Part II: What We Heard—Community and Stakeholder Consultation.” My analysis focuses on Part I of the “Task Force Report” because its authorship is credited to the members of the Task Force, and it consists of their recommendations for improving the quality of the teaching profession in Alberta. Also, I attended the “Task Force for Teaching Excellence Symposium” on May 5, 2014 in Edmonton, Alberta. Hosted by Alberta Education, the event centred around the release of the “Task Force Report.” During this day, attention was given almost exclusively to Part I, and as such, it seemed to be the most productive text to which to apply my limited time and resources for this analysis. Part I is ninety-five pages long, but again, I omitted the appendices from my analysis (pp. 66-94). In addition to these primary policy documents, I also conducted more limited analysis on “Part II: What we Heard—Community and Stakeholder Consultation” of the “Task Force Report,” the “What is Inspiring Education?” website, and the “Excellence in Teaching Awards Program” website. The decisions to include these texts in the analysis were

motivated by strong connections—and often direct references—to these texts in the two primary documents.

Procedure

The process of analysis began when I read the “Inspiring Education Report” for the first time two years ago. I revisited this document repeatedly throughout my graduate course work, pausing to consider different aspects of language within it. When it came time to analyze the “Inspiring Education Report” and affiliated policies specifically for this project, I used the data analysis software Atlas.ti.

First, I looked to “existing empirical research and theoretical work” (Hardy, Harley, & Phillips, 2004, p. 21) for direction in identifying relevant patterns of construing “aspects of the world” (Fairclough, 2013, p. 179). These themes—also represented in the Literature Review section of this paper—delimited which patterns I coded for in the data. Initially, I employed codes such as “social change,” “global economy,” and “citizens as liberal individuals.” Through the process of coding I identified particular features of the language which acted as the mechanisms, or discursive strategies, used by the authors to construe the social world in a particular way.

The first stage of analysis was content analysis. I used the search function in Atlas.ti to count the occurrences of particular words. Word counts do not feature as a large part of the analysis, but they were informative in my process, particularly as they related to ideologically significant vocabulary.

Additionally, I used “analytical categories or concepts” as introduced by Fairclough (1989) to keep my analysis closely engaged with features of the text. These concepts include the

experiential values of words (i.e., co-occurrence or collocation of words, ideological significance of vocabulary); relational values of words (i.e., euphemistic expressions); and experiential values of grammatical features (i.e., active or passive sentence construction).

I also used concepts from Membership Categorization Analysis (henceforth MCA) to support my analysis of the discursive treatment of teachers. MCA is concerned with “how people ‘do’ descriptions and how they recognise descriptions: matters of cultural knowledge and relevance (Sacks 1974, p. 216)” (Baker, 2000, p. 100). In the case of this analysis, the membership categories are categories of person; specifically, categories of teacher-types. These categories are bound to particular activities or qualities, which I refer to as predicates, but can alternately be called “category-bound activities,” or “category-tied activities.” (Baker, 2000, p. 103). I also use the MCA concept of “standard relational pair” (i.e., “The hearing of the second term implied or suggested by the first” [Baker, 2000, p. 102]) to analyse the decoupling, or discursive separation, of the standard relational pair “teacher-student.”

Considering Quality

Broadly, good discourse analysis “means a close engagement with one's text or transcripts, and the illumination of their meaning and significance through insightful and technically sophisticated work” (Antaki, Billig, Edwards, & Potter, 2003, section 10). Discourse analysis that does not reach this standard often falls short due to one, or many, of the six analytic shortcomings described by Antaki et al. (2003). The shortcoming that resonates most strongly with me is 7) “The Circular Discovery of (a) Discourses and (b) Mental Constructs” (p. 12). This shortcoming can occur when the analyst is working with macro concepts,

such as the Foucauldian notion of “discourses.” The analyst may claim that the texts that are being studied show evidence of a particular discourse ie [sic] they may say the writer/speaker is using “the faithfulness discourse.” It would then be circular to explain the particular texts on the grounds that they have been produced by this “faithfulness discourse” if the texts themselves were the evidence for the existence of that discourse.

(Antaki et al., 2003, p. 12)

I find this kind of circular logic easy to slip into, and so I have tried to guard against it by keeping “data near,” or closely engaged with the text. In response to Antaki et al.’s (2003) list, Burman (2004) added three more possible analytic shortcomings, each of which I have been aware of throughout my analysis: “under-analysis through uncontested readings,” “under-analysis through decontextualisation,” and “under-analysis through not having a question” (Burman, 2004, p. 6). By keeping these shortcomings in mind, I have endeavoured to avoid some of the common failings of discourse analysis and also achieve Tracy’s (2010) criteria for “rich rigor” (p. 840).

In order to reflect on the quality of this project as a whole, I have looked to the “big-tent” criteria described by Tracy (2010). These criteria honour the creative and artistic richness of qualitative inquiry and are inclusive of the “cornucopia of distinct concepts” (p. 837) which have proliferated within the conversation about qualitative excellence.

In designing this project I have attempted to meet each of Tracy’s (2010) eight criteria for excellence. I endeavoured to make a convincing case for the worthiness of the topic (the discursive treatment of care in educational policy). I have sought to achieve “rich rigor” by developing an appropriately complex theoretical framework. As the project moves forward I will

remain attentive to the question: “How much data is enough?” (Tracy, 2010, p. 841), keeping in mind the “most important issue to consider is whether the data will provide for and substantiate meaningful and significant claims” (Tracy, 2010, p. 841). Through a commitment to transparency and honesty (which is explicitly demonstrated in my positionality statement) I will attempt to meet the criteria of sincerity. I will also remain committed to reflecting the complexity of the issue by gathering multiple types of data and including multiple and varied voices (Tracy, 2010). By resisting the temptation to simplify by omitting conflicting perspectives, I hope to achieve a credible end product. In lieu of the quantitative concept of generalizability, I will seek to craft a relatable project, one which somehow resonates with its readers. I understand the criteria of resonance to be intricately linked with sincerity and credibility—if the project reads as honest and sufficiently reflective of the complexity of the social world, then it is likely to resonate. I continue to consider the holistic coherence of the project: whether the literature, research questions, methods, findings, and interpretations have a meaningful connection to each other. This quality was described to me once as a kind of elegance in the design. It has informed many of my choices, including the choice to look to policy for data instead of to participant interviews, the choice to explicate a theory of social change, and the choice to engage with both the material and discursive elements of the world. These choices also speak to the ethicality of the project, which is alluded to at the beginning of this section, and influence the significance of the contribution this project might have to “the current climate of knowledge, practice, and politics” (Tracy, 2010, p. 845).

Chapter 4: The Social World as Individualistic and Competitive

Using care theory as a lens, I have identified discourses—“semiotic ways of construing aspects of the world (physical, social or mental), which can generally be identified with different positions or perspectives of different groups of social actors” (Fairclough, 2013, pp. 179-180)—within *Inspiring Education* texts which might challenge, change, or enable caring relationships in Alberta’s society. In Chapter 4, I identify Personal Responsibility and Neoliberal discourses, which reflect a construal of the social world as individualistic and competitive. I discuss how this perspective challenges caring perspectives, and the bias it presents against care writ broadly across society.

In Chapter 5, I identify discourses specific to the role of the teacher. Focus on the teacher evolved out of several circumstances: (1) the teacher is the only caregiving role given substantial treatment in *Inspiring Education*, and (2) the discursive treatment of teachers concerns the universal caring relationship between adult and child. As such, it may also provide insight into the changing patterns of care within families. The teacher-related discourses identified here are the Teacher Excellence, Teacher-as-Facilitator, and the Learner-Centred discourses. Each one construes the teacher in a way that, as I discuss, influences the ability of teachers to talk about, and justify, the work of establishing and maintaining caring relationships with their students.

Personal Responsibility Discourse

Janine Brodie, in her chapter “The Stories of Canadian Citizenship,” draws on Speeches from the Throne to trace historical changes in the ideals of Canadian citizenship throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries (Brodie, 2002). In the section “From Social Citizen to Entrepreneurial Citizen,” Brodie (2002) writes:

[...] the individual Canadian of the 1960s was differently conceived than the individual Canadian of the early twenty-first century. The former was assumed to be equal with respect to vulnerability to insecurity while the latter is assumed to be equal with respect to assuming personal security. (p. 60)

Brodie's work illustrates how citizenship in Canada has evolved over time. In *Inspiring Education*, citizens are understood as "fully independent, free, and equal rational agents" (Held, 2006, p. 85) who are personally responsible for their success. This perspective risks marginalizing people whose levels of autonomy and independence fall outside the ideal. While all people are born into familial and caring relationships, some have more opportunity than others to exercise personal choice. Imagine a family in which, for example, a parent loses her mobility in an accident. The child is not free to trade in her injured parent for a new one, the parent is not free to abdicate the responsibility to care for her children, and the broader network of caring relationships will be influential in determining each party's ability to live well in the world. In the following section I consider discursive strategies that construct the independent, self-reliant, "educated Albertan of 2030" (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 5).

The authors of *Inspiring Education* construct the individual Albertan as personally responsible for his own success by making "the Albertan" the active subject of the sentence, elevating *choice* as one of the six core values of *Inspiring Education*, and trivializing the influence of social context. Central to the vision of the "Inspiring Education Report" is the "educated Albertan of 2030" (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 5), an ideal future citizen who would describe herself as an *Engaged Thinker*, *Ethical Citizen*, and *Entrepreneurial Spirit*. The authors

have “summarized” these specific outcomes “as ‘the Three E’s’ of education for the 21st Century” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 18):

“Engaged Thinker: who thinks critically and makes discoveries; who uses technology to learn, innovate, communicate, and discover; who works with multiple perspectives and disciplines to identify problems and find the best solutions; who communicates these ideas to others; and who, as a life-long learner, adapts to change with an attitude of optimism and hope for the future.

Ethical Citizen: who builds relationships based on humility, fairness and open-mindedness; who demonstrates respect, empathy and compassion; and who through teamwork, collaboration and communication contributes fully to the community and the world.

Entrepreneurial Spirit: who creates opportunities and achieves goals through hard work, perseverance and discipline; who strives for excellence and earns success; who explores ideas and challenges the status quo; who is competitive, adaptable and resilient; and who has the confidence to take risks and make bold decisions in the face of adversity.” (Alberta Education, 2010, pp. 5-6)

In the excerpt above, the “Educated Albertan” *thinks, makes, uses, works, and communicates*; the ideal citizen is the active subject, the active agent. “Such choices to highlight [...] agency may be consistent, automatic and commonsensical, and therefore ideological” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 122). If, as an imaginary example, one of the sentences describing “the educated Albertan” used passive construction (e.g., the educated Albertan of 2030 is supported in their work by strong communities), then the presence of some other social actor (i.e., government, family) would be implied. Passive construction here would require a shared responsibility. Instead, the ideal citizen of the future “earns success” on his own terms.

Further to the point of personal responsibility, the Government of Alberta discursively removes itself as an author of *Inspiring Education*. *Inspiring Education* is the flagship policy ensemble of Alberta Education, yet the Steering Committee members who authored the “Inspiring Education Report” apportion most of the responsibility for its content back to the

individual citizens of Alberta. The following excerpts are a small selection of the forty-one occurrences of the word *Albertans* in the body of the “Inspiring Education Report:”

“The input of thousands of Albertans is the foundation for this document” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 5).

“However, discussions with thousands of Albertans confirmed that innovations like this are in the minority” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 5).

“Albertans articulated their vision for education through specific outcomes which have been summarized as ‘the Three E’s’ of education for the 21st Century” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 5).

“In community conversations, Albertans stressed the need for diverse approaches to evaluate learner competency, including the use of qualitative measures” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 7).

“Other than parents and families, Albertans see the teacher as the single most important contributor to learner success” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 7).

“Through conversations with Albertans, it became clear to the Steering Committee that governance should also change to align with the shifts in policy” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 8).

In these sentences, and most others, Albertans are the active subjects. In some cases, however, the object is turned into a subject: “However, discussions with thousands of Albertans confirmed that innovations like this are in the minority” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 5).⁶ I assume the absent agents—those who actually did the “confirming”—are the members of the Steering Committee who authored the “Inspiring Education Report,” but I cannot be certain.

Constructing the sentence as an agentless passive “again leave[s] causality and agency unclear” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 125); the emphasis remains on the Albertans. In another example, the agent (the Steering Committee) is present, but remains passive: “Through conversations with

⁶ Possibilities of alternative constructions which feature the subject include: ““However, discussions *by the Steering Committee members* with thousands of Albertans confirmed that innovations like this are in the minority,” or “However, discussions with thousands of Albertans confirmed *to the Steering Committee* that innovations like this are in the minority.”

Albertans, it became clear to the Steering Committee that governance should also change to align with the shifts in policy” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 8). A common strategy in neoliberal policies, the authors emphasize consultation with the public to legitimize the “vision” of *Inspiring Education*. The consultation processes which preceded the publishing of the “Inspiring Education Report” enhance the impression of the policy as a democratic document. Through these strategies, the Government positions itself as less accountable for the words in the text—the onus is again placed on Albertans to take responsibility for the future described in this document.

Within the framework of personal responsibility, *choice* becomes crucial. Citizens must be given several options from which to choose the best fit for their “unique needs, strengths, challenges and passions” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 25). The “Inspiring Education Report” is structured around six core values, of which one is *choice*:

“Curriculum should be relevant and available in a variety of forms. It must be accessible; in-person or virtually, collaboratively or independently, and at one’s own pace” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 6).

“Learners have a choice of both programs and methods of learning” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 21).

In the mid-1990s, through a series of reforms eliminating attendance boundaries and introducing charter schools, the Government of Alberta under Conservative Premier Ralph Klein codified choice as a core value of Alberta’s education system. *Choice* carries significant ideological weight in public school reform. *Choice* became codified as a core value of Alberta educational policies in 1995, through a series of reforms eliminating attendance boundaries and introducing charter schools. “School choice policy assumes that situating schools in a market-based

environment will force schools to compete for students by improving the quality of the educational product” (Beal & Hendry, 2012, p. 522). Beal and Hendry (2012) have chosen these words intentionally. School choice changes the norms of public education. Rather than comparing the work of educators and students against a moral standard, or any philosophical point of reference, the work is compared to that of its competitors. The work of schools becomes the product, the school system the provider, and the students the discerning customers. An underlying assumption is “that empowering parents with choice will improve education by holding schools accountable and will reenergize democratic participation in public education” (Beal & Hendry, 2012, p. 521). Schools are positioned to compete with one another to attract students (and associated per-pupil funding). The consumers are the new agents of accountability. Students and their families are responsible for holding the school accountable, and they are also responsible for selecting the appropriate program of their children’s needs. Each individual, and by extension, each family, becomes responsible for earning success in the system. Choice is part of an evolution of educational norms. If once the school’s primary aim was to *educate* children (Held, 2006), now it also aims to *attract* an adequate number of children to keep the books balanced and the doors open.

A central tenet of care ethics is the embeddedness of people’s lives. We are embedded in relationships, in particular social contexts, that strongly influence the choices we make. In stark contrast to this perspective, *Inspiring Education* minimizes the influence of social context. The authors of the “Inspiring Education Report” refer to social differences euphemistically as *diversity*. *Diversity* is another of the six core values upon which the vision of *Inspiring Education* is based. The “Inspiring Education Report,” however, makes only certain kinds of

social difference relevant to the meaning of *diversity*. The following is a sample of sentences which use *diversity* or otherwise reference social differences:

“A diverse range of cultures, languages and attitudes” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 13).

“The workforce will see different cultures and generations working side by side” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 13).

“The province will draw upon citizens who may have been under-represented or under-utilized in the workforce, such as seniors, new immigrants, those with physical or developmental challenges, and Aboriginals, whose population is currently growing at twice the rate of the non-Aboriginal population.” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 13)

“Through all this, our system of education will continue to be challenged by a diversity of learning needs. As well, a decidedly more inclusive learning environment will challenge the system to better respond to the needs of those with differing physical and developmental abilities.” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 13)

“[...] students representing diverse populations (e.g., students with special needs, immigrant students, students who have not completed high school, etc.)” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 15).

“This Albertan will be well-positioned to manage the challenges and opportunities of our common future: an increasing focus on knowledge; competition from developing economies, changing demographics, and more diversity” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 18).

“The values apply to every learner, including those who are urban, rural, Aboriginal, disabled, gifted, and of minority cultures” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 20).

“Diversity: Learners’ differing needs, cultures, and abilities are respected and valued within inclusive learning environments.” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 21)

By collocating (or placing in proximity) social difference and *diversity* with *culture*, *language*, *attitude*, *ability*, *generations/age*, *learning needs*, *immigration status*, *high-school completion status*, and *geographical location*, the authors make these kinds of diversity relevant. Markers of social difference which are not oriented to in this document, but nonetheless have tangible consequences for people in Alberta, include gender, sexuality, and socio-economic status. For

example, only one reference is made to “economic circumstance” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 32) and none to poverty or inequality, despite the great widening of income inequality between Alberta’s poorest and richest families (Kolkman & Moore-Kilgannon, 2013). Tellingly, it is at the intersection of gender, race, and class that an unequal distribution of care responsibilities becomes visible. *Diversity*, in the way it acts as a pleasant substitute for other controversial concepts, is euphemistic (“a word which is substituted for a more conventional or familiar one as a way of avoiding negative values” [Fairclough, 1989, p. 117]).

While the “Inspiring Education Report” does not explicitly address many social conditions which might act as barriers to success, the term *adversity* does feature in the description of *Entrepreneurial Spirit*: “who has the confidence to take risks and make bold decisions in the face of adversity” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 6). The meaning of *adversity* is unclear. *Adversity* could represent individual traits, within the subject or within others, that sabotage success (e.g., laziness, cowardice, negligence). *Adversity* could refer to the challenge of a competitive equal, or financial insecurity, oppressive relationships, social marginalization, uncertain migrant status, or care responsibilities. *Adversity* is another euphemism for consequential challenges like poverty, mental illness, and discrimination.

Tronto (2013) describes personal responsibility as the moral dimension of neoliberal practice. It is summed up in this statement: “If you cannot care for your own children, your own community, then if there is a problem in your family or community, the problem is your inadequate sacrifice” (Tronto, 2013, p. 42). The discourse of personal responsibility is apparent even in the description of the *Ethical Citizen*:

“Ethical Citizen: ‘I do the right thing because it is the right thing to do.’

It’s not all about me. I have learned about and appreciate the effort and sacrifice that built this province and country. My education has helped me see beyond my self-interests to the needs of the community. As a result, I contribute fully to the world around me—economically, culturally, socially and politically. As a steward of the earth, I minimize environmental impacts wherever I go.

I build relationships through humility; fairness and open-mindedness; and with teamwork and communication. I engage with many cultures, religions, and languages. This enables me to value diversity in all people and adapt to any situation. I demonstrate respect, empathy and compassion for all people.

I can care for myself physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially, and spiritually, yet I am able to ask for help when needed from others and for others. I am well-prepared to assume the responsibilities of life – whether they be the duties of a parent, a neighbour, a mentor, or an employee or employer.” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 19)

In the above excerpt, as in the description of the *Entrepreneurial Spirit*, the *Ethical Citizen* is the active subject, a self-reliant contributor. Within the logic of personal responsibility and self-reliance, this conception of the *Ethical Citizen* is rational. If each future citizen is able to realize the statement: “I can care for myself physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially, and spiritually” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 19), then the responsibility to care for one another would be simplified; we would be living in an ideal market, uncomplicated by varying levels of autonomy and ability. In the ideal market all things are assumed to have a price and “exchanges are made anonymously on grounds of rational self-interest” (Held, 2006, p. 112).

We know, however, that every society has citizens who cannot care for themselves. The authors superficially acknowledge interdependence in the clause: “[...] yet I am able to ask for help when needed from others and for others” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 19). The authors subordinate “asking for help” to caring for oneself. This hierarchy might be the ideal in theory, but it does not reflect our actual exchanges with one another: “Actual markets are often very

different. They include personal exchanges between persons who have social connections with each other and exchanges that incorporate various of the values other than market ones of the items or services being traded” (Held, 2006, p. 112). Subordination of dependence to independence is pervasive in *Inspiring Education*.

The discourse of personal responsibility makes systemic social inequalities immune “from notice and criticism” (Edelman, 1988, p. 14). In the “Inspiring Education Report,” the careful construction of the “educated Alberta of 2030” as the active subject, the redistribution of responsibility through mechanisms of *choice*, and the minimization of the influence of social context on individuals’ ability to succeed, all reflect a belief that, with a bit of hard work, each Albertan can achieve the ideal. However,

When we act as if all of the starting and ending points for everyone are the same, we miss an important feature of what justice might require. From this perspective, personal responsibility seems anti-democratic because it pays no heed to the likely effects that great levels of inequality will have on individuals and on public life. (Tronto, 2013, pp. 42-43)

Personal responsibility is a compelling discourse, though, and not altogether wrong or bad.

While I am critical of discussions about human potential and the power of “pulling up your bootstraps,” the value of hard work and accountability for one’s choices does resonate with me.

What I see as most threatening to an ethic of care in the future of Alberta’s education system is not so much the presence of Personal Responsibility, but the glaring absence of a discourse that recognizes that there are real, “structural reasons why individuals may encounter responsibilities that they cannot meet, through no fault of their own” (Tronto, 2013, p. 61).

The care alternative.

A productive alternative discourse would honour our collective dependency and difference. Similar to the conception of the Canadian citizen in the 1960s, “assumed to be equal with respect to vulnerability to insecurity” (Brodie, 2002, p. 60), democratic caring as a political theory

presumes equality rests upon a very different ground. It presumes that we are equal as democratic citizens in being *care receivers*. In being “care receivers all,” citizens’ needs for care and their interdependent reliance on others to help them to meet their caring needs become the basis for equality. (Tronto, 2013, p. 29, emphasis in original)

Recognition of our equality as care receivers has the potential to disrupt the hierarchy between those who are perceived as independent and those who cannot mask their dependence. It could potentially normalize, even idealize, the work done by caregivers, paid and unpaid. Albertans could learn to perceive themselves, not as “fully independent, free, and equal rational agents” (Held, 2006, p. 85), but as equally vulnerable citizens who will all, at some point, benefit from a society in which care responsibilities are valued and fairly distributed.

Private-Sector Norms Discourse

The discourse of Personal Responsibility assumes equality amongst citizens insofar as each of us have equal opportunity to make the right choices for ourselves and our families. It assumes the market will supply a sufficient quantity and selection of goods and services so that everyone can choose that which is most advantageous for them.

The market sees needs as a result of individuals making decisions for themselves about the nature of their needs. When new needs emerge, some entrepreneur will see a new niche

and provide some good or service to meet that need. Thus, needs are met when they arise.

(Tronto, 2013, p. 120)

The authors of *Inspiring Education* construct the social world in the image of the corporate world through the importation of corporate vocabulary, emphasis on a competitive global economy, and favouring of “entrepreneurial skills” over routine work. This construction is problematic for care in society because the spread of market logic—“Nothing about the market says that market thinking must spread to other realms of life, but in fact the logic of the market does spread” (Tronto, 2013, p. 121)—is fundamentally different from care ethics. Both caregivers and care receivers are disadvantaged in a social context which places higher value on productivity and efficiency than on social ties and caring responsibilities. In the following section I consider the discursive strategies through which corporate norms are superimposed onto the social world.

“In some cases, what is ideologically significant about a text is its vocabulary items *per se*” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 113); in the case of the “Inspiring Education Report,” much of the vocabulary reflects an orientation towards market logic and corporate norms. *Excellence*, *innovation*, and *entrepreneurial* are associated particularly closely with the market.

In addition to *choice* and *diversity*, which have been previously discussed, the “Inspiring Education Report” features *excellence* as one of its six core values. The word *excellence* occurs twenty-three times in the body of the “Inspiring Education Report,” and *excellence/excellent* occurs 127 times⁷ in “Part I: Report to the Minister of Education, Government of Alberta” of the “Teaching Excellence Report.”

⁷ Part I comprises the first 65 pages of the two part document; the count of 127 excludes the occurrences in the repeating header

Excellence in educational policy is indicative of the rise of neoliberal ideology in the governance of education (Gillies, 2008). Gillies (2008) unpacks the conflation of discourses of excellence and equality in education policy texts in the United Kingdom. *Excellence*, as associated with the movement for improving quality in schools, refers to the “farthest end of the quality spectrum” (HMIE, 2006, as cited in Gillies, 2008, p. 686). *Excellence* is defined by the ability to exactly reproduce a desirable product (Temple, 2005). It evolved out of the introduction of quality control for munitions production during World War II (Gillies, 2008). It has “no point of reference beyond a mutually satisfactory buyer–seller relationship” (Temple, 2005, p. 269). The *excellence* model in educational policy “does not ask questions about what might lie at the heart of the organisation: about what it does, what it believes in, what gives it its special character” (Temple, 2005, p. 269). The fundamental philosophical concepts which provide a point of reference for *excellence* must be made clear in educational policy, or *quality* and *excellence* remain empty terms (Gillies, 2008). Without clear philosophical underpinnings, emphasis on quality focuses attention on “practices and procedures” (Gillies, 2008, p. 689).

Excellence, without the rudder of fundamental concepts, such as “what is good teaching, or a good teacher” (Gillies, 2008, p. 689), devolves into an obsession with managing:

[...] a focus on quality in teaching would require that every teacher was of the required standard (excellent?) *all* of the time; that *every* learner received this stipulated standard of teaching *all* of the time. Quality, thus, is about management [...]. (Gillies, 2008, p. 689)

Quality control assumes that education need not be contextualized, that a teaching staff who is managed correctly will be able to apply best practices and—poof—the “educated Albertan” is produced. *Excellence* is not about “restructuring and change” (Gillies, 2008, p. 690) and

“endeavouring to adjust educational provision to meet the aims of egalitarianism” (Gillies, 2008, p. 690), but endeavouring to manage the quality of provision of education. Managing for quality control is unrelational, ignoring the unique circumstances of individual students, schools, and communities. Elevating quality and *excellence* to the level of a core value in *Inspiring Education* highlights the management of “practices and procedures” (Gillies, 2008, p. 689) and deemphasizes fundamental questions about “the purpose and role of such public sector institutions as education” (Gillies, 2008, p. 689).

Innovation is an important complement to *excellence* in *Inspiring Education*.

Educational policymakers imported it from managerial discourses in the economic sphere. Various iterations on the root word *innovate* occur twenty-five times in the “Inspiring Education Report.” In the “Teaching Excellence Report,” the terms occur twelve times. “[I]nnovation to promote and strive for excellence” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 7) is one of the seven guiding principles of *Inspiring Education*. “[I]nnovate—create and generate new ideas or concepts” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 26) is one of the ten competencies of the “educated Albertan.” Innovation t applies to teachers (“teachers need to be innovative, passionate and positive about teaching” [Alberta Education, 2010, p. 7]) and, it is central to the description of the *Engaged Thinker* (“I use technology to learn, innovate, collaborate, communicate, and discover” [Alberta Education, 2010, p. 19]).

Bullen, Fahey, and Kenway (2006) discuss *innovation* in the context of knowledge-economy policies. Knowledge-based economies are defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as “economies which are directly based on the production, distribution and use of knowledge and information” (Organisation for Economic Co-

operation and Development, 1996, p. 7). The authors of the “Inspiring Education Report” make reference to the knowledge-based economy of the future several times:

“Today’s generation has seen the rise of knowledge as a key resource of the world’s economy” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 4).

“As never before, the next generation will need to be innovative, creative, and skilled in managing knowledge as a resource” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 4).

“The ‘next generation economy’ will be knowledge-based, diverse and grounded in value-added industries” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 11).

“In the context of the knowledge economy and its associated discourses,” write Bullen et al. (2006), “‘innovation’ denotes a complex of attributes and processes that extend far beyond the creation of something new” (p. 60). Key elements of *innovation* discourse include: “new knowledge, scientific inventiveness, technology, markets, enterprise, competitiveness, and entrepreneurialism. Innovation, therefore, means much more than a new idea or invention or even new knowledge alone” (Bullen et al., 2006, p. 60).

“In the future, Albertans will have to possess non-routine, big-picture skills like innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship if we are to remain competitive with these countries, and other emerging economies like Brazil and Russia” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 12).

In this excerpt, the authors present innovation as a skill, paired with *creativity*, *entrepreneurship*, and *competitiveness*. In the following excerpt, *innovative* is required if we are to solve social challenges:

“To truly transform education, the system must empower innovation throughout the province” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 18).

In this example, the challenges in question are those associated with increased competition for natural resources. Teaching practice is also subject to calls for *innovation*:

“Learners in particular told us that teachers need to be innovative, passionate and positive about teaching. These qualities can be nurtured through a variety of policies and practices, including a less restrictive curriculum, meaningful professional development, and structures that allow for regular exchange of ideas and best practices.” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 27)

The above excerpt links *innovation* with policy and practice associated with quality and excellence. Suggesting teachers need to be innovative implies that the age-old work of building relationships with students is less valuable than being edgy, inventive, and entrepreneurial. The authors also state that innovation can be nurtured through “meaningful professional development and “exchange of ideas and best practices.” To ensure all teachers are implementing best practices, the education system will require a robust framework for teacher oversight and management. From a relational perspective, emphasis on management and best practice reduces teachers’ ability to meet the idiosyncratic needs of the children for whom they take responsibility. It also challenges teachers’ ability to use their own professional judgment and take into account their own needs as professionals who live “nested lives” (Couture, 2014). The push for *excellent* teaching

ignores the complex inter relationships [sic] that determine the conditions of teaching practice and student readiness to learn—and how these relate to the interior psychological lives of teachers and their relationships to their students, school communities, personal and family circumstances and the broader educational policy environments they work in.

(Couture, 2014, pp. 48-49)

Ignoring the complexity of the “nested lives” of both teachers and students is a barrier to the subtle negotiations of interests within caring relationships. *Excellence* and *innovation* both devalue the contextual, idiosyncratic, and often mundane work of caregiving.

In addition to *excellence* and *innovation*, *entrepreneurial* is another blatant associate of neoliberal ideology. The terms *entrepreneur/entrepreneurial* occur eight times in the “Teaching Excellence Report.” In the “Inspiring Education Report” the terms occur only six times, but feature prominently: the *Entrepreneurial Spirit* is one of the Three E’s describing the “educated Albertan of 2030.”

“Entrepreneurial Spirit: ‘I create new opportunities.’

I am motivated, resourceful, and self-reliant. Many people describe me as tenacious because I continuously set goals and work with perseverance and discipline to achieve them. Through hard work, I earn my achievements and the respect of others. I strive for excellence and personal success.

I am competitive and ready to challenge the status quo. I explore ideas and technologies by myself and as part of diverse teams. I am resilient and adaptable, and have the ability and determination to transform my discoveries into products or services that benefit my community and by extension, the world.

I have the confidence to take risks and make bold decisions in the face of adversity, recognizing that to hold back is to be held back. I have the courage to dream.” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 20)

Virginia Held (2006) writes, “[t]he ideal of everyone an entrepreneur is pervasive” (Held, 2006, p. 112). In the above excerpt, entrepreneurial values include perseverance, self-reliance, and discipline. An *Entrepreneurial Spirit* is resilient and adaptable and willing to take risks: “to hold back is to be held back.” Personal success is the goal. In this next excerpt, the “big-picture” skills of innovation and entrepreneurship are juxtaposed with “routine jobs:”

“Many routine jobs previously done in North America are already outsourced to these countries. Those numbers are expected to grow. In the future, Albertans will have to possess non-routine, big-picture skills like innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship if we are to remain competitive with these countries, and other emerging economies like Brazil and Russia.” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 12)

This statement stigmatizes the often routine work of caregiving. It also normalizes the problematic practice of outsourcing routine work to people in developing countries. Caregiving often involves listening to the same story for the thousandth time, playing a daily game of cards, or simply reading a book alongside another person. These activities establish trust and competence between the caregiver and care receiver. It is productive work, but its product is difficult to observe and measure. It is not competitive, and it likely will not result in a discovery that transforms into products or services. Though some people “have begun to hope that robots will be able to replace some care activities (Graf, Hans, and Schraft 2004)” (Tronto, 2013, p. 121), many do not desire a move away from human connection. Relationships can only be built when caregivers have the time and resources to meet the needs of those for whom they are responsible without pressure to increase efficiency and do more with less. Constructing routine work in opposition to the more favourable “big-picture thinking” presented in the “Inspiring Education Report” casts the work of establishing and maintaining caring relationships as less valuable than *Entrepreneurial Spirit*.

Excellence, innovation, and entrepreneurial are each affiliated with the familiar discourse of competition. In the body of the “Inspiring Education Report,” iterations of the root word *compete* appear eight times, and they are often collocated with *developing economies* (i.e., “competition from developing economies” [Alberta Education, 2010, p. 18]). Iterations of the root word *global* appear ten times in the “Inspiring Education Report.” While I previously discussed competition as it arose out of school choice policies, in the context of global competition, Albertans are positioned in competition with China and India:

“China, India, and other parts of the developing world are using education to power their economies” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 11).

Understanding the social world as competitive reduces society to a collection of winners and losers. Success will be enjoyed by “either/or” but not “and.” The motivation for competing is framed as self-preservation. The Albertans of 2030 must “have the skills necessary to both continue the Alberta legacy and strengthen it” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 4). Otherwise, we lose the competition. Again, any moral standard or philosophical point of reference, defining success beyond defeating our opponents, is absent from these policy texts. This construction imagines the marketplace in which the competition occurs as an ideal marketplace. In ideal markets, “Social relations such as trust and caring are invisible [...] every social interaction is an exchange between individuals and the notion of a social tie disappears” (Held, 2006, p. 112). These imaginary markets do not account for inequality, for people who are less able to identify, articulate, and pay for their required goods and services, or who are systemically marginalized in their attempts to do so.

The ideological significance of *excellence, innovation, and entrepreneurialism* is the extension of private-sector norms into public institutions. The norm governing the market is “the maximization of economic gain” (Held, 2006, p. 110):

But [the teacher’s] work is not in the market in the sense that the principles under which he works are the market principles of the maximization of economic gain. Economic gain is not the primary name of the school, and his primary goal is not economic gain if he could

earn far more working for a corporation. The school's primary objective, and his, may be educating children well, not earning as much as possible. (Held, 2006, p. 110)⁸

Market norms fundamentally change the caring nature of work in the public sector. In order to maximize profit, the cost of the service must be as low as possible. Carework is resistant to measures of efficiency. “[A]n important aspect of care is simply spending time with another, listening to stories, observing care receivers” (Tronto, 2013, p. 121); the routine work which ideal educated Albertans will eschew. Caregivers are trapped in a time bind, caught between the demands of the economy and the demands of caregiving. In order to profit despite the high time-cost of carework, entrepreneurially-minded managers and business owners must either decrease the quality of care, or increase the cost to consumers. High cost of care services create a disparity between a market society's biggest winners and all those nonwinners left behind. “Stagnation in the wages of nonwinners is especially harmful to women, who are disproportionately among those with meagre earnings” (Held, 2006, p. 113). Not only does the ideology of entrepreneurialism marginalize the routine work of caregiving, but market norms make it extremely difficult—really, next to impossible—to employ caregivers at reasonable wages and still provide care services to economically and socially disadvantaged citizens.

Personal Responsibility and Private-Sector Norms are hallmarks of neoliberal ideology:

Neo-liberal strategies of rule, found in diverse realms including workplaces, educational institutions and health and welfare agencies, encourage people to see themselves as individualized and active subjects responsible for enhancing their own well being.

(Larner, 2000, p. 13)

⁸ I cannot be certain why Held chose to use the masculine pronoun “he” in this passage, but I suspect that it is an intentional move to challenge the expectation that teachers are female.

For care ethics, neoliberalism is problematic. Both caregivers and care receivers are disadvantaged in a social context which places higher value on personal success, productivity, and efficiency than on social ties and caring responsibilities. Focus on quality control (of which the pinnacle is *excellence*) is a barrier to the compromise necessary in caring relationships, emphasis on *innovation* and *entrepreneurialism* conflicts with the value of the routine work of caregiving and assumes everyone as a competitor in the global economy.

The care alternative.

A productive alternative to the discourse of Private-Sector Norms is a perspective that honours the distinctiveness of the public sector. Ball (2003) is critical of three policy technologies—the market, managerialism and performativity—that diminish the distinctiveness of the public sector:

[T]hese technologies offer a politically attractive alternative to the state-centred, public welfare tradition of educational provision. They are set over and against the older policy technologies of professionalism and bureaucracy. In more general terms, the new technologies of reform play an important part in aligning public sector organizations with the methods, culture and ethical system of the private sector. The distinctiveness of the public sector is diminished. (Ball, 2003, pp. 215-216)

If professionalism and bureaucracy are no longer effective policy technologies, then perhaps it is necessary to find new ones. Technologies imported from the private-sector, however, lack the ethical standard, the philosophical point of reference, that distinguishes the public sector from the private. I suggest ethics of care could provide the moral rudder necessary to steer public policies.

Chapter 5: The Teacher as “Enterprising” Facilitator

The teacher-student relationship is unique in the realm of caring relationships. It exists between a child and adult, as opposed to between two adults or two children; it is sanctioned in its inequality, as the teacher has particular responsibilities towards the child that are not reciprocated and are not shared by other, non-teacher adults; and, it exists as part of a public institution, and so is subject to the norms of public education. The teacher role is also a familiar role. It provides a useful backdrop against which to compare the discursive treatment of caregivers in *Inspiring Education*.

First, I will comment on the distinction between citizens generally and teachers specifically. In the previous chapter I sought to understand the discursive treatment of care as it applied to the whole of society, to caregivers from all spheres. In this chapter I look specifically at teachers. Separating the construction of the citizen from the construction of the teacher is a strategy for analysis, hopefully drawing a clearer picture of the worldview reflected in the language of *Inspiring Education*. The categories of citizen and teacher are not mutually exclusive: teachers are citizens, and citizens may be teachers, and the values generally espoused in the school system “of the future” will be modelled by teachers as an ideal for all citizens. The discourses of Personal Responsibility and Private-Sector Norms, discussed in Chapter 4, map directly onto Alberta’s teachers; if citizens are to be “self-reliant” and recognize “that to hold back is to be held back” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 20), so, too, must the teachers. Subsequently, the question guiding the remainder of the analysis and discussion is: How does the language in *Inspiring Education* policies construct the teacher relative to his/her role as a caregiver? I begin this section with discussion about the two allusions to a caring teacher-student

relationship that do occur in the “Inspiring Education Report” and the “Teaching Excellence Report.” I then detail the discursive strategies that comprise the Neoliberal Professionalism and Teacher-as-Facilitator discourses, along with a discussion about how these discourses might influence teachers’ relationships with students.

Allusions to a Caring Teacher-Student Relationship

In light of the prominence of discourses of personal responsibility, independence, and competition, it would be reasonable to assume that language of care would be totally absent from the *Inspiring Education* ensemble. While this is largely true, there are a few exceptions. I suggest these few exceptions are the perpetuation of long-established patterns of treating “women’s work” as peripheral to the real work of economic competition. The language of care is present but practically deflated; simultaneously cherished and denied (Grumet, 1988).

Part I of the “Teaching Excellence Report” features one occurrence of the word *care*, and none of the word *caring*. The following describes caring as one of the key attributes of excellent teachers:

“Compassionate, empathetic, caring, kind, understanding, and relationship builders. For example, a student participating in Task Force consultations said: “Truly having a good teacher is to be able to connect with him or her and their teaching method. More than just the way he or she teaches, but on a personal level as well. To be able to connect with someone will truly make it easier to understand what they are saying and to comprehend material in depth.” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 19)

The above excerpt describes the teacher-student relationship as complex—even personal. It occurs near the beginning of the “Teaching Excellence Report,” but none of *care*, *kind*, nor *kindness* appear again. From the above excerpt—a summary of the feedback gathered during

consultations with Albertans—the only teacher attribute to which the authors refer again is *relationship builder*.

The Alberta Association of Deans of Education identify, “fosters supportive learning relationships” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 29), as a key competency of effective teachers. The recommendations of the Alberta Association of Deans are listed as a sidebar, but the Task Force authors do emphasize them by suggesting that they be a launching point for revisions of the teaching practice standards in the province. *Relationship builder* is a generic category. Relationships are not all equal, and the authors of the “Teaching Excellence Report” do not specify the nature of effective teacher-student relationships. The norms which govern them, the boundaries which delimit responsibilities—these qualities remain ambiguous. The singular mention of “compassionate, empathetic, caring, kind, understanding” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 19) amidst an abundance of language of competition, achievement, and self-reliance is more like empty rhetoric than genuine interest in supporting caring teacher-student relationships.

The “Inspiring Education Report” also includes some language of care. Notably, the description of the *Ethical Citizen* does come close to a concept of care. I have already addressed the significance of citizens who proclaim, “I can care for myself” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 19). The *Ethical Citizen* is self-reliant, an individual who contributes, asks for help when he needs it, and is well-prepared for the “duties” of being a parent, neighbour, mentor, employee, or employer (Alberta Education, 2010, p.19). Close, but not quite care.

A better approximation of a caring teacher-student relationship occurs in a sidebar:

“To my son...when I think of education in 20 years, I hope that your teachers have loved you and nurtured you and helped you to become a ‘ready citizen’ for your adult journey of life. I hope your teachers have instilled the power of life-long learning and teamwork. Community Conversation, Fort McMurray (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 31).

This contribution from a community member is the only example in the “Inspiring Education Report” that suggests a teacher-student relationship which might have other-than-market value, value that does not readily translate into economic terms but is nonetheless an important feature of social life. Love and nurturance speak to an ethic of care, as they suggest a moral quality of teaching (or parenting or nursing, etc.) beyond preparing future economic contributors. The above excerpt is even more significant when taken in the context of the document as a whole. First, it is the only reference to teacher-student relationships that extends beyond the narrow concept of teacher as “architect of learning.” Second, the excerpt is presented as a sidebar, literally in the margins of the “Inspiring Education Report.”

Both fleeting mentions of caring teacher-student relationships continue a well-established pattern of presenting “women’s work” as peripheral, or extraneous, to the real work of economic contribution and competition. Writing about the transition to industrialized economies in America, Ann Douglas (1988) claims,

[T]he lady's function in a capitalist society was to appropriate and preserve both the values and commodities which her competitive husband, father and son had a little time to honor and enjoy. She was to provide an antidote and a purpose to their labor. (p. 60)

While those who are expected to compete are busy doing so, other members of society are tasked with doing the work that gives purpose to the competitive labour. Who was, or is, tasked with

this maintenance work, and how they are assigned these tasks, is an implicit process. The struggle of care ethics is to make the process more explicit.

The authors of *Inspiring Education* perpetuate the marginalization of caring work by briefly mentioning caring, loving, nurturing, teachers, and then getting on with the more important stuff of educational policy. This move is an artifact of what Ann Douglas (1988) calls *sentimentalism*. The occurrences of *compassionate* and *nurturing* play on a kind of mistaken nostalgia about teacher-student relationships. The sentimental notion of the gentle, loving teacher is immediately undermined by the construction of the teacher as self-interested and distant from students.

Women who first entered the teaching profession through the common schools of the late-19th century did so under the veil of moral superiority bestowed upon them for their feminine self-sacrifice, submissiveness, purity, and domesticity. Theoretically, this moral superiority could then be dispensed in schools and leveraged in the process of educating children (Grumet, 1988, p. 40). The impossibility of this sentimental notion soon revealed itself:

The moralistic and impossible demand that women, without expressing anger or aggression, control children who were resisting a tightly repressive and tedious regime encouraged teachers to confuse the logical consequences of these harsh conditions for the failure of their own discipline, intelligence, and inspiration. (Grumet, 1988, p. 52)

The discourses of Neoliberal Professionalism and Teacher-as-Facilitator both deny that teaching requires hierarchy, authority, or strategies for control. The assumption within these discourses is that through investment in one's professional growth, implementation of best practices, and consideration of students' needs and interests, teachers need not resort to "old-fashioned"

methods of achieving student compliance. Students will want to learn *if* you are a good enough teacher. Many young female teachers fell victim to this sentimentality in the 19th and 20th centuries:

It is probable that the thousands of young women who taught in the common schools, with or without benefit of normal school education, excepted the rhetoric of nurturance, expecting to mollify the reluctant student with earnest affection and good intention. I suspect that the many women who must have failed either returned to their parents' homes or fled to the shelter of their husbands' kitchens, chastened and humiliated, interpreting their failure as proof of their own frailty, weakness of will, and essential incapacity to function in the man's world. The cult of maternal nurturance prohibited those who stayed behind the desk from confessing their rage, frustration, and disappointment to each other. (Grumet, 1988, p. 52)

Now, in the 21st century, the rhetoric may be different, but the contradictions still hold strong. *Inspiring Education* is no less sentimental about teachers' caring and we still have not succeeded in giving it practical consideration in our educational policies. Teacher attrition in Alberta is a well acknowledged problem: "Approximately 25% of teachers leave the profession within the first 5 years of teaching" (Alberta Education, 2013, p. 2). Insofar as teachers who leave can be considered to have "failed," as Grumet (1988) puts it, how many still interpret "their failure as proof of their own frailty, weakness of will, and essential incapacity to function in the man's world" (p. 52)?

Teachers, often women, who take on the shortcomings of the education system as their personal failing or weakness are the inspiration and motivation for this project. As I stated in the

Positionality section in the Introduction chapter, throughout my teaching career I have grappled with the moral imperative upon me, as a female elementary school teacher, to demonstrate competency in my responsibility to meet students' needs. Often, the feeling of incompetence, of failure, is overwhelming. In the remainder of this chapter I identify some of the discourses that perpetuate the marginalization of care in teaching.

Neoliberal Professionalism Discourse

The authors of *Inspiring Education* construct the teacher as a “neoliberal professional” by suggesting the teachers' professional association is primarily self-interested, and by recommending a system of reward for teacher performance. The ideal of the neoliberal professional is a consequence of a new form of governance, in which

teachers are represented and encouraged to think about themselves as individuals who calculate about themselves, “add value” to themselves, improve their productivity, strive for excellence and live an existence of calculation. They are “enterprising subjects,” who live their lives as “an enterprise of the self” (Rose 1989)—as “neo-liberal professionals.” As Bernstein (1996: 169) puts it “contract replaces covenant” or putting it another way, value replaces values—commitment and service are of dubious worth within the new policy regime. (Ball, 2003, p. 217)

Neoliberal professionalism shares many of the themes already discussed, including personal responsibility and the extension of private-sector norms into education.

In the “Teaching Excellence Report,” the authors suggest there is conflict of interest within the Alberta Teachers' Association (henceforth the ATA). They suggest that the essentially

self-interested nature of the ATA makes the teachers' association ill-suited to act as a regulatory body for the profession:

“A potential and perceived conflict arises when the professional arm of the Alberta Teachers' Association espouses to have the best interest of students and the public at the heart of its decisions” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 63).

In the above excerpt, the word *espouse* connotes a belief or an idea rather than a fact; it casts doubt on the ATA's claims that it works in the interest of teachers, students, and the public.

“Again, the central issue relates to whom the associations serve; i.e., are decisions made in the interest of students or of members? From the standpoint of its union functions, including collective bargaining, the Alberta Teachers' Association is understandably and legally most concerned with the interests of teachers.” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 63)

Here the authors clearly state an either-or relationship between these two interest groups. Commensurate with a competitive worldview, the interests of students and the interests of teachers are considered mutually exclusive. From a care perspective, this perspective ignores the delicate interplay of interests that occurs in caring relationships. Held (2006) describes “[p]ersons in caring relations are acting for self-and-other together” (p. 13). Key to this distinction is the inclusion of a third party in this dynamic: the relationship itself.

Those who conscientiously care for others are not seeking primarily to further their own individual interests; their interests are intertwined with the persons they care for. Neither are they acting for the sake of all others or humanity in general; they seek instead to preserve or promote an actual human relation between themselves and particular others. (Held, 2006, p. 13)

The complex balance of interests immanent in caring relationships is not represented in *Inspiring Education*. Instead, the authors of the “Inspiring Education Report” repeatedly claim that “for

learners to achieve their full potential, education must make the child the centre of *all* decisions related to learning and education” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 25, emphasis in the original).

The ATA, in their contribution to “Part II: What we Heard - Community and Stakeholder Consultation” of the “Teaching Excellence Report,” call out this superficial narrative:

“A good place to begin with respect to support is to move away from the throw away lines about ‘it’s all about the kids’ to an actual meaningful lens from which to organize the system” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 152).

The “all about the kids” approach is powerful in the way it can be used to frame any other perspectives as being *not* about the kids. This false dichotomy is used by the authors of the “Teaching Excellence Report” to imply that because the ATA works in the interests of teachers, they must work in opposition to the interests of students and the public. If the teachers’ interests are served, then the students’ interests are not. This reasoning justifies the Task Force’s recommendation:

“That the professional regulatory model for teachers be modified to implement the recommendations of this report. The Task Force believes that this can be achieved through collaborative transformation of the existing model in which the Alberta Teachers’ Association continues to have both union and professional functions. If that is not possible, either a Ministry-based model or a separate professional college of teachers is recommended for consideration.” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 64)

For the teaching profession, having professional autonomy is a valuable source of control over the political environment in which teachers work. Degrading that autonomy is a blow to the movement for the professionalization of teaching. This scenario is illustrative of yet another contradiction: on one hand, the rhetoric of *Inspiring Education* encourages citizens to be ambitious, to be self-reliant, to be entrepreneurial. On the other hand, the authors of the

“Teaching Excellence Report” suggest the ATA’s self-interest is a barrier to teacher excellence and a threat to students’ opportunity to succeed.

The theme of competing interests is apparent in the “Teaching Excellence Report’s” treatment of the contentious issue of class size. While the ATA perennially campaigns for reduced class sizes, the Task Force suggests that some of the best school systems in the world have large class sizes. The variable in the system that really effects learning outcomes is the quality of the teacher. The authors then provide a quote from Andreas Schleicher of the OECD:

“The political economy of those changes [in P.I.S.A. ranking] is really tough because we’re not very transparent about schools, so parents judge schools on things they can easily observe – the size of the class, number of hours, all of these kinds of things. But if you look at actually what makes a difference, it’s quality of teaching. And quality of the education system can never exceed the quality of instruction. If you look at high-performing nations, it’s actually a very interesting experience. They tend to prioritise the quality of teachers over the size of the classes.” (as quoted in the Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 43)

I do not know the research on this topic. It may well be true that the success of students (as measured by standardized tests) is more dependent on the “quality of teachers” than on systemic factors like funding and class sizes. The relevance of this move to the discussion at hand is the way the authors shifted responsibility for student success off the system as a whole and onto individual teachers.

“Some of the school systems that perform best internationally have relatively large class sizes and put most of their reform efforts and resources into recruiting, training and advancing the very best teachers” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 43).

Teacher quality is another iteration of the *excellence* discourse, emphasizing universal implementation of best practices and policies. It shifts responsibility onto the individual teacher, who instead of being part of a system that is responsible for creating the conditions for

meaningful learning, is *personally responsible* for student success. A truly “enterprising subject” (Rose, 1989 as cited in Ball, 2003, p. 217) will seek out the best teacher training programs, the best professional development, and the most strategic career advances. The discourse of the Neoliberal Professional represents teachers as operating under a different set of norms. If once teachers’ primary aim was to *educate* children, now they also aim “to think about themselves as individuals who calculate about themselves, ‘add value’ to themselves, improve their productivity, strive for excellence and live an existence of calculation” (Ball, 2003, p. 217).

Caregivers of various types are often similarly caught between these two narratives: they are subject to the moral imperative to meet the needs of those for whom they are responsible, and yet, because they do not live up to the ideal of the competitive, innovative, and entrepreneurial citizen, they are seen as marginal contributors. This tension is described in popular writing about the “mommy wars.” Women who stay home to raise their children and women who work outside the home are each subject to different criticisms: those who do not earn an income are financially dependent on another wage earner or government subsidy. They are guilty of not investing in themselves, not being strategic enough, and maybe even of “selling themselves short” or underperforming. Those mothers who work outside the home are subject to criticism about the quality of care they can provide, about how their children deserve more time with their mothers, and about the selfishness of pursuing their own careers rather than caring full-time for their kids. These criticisms perhaps are most commonly directed at middle and upper-class women who are perceived as having a choice about working outside the home. Women who live in a low-income environment may not have the luxury of choice and may find themselves “damned if they do, damned if they don’t.”

When the ATA advocates for wage increases, class size reductions, or a cap on working hours for teachers, they are subject to the same criticisms as the middle-class mother who chooses to work outside the home: a critique of self-interest. The ATA counters with claims that improved working conditions for teachers is an improvement in learning conditions for students—an investment for all. This argument reflects the holistic view of relationships championed by care ethics. From a care perspective, framing students' interests in competition with teachers' interests is unproductive. As caregivers, teachers are under the moral imperative to meet the spectrum of needs that students present upon entering the classroom every day. Many of those needs are not represented in academic assessments and evaluations (e.g., social and emotional guidance), but are nonetheless necessary to fulfill the professional obligation to act as a caring adult. A caregiver is only able to reach an ethical standard of care for his students when he is also able to meet a minimum of his own needs. Caregivers and teachers are constantly balancing interests, establishing personal boundaries so as not to be exhausted of their will and ability to care, while still trying to meet the myriad needs of the people for whom they are responsible. None of this is particularly innovative thinking—achieving balance as a caregiver is the topic of much writing, both popular and academic. Unfortunately, in a neoliberal political environment emphasizing personal responsibility and market logic, the careful balancing of needs and interests is less celebrated than measurable and observable productivity.

Another strategy by which the teacher is constructed as a “neoliberal professional” is through the recommendation of a system of reward for teaching quality. “Recognizing and motivating teachers” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 41) through a reward system challenges traditional public sector norms. Held (2006) poses the questions: “What kinds of

activities should or should not be in the market and governed by market norms? How does marketing an activity change its character and what values are served or harmed by this transition?” (pp. 107-108). A system of reward encourages teachers to invest in themselves, to reach *excellence* in their practice in order to be personally rewarded. The recommendation in the “Teaching Excellence Report” reads:

“That the Ministry of Education create and administer a new provincial designation to recognize teachers who consistently demonstrate teaching excellence and mastery in accordance with the Teaching Quality Standard. These individuals would be invited to contribute their expertise in areas such as:

- mentorship of other teachers
- leadership in teacher collaboration
- support of student teachers during their practicum and/or articling/internship
- citizenship roles which advance the interests of students

We further recommend that those receiving this designation be allotted time from their teaching duties, additional resources, and/or an honorarium from the Ministry, commensurate with their participation in such areas. A teacher’s designation would continue at the pleasure of the Ministry.” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 41)

Currently, Alberta Education’s only system of reward for teacher quality is the annual “Excellence in Teaching Awards Program.” Since 1989, approximately twenty teachers from around the province have been selected annually for this award. Officially, the awards program recognizes and honours outstanding, creative, innovative, and effective teaching, focuses public attention on the profession, and involves Albertans in celebrating excellence (Alberta Education, n.d.-a). The selection committee uses the following as criteria for selection:

“Teachers and principals are vital to empowering students to reach their full potential. They do this by putting students first and developing engaged thinkers and ethical citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit” (Alberta Education, n.d.-a, para. 8).

Using the language of *Inspiring Education*, this program of rewarding teachers requires nominators to provide specific examples of “How the nominee’s teaching or leadership excels” at specific criteria and “How the nominee’s teaching or leadership is innovative or creative in supporting student learning” (Alberta Education, n.d.-a, para. 9). Two assumptions underpin the recommendation for a more robust reward system: (1) teachers are motivated by recognition, and (2) unrecognized and unmotivated teachers are the cause of (supposed) inferior teacher quality in the province.

Assuming that teachers are motivated by recognition and awards, a system of recognition would create healthy competition between teachers. Those who have not yet been recognized will strive to reach the ranks of those who have. Competition, the associate of *excellence*, *innovation*, and *entrepreneurialism*, is assumed in a neoliberal worldview to be the mechanism by which to elevate the performance of the whole. In an ideal marketplace this theory may produce the desired outcome. In public schooling, however, an ethical standard exists. Every student must be cared for. Is it ethical if an ambitious and enterprising teacher, highly motivated by recognition and advancement opportunities, chooses to keep valuable instructional resources to herself in order to improve her students’ results? Her self-interest is to the detriment of the students in other classes who will not have access to that resource. A caring environment attempts to balance the interests of all parties. Sometimes this kind of compromise is perceived as mediocrity—in order to serve the needs of the whole, the potential of a few might be stifled. It is an age-old dilemma, but in a caring school environment, the alternative of ignoring the needs of a few in the interests of another falls short of a care ethic.

Within the neoliberal paradigm, achievements that are observable and measurable, and therefore available to reward, are rarely those intangible behaviours that build caring relationships. The likelihood is that the measurable, observable skills will be rewarded, and the essential caring work that underpins teacher-student relationships will remain difficult to describe, difficult to define, and thus, difficult to recognize as the foundation of educators' work.

The care alternative.

A productive alternative to the discourse of Neoliberal Professionalism is a perspective that trusts teachers in their role as caregivers. Teachers work with young and vulnerable children, children who are new to the world and dependent on adult support to make it safely through their days. Teaching will always be caring work, and teachers will always be under the expectation to behave towards their students as responsible, caring adults.

Our education system would be well-served if educational policy recognized that the role of teacher requires a careful balancing act of interests on both micro and macro levels. In a single interaction, in the hallway of a school during the mid-day recess, for example, a teacher must decide if his need to grab lunch from the fridge is greater, equal, or less important at that moment than helping a student find a lost article of outdoor clothing. Even in this mundane example, which is illustrative of the decisions teachers make by the dozens everyday, the significance of context is evident. Which article of clothing has been misplaced? What is the weather like? Has this happened on the four previous days? Is the student new to the school? On the macro level, the same balance of interests occurs. When contract negotiations role around in the provinces of Western Canada, teachers' associations debate whether to accept the offer, to campaign, or to strike. The interests of students are central to these deliberations—

during the 2014 strike by members of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, the media featured articles from every side of the controversy. In teaching, as in all caring contexts, decisions are rarely a simple matter of "us or them."

Of course, teachers are not infallible. There are greedy teachers and lazy teachers and teachers who do not even attempt to meet the needs of students. The suggestion of merit pay, though, implies that teachers generally cannot be trusted to perform that balancing act. That without external reward, teachers will serve their own interests on the backs of their students. Again, it seems to represent a worldview in which care, morality, or philosophical points of reference of any kind is perceived as provincial or even harmful to the project of success.

A policy that reflects an ethic of care would make explicit the highly contextualized work teachers do. It would leave financial reward out of the teacher-student relationship and allow teachers to advocate for the collective interests of students and teachers without labelling teachers greedy or self-interested. A policy that reflects an ethic of care would take to heart this sentiment:

The moral rewards of teaching need not take identical forms for all practitioners, but the work offers some opportunities particular to the profession: responding pedagogically to students' learning needs, enabling students' academic and personal success, helping students envision themselves as competent learners. The moral rewards of teaching are far from selfish or self-serving, but they certainly are necessary for sustaining the work of practitioners who care about their profession and their students. (Santoro, 2011, p. 5)

Teacher-as-Facilitator Discourse

Through several different discursive moves, the authors of *Inspiring Education* construct the teacher as a by-stander, or facilitator, to the process of learning, as opposed to a central or guiding figure in the process of educating. To illustrate this, first, I will identify and describe the significance of the use of “the new language of learning” (Biesta, 2006, p. 15) on the teachers’ role in the educational relationship. Second, I consider the authors’ juxtaposition of the “architect of learning” teacher-type with the “knowledge authority” teacher-type. Third, I will analyze the discursive separation of the category *teacher* from the category *expert*. Finally, I will examine the decoupling of the category *student* from the category *teacher*.

“Learner-centred” is one of the seven guiding principles of *Inspiring Education*:

“Decision makers should consider the needs of children and youth first and foremost when making decisions” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 31).

Biesta (2006) describes “the new language of learning” (p. 15):

One of the most remarkable changes that has taken place in the theory and practice of education over the past two decades has been the rise of the concept of “learning” and the subsequent decline of the concept of “education.” Teaching has become redefined as supporting or facilitating learning, just as education is now often described as providing learning opportunities or learning experiences. Pupils and students have become learners [...]. (Biesta, 2006, p. 15)

The language of learning is evident throughout the “Inspiring Education Report.” For example, *learners* are the subject of each of the six core values of *Inspiring Education*:

“Learners are exposed to rich learning experiences that enable them to discover their passions and achieve their highest potential” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 20).

“Learners have access to the programs, support services, and instructional excellence needed to achieve desired outcomes” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 20).

“Learners have pride in their community and culture. They have a sense of belonging and work to improve both the community and the world” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 21).

“Learners have a choice of both programs and methods of learning” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 21).

“Learners’ differing needs, cultures, and abilities are respected and valued within inclusive learning environments” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 21).

“Learners, teachers, and governors achieve high standards” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 21).

Biesta (2006) identifies four trends which have contributed to the rise of “language of learning.”

First, new theories of learning, like constructivism and sociocultural theories of learning have

“challenged the idea that learning is the passive intake of information and have instead argued that knowledge and understanding are actively constructed by the learner” (p. 17).

Consequently, the learner is understood as more central to the process of education. Second,

postmodernism has contributed to the new language of learning. “Over the past two decades

many authors have argued that the project of education is a thoroughly modern project” (Biesta,

2006, p. 17). Postmodern doubt about the project of education has raised questions about the

current configuration of education, especially the concept that students can be liberated through

the development of rationality and critical thinking. As the modern project loses credibility,

“what can be left but learning?” (Biesta, 2006, p. 18). The third trend which contributed to the

rise of the language of learning has been the increase in time and money spent on many different

kinds of learning, from self-help programs, to massive open online courses (MOOCs), to

spiritual retreats, and fitness centres. The “new learning is far more individualistic, in terms of its form and its content and purpose” (Biesta, 2006, p. 18). Fourth, and finally, Biesta identifies “the erosion of the welfare state” (p. 18) as a contributing trend to the rise of the language of learning. Although the key ideas underlying the welfare state (i.e., “the redistribution of wealth so that provisions such as healthcare, social security, and education can be made available to all citizens and not just to those who can afford it” [p. 18]) are still in place in some countries: “the relationship between governments and citizens has in many cases changed from a political relationship to an economic relationship: a relationship between the state as provider of public services and the taxpayer as the consumer of state provision” (Biesta, 2006, pp. 18-19).

In the provision of education, this way of thinking is behind programs of school choice and, in parts of the United States, voucher systems. The taxpayer as consumer is the same logic underpinning “the idea that parents, as the consumers of the education of their children, should ultimately decide what should be offered in schools” (p. 19). I have previously described this market logic, or neoliberal perspective, in relation to discourses of Personal Responsibility, Private-Sector Norms of *excellence, innovation, entrepreneurialism, and competition*, and Neoliberal Professionalism. The language of learning, and the focus on learner-centred instruction, “focuses almost exclusively on the user, or consumer, of educational provision. What could be a more suitable name for such a consumer than ‘the learner?’” (Biesta, 2006, p. 19).

Focus on the learner, or “learner centred” pedagogy, is mainly a problem because “it has facilitated a redescription of the process of education in terms of an *economic transaction*” (Biesta, 2006, p. 19). In much the same way *choice* changes the relationship

between students, their families, and the education system, the language of learning has re-characterized education. The *economic transaction* is

a transaction in which (1) the learner is the (potential) consumer, the one who has certain "needs," in which (2) the teacher, the educator, or the educational institution is seen as the provider, that is, the one who is there to meet the needs of the learner, and where (3) education itself becomes a commodity—a "thing"—to be provided or delivered by the teacher or educational institution and to be consumed by the learner. (Biesta, 2006, pp. 19-20)

This perspective supports

the idea that educational institutions and individual educators should be flexible, that they should respond to the needs of the learners, that they should give their learners value for money, and perhaps even that they should operate on the principle that the learner/customer is always right. (Biesta, 2006, p. 20)

The consumer-provider relationship differs from a caring relationship in that altruism is eliminated. Instead of acting to achieve an ethical standard of care, the individualistic logic of the market applies: You get yours, and I get mine. Caring relationships—particularly unequal ones, in which one party is dependent on the other—are “typically motivated by a mixture or combination of egoistic (self-concerned) and altruistic (caring) motives” (Slote (2007, p. 118). Something other than the economic transaction is present in caring relationships.

Thinking about what kind of language would capture the unique nature of the educational relationship, Biesta answers with three interlocking concepts: “trust without ground, transcendental violence, and responsibility without knowledge” (p. 24). Trust without ground

acknowledges the risk, and associated trust, inherent in the process of education: “To negate or deny the risk involved in engaging in education is to miss a crucial dimension of education” (Biesta, 2006, p. 26). Trust in the educational relationship provides a context for risks to be taken. Transcendental violence comes from seeing learning “as a response to what is other and different, to what challenges, irritates, or even disturbs us, rather than as the acquisition of something we want to possess” (Biesta, 2006, p. 267). The process of education is not always comfortable or easy, and part of the educational relationship is the posing of difficult questions. “This means that education entails a violation of the sovereignty of the student. Derrida refers to this violation as ‘transcendental violence’” (p. 29). An understanding of education as a process with inherent risk and violence makes it clear that educators must establish trusting relationships. From this perspective, the responsibility of being an educator is immense.

This responsibility is more than a responsibility for the "quality" of teaching or for successfully meeting the needs of the learner or the targets of the institution. If education is about creating opportunities for students to come into the world, and if it is about asking the difficult questions that make this possible, then it becomes clear that the first responsibility of the educator is a responsibility for the subjectivity of the student, for that which allows the student to be a unique, singular being. (pp. 28-29)

Responsibility without knowledge, then, refers to a teacher’s responsibility for someone whom we do not, and cannot, know (Biesta, 2006).

Biesta’s concept of the education relationship includes trust, discomfort, and responsibility. It is a relationship characterized by one party who is “coming into the world” (Biesta, 2006, p. 27).

Coming into the world is not something individuals can do on their own. This is first of all for the obvious reason that in order to come into the world one needs a world, and this world is a world inhabited by others who are not like us. Coming into the world also isn't something that we should understand as an act or decision of a pre-social individual.

(Biesta, 2006, p. 27)

“Coming into the world” resembles Arendt’s (2006) concept of natality: “the fact that human beings are born into the world” (p. 171). What we ask of children in the process of education, is to be part of the world which already exists here; “Coming into the world is definitely *not* about self-expression” (Biesta, 2006, p. 28, emphasis in original). Of course, taken to one extreme, eliminating self-expression entirely is not generative to the process of education either. The other extreme, however, of Learner-Centeredness, is also stifling to both educators and students, because it removes the competent, ethical, responsible adult from the relationship.

Several excerpts in *Inspiring Education* clearly illustrate the discourse of Learner-Centredness. For example, this anecdote is featured in the “Inspiring Education Report”:

“For example, to study history, students might be given an opportunity to travel. They would read, examine archives, analyze documents, interview experts, and engage in the re-creation of historical events. They would interpret past events and their impact on today’s world. As a result, they might identify similar situations or problems and look for solutions. They would augment their study of facts with experience of a people, a place, and a culture. Or, with coming advancements in technology, they may be able to approximate this study and experience it without leaving their classroom. In so doing, they might be exposed to what is involved in becoming an individual with expert abilities, skills and knowledge.” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 26)

Here the students are clearly the centre of the process of learning—the teacher does not garner a mention. The “Teaching Excellence Report” explicitly identifies the focus on learners as a shift

away from a system valuing “imparting knowledge,” “authority and management,” and a “focus on content” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 11). These old values underpinned a system in which the “knowledge authority” category of teacher would feel at home; a system which is “structured and restrictive” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 11).⁹ In the above excerpt, the *learner* is the only active agent in the learning process. The *learner* constructs her understanding and knowledge based on her individual interactions and experiences in the world. The metaphor of construction is powerful in the way it is broadly applied: “Notions such as ‘scaffolding’ have provided a perspective in which teaching can easily be redefined as supporting and facilitating learning” (Biesta, 2006, p. 17). *Excellent* teachers *scaffold* the learners’ *construction* of abilities, skills, and knowledge. To extend the metaphor, they act as “an architect of learning” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 7).

The juxtaposition of the “architect of learning” teacher-type with the “knowledge authority” teacher-type is another discursive move which constructs the teacher-as-facilitator. In both the “Inspiring Education Report” and the “Teaching Excellence Report,” the membership category “excellent teacher” is associated with particular predicates (i.e., activities, rights, entitlements, obligations, knowledge, attributes, or competencies [S. Talmy, personal communication, 2014]). The “excellent teacher” of *Inspiring Education’s* vision focuses first on competencies:

⁹ Characterizing opponents of learner-centered pedagogy as old-fashioned and out of date is a policy technology used to present “the agenda as the only possible one that sensible and rational people could pursue” (Scott, 2001, p. 30): “What is essentially a clash of values about the aims and purposes of education is transformed into a dispute between those who hold up-to-date and progressive agendas about education and those who are locked into the past and who cannot free themselves from these discourses” (Scott, 2001, p. 31).

“RECOMMENDATION 1: Teaching practice standards

That the Teaching Quality Standard be revised to align with Inspiring Education and with the recommendations of this report. The Task Force further recommends that the Teaching Quality Standard be framed by the ability to achieve and maintain teaching excellence.

Further advice: The Task Force found the five teacher competencies (see sidebar) of the Alberta Association of Deans of Education’s Framework of Effective Teaching for Learning to be compelling and an appropriate starting point for defining competencies for teacher excellence competencies within the Teaching Quality Standard.” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 30)

The sidebar referenced in the above excerpt is a list of five competencies of “five key competencies of an effective teacher” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 29) as initially identified by the Alberta Association of Deans of Education:

“An effective teacher:

1. designs academically and intellectually engaging learning
2. engages students in meaningful learning experiences
3. assesses student learning to guide teaching and improve learning
4. fosters supportive learning relationships
5. collaborates to enhance teaching and learning” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 29).

The “excellent teacher” demonstrates competency in designing, engaging, assessing, fostering, and collaborating. He considers the interests, passions, talents and natural curiosities of the learner. She “would inspire, motivate and plant the seeds for life-long learning” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 7). The “excellent teacher” supports students, innovates, models, guides, and facilitates. The “excellent teacher” identifies, develops, supports, “brings ideas to life” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 19), and takes “risks in learning” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 19). These “excellent teachers” integrate ideas, reflect upon actions, and “build community support structures and create innovative learning

environments” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 20). Not only do “excellent teachers” demonstrate competencies themselves, but they help students do the same:

“Inspiring Education envisions teachers helping students to develop core competencies, including the ability to think critically, to manage information, and to explore new opportunities. Students will be supported as individuals, with full consideration of their unique interests, experiences, and abilities. Teachers will work in partnership with the community and will work more closely with one another.” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 32)

The predicates associated with the membership category “excellent teacher” are summarized as “an architect of learning—one who plans, designs and oversees learning activities” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 7). The word architect comes from Greek *arkhitekton* “master builder, director of works,” from *arkhi-* “chief” and *tektion* “builder, carpenter.”¹⁰ The teacher as “architect of learning” does not impose a particular kind of knowledge upon the learner. The teacher as “architect of learning” constructs the context, and the learner—in the spirit of individualization—constructs his own unique meaning. The teacher is at a distance from the learner.

Repeatedly, the authors of both the “Inspiring Education Report” and the “Teaching Excellence Report” contrast the “architect of learning” teacher-type with the “knowledge authority” category of teacher:

¹⁰ from http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=architect&allowed_in_frame=0

“[...] Albertans see the role of the teacher changing from that of a knowledge authority to an architect of learning—one who plans, designs and oversees learning activities” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 7).

“[...]Expertise as a creator of knowledge. Quite opposed to acting as content experts, teachers must act as architects of learning to achieve the 3E’s” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 19).

“One of the central elements of Inspiring Education relates to the role of the teacher, shifting from that of ‘sage’ to that of ‘architect of learning’” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 32).

The category of “knowledge authority” is associated with “[...] the dissemination of information and recall of facts” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 13) and is framed as an artifact of times past, from which we must move away. Juxtaposing the “architect of learning” teacher-type with the “knowledge authority” teacher-type reimagines the role of the teacher. As an “architect of learning,” the teacher is no longer valued as a leader in the learning process, but a facilitator or guide.

In addition to the construction of the ideal “architect of learning” teacher-type, the authors of *Inspiring Education* construct *teachers* as a separate membership category from *experts*. While *Inspiring Education* does emphasize that teachers should have expertise as “architects of learning” and “creation of knowledge” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 19), the category *teacher* is constructed as separate from the category *expert*. In the following examples, the category *teacher* is collocated with “expertise.”

“Participants in Task Force consultations often cited the key attributes of excellent teachers as competence, expertise, and the ability to build relationships with students” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 18).

“[...]Expertise as a creator of knowledge. Quite opposed to acting as content experts, teachers must act as architects of learning to achieve the 3E’s” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 19).

“The Task Force believes that truly excellent teachers are not sufficiently recognized and provided opportunities to share their expertise” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 24).

“These individuals would be encouraged to contribute their expertise in areas such as mentorship, collaboration, and in supporting individuals in practicums and internships, with appropriate resources provided” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 24).

“An important step in achieving the vision of Inspiring Education occurs at the decision point of whom [sic] enters the profession of teaching. Ideally, we want a community of teachers with a mix of experience, subject expertise and passion” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 31).

“The Task Force believes professional development must build the individual and collective expertise of teachers” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 39).

In the following examples, however, the category *teacher* is separate from the category *expert*.

“Leadership, teaching, and advice from experts, mentors and elders can be found in the community, whether it be local, provincial, national or even global” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 23).

“For example, the teacher might invite an expert in from the community to teach a class, perhaps in financial management or stage design. The expert might teach the class independently or with the teacher” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 23).

“For example, to study history, students might be given an opportunity to travel. They would read, examine archives, analyze documents, interview experts, and engage in the re-creation of historical events” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 26).

“The Task Force further recommends changes that will provide greater flexibility for schools to use community-based experts” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 23).

“It describes a system where a teacher might invite an expert in to instruct a class. The expert might even instruct a class without direct teacher supervision but under the guidance of the principal” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 34).

“At the same time, it was argued that without the assistance of outside experts, some students may not have access to a full range of learning opportunities” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 34).

“Teachers frequently noted difficulties in accessing qualified educational assistants and external experts, including speech language pathologists” (Task Force for Teaching Excellence, 2014, p. 42).

While teachers are referred to as having expertise, they are not considered *experts*. The authors of the “Inspiring Education Report,” in fact, assert the necessity of involving someone other than the teacher so students “might be exposed to what is involved in becoming an individual with expert abilities, skills and knowledge” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 26). In addition to emphasizing teachers as “architects” or guides, but not leaders, and discursively treating teachers as non-experts, the category *teacher* is also decoupled from the category *student*.

The authors of the “Inspiring Education Report” decouple the categories *student* and *learner* from the category *teacher*. “Teacher” occurs thirty-six times in the body of the

“Inspiring Education Report,” and “educator” appears eight times. In total, the authors include forty-four references to these categories. Comparatively, the variations on the word “student” occur forty-three times and on the word “learner” occur eighty-four times. In total, there are 127 references to these categories—three times as many as there are to teachers. In itself, this imbalance is not surprising, as “learner-centred” is a central value of *Inspiring Education*. As part of a larger representation of teachers, though, this imbalance begins to seem more meaningful.

Additionally, of the one hundred twenty-seven occurrences of “student” and “learner,” only 11.8% cooccur in the same sentence with “teacher” or “educator.” Student/learner and teacher/educator are rarely associated with one another. The teacher and the students are not treated as a relational pair—each category is constructed as independent of the other.

“Why a Vision Matters

Caslan School draws almost all of its 100 students from Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement, located some nine kilometres away. In 2003, the school faced several issues: student behaviour and attendance, staff retention and provincial exam scores.

Just three years later, there was a different scene: approximately 450 people pressed into Buffalo Lake’s community hall to watch the initial version of *Trust Our Voices*, a video filmed by the students of Caslan. They had taken cameras into the community to interview different professionals and community members about the impact of family violence. The evening began with a feast, then one of the students brought out her fiddle and played the Red River Jig. Children from the school ran to the front and began jigging. Community members watched with tears of pride as their children showcased their cultural traditions.

What had happened in the three years in between? Caslan School partnered with the national ArtsSmarts organization, and created a project sponsored by the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI). It integrated Métis heritage, culture, and the fine arts into the curriculum. That integration of culture and arts continues today as part of the school’s identity. The students are learning their culture—they have performed jigging, fiddling and guitar routines across Western Canada before international audiences and government dignitaries. One of the school’s graduates, has released two CDs. The students are creative, entrepreneurial, and participating in their community as engaged citizens.

Today, when Buffalo Lake students arrive at school they are personally welcomed at the front door by school staff, often with hugs and high fives. Behavioural problems are reduced, suspensions are a fraction of what they once were, and attendance is improved. Teachers and support staff are staying longer. There truly is a sense of a lasting connection between the school and Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement.

The tears of the parents that night in the community hall demonstrated more than pride. There was hope too—hope that their children could be catalysts of change. Clearly, a vision has been formed at Caslan School and Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement.” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 17)

In the preceding excerpt, the positive change that affects the community and students is attributed to the vision (“Clearly, a vision has been formed at Caslan School and Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement” [p. 17]) and a partnership (“Caslan School partnered with the national ArtsSmarts organization, and created a project sponsored by the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI)” [p. 17]). Teachers are mentioned only to point out that they do not quit

their jobs as frequently as they used to. The inanimate pronoun “it,” referring to the partnership, is credited with integrating “Métis heritage, culture, and the fine arts into the curriculum” (p. 17).

This move downplays the agency of teachers in positively influencing student and community life. Another anecdote is highlighted in the “Inspiring Education Report” about the potential of innovation and technology in the education system:

“Research to aid education

Athabasca University, two rural school divisions, and a major multinational technology company have embarked on a research project that will adapt current online and mobile technologies to deliver educational courses to students in remote locations, such as rural settings and work camps. Mobile technologies will include smart phones, digital audio players and mobile computing platforms.

A goal of the research is to develop new technologies specifically designed for a collaborative learning environment. These technologies will “learn” with the student. They will adapt to the learning needs of both an individual student and student groups by posing questions and identifying appropriate research and support materials unique to the students’ situation. The research will help to personalize the learning experience.

Key benefits of this project include:

- K-12 students in remote areas and in rural communities with low enrolments will be able to access high quality programs.
- Students outside of major centres will have an easier transition to post-secondary education. The project will demonstrate how they can take post-secondary courses in their home communities with the support of technology.
- The project, while strongly research-led, is expected to also contribute to commercial endeavours, thereby creating a competitive edge for Canada in this emerging field.” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 30)

Again, this excerpt demonstrates the removal of the teacher as an agent in determining student success. Technologies “will ‘learn’ with the student. They will adapt to the learning needs of both and individual student and student groups” (p. 30). And, perhaps best of all, according to

the authors, this partnership between higher education, public education, and corporations will “contribute to commercial endeavours” (p. 30), all absent of the “teacher” or “educator.”

Ideologically, using the “language of learning,” juxtaposing the “architect of learning” teacher-type with the “knowledge authority” teacher-type, separating the category *teacher* from the category *expert*, and decoupling the category *student* from the category *teacher* changes the role of the teacher relative to his student. These discourses flatten the teacher-student hierarchy, distance the adult from the child, creating a problem for both authority and care in the relationship. Authoritative relationships, borne of a mutually accepted hierarchy, feature a responsible adult demonstrating competence in the carework required to meet a child’s needs.

The care alternative.

A productive alternative to the discourse of Teacher-as-Facilitator is a perspective that honours the teacher as a competent, responsible adult whose role is to educate, rather than to facilitate learning. This alternative would require an explicit acknowledgment of the responsibility adults have towards children. Teachers, by virtue of having been in the world and having been trained as educators, have a great deal to offer students. If we can resist the temptation to be awed by our five-year-olds’ skills on the iPad, we can remember that these children are new here. The rhetoric of learner-centredness and constructivism can be tempered by the awareness that the interests, values, skills, and competences of teachers and adults are valuable resources. Teachers’ experience in the world and in the educational relationship can and should be part of educational decision-making. If our society is going to continue to expect teachers to act as caring adults, then we have to acknowledge their relative superiority to the children they teach. When the language of educational policy begins to reflect the importance of

the role of teacher as instructional leader, *expert* in his domain, and responsible caregiver, then the work of building relationships can be brought back in from the margins.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Summary of Analysis

Through multiple discursive moves, the authors of *Inspiring Education* craft policy texts that are biased against care. The role carework plays in society is largely unacknowledged. Instead, the authors of *Inspiring Education* construe the social world as individualistic and competitive.

Biesta's (2006) description of the rewriting of the process of education in terms of an economic transaction applies beyond teacher-student relationships, to caring relationships of various kinds. The acceptance of education as an economic transaction is a problem because it assumes that learners know best what they need or want. Parents, however, "generally send their children to school because they want them to be educated, but it is up to the professional judgment and expertise of the teacher to make decisions about what this particular child actually needs" (Biesta, 2006, p. 21). The teacher is assumed, in this context, to know something about teaching that elevates him to a position of relative superiority. In unequal or hierarchical caring relationship, the caregiver is assumed to know something about what will meet a child's needs. From having been in the world for a while, an adult is responsible for providing competent care. Market logic is a problem for caring relationships, in that it assumes the care receiver knows best. When caregivers are unable to claim authority, to show children the world and take responsibility for it, care becomes a very difficult standard to achieve.

Using care theory as a lens, which discourses can be identified within *Inspiring Education* which represent a particular perspective on care? *Inspiring Education* suggests the ideal citizen is Personally Responsible, striving for excellence and earning success (Alberta

Education, 2010). The ideal citizen embraces the Norms of the Private Sector by outsourcing routine work and focusing on competing in the global economy. The ideal citizen uses the full range of choices available to him to fulfill his potential, free from relational constraints or social barriers. This perspective casts the routine, time consuming work of paid and unpaid caregivers as less than ideal, because they do not embody the personally responsible and entrepreneurial-spirited “educated Albertan” (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 18). While these discourses may resonate with some Albertans, they may also provoke the ire of adults who care for *both* their children and their elderly parents, women who work multiple jobs to earn a living wage, and anyone else who resents being cast as unsuccessful because he chooses to fulfill his care responsibilities at the expense of “personal success.”

A familiar caregiving role in contemporary society is the elementary school teacher. Analysis of the discursive treatment of teachers in *Inspiring Education* provides a more tangible example of the influence of Personal Responsibility and Private-Sector Norms. It provides us with a specimen to dissect, in order to better understand the particular discursive strategies that the authors used to construct caregivers.

How do these discourses, as well as the specific discursive treatment of teachers, effect the possibilities of a caring teacher-student relationship? Teachers are cast as self-interested, motivated by rewards separate from the context of the teacher-student relationship; she is a Neoliberal Professional. The ideal Teacher-as-Facilitator acts as an “architect,” responding to the students’ needs and wants. The ideal teacher innovates and delivers results. She is understood in relationship to outcomes instead of in relationship to students. Rather than suppose herself an expert, she seeks experts to teach content. If adulthood and adult authority did once derive from

the condition in which adults knew things which children either needed or wanted to know, in the future according to *Inspiring Education*, teachers should not expect to hold a position of authority.

I am left feeling that teachers who work in this political environment will find it increasingly frustrating to conduct themselves according to the standard “of a caring, knowledgeable and reasonable adult who is entrusted with the custody, care or education of students or children” (Government of Alberta, 1997, p. 2). If a caring teacher is one who competently *responds* to the needs of the student for whom she is *responsible*, it will no doubt be more difficult to justify her highly contextual responses in a climate of quality control and best practices. It will be difficult to justify professional judgments if he can no longer lay claim to authority.

This is not to say that teachers will stop being subject to the moral imperative to care. Neither does this moment represent the end of sentimentality toward female teachers, and male teachers who are feminized by the very choice of their profession. The public, politicians, parents, and teachers will continue to expect teachers to care and teachers will continue to act as representatives “of all adult inhabitants, pointing out the details and saying to the child: This is our world” (Arendt, 2006, p. 186). The problem is the contradiction between what is valued and what is denied in educational policy. The authors of *Inspiring Education* elevate the Teacher as “Enterprising” Facilitator to cult status while simultaneously denying the necessity of hierarchy and authority. Just as “the cult of motherhood” (Grumet, 1988, p. 41) stigmatized the use of strategies of control by female teachers, the Teacher as “Enterprising” Facilitator stigmatizes the assertion of the hierarchy necessary for both authoritative and caring teacher-student

relationships. One way forward is to give practical consideration to the features of caring teacher-student relationships, including the need to embrace hierarchy.

The intimacy of the adult-child relationship—between parents and children, teachers and students—is not immune to the forces of social change. I have attempted to argue that, despite the appeal of child-centered and egalitarian discourses, adults should be empowered to claim (at least some) authority in their work as caregiver of children. Hierarchy is immanent in authoritative and caring adult-child relationships, and it is from this place of relative superiority that adults assume responsibility for protecting, educating, and caring for children. Adults hold positions of authority because they are competent in the world in ways that children cannot be, and it is the moral obligation of adults to use our understanding of the world to prepare children for their own futures. Additionally, young people are not empowered to change adult institutions and structures. The hierarchy is not indefinite—children grow up to be adults. Competence shifts as a new generation of adults maintain, repair, and continue the world for even newer children. In contrast to the authoritative and caring adult, the worldview espoused by the authors of *Inspiring Education* comes dangerously close to Arendt's (2006) description of irresponsible adulthood, where adults refuse to assume responsibility “for all this [...] we wash our hands of you” (p. 188). In *Inspiring Education*, each child is an independent citizen, thinker, and entrepreneur. The role of the teacher is to stand aside, removed, as though an adult's most valuable contribution to a child's development is to get out of the way.

A counter-narrative to that put forth by the authors of *Inspiring Education* would acknowledge, as its foundation, that we are all interdependent. Care, as an ethical concept, caregiving as those activities done in service of care, and caring relationships, as those

relationships which use care as an ethical point of reference, would become the central concern of our political activities.

Use, Implications, and Limitations

The express purpose of this project is to illuminate discourses within *Inspiring Education* and consider their influence on care across society. To this end, the findings from this project could be educative to caregivers and care receivers—to us all—allowing us to indulge in a collective exhale: it is not just our imaginations, it is not just us. Our own selfishness or incompetence are not the cause of the tensions associated with modern care responsibilities. Discourses exist in our public policies that encourage citizens to be self-reliant and “enterprising,” rather than ethical or responsible. What mention is made of care is sentimental, an inflated rhetoric about the power of a caring individual, absent of practical consideration for the political and economic conditions necessary if care is to be valued. Child-care, elder-care, and all the caring that occurs in between—paid and unpaid—is unacknowledged in Alberta's guiding education policy.

Of the larger population of caregivers, a unique subset is that of school teachers. The second purpose of this project is to consider how the discursive treatment of teachers within *Inspiring Education* influences the possibility of a caring teacher-student relationship. Legally and morally bound to act as caring adults, teachers' caring occurs in the context of the teacher-student hierarchy. For teachers and educational leaders who sense that it is increasingly difficult to justify and discuss the work of building caring, educational relationships with students, I believe this analysis could contribute to advocacy work for improved educational conditions in schools. These findings could be generative for the ATA, to highlight the bind in which teachers

are caught: the weighty expectation to fill systematic gaps in care in our society, within a policy environment that ignores the value of caring work. The analysis of *Inspiring Education* could contribute to the creation of a counter-narrative, and alternative framing of teachers and their work.

This project is rooted in my own politics and my perspective that caring responsibilities should be a central concern of our political activities. I hope the theoretical framework I have used, and the concepts I drew from the literature, supported meaningful interpretations of the data (Bachman, 2009). Not all readers of *Inspiring Education* will find my interpretations meaningful. I suppose this is one of the limitations of this work, as it will not hold up to a positivist assessment of “generalizability” (“the degree to which findings derived from one context or under one set of conditions may be assumed to apply in other settings or under other conditions” [Shulman, 1997, p. 13]). Anyone with a different theoretical lens could look at *Inspiring Education* and, under that set of conditions, see entirely different meaning. Another limitation of this project is the breadth of data I used in my analysis. More policy documents exist within the *Inspiring Education* ensemble than what I analyzed. My analysis was limited by time and resources. The policy texts I did include in the analysis were those documents which were touted as guiding documents, and so I believe the analysis of them does speak for themes which are present throughout the rest. Optimistically, I hope I have provided enough theoretical grounding that the findings of my analysis achieve, in the words of Tracy (2010), “resonance:” “research’s ability to meaningfully reverberate and affect an audience” (p. 844). As with other qualitative research methods, the relevance of my work will depend on a critical reader

examining whether or not “an inferential bridge can be built between this case and other cases of interest to the reader” (Shulman, 1997, p. 15).

If a reader of this project is convinced that the current discursive treatment of care in public policies disadvantages us all, then public policymakers—particularly in a field so concerned with the development of ethical citizens as education—could begin to temper discourses of personal responsibility and marketization by including acknowledgment of our collective dependence and responsibility to one another. The dominance of neoliberal educational policy is formidable, but I believe that the language of care can be equally powerful. In the case of teachers’ work, it can provide the discursive tools to move awareness of teachers’ work beyond a simplistic, sentimental conception of the kind, caring teacher who brings in cupcakes on Valentine’s Day and “just loves being with the kids.” The implications of the language of care is that teachers themselves can begin to create robust, complex descriptions of their caring work, and use that awareness to shift attention toward the immense moral responsibility on teachers to build and maintain caring teacher-student relationships, and the requisite conditions for their existence. I hope that any of these hypothetical contributions to “the current climate of knowledge, practice, and politics” (Tracy, 2010, p. 845) can be considered significant enough to recommend this project as a high-quality piece of qualitative research.

Regarding possibilities for further research, one of the most interesting is the question of alternative policies: What would an educational policy written with care as a central value read like? Through the process of refining a “caring” educational policy, the differences between it and current policies would become more apparent. Care advocates would be able to see more clearly the barriers to making care an explicit discourse in public policy. Generative research

would also include an historical inquiry into the expectations on teachers as caregivers, in Western Canada and elsewhere. Through this work, the contemporary shift towards teacher-as-facilitator could be put into a broader context. Further research into the lived experiences of caregivers and care receivers will also further our understanding of the conditions of care in the developed world.

Despite the scope and influence of the discourses highlighted in this analysis, none of the obstacles in the way of care eliminate its enduring importance of care. We are “care receivers all” (Tronto, 2013, p. 29), and not even an individualistic, egalitarian worldview will change the necessity of caring relationships. The real risk posed by discourses within *Inspiring Education* is the continued marginalization of care, perhaps obscuring it even further. The risk is that the maintenance of caring relationships will require greater sacrifice, that it will continue to be the hardest work, done by the very people excluded from the process of assigning care responsibility. Not acknowledging the role of care in our society and in our education system means that the *de facto* methods of assigning responsibility will remain undisrupted. Under this paradigm, those who shoulder the caring load will continue to feel “that it is everything that could possibly matter to us” (Grumet, 1988, p. xi), but about which we are prohibited to speak.

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