Caring in academia: Exploring the role of values-led practice and research within the doctoral student experience

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Abstract

In this paper, four American doctoral students and their mentor explore their experiences with Delong's notion of a 'culture of inquiry.' They begin learning experientially to create their living-educational-theories, aiming to improve how they navigate the role of values within their individual practice and research. The doctoral students are experienced professional practitioners in Education with backgrounds in practitioner research. Their mentor, also a professional practitioner in Education, developed her knowledge, understanding, and practice of Living Educational Theory Research over years of mentorship. This account details their activities and research across five sessions held during the first half of the academic year. The intention of publishing their account is to inspire a new generation of doctoral students and mentors to enhance their accountability as professional practitioners, living according to their values by experientially developing their knowledge, understanding, and practice of Living Educational Theory Research together. They include videos, transcripts, and individual reflections to exemplify their concept of 'caring in academia' and demonstrate the evolution of their learning as they discover and research their individual, embodied meanings of the ontological value of 'care,' which they each use as an explanatory principle in their explanations of their educational influence on their students' learning.

Keywords: culture of inquiry; doctoral experience; values; Living Educational Theory Research; caring.

Background

This paper has been co-authored by four doctoral students (Erica, Reinaldo, Kimberly, Márta) and their mentor (Michelle) at Florida Atlantic University, USA. Each student, while attending their doctoral program, is also employed as an educator, either in a traditional classroom or in a one-on-one setting.

Introduction

In 2019, I (Michelle) published an account of my living-educational-theory in the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTs) and ended with a commitment to create spaces where I could support students in exploring their own values. In that account, I shared a piece of the dialogue from a conversation with my mentor, Jackie Delong:

> And community is the right word I think because I would like there to be a community here…I want to be able to create a safe place for students to do that…I think that the role that this plays is really about planting your feet firmly and knowing who you are…I would like to create a place where values are valid and the conversations matters and it's not secondary (Vaughan, 2019, p. 78).

I went on to work with communities of teacher researchers in my university context, with a focus on supporting their development as classroom researchers (Vaughan et al., 2019). Four years after the publication of my account of my living-educational-theory, Jackie Delong and Jack Whitehead published their text, You and Your Living-Educational Theory (2024) and I was armed with the roadmap to begin creating a 'culture of inquiry' with doctoral students and introducing them to Living Educational Theory Research. A 'culture of inquiry' was first introduced by Delong (2002) and later defined as "… a safe, supportive space wherein practitioner-researchers are enabled to share their vulnerabilities, to make explicit their values, and to hold themselves accountable for living according to those values" (Vaughan & Delong, 2019, p. 71).

In the summer of 2023, I invited four doctoral students (Erica, Reinaldo, Kimberly, and Márta) with backgrounds in practitioner research to join me in a culture of inquiry where we would focus on the process of creating their living-educational-theories through value-focused dialogue. Reading through sections of You and Your Living-Educational Theory (Delong & Whitehead, 2024) and engaging in regular meetings, they each deepened their knowledge of and research around their value systems. We worked from a shared understanding that "values are the elements of an individual's principles, standards, or qualities that they identify as significant, worthwhile and desirable for guiding their intentional actions" (Educational Journal of Living Theories, 2024, Lexicon of Vocabulary). Furthermore, that "values can only be clarified and understood in the course of their emergence in practice" (Feyerabend, 1990, as cited in Delong & Whitehead, 2024, p. 8). This article is designed to accomplish two objectives; to explicitly share and reflect on our process with others in the field who may want to consider creating cultures of inquiry within their communities and to create a space for the members of our culture of inquiry to share their account of their living-educational-theories to this point.

The paper begins with brief details of the five sessions we had together via Zoom. Erica, Reinaldo, Kimberly, and Márta then share their personal journeys as they navigate the ontological values that permeate their doctoral coursework, teaching jobs, and personal lives and that they use as explanatory principles in their explanations for the educational influence in the learning of their students, which they want to improve. We end with reflection on what we each have learned as a result of engaging in Living Educational Theory Research and how this experience will impact our work moving forward.

Our Sessions

Session One

Our first meeting opened with a discussion about why I asked each student to join this group. I shared that, through observation, I noticed an "emotional investment in the work" and remarked that it seemed it "was a part of them." To that comment, Erica exclaimed, "she sees us guys!" My core value as a doctoral mentor is that of 'care'. I expressed that value as I made connections with my doctoral students in the opening moments of the session and relayed my observations of their work as doctoral students up to this point. Sharing these observations led to Erica's feelings of being 'seen.' Creating a culture of inquiry is an intentional process and before members can be comfortable sharing their values, it is key to establish safety and support within the group. After those warm sentiments, we each took turns answering the following questions: What is important to you? What do you feel that you do differently than others? What comes naturally to you?

As we shared, it became apparent to me that this was a very supportive group, which Image 1 and the extract from the recording (Vaughan et al, 2023a) of the Zoom conversation we had in the first session, serve to illustrate.

Image 1. Screen shot from recording of the first Zoom meeting (Vaughan et al, 2023a) as an example of a conversation as we develop our culture of inquiry.

Each of our sessions concluded with an email summarizing the key points of our conversation, a recording of our meeting for data purposes, and things to think about for our next meeting.

To prepare for our second session, each group member agreed to read part one of *You and Your Living-Educational Theory* (Delong & Whitehead, 2024). Part one is designed to give researchers who are new to the field foundational knowledge and "meet the needs of the beginning researcher as they start a project to improve their practice."

Session Two

In this meeting, we began by discussing the ideas from the text that we each made note of or highlighted. First, Campbell's idea of a "living wall" (Delong & Whitehead, p. 25)

was discussed as an innovation that could assist us in making connections between our individual values and finding the points of intersectionality. Campbell (2011) explains that she uses a wall in her office to visually find patterns in her data; in this way she could combine practice and principle in a creative way to help her generate her living-educational-theory. Additionally, the ethics section (Delong & Whitehead, pp. 18–19) brought to light many questions the group had around data collection and participant permissions. Lastly, we spent significant time discussing the notion of living contradictions (Whitehead, 1989). Identifying where you experience yourself as a 'living-contradiction' and where you experience your values contradicted is a core idea in Living Educational Theory Research. Kimberly wrestled with the contradiction she experienced between her values-based research and a push to exclude the "I" in academic research in her program, and Reinaldo unpacked how recent policy and curriculum changes at his higher education institution has created a teaching context that creates a tension with his student-centered values of teaching.

Session Three

In Session three, our group read through the Masters Level Inquiries included in part two of *You and Your Living-Educational Theory* (Delong & Whitehead, 2024). We deepened our understanding of the role validation groups play in creating your own living-educational-theory. As we closed this session, I presented the group with the call for a special issue of EJOLTS focused on "Opening new frontiers for values-led practice" and we agreed that we wanted to pursue writing in this special issue to share the new learning they were experiencing with others in the field. As the discussion circled around the Zoom room, it became apparent that each member was committed to examining a variation of care with their practice. I remarked on this phenomenon at the close of the session:

> Michelle: And it's interesting because we've talked about a lot of different values in this group. And you all, and I don't know if it's me, or if it's you all, but the value of care keeps, everybody keeps using the same word, and I'm like…Is that me? Am I? Am I doing? Is it just a natural thing that everybody is now as a group kind of looking at this value? It's very interesting. But did I do that? Or is that? Did it happen by itself? I just want to make sure.

They agreed that this occurred organically, and Reinaldo remarked that it will be interesting to examine this central theme as it plays out with each of us. Before we met for our fourth session, questions were distributed to the group as talking or writing points.

Session Four

As we shifted from 'learning about' Living Educational Theory Research to taking the first step to creating our living-educational-theories, our session centered around these guiding questions:

> Can you explain your values (who you are, how these values show up, what scholars resonate with you that contribute to your values)?

> What is the impact/role of your values in your practice? How do you know they are there? Share evidence.

How have you attempted or plan to attempt to embed those values more fully or intentionally in your practice?

In this session, Erica gave examples of her meaning of 'culture of care' she tries to embed in her practice. Márta said that she can examine student (and parent) testimonials for evidence of how she cares within her work. Kimberly shared her framework for the three components within her value of "love and care" in her tutoring practice. We ended this session with a rich conversation around the need for data analysis practice for doctoral students, specifically in qualitative research. As we got closer to the end of the semester, the group was charged with bringing back more data to our next session so we can begin writing. At this point, we agreed to bring accounts of our research to the next session to ask members of our culture of inquiry to act as a validation group to help us strengthen them. As Delong and Whitehead (2024) explain:

> ... the submission of explanations of educational influence, in which the values are used as explanatory principles, for strengthening in regular meetings of validation groups is so important. The validation groups enable the values to be clarified and justified in ways that can be comprehended and criticized by others, through the mutual rational controls of critical discussion (Popper, 1975, p. 44).

Session Five

Our last session of the year marked a transition towards personal ownership of each group member's Living Educational Theory Research and personal stories. In this session, individual living-educational-theories began to take shape and it was intriguing to see the value of care as a through-line within each. As we organized this article, I shared that:

> These little pieces of data you have are validating them [values] and deepening them ... And every time you study your values it gets deeper, you know. You learn more about yourself. We learn more about what you do, more about your students. So, you're in kind of this first cycle.

The next sections are devoted to the group members' narratives of their living-educational-theories up to this point.

Group Members' Narratives

Erica: Students See and Feel Your Care

The only job I ever wanted was to become a mother. While I actively taught my Barbies math using scrolls inside a shoebox diorama as a young child and developed the foundation for solid pre-medical coursework throughout high school, I started my bachelor's degree as a young mother. The choice to keep, care, and devote my life to my son was the deciding factor that formally brought me into the field of education. My care for other people has always been present, but combined with my teaching vocation this central value has shifted to an all-encompassing form of radical care for humanity within education.

My bachelor's and master's degrees formed a solid science background that continues to support content-based communication and experiences for students, but

awareness of my omnipresent care has emerged through exploring the social and emotional frameworks in education. Growing up among the diverse communities of South Florida, I developed a multicultural identity that celebrates the variety of perspectives and experiences found globally. Within science, mathematics, and engineering classroom settings, my intrinsic appreciation of diversity encourages high standards for all learners, cultural connections through language and student-based experiences, collaboration during activities, and open, respectful dialogue to explore ideas, perspectives, and potential misconceptions. These practices are grounded in Ladson-Billings' (2022) culturally relevant pedagogy and flow outward into the interconnectedness of life globally linked with Shiva's (2022) respect for environmental sustainability and ethical justice "since we are part of nature, not her masters or owner" (p.131).

Upon discovering the world of action research through program coursework and harnessing the potential to personally monitor, assess, and improve awareness and impact practices within my classroom, I naturally centered my focus on student perspectives since they are the people most directly impacted by my instruction and classroom community development. But as an active participant within the classroom system, I feel it is critical to maintain awareness regarding processes, relationships, and data analysis because my insider privilege binds me: " … to live with the consequences of [my] processes on a day-to-day basis for ever more, and so do [students'] families and communities" (Smith, 2022, p. 157).

Recognizing that I am in education to make a difference for all students has driven me to bond academically and socially to develop relationships based around student interests. These dynamic connections are centered in authentic relationships and strategies that encourage each student to reach personal excellence. This individualized care, in conjunction with my desire to improve the system within my classroom and beyond, and my eternal hope for an increasingly equitable school system, are central to the concept of radical care (Rivera-McCutchen, 2023) and are found within my core values developed over almost 20 years in education.

Journey With a Culture of Inquiry

There are large sections of my life I do not speak about due to trauma. My path into education stemmed from a teenage pregnancy in an unhealthy relationship, I grieve the loss of a child, and am a survivor of spousal abuse. The friendship and community shared with my colleagues in this process helped me talk about and move through my resistance to explore deeper thoughts and feelings associated with education and life. Creating a culture of inquiry, we were able to "establish 'power with' and eliminate 'power over' relationships" (Delong & Whitehead, 2024, p. 34). The monthly hour of shared time supported our deep dive into our individual living-educational-theories in conjunction with validation from knowing each other in academic settings and pushed us to explore our deep connections with students more closely. Creating a culture of inquiry provided time and space to place our values into the forefront of our practices through shared reflections. We entered the virtual space with consideration and great regard for each other as educators and colleagues, recognizing a strong presence of care.

My personal journey of inquiry centered around investigating how a culture of care is evident in my high school engineering teaching practice. Looking at written artifacts

including letters from students and principals, maintaining a journal to document interactions, and presenting students (Principles of Engineering – 10th and 11th grade; Aerospace Engineering – mostly 12th grade) with a short optional questionnaire that asked them about my culture of care provided strong evidence of numerous forms of care. My core values are highlighted in a letter from my former principal: "[Erica] strives to be a light in her students' lives emotionally, encouraging kindness and compassion for others, and intellectually, by fostering a curiosity and love of learning (personal correspondence)".

Interactions with my engineering students and conversations with the culture of inquiry validation group consolidated my culture of care into three main realms: academic success; social-emotional connection; future life guidance. These different categories of care were then used as a priori codes to review student responses from the Fall [Autumn] 2023 Student Survey.

This survey explored activities that students enjoyed in groups and individually, shared information they found useful, areas they would like more help with, how they "have noticed I demonstrate care for students," how they think "my classroom culture of care compare[s] with other teachers," and any additional feedback. The survey was posted in Google Classroom for students to access in December. Due to a low response rate, it was pushed to the top of the thread in January and students were reminded about this opportunity to provide feedback after they returned from break. Only five students participated before winter break, but ultimately 44 students responded providing direct feedback from over 50% of my engineering students.

The responses to the first two questions helped me recognize how my classroom structure impacts student enjoyment of learning, while the following questions focused on how they see my impact within their academic studies, future, and regarding overall care.

Academic Success: Show Up and Do Your Best

As a high school engineering teacher, I recognize that students are seeing complex information for the first time, their individual interests have wide variability, and engineering is a deeply creative process that is facilitated by student enjoyment. My passionate optimism for education was identified by the culture of inquiry in relation to caring for people and content and students directly connected my care for them with a variety of interactions. Students identified individualized feedback, flexibility with time for assignments, conversations about grades, and an open environment that is interactive providing freedom and responsibility for student creativity as ways I show care in the classroom.

The open and growth-focused environment was described by one student saying, "our thoughts and ideas can be shared. Every student can participate without being ashamed of being wrong since we're all learning something that doesn't compare with other subjects".

Difficulty associated with engineering was also connected in this quote from another student:

Your culture of care in comparison to other teachers in my opinion is a little higher, which is a good thing because this isn't the easiest course, and students like me that need a bit more time to learn things are able to keep up with the rest of the class.

Flexibility regarding time associated with student learning centers around my experience with students demonstrating different abilities in the wide range of topics covered within science, math, and engineering. Some grasp topics quickly, while others need to take work home for review and benefit from seeing and experiencing the material in multiple ways before flourishing into understanding. My goal has never been for students to learn material immediately, but rather to take the time they need to reach their full potential. Student appreciation for this time and personal care is seen in quotes such as: "…when we don't turn in something on time you are very lenient and let us try to learn and get it done rather than just giving a zero for that assignment" and "…helping us with the problems without giving the exact answer because it allows us to see what we did wrong and correct ourselves without just writing down another answer without knowing how to get it".

Engineering problems require the application of content and skills, just as teaching requires individualized attention and patience with students around who they are and what they know; both processes take time and consideration.

Social-Emotional Connection: Be Kind, Always

I believe that imparting course content is strengthened by seeing the humanity within our students. One student wrote in a letter, "You do care about our education, but you also care about our well-being, academic bearing, and so much more which goes past the requirement for teachers".

My care for students usually begins with a whole class check-in where I ask students about their weekends, breaks, previous classes, and how they are doing personally. Then throughout our time together, conversations flow freely as I move about the room, and they feel comfortable sharing. One student said, " You know everyone personally, so when someone comes up to you, you know exactly how to talk to them and treat them".

My students see and feel the personal relationships I have with each of them. Another student commented:

You're very open to talking to students about almost anything, whether you start the conversation yourself or a student starts it instead. You even got us a couch for when we need to relax at the beginning of class or while doing work.

My care extends beyond students into their relationships with each other and the space where we learn together. I strive to reach every student personally and help them connect with each other through group work and movement within the classroom. Another student's survey response said, "This classroom feels like home, everyone in this classroom has a special connection even if we wouldn't interact anywhere but here, everyone still 'loves' (for lack of a better word) each other".

This student's comment expresses that my classroom is an inclusive space where all learners connect with each other and build community based around a culture of care. The power of collaborative learning to unite students and enhance academic success is demonstrated in this student quote, "No one in the classroom is left behind or alone. We work with groups so it's nearly hard to work by oneself, which can create pressure and stress".

High school is a stressful period for young people, many are juggling jobs, family dynamics, and rigorous coursework while figuring out who they are and what they plan to do with their lives. My genuine concern for students' wellbeing is identified in this quote, "Honestly asking if a student is having a down day and noticing when a student is 'off' is really, really caring and something most teachers don't do".

I am grateful for the time I have with my students to support them with an engineering knowledge base and a classroom culture of care as they move toward becoming what I hope will be the best version of themselves.

Future Life Guidance: It's Your Life, What Do You Want to Do With It?

Engineering courses fall into the realm of career and technical education (CTE) and embed college and career content into the curriculum. The need for this connection within high school courses was validated as student survey responses demonstrated that conversations we have regarding their futures matter to them, with almost 50% of respondents citing specific ways information I shared is particularly useful for their future. Topics ranged from life tips to college and scholarship information into future careers. Despite the large percentage of students who identified this information as valuable, 48% would like more help with college prep and 55% indicated wanting more help regarding their future career.

A few students noted my caring for their future lives in the survey in comments such as, " … you do a very good job and even better than some teachers in caring for our personal and future college lives … ". I believe this indicates that there is a need to continue supporting this component within education. In their surveys, students reported appreciation for seeing the engineering and computer science facilities at Florida Atlantic University, the local public university, receiving information about college preparation, scholarships, and applications and identified these activities directly with my care for them. Another student said, "You talk to us like we are young adults and not students, so we all share a mutual respect." I believe this respect is tied to my care as they move towards their future young adult lives.

Optimizing Care

The care I share for students extends in many directions through multiple pathways. I try to directly impact each student by identifying their individual needs, academically, socially, and building towards their future, while simultaneously connecting them with each other through interactive and collaborative engineering experiences. My care has shaped my classroom into a "safe space" where students can "express [them] self and feel welcomed. Comments like "I love being heard and supported by you!" and "I love that you understand and put yourself in your students' shoes" validate that the time, energy, and love for my students is felt and reciprocated.

While I strive to make the most of every opportunity to connect and bring unique experiences to my family of students, I also recognize that the variety of caring might not have the same impact. So, to continue investigating my care and its effect on students, I am going to use this study as a base to itemize and explore which forms of care my students value the most through an impact rating to optimize and enhance my value of care within education. My students see me as "More caring and parent-like, [someone who] treats [them] like kids of [my] own," but because time is limited, I seek to discover which aspects of my care are most meaningful to my students.

Reinaldo: When One Cares Evidence Can Be Found Everywhere but Individualized Care, That Requires Listening

What does it look like when I care about my students? To answer this question, I began by looking at my core values, then, realizing that what I envision as caring may not align with students' opinions, I asked my students what they believe it means to be a caring teacher. I then cross-referenced the two, found evidence of caring in my practice and concluded by realigning and reaffirming my values.

My Core Values and Beliefs

As a math professor who believes that all students are capable learners, my core value is to do everything in my power to help students reach their potential. This often manifests itself as caring to motivate them, break down the material and enable them to succeed in my class. However, understanding that students are young adults who need safe spaces to grow both as individuals and as capable learners, I also care for them by allowing for mistakes, encouraging those who may lack the self-efficacy to push through on their own, and putting safeguards in place to protect students when life's obstacles, or even they themselves, get in the way of their success. These manifestations of care are predicated on the Pygmalion effect (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000), The Pygmalion effect is a type of self-fulfilling prophecy where students show greater intellectual development when teachers believe in their ability to do so. On the other hand, according to SDT students must feel competent, autonomous, and connected to experience feelings of "well-being." To this extent, feelings of competence enhance intrinsic motivation only when accompanied by a sense of autonomy and activities hold intrinsic interest for them. Nonetheless, when motivation is intrinsic (authentic), students show more interest, excitement, and confidence, resulting in enhanced performance, persistence, and creativity (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Data Collection and Analysis

At the beginning of the academic year, our culture of inquiry group met to discuss our core values. Identifying with the work of Noddings (1986), Michelle introduced a "pedagogy of care" as an example of her own journey into discovering her core values, but by the end of the first meeting this became a common theme. This was not accidental, as it was a driving force in bringing us together in the creation of our culture of inquiry. Consequently, we set out to explore our core values, in particular, how care manifested itself in our practice. We also sought data gathering tools to verify them and established a general timeline.

As the semester progressed, I learned about Whitehead's idea of 'living-contradictions' in Living Educational Theory Research from reading the book Michelle recommended (Delong & Whitehead, 2024). I also held a handful of informal conversations with students who, unprompted, brought up supporting evidence in class or office hours. Then to determine how my perception of care in my practice aligned with what students consider to be caring, I gave students that participated in office hours a short survey consisting of four questions which asked them to expand on our previous conversations. I also gave a short survey to the students in my Liberal Arts classes and analyzed the students' evaluations of instructor, which are available to every student at the end of the semester.

Once all data were collected, I began by using in vivo coding – separating observations and student surveys from teacher evaluations. I then used magnitude coding on student surveys and teacher evaluations to determine most frequent student responses. Using pattern coding, I then compiled all codes into emergent common themes, which were triangulated with student conversations and recordings from our group meetings to establish my core values and beliefs and separately how students define care. Finally, the two were manually cross-referenced for alignment, findings were established, and the most representative quotes were selected.

Caring to Motivate Students and Enable Success

A common theme in our culture of inquiry discussions is how I constantly find ways of contextualizing mathematical concepts in hopes of making the material more interesting and 'infecting' my students with my passion for mathematics. For example, you can see me (Image 2) in one of our Zoom conversations (Vaughan et al. 2023b). 49.1mins into the recording I begin reflecting on what has previously been said and my passion for math, which leads on to a discussion about my student-centered math instruction.

Image 2. Screenshot of me (Reinaldo) from recording of Zoom conversation, (Vaughan et al. 2023b) about student-centered math instruction

In my practice this is seen when I incorporate student-centered instruction in courses perennially taught via direct instruction. Even with a rigid curriculum that requires I teach abstract formulas and complicated algorithms, I ground the material for my students by deriving formulas, explaining how the math works, and applying it to the real world.

For further evidence of care, I asked my students to rate their experience of my level of care as an instructor on a scale from 1 to 5. Twenty-one of 27 students (78%) rated my level of care a 5, while the other 6 (22%) rated my level of care a 4 for a mean of 4.78. More central to my theme, however, is that when asked how their teacher demonstrates care, the

most common response (10 out of 27) was that I take the time to help them understand the material. This was encapsulated by a student who mentioned that one of my strengths is "explaining things in detail, giving reasons for learning math and explaining where things come from rather than just enforcing memorization." Another student summarized it as follows:

> You are so passionate about the topic, [it] makes it fun for me since I don't like math. I enjoy how you teach the 'why' in math instead of just throwing shortcuts and calling it a day. You take your time, and I am grateful for that.

Caring to Create a Safe Space for Students to Grow

Another theme that emerged is how I create a space where students feel comfortable making mistakes, learning, and growing as individuals and mathematicians. While I teach face-to-face classes, I open a Zoom session allowing students to join even when they can't come to class and record each lesson to the Cloud so they can be accessed. I also make a habit of pointing out when I make mistakes. Instead of getting embarrassed, angry, or deflecting, I simply let students know: "See everyone makes mistakes, including myself." I then show them how I find and fix my mistakes. Additionally, I encourage students to come to office hours and gladly help them when they do. As one student said: "you are very easy to talk to and very understanding so I never minded coming by to ask for help." Finally, I care about my students' success and give them opportunities to make up work and improve their grades. This was corroborated by eight of 27 students when answering the question "how does your teacher demonstrate care?" However, the student that struck me as the most embodied by this theme exclaimed:

> Thank you for believing in me. I wanted to drop the class, but you convinced me that I could pass and now I [am] doing better. I will pass the final with ease. You actually care about how I am doing, and I don't feel inferior. You taught me to trust myself and that I know what I am doing.

Caring Through the Lens of Students: The Additional Value of Listening

When asked what it means to be a "good/caring" teacher, the same two themes emerged. Students said teachers are good if they provide simple, yet thorough explanations of the content, and demonstrate care if they value student success and take time to explain material (multiple times if necessary) to help them understand. Second, students said that good teachers listen to their students and are understanding, compassionate and kind and care for students by listening to them and treating them as equals, building relationships with them and understanding their struggles.

As I analyzed student responses to "How does your teacher demonstrate care?" it became apparent that if one "cares," it shows up everywhere but listening became the common thread. While students valued my creating a safe space and motivating them, they also mentioned that I am patient enough to listen and answer their questions, especially during office hours, when others would rush them to leave. And they also mentioned that I listen to their opinions giving them agency. But it is not just listening; it is active listening and paying attention to them that made them feel cared for. They also mentioned that I get to know them and build trust, which makes the class enjoyable.

Realigning and Reaffirming My Values

While my core value has always been the infusion of passion for math into my students, the way I have shown care has evolved over my twenty years of teaching. Nonetheless, one thing has remained constant: I have always cared to listen to them. When I finished my master's degree and first started teaching, I figured all I needed to do to engender passion for math within my students was explain it in a way that was easily understood. After seeing the intricate patterns in numbers, the various relationships between different topics, and how they all come together to explain how everything within the universe works, math's beauty would naturally radiate and nurture my students' inner mathematicians.

Unfortunately, it did not take long to realize that my high school freshmen did not share my fervor. Many had given up years prior or developed a fear for the subject and some hated being forced to learn topics that they viewed as abstract: often asking, "How am I ever going to use this in real life?" It was at this moment, perhaps a month into my teaching career, that I began contextualizing mathematics topics within their personal lives and futures, forging a path leading to my current pedagogy of care.

As my students have pointed out, the fact that I care manifests itself in every aspect of my teaching, from creating a safe space for them to grow to motivating them and enabling their success. Nonetheless, while a 4.78 out of five may seem great to most, 22% of my students rated my care a 4, implying there is stillroom for growth. As I continue to improve my practice, creating a culture of inquiry and incorporating research into my classes would be a perfect next step. Additionally, mentoring my high school freshmen students and creating validation groups could be a great use of the roadmap assembled during this experience. As I contemplate the many directions in which this experience can propel me, it is evident that one thing must remain constant: I must continue to listen to my doctoral students.

Kimberly: The Love and Care That Burns Within

Before delving into how my love and care may shape my beliefs and instruction, I should preface by acknowledging that my values and beliefs may face great contentions with what the academia and nation's education system may widely commend as being distinguishable and of primary importance to teachers and their role. The love and care, for both my students and career, have attributed to my unwavering dedication to design instruction in a manner that prioritizes cultivating a positive teacher-student relationship and purposefully attending to my students' passions, joys, motivations, and self-efficacies, in hopes of subsequently promoting their academic success. I adamantly believe there is a critical need for educators to 'be in touch' with students' feelings, long before searching to understand which instructional practices should be implemented to improve students' scholarly performances; particularly for tutors, who may have limited time with tutees and feel a great sense of urgency to immediately attend to their academic demands, or shortcomings. Although I concur that promoting students' academic growth is essential, I am intentional in ensuring students' affective needs are not overshadowed by their academic demands. For I believe that primarily focusing on the intellect may severely hinder, restrict, or spark unauthentic learning experiences that may forge a stark divergence between the

students' hearts, their intrinsic inclination and enjoyment for learning, and their future development as individuals. These risks are concerning and lead me to realize that I cannot fathom the idea of sustaining a living contradiction – where I identify as an educator but may simultaneously be inadvertently and/or unwittingly deterring students away from their education.

Grounding My Values

My love and care, which predominantly fuels my approach to instruction, is closely rooted to Noddings (1986), which shines light on the importance of care, empathy, and the role of relationships. Noddings' (1986) notion of "ethics of care" firmly grounds my beliefs, as it explicates the view that care should be at the core of educational practices. My love and care instinctively propel me to attend to several affective aspects in education, particularly students' passions, joys, self-efficacies, motivations, and the cultivation of positive relationships with my students. My attention to a myriad of affective factors relates to Noddings' (1986) and Vygotsky's (1987) claims that educators should attend to students' emotional needs, in addition to their intellectual demands, to support the 'whole' child. My desire to support the 'whole' child also relates to the central tenets of Dewey's (1916) educational philosophy, as I strive to develop instruction that is responsive and uniquely crafted to my students' academic demands, passions, and interests. Furthermore, my attention to students' self-efficacy and motivation aligns with Bandura's (1997) emphasis of the significance in attending to students' self-efficacies, as this may be influential to their motivation, behaviors, and academic achievement. Altogether, Noddings, Vygotsky, and Dewey have provided the grounding from which my instruction has emerged.

Investigating My Love and Care

To investigate my value of love and care in my tutoring practices, data were gathered through video-recordings, journal entries, and questionnaires. Following parental permission, video-recordings were conducted using the Zoom platform to capture the exchanges shared with my tutees. Tutoring sessions were held 'in-person' at a public library, spanned from one to two hours, and were conducted in isolated study rooms or areas that students deemed best for their learning. After a tutoring session was completed, I would write a journal entry that provided an overview of the session and any pertinent details that may relate to the love and care demonstrated throughout my practices. After conducting a week of video-recordings (5.5 hours of tutoring), I read all the journal entries and evaluated which video-recording best encapsulated tutees' tutoring experiences. The selected recording consisted of a 1:1 session that spanned about 1.5 hours. The video-recording was transcribed verbatim through Microsoft Word's 'Dictate' feature and by hand. Additionally, five questionnaires were administered to students who received parental permission. After the questionnaires were completed, I privately read the tutees' responses and addressed any areas that needed clarification through informal conversations in the proceeding tutoring sessions.

The data were analyzed through a constant comparison analysis approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The video-recording transcript was read several times to obtain a thorough understanding of the tutoring session. I then engaged in open coding, where I highlighted significant statements, sentences, or quotes to produce an in vivo master code list. The same

process of open coding was utilized when analyzing the students' questionnaires. Axial coding was then conducted as I sought to uncover similar and/or contrasting categories among the codes by analyzing the video-recordings and questionnaires in tandem. Finally, I engaged in selective coding as I sought to identify the core categories. The emergence of these core categories reflected how love and care are showing up in my practice (Image 3).
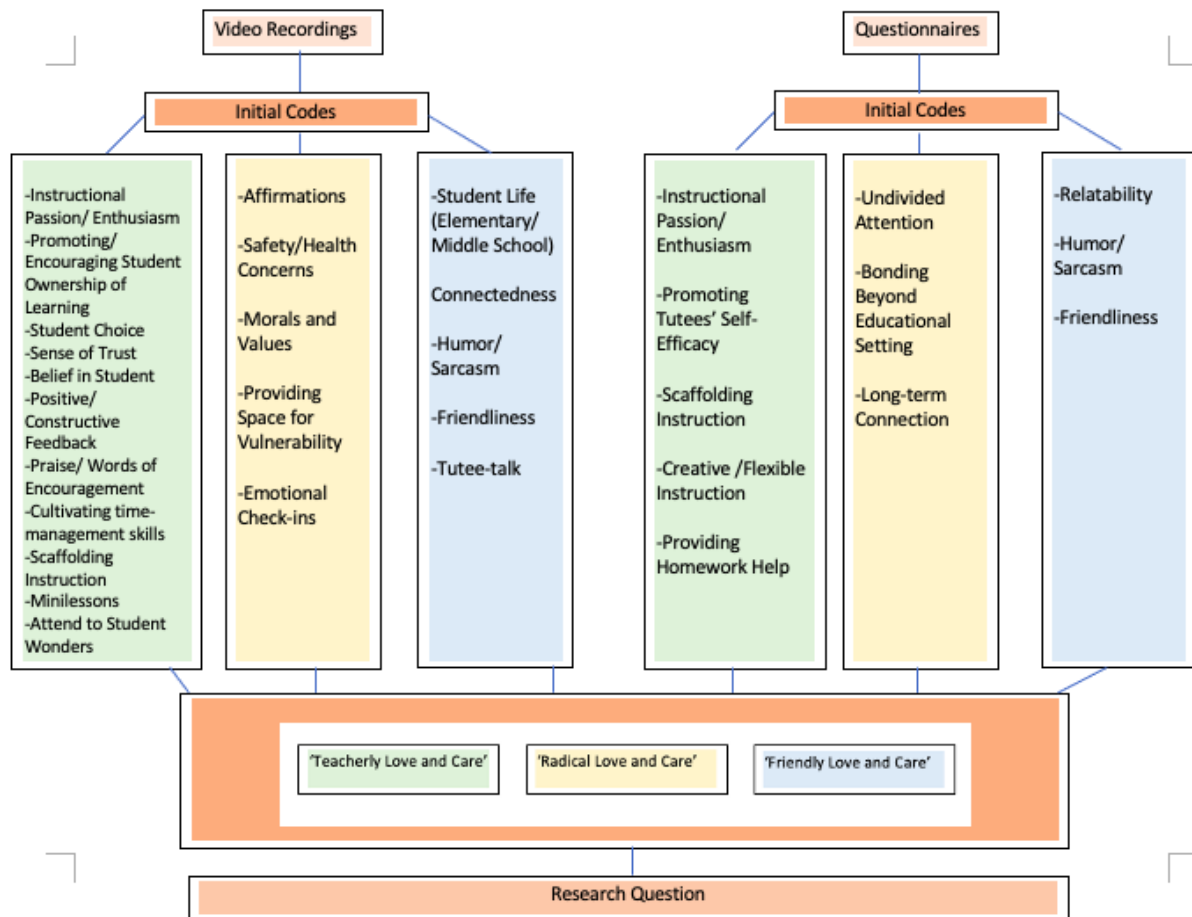
Image 3. Analysis of the Love and Care Exhibited Throughout My Tutoring Practices

Teacherly Love and Care

The first theme that emerged exemplified that my love and care was specifically fostered through the demonstration of 'teacherly love and care'. This notion of love and care was conveyed when my role as the tutor reflected the role of a teacher. 'Teacherly love and care' was influenced by my educational knowledge and expertise, as I designed the sessions by implementing a variety of instructional strategies that aimed to promote students' learning. This form of love and care were demonstrated through the integration of socio-emotional and academic strategies that may have influenced students' success by attending to the tutees' academic growth, self-efficacy, motivation, and positive tutor-tutee relationship. Generally, the essence of 'teacherly love and care' entailed loving and caring for a tutee as my student. The data revealed that all five students expressed their appreciation for creative and flexible instruction, as indicated by Mike who expressed: "I feel

chill and happy with my tutor [because] we're having fun from playing math games." Two of the five students evidenced 'teacherly love and care', as it related to my desire to promote their self-efficacy. For example, Ally explained: "[When I work with my tutor] I feel smart and like I do better work. My tutor is a huge help…without her I got [kind of] bad grades".

Another tutee confirmed the love and care exhibited, as the tutee explained his desire of having me as a long-term teacher, and I conveyed my desire of extensively working with him throughout the years:

Tutee: Why can't you just be a teacher and not a tutor?

Tutor: [Laughs] [Because] I love tutoring…If I were a teacher I would only get to see you once a year and I wouldn't really get to see you after that.

Tutee: What if you just went to 6th grade?

Tutor: Just keep being your teacher every year?

Tutee: Yeah!

Just as a teacher may develop strong attachments to their students, I also exhibit this deeply rooted connection to my students.

Radical Love and Care

Another theme that emerged revealed that my love and care was promoted when I conveyed a sense of 'radical love and care' for the children. 'Radical love and care' was reflected when my role as the tutor closely reflected the role of a caregiver. This construct was portrayed in exchanges that evidenced the student being nurtured. The essence of 'radical love and care' emerged when I indicated that I loved and cared for the student, as if they were my own child. The following excerpt exemplifies a conversation shared with a tutee that was unrelated to the academic task but deemed a critical moment for the tutee to reflect on how their actions may impact others, something that is beyond the school content:

Tutee: I call him [derogatory term] …

Tutor: Aww, don't call him that.

Tutee: But he is mean to other kids though.

Tutor: But don't be mean back. Don't go down to his level. But he does need to be nice. I don't think if people are mean to him it's going to make him nicer.

Tutee: [Appears to silently think/reflect but does not verbalize anything further].

'Radical love and care' was also reflected in my strong desire to attend to my tutees' emotions within and beyond the tutorial setting:

Tutee: Ughhh!

Tutor: Why are you [upset]?

Tutee: I don't [want to] leave.

Tutor: Why not?

Tutee: [Because] when I go home, I can't take a break!

Tutor: [The library was closing and the tutee's parents were waiting, so the recording was abruptly ended. However, the conversation continued afterwards where the tutor reassured the tutee that things would be OK and that he would be able to rest very soon].

In addition to the excerpts from the video recording, the questionnaires also provided insight into 'radical love and care'. Two out of five tutees evidenced their appreciation for spending time together outside of tutoring as illustrated by a comment from one tutee, "Me and my tutor's relationship are great because we get to go places with her … we spend time with her and sometimes go out with her".

The overall essence of 'radical love and care' was conveyed by Sally's response: "My tutor focuses just on me." Just as a child may be a parent's 'whole world', the tutees essentially become my children, who have my undivided attention and, more importantly, my unwavering love.

Friendly Love and Care

The final theme that surfaced was that my relationship with my tutees was promoted when I conveyed a sense of 'friendly love and care' for the students. The notion of 'friendly love and care' is demonstrated when my role as the tutor closely reflects the role of a peer and learning partner. 'Friendly love and care' may be exhibited when a tutor engages in behaviors that convey mutuality and mirrors interactions that may occur between peers or co-constructors of knowledge. The vignette below reflects a light-hearted exchange shared between my tutee and I during a session:

[Tutor and tutee continuing a conversation about softball]

Tutee: What's SLAP mean then?

Tutor: I don't know!

Tutee: You didn't play softball then.

Tutor: I didn't play in a – I was [going] to say I didn't play for a school team. I've played recreationally.

Tutee: So!

Tutor: I was actually one of the better girl players…[smiling and jokingly] if not the best.

Tutee: [Gives a sarcastic glance].

Tutor: … What do you know about it? I got wheels! I could beat you in a race.

Tutee: I mean that's true but …

Friendly love and care was also demonstrated as we related to one another:

Tutee: Did you play an instrument when you were in 6th grade?

Tutor: No, I was going to and then I didn't.

Tutee: What instrument did you think you were [going to] play?

Tutor: Originally, I wanted to play the drums. I never tried the clarinet [the student's instrument] though, maybe I should have.

Tutee: [Pretends to play the drums] Drums? I didn't pick drums. I wanted to do drums but then I didn't [want to] do drums [any] more. It's so complicated.

The questionnaires also revealed aspects of 'friendly love and care', as all of the tutees evidenced their perception of my friendliness. For example, Mike expressed: "My tutor is so nice and the best in the wide world." Generally, the essence of 'friendly love and care', as indicated by a friendship, was captured through two tutees' responses, such as when Kamy expressed, "We [My tutor and I] are BEST FRIENDS [heart drawing]." As the interactions between my tutees and I continue to grow, I become increasingly aware that a friendship has and continues to develop. This friendship is one that I had never anticipated, as I was repeatedly told throughout my education in undergraduate courses, to ensure that I maintained professionalism by not attempting to be friends with my students. However, I find that being an effective teacher, or more specifically tutor, does not necessitate eradicating the idea of 'being friends'.

Continuing the Search for My Love and Care

My investigation into love and care led me to learn about myself as a practitioner and uncover how my core values may present within my tutoring practices. The teacherly, radical, and friendly love and care that I have uncovered has prompted me to delve further into the investigation of each theme to identify a myriad of ways in which each construct may be exhibited throughout my practices, as that is the purpose of engaging in Living Educational Theory Research and generating a living-educational-theory. However, to thoroughly understand this core value that burns within, I believe I must also involve my tutees, as co-researchers, in the exploration of love and care in tutoring. Thus, a more profound and comprehensive analysis into my value of love and care awaits.

Márta: 'Care'ful[1] Listening

We all have extraordinary creative, humanitarian, and spiritual potential, yet often find ourselves alienated from them by only focusing on a narrow slice of who we are. My decision to embark on a doctoral journey was an attempt to explore the other side of my potential; one that aims to garner scholarly knowledge to better serve the students I work with as an educational consultant and ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) coach. At the onset of this journey, I knew not what struggles would greet me academically, nor how significantly the journey would shake my epistemological paradigm. I began by focusing on ways that my years of professional experience in education and business could be harnessed to foster students' journeys of self-discovery and growth. Mine had indelibly relied on grit and perseverance, growing up as a Hungarian immigrant in Canada. Undoubtedly, this experience included its challenges but staying true to my Hungarian

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[1] This author renders the word careful as 'care'ful in order to highlight the word 'care' in its exposition in this section.

heritage meant embracing obstacles in a manner that propelled me forward rather than stunted my growth. I learned that the road to self-actualization is hardly linear. With perseverance and the right kind of support, I have emerged with a renewed strength and sense of responsibility that comes with a moral imperative: knowledge is futile unless it is shared.

In Theory I Affirm My Practice

Horace Mann (19th century American politician and educational reformer) said: "Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity." (Commencement address at Antioch College, 1859). Though rather hyperbolic, his declaration resonates with a poignancy that highlights the work of Gert Biesta, John Dewey, and Abraham Maslow, scholars who have contributed to the construction of my values. The belief that education is a process by which students enter a social contract of discovery to unveil truths about the world around them and truths yet unknown to them is at the heart of my practice. As a human endeavor, the act of knowing entails a fruitful relationship between actions and consequences – what Dewey (2013) termed the transactional approach in education. Indeed, we are not part of a static world. We are part and parcel of an ever-evolving and unfinished universe that requires our attention to reject certain truths, embrace others, and have a voice in the world we create (Biesta, 2014). To use our voice as educators means we must be able to listen. We must listen intently, openly, and free of judgement so our students' unique journeys can be meaningful to them at each stage of development. Importantly, we must tend to our students with unwavering care.

In thinking about the demonstration of my values as an educational consultant, I believe it is through the personalized sessions provided to sophomores, juniors, and seniors as they navigate the often confusing and rocky road of college admissions. In my role as an ADHD coach, it is through the organizational, time-management and goal-achieving strategies that facilitate their specific lifestyle skills, so they learn to better manage their ADHD symptoms – symptoms that are often demoralizing and debilitating. While care is the overarching value that fuels my practice, I believe it is through my ability to truly listen and provide tools to persevere that creates the space for my students to be heard and grow on their road to self-actualization.

Data Collection and Analysis

Setting out to explore how my core values present themselves in practice, I gathered data from questionnaires, testimonials and video recordings from my colleagues in our culture of inquiry sessions. Five students and one parent filled out the questionnaire, which asked a series of questions centered around their observations of my commitment to the value of care, supported by listening and perseverance. I asked them to share specific instances from our sessions and interactions outside of them, emphasizing concrete examples when possible. By locating and grouping similarities across the collection of data, I aggregated quotes from all data sources, used a priori coding, and triangulated findings to validate the data.

'Care'ful Listening to Develop Agency and Self-Advocacy

Insightful evidence from my students and culture of inquiry peers reinforced my value of listening. One peer commended my ability to listen intently, referencing specific conversations we had at an educational conference attended in the past year: "Márta is engrossed! And then it's like connected. She's ... hearing everything, taking everything in, hearing 5 million connections in her brain to solve the problem ... It's like another level of connections and connecting".

Another culture of inquiry peer shared my keen ability to focus on and support the initiatives of a conversation:

> You do a really good job of listening to people, and then saying your thoughts on that, and then questioning them too. I'm not as a great ... a listener as you ... You don't really tell people your answers. I've noticed with me; you ask me a question to make me think for myself.

This skill set as an ADHD coach is particularly salient. Listening to my students is of utmost importance to help them bridge the gap between their present state of struggle and their future success. Further, listening provides a unique opportunity to support and chart paths to overcome common obstacles germane to the diagnosis, such as task initiation, procrastination, difficulty staying focused and difficulty organizing and prioritizing the completion of tasks. By being a thoughtful listener and helping students come to conclusions on their own, my hope is that they develop agency and learn to advocate for themselves using the tools they have learned in our sessions.

In my practice as an educational consultant, one parent observed that I was able to adapt well to changes that ensued with her daughter. She shared: "I observed all of these values [care, listening, perseverance] being upheld in the language you use, how you make inquiries, listen and respond." She elaborated that my "individualized approach" enabled me to pivot when her daughter's needs shifted and that I "remained supportive but in a new way." When asked if I had missed the mark in any way regarding the student-centered consulting I aim to provide, the parent remarked, "You did not fall short in any way" and that my services remained "individualized and supportive." Further evidencing this value, one colleague posed an interesting question, asking: "What is it about you that helps you give such personalized and pointed feedback? It's like you listen with a filtering device that helps you pinpoint what needs doing, how to do it and then boom – out comes gold!"

Pulled from the questionnaire, one student expressed that by offering accountability check-ins and a checklist of to-dos in between sessions, my core values shined, "All [your] values have been shown during sessions, reminders and achievements during the college applications." Through my ability to tailor "constant checkups and reminders" during our time together, this student was able to follow the timeline and manage the tedious executive functioning tasks required to prepare for and complete her college applications – tasks that otherwise would likely not have been completed if she were on her own. At the end of the process, she was able to submit each application ahead of its deadline without compromising schoolwork and other responsibilities. When asked whether my services had fallen short in any way, she replied: "They worked well ... they kept me on track and up-to-

date with what was needed to be done. I was able to time-manage my work and schedule better … and the process was less stressful and easier to handle".

These quotes reveal the delicate art of listening and reinforce the importance of tending to students' specific needs. In this way, students become aware of their abilities and feel empowered. These findings also illustrate that, with thoughtful care, patience and resources that leverage students' journeys, preparing for college applications, or having ADHD does not have to be stressful or debilitating. Perhaps this quote from a student captures this sentiment best:

> Marta is patient, empathetic, and enthusiastic. She cares about the success of her clients and is great at picking up where you left off between sessions. She develops individualistic plans with you to form realistic goals and offers accountability throughout your time if you choose. Furthermore, Marta was great at reflecting on the process and creative in adjusting plans if necessary. Since my time working with Marta, I have continued to use strategies we developed that reinforce my work and personal goals daily.

Persevering to Succeed

Embracing uncomfortable situations, harnessing weaknesses and learning to transfer them into strengths have been essential on my journey – and are skills I endeavor to share with my students. Michelle's assessment of this value is thoughtfully encapsulated in one of our culture of inquiry sessions when she shared:

> My guess is it [the value of perseverance] really got strengthened when you had to walk that path yourself. You really did have to put all of your skills into practice and it worked for yourself, so now … what was once a personality trait became a core value… [so] now that [you] know this works, [you] can now do this for others …

As an ADHD coach, this value truly shines. By arming struggling students with the resources to succeed, my hope is that they believe in themselves to pragmatically overcome roadblocks that will inevitably come their way in life. Each student can benefit from resources that suit their unique learning style and executive function needs. When students work with a coach that listens to them, encourages them and shares ways that they can strengthen weaknesses in school, and build on their strengths, students feel cared for and less isolated on their journeys.

Michelle thought that this was "a powerful part of [my] practice." She further shared that she loves the way I help students become their own advocates, a skill she believes resonates naturally from my experiences as an immigrant, an interloper of sorts, which is "quite special." As further corroborating this value, a student with ADHD voiced her perspective on hardship, as a result of our working together: "I had the pleasure of working with [you] and it completely changed how I view myself and my disorder. [You] made what seemed to be enormous mountains blocking my way to normalcy into much more manageable hills." Her advice to students with ADHD who were struggling was additionally inspiring: "If you are looking to change the way you view yourself, be taught ways to improve your life in all aspects and be supported throughout your process – this is the coach for you".

I truly believe in the highest potential of my students. When they find themselves navigating difficult situations through school or college applications, I want them to know that these challenges are transitory and can often be solved through the application of tools, resources, and support. I want them to feel confident in overcoming obstacles and building an arsenal of tools they can use and modify as they journey onto the next stage of their lives. Fundamentally, I believe in my students' will to push forward and succeed. One student testimonial eloquently captures this sentiment:

> Marta is extremely knowledgeable, very encouraging, and inspiring, thoughtful, and very easy to work with. ... This coach really takes the time to not only evaluate your strengths and weaknesses but really makes sure that you can see what she sees. Never had an experience like this! Super supportive and give you room to come to helpful and healthy realizations about the information she teaches you.

Conclusion

As I continue to serve students' unique needs through consulting and ADHD coaching, I vow to deepen my value of care through 'care'ful and thoughtful listening. From this culture of inquiry experience, I was able to hear my students' voices loud and clear to continue tailoring student-centered services that develop their agency, access to resources of encouragement and support, and overcome obstacles using their strengths. Feeling affirmed by my experience of a culture of inquiry, led by a thoughtful, kind, and engaging mentor, reinforces the value of being part of such groups in my future studies. Considering starting my own culture of inquiry, I would emulate the supportive characteristics of our mentor to provide the space for students to be heard and encouraged as they develop their studies. I believe the path to a better world is hard, but nothing of consequence gets accomplished without courage. I hope that my courage inspires students to take action in their own lives and traverse unique paths of self-discovery and growth.

Michelle: Reflections and Next Steps

Our group met for a final session to discuss our writing up to this point and reflect on what we would want to share with others about our culture of inquiry, and the role of values within our practice and research, and experientially beginning to develop knowledge, understanding and practice of Living Educational Theory Research in the doctoral experience.

The still image below (Image 4) is from a clip from our final meeting, and I share it here so the readers may experience the connection, care, and love that have grown within our group.
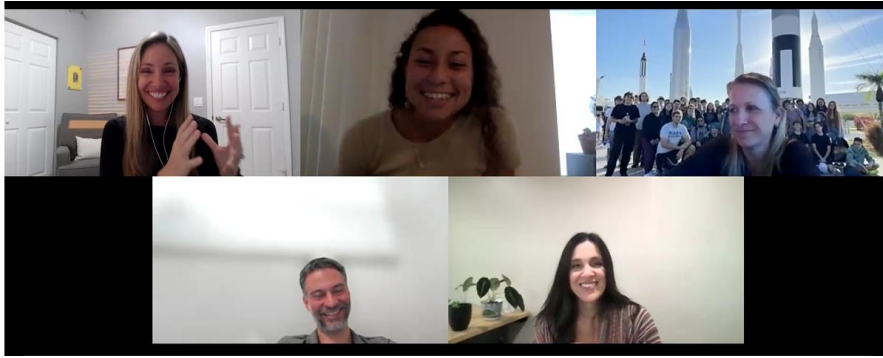
Image 4. Culture of inquiry members (clockwise from top left: Michelle, Kimberly, Erica, Reinaldo, Márta)

As a doctoral mentor, I saw significant value of developing knowledge of Living Educational Theory Research through the vehicle of a culture of inquiry. When I created my account of my living-educational-theory in 2019, I worked individually with a mentor and likely would have benefitted from a group of other new learners in the field to work alongside. Within our culture of inquiry, comprising doctoral students and their mentor, we provided support in the form of encouragement and critique in two ways – verbally through sharing data analysis from individual projects and in writing through a shared Google Doc used to draft this manuscript. While our culture of inquiry did not begin with the intention of creating a paper for publication, the shared writing project allowed each member additional time to reflect on each other's work between sessions and challenge their written explanation of their values.

Additionally, having a guiding text (Delong & Whitehead, 2024) was also an asset to our work. The definitions, examples, and supporting theory provided in You and Your Living-Educational Theory guided our initial sessions and the wide array of studies included in the text ensured that each member was able to find a connection to published work in the field. Furthermore, my doctoral students now have a resource, beyond their mentor, that can support them in their developing knowledge of Living Educational Theory Research.

Living Educational Theory Research as a Compass

Reinaldo shared that he found value in using this methodology to explore his practice and become a better educator, but he added that without it as a grounding methodology, it was as if "we have no compass." Understanding what your values are and how you want to be in the world is a necessary first step in improving your practice. It provides, as he said, a "measuring stick." Kimberly expounded on that idea when she talked about how understanding her core values impacts her accountability within her practice.

> It makes you think deeply, … really within yourself, and finding what is at the core. What holds you? You know? And then you build off of that and you do research off of that. Then what I saw for me, at least, is that almost in a way, it's like I found this [value of care]. And now I'm holding myself accountable to this. I'm saying that I'm this person who loves and cares, and I've had proof of that. But now I'm not going to ever let myself let go of that. I'm never [going to] let myself let go of that value.

Márta discussed the power of having the data to reflect on the presence of her values in her practice, and how this process gave her "permission" to lean into her values. The intentional focus on values, along with the loving support of the culture of inquiry, created an outcome that, as Erica described it, had both "intra- and interpersonal value."

Validation in Values-Based Inquiry

An overwhelming theme of our reflection was the power found within our dialogue and writing as we provided both support and criticism around generating our explanations of educational influences in learning. As we examined how the unique constellation of care emerged within each members' practice, our questions to each other grew in complexity along with our understanding of this ontological value. Our group challenged Erica to examine how her level of care in her classroom might be unsustainable and also questioned the language Kimberly used to describe her three components of care in her tutoring practice. But along with caring critique, Kimberly discussed how close she now felt to each member within our group, and how this experience has created bonds at a deeper level. Márta also discussed the support she felt to now go out and continue to study her values on a larger level, knowing she had a "home base for support" with our group. As a doctoral mentor and practitioner-researcher with experience of Living Educational Theory Research within this community, I was impressed with the accelerated growth and research this group was able to complete in the time we met. Leaning on each other and applying their skills as students and researchers, I saw each member of our group take ownership over their own unique approaches to a shared value (care) and explore the world of Living Educational Theory Research. It made me think carefully about the doctoral student journey and the benefits of doctoral mentors providing this type of experience for all their students. Additionally, our culture of inquiry group met online, which allowed for flexibility in schedules, but group members also indicated there was a desire to have more in-person opportunities to connect, believing that the physical presence of each member may foster opportunities to develop connections that extend far beyond the academia and academic setting.

Since the initiation of our culture of inquiry group, two members have been recognized as exemplary educators with awards at their respective institutions. While creating a living-educational-theory can be done individually, I believe that cultures of inquiry within Living Educational Theory Research are a pivotal element facilitating the transformative growth that can occur.

Concluding the Paper

This group continues to develop their knowledge, understanding and practice of Living Educational Theory Research and work together to create and disseminate their individual living-educational-theories as well as underscoring the importance of the culture of inquiry experience. Most recently, we presented at the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) conference and shared how becoming acquainted with Living Educational Theory Research through our culture of inquiry has influenced their practice as well as their dissertation research. Within our presentation, Kimberly shared that this experience has

helped her "better understand myself, my values, and uncover what is important to me as a doctoral student / research practitioner." Additionally, Erica shared:

> This study, as supported through a culture of inquiry, helped me focus on my value of care through conversations with caring colleagues and directed time observing my practices and interactions with students that occurred as a result of this value. The focus on my care for students within the classroom increased my pedagogical awareness and serves as a foundation for future research associated with values and humanity in educational practices.

As a doctoral mentor, I believe that each member of our culture of inquiry has deepened their knowledge as an educational researcher through their experience with Living Educational Theory Research. Watching them present their work at ARNA and speak about Living Educational Theory Research, it was apparent that they felt comfortable discussing their values and the evidence they had collected to examine their presence in their practice. As they each move forward towards their individual dissertation research, I intend to support their work by continuing to meet regularly as a group to discuss the role of values within their research as growing scholars.

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