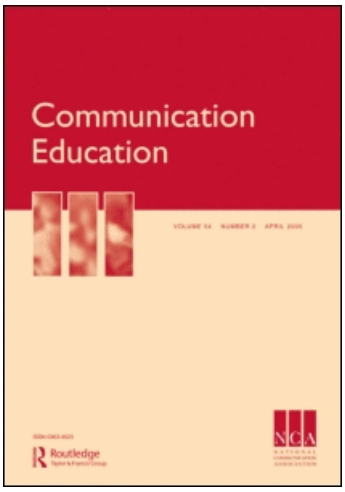

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Teacher Temperament: Correlates with Teacher Caring, Burnout, and Organizational Outcomes

Jason J. Teven

This study utilized the Big Five personality measure to assess the relationships among teacher temperament, caring orientation, and dimensions of teacher burnout. Perceptions of supervisor caring, job satisfaction, and teacher motivation were assessed. Respondents in this study were 48 college faculty teaching a variety of classes at a medium-sized Southwestern university. Teacher caring was negatively related to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, loss of personal accomplishment, and neuroticism while positively related to agreeableness, conscientiousness, job satisfaction, and motivation. A canonical correlation analysis examined the relationship between the five domains of teacher temperament and three dimensions of burnout. Teacher temperament predicted a significant amount of variance of caring. The results support a theoretical model of teacher temperament, caring, and burnout, and provide a foundation for future research in instructional communication.

Keywords: Teacher Burnout; Temperament; Caring; Personality Traits; Communication Orientations

A recent report indicates that teacher attrition rates, particularly for beginning teachers in their first three years of service, hover around 50 percent nationally (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003). Overcrowded classrooms, teacher shortages, long work hours, and daily job demands placed on teachers are a major cause of unrelieved stress (Mullins, 1993). Teachers often contend with unmotivated and difficult students. Student resistance (Burroughs, Kearney, & Plax, 1989), misbehavior, and teachers' management of disruptive classroom behavior can be sources of workplace stress. Conversely, teacher nonimmediacy (Thweatt & McCroskey, 1996) and noncaring (Teven & Gorham,

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1998) can lead to student misbehaviors and negative teacher evaluations, respectively. A teacher's temperament may strongly influence that teacher's affective orientations. Those scholars best known for their work on burnout report that similar personalities are often drawn to human service careers (Maslach, 1982; Pines, 2002). Most human service professionals are humanitarians (Pines & Aronson, 1988). Burnout is higher among individuals who have an external locus of control, possess other-oriented empathy, and are more emotional than cognitive (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Hence, teacher temperament is likely to be a significant variable in determining caring orientations and potential burnout. The present study was designed to provide a more comprehensive examination of the relationships among teacher temperament, caring, burnout, and organizational outcomes.

Review of Literature

Teacher Caring

Caring is a fundamental personal attribute of teachers. Teacher caring plays a vital role in students' perceptions of learning, affect and satisfaction, and perceptions of teacher competence and trustworthiness (Teven, 2001, 2003, in press; Teven & Gorham, 1998; Teven & Hanson, 2004; Teven & McCroskey, 1997). Caring is also a primary concern in teacher education (Goodlad, Soder, & Sirotnik, 1990; Perry & Quaglia, 1997) and a component of preservice teachers' field placement experiences (Perry & Rog, 1992; Rogers & Webb, 1991). Caring teachers promote a climate of trust within the classroom (Chory, 2007; McDermott, 1977; Teven & Hanson, 2004). Conceptually, perceived caring is similar to Aristotle's conceptualization of a source's "goodwill" toward an audience (McCroskey & Teven, 1999; Teven & McCroskey, 1997). Perceived caring is an interpretation of another person's communication behavior (Teven, in press).

Caring is a major component of teaching which involves a personal relationship with one's students. Three factors which are believed to lead students to perceive the teacher as caring about their welfare are empathy, understanding, and responsiveness (McCroskey, 1992). *Empathy* is one's ability to identify with another's situation or feelings. Prosocial behavior stems from altruistic motives and a concern for others (Stiff, Dillard, Somera, Kim, & Sleight, 1988). The second factor of teacher caring is *understanding*. Understanding is the ability to comprehend another person's ideas, feelings, and needs. Perceived understanding has been found to have a positive impact in a variety of communication contexts (Cahn, 1986; Cahn & Shulman, 1984; Cushman, & Cahn, 1985). Some teachers are adept at determining when students are encountering a problem either personally or with the course content, while other teachers seem insensitive to such matters. *Responsiveness,* the third factor of perceived caring, involves being other-oriented and having sensitivity toward others. The responsive individual is defined as "helpful, sympathetic, compassionate, sincere, and friendly" (Thomas, Richmond, & McCroskey, 1994, p. 109). Teven (2001) discovered that students' perceptions of teacher caring were related to teacher responsiveness.

A review of the extant research on teacher caring reveals an exclusive focus on *students*' perceptions of caring in relation to learning outcomes and teacher evaluation. Limiting the definition of caring solely to the students' perspective ignores the potential for individual differences within communication in instruction. Exploring teachers' self-reports of caring in relation to burnout and temperament provides a more comprehensive understanding of both the teacher–student relationship and the caring construct.

Teacher Emotional Labor

Effective teachers are nonverbally immediate and responsive with students, thereby enhancing the communication process and ultimately facilitating student learning (Andersen, 1979; Christophel, 1990; Christophel & Gorham, 1995; Frymier, 1994; Plax, Kearney, McCroskey, & Richmond, 1986). Mehrabian (1969) defined immediacy as behaviors that "enhance closeness to and nonverbal interaction with another" (p. 213). Recent scholarly attention has concentrated on the close relationship between nonverbal immediacy and teacher caring (Teven & Hanson, 2004). Caring teachers are nonverbally immediate and responsive to students both in and out of the classroom (Myers & Bryant, 2004; Teven & Gorham, 1998). Teacher immediacy fosters increased frequency of students' visits to the teacher's office (Fusani, 1994), greater length of office visits, and increased student satisfaction (Jaasma & Koper, 1999). However, as Isenbarger and Zembylas (2006) assert, "caring relationships in teaching may be a source of professional satisfaction for teachers but they can be a source of emotional strain, anxiety, anger, and disappointment" (p. 123).

Emotional labor, a construct coined by Hochschild (1983), focuses on the many ways professionals manage their emotions. Emotional labor is a form of emotional regulation in which workers are expected to display certain emotions as part of their job and to promote organizational goals (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989). Emotional labor refers to jobs in which workers are expected to display certain feelings in order to satisfy organizational role expectations (Miller, Birkholt, Scott, & Stage, 1995). Teaching is one of the many professions that focuses on customer (human) service involving face-to-face and/or voice-to-voice interaction. Similar professions would include nursing, counseling, emergency services, and social work. Emotional labor occurs when teachers engage in efforts to alter negative emotions for the purpose of expressing only those emotions that are socially acceptable. For instance, we know that teachers' expressions of anger are associated with negative evaluations of both the teacher and the course (McPherson, Kearney, & Plax, 2003). Controlling or maintaining particular emotions over time can become stressful for teachers and can lead to burnout.

Relationship Between Teacher Caring and Burnout

Freudenberger (1974) defines burnout as the exhaustion that results from excessive demands on energy, strength, or resources. Starnaman and Miller (1992) note that

burnout is "an individual, psychological, and negative phenomenon" (p. 40). Burnout is defined as a condition characterized by *emotional exhaustion*, *depersonalization*, and *loss of personal accomplishment* (Maslach, 1982; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Burnout has been described as a "wearing down" from the pressures of human service work (Miller, Stiff, & Ellis, 1988). Maslach (1982) describes emotional exhaustion as "a loss of feeling and concern, a loss of trust, a loss of interest, a loss of spirit" (p. 323). Teachers who experience negative emotions at work and who have lost interest in their jobs would likely be less caring and experience *emotional exhaustion*. Given the preceding framework, the first hypothesis was advanced:

H1: Teachers' self-reports of caring are negatively related to emotional exhaustion.

Depersonalization has been conceived of as a negative shift in responses toward others (Maslach, 1982). Depersonalization refers to "a distancing of oneself from others and viewing them impersonally" (Chiu & Tsai, 2006, p. 518). As a consequence, teachers experiencing depersonalization would likely develop negative attitudes toward work and students, dehumanize their students, and ultimately, care less about their immediate work environment. "Ironically, these hostile and negative feelings are often directed at the people one cares about most of all" (Maslach, 1982, p. 5). Teachers experiencing depersonalization will likely want to spend less time with students. Hence, it was predicted that:

H2: Teachers' self-reports of caring are negatively related to depersonalization.

Loss of personal accomplishment is defined as the loss of feelings of being successful and adequately qualified (Maslach, 1982). When teachers begin to undergo a reduced sense of accomplishment, they experience a loss of sense of efficacy at work. Negative feelings and attitudes toward others in the environment often lead to self-perceptions of inadequacy. When feelings of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization set in, teachers may begin to doubt their choice of profession. Teachers may begin to feel as though they are not as sensitive and responsive to students as they were initially. From this vantage point, the following hypothesis was advanced:

H3: Teachers' self-reports of caring are negatively related to loss of personal accomplishment.

Empirical Support for Teacher Temperament, Caring, and Burnout

Teacher temperament is a fundamental component of the instructional process. In 1998, Beatty and McCroskey advanced the communibiological paradigm as a means to study the relationships among neurology, temperament, and communication behavior within a variety of contexts. Initially, the new paradigm focused on the relationship between communication and the three personality traits of extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism (Beatty, McCroskey, & Heisel, 1998; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985). Costa and McCrae's (1992) Big Five personality structure (agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness) provides one of

the most recent and compelling conceptualizations of personality. The Big Five represents biologically rooted individual differences in temperament which impacts the ways in which people interact. Teacher temperament precedes teachers' responses to social interaction within the school environment. Temperament is believed to explain why some individual teachers respond differently to stress and experience more burnout than others. This study contributes to both instructional communication theory and the communibiological perspective by providing an opportunity to assess systematically the relationships among teacher caring, burnout, and teacher temperament.

Eysenck (1986) explains extraversion as an individual's cooperativeness, sociability, and responsiveness in high stimulus situations. Extraversion is related to sociability, assertiveness, activity, and positive affect. Extraverts tend to be positive and happy (Francis, 1998) and optimistic (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Teachers possessing this trait would tend to be positive, sociable, and outgoing in how they relate with students, coworkers, and others in the school environment. Affective orientation, a predisposition to be aware of one's emotional state, is positively related to extraversion (Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 1994, 2002). Given their strong, positive orientation toward others, extraverted teachers would likely care about others. Hence, the following hypothesis was advanced:

H4: Teachers' self-reports of caring are positively related to extraversion.

Neuroticism is defined as an enduring tendency to experience negative emotional states (Matthews & Deary, 1998). Neuroticism is a vulnerable personality factor for depression (Roberts & Kendler, 1999). Teachers scoring high on the neuroticism domain of personality would likely experience negative emotions including fear, disgust, depression, and/or anxiety. These teachers would not cope well with stress, thereby making them more likely to experience burnout. These same teachers would subsequently not be in an optimal position to care for others. Hence, it was reasoned that:

H5: Teachers' self-reports of caring are negatively related to neuroticism.

Agreeableness refers to an individual difference in concern with cooperation and social harmony. Agreeableness is a tendency to be compassionate and cooperative as opposed to being suspicious, skeptical of others' motives, or antagonistic. Within work groups, the agreeable participant is likely to support other team members' viewpoints and experiences (Neuman, Wagner, & Christiansen, 1999). Agreeableness would likely correlate very strongly with caring since agreeable teachers seek to establish and maintain positive relationships with those in their immediate environment and are supportive of others. The following prediction was made:

H6: Teachers' self-reports of caring are positively related to agreeableness.

Conscientiousness is one's involvement, persistence, and intent to fulfill rules (Cano-García, Padilla-Muñoz, & Ortiz, 2005). Scholars have discovered strong

associations between conscientiousness and self-discipline, achievement striving, dutifulness, and competence (McCrae & Costa, 1986). Hence, conscientious teachers are likely to be self-disciplined, organized, and achievement-oriented, and display a concern for completing tasks. The more conscientious the teacher, the more competent, dependable, orderly, and responsible he/she is likely to be (Nguyen, Allen, & Fraccastoro, 2005). Hence, conscientious teachers would care about doing their best work.

H7: Teachers' self-reports of caring are positively related to conscientiousness.

Openness to experience involves active imagination, aesthetic sensitivity, attentiveness to inner feelings, preference for variety, and intellectual curiosity (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

Individuals who are open to experience tend to be more creative, adventurous, and flexible in their thinking (Lee-Baggley, Preece, & DeLongis, 2005). Few studies have examined the relationships between openness to experience and empathy, and the findings of these studies are inconsistent (McCrae & Costa, 1986; Stasio & Capron, 1998). Given the paucity of data, the following research question was posed:

RQ1: What is the relationship between teachers' self-reports of caring and openness to experience?

Organizational Outcomes

Teachers' perceptions of their immediate supervisor and work environment are important elements within the school environment. Subordinates' perceptions of supervisor goodwill are often positively related to employee job satisfaction (Teven, 2007; Teven, McCroskey, & Richmond, 2006). Burnout is conceptually distinct from job satisfaction (Koustelios, 2001) and is often associated with decreased job satisfaction (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993). Teachers who perceive their supervisors as caring about their welfare and best interests would more likely report greater job satisfaction. Similarly, the more that teachers care about their jobs, the more motivated they will be at work. Hence, the following hypotheses were advanced:

H8: Teachers' perceptions of their immediate supervisors' caring are positively related to teacher job satisfaction.

H9: Teachers' self-reports of caring are positively related to teacher state motivation.

Recent studies employing the communibiological framework have discovered meaningful relationships between temperament variables and communicators' behaviors and orientations (Beatty & McCroskey, 1997; Cole, 2000; Cole & McCroskey, 2000; McCroskey, Heisel, & Richmond, 2001; Wahba & McCroskey, 2005). Given the strength of those relationships, it seems reasonable to expect that teacher temperament might significantly predict teachers' self-reports of caring and burnout. Thus, the following research questions were posed:

RQ2: To what extent is teacher temperament related to teachers' self-reports of caring?
RQ3: To what extent is teacher temperament related to teachers' self-reports of burnout?

Method

Participants and Procedures

Participants were 48 college faculty (27 men, 20 women, 1 unidentified) teaching a variety of classes at a medium sized university in the southwestern United States. The mean age of the participants was 51.15 years ($SD = 9.86$) with 96% holding a doctoral degree. A random sample of 120 faculty members at the university received a letter of invitation for participation accompanied by a survey. The cover letter provided a description of the research project and a copy of the IRB approval letter. Each faculty member was provided with the cover letter, survey, and preaddressed (nonidentifiable) envelope to return his/her survey through campus mail. Surveys were returned directly to the researcher to protect the anonymity of the participants and to emphasize the independence of this research effort from that of the university. Surveys were returned by 48 faculty members, representing a return rate of 40%.

Measurement

Twelve variables were measured in this study. For each of these measures, Table 1 provides the means, standard deviations, range, and reliability estimates. Similarly, Table 2 provides the simple correlations among all variables.

Big Five personality. To assess teacher temperament, the shortened version of the Big Five measure (Sager & Gastil, 2002), originally developed by McCrae and Costa (1987), was used. This 38-item scale contains seven-step items for each of the five personality factors of extraversion, openness, agreeableness, neuroticism, and conscientiousness. Each factor was measured using seven or eight semantic differential items, with contrasting adjectives placed at opposite ends of the 7-point scale. One item was dropped from the measure of extraversion to increase the reliability from $<.76$ to .81.

Burnout. Teacher burnout was assessed using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). This 21-item instrument measures three dimensions of teacher burnout: emotional exhaustion (nine items), depersonalization (five items), and loss of personal accomplishment (seven items). Respondents rated on a 5-point scale how each item applies to them. The responses ranged from 5 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*). Higher scores reflected greater burnout.

Perceived supervisor caring. Teven and McCroskey's (1997) measure of perceived caring was used to assess teachers' perceptions of their immediate supervisor's caring.

Table 1 Means Table

Measure	*M*	*SD*	Reliability	Range
Caring				
Teacher Self-Report	35.02	4.76	.86	6–42
Perceptions of Supervisor	24.15	9.81	.94	6–42
Burnout				
Emotional Exhaustion	21.50	7.70	.88	9–45
Depersonalization	10.92	4.02	.73	5–25
Loss of Personal Accomplishment	15.13	4.77	.81	7–35
Temperament				
Extraversion	29.92	6.51	.81	6–42
Agreeableness	42.87	8.05	.87	8–56
Conscientiousness	49.17	6.00	.86	8–56
Neuroticism	22.67	7.83	.81	7–49
Openness to Experience	39.96	7.79	.81	8–56
Organizational Outcomes				
Teacher Motivation	23.41	3.64	.92	4–28
Teacher Job Satisfaction	28.07	6.91	.96	5–35

Given that some of the faculty participants were presently serving as chairpersons of their respective academic departments, the target source was an immediate supervisor, such as department chair or college dean. The instrument consists of 6 seven-step semantic differential items intended to tap the goodwill dimension of source credibility. Higher scores reflected greater caring.

Self-reported caring. Traditional research relating to teacher caring (and the larger credibility construct) has focused exclusively on a receiver/perceiver view of caring. Restricting the definition of caring solely to the students' perspective ignores the potential for individual differences within communication in instruction. Presumably, a teacher's caring for students impacts their choice of classroom behaviors. In an effort to measure instructors' self-reported caring orientation, items on Teven and McCroskey's (1997) perceived caring instrument were reworded. The resulting caring items completed by teachers were: *care about others–don't care about others, have*

Table 2 Correlations Among Caring, Burnout, and Organizational Variables

	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Caring (self-report)	−.39	−.56	−.26	.19*	.30	.04*
2. Emotional Exhaustion	–	−.76	−.39	−.16*	−.67	−.50
3. Depersonalization	–	–	.42	−.11*	−.61	−.33
4. Loss of Personal Accomplishment	–	–		−.07*	−.15	−.18*
5. Supervisor Caring	–	–	–	–	.17*	.38
6. Teacher Motivation	–	–	–	–	–	.64
7. Job Satisfaction	–	–	–	–	–	–

Note: All correlations are significant at the .05 level (at least) unless specified.
*Not statistically significant.

others' interests at heart–don't have others' interests at heart, self-centered–not self-centered, unconcerned with others–concerned with others, insensitive–sensitive, not understanding–understanding. The self-report caring instrument was composed of 6 seven-step semantic-differential scales. Responses to items were recoded so that higher scores reflected greater caring for others.

Teacher motivation. Teacher state motivation was measured using 4 seven-step scales modeled on the instrument previously developed by Richmond (1990). The general statement to which the participants responded was, "How I feel about coming to work everyday." The items for the measure include: *motivated–unmotivated, excited–bored, uninterested–interested,* and *dreading it–looking forward to it*. A fifth item (*involved–uninvolved*) was discarded, since it detracted from the reliability of the motivation measure overall. Responses to items were recoded so that higher scores reflected higher motivation.

Job satisfaction. The Generalized Belief Measure (GBM; McCroskey & Richmond, 1989) was used to measure teachers' job satisfaction. This five-item, seven-step semantic differential scale taps beliefs in a variety of domains. The general statement in this study to which the participants responded was, "I am very satisfied with my job." The items for the measure include *true/false, right/wrong, no/yes, disagree/agree,* and *correct/incorrect*. Responses to items were recoded so that higher scores reflected greater job satisfaction.

Data Analyses

Preliminary assessment of the findings involved computation of the means, standard deviations, and reliabilities of responses to all measures. These descriptive data appear in Table 1. To analyze the data relating to hypotheses 1–9 and RQ1, simple correlations were computed between scores for teacher caring and those for the three dimensions of teacher burnout, the five temperament domains, and organizational outcomes. Table 2 provides these correlational data. For RQ2, a multiple correlation analysis was computed to determine the extent to which the five aspects of teacher temperament were predictors of teachers' self-reports of caring. A canonical correlation analysis was used to consider multivariate relationships between the set of temperament antecedent variables and the set of burnout dimensions. *Alpha* was set at .05 for all tests of significance.

Results

H1 predicted that teachers' self-reports of caring are negatively related to emotional exhaustion. The correlation of teacher caring with emotional exhaustion was $r = -.39$ ($p < .007$). H1 was supported. See Table 2 for all correlations among the caring, burnout, and organizational outcome variables.

H2 predicted that teachers' self-reports of caring are negatively related to depersonalization. The correlation of teacher caring and depersonalization was $r = -.56$ ($p < .0001$), supporting H2.

H3 predicted that teachers' self-reports of caring are negatively related to loss of personal accomplishment. The correlation of teacher caring and personal accomplishment was $r = -.26$ ($p < .05$), supporting H3.

H4 predicted that teachers' self-reports of caring are positively related to extraversion. The correlation of teacher caring and extraversion was $r = .25$ ($p < .05$), supporting H4. Table 3 provides the simple and multiple correlations between teacher temperament and affect variables.

H5 predicted that teachers' self-reports of caring are negatively related to neuroticism. The correlation of teacher caring and neuroticism was $r = -.40$ ($p < .005$). H5 was supported.

H6 predicted that teachers' self-reports of caring are positively related to agreeableness. The correlation of teacher caring and agreeableness was $r = .74$ ($p < .0001$), offering strong support for H6.

H7 predicted that teachers' self-reports of caring are positively related to conscientiousness. The correlation of teacher caring and conscientiousness was $r = .37$ ($p < .02$). H7 was supported.

RQ1 asked about the relationship between teachers' self-reports of caring and openness to experience. Teachers' self-reports of caring were unrelated to openness to experience ($r = -.03$, $p > .05$).

H8 predicted that teachers' perceptions of their immediate supervisors' caring are positively related to teacher job satisfaction. The correlation of teachers' perceptions of supervisor caring and job satisfaction was $r = .38$ ($p < .02$). H8 was supported.

H9 predicted that teachers' self-reports of caring are positively related to teacher motivation. The correlation of teacher caring with teacher motivation was $r = .30$ ($p < .04$). H9 was supported.

Table 3 Simple and Multiple Correlations Among Teacher Temperament and Affect Variables

	Temperaments					
Affect variables	E	A	C	N	O	Multiple correlations
Caring	.25*	.74	.37	−.40	−.03*	.63
Emotional Exhaustion	−13*	−.21*	−.41	.50	.08	.37
Depersonalization	−.30	−.37	−.54	.39	.05*	.46
Loss of Personal Accomplishment	−.40	−.25*	−.18*	.38	.14*	.28
Motivation	.07*	.18*	.52	−.42	−.05*	.41
Job Satisfaction	.14*	.02*	.22*	−.30	−.15*	.16

Note: E = Extraversion; A = Agreeableness; C = Conscientiousness; N = Neuroticism; O = Openness to Experience. All correlations significant at the .05 level (at least) unless specified.
*Not statistically significant.

RQ2 was concerned with the extent to which teacher temperament is related to teachers' self-reports of caring. The relevant results of the multiple correlations are reported in Table 3. Collectively, the five temperament variables predict approximately 63 percent of the variance in teacher caring.

RQ3 was concerned with the extent to which teacher temperament is related to teachers' self-reports of burnout. A canonical correlation analysis involving the five temperament scores and the three burnout scores yielded one significant canonical variate. The adjusted canonical correlation was .70 ($F = 5.65$, $df = 7/34$, $p < .001$) and explained 38% of the common variance between the variates. *Extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism,* and *openness to experience*, respectively, correlated with the variate at −.52, −.53, −.76, .61, and .04. Emotional exhaustion correlated with the variate at .58, depersonalization at .75, and personal accomplishment at .47. The data indicate that teacher temperament is strongly associated with self-reports of burnout. The first canonical correlation generated an $R_c = .36$, $F(3,43) = 3.18$, $p < .001$. The second canonical correlation was not significant, $R_c = .74$, $F(3,43) = 1.62$, $p = ns$. Hence, only the first solution was interpreted.

Discussion

This research was designed to test nine hypotheses and three research questions based on the theoretical relationship among the five domains of temperament, teacher caring, the three dimensions of burnout, and organizational outcomes. In this study, teacher temperament predicted the affective orientations of professors in college classrooms. This investigation demonstrated that teacher caring is substantially and negatively associated with dimensions of burnout, positively and significantly related to agreeableness, conscientiousness, and extraversion, while negatively related to neuroticism. Teacher caring was also found to be positively related to their state motivation, and teachers' perceptions of their immediate supervisors' caring were found to be positively related to job satisfaction.

H1 correctly predicted that teachers' self-reports of caring are negatively related to emotional exhaustion ($r = -.39$). This particular finding provides support for the theory of emotional labor in the teaching context. Caring leads to communicative responsiveness, and that same empathy and responsiveness are also negatively related to burnout (Miller et al., 1988). Teacher temperament is the central variable which will determine whether an individual teacher will experience burnout. Personality factors explain why individuals in the same work environment, having the same supervisor, and possessing similar educational backgrounds and experience respond differently to stress and burnout (Farber, 1991; McCroskey, Valencic, & Richmond, 2004). Teacher personality is antecedent to individuals' caring and burnout orientations.

Teachers' self-reports of caring and depersonalization exhibited a significant and meaningful negative correlation ($r = -.56$), confirming H2. Teachers who have experienced depersonalization experience negative attitudes towards the school environment. As a result, they most likely spend *less* time with students and

coworkers within the school environment. Social support is a resource that enables individuals to better cope with stress (House, 1981; Russell, Altmaier, & Van Velzen, 1987).

H3 correctly predicted that teachers' self-reports of caring are negatively related to loss of personal accomplishment ($r = -.26$). Given their choice of career and the assumption that teachers naturally care about students, the data seem to suggest that when teachers develop a reduced sense of accomplishment, they also report less caring for others. As teacher reports of burnout increase, their perception of student behavior becomes increasingly negative (Whiteman, Young, & Fisher, 1985). When teachers see themselves as failing to make progress toward goals and failing to reach students in their classroom, caring can be substantially reduced. Over time, teachers may become less and less responsive and empathic toward students.

Tests of H4 revealed that teachers' self-reports of caring are positively related to extraversion ($r = .25$). Teachers who are extroverts are generally cheerful and engage in interpersonal activity. By their nature, extroverts are likely to be social with others in their immediate environment. Hence, they would likely care more about others. Given the moderate and positive correlation with caring, the extraversion dimension of personality may be the key factor in understanding why individuals are resistant to depersonalization and emotional contagion (Strelau, 1983). Extraverts perceive themselves as more competent, assertive, and responsive than others; they are more aware and in control of their emotions (i.e., affective orientation); and they express greater degrees of self-acceptance (McCroskey et al., 2001). Therefore, extraverts are likely to be more effective at coping with occupational stress (Lee-Baggley et al., 2005; McCrae & Costa, 1986).

H5 correctly predicted that teachers' self-reports of caring are negatively related to neuroticism ($r = -.40$). Individuals who are neurotic are more stressed and express more negative emotions than those who are not (Watson, Clark, & Harkness, 1994). Teachers scoring higher on neuroticism would be more preoccupied with worry than caring about the needs and concerns of their students.

Tests of H6 found strong support for the relationships between teachers' self-reports of caring and agreeableness ($r = .74$). Costa and McCrae (1992) have previously reported other-oriented empathy correlating strongly with agreeableness. Because teaching is a stressful occupation (Burke & Greenglass, 1993; Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1977), perceiving and receiving support from others at school should allow individuals to be more trusting and considerate of others.

Tests of H7 indicated that teachers' self-reports of caring are positively related to conscientiousness ($r = .37$). A conscientious teacher is thoughtful and displays a concern for completing school-related tasks effectively. Not surprisingly, then, the conscientious teacher cares about performing well in their chosen profession.

RQ1 asked about the relationship between teachers' self-reports of caring and openness to experience. Teachers' self-reports of caring were not related to openness to experience ($r = -.03$, $p > .05$). This particular result suggests that autonomy/openness is simply not relevant to one's caring orientation. Some scholars (cf., De Vries & Van Heck, 2002) have labeled the openness to experience dimension as

autonomy. In essence, there is little conceptual overlap between openness/autonomy and caring.

Consistent with previous organizational communication research, tests of H8 revealed that teachers' perceptions of their immediate supervisor's caring are positively related to job satisfaction ($r = .38$). The perception of a caring supervisor hopefully translates into more satisfying experiences for the teacher. The larger question for future research is to ascertain whether this finding produces results that are positive for the school as a whole, meaning the potential for a more caring and satisfying school climate overall.

Results of H9 indicated that teachers' self-reports of caring are positively related to teacher state motivation ($r = .30$). In other words, teachers who care are also motivated to do well at their jobs. This is a welcoming and affirming finding. Employee motivation and job satisfaction are critical concerns for most modern organizations (Bruning, Castle, & Schrepfer, 2004; Kassing, 2006; Miller, Zook, & Ellis, 1989). If teachers are motivated, more positive outcomes, such as dedication and organizational commitment, are likely to occur.

Relationship Between Teacher Temperament and Caring and Burnout

RQ2 was concerned with the extent to which teacher temperament is related to teachers' self-reports of caring. The relevant results of the multiple correlations are reported in Table 3. Collectively, the five temperament variables predict approximately 63 percent of the variance in teacher caring. This result reflects the critical role of teacher temperament in mediating teachers' affective orientation.

RQ3 was concerned with the extent to which teacher temperament is related to teachers' self-reports of burnout. The canonical correlation between the five temperament scores and the three dimensions of burnout was significant. With the exception of openness to experience, all temperament variables were related to the burnout variate. Conscientiousness and extraversion were the dominant contributors to the temperament canonical, with agreeableness making some contribution. Neuroticism predicted higher scores on emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

Clearly, teacher temperament seems responsible for explaining a sizable portion of teacher burnout. The next step for research is to explore situational or environmental stimuli and teachers' experiences which add to our understanding of burnout. Loyd (2005) found that intermediate and secondary educators report more burnout than college faculty. Loyd speculates that a lack of autonomy in teaching, more restrictions on curriculum, and temporal pressures may be environmental contributors to elementary and secondary teacher burnout.

Development of a Theoretical Model

An underlying objective of the present research was to develop a theoretical model of college teacher temperament, caring, and burnout in the higher educational organization. The premise here is that teacher caring does *not* cause burnout, nor

does burnout cause a lack of caring; instead, both factors are manifestations of teacher temperament. The strong association between temperament and teacher caring is strongly suggestive that caring for others is substantially genetically based. Teacher temperament precedes teachers' responses to social interaction within the school environment. The nature of the study's design, specifically, the inclusion of teacher caring as both a self-report and perceived other perspective, makes a new contribution to the existing instructional communication literature. The results support the theory that teacher temperament is the foundation for teacher communicative orientations. Figure 1 reports the components and links of the best interpretable model obtained for teacher caring and burnout.

Ideally, teachers should care about each and every student (Kohl, 1984), but that notion is simply unrealistic in today's classrooms. As the results of this study reveal, even the most committed teachers' capacities for caring can be challenged given the emotional labor of the profession. Teachers can be taught how to enact behaviors which lead students to perceive them as caring. Teachers also stand to benefit from being made aware of the types of behaviors that undermine the students' perceptions of caring (Teven, 2001). As Teven and McCroskey (1997) assert, "it is not the caring that counts; it is the *perception* of caring that is critical" (p. 1). It is not the level of caring that makes the difference; it is the communication of positive traits which has the most influence on students. In this case, perception is far more important than reality. Nonverbal immediacy is a means for teachers to communicate caring and

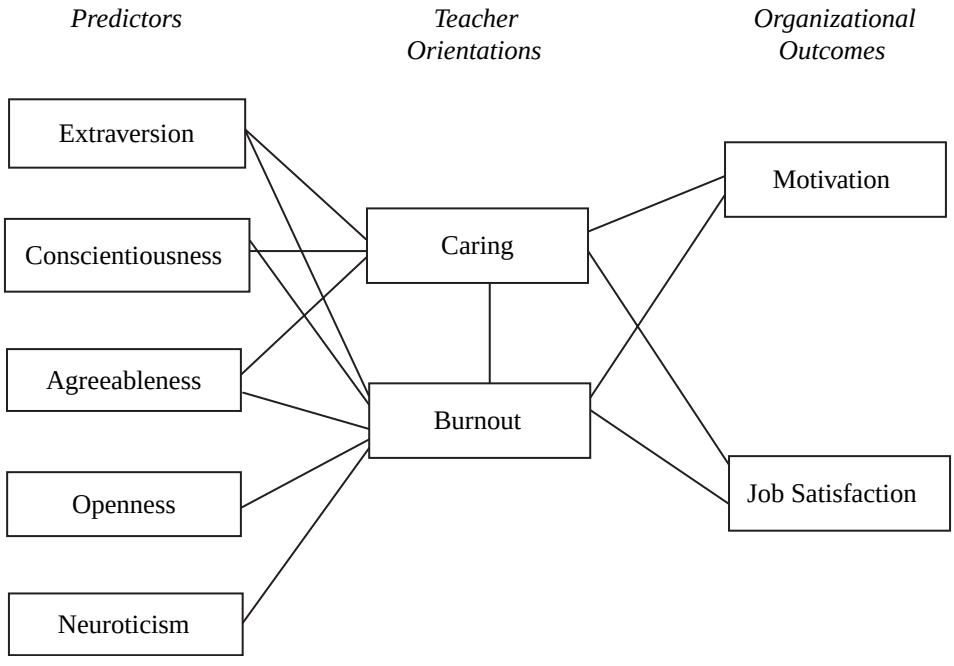

Figure 1. Hypothesized model of temperament, caring, burnout, and organizational outcomes.

positive intent to students. Nonverbal immediacy may also be a way for teachers to recover from or prevent burnout (McCroskey & Richmond, 1992). In this regard, nonverbal immediacy is a means for teachers to create social support systems within their schools. Affiliation among teachers, such as peer acceptance, is inversely related to emotional exhaustion (Dorman, 2003).

Limitations

Although the findings of this study provide valuable information for both scholars and practitioners, several limitations need to be noted. A limitation stems from the small sample size and the fact that the sample obtained consisted of college faculty from only one university. More research is needed to generalize the relationships among teacher temperament, caring, and burnout. One should exercise caution when interpreting the results of this study beyond their context. The data obtained for this research were drawn from the environment of a university, by college faculty providing self-reports of their temperament, affective orientations, and experiences within higher education. It is likely that other factors related to burnout are experienced by teachers at different levels of education. A limitation is the very reliance on self-report data. Finally, given that participants were asked to complete 12 measures, many of which overlap conceptually and operationally, respondent fatigue may be a concern.

Directions for Future Research

This study is a first step in understanding the links between teacher temperament, caring, burnout, and organizational outcomes. The data provided by this research help to provide a clearer picture of the extent to which faculty member temperament is associated with both caring and burnout. Future research should examine if teachers who report burnout are perceived by the students (and administrators) as less caring, less nonverbally immediate, and less responsive, along with other negative outcomes, such as perceptions of *less* competence, *less* trustworthiness, and negative evaluations of the teacher. How are burned-out teachers and their courses evaluated by students? Do students exposed to burned-out teachers report less affect towards course content and less cognitive learning? Future research should also examine the relationships among teacher caring, workaholism, and perfectionism. Clearly, the strong relationships discovered involving teacher temperament and caring suggest that teacher personality may be what is driving teachers to become burned out.

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