

## Chapter 17

# “I don’t think they realised what an impact they had...their voices are still in my head: The profound impact of attentive care on career meaningfulness and wellbeing”



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**Abstract** Care perspectives view individuals as primary relational with work as a means by which individuals can achieve career wellbeing. In this chapter theoretical understanding of the ethic of care is advanced using Heidegger’s philosophy of care. Heidegger argued care is at the heart of our being and essential to meaning in our relationships and ventures. Findings from empirical phenomenological research that explored subjective meanings of women’s career are used to show how an ethic of care caused an increase in career meaningfulness. Women spoke of the enduring significance of key people who showed them an ethic of care. Interactions with these key people did not involve structural interventions, nor did they necessarily occur over long periods; they were instinctive and extemporaneous. People who exercised an ethic of care showed awareness of need, concern for the other and a willingness to take responsibility. The objective of this chapter is to consider how career wellbeing in individuals and organisations can be improved by including care perspectives.

**Keywords** Care perspectives · Ethic of care · Phenomenology · Women’s careers · Meaning

### 17.1 Introduction

Recent theoretical developments have seen increased emphasis on sociological aspects of career (e.g. Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000; Savickas, 2005). Strong ties with family members have been shown to be significant in shaping career identify

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and offering psychosocial support (Ibarra, 1999). In particular, for women, early career influences such as maternal attitude to career have been revealed to be more significant than mother's actual career (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). Further, mothers' messages to their daughters can positively influence career decision making and self-esteem when mother's relationship with her daughter is loving and caring, and low in control (Sholomskas & Axelrod, 1986). The supportive influence of a woman's partner has been recently documented by Litano, Myers, and Major (2014) as a factor in career wellbeing; they describe the positive "cross-over effect" that a partner who is an "ally" rather than an "adversary" provides.

Career literature abounds with studies on social capital practices such as networks and mentoring schemes in women's career development (e.g. Hamilton Volpe, & Marcinkus Murphy, 2011; Ibarra, Carter, & Silva, 2010; Motulsky, 2010; O'Neil, Hopkins, & Bilimoria, 2011; Tschopp, Unger, & Grote, 2016). Mentoring involves a long-term relationship between the mentee and mentor; it provides the mentee with ongoing emotional support, counsel on professional development, and role models (Ibarra et al., 2010) and networks involve formal and informal organisational structures that can increase women's self-efficacy and agency (O'Neil et al., 2011). Yet the literature reveals that women often lack access to networks, mentors and role models (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013) and experience challenging organizational conditions such as working in gendered organizational systems and gender bias. In a recent article O'Neil, Brooks, & Hopkins (2018) sought to better understand the relationships and career supports of women and found women expect a great deal of other women in the workplace but often do not receive it.

In the workplace, interventions typically follow set procedures and formulae and adhere to performance management goals and protocols, with the individual worker viewed as human capital to be developed. However, the commonly held "human capital" view of employees (Foss, 2008; Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011) has begun to be challenged with focus growing in intensity on care perspectives that see work as a means for individuals to increase in self-esteem and find fulfilment through enduring relationships (Islam, 2013; McAllister & Bigley, 2002). Further, meaningfulness in career has become a predominant theme in contemporary organisation studies (Heslin, 2005; Lips-Weersma, 2002) and work is increasingly seen as a vehicle for the individual to become enriched and their existence enlivened (Honneth, 2008).

Recently, some writers have drawn links between care perspectives and the care ethic with Heidegger's concept of attentive care, *Sorge* (Heidegger, 1996) and suggested that these might be understood by using philosophical approaches that draw on phenomenology and existentialism (Reich, 2014 ; Tomkins & Simpson, 2015). There are also calls for the concept of care in the organizational setting to be undergirded by philosophies of care rather than merely by business theories (Kroth & Keeler, 2009; Tomkins & Simpson, 2015; Elley-Brown & Pringle, 2019).

A Maori whakatoki (proverb) is often quoted especially in education and organisation circles to explain the importance of strong relationships.

Unuhia te rito o te harakeke kei whea te kōmako e kō  
 Whakatairangitia rere ki uta rere ki tai  
 Ui mai koe ki ahau he aha te mea nui o te ao  
 Māku e kī atu he tangata, he tangata, he tangata!  
 Remove the heart of the flax bush and where will the kōmako sing?  
 Proclaim it to the land proclaim it to the sea  
 Ask me ‘What is the greatest thing in the world?’  
 I will reply, ‘It is people, people, people!’

This proverb alludes to the importance of having strong relationships at the centre—of an organisation or group—such relationships are likened to the “heart of the flax bush” where the komako sings (common name: bellbird a songbird known for its loud clear liquid songs). Twentieth century German existential philosopher Martin Heidegger believed that at the heart of our humanity lies the notion of care—he described care as being fundamental to our existence as human beings and that it is a “primordial structural entity,” there before we realize that we are surrounded by others.

## 17.2 Problem Stated and Chapter Objective

In this chapter the notion of the ethic of care is explored both historically and empirically through the lens of Heideggerian care. Empirical data is provided in the form of phenomenological anecdotes—evocative stories from an interpretive study into women’s career meanings—to illustrate how experiencing an ethic of care provided inspiration, increased meaningfulness, and future career wellbeing. An ethic of care contrasts with other organizational supports and structures such as mentoring and networks in that it can have a more spontaneous and informal quality. In this chapter the value of philosophies of care is expounded and an argument made for the care ethic to receive greater attention in career and organizational management initiatives.

How does being shown attentive care contribute to women’s career confidence and wellbeing? How is Heideggerian care different from other supports and organisational structures? How can an ethic of care be used in career development and organizational initiatives? This chapter sets out to address these questions. It first returns to the ancient Roman tradition of care, follows its historical development and explores how care was developed by twentieth century existential philosopher Martin Heidegger as *Fursorgen*—solicitous care.

### 17.3 A Brief History of Care

The ‘Cura’ tradition of care first appeared in ancient Roman writings and was named after a mythological figure Cura who crafted human being from the earth—*ex humo* (Reich, 2014). The notion of Cura (care) was further developed by writers such as Virgil and Seneca and had two different meanings. First: care as anxiety or worry; second: care to provide wellbeing for another person. For Seneca care implied attentive commitment and extreme devotion to another person and a means to become truly human, also as a way to become ‘god-like’, a powerful force that lifts us as humans onto a plane equal with God (Burdach, 1923; Seneca, 1967). Care later appeared in the nineteenth century in writings by van Goethe and Kierkegaard. Danish philosopher and religious thinker Soren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) was influential in using the notion of care or concern and suggested care is not just fundamental to our understanding of human life but also the key to an authentic life (Reich, 2014).

Kierkegaard’s work strongly influenced German philosopher Martin Heidegger who acknowledged his development of the notion of care drew from the Cura tradition. Heidegger’s book *Being and Time* was first published in 1927 and immediately gained recognition as a classic work, considered the greatest work of philosophy in the twentieth century, a work trademarked by its depth and its simplicity (Heidegger, 1996). Previously religious thinkers such as St Paul, Luther and Kierkegaard had proposed that it is through our relationship with God that we ‘find’ ourselves. However, for Heidegger the existence of God had no philosophical relevance, rather it is through confronting death that we become truly who we are—by making meaning out of our finite existence. For Heidegger, ‘being’ human involves coming to terms with our finitude. In Heideggerian philosophy the name for human existence is *Dasein* which literally means “being there.” Heidegger claimed that as human beings we can exist in one of two dominant modes: authentically or inauthentically. We must make a choice between these two, in order to come to grips with our possibility of being—this is an essential part of being human. To be authentic we have to live a life of possibility (Heidegger, 1996).

### 17.4 Heidegger and Care

The concept of care lay at the centre of Heidegger’s philosophy, the German word “*Sorge*” translates as “care for” “concern for.” We live and share our existence in a world filled with people, a state Heidegger called “being with.” Even when we are not physically with other people, our way of being is still being-with. Heidegger argued that care isn’t just about existing in the world and with other people, it’s about being there “for” others. Further, we are compelled to care and show concern for other people; it is fundamental to being-in-the-world and we cannot avoid it. To be-in-the-world in an authentic existential state is to be “care-full.” Heideggerian

care however isn’t necessarily practical—such as tasks a caregiver might do for a sick person—but has a deeper origin—he called “a primordial structural totality.” Further, care makes our existence both significant and meaningful (Heidegger, 1996).

## 17.5 Heideggerian Care in Action

Living in the world and ‘being-with’ others involves care and involvement whether emotional or practical; it involves caring for others and being cared for in return. Heideggerian care also means being oriented to the future because part of being authentically human is to move forwards towards possibilities. As in Roman times two types of care exist in Heidegger’s school of thought: solicitude which means nurturing others and anxiety which connotes struggle and tends to concern itself with trivia in order to avoid facing up to what being really means. The first meaning of care is further exemplified by exercising self-control and showing consideration. In our day-to-day lives this type of care can be seen in two positive ways that Heidegger calls ‘leaping.’ ‘Leaping-in’ occurs when a care-giver assumes control and takes over for a person; out of concern for the person the care-giver problem solves creating an imbalance between the two with the result being that the person can feel controlled or dominated (Heidegger, 1996).

‘Leaping ahead’ by contrast is more empowering for the recipient in that the care-giver intervenes and opens up possibilities for the person, who can then move to find their own solution rather than being dependent. As a result, the care recipient feels in control, empowered, and has increased freedom and meaningfulness. Heideggerian care can be seen in our day to day life somewhere between these two extremes of positive care—leaping into dominate and leaping ahead to liberate. Tomkins and Simpson (2015) identify three aspects of leaping ahead: anticipation, autonomy, and advocacy. Anticipation concerns the future focussed nature of care that is forward thinking; autonomy alludes to the space provided by care than gives the care-recipient room to move forward; advocacy involves standing in for the recipient. These three aspects combine to create ‘empowerment’ for the care recipient.

There are also deficient types of care that Heidegger refers to. These types of care can be seen in everyday life where we are too preoccupied with getting on with life without much thought for anyone else. Sometimes we don’t even notice that we are with another person or our smartphone or device draws our attention. Sometimes we can attempt to be part of a social situation and the reverse occurs when others don’t seem to notice we are in the room. People then become just a commodity to be used and abandoned at will. We feel we don’t matter to others, we don’t receive any attention from them; we lack purpose and meaning (Gardiner, 2016). We are just getting on with life and day to day activities and lose any sense of our own authenticity and purpose. The solution, Heidegger reasoned is to be resolute and open to others and to the world around us; this is how care is seen and defined (Heidegger, 1996).

## 17.6 Phenomenology

Heidegger was one of the founding fathers of phenomenology that has a complex philosophical pathway (Creswell & Poth, 2017) and is defined as the study of lived experience or ‘lifeworld’ (Ger. *Lebenswelt*); the world we live rather than the world or reality separate from us (van Manen, 2016). Phenomenology is concerned with the question, “What is this experience like?” and its goal is to explain meanings as they occur in our everyday lives, things that we often take for granted.

A phenomenological study describes what a phenomenon means for several people and focusses on describing what they all have in common. Its purpose is to reduce individual experiences to universal essence and to gain “a grasp of the very nature of the thing” (van Manen, 2016, p. 175). The phenomenological researcher collects data from people who have experienced the phenomenon and works to develop a composite description of the essence of the experience for all participants. The researcher endeavours to stay close to the experience of the person by capturing their experience in storied form (Grant & Giddings, 2002). These storied descriptions or anecdotes contain ‘what’ participants have experienced and ‘how’ they have experienced it (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology used as research methodology can provide an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon as it is experienced by several individuals. It has been claimed to have potential in organisation research as a means to understand human experience and to observe a phenomenon from a subjective viewpoint: the individual’s perspective (Ehrich, 2005; Gibson & Hanes, 2003; Gill, 2014). This kind of methodology necessitates the participant to be reflective and able to express her thoughts in an interview.

## 17.7 The Current Study

The current study investigated the phenomenon of a woman’s career. It sought to answer the questions: “What does it mean for a woman to have a career?” and “What are some of the essential meanings of the phenomenon of a woman’s career?” Phenomenology was seen to be an excellent fit for this research that involved women working in the education sector who are likely to be adept communicators.

Purposive sampling was used as selection process (Bryman & Bell, 2015) to fulfil two primary criteria: to have experienced a career in the education sector and to be able to talk about what their career means to them. The potential sample was primarily recruited using an advertisement in a women’s magazine, and secondly using a snowball technique through contacts of the researcher and supervisors. The sample comprised 14 professional women, aged between 24 and 61 years, and all working in education at either primary, secondary or tertiary level. All women had tertiary qualifications from diploma to doctorate and lived in New Zealand.

One woman had no children, the remaining thirteen had between one and three children. All women had a partner.

Participants were involved in an in-depth conversational interview of between one and one and a half hours (van Manen, 2016). This took place in a venue of choice for the participant, either their workplace or home. A small number of questions was used to provide prompts to the conversation such as “Do you think that your work has helped you find out who you are?” “Can you tell me how you have been able to manage to balance the needs of family life and relationships amidst the demands of your working life?” The questions were a guide only and the researcher often used prompts, probes, reflection, and silence, working with the participant to interpret the question. The role of the researcher is to discover what ‘being’ in the phenomenon is like. The data analysis begins in the interview in an interpretive way as the researcher questions the participant’s response and works with her to interpret what it means. The interview is an active process of meaning making. The aim is to stay close to the lived experience of the participants and what the phenomenon means to them (Vandermause & Fleming, 2011).

The transcripts were then read and analysed for relevant incidents and stories (Vandermause & Fleming, 2011). The next task was phenomenological reduction where anecdotes—evocative stories—were crafted that contained interpretive meanings rather than descriptive narrative. Stories were often found throughout a transcript and pieced together in a time-consuming process so that aspects of the participants live experience are exposed. The anecdotes were returned to participants for review and consent to continue with data analysis gained before the identification of themes. These themes are structures of experiences and are described as being like “knots in the web” of experience (van Manen, 2016).

## 17.8 Findings and Discussion

Being cared-for was a recurring notion in the career stories women told. It was through care that they were often able to understand and make sense of their everyday lives and role as teachers. Women described how care from others was key to their career direction and agency. Care had positive influence, through key people, supporters, and gate openers and was seen at formative and transition points.

What follows next are some of the women’s stories that related ‘care-filled’ incidents, times in their lives when someone paid attention to them, noticed them, and saw a future for them. Care was crucial in gaining career meaningfulness and wellbeing. The first section has focus on how care from her mother was seminal in career decision marking and confidence; the second on a partner’s support and care that provided perspective. Third, examples of other key people such as teachers and lecturers who cared with examples of how the future-focused and empowering positive form of care Heidegger espoused—leaping-ahead.

## 17.9 The Stories

### 17.9.1 *Early Career Influences: The Profound Influence of a Mother Who Cared—“Mum Was My Biggest Fan”*

Many women told how their mother was a powerful influence in their career pathway with mother’s words often quoted during an interview. Women in this study were often the first in their family to go to University and described themselves as a “forerunner,” often acknowledging that their mother’s support was a key motivator for this. Mother’s influence was interpreted as particularly salient since she wasn’t able or permitted to advance in her own career.

Kiri’s mother who had a large family of 11 children was unable to have a career of her own outside the home. Kiri says:

I had the most gorgeous mother in the world. She was an amazingly intelligent person, who without any formal education, was very well read. She became an integral part of what I did and would often visit me in my classroom. She was my biggest fan, my mother – and I was also her biggest fan. In my day-to-day life as a principal, it’s my mother who comes back to me when I have to deal with children and parents. There are lessons I’ve learnt I take into my life today. One thing she used to say was, “Just be careful with your words, because they have power. Especially yours Kiri.” I remember her saying that. She was powerful in her being. And she drove us to be good women. (Kiri)

Kiri’s story reveals the life-long impact of her mother who passed away while Kiri was still in her thirties. Her mother’s care towards her reveals understanding and awareness of Kiri’s strengths and potential weakness, recognising her as a leader whose words had power. This kind of care involves noticing and speaking up in such a way that encourages and moves the care-recipient towards greater authenticity and self-belief (Heidegger, 1996).

The empowering influence of her mother is also apparent in the story told by Amanda who like Kiri was the first in her family to study at University. Amanda describes how her mother encouraged her to choose her own pathway and make her own career decisions:

Mum always supported what I did. She gave me the confidence to do what I wanted. She says she wished she’d had the chance to go to university. Having daughters of her own, she wanted us to do what we wanted and to not let anyone tell us otherwise. She didn’t tell me what to study. She said, “You choose, it’s your chance.” My adventure into university was the first for our family.... I was the frontier for that.....Having Mum’s support and the freedom to choose, I thought that whatever choices I made would work out. (Amanda)

The type of care that mother exhibited enabled these women to move toward possibility rather than to accept what others did. Like another participant Rachel, they described themselves as being independent “I’ve done everything for myself” yet acknowledging the care of mother “Mum’s had a big influence.” Mother often did not have her own career or had been restricted in her career development “she’d always wanted to go to university.... none of them back then could”, confirming



findings from Betz and Fitzgerald’s (1987) study that revealed maternal attitude to career is more significant than mother’s actual career. Further mother’s care provided a sense of certainty and self-belief as evidenced by comments such as “she was my biggest fan” and “she gave me the confidence to do what I wanted.” The messages they received from their mother, who was loving and caring but low in control, positively influenced their career decision making and self-esteem (Sholomskas & Axelrod, 1986).

### ***17.9.2 Care from a Supportive Partner: “The Other Thing That Keeps Me Going”***

A later influence was a woman’s partner, described not just as supportive but also as a reality check. Kiri said of her husband, “The other thing that keeps me going is I’ve got a wonderful man who says to me, “Don’t take it all too seriously.” And that helps too.” And Debbie was candid about the levelling influence her partner provides:

My partner is really well read and politically engaged. He finds it a little bit hard to understand the whole allure of the university and some of the pitfalls of being an academic. I think he finds it a bit weird. He is very supportive. By the same token he’s not the sort of person that has everything absolutely invested in my career and me as a career person. I mean he also sees me as a person. Not just a worker. (Debbie)

Women also described their partner’s career as different from, in particular, not as stressful as theirs. Amanda described herself as “wearing the pants” and that her husband is “not a career man” adding “I’m not trying to insult him.” She adds:

If I need to do something with my job, the two of us ask, how can we make this work? I think quite often the reverse is the stereotype. At school, a lot of the Mums are not working or working two or three hours a day, and their partners have high career stress. I’ve got a partner who doesn’t have that stress. It gives me the freedom to put in the time I need to. Having his down-to-earth common-sense approach gives me the freedom to say “Right my next step for study, or...” I like having someone who can get his hands dirty, dig a garden. I don’t feel the pressure of competing with someone else. (Amanda)

Amanda is also quite open about her motivation for choosing her husband—she wanted to have the freedom to make her own choices and to pursue her own career. Having a husband with a “down to earth common-sense approach” means she can move ahead in her career whilst her husband ‘cares’ for her and takes a major share of the childcare responsibilities and household tasks.

Rachel who is studying whilst working full time describes how her husband supports her one hundred per cent, taking the primary role for care of their daughter and prioritising Rachel’s study demands; she comments:

I feel bad there’s always something to be done on the house of something to be bought and I’m saying, “I need a couple of thousand to pay for this paper.” He just says “Okay...” I think that’s awesome because I don’t know if the roles were reversed, I’d be like that. I sit back and think, ‘Wow, he’s compromised a lot.’ (Rachel)

As with Amanda, Rachel's career and the decisions around it take centre stage in the family. Being with an attentive and supportive partner has also been key for Tina, an academic and associate professor. She comments she became more confident as a person when she met her husband soon after breaking up from a difficult relationship. She and her husband's joint decisions are made contingent on her career: Tina's career takes priority, her husband comments "you apply wherever you want, I can find a job anywhere." She describes how she has the freedom to drive the decision-making process:

All the decisions I made when I came back to work were my decisions. I talked with my husband about them, but they were all driven by me, he is a much more supportive person.  
(Tina)

Heidegger said that as Dasein (beings) we have become confused, we only know what it is 'to be' in a vague and hazy way, and not a powerful and rigorous way that we deeply desire. Our knowledge of being is blurred and we are on the lookout for new ways to be. Care enables us to move beyond confusion and to feel more confident and certain of who we are and what we want to do next. The women in this study became more assured and agentic through being shown care; they were less accepting of what Heidegger called living averagely or having a mainstream view, doing "what other women do." In the stories in these two sections, care can be seen to have a caregiving (practical) function as well as a supportive (psychosocial) function (Heidegger, 1996).

A caring and supportive partner enabled these women to progress their career whilst maintaining perspective. Litano, Myers, and Major (2014) describe the positive "cross-over effect" and career wellbeing that having a partner who is an "ally" rather than an "adversary" provides. A partner who takes an equal or major share of the childcare and household management was typical for many women who considered this the "normal" way of balancing work and family demands. Rather than having essentialist roles they shared an egalitarian gender role ideology with their partner, and this had positive crossover effects in reducing conflict between them and facilitating decision making. These women's partners were committed to 'being there' for them, and considerate of their career needs so women could be autonomous and in control of their decision making; these things contributed to more meaningful career experiences (Elley-Brown, Pringle & Harris, 2018).

### ***17.9.3 Influence of Caring and Attentive Teachers and Lecturers: "Their Voices are Still in My Head"***

Women told of teachers and lecturers who played a key role in their career decision making and career confidence, as they made early career choices during high school and tertiary study. Kiri an Indigenous (Maori) primary school principal in her mid-forties, tells of significant teachers at high school:

I’ve been asked this a lot throughout my life, “What makes a difference for Maori students? How can we help them succeed? And I’ve thought about it, reflected on it and spoken about it a lot. I understand the importance of knowing te Reo [Maori language]. I understand the importance of knowing about culture, that culture counts. But for me one of the things that also made a difference was two Pakeha [white] teachers at Girls High. It wasn’t that they knew te reo Maori or anything about Maori culture. It was rather that on a human level they were people who could see potential. They simply encouraged me.... (Kiri)

Kiri goes on to tell how she had gained full marks in a test and the girls around her were teasing her and saying she had cheated. Her science teacher stepped in just as Kiri was close to tears, unable to stand up for herself—the teacher stood up for Kiri and said, “actually if anybody’s cheated it’s you guys off her.” She goes on:

I didn’t know how important this teacher was until years later. I maintained contact with both those teachers, both of them said to me “Go to Teachers’ College”. They knew that story, and they both said, “No, come on.” It wasn’t much to those teachers. But what they did for me, in my head as time has gone on, was very significant. I can put my finger on those times and the things that they said. Even though language and culture counts, what also counts is people who believe in you. And if you can do nothing else as a teacher for Maori, it is to believe in them and to encourage them. Look it must’ve been significant, I’m still telling that story to this day. (Kiri)

By stepping in, the teacher enabled Kiri to maintain her dignity and as a result Kiri feel more human. She describes how from then on “I thought—I can do this.” Heidegger (1996) describes this as an ontological shift. Kiri comments that thirty years later, she can still hear their voices “the things that they said.”

Carol also describes the empowering influence of key people:

I think people are always part of it. Throughout my life I can see people who have come into my life at the perfect time and have said things that have given me a boost or the confidence to do something. In my first year there was one teacher on practicum. She had been in education a long time. At the end of my practice she looked at me and said, “you should be teaching now. I don’t know why you didn’t go years ago. I would entrust my kids to you now.” (Carol)

The lecturer had watched Carol and seen her potential; her positive words had an empowering effect on Carol who was initially constrained by her background as an adopted child. She had felt disenfranchised and without a sense of her own identity. A few prescient words from a lecturer gave Carol the confidence that she needed to move forward.

#### ***17.9.4 Leaping-Ahead—Moving Toward Possibility: “Oh Yes, You Could Quite Easily Do This”***

Quite often, women spoke of how people didn’t pay attention, or they felt passed over, were sometimes outwardly discriminated against or bullied; they also commented that typically other people were too preoccupied with their own things to

notice them (Gardiner, 2016). However, sometimes care was shown in ways strongly aligned with the positive form of care Heidegger describes as leaping ahead. Women described these people as being different from others. They said, “I haven’t found other people take the time to know what your strengths are, to take an interest in you” and “they really believed in me; they said, ‘you can be something else’” and “I don’t think they realized what an impact they had.”

Tina, an academic and Associate Professor told of the profound influence of a visiting professor who came into her department for one semester three years prior to the interview. Tina describes how his behaviour was very different from any other colleague she had encountered:

He just instilled this extra confidence in me. He’d say to me, “Oh yes, you could quite easily do this” or “Why don’t you apply, this would be quite good for you.” And, he would also say, “You know, you’re quite ready to apply for Associate Professor.”

Tina goes on to describe how she did apply for Associate Professor after he had left:

If it wasn’t for him, I don’t think I would have applied. When he came, I felt “Oh here is somebody who actually understands me, who takes time to know what I research or what my strengths are.” (Tina)

A significant writer on care, Weil (Weil & Panichas, 1977) made it a central characteristic for ethics and proposed attention is essential to care, that to care means giving a person full attention, to see them just as they are. Unlike other colleagues, the professor got to know Tina and exercised the highly positive form of care “leaping ahead” described as a combination of anticipation, autonomy and advocacy. He anticipated Tina’s next career move, and allowed her the space to make her own decision (Tomkins & Simpson, 2015). His care had a transformative quality that helped Tina, the recipient of care to “grow and develop” (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 3).

Being watched and paid attention was also significant for Miriama who discovered a greater sense of her own identity as Maori (Indigenous) when an older teacher she greatly admired and used to watch stepped in and spoke strongly to her about how she needed to change her perspective—saying to Miriama “Whether you like it or not, the kids view you as Maori. So, you have to represent us in a really positive way.” Initially taken aback Miriama tells how this interaction arrested her and she thought the older teacher was “a little terrifying, but that’s because she cared. She’d give you a hug but also tell you off.” Care therefore, is not necessarily about being ‘kind’ or ‘nice’ but rather it can be linked to agency and self-efficacy as Tomkins and Simpson attest that for Heidegger “compassion, kindness and niceness are neither necessary nor sufficient for care” (Tomkins & Simpson, 2015, p. 1023).

## 17.10 Implications for Theory and Practice

Women in this study told of significant connections with their family in particular with their mother and partner. These strong ties were significant in shaping their career identity and provided them with psychosocial support (Ibarra, 1999) and mother’s support and care provided them with germinal material on who they are. Powerful reciprocal relationships with their partner were pivotal in terms of career identity formation viz: “he sees me as a person. Not just a worker” validating what Hall and Mao (2015) contend that the involved authentic careerist must be fully aware that work is merely one part of life and to ‘hold it lightly.’ These people who showed an ethic of care towards them enabled women to keep things in perspective whilst staying true to themselves. This research illuminates the importance of an ethic of care through strong ties. More research is required into sociological career influencers such as mother and partner.

These anecdotes reveal that receiving care during her career was transformative and its effect long-term for women’s career confidence and wellbeing. These interactions shared a common characteristic that the person providing the care was genuinely concerned and interested in the other. Further there is a natural and spontaneous nature to these incidents that could be considered quite ordinary and prosaic. The care-giver paid attention and watched, noticed and recognised the recipient, took responsibility and acted. By contrast management processes that involve watching people to measure, monitor and analyse can have a dominating effect and individuals can think that their basic self-worth has not been acknowledged and feel invisible or alienated (Honneth, 2008).

Receiving care through attention, recognition of need, identification of potential—has the ability to build strong social bonds and ties. However just because care is positive, and recognition is appropriate, it does not necessarily follow that a person agrees with the other. It is important also to understand that attentive care is not sympathy—or support for a cause. What a care perspective does acknowledge is that individuals are valuable in themselves, and within the organizational setting it reframes work as a means to reach instrumental goals whilst at the same time promoting human flourishing (Islam, 2013).

It is well documented that women still face many barriers in the workplace, sexism, discrimination and harassment. However, Sandberg (2015) writing in *Lean in* argues that women keep themselves from progressing in their careers because they lack the self-confidence and drive possessed by men and lower their expectations of what they can achieve. Although motivation is complex and moulded by numerous factors, including sociological factors, peer group, education, and connections, as well as expectations and bias of those around us, there is evidence from this study and the emerging literature that an ethic of care as viewed through Heideggerian care can offer some promise as a construct undergirded by a strong philosophy that might help individuals and organization to gain increased meaning and wellbeing in their work.

## 17.11 Concluding Thoughts and Future Research

Perhaps the greatest challenge if this kind of care is to become more apparent in organisational settings and career management is to ask whether this behaviour can be learnt or as Tomkins and Simpson (2015) ask, can it be “outsourced” to people with a more developed and sensitive side? Still, Heidegger argued that it was part of our nature to care, not just for a select few. Yet, participants pointed out and alluded to the fact that this behaviour is rare—recall Tina who commented “no one else had every done that before” and “I haven’t found that other people take the time to actually know what your strengths are, to take an interest in you.”

A care perspective viewed through the lens of Heideggerian care can be seen to offer an important step towards understanding the ‘human’ aspect of management, recognizing that organizations are primarily social systems populated by existentially involved people. More empirical research is needed with focus on the workplace as a place of social meaning and caring interaction. Phenomenological studies by design involve a small number of participants with aim to garner rich data on human experience. This research conducted in education—an area seen as ideal for this kind of methodology provides a sample of what might be explored using hermeneutic phenomenology in other contexts and with a greater diversity of participants. Further research is encouraged to extend work on the ethic of care in practice and Heideggerian care. Perhaps existential philosophy with emphasis on an ethic of care can direct us to ways of being that create greater wellbeing and meaningfulness in our work and provide as the Maori proverb describes a place at the heart of the flax bush where the bellbird can sing. Such knowledge might not establish exact principles of ‘how to’ care but it may engender habits of mind and thought that can move us in some small way and remind us of what we do at work, and with whom, and why that is significant and meaningful.

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