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Colette Rabin
San Jose State University, colette.rabin@sjsu.edu

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Constructing an Ethic of Care in Teacher Education: Narrative as Pedagogy Toward Care

Colette Rabin, Ed.D.
San Jose State University, CA

Abstract

Teacher educators have a civic responsibility to prepare novice teachers to foster relationships across cultural, racial, and socioeconomic divides. Care ethics acknowledges this imperative. This study explores how to cultivate the knowledge, skills and dispositions associated with constructing a caring stance toward the work of teaching. Data come from two preservice teacher education courses. A cluster of course activities sought to foster novice teachers' core skills for a caring stance. In particular, one assignment, an ethical dilemma case, gave the novice teachers the opportunity to write a narrative about practice and consider any potential moral implications. Since narrative methodology accounts for context and particularity, the assignment supported novice teachers' consideration of the demands of care in relationship.

Introduction

Twelve years teaching elementary school has left me with the conviction that caring relationships lie at the heart of good teaching. The best teachers I've known can discuss the ins and outs of their relationships with students infinitely. These teachers say that developing relationships with students is the very foundation of their practice. Given that new teachers in urban communities meet increasingly multicultural populations, the ability to foster relationships with students is all the more important. Teachers need to learn how to relate to students across cultural, racial, and socioeconomic divides. Yet teacher preparation programs, burdened with external mandates and narrow technical specializations, may neglect the need to entertain big questions or ethical concerns such as the challenge and necessity of relationship. An ethic of care offers a language to articulate the moral importance

of teachers' relationships with students. While a growing body of literature has begun to address how care ethics may influence teacher education, we still don't know much about how to teach novice teachers about the relational nature of their work.

Given this concern, I designed this study to answer the following question: How can teacher education prepare novice teachers to construct a caring practice? To explore this question I examined one teacher education program with an explicit commitment to constructivism and care ethics. In this paper I report on the novice teachers' opportunities to construct a caring stance toward their practice.

Theoretical Background

The current context

A review of the teacher education literature shows that much pre-service teacher preparation focuses on behavioral objectives while often ignoring the ethical or intellectual aspects of teaching (Beyer, 1997; Cambron-McCabe, 2000; Cummings, Dyas, Maddux, & Kochman, 2001; Doyle & Doyle, 2003; Ducharme & Ducharme, 1999; Goodlad, Soder, & Sirotnik, 1990, 1992; Huebner, 1996; Lake, Jones, & Dagi, 2004; Schwartz, 1998; Socket & Le Page, 2002; Stengel & Tom, 1995, Yost, 1997). Attention to caring relationships in education could balance the certainty and conformity of the current focus on standardization and testing. Standardization and testing may narrow teachers' focus on measurable performance, as opposed to attending to students' interests, cultural backgrounds, and concerns. Care ethics would acknowledge the importance of getting to know students to engage them in learning. Furthermore, if we look at the prevalent methodologies of testing and standardization - in terms of the possible collateral learning (Dewey, 1916) and in terms of the cultivation of dispositions and habits of mind - repeated experiences of high stakes testing may foster competitiveness as opposed to cooperation. Likewise, through standardization, students could learn the importance of conformity, as opposed to the acceptance or celebration of differences. With the push to standardize and measure performance, it may be all the more important for new teachers to have a chance to consider care ethics.

What is care?

An ethic of care calls educators' attention to the need for the processes of education to foster the kind of relationships in which students can learn to care (Noddings, 1984, 1992, 2002a, 2002b). Caring relationships are characterized by attentiveness, recognition of another's world as a possibility and movement to

support another (Noddings, 2002a). Noddings (2002a) refers to the particular attentiveness necessary in order to care, as engrossment:

In a phenomenological analysis of caring... there is a special form of attentiveness, which I have called engrossment; this form of attention is acutely receptive and is directed at the cared-for. (p. 28)

Thus when we care and when we feel with another, we are moved to act on the other's behalf.

The challenge of teaching teachers about care ethics

Teacher educators (Arnstine, 1990; Bulach, Brown, & Potter, 1998; Goldstein, 2002; Knight, 2004; Lake et al, 2004; Schwartz, 1998; & Yost, 1997) have begun to consider how care might inform teacher preparation. Teaching about care ethics is complicated by the fact that novice teachers tend to consider care an essentialist personality trait or a warm-fuzzy feeling, as opposed to an ethical stance (Goldstein, 2000, 2002; Vogt, 2002). In Goldstein's (2000) examination of pre-service teachers' conceptions of care, she found them to oversimplify and idealize care; for example, sometimes "sloganeering" (p. 864) took the place of insight. Along these lines, care's societal devaluation, which some consider related to its connection to the feminine (Goldstein, 1998; Vogt, 2002), adds to the challenge of teaching about care in teacher preparation. Vogt (2002) explored teachers' conceptions of professional identity. She found elementary school teachers considered care gendered to the extent that it was exclusive to the domain of motherhood. In contrast to this conception of care as a static personality trait one could either lack or possess, Goldstein (1998) expresses the conception of care as a moral stance that leads to ethical action:

(T)he feminist interpretation of caring – an action rather than an attribute, a deliberate moral and intellectual stance rather than simply a feeling – offers a powerful alternative to the conceptions of caring currently shaping our thinking about the term. (p. 18)

The complexity and the intellectual rigor implied in Noddings' usage clarifies how caring for students demands more than a warm feeling.

Care and constructivism

Goldstein (1999) and Tappan (1998) further clarify the potential of care ethics through their exploration of care's theoretical connection to constructivism. They argue that learning takes place in relationship and that constructivist teaching

closely resembles a caring encounter. Goldstein (1999) analyzes Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development in terms of its relational and affective aspects. Goldstein quotes Vygotsky to illustrate his focus on the connection of feeling and relationship to intellect.

The separation of the intellectual side of our consciousness from its affective, volitional side is one of the fundamental flaws of all of traditional psychology. Because of it thinking is inevitably transformed into an autonomous flow of thoughts thinking themselves. It is separated from all the fullness of real life, from the living motives, interests, and attractions of the thinking human. (Vygotsky, cited in Wersch, 1985, p. 189) (Goldstein, 1999, p. 648)

Goldstein notes Vygotsky's regard for cognition as inextricably embedded within its cultural and social contexts. She compares the interactions that must occur within the zone of proximal development for learning to occur to those of a caring encounter. In so doing, she underscores the importance of the affective and volitional elements in cognition. Goldstein shows how an ethic of care clarifies the role of relationships in learning.

Tappan (1998) agrees with Goldstein that Vygotsky's sociocultural psychology reflects an ethic of care:

I conclude... that Vygotsky's sociocultural psychology represents a form of caring pedagogy, and that the values of care, concern, and responsiveness in relationships that Noddings identified as central to a care perspective are also part and parcel of Vygotsky's approach. (p. 31)

Tappan argues that Vygotsky's theory of learning necessitates a caring dialectical relation. Both Tappan and Goldstein argue that an ethic of care supports Vygotsky's learning theory.

Vygotsky believed strongly in the value of human relationships in learning and development; however, he did not articulate these ideas fully. The ethic of care provides an explication of the nature and the role of teaching-learning relationships, thereby picking up where Vygotsky left off. (Goldstein, 1999, p. 655)

Goldstein shows how a care ethic highlights the importance of relationship to the construction of knowledge. These premises concerning the centrality of relationship in constructing knowledge highlight the importance of new teachers learning about care.

Narrative methodology to teach about care

How might teacher educators introduce novice teachers to the relevance and complexity of care? In the face of care's complexity, teacher educators Rosiek (1994) and Young (1998) argue the importance of narrative methods to teach teachers about care. Polkinghorne (1988) distinguishes narrative as a methodology through which "we achieve our personal identities and self concept..." (p. 150). As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) put it, story expresses the "fundamental structure of human experience" (p. 2). In a foundations course for novice teachers, Young (1998) found that narrative assignments supported novice teachers to unearth prior assumptions and beliefs that impeded relationships with their students. Along these lines, Rosiek (1994) examines how his own stories of practice help to illuminate aspects of pedagogy that can be challenging to articulate, like the importance of relationship. He argues that stories allow teachers to analyze what it actually means to care since stories can encompass contextual factors like a teacher's emotional investment and instructional goals, a student's history, culture, or perception, and student-teacher dialogue.

Since narrative accounts for context and resists formulaic solutions to relational issues such as behavioral management techniques I wondered if the teacher educators in the program I studied would employ narrative methodology to teach about care.

Methods

To explore the phenomenon of care in teacher education I conducted a case study of the practice of one teacher education program with a professed commitment to care ethics. My data include observations and transcribed audio-recordings of two courses, one foundations and a secondary literacy course, as well as all course materials including syllabi, assignments, readings, and class handouts. In audio-recorded and transcribed interviews with the professors of the courses I asked questions to clarify my understanding of what I heard spoken in class. I also audio-recorded and transcribed interviews with five credential students and five graduates with at least three years of teaching experience. This data was triangulated with pre- and post surveys designed to explore the novice teachers' views on care ethics and how they saw it (if they did) manifest in their teacher

education program. Over one year I gained an understanding of how one program approaches the ethical aspect of teaching in the current educational and political context and how that might inform theory. I analyzed this data drawing on Noddings' dimensions for teaching care: modeling, practice, dialogue, and confirmation. I was also able to look at change over time in the program through comparing the pre- and post surveys. In this paper, I present the findings concerning a cluster of course activities and one pedagogical strategy in particular as an opportunity to construct a caring stance.

Findings

First, I identified a cluster of course activities (including introductory activities concerning students' names and core skills in care through a focus on listening, culture and funds of knowledge) that focused the novice teachers' attention on students as individuals which is a building block for developing an ethic of care. Second, one signature writing assignment – the narration of moral dilemmas – stood out as an opportunity for the novice teachers in this study to construct a relational moral stance.

Students as individuals

Names. The first finding included a variety of ways the instructors prompted the novice teachers to attend to the significance of each individual through attention to students' names (which imply personal history and cultural connection), funds of knowledge, interests, learning styles, cultures, and unique needs in general. At the beginning of the year, the instructors in both classes modeled recognition of the novice teachers' names and engaged them in a conversation over the potential significance of names. In fact, one novice teacher, in an end-of-the-year interview, recalled this focus on names as both particular and uncomfortable for her at the beginning of the program:

The first month here I thought I was going to puke if I had to stand up, say my name and something unique about myself one more time. But now, a year later, I see the importance of making us all learn each other's names so that we could feel safe enough to take all the risks we took this year. The emphasis on names and building a community was cohesively present in the program in all my classes. In my placement my teacher uses "community circles" as part of our curriculum. It's structured and it gives students a venue for dealing with issues in a safe way. It also lets students know we prioritize them over test scores.

This novice teacher describes having to share something about herself and her name repeatedly at the beginning of the program. The experience seems to have led her to begin to understand the value of parallel experiences in her teaching placement. She recognizes her students' need to "deal with issues" and the teachers need to "value the students over test scores."

To give a sense of how names featured in the program, in the foundations class, for example, Alma¹ modeled recognition of her students' names as she called on one student volunteer to name three others, then another to name five others, and finally yet another to name everyone in their row. She asked the class, "Why do names matter?" and gave them an excerpt to read from Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*. In Alma's class plan she wrote that names are important for the following reasons:

- Demonstration of care
- Creates a classroom culture of relationships
- It's the first step towards collegiality (for us and for your students)
- Sets a tone of trust and respect

One novice responded to Alma's question to the class, "Why do names matter?" She replied, "Whether or not you as a teacher know your students' names may have an effect on whether or not they feel like you as the teacher care about them or not." Another novice raised the conflict between "what the name means to the student as an individual as opposed to the family history..." At this mention of multiple meanings of names, Alma drew on Joseph McDonald's (1992) conception of the myth of certainty, to address how names might hide "levels of meaning" that raise the uncertainty of teaching and of caring. Alma said:

Where does the name come from, for example? Did the name belong to the grandma who was killed on the boat? ... We can use what we do know in service of what we don't know. If we know all of it matters, their background, relationships, family history, then a teacher's challenge is figuring out what those are... We can use this class as a trusting caring community in which to explore what we do and don't know about teaching...

¹ Alma is a pseudonym, as are all the other names for instructors and students. David is the pseudonym for the other instructor, Vanes, Laura, and Rachel are the pseudonyms for the novice teachers and Jacob and Yadira, for the students.

In Alma's comment, names seem to symbolize and frame the need to construct a sense of recognition of all that renders each student unique.

Listening, Culture, and Funds of Knowledge. Beyond introductory activities such as those concerning names, I identified repeated opportunities in both classes throughout the year for the novices to construct core skills of care, including attending to students through listening to them with awareness. As I wrote above, caring demands attentiveness, which Noddings (2002a) terms engrossment. In the secondary literacy course for example, when discussing the miscue analysis of two student-readers, a novice mentioned the importance of careful listening to discover students' funds of knowledge:

Adam (the teacher): What else did you notice?

Novice: She didn't notice periods. She just kept going on as if she was hurrying.

Adam: Maybe she thinks that's the best way to read.

Second Novice: She kept reading the same word as different words.

Adam: I'm not thinking that you'll be able to do this with all your students but you might notice when a student continues to read something incorrectly. You could have your miscue analysis ears out. Like I noticed that she reads canary as cardinal repeatedly.

Here Adam facilitates the novice teachers' practice in listening closely to students to see what they might notice. While recognizing the challenge of this kind of attention given the crowded classroom context in which the novice teachers will likely teach, Adam still suggests that they try to keep their "miscue analysis ears out." The discussion continued:

Novice: She has a Midwestern accent and there are red cardinals everywhere. I think it has to do with her funds of knowledge because she might know cardinals instead.

Second Novice: That makes me question her funds of knowledge concerning what happens when you don't have oxygen. If you don't know that, you will not understand the story.

Adam: Think what a big effect funds of knowledge would have on this story.

The novice teachers continued to consider what they might learn through constructing opportunities to listen closely to each student. It seems this close

listening prompted the novices to consider a reader's funds of knowledge. Adam bids them to consider the effects of funds of knowledge on the students' comprehension of the story. The novice teachers noticed how this student's unique life experience renders her needs unique. This experience of listening to a reader seems to highlight the necessity of constructing a practice in which attention, or in Noddings' terms, engrossment, is central to determine each student's needs.

In the foundations class, Alma's prompts for conversation in the form of questions also led the novice teachers to focus on individual students' needs – a practice central to constructing a caring stance. For example, when reading Nieto's (1999) "Cultural Issues and Their Impact on Learning," Alma posed the following questions to the class: "Who are my learners?", "What kinds of steps can we as teachers take to make ourselves accountable to kids?", and "The kinds of experiences that kids have in schools are difficult for kids of various backgrounds. So how can we change and accommodate (them)?"

Novice: I think one way is having a calendar of special dates for the kids in your class. For example, there was this event at my school about September 11th and one of my kids had a Mexican Flag and I'm so glad I found out it was Mexican Independence Day. I would never have known. I thought, How do I have a right to talk to this kid? It's like basic respect.

Alma: So it's about learning about all these holidays. We can start here but we must learn to go way beyond "the holidays approach" to dealing with difference.

This novice teacher discusses an experience at school in which he did not understand his student's actions. "Basic respect" necessitated discovering what meaning his student might be making. Educating himself about this student's culture was a way he could change to understand and accommodate this student. The course's attention to questions such as, "Who are my learners?" spurred the novice teachers to practice considering their own students' needs, in particular those related to cultural differences.

As the conversation progressed, other novice teachers offered stories such as the one quoted above. At one point, Alma cautioned them about the tendency to misconstrue caring for those from other cultures in a way that might oversimplify cultural differences.

Alma: Hopefully, we're changing in a thoughtful way, an integrated way of bringing in culture to schools, not a tacked on kind of way that doesn't fail to do justice to another culture. I think that Nieto's caution about overgeneralization is so important. Bringing in others' experiences in a way that does justice to the whole person is so important.

Alma addresses the ineffectuality of over-generalizing about students' cultures in schools. She asserts the importance of the "whole person." Noddings (1992) too, argues against overgeneralization in caring:

One purpose of global education and multicultural education is to supply students with knowledge of other people and their customs... But knowledge alone is unlikely to establish caring relations.... Persons with multicultural knowledge sometimes overgeneralize... we forget that people vary as a result of a host of group connections and as individuals, too. (p. 113)

Noddings describes the limitations of only knowing about students' cultures, as opposed to the students themselves, and how knowledge alone can give one a false sense of authority as the one-caring. Constructing a caring stance demands keeping an open mind to listen to and recognize each individual, a perspective that the novice teachers discussed in class.

In Alma's interview, she explained why she focused during class on the importance of listening in order to care. In her explanation, she refers to the author and teacher, Vivian Paley:

Paley really helped me clarify that listening is so important for teachers. I want them (the novice teachers) to come away understanding that... (When) she began to teach she thought it was about giving information to kids and providing kids with certain things according to a plan that's predetermined. She's learned over time that she has to listen. She wrote a paper called, "On Listening to What Children Say." It's about paying attention to kids and honoring their voice and thinking deeply about trying to interpret what kids are trying to say to make sense of their world from their point of view so she can move them to an end view that can empower them. So, it's not randomly listening to the kids and leaving it at that.

This value, which Alma places on Paley's listening, reflects Noddings' concept of care. Caring involves engrossment in the particular needs of the cared-for and experiencing motivational displacement to support the cared for's projects or purposes. Noddings' (1992) following anecdote clarifies what is at stake in engrossment:

When we watch a small child trying to tie her shoes, we often feel our own fingers moving in sympathetic reaction. This is motivational displacement, the sense that our motive energy is flowing toward others and their projects. I receive what the other conveys, and I want to respond in a way that furthers the other's purpose or project. (p. 16)

As Alma put it: "So, it's not randomly listening to the kids and leaving it at that." She relates listening to determining and then addressing the student's needs. Although this care seems so necessary and even foundational to good teaching, larger structural restraints – which these novice teachers may meet in the often-overburdened urban schools where they teach – may thwart their efforts at constructing a caring practice. Thus, rendering the potential impediments to care problematic seemed integral to constructing a caring practice.

For example, in the following class conversation on the challenges of constructing a caring practice, one novice teacher described how school failed to meet her needs. This class followed the reading of Noddings' (1984) *Moral Education* and Lewis, Schaps, and Watson's (1996) "The Caring Classroom's Academic Edge." A novice teacher began:

Novice: At school as a student I felt like everyone was saying we're teaching you this, because these are the gates that you have to go through to go to college. But everything I got that worked for me is from home, not from school. There was not enough attention to me and my world at school. There was nothing about how to make me fit in and it was damaging.

Alma: The thing I want to say here, what Sarah (pseudonym) is helping us to see... takes us to the funds of knowledge. What can we draw from what each one of our students cares about and how important it is to find out what they see about the world. Students come in with all kinds of things on their minds and in their hearts. They may not fit in our squares. Part of the challenge of making the learning experience successful is understanding who the kids are so

you can create a series of learning experiences that will be meaningful to them.

This novice teacher's experience emphasizes the real challenges in constructing a caring practice. She implies that particular school norms served the school's own purposes only, and therefore failed to care for her (in Noddings' sense of the term); her education failed to help meet her own needs. Finally, she says she did not fit into this system and not fitting in was harmful. Her voice implies the possible importance of problematizing school norms in light of care as a central aspect in the novices' construction of a caring teaching practice. Alma insists on the possibility of attending to students' needs, as does Adam, despite the contextual challenges in schools. Also of note is how Alma draws on Moll's (1990) concept of funds of knowledge, which affirms the importance of listening to students, understanding who they are, and providing them with learning experiences "that will be meaningful to them," or in other words, that meet their needs.

Constructing a Caring Practice through Narrative

A second finding focuses on a writing assignment that appeared central to the novices' beginning construction of a caring stance. The novice teachers were asked to tell a story of a moral dilemma and discuss it. As I mentioned above, the use of story to teach care in particular supports research by Rosiek (1994) and Young (1998) who argue the significance of narrative in novices' learning to care, since narrative accounts for context and resists formulaic solutions to relational issues, such as behavioral management techniques. In this narrative case assignment, each novice teacher described his or her school context, a dilemma story, and a reflective commentary to situate him or herself in relation to the dilemma. Alma explained that the class would discuss the kinds of ethical dilemmas teachers typically face. She said, "Almost every decision that a teacher has to make has some moral component to it." The novice teachers shared their narrative cases with one another and discussed them in a case conference format. I found that the case stories in general elicited in-depth, reflective commentaries on the novice teachers' experiences in their placements. Many focused on relationships between teachers and students, often remarking on their complexity.

The first example I describe in more detail to give a sense of a novice teacher's reasoning through an entire case. In this case titled, "Grades and the Messages We Send Our Students," as in all the cases, Vanessa starts by contextualizing her dilemma; she describes her high school humanities class of 30 students in urban California. Her cooperating teacher uses a computerized grading system:

He has a grade for everything, from participation to attendance to class work to homework. It is all a point system, and the computer keeps track of what grade the student has. So when it comes to the end of the marking period, there is little work to be done. The computer tells you the student's grade...

Vanessa discovers that 11 out of 30, a third of the students in the class, are failing according to this electronic system and she begins to question the system's worth. As she comes to know 17-year-old Jacob, one of these failing students, Vanessa's dilemma surfaces. Jacob, energetic and playful, attends more to his peers than to the focus of the class and his "good ideas" and facility connecting these ideas to his life experience does not seem to translate into class work.

Throughout the semester, Vanessa noticed that Jacob had neglected many assignments; therefore he had earned a 29% in the class. With one week before grades were finalized, Vanessa offered to meet with individual students to clarify necessary makeup work. Jacob approached her and in her words, "proudly" gave her his essay. Vanessa realized that from the numbers alone, given the computer program's automatic deduction for late work, Jacob would earn only an F, even if he completed his late course work: "From the numbers, even all this work might not bring him to a D, according to the science of it." Weighing the decision to put forth the effort to complete his late assignments and demonstrating savvy concerning the point system, Jacob asked Vanessa whether finishing the work would raise his grade. Vanessa decides to tinker with the numbers:

He quickly moved to the point, "If I'm not gonna pass any way, why do all this work?" Even though there are other reasons for doing the work, like *learning* (sic) from it, which I told him, I also relate to his point of view. Grades are a real motivator for many students at this school. If they don't pass a class, they have to repeat it. And that can hold them back from graduating. I told him, "Okay. You do all this work, and you won't fail this quarter. You'll earn at least a D." He left looking hopeful and determined.

Vanessa grapples with this student's concerns embedded in context, including her description of Jacob's "pride, hope, and determination." Vanessa's narrative seems to facilitate her taking into account Jacob as a person with interests and concerns beyond the class. Her attention to or care for Jacob highlights the complexity of assessment:

The question is this: Do I veer away from the rigid grading system in order to reward a student for trying to catch up at the last minute? If I stick to the numerical system, Jacob will not pass the quarter, even though he did a lot of the work in the end. This would teach that there is no point in doing something if the “deadline” has passed. This implies that there was no real value in the assignment; that the only thing to be gained by it was the grade. I want to encourage him to do the work, and if what he needs is the assurance that he will pass the class if he does this work, then I am willing to give it to him. In doing so, I risk him learning that he can get away without doing the work throughout the quarter. It may show him that he does not need to be accountable along the way, as long as he turns things in at the end. Tomorrow I will see how much work Jacob brings in. If he has all the assignments we went over, I will give him at least a D, even if the numbers don’t add up.

As Vanessa analyzes her case, she recognizes the complexity of her decisions regarding assessment, since Jacob will learn more than the merit of a particular effort. She recognizes that he could learn about the intrinsic worth of learning, responsibility, and the role of authority. She continues her case analysis and her reflection on this single story leads her to contemplate the larger implications of assessment and to clearly state an intention to account for individuality, even within a grading system:

While I expect excellence from all students, that may look different for different students, and I feel I do need to be flexible in responding to students through the grades I give them...I think the grade a student earns should reflect where they are in their development, which means addressing the student as an individual, and not having a strict numerical system....

Lastly, after determining to respond to difference with flexibility, as opposed to a rigid or rule-bound use of grades, Vanessa analyzes her decision drawing on a relational ideal to define what is fair; she begins by noting the relational nature of grading and uses this to construct her understanding of fairness as beyond “one-size-fits-all”:

I know a lot of teachers say, “I don’t give the grade, you earn it.” Which is of course true, but I think that honestly there is a message communicated to the student, by the teacher, when the teacher marks

the grade on the report card. I know as a student I always felt that the teacher had something to do with my grade, and it wasn't all in my hands... Maybe it has more to do with the struggle of defining "fairness" in the classroom. I think being fair does take into account each individual, and does not use the "one size fits all" philosophy. It takes lot of attention and care to "fairly" grade students, reaffirming the fact that good teaching in my book, arises from a place of love.

Vanessa seems to imply that caring for each individual's particularity is an ethical choice that would undergird justice. She relies on her growing construction of care to clarify justice in this context. Her notion of care and affect, or as she puts it, "a place of love" serves as her point of origin for constructing a stance concerning assessment. The narrative case assignment seems to support the kind of reasoning evidenced here; the details necessary in narrative are ethically relevant. Her case left me wondering if she would have thought Jacob's situation through to this extent without the narrative assignment. Could this experience lead to continued depth of reflection over the moral implications of her actions in relationship with students? While it may, it seems that teachers could need both this initial experience and continued support to reflect.

Across many of the cases, the novice teachers grappled with situations in relationship with students in the depth necessary to care for them. In another case, a novice teacher checked in on a student, as opposed to disciplining him for his distracting behavior, and discovered that his struggle to focus was due to his house having been shot at earlier that morning. Laura wrote:

It also makes me feel overwhelmed by what they are walking into the classroom dealing with that I don't know about and don't leave space for them to deal with. If I had not taken the time to quietly ask A that morning what he needed I would have never known what was bothering him so much. My reaction to his misbehavior probably would have escalated during the day and instead of feeling supported at school he probably would have felt aggressed upon. I am happy that I had the insight in that moment to take that approach with A but it is not my regular approach... How do I maintain my classroom management while still leaving room for each individual student to feel safe and part of the class?

This experience of reflecting over the importance of "taking the time to ask... what he needed," led Laura to question her "regular approach," in which she does not

take this time to experience the kind of motivational displacement necessary to “support” this student and meet his needs in this situation, or in the language of care ethics, in order to care for him. Her experience reflects Alma’s comment at the beginning of class concerning “the myth of certainty.” Highlighting this concept seems to support these new teachers in constructing a sense of the importance of receptive attention to the real complex experience of each individual student, as in Vanessa’s case above. Laura leaves us with a question that highlights the challenge to care, perhaps in particular as a novice – how to have the “insight in the moment” to attend to a particular student. Will Laura continue to see the importance of this kind of insight?

In terms of Laura’s description of the challenge to gain insight into her students’ needs, many novice teachers refer to the case assignment as a way they gained this perspective. Another novice teacher named Rachel put it as a “chance to step back from the situation and reflect on it further.” Rachel describes how this experience leads her to pose questions concerning the complexity race adds in caring for individual students. She mentions a struggling African American student whom she describes as interruptive and challenging for her and her cooperating teacher. She focuses on discipline measures that she thinks ought to be taken until the end of her analysis. Here she begins to reflect on her student’s situation:

I wonder what other factors are causing Yadira to act the way she does. I know that her parents are divorced and she is currently living with her dad, but still sees her mom often too... (H)ow does being from a different race affect the situation? Does she relate and understand the ways that I am trying to correct her behavior? Whereas I have taken her out of the classroom for misbehavior, ultimately I see that I need to try to care for Yadira through helping her be part of the classroom in a way where she can learn... Although I try to show care in many different ways to not just Yadira, but all my students, I know that I won’t always see positive results immediately... I may never see the results during the whole time the student is in my class.

Rachel begins to question her student’s understanding of her attempts to “correct her behavior.” She seems to begin to contrast her disciplining actions – sending Yadira out of class – with her goal to include students in class. It’s still unclear whether Rachel would continue to send a student like Yadira out. While we don’t know exactly how disruptive Yadira was, removing a student would be a last measure if relationship is central in teaching. While this narrative seems to have afforded this novice a chance to reconsider how to meet the needs of, or to care for

an individual student in this multicultural context, I wonder what could foster her further reflection.

Overall, the novice teachers' opportunity to practice reflecting on relationship through this narrative assignment seems to highlight their determination to care in the face of the challenge of doing so given the current context with its segmentation of time and large numbers of students and across the potential boundaries of race and class.

Interviews and Surveys with the Novices and Graduates

In addition to these case assignments, the reading, and the class discussions – in their end-of-the-year surveys and interviews, the novice teachers and graduates repeatedly affirmed their intention to construct caring relationships. While these findings may not be an outcome of the experiences described, they could be connected and, as such, are interesting to note.

First, in the surveys, the novice teachers frequently drew on the core skills for care that they read about and practiced in class to describe both the practice of and the necessity for building a relationship with their students. In general, the novice teachers seem to suggest that they engage in the practices reflective of the habits of mind associated with caring-for that are addressed in the program. For example, one novice teacher drew on the core skills of caring-for, engrossment and motivational displacement that leads to some sort of action to forward students' goals: "I pay close attention to each student and their needs and do what's in my power as a teacher to meet their needs." Others described how they would discover the needs of their students in their urban multicultural contexts. For example, one wrote:

It is important to know the students – what their lives are like outside and in school with others, home life, community life, influencing factors like history, neighborhood activities, students' learning styles, interests, abilities, self-esteem – in a caring way to look at the whole student not just what one sees in class. I need to take time to know my students – who are they? What resources do they bring to the class?

This novice teacher declared the importance of contextual factors in a student's life beyond school, reflecting the class focus on funds of knowledge. Another put it this way:

Students should feel that teachers care about them as individuals – teachers should make efforts to find out about what their students care about and bring those things into their teaching practice.

Many confirmed this view particularly in light of their developing conception of caring (consonant with that of Noddings) in which what counts for care varies: “I have learned that care looks differently for different students – making accommodations, giving attention...”

Likewise in the interviews with novice teachers, they further articulated this attitude they constructed in class concerning the necessity of attending to students’ needs. As one novice teacher put it, “To care I pay close attention to each student and their needs and do what’s in my power as a teacher to meet their needs.” Like the surveys, in the interviews the novice teachers framed the importance of this attention to individuals based on their understanding of how care differs for each student. One novice teacher said: “You cannot follow the script because it needs to be you and the student. It comes from inside.” This novice’s mention of the notion of a “script” is interesting in terms of the unscripted nature of the narrative format in the dilemma assignment and how narrative embraces local, complex approaches to relationship – as opposed to more formulaic behavioral approaches. One novice teacher mentioned the complexity that the irreducible nature of care adds to the teacher’s role as the one-caring:

For different students it seems like it’s different things and that’s something I’m trying to understand. I’m really struggling with how treating students well differs; nothing can be done arbitrarily.

Here this novice teacher demonstrates this repeated theme across the surveys and interviews of having constructed a sense of the real importance of the particular. She harkens back to a class reading from *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue*, in which Friedman (1960) eschews the “arbitrary” in relationship with students. Since these novice teachers seemed to have begun to construct a sense of the importance of caring for each student, I wonder how they will balance this imperative with the needs of their entire class.

While the graduates also expressed the imperative to treat each individual student differently in order to care for them, they further detail ways they care, touching on how each student’s needs must be balanced with the needs of the group. For example, one graduate said:

Caring is about understanding that every student is going to have special interests and you're not going to be able to draw on them in every lesson, but trying to get as many as you can involved in each lesson and eventually you're covering them all, finding ways to incorporate what you know about kids.

This graduate describes how she involves her students' "special interests" and "incorporates what she knows" about each student over time. There is a sense of understanding the need to balance attending to the individual with the class. Also I found it interesting that, after three years of teaching in the field, her comment still reflects the focus of her credential year on Moll's (1992) funds of knowledge. As another put it, "(Caring means) to know they (the students) have a life outside of the classroom." He continued adding an example of one way he "cares" and also refers to funds of knowledge:

I share myself. For example, I cared by going to a student's baseball game. He's showing me what he loves to do and that's a starting place. We'll have a stronger relationship in the class; my knowledge of him will be broadened. Discovering their funds of knowledge is a lead in to how to teach the curriculum. It leads me to be able to negotiate how to teach with their interests in mind.

This graduate describes the relevance of paying attention to a student to develop a relationship and to draw on the student's interests to engage him or her in curriculum.

The five graduates I interviewed mentioned the relevance of discovering their students' funds of knowledge. Knowing about each student was necessary to determine how to care, since caring is necessarily unpredictable. In moment-to-moment experiences, the graduates described how they needed to know to try to read multiple social cues to respond to their students. For example, one characteristic example follows:

I have a student who interrupts all the time and I don't want to squelch her spirit but I'll want to make sure it's not really bothering other students or that the students who need longer times to concentrate can have the time they need or they will be pissed at her. She is the class clown. In one way that can keep the class light. So it's not only different for different kids, but how I develop relationships and deal with kids differs from moment to moment.

This graduate describes how she needs to vary her responses to one disruptive student. She allows this student to share her humor to encourage her “spirit” and “keep the class light.” However, this graduate also seems to be aware of the “clowning” student’s relationships with her peers. As the teacher, if she neglects the other students’ need to concentrate, she may support the undermining of the humorous student’s friendships with peers. Thus, this graduate paints a picture of the complexity of caring in the classroom akin to the dilemma narratives she wrote in her credential program. To care, a teacher cannot rely on a formula; she must take into account what she knows about her students and she also needs to think of the multiple intertwined relationships in each situation. In this example the need for the teacher to be aware or attentive, as Noddings writes, “engrossed,” in her students’ experience to determine an appropriate action, as opposed to a preconceived action, is essential. Irreducible in nature, care varied with each individual in each instance.

What Can We Infer About Teachers’ Construction of a Caring Practice?

First, affording novice teachers the chance to reflect on their students’ stories appears central in the construction of a caring practice. Narrative methodology appears to be a compelling practice, since it allows the novice teachers to gain a sense of the irreducibility of what it means for teachers to care for students. The novice teachers described how they discovered what actions or decisions might be involved in caring for a student, given his or her story. Through telling their students’ stories, the novice teachers glimpsed the complexity involved in caring in school, particularly given grading or classroom management. Without knowing students’ stories, pedagogical decisions may seem neutral and therefore, to be decided based on expedience or efficiency. Yet if Vanessa had allowed the efficient automated grading system to grade Jacob, he may have given up on the class. Would Vanessa have discovered this about Jacob without this assignment to frame the experience? Or would Rachel have considered what underlay Yadira’s disruptive behavior? Rachel’s contemplation of Yadira’s story led Rachel to compare her goal of inclusion with her solution of sending a student out of the classroom. Rachel considered how her student’s unique experience in class, her perspective as an African American and her particular family situation. In general in this study, the dilemma stories evidence the novice teachers’ reflection on the limits of predetermined lock-step responses to individual students.

As opposed to considering situations in the abstract – which can lead to prescriptive or general solutions like point systems for “good” behavior – these novice teachers’ opportunities to tell stories of their dilemmas in practice seemed

to foster their construction of the notion of contingency in relationship. In other words, the novice teachers' telling of their students' stories allowed them to consider actual implications of preset school procedures, such as assessment and behavioral management techniques. The narratives supported these novice teachers in transcending narrow or restrictive school policies by closely considering a student's story and what might be required to care for him or her.

Second, before writing these dilemma stories, the novice teachers had engaged in reading and dialogue over questions designed to explore the importance of the phenomenological worlds of their individual students – through their names, funds of knowledge, cultural backgrounds, and interests. The novice teachers discussed how every decision a teacher makes may have some moral component to it. Thus, the novice teachers had prior experiences to prepare them to delve as deeply as they did in the stories of their students. Given the possible importance of this continuity, how might a narrative approach be integrated into teacher education in more than foundations classes? How might teacher educators continue to support early career teachers' construction of a caring stance through narrative methodologies? Given the moral imperative for teachers to construct a caring stance, particularly across communities of difference, this study shows interesting possibilities for meeting this need in teacher education – and I would argue even in teachers' further professional development.

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The author, Colette Rabin, teaches in the Critical Research Academy in elementary education at San Jose State University in San Jose, California. Her special area of interest is in care ethics and education. She can be reached at colette.rabin@sjsu.edu .

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