Restorying "Caring" in Education:
Students' Narratives of *Caring for* and *about*

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In this paper, I use two exemplary narrative case studies to illustrate the multiple ways caring functioned for students in their urban high school context. One case study illustrates how different frames of caring can provide different interpretations of a situation. Another case study shows how caring processes can act in synergistic ways. I conclude by arguing that we should widen our conception of educational care to be inclusive of the complex and overlapping ways that students engage in processes of caring for and caring about.

Over the last twenty years, the concepts of "care" and "caring"[1] have captured the imaginations and agendas of many contemporary educational writers and researchers (Gilligan, 1982; Larrivee, 2000; Noddings, 1992; Rauner, 2000; Teven, 2001; Thompson, 1998; Valenzuela, 1999). Caring, Nel Noddings (1992) writes, "is the very bedrock of all successful education…contemporary schooling can be revitalized in its light" (p. 27). In this paper, I argue that listening to students' narratives of care can provide opportunities to "restory" the complex ways caring functions in schools. Using two narrative examples from a larger study (McKamey, 2006), I will demonstrate how using a student-centered narrative analysis complicates our understanding of caring in educational settings. In the first example, Lila's[2] stories provide insights into how two different processes of caring can function as separate and distinct ways of interpreting a situation. In the second example, Ruby's story illustrates how processes of caring can be intertwined and synergistic. I conclude by arguing that we should widen our conception of educational care to be inclusive of the complex and overlapping ways that students engage in processes of caring for and caring about.

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[1] In this paper, I use the terms "care" and "caring" interchangeably.
[2] All names of students, teachers and schools have been changed.

Caring for and Caring about: A Framework

To better understand "caring" in schools, I have borrowed and developed the concepts of *caring about* and *caring for* from Noddings (1992) and Tronto (1989). *Caring for* involves the day-to-day interpersonal interactions that attend to a person's needs at a specific time. For example, a teacher might *care for* a student by asking him about his emotional well-being. A student might *care for* herself and her academic standing by asking a teacher to stay after school to help her with a math assignment. These *caring for* interactions are private, contained within interpersonal relationships, and attend to specific, individual situations. Empirical research has documented a variety of behaviors associated with teachers' *caring for* students, including helping with academic schoolwork (Davidson, 1999; Ferreira & Bosworth, 2001); recognizing that the student is unique (Wentzel, 1997), listening to students (Rolón Dow, 2005; Sickle & Spector, 1996; Streitmatter, 1996; Valenzuela,1999); asking questions about personal life (Ferreira & Bosworth, 2001; Siddle Walker, 1996; Phelan et al., 1994; Teven, 2001); supporting students emotionally (Bosworth, 1995); maintaining an orderly classroom atmosphere (Davidson, 1999; Wentzel,1997); and having high expectations for students (Bosworth, 1995; Davidson, 1999; Wentzel, 1997).

In contrast, *caring about* denotes an action or interaction that attends to a more general principle, concept, or policy. In other words, the act of caring about has implications that are greater than any one interpersonal relationship. *Caring about* is sometimes associated with social or hierarchical positions of power, and it is also sometimes associated with communities of practice. For example, some researchers who investigate *caring about* have documented the ways people in power and school bureaucracies tend to focus on things and ideas—*caring about* standardized test scores, curricula, or financial balance sheets (Danin, 1994; Eaker & Prillaman, 1994; Courtney & Noblit, 1994; Valenzuela, 1999). These studies argue that *caring about* is often removed from caregiving situations and at times the process is in tension with teachers or administrators *caring for* students. In this paper, I use two exemplary narrative case studies drawn from student interview data to illustrate the multiple ways caring functioned for students in their high school context.

Many feminist scholars have argued that caring, and specifically, the act of *caring for* others, is an invisible and undervalued ethic or practice. Feminist scholars like Gilligan (1982), Martin (1992), and Noddings (1992) have argued that caring should be made more publicly visible and valued, and that schools should be reframed to better support caring orientations, interactions, and relationships. In contrast, other scholars have disassociated caring with femininity, expanding a view of care to include issues of race, class, culture, and power, and calling for educators to critically examine how multiple processes of caring function for people within organizations and social contexts

(e.g., Antrop-González & De Jesús, 2006; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Rolón Dow, 2005; Siddle Walker & Tomkins, 2004; Thompson, 1998, 2004; Tronto, 1989; Valenzuela, 1999; Van Galen, 1996).

Taking this latter critical orientation toward caring, I investigate what caring looks like and how it functions for immigrant students—a group usually framed as recipients of institutional caring—in the context of an urban public high school. This research perspective interprets care as a social process that can be observed and thickly described (Geertz, 1973). My aim in this project is not to explicitly distinguish caring for from caring about, but to empirically expand our view of caring to include the multiple ways students talk about and engage in caring processes. This widened lens provides a more complex, multilayered vision of care within schools.

Methods

Description of Study Site

This paper draws from a three-year ethnographic study in an urban public high school in the northeastern United States. The study focused on the International Studies School, one of four small learning communities (SLCs) in a larger high school. I located my study in the International Studies SLC because several lead administrators reported that it was more cohesive than the other three. By cohesive they meant that in comparison to other communities in the school, International Studies sponsored more community events, teacher team meetings, and student afterschool club activities. In addition to having an international relations and geography focus, International Studies also specialized in serving immigrant students who were English language learners (ELLs).

The study used three methods of data collection: student surveys, individual student interviews, and student observations, including a one day focused "shadowing" observation of each participant. During the two years that I collected data for the study, I also had other roles and responsibilities with International Studies and in the larger high school, including supervising student teachers, chaperoning field trips, and observing and interviewing students and teachers for another education research project (Luttrell, Ward, & Holland, 2006). Having multiple peripheral roles in the school gave me opportunities to observe and interact with students and teachers in various ways and across a variety of contexts and also helped me to build rapport with both teachers and students over time. This "deep hanging out" (Luttrell, 2003) in the school also allowed me to observe patterns of events that occurred and reoccurred over time and across contexts (Spindler, 1982) and provided me a rich empirical data base upon which to check my descriptions and interpretations (Xu, Connelly, He, & Phillion, 2007).

Participants

To better understand a wide range of students' perceptions of caring in their school, I purposefully sampled (Maxwell, 2005) seventeen high school juniors and seniors who were diverse across a variety of characteristics, including gender, academic achievement, and country of origin. I was particularly careful to sample students from multiple countries of origin—the seventeen participants represented fifteen different countries. I focused my sampling on this diverse group of immigrant students for several reasons. First, immigrant students are often positioned as needing significant amounts of "care" and extra services in school institutions (Olsen, 1997). When I began the study, immigrant students in International Studies who were also English language learners (ELLs) benefited from extra services in the school, including having opportunities to take smaller classes and, for some students, access to teachers who could understand and translate multiple languages. Being recipients of additional academic supports and institutional care, immigrant students who were ELLs had the potential to provide an important and unique perspective on teacher and institutional caring. Second, while piloting a survey for my research project about the school climate in International Studies, I noticed that immigrant students were most likely to ask extended questions about the meanings of certain questions. It seemed that whereas US-born students took for granted conditions and norms within their school, immigrant students, who were both outsiders and insiders, posed many questions about their school context. In administering the survey, and in my other roles in the school, I noticed that immigrant students often talked among themselves, to teachers, and to me about school norms, events, and classroom incidents that were confusing, difficult, or puzzling to them. These observations, together with insights from other ethnographic scholars that people at the margins of social groups often make good informants about the cultures in which they live (Olsen, 1997; Rabinow, 1977; Shostak, 2000), informed my decision to seek out immigrant students as informants for my study.

Interviews

I interviewed students in sessions that lasted forty to sixty minutes. The interviews included questions about relationships students had with teachers and administrators, such as: "Can you tell me about a teacher with whom you have a good relationship?" "Can you tell me about a particular teacher at this school with whom you have had trouble relating?" "When you have problems with other students or teachers in this school, whom do you talk with?" I tape recorded and transcribed all of the interviews.

To capture students' perceptions of caring processes in their school, I employed strategies where codes and meanings would emerge from the data

(Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). One common pattern that surfaced across interviews was that students often told unprompted stories about how they overcame obstacles that they encountered in the school.

Narratives of Care

Students often interrupted the interview to tell me a particular story, or what I am now calling "narratives of care." By using the term "narrative," I am drawing from the tradition of "experience-centered" narrative research (Mishler, 1995; Squire, 2008; Tsai, 2007), which defines narrative representations as having a sequential, causal, or thematic order and which illustrate the teller's understanding of an experience. Students' narratives of care collectively had several unique characteristics. First, students told these narratives with urgency. It didn't seem to matter what question I asked; students responded with a particular story that they wanted or needed to tell me. Moreover, if I tried to get the interview back on the track I expected by redirecting students to the interview protocol questions, they often returned to telling the story that I had interrupted. The narratives followed a similar kind of plot about overcoming a conflict or obstacle that the students had encountered in school, and highlighted students' agency in responding to an issue that they cared about. Josue, for example, who was Dominican, described how he and other Latino students and teachers worked together to protest an English-only state policy initiative. Monica, who was Guatamalan, told a story about how she and other students receiving free lunch were teased by certain students in the cafeteria. She and the others appealed to school administrators to make the cafeteria a more safe and welcoming place. Asha, from Ghana, described how she persisted in appealing to administrators to make sure that the school punished a boy who had sexually harassed her in class.

Susan Chase (2010) describes this kind of unexpected narrative interruption as an opportunity "to understand how people create meanings out of events in their lives" (p. 218). She argues that the point of narrative analysis is not to question or verify the truth of a story, but to ask what the story reveals about the ways the narrator is making sense of his or her world. Although I was attentive to some structural elements—for example, in all narratives there was at least one agent in the story who was acting or doing something, and stories had a beginning, middle and end of action—I was most attentive to whether a story addressed a particular theme or experiential topic related to educational care (Squire, 2008). The stories told by the adolescent participants with whom I talked were sometimes not confined to the formal interview; participants sometimes continued "telling" me the story in other school contexts. This pattern seems aligned with Patterson's (2008) observation that for some women storytellers, the point is to share experiences rather than to document historical or biographical events. Luttrell (2003) also noted that the adolescent storytellers

in her study upheld an experiential orientation to their storytelling. In my study, participants' continued storytelling took on different forms. For instance, sometimes students pulled me aside and literally retold or continued elaborating on a particular story that they had told me days or even weeks before in a formal interview. Other times, students invited me to visit a school context that was important to one of the stories they told me. For example, several students invited me to visit different after-school clubs where I could observe or experience the essence of their stories, and others urged me to observe a particular teacher's classroom. My focused observations and fieldnotes in these contexts provided a way to deepen my understanding about students' perspectives as storytellers.

Narrative Analysis

A growing number of educational researchers have argued that understanding how storytellers portray themselves in relation to events, processes, and other people—including the interviewer—can provide insights into how people experience and engage in a range of social processes, including schooling (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Luttrell, 1997; Xu, Connelly, He, Phillion, 2007), identity formation (Bernard, 2004; Luttrell, 1997; Mishler 1995; Kelchtermans 2005), and caring (Rolón Dow, 2005; Thompson, 1998). The stories people tell reflect and reveal assumptions that people have about the way the world works: for example, what knowledge should be valued, what kinds of relationships are important, and what it means to express caring in school. Being attentive to stories told by people with varying social locations can provide insights on the different and complex ways people experience and construct educational processes of caring, and can also serve to de-center dominant narratives of care held by people in positions of power (Rolón Dow, 2005). For these reasons, narrative analysis was a particularly relevant approach to my questions about how immigrant high school students conceptualized and engaged in caring processes in school.

Using a protocol adapted from Riessman (1993) and Luttrell (2003), I read the texts of students' narratives of care while asking specific questions, including:

1. What conflicts are posed by the story? How are these conflicts resolved?
2. What position or role does the speaker have in the story?
3. What is the coda or ending of the story, and what does the coda reveal about what is important to the student?

These questions allowed me to consider the multiple ways students described caring and to notice how students positioned themselves in caring interactions. For each student narrative, I wrote analytical memos addressing each of these questions. For each student participant, I also wrote memos that

captured major themes across their narratives of care, interview responses, and my focused observation notes (Lofland & Lofland 1995). This memoing process allowed me to check my interpretations of students' meanings with codes arising from the larger interview and observational patterns I had observed over time. Throughout this research process, I tested propositions and interpretations with a research advisor who was familiar with the school context and members of an interpretive community (Bernard et al., 2009).

In addition to analysis of individual students' meanings, I also looked for patterns across students' narratives of care. I noticed that participants in my study talked not only about teachers' caring for (or not caring for) them, but also about how they engaged others in caring about topics such as justice, equity, or legitimacy.

Considering Two Students' Narratives of Care

Although many other students told similar narratives of care, I have chosen to use Lila's and Ruby's narratives because they illustrate two different ways students talked about caring. Lila, from Kurdistan, tells two very different and conflicting narratives of care to explain her academic failure in a class. Lila's stories illustrate how the lenses of caring for and caring about can provide distinct and separate interpretations of a single situation. Ruby, who is Nigerian, tells a story that illustrates how the concepts of caring for and caring about can overlap and inform each other. These two examples prompt us to consider the multiple ways students, teachers, and parents may differently enact and participate in processes of caring for and caring about.

Caring about and Caring for:
Interpreting a Student's Experience Differently

Lila's two stories about why she failed a history class provide two distinct interpretations. In Lila's first story, she describes an inequitable situation that she experiences with other students and her failed efforts to change the conditions of her classroom. In Lila's second story, she describes a failed interpersonal relationship with her teacher. The first story illustrates a *caring about* interpretation: Lila describes an inequitable situation experienced by multiple students. In the story, a teacher who conducted classroom discussions in Spanish excluded her, a speaker of Urdu, Kurdish, and English, and other students who spoke a variety of other languages. She expresses anger about the situation, and explains that she and students who didn't speak Spanish were not treated equally in the classroom:

C: Is there a teacher here that you have trouble relating to?

L: Yeah, I had one last year. But I can't tell you the name, you know?

C: Don't tell the name (*both laughing*).

L: Or else she going to be mad at me anyway. She was actually, you aren't going to tell this to anyone, the teacher? Because she going to know what I am talking about. She said, she was talking to the people from her own country a lot, and like, three different students from my country, and other students from other countries, and she wasn't talking to them, you know what I mean? Like, we were not equal, you know, not equal. We are different from them. I really hate that.

In this story, Lila relates a conflict that she and other non-Spanish-speaking students experienced in the class: "Like, we were not equal, you know, not equal. We are different from them. I really hate that." In using the pronoun "we," Lila positions herself with other students who were excluded from discussions in Spanish. The story conveys an issue that Lila *cares about*— the unequal and collective situation that she and other students experienced in a history class. Lila then explains that she went to another teacher, Ms. Boyle, to help her resolve this situation. Lila describes two different strategies that she and Ms. Boyle discussed. Like other students who told narratives about the ways they engaged teachers in issues and situations that they cared about, Lila portrays herself as an active agent in these discussions. In the first strategy, Lila asks Ms. Boyle if she and the other students could transfer to another class. This strategy would have removed students from the classroom where they experienced exclusion:

> *L:* I went to Ms. Boyle and told her, that, do something about it, and why don't we just leave the school, leave their class? [She approached the administration about this issue and] they said you cannot change this class.

In the second strategy, Ms. Boyle suggested that Lila go speak with the teacher as part of an interview for a class project. Through this strategy, Lila sought to make a connection with the teacher and to have the teacher understand non-Spanish-speaking students' experiences of exclusion. Lila acted on this advice, and interviewed the teacher:

> *C:* So you went and talked to Ms. Boyle . . .
>
> *L:* And . . . she said, go interview [your history teacher]. We were doing a project, so she said, "You can just go interview her for the project . . . and you can ask her questions about it." I went there, but really, nothing happened. I asked her some questions, and it wasn't something like that [inaudible]. For that time, she didn't even care.

This extended story reveals that Lila cared about students having equitable access to instruction and how she actively engaged an adult, Ms. Boyle, to join her in recognizing and acting on what she cared about. Foregrounding what and how Lila cared about provides insights into how Lila and Ms. Boyle sought but failed to change classroom conditions for non-Spanish-speaking students.

From a perspective that foregrounds teacher caring, one might argue that this example illustrates caring deficiencies. In this view, the story conveys how the history teacher didn't care for Lila or other non-Spanish-speaking students. Lila and Ms. Boyle failed in their attempts to create an equitable solution, and perhaps Ms. Boyle (or even me, the researcher listening to the story) didn't care enough to persist in making sure changes were made. This view focuses our attention on the adults in the story (what did or didn't the adults do?), rather than maintaining attention on what Lila's story conveys in terms of what she *cared about*: how she and other students were excluded from classroom discussions. In making this point, I am not arguing that individual teachers like the one in the story should be let off the hook for not teaching inclusively or not caring for non-Spanish-speaking students. However, focusing our attention on what Lila cared about, as Ms. Boyle did, provides educators a way to consider and attend to issues of equity and fairness as they are experienced by groups of students in the school.

In a second story, Lila interprets her academic failure through an interpersonal lens of "caring for," and attributes her failure to her teacher inadequately caring for her in the class:

> *L:* I got like F and D- just because of those . . . I couldn't help myself, you know, to concentrate, when she was [speaking in Spanish]. . . . They changed me from Mr. Huntley's, my history class, to her class. But, in Mr. Huntley's class I had like A's, but in her class, *I couldn't do anything.* Because of our differences.

Here Lila portrays herself as an individual student who has a troubled interpersonal relationship with her teacher. Focusing on individual failure ("I couldn't . . . concentrate") and an interpersonal conflict (her "differences" with the teacher) leaves little room for Lila to speak about or acknowledge how she and other non-Spanish-speaking students experienced inequitable classroom conditions. One might argue that failing the class was Lila's way of resisting the inequality she experienced. However, although her academic failure and her experiences of unequal conditions might be related, Lila did not explicitly make this particular association. Through the logic of Lila's second story, her academic success in school depended on the extent to which she is cared for by her teacher.

This interpersonal interpretation of caring leaves Lila dependent on others for her academic success or failure in school. Lila expressed this interpretation in other contexts as well. In an assignment for another class, Lila depicted herself as a pot of yellow and red flowers. In the upper left-hand corner, an outstretched hand tipped a watering can and showered the flowers with water. In the upper right-hand corner, a yellow sun beamed brightly. She wrote:

> I consider myself as a pot, because the flowers inside the pot need water, sun, and soil to grow and become healthy. If it doesn't have these things, then it will not grow and will die. I am like the pot cuz I have my family, friends, and loved ones around me. If I don't have them I will get sick, cuz there is no one to take care of me and [I] will die one day like the flowers.

The examples in this section illustrate how Lila differently interprets her academic failure through caring for and caring about perspectives. A caring for perspective locates Lila's failure in the poor quality of her interpersonal relationship with her teacher and her failure to focus in class, whereas a caring about perspective attributes Lila's failure to the exclusion of non-Spanish-speaking students from class discussions. More than being two different "codes," caring about and caring for provide two distinct interpretations of Lila's experience. Moreover, the contrast between these two interpretations illustrates how an exclusive focus on teachers' caring for is too narrow a lens to capture students' collective experiences of exclusion.

Caring about and Caring for: Interconnected Concepts

Considering Lila's stories about why she failed an academic class shows how the concepts of caring about and caring for can sometimes provide very different interpretations of an experience. Ruby's story, below, illustrates how the concepts can be interrelated and overlapping.

In a story she told and retold over the years I knew her, Ruby explains how, as a second-language speaker of British English, she struggled to recognize herself and have others recognize her in a U.S. school. The main plot of the story describes how she experienced and responded to her teachers and peers not knowing a particular word she used in school. At the beginning of the story, Ruby conveys how the teacher and her peers doubted her legitimacy:

> I was in class, and Mr. Medina, he was in my class talking about the MCAS [state exam]. And I asked a question, and the question was, Will there be an invigilate in the class? You know, where I came from, we spoke that word in school to mean a person who gives you the MCAS,

well not the MCAS, but a test. And I used that word, and the teacher laughed at me, and the students laughed at me. They didn't know the word. . . . I told him the meaning of this, it means the person that interview[s] you, invigilate, in the class. He doesn't understand what that means. I told him, all the class, [but] my English teacher doesn't understand. He's English, but he doesn't know what it means. So, he was laughing at me. I was like, embarrassed in that class…I was like crying because he was like, I don't know what I'm talking about, but I know what I'm talking about…

Here Ruby describes a central conflict: she is embarrassed about using a British English word that she knew from her schooling experience in Nigeria. The word, a derivative of invigilate, which means to supervise closely as in proctoring an examination, is not part of her current school's vocabulary. Ruby told me that she was so distressed by this situation that she awoke at night crying and wondering who she was.

Ruby goes on to describe how she actively sought to resolve this conflict. During the school day, she seeks out adults to help her in this situation—she approaches Mr. Rios, who can't help her because he doesn't know the word, and she calls her father at home, as he shares her experience and knowledge of British English. Ruby's father helps her to find the word in the dictionary, and Ruby brings the dictionary to school to resolve the situation:

C: The kids were laughing?
R: Yeah, they were laughing a lot. I was like, I don't want to say to you. I just . . . My conscience told me that this, what I spoke was right. And I know what I am saying. And my mind, it was not at rest that day. I thought about it all day. I called my dad from school, and he said, these people, many of them are immigrants and they don't know English. I went and talked with Mr. Rios, he was a teacher in the school last year, and I told him about what happened, but he didn't know the word either. So when I got home, I told my dad, please, help me bring something to the class…
C: Right.
R: So, it was like, my dad, I told my dad and he said, ok, I'm going to find you a dictionary. My father looked the word up in a big dictionary, and he said, here, here it is. And I marked it with a piece of paper. The next day, I brought the dictionary to school. It was so thick [pointing to her bag] that I had no room in my bag to carry any of my other books, so the only book I brought to school that day was the dictionary. And I took the dictionary to Mr. Rios, and Mr. Rowton was there too, and I showed him the word. And he said, oh, this is important to know, I need to call Mr. Medina right away. And right away he called Mr. Medina on

the phone, and he had him come and see the word in the dictionary. And when I got to class, the first thing I did was I laid the dictionary out on the teacher's desk, and when people came into the class, everyone saw the dictionary, and then they knew the meaning of the word.

In this part of the narrative, Ruby seeks to legitimize her knowledge with several different strategies. She appeals to her father, an outsider to the school, who shares her knowledge of British English and who recognizes the word. In bringing a large dictionary to school, Ruby is symbolically bringing with her the experiences of Nigerian schooling that she and her father share. At the same time, she also brings a legitimate academic text that is recognized both at home and in the school. Importantly, Ruby says the dictionary was so big that she had no room to carry any of her other school books. One might speculate that this issue is so important to Ruby that she could not focus her attention on her other academic studies. When Mr. Rios recognizes the word and remarks, "Oh, this is important," he calls Mr. Medina to tell him about the meaning of the word. Although Ruby's father is not a teacher and not a part of the school institution, he is a key resource who helps her find ways to legitimize herself within the school institution.

Reissman (1993) argues that how narrators end or sum up the story can provide insights into the ultimate meaning of the story for them. Ruby ends her story not with a summary statement about how she felt uncared for by her teachers and students (her story opening), but rather how her peers and teachers finally understood the meaning of "invigilate":

And when I got to class, the first thing I did was I laid the dictionary out on the teacher's desk, and when people came into the class, everyone saw the dictionary, and then they knew the meaning of the word.

Ruby's ending to the story reveals how she *cared about* being seen as knowledgeable and competent, and how she actively sought out adults—teachers and her father—to help her convey knowledge to her teachers and peers in school. Whereas in the beginning of the story, Ruby felt separated from the class and even from herself, at the end of the story Ruby's knowledge and word became a part of the school context and even worthy of being displayed on the teacher's desk. Through her relationships with her father and Mr. Rios, Ruby was able to negotiate and transform her school world to be inclusive of her British school experience.

In telling this story, Ruby draws from a variety of interpretations and expressions of caring. She cared about being seen as a legitimate English speaker in the class. She also cared about expanding the vocabulary of the classroom to include a British English term for "proctor." She engaged multiple people, including her father, Mr. Rios, and her classroom peers, in sharing what

she cared about. One could argue that in succeeding in having her word acknowledged and recognized, Ruby changed the classroom context in a way that enabled people to care for her, to respect her in a way that they previously didn't or couldn't. My point here is not to speculate which of these (or possibly other) meanings most motivated Ruby, but that these multiple interpretations of caring in Ruby's story show how caring for and caring about can be complex, multilayered, and interdependent.

Using a student-centered narrative analysis to understand the ways Ruby engaged others in caring provides insights that an analysis focused on teacher caring does not. From a perspective focused on teacher caring, one might argue that this story illustrates how uncaring teachers (and students) caused Ruby tremendous emotional distress and humiliation, or how a teacher cared about the correctness of words and academic texts rather than authentically caring for Ruby by acknowledging her lived experience and knowledge. In focusing attention only on the teacher, the analysis would be limited to a litmus test between a teacher caring or not caring. While a teacher-focused analysis provides an additional take on this story, it doesn't capture the agency with which Ruby narrates her experience of engaging others in processes of caring about and caring for.

Discussion: Complexifying Our View of Caring

Much of the research and writing about educational care separates the processes of *caring for* individual students from the processes of *caring about* issues that exist in a more public sphere. Moreover, the processes of *caring about* are often attributed to people in positions of power in schools and institutions and not students. The case studies in this paper illustrate the complex ways students engaged in multiple processes of caring for and caring about in their school context. In both Lila and Ruby's stories, the role of "one who cares" both shifts and is shared among multiple participants. There is not always a single "carer" providing for a "cared for." For example, it is not only Ruby who cared about the meaning of a British English word; the story revolved around Ruby's father, teachers, and fellow students also caring about the word's meaning. This process of caring about was not separate but connected to Ruby's need to feel cared for by her teachers and peers. Lila's multiple stories about her failing history class illustrate how the concepts of caring for and caring about might also provide conflicting interpretations of the same situation. In this case, the two concepts are distinct frames that are important to acknowledge and shift between in understanding a students' situation. Lila's stories also remind us that students' stories and positions are not fixed, but may continually shift and change across contexts, situations, and interpretations (Cook-Sather, 2007). It is important for educators to listen for

and attend to multiple and sometimes conflicting accounts of how caring functions for students in schools.

A student-centered narrative analysis shifts our attention from what the adults are doing (or not doing) to thinking about issues and experiences that are relevant and important to students. Rather than focusing our attention on whether teachers are caring or not caring (or asking if teacher care is good enough/sufficient/culturally relevant), this shift allows us to attend to a multitude of students' perspectives, situations, and grounded experiences. This is particularly important in schools with diverse student populations. Ruby's and Lila's stories provide insights into how they were isolated or treated unfairly, in part, because of language differences. Other immigrant students' stories involved issues of class, gender, race, and country of origin. The openness of listening for what students care for and about builds a capacity to recognize and to help address conflicts across social positions and situations (Rolón Dow, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999), and to work alongside students in developing agency, autonomy, and influence within their schools (Banks 1996; Goodenow, 1993; Kohn, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2000; Schaps, Battistich, & Solomon, 1997; Watson & Ecken, 2003).

I agree with Freema Elbaz-Luwisch (2007), who argues that in the current accountability climate, it is imperative to develop ways to talk about the experiences and perceptions of people within public schools. This imperative is even more critical within the rapidly diversifying school population in the US, where by 2040, 1 in 3 students will be children of immigrants (Suarez Orozco & Suarez Orozco, 2007). Widening our understanding to include listening for how students engage in and interpret caring processes is essential to developing and adapting educational contexts that serve a diverse range of students. As researchers and educators, attending more closely to students' experiences, including their narratives of caring for and caring about, expands and increases the complexity of the processes of caring that we not only examine, document, and analyze, but also participate within and ultimately co-construct with students.

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