Aspiring to Care in the Open: Educator Perspectives

Extended Abstract

Care ethics was championed by feminist scholars dissatisfied with theories of ethical action that relied solely on objectivity and rationality. They observed a void in moral philosophy that omitted relationships, reciprocity, context, and responsiveness (Hamilton, 2017). In a similar vein, the presenters came to ask: How can we center, communicate, and realize an ethic of care in our open education work? For Tronto and Fisher, care encompasses “everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair ‘our world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible” (1993, p. 103). Here, care resonates with open education commitments to repair access and encourage cooperative relationships to ensure education as a basic human right. We find a direct alignment with the UNESCO OER Recommendation Area of Action i.11.a. objective, “building awareness among relevant stakeholder communities on how OER can increase access to educational and research resources, improve learning outcomes, maximize the impact of public funding, and [especially] empower educators and learners to become co-creators of knowledge”.

Inspired by Tronto and Fisher’s model of care that articulates phases of caring and attention to the cared-for throughout, we established a care-based framework, Care in the Open: A Framework [https://caring.openped.buffscreate.net/](https://caring.openped.buffscreate.net/) to guide our open education work. We intend the framework to support our open education efforts at an American university by defining the values we wish to center, and realize as ways of being and outcomes. We hope the framework will help us convey these values in our open education communications and collaborations with students and colleagues.

We shared a first version of our framework at the OE Global Conference 2020, where we engaged colleagues in actively reflecting on connections between the framework and their own values and work in open education. In 2021, we extended the framework to address educator care for the risk and vulnerability diverse students experience working in open, and in educational landscapes complicated by surveillance technologies and student data ownership issues. We incorporated educator reflection questions, aiming to invite and support educators’ self-reflective engagement with care for students when designing and implementing learning experiences involving open educational resources and open pedagogies. We introduced this expanded framework content at the 2021 OERxDomains Conference.

Subsequently, we engaged a small sample of University of Colorado Boulder educators in conversations about our framework and its educator reflection questions. In these conversations we explored how educators respond to the framework and its questions, and whether both are effective supports to educator self-reflection on values we believe are critical in practicing care in open education.

In this session we will explore these educator perspectives on Care in the Open: A Framework [https://caring.openped.buffscreate.net/](https://caring.openped.buffscreate.net/), inviting participants to consider how as members of the global open education community they might use, adapt, or take inspiration from the framework to foreground and enact care—for students, for peer educators, for colleagues—in their open education work. We will begin by introducing the scholars who inspired our care-based approach, including Cronin (2020), Fisher and Tronto (1990), Noddings (1984), and Tronto
Next, we will discuss our development of the framework in 2020 and frameworks created by others for open education, open practices, and the values-driven design of higher education learning. The session focus will be the educators’ perspectives on our framework and care in open education, that we gathered from campus colleagues. We will discuss how these perspectives will inform our further framework development and enactment of care in our open education work. Through openly-licensed slides, Answergarden, and a shared document for collective note taking during the session, we will invite asynchronous annotation of our framework to facilitate dialogue in and beyond the conference platform throughout the week.

Participants will be able to draw connections and complements between feminist theories of care and the foundational values of care in the open education movement. They will gain a textured understanding of our framework development, iteration, and educator perspectives, that they might translate to local contexts. Through dialogue sustained in and beyond the conference platform, participants and presenters will contrast care perspectives, and enactments of care, across the global open education community. Our hope is that this dialogue will connect participants, inspiring them to work together to further care-based open educational practices, globally.


