

Teachers and Care: A Relational Narrative Inquiry of the Power of Educators for Youth

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Outline

- **Topics**
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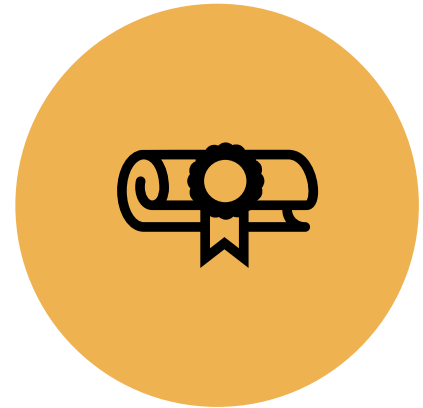
Topic



CARE



YOUTH



EDUCATION

Topic - Care



- **Caring About...**
 - **Grades, appropriate behaviour, the social context**
- **Caring For...**
 - **Empathy, responsive, dialogue, respect, trust**

Topic - Youth

Process of becoming – identity formation and an emerging sense of self

Youth mentoring – a key role of adults, like teachers, in youth's lives

These processes are at a critical time when youth are in school

Topic - Education

‘Champion’ for youth: “An adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists they become the best they can possibly be” (Pearson, 2012)

Teachers as educators, role models, and mentors

Teachers provide support, empowerment, boundaries, expectations, and guidance

Research Objective:

- A sociological exploration into the relational process of building teacher-student connections and championing efforts, from the vantage point of educators.
- What are the processes, practices, and reasons behind teachers' care for their junior high students?

Methods



**St. Albert Junior High
Schools**



4 Participants



**In-depth, semi-structured
interviews**



Journal prompts

Findings



"Ideal" Teachers

Questioner

Counselor

Negotiator

Community Leader



Care Components

Building **Trust**

Setting **Boundaries**

Fostering **Respect**

Forming **Identities**

The Questioner

“Kind of looking at the whole kid. There is more to you than just being a student. Student is important. There is more to you than just a student. Or that hockey player or that gymnast.”

**Identity
Forming**

“If you want to talk. Then my role would be I’m an adult in that school that they can trust. Yes I’m their teacher, yes I may [be] whatever I may be, but they know that they can trust me. And that’s super important.”

**Trust
Building**

“And I know, and I tease them that I’m old and I have to see you guys, and I get distracted easily, but I really need to know that you’re hearing me, just like you need to know I’m hearing you.”

**Boundary
Setting**

“I think a kid knows I care when a kid comes in and is like hey, can I talk to you? Absolutely. They know that I will drop something for them, they will see I have an interest in them. That I respect what they’re saying.”

**Respect
Fostering**

The Counselor

“They need to know that they can come to you with problems and that you’re not going to, you know, be a friend about it, you’ll be an adult about it and someone that can give them advice and help.”

Boundary Setting

Respect Fostering

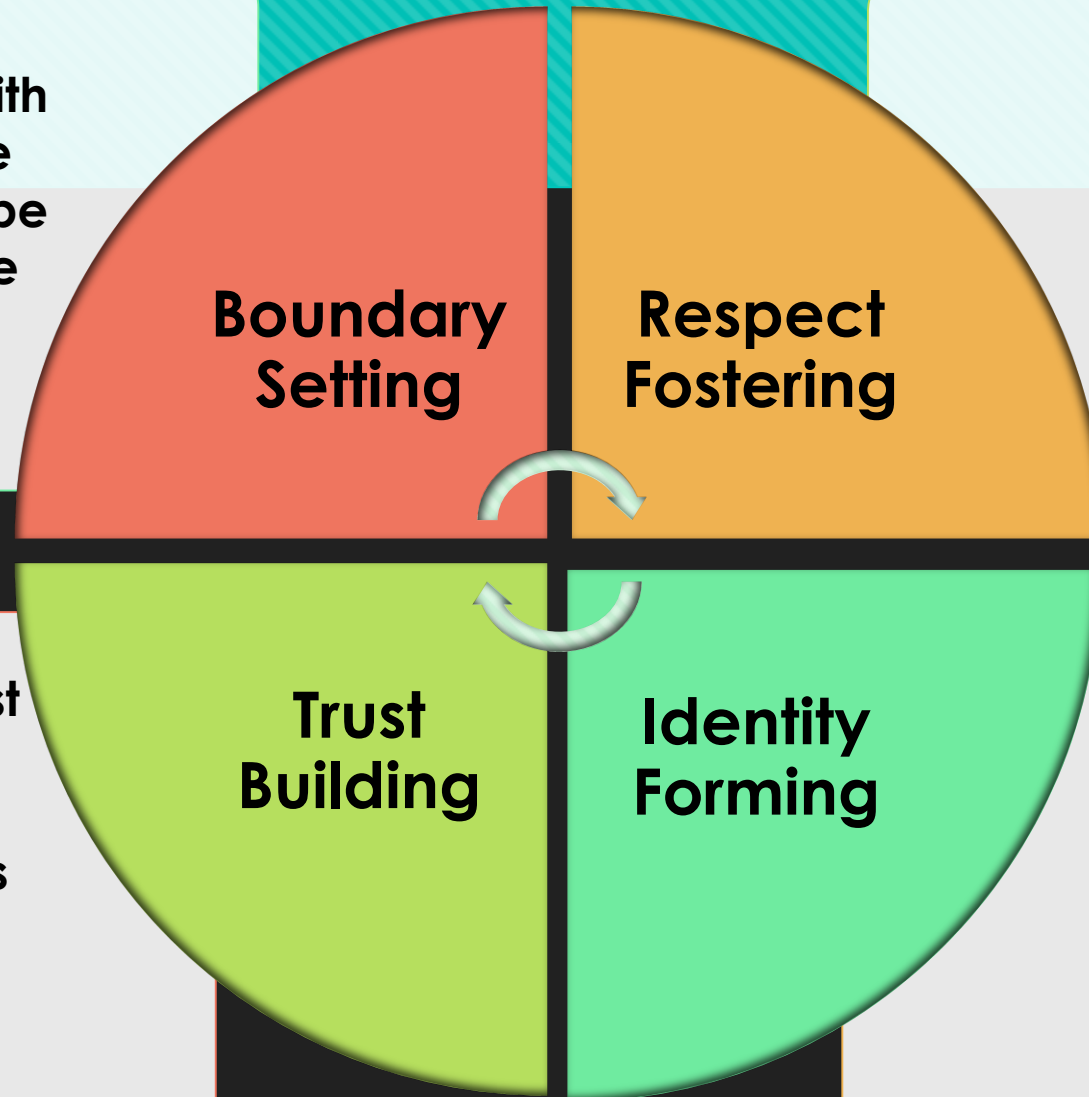
“I’ve always found that if they feel that they are a person of value in your room, that they will try to kind of prove to you that that’s true.”

“A lot of the time they just need someone to listen. And sometimes they’ll seek that out, other times it’s really important to notice and to just pay attention.”

Trust Building

Identity Forming

“Just because you’re frustrated, ... not seeing any change, just because you’re not getting results you wanted right away, doesn’t mean you aren’t making a difference and doesn’t mean you shouldn’t keep doing what we’re doing.”



The Negotiator

"Sometimes I need to set boundaries or wag my finger at them, ask them to do better next time, but never shout or make them feel awful about things. Treating them this way, they feel comfortable coming to ask me for help, forgiveness or a second chance."

**Boundary
Setting**

**Respect
Fostering**

"Fair to a teenager is not just giving everyone the same thing. They understand equity and that some need more support than others to have the same opportunity. It is about treating them with respect and like their own person."

"I want my kids to know that it doesn't matter what they look like, how well they're doing in my class, what their mood is that day, that I still like them as a person, and I'm still going to like them tomorrow."

**Identity
Forming**

**Trust
Building**

"I guess when they seek me out, when they feel trusting enough to let me help them with something whether it be school, whether it be relationships with other teachers, other students."

The Community Leader

"Sometimes they just need to be able to talk at you, and they don't want you to fix their problem, they don't want you to be able to do anything else other than just be able to vent."

Trust Building

Identity Forming

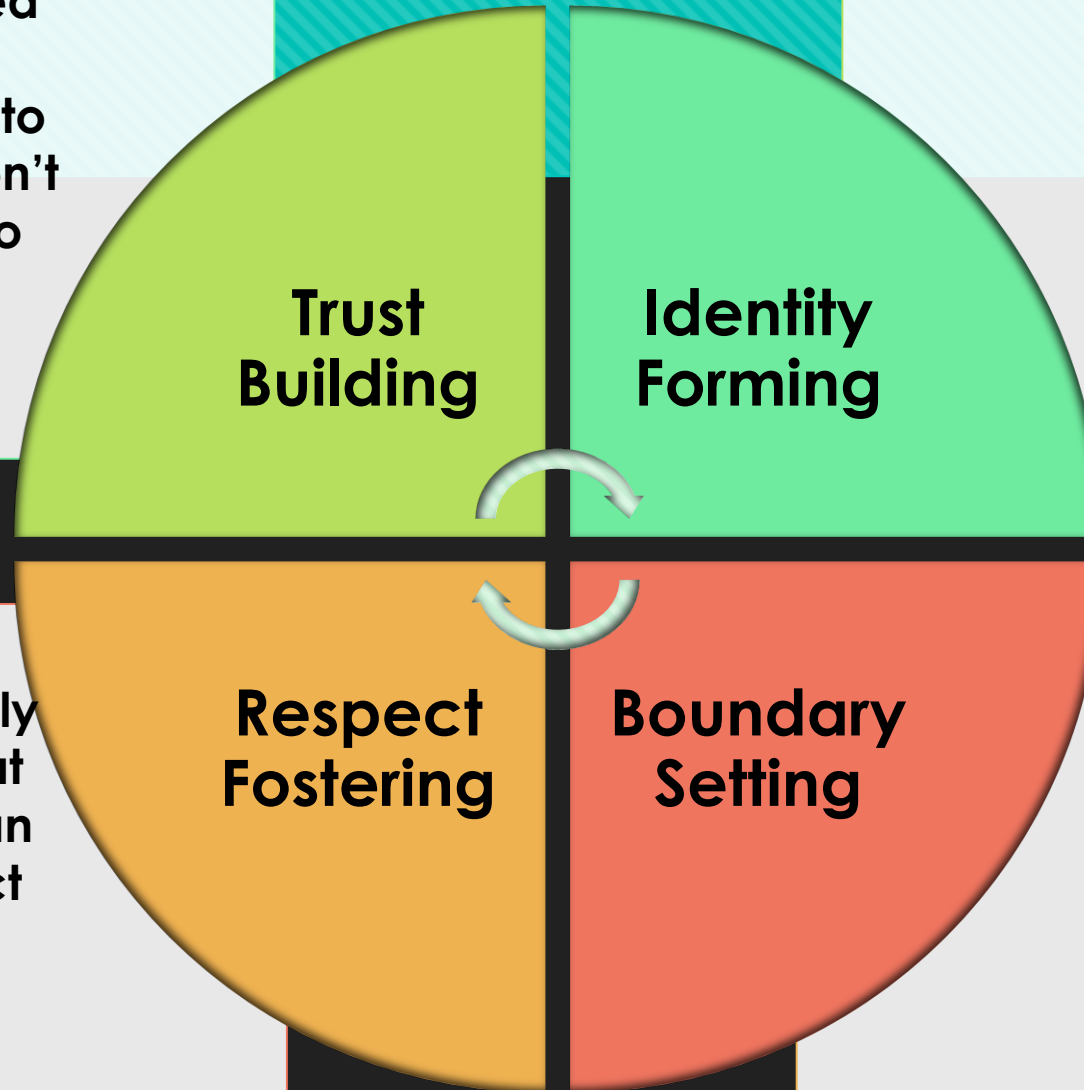
"A caring relationship, it's being able to know that student's story. What's their background, what are they coming from, what do they want to do, who are they as a person?"

"And it really is just honestly being able to tell them that I'm going to treat you as an equal, I'm going to respect you as long as you do the same back to me."

Respect Fostering

Boundary Setting

"I tried to emulate a lot of that in my coaching, where I'm strict, and I'm stern, but they still recognize that they're important to me, that I care for them, that I want them to do well."



Why does a caring relationship matter?



Youth need to feel cared for, supported and challenged.



When youth feel cared for, positive youth development occurs.



Teachers can provide support (with respect, trust, boundaries etc.) to guide or “champion” youth.



This youth mentoring by teachers can guide young people through their process of becoming.

Limitations/Future Studies

- **Would a different school in a different socio-economic environment find similar components of care?**
- **How does a teacher's gender impact their relationship building with students?**
- **How are students' narratives similar and unique from the teachers' views of caring relationships?**

Closing Remarks: Teachers' Care Matters

Care is created, (re)created, fostered, challenged, and reproduced through ongoing, dynamic and meaningful practices.

In my study, the components of care that were utilized by teachers were: Building trust, fostering respect, setting boundaries and forming identities.

For teachers, building caring relationships with youth is exhausting but extremely rewarding as they can play a key role for youth in their process of becoming and identity formation.

○ If I don't feel like I'm an effective teacher, that I'm not making a difference, I won't do it. It's too difficult of a career, it's too demanding to be something where you're putting in half-ass effort.



Thank you!