

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

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ABSTRACT

Our human process of becoming, which involves identity formation and an emerging sense of self (Worth, 2009, p.1050), begins at a very young age and reaches critical points through youth's educational life course. Through the process of becoming, the ways through which youth deal with the challenges in their lives are potentially supported or thwarted, depending on the presence of caring adults who may act as guides, adult mentors, or what can be referred to as "champions." According to Rita Pierson (2013), a champion for youth is "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." During adolescence, the transition from elementary school to junior high can result in "heightened levels of mistrust between teachers and students, student perceptions that teachers no longer care about them, and a decrease in opportunities for students to establish meaningful relationships with teachers" (Wentzel, 1997, p.411). Therefore, the position that teachers occupy at such a necessary time for youth becoming gives these adult authorities a unique opportunity to connect with youth and to establish a relationship that can serve as a role model and a support system as youth learn who they are and aspire to become. This project is a sociological exploration into the dynamics of building caring relationships between youth and teachers. Specifically, what are the relational processes of teacher-student connections according to junior high teachers?

Keywords: youth, teachers, junior high, care, connections, relationships

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INTRODUCTION

As social beings, we both influence others and are influenced by them throughout our lives. As we journey from childhood to adulthood, we experience our lives *in* and *through* relationships. Youth today navigate adolescence and negotiate relationships in an ever-changing cultural and technological landscape, thereby facing new challenges and struggles in unique ways compared to previous generations. Mental health concerns, addictions, pervasive technology, youth disengagement, academic pressures, financial stress, and bullying are only a few of the myriad social issues gaining more prominent attention in recent decades. Youth are staying in education longer and are actively delaying their inevitable entrance into the labour market (Worth, 2009, p.1051). All of this has implications for adults in young people's lives, and in turn, the impact caring adults may play in a young person's life.

Through their process of becoming, the ways through which youth deal with the challenges in their lives is potentially supported or thwarted, depending on the presence of caring adults who may act as guides, adult mentors or what can be referred to as “champions.” According to Rita Pierson (2013), a champion for youth is “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.” Teachers act as educators, and potentially powerful role models and mentors. Strong network ties benefit young people because they provide social support and resources that youth may leverage or mobilize as they journey into adulthood (Ferguson, 2018, p.212). Youth mentoring, as Ferguson (2018) suggests, “is a sustained relationship between an adult and a youth in which the adult provides guidance and support to facilitate a youth's transition to adulthood” (p.212; Eby, Rhodes, and Allen, 2007; Rhodes, 2002). This project is a sociological

exploration into the relational process of building teacher-student connections and championing efforts, from the vantage point of educators.

Our human process of becoming, which involves identity formation and an emerging sense of self (Worth, 2009, p.1050), begins at a very young age and reaches critical points through youth's educational life course. Youth not only experience a variety of societal challenges such as those listed above, but they also are involved in the evolving process of identity formation that comes with decision making and independence of adulthood. Canadian youth within junior high schools, between the ages of 11 and 15, are at one of these critical periods that are defined by change, exploration of many possible futures, and impactful decisions (Worth, 2009, p.1058). Nancy Worth (2009) conceptualizes “becoming” in a dialectical way, not as one discrete life stage, but rather as both personal, focusing on questions of identity, and social, emphasizing youth transition itself as a process of becoming. During this developmental time of life and experience, the people who are the most prominent in a young person’s life are parents, peers, and teachers. Even though parents are a primary agent of socialization, whom many youths can rely on to champion their journey, other adult role models are significant, especially for those whose families or communities are less equipped to offer the needed love, care, and support. As such, a young person’s encounters with adult authorities outside of parents or guardians are impactful and significant.

The middle years of education represent a period marked by a younger person's attempts to leave their childhood dependency behind and begin to distance themselves from parental influences. Peers start to socialize youth in their everyday interactions, interests, and values but their similarly-situated friends are inexperienced with the transition into adulthood, as they are also going through this process of identity formation. This leaves adults in schools, like teachers,

in a unique position of being an adult authority figure who is not a parent but is also not a peer. Educators can provide an essential window into adult-adolescent relationship building.

Teachers are individuals who teach others “how to behave socially and how to understand social reality” (Gevorgyan & Balasanyan, 2012, p.43). The position that teachers occupy at an integral time for youth mentoring allows them to connect with youth and to establish a relationship where they serve as a role model and a support system as youth learn who they are, their role in society, and how to become themselves. This student-teacher relationship will be the focus of this study. This project is a sociological exploration into the dynamics of building caring relationships between youth and teachers. Specifically, what are the relational processes of teacher-student connections, according to junior high teachers?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following sections outline the research that has been examined in this line of inquiry to set the basis of what the research project addresses. This project contributes to both public conversations and academic literature in the sociology of education as well as care theory. This discussion centres the changes and challenges associated with youth today, then explores teachers’ roles in young people’s lives, and how care can be expressed, built, shared, and utilized towards youth becoming.

Young People Today: Changes and Challenges

“Identity is a life story or a set of stories that adults have internalized in order to make sense of their life to themselves and others. Youth are expected to develop a core identity that is reasonably stable and sustainable while living within a society that is characterized by change. This is an enormous task” (Greenberg, Grekul, & Nelson, 2016, p.301).

During adolescence, youth are faced with many new challenges and first-time experiences. One of the most significant problems for youth at this period is grappling with the question – who am I? Understanding youth transition as a process of “becoming” (Worth, 2009, pp.1050-1051), is to understand this as a time during which young people are beginning to take more responsibility and gain more control over their lives. Ideally, youth become engaged, self-sufficient and are actively creating their futures.

Bibby’s (2010) survey of Alberta teens found that even though getting a good education is viewed as a priority and that many young people find school to be a source of enjoyment, other prevalent sources of enjoyment include the television, videos and computer games (p. 19). Electronic means of interacting with other peoples “has contributed significantly to the sense that teens ... have close friends” (Bibby, 2010, p. 21). Even though Bibby’s (2010) study finds that Alberta youth are engaged with electronics and social media on a regular basis, Alberta youth expressed feeling that the primary sources of influence on their lives are their families, their friends, and their willpower. Many of the youth Bibby (2010) surveyed downplayed the impact that internet, television and even teachers have on their lives (p. 23).

In this context of social media engagement, some adolescents “seldom experience close-knit relationships, lack adult guidance, experience isolation, and rely on friends who have no more life experience than themselves” (Alder & Moulton, 1998, p.16). These challenges that youth face may amplify and shift as they continue through the educational system. Specifically, the transition from elementary school to junior high can result in “heightened levels of mistrust between teachers and students, student perceptions that teachers no longer care about them, and a decrease in opportunities for students to establish meaningful relationships with teachers” (Wentzel, 1997, p.411).

Parents, caregivers, mentors, other family members, peers, and other adult authorities play a significant role in young people's process of becoming. One group with much potential to positively (and/or negatively) affect this, are teachers. The part of teachers and the relationships they develop with their students in schools potentially thwarts or fosters identity building and adolescent thriving. Many scholars emphasize that feelings of "belongingness and of being cared for can foster the adoption and internalization of goals and values of caregivers" (Wentzel, 1997, p.411), which is what Gevorgyan and Balasanyan (2012) explained with their sociological definition of education, that teaching is the "transformation of socially important knowledge" whether it is the sciences or society's values (p.40). The question becomes, do teachers extend their reach beyond academic outcomes, offering tangible and symbolic *care*? To what extent and in what ways do teachers practice caring for their students?

Teachers as Educators and Mentors

As societal organization becomes more complex, teaching youth career and life skills has greater importance. Education has transformed from 'telling them' to 'encouraging them to find out,' while at the same time, instilling youth with the technical skills and knowledge they need to advance in society (Tyyska, 2014, p.89). If there is confusion about social norms, "the general rules and expectations concerning each person's role in the classroom or society" (Cobb & Yackel in Mullins, 2018, p. 6), then youth are less likely to participate in discourse and cooperative learning within the classroom. Mullins (2018) states that "learning should not be viewed as a bank depository in which the teacher inserts knowledge in the students' minds, but rather as the process of using new information to prompt ... [and] allow students to rethink prior ideas" (p. 7). Essentially, "students learn when they are encouraged to become the authors of their own ideas and when they are held accountable for the reasoning about and understanding

key ideas” (Engle and Conant in Mullins, 2018, p.6). This places more emphasis on the teacher to stimulate the student to respond to, and accept, societies social values and norms (Tyyska, 2014, p.120). In this way, the teacher becomes a social weaning agent – "provid[ing] the skill sets required for navigating one's life, including citizenship, education, and training for employment" (Tyyska, 2014, p. 89). Therefore, for a teacher to foster and sustain a caring relationship with an adolescent individual, a favourable climate must be established to transmit these social values and ideals. Again, teachers can play an important role as youth navigate the dynamic time of adolescence.

Nell Noddings (2003) argues that “teaching is conceptually and practically dependent on learning,” but for this to be achieved, society, and specifically teachers, need to figure out what it is that youth need to learn *to their greatest capabilities* (p.242) [emphasis added]. Beyond core competences and academic context, youth need “a great deal more ... [b]ut what is needed differs from student to student” (Noddings, 2003, p.243). Noddings (2003) illustrates a dilemma facing teachers and students alike. “Students need and want teachers to care for them as persons and to convey this care through listening and responding to their expressions of concern” (p.244). This form of care is not as straightforward as a teacher saying that they care for their students; it must be established, maintained and exhibit the integrity of a real relationship between two individuals (Noddings, 2010, para.9).

The difference between a teacher *saying* they care and a teacher *showing* that they care begins to find expression when we examine the differences between *caring for* and *caring about* (McKamey, 2011, p.79). *Caring for* is the practices involved in day to day interactions that attend to an individual's basic needs. These are private and contained within interpersonal relationships that are specific to an individual's situation. *Caring about* are actions and

interactions that have implications that are larger than any one interpersonal relationship; it is the broader, overarching idea of care. For example, school boards, principals and teachers *care about* test scores. On the other hand, a teacher *cares for* her students who are struggling with trigonometry (McKamey, 2011, p.79). By teachers *caring for* their students, they “accept some responsibility for the development of [their] students as whole persons” (Noddings, 2003, p. 249). Since teachers are the adult figures in youths lives who spend countless hours with them throughout their educational journey as youth grow and develop, in addition to parents/caregivers, teachers are in a unique position to “identify and encourage [youth’s] talents, ... to find out what actually does motivate students and to encourage those interests” (Noddings, 2003, p.250).

Lisa Mims (2018) asked a room full of teachers if it is fair to ask teachers to add 25+ individual students emotional well-being onto their already overflowing plates. Mims (2018) answer was an enthusiastic yes. For learning to take place, for students to take a risk not only in school, but for themselves to grow, social and emotional development must be present in the classroom; *care* must be present.

Care Theory

Care theory claims that caring is the development and basic well-being of another (Engster, 2005, p.51). Caring has three aims: the first aim is to satisfy another's basic biological needs; the second aim is to help another develop and maintain the essential functions needed to survive in society (such as sensation, speech, imagination, literacy, etc.); and the third aim is to support another's life free from illness, harm, malnutrition, pain, and other possible adverse outcomes (Engster, 2005, p.51-53). Concerning these aims, school and youth mentoring would

fall under the second and third aims, to develop and maintain an individual's essential functions needed to survive in society and guiding youth out of harm's way.

Engster (2005) suggests three virtues that best meet the aims of caring. The first virtue is *attentiveness*, which entails *empathy* and the ability to anticipate the needs another individual may have. Second, the virtue of *responsiveness*, means engaging in the form of dialogue to discern the other person's needs. Finally, the third virtue is *respect*. This virtue may appear at first apparent, given the idea that another individual is worthy of attention and responsiveness. Yet respect needs to be maintained so as not to make the individual who is being cared for feel as though they are lesser because of their needs. For Engster (2005), this element is relationships. (p.55). These three virtues of care may be applied to the school system and student-teacher relationships. A teacher needs to be empathetic to a young person's life experiences, to respond to what the young person says and does while at school, and to respect and acknowledge that adolescents are human beings who require and deserve care.

In their research with youth in grades 6 through 12, Hershberg, DeSouza, Warren, Lerner, and Lerner (2014) found that connection to others was paramount for students (p.957). They argue that having a positive relationship or bond with other people, including peers, family and non-parental adults matters a great deal to youth (Hershberg, DeSouza, Warren, Lerner & Lerner, 2014, p.965). These positive connections, or relationships, are a form of social capital, which is pivotal in youth development and potential flourishing. A key component of social capital is “how individuals or groups are connected to larger forms of social organizations” (Cemalcilar & Goksen, 2014, p.97), especially in “situations where family social capital is not adequate, school social capital may be functional in providing students with the resources they are lacking” (Cemalcilar & Goksen, 2014, p.98). The key component in the context of school

social capital comes in the form of relationships youth build with their teachers (Cemalcilar & Goksen, 2014, p.99). For these reasons, this research examines how teachers “decide to invest in, not invest in, or disengage from the [student-teacher] relationship” (Muller, 2001, p.242), as a way to explore the caring component of education by teachers.

Positive Youth Development

Care theory can be linked to discussions in more recent lines of scientific inquiry called positive youth development. Positive youth development focuses on what youth need for their “optimal development” (Scales, Benson, & Roehlkepartain, 2011, p.263). The framework of developmental assets created by the Search Institute in 1990 is an example of positive youth development. It groups 40 different relationships, opportunities, skills, self-perceptions and values that studies have shown are related to positive development in youth and divides them into eight categories (Scales, Benson, & Roehlkepartain, 2011, p.263-264). The external asset categories are what adults and peers provide for youth such as support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time. Internal assets include a commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity, which adolescents are said to develop on their own (Scales, Benson, & Roehlkepartain, 2011, p.264). Since the Search Institute created this framework, studies have repeatedly found that the more of these eight assets or categories an adolescent has, the better off, in the long run, they are academically, emotionally, socially, and psychologically (Scales, Benson, & Roehlkepartain, 2011, p. 264).

The social construction of youth is everchanging. The historical assumption that youth are not capable of making decisions about things such as their education, has been supplanted in contemporary discourse by the idea that “youth are producers of their own growth,” that youth are best able to grow when being supported, but also challenged, by adults (Larson, 2006, p.677).

Humans are most motivated when questioned and when we believe that we are agents of our own actions. Adolescence then is the beginning of the transition between adult dependency, and self-autonomy. This phase, which is experienced while in school, can be structured and supported by teachers and other adults in adolescents' lives through five forms of assistance, or what Larson (2006) terms 'scaffolding' (p.684). To what extent, we may wonder, do caring teacher-student relationships provide youth with scaffolding that supports them in their process of becoming?

The first form of scaffolding that Larson (2006) termed is authoritative parenting. This is the idea that the best way to maintain parental control is to give explanations about the adult's actions, as a way to provide youth opportunities for input on the issue (p.684). Second is instrumental scaffolding, which is when someone with expertise gives someone with fewer experiences' suggestions, cues, clarification or modeling to help the less experienced individual focus on key points in the learning problem. This means that the 'teacher' does not actually teach or direct the individual with less experience but provides support and aid to help the individual reach the next step on their own (Larson, 2006, p.684). This can enable a sense of agency and ownership discussed previously that is important in youth empowerment and identity formation. Larson's (2006) third component is motivational scaffolding. This piece can be modeling enthusiasm, communicating confidence in the young individual, setting realistic expectations and goals, or choosing situations in which the adolescent will experience success (p.685). The fourth form of scaffolding is supporting cycles of real-world learning. Examples here include connecting youth with a new opportunity in the community, or to be there to help the adolescent reflect on what they experienced and how it relates to their life now (Larson, 2006, p.685). The final form of scaffolding is asset building, which is the altering of the obstacle course that is the youth's everyday life. This component includes limiting distractions and disruptions but also

increasing the experiences which keep the youth motivated and directed towards positive development and success (Larson, 2006, p.686).

All six forms of scaffolding that Larson (2006) discusses can relate to the role teachers play in the student-teacher relationship. A teacher must explain why students need to do a specific test or activity and guide young people in the direction of the correct answer on a test or assignment. Teachers must set realistic goals and expectations that are met with enthusiasm and confidence, show how the classroom material relates to the world, and finally, should model behaviour on how to deal with life's challenges and difficulties. Larson's (2006) six forms of scaffolding may be the foundations of care that should be shown and acted upon by teachers in the student-teacher relationship.

All youth need support in some form, and from somewhere, for positive youth development to occur and for youth to reach their full potential, whether academically, emotionally, or socially. Liang, Spencer, West, and Rapport (2013) suggest that youth-adult partnerships, in which both parties learn from one another, contribute to decision making, and act together to promote change, are one the best ways to support positive youth development (p.259). When youth-adult partnerships are executed correctly, they can encourage behavioural, emotional, and academic gains for youth (Liang, Spencer, West & Rapport, 2013, p.259). An example of this type of youth-adult partnership that can support positive youth development is the teacher-student relationship.

These elements of youth-adult partnerships can be applied alongside Larson's (2006) description of youth scaffolding. Both of these conceptual frameworks may provide a basis for student-teacher relationships. Both Larson (2006) and Liang, Spencer, West, and Rapport (2013) explore how youth are going through the process of becoming by trying to find their agency,

while also still needing the care and guidance of others. As mentioned in the earlier discussion, this is where teachers are in a unique position to help youth empower themselves since most youth are trying to distance themselves from their parent's control while still needing adult guidance for life decisions. This is what Noddings' (2003) means when she says that "a teacher's job extends well beyond introducing students to a particular subject" (p. 245). Not only is a teacher supposed to teach their students their own subject, but a teacher also needs to motivate their students, build relationships of trust, "encourage intellectual growth", allow room for mutual growth and curriculum planning, and to create a safe environment for youth to learn and grow on their own in order to become empowered (Noddings, 2003, p. 249-251). This is why it is a "challenge for teachers ... to demonstrate caring behaviors [that are] responsive to students' needs" (Garza, Alejandro, Blythe & Fite, 2014, p.1); the teacher's role is vast and difficult to define.

The Significance of Care for Youth in Schools

As we have seen, a caring youth experience is a key component of positive youth development. In essence, this care and positive youth development are ways to empower youth and to guide them in this transitional period of development in building their own identities. The Social Development Model indicates that if youth are provided with "opportunities, skills, and recognition for prosocial behaviour," that this will strengthen their attachment and commitment to positive social connections (Kim, Oesterle, Hawkins, & Shapiro, 2015, p. 567). Youth will then adopt the standards and beliefs of those positive social connections, leading to prosocial behaviour.

The relationships youth build within schools can be examined as sources of care they need in their process of becoming. Kirk, Lewis, Brown, Karibo, Scott, and Park (2017) found

four factors within the school environment that influenced youth becoming. First is individual characteristics of adolescents such as learning disabilities, personal interests, or personality traits (p.835). Second is ecological characteristics which are multiple settings that exert influence on the youth and the school, including neighborhood, social status, family, or culture (p.835). The third factor is school-wide characteristics which is a wide-ranging group that encompasses a school's resources, the staff, sense of community, traditions, and cultural diversity (p.837-838). The final factor is the classroom characteristics which has five subgroups found to be influential: the teacher's belief in student ability, sense of community within the classroom, engaging classroom practices, shared decision making, and equitable student-teacher roles (p.836-837). This research explores the third factor – staff.

The classroom spaces provide many opportunities for teacher-student relationship building. Maclever's (2012) study found two teacher characteristics to be influential in school engagement: when teachers make school an enjoyable experience, and when teachers build rapport with students and create positive relationships within the classroom (p.158). With respect to these two teacher characteristics, the study found that schools needed teachers to develop ongoing relationships with youth by getting to know them on a more personal level (while remaining professional), and for teachers to maintain open communication channels with students (Maclever, 2012, p.158-159). The results of this study indicate that students are feeling lumped into a singular group and are not being seen as the unique individuals. For youth to be empowered to develop their own unique identity, this suggests that a more individualized approach in teaching is a way toward positive youth development and empowerment.

Mims (2018) demonstrated this by sharing her own experience from teaching. Mims asked her students one year, what a caring teacher looked like. The answers she received from

her students all contained the same underlying message; it is not about what the teacher did for them, but how the teacher made them *feel* (emphasise added, Mims, 2018).

Similarly, in their study, Stelmack, Kovach and Steeves' (2017) found that teachers are an integral part of positive youth development. A teacher's empathetic response to students, the teacher's disposition, and the teacher's consideration of the students' lives were found to be qualities of effective teachers (Stelmack, Kovach, & Steeves, 2017, p.3). Mainly, if a teacher is warm and caring, while holding high expectations for the students academically, but also possessing a wide-ranging repertoire of teaching strategies so as to meet individual needs of students, then students saw these teachers as effective, and hence beneficial to their growth (Stelmack, Kovach, & Steeves, 2017, p.8).

Since youth spend much of their adolescence in schools with teachers, then "teachers possess the unique opportunity to positively impact youth each day," to guide youth through positive youth development, and to empower them (Vidourek, King, Mernard, Murnan, & Nabors, 2011, p.124). Vidourek, King, Mernard, Murnan, and Nabors (2011) similarly found that youth who feel supported and cared for by teachers and peers felt better about life difficulties they faced, such as making informed decisions on secondary schooling (p.116).

Compared to the previous two studies mentioned, the work of Vidourek, King, Mernard, Murnan, and Nabors (2011) study addressed the teachers themselves in their everyday actions within the classroom about how they create an empowering and engaging environment for youth. The authors found that teachers trying to act as positive role models, those who use students' first names, and teachers that enforce rules regarding student respect were the top three most frequently used strategies teachers applied to create an empowering environment (Vidourek, King, Mernard, Murnan, & Nabors, 2011, p.118). The fourth and fifth most commonly used

strategies were teachers attempting to show students that they are respected, and actively listening to students when they are speaking (Vidourek, King, Mernard, Murnan, & Nabors, 2011, p.124).

This same study also found that students feel the most supported by empathetic teachers who regularly praise their students, and provide attention to students regularly (Vidourek, King, Mernard, Murnan, & Nabors, 2011, p.124). Conversely, the difference between the three most important actions that a teacher believes exemplify care (positive role model behaviour, using first names, and enforcing rules on respect) and the ways students feel supported by a teacher (those who are empathetic, use praise and provide attention) shows the disconnect within the student-teacher relationship in how care is shown and received.

The research has some suggestions about teachers can create empowering environments and relationships with students for the youth to become themselves and forge their own identities. One suggestion is taking into account students' experiences and perspectives when developing curriculum to make it more accessible to students (Cook-Sather, 2007, p. 344). Other studies have found that the best strategies for youth empowerment are "treating students as capable persons, capitalizing on their knowledge and interests, and involving them in determining goals and learning methods" (Cook-Sather, 2007, p. 345).

In the North American education system, there remains a longstanding belief that the 'teacher knows best' while putting a significant amount of emphasis on the individual (Noddings, 2010, para.8). If a student is not learning, the teacher is not teaching the subject matter effectively, or the student needs to take more responsibility for their studying which results in tutors, more exams, and less free will for the youth involved. This commonly held belief denies "the agency of young people by invoking the fallacy of child as becoming, adult as

being” (Worth, 2009, p.1052). This is where youth have “left the dependency of child-hood and adolescence, and [have] not yet entered the enduring responsibilities that are normative adulthood” since they are still under the care of adults but wish to make decisions as the adults they are becoming (Worth, 2009, p.1051). By including youth in decision-making that impacts them, by giving them opportunities and chances to make mistakes and nurture their interests, to show them that teachers care for their wellbeing and not just their grades, is the task set before teachers to empower their students so that they can create their own identities.

Where do we go from here?

There is a lot of work that addresses why elementary aged youth need to be cared for and why teachers are vital figures to enacting care. Most literature addresses youth at the elementary age in which youth are not yet at an autonomous stage in developing their identities. Less attention has been given to the way that teachers care for youth within the classroom at the junior high level. How teachers care and subsequently teach can lead to building caring relationships between the student and teacher which can guide youth in their process of becoming. The best way to address these ‘how’ questions is to address the teachers themselves. This study interviewed Canadian junior high teachers to hear first-hand accounts of how these teachers are caring for youth and building these caring relationships during this period of increased autonomy, independence, and becoming.

“Youth transition [is] a constantly evolving experience, embracing its changeability and instability” (Braidotti in Worth, 2009, p.1058). It is a time that if youth are cared for, challenged, and encouraged, identities are formed, and empowerment occurs. Youth becoming can result in “enhanced self-awareness, social achievement, improved mental health and academic performance, reduced rates of dropping out of school, delinquency and substance abuse, and

reduced violence” (Pearrow & Pollack, 2009, p.48). Teachers are prominent figures in the lives of youth, and as such are in the unique position to help youth find empowerment and identity. Through genuine, maintained, reciprocal care is how teachers can accomplish this. As Noddings writes, “caring is the very bedrock of all successful education” (in McKamey, 2011, p.78). This is why this study examined how teachers care for youth from the perspectives of teachers themselves.

METHODS

Using narrative inquiry approach, I analyzed “the stories teachers tell... [which] are revealing of the ways they make sense of the world” (Webb & Blond, 1995, p.614). The procedure focused on studying a few individuals, “gathering data through the collection of their stories, reporting individual experiences, and chronologically ordering ... the meaning of those experiences” (Creswell, 2007, p.54). This organization and ordering of experiences are through the use of a plot line, or causal link since most individuals do not tell their stories in chronological order (Creswell, 2007, p. 56). For example, a teacher could describe an event with a student from five years ago, then an incident from last week, followed by a story of their very first year teaching. Therefore, I ordered these stories based on a common thread of care that the teachers described throughout their participation. I used semi-structured interviews and journal responses kept by the participants as a way to explore their stories of care.

This narrative inquiry explored meanings of teachers’ care about their students and how they care for them. This line of inquiry is more than just asking a teacher if they care. It is about understanding how a teacher connects with students, why they choose to build caring relationships, how they maintain these relationships, and why they continue to make these connections even after “failed” attempts.

Understanding how teachers build caring relationships with students and why they choose to care about them is more than answering a simple question; it is the nuanced stories and intricate meanings behind the actions of both the teacher and students that create these relationships of care. Since it is the stories and meanings behind an individual's actions, then every caring relationship between a teacher and student is different and unique. Narrative inquiry delves into these stories and meanings to share how teachers build caring relationships with each, individual student.

Recruitment

This project focuses on junior high teachers in St. Albert, in Alberta, Canada. Junior high, which is grades 7-9 in Alberta, is a pivotal time for youth in which they begin to gain autonomy while still needing adult guidance. The adult guidance this research looked at was through these junior high teachers who engage with youth daily. The criteria for teacher participation was that the teachers must be currently teaching in a junior high school in the city of Edmonton or its surrounding municipalities. Also, these teachers needed at least four years of previous teaching experience so that they have a better understanding of their teaching practice. In total, there were four teacher participants from three junior high schools from St. Albert only, that participated in the study. All teachers had been teaching for at least four years and were a mix, but a non-representative sample across genders and age.

To gather participants for this study, I applied for research permission with the public and Catholic school boards in the Edmonton and surrounding area. Of the school boards that granted permission, I sent email letters to the principals of the junior high schools in those school districts, asking for permission to interview any teachers who wished to participate in the study (see Appendix A). From there, the principals who agreed to the project informed their teachers of

the project and of how to contact the researcher. A recruitment poster was attached to the initial correspondence via email for the principals to share with their teachers (see Appendix B). If a teacher was interested in the project, they contacted me via email. From there I informed the possible participants of what the study involved, the time commitment, and benefits of the project, before the first interview date was arranged (see Appendix C). When I received five responses, recruitment stopped.

Initial contact and interviews began in October of 2018. In total, five teacher participants agreed to the study, with one participant choosing to withdraw after the initial interview was conducted resulting in four participants whose data was collected and analyzed over the span of five months.

Data Collection

Data collection was completed in three phases. The first phase was the initial interviews, which took place throughout October and November 2018. These were approximately one-hour sessions at a coffee shop agreed upon between me and each participant. These interviews were in-depth, semi-structured interviews that were recorded for future transcription and analysis.

Semi-structured interviews are a flexible interview format “in which main questions are prepared ahead of time, but the questions can be modified or clarified based on participant feedback” (Symbaluk, 2014, p.208). In-depth semi-structured interviews were chosen to allow me the ability to guide the conversation when needed, but also to allow the participants the ability to expand on questions, themes, and stories that they wished to share. This process of semi-structured interviews allowed for richer, in-depth data most accessible to narrative inquiry, that shed light on other themes or patterns I found during the analysis. For reference to the initial interview questions that, see Appendix D.

During the opening interviews, I explained what the next phase of participation involved, namely, participant journaling. With journaling comes the opportunity to “identify themes and patterns, make sense of fragmented events, feelings and meanings, and explore aspects of professional practice” (Alterio in Humble & Sharp, 2012, p.3). This process allowed for participants to give not only written accounts of their caring practices but also a time to reflect and expand on their own experiences in written journal form.

The journaling phase occurred over a 4-6 week period after the initial interviews were completed, with the researcher sending out approximately seven to ten prompts for the participants to respond to at their leisure. The participants responded to any prompt, whenever they had the time available, while also having the option to expand or diverge from the prompts if they wished. In the end, the researcher gathered four entries from the first three participants, and five entries from the fourth. Based on the initial interview, each participant received some unique journal prompts but overall, all participants received the same initial seven prompts (see Appendix E for the shared journal prompts). Participants wrote their entries on a Microsoft Word document, which after completion they sent via email to the researcher.

The third phase of participation was closing interviews. Like the opening interviews, the closing interviews were in-depth, semi-structured interviews held in a mutually agreed coffee shop between the researcher and individual participants. The closing interviews were a way for the researcher to expand on trends, patterns, and experiences of the participants found within the journal entries. As such, the closing interviews were unique to each participant, with nine of the same questions being asked to each participant (see Appendix F for shared closing interview questions). The closing interviews took place in January and February 2019.

Upon analysis of the interview transcripts and the journal responses, there were some questions asked that were not addressed, or not explored thoroughly enough to be discussed within this study. Some of these questions and responses will be addressed in the Limitations/Future Studies section.

Understanding Stories of Relationship Building

The journal entries and interviews were analyzed using narrative inquiry. As discussed previously, narrative inquiry is the organizing and ordering of experiences along a plot line of how each teacher has developed their notions of caring for their students. Interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Transcription is a way of “re/presenting” the data in text form, and with it comes the belief that the researcher has captured the reality of the recorded conversation and is portraying this reality accurately (Tilley & Powick, 2002, p.292).

After transcription, I used the program MAXQDA for the coding process. Coding begins with action coding for each word, line or segment of data. This is done to determine and note what the primary purpose of each sentence or line is. For example, “Just feeling able to speak your mind, feeling safe in the surroundings and feeling like you can speak up and not be worried about people judging you or saying something wrong. Just being able to speak your mind” is a segment from an interview on classroom confidence that would have possible action codes such as speaking your mind, feeling safe, speaking up in class, people judging, and saying the wrong thing.

Action coding is then followed by coding for patterns or themes apparent from the action codes. Using the above example, possible thematic codes would include confidence (seen in the action codes of speaking your mind, feeling safe, and speaking up in class), and lack of confidence (seen in the action codes of people judging, and saying the wrong thing). Ultimately

the thematic codes are what the researcher used to organize the data into a plotline of caring relationships.

Ethical Considerations

Each participant was sent a consent form via email to read over before the initial interview took place. This agreement outlined the potential risks and benefits facing participants for this study. Also, it explained how the results of this research are confidential, how the results are disseminated, and that they are free to withdraw from the research at any time (see Appendix G for the consent form).

When recording, transcribing and coding the interviews and emailed journal entries, everything was stored on the researcher's professional email account and laptop which is password protected. The only people with access to these files were the researcher and her supervisor, Dr. Minaker. All recordings were deleted once the research was completed, both from the recorder and my computer.

Participants

The teachers whom agreed to participate in my study have all been teaching for more than four years. Given confidentiality considerations, gender of participants will not be shared here, nor is it considered in the analysis or discussion. This is important to protect identity, with a small sample size. The following section outlines a bit of background information on the four participants in this study.

Jordan, a teacher of 30 years, always knew they wanted to be a teacher from a young age. With a mother who taught in elementary, Jordan was in the school atmosphere a lot while growing up. When they reached the age of 17, Jordan took on teacher-like roles, beginning to coach sports for younger kids. After contemplating a career in the military, the lure of teaching

won out. Having taught junior high school since 2005, Jordan has taught youth a wide variety of subjects including home-economics, social studies, physical education, and academic coaching. When asked if there were any other reasons behind their choice to become a teacher, Jordan explained just how committed they were to education:

Like it's not a job. Which makes my [significant other] crazy because [they] know I would do it for free. And I, I feel bad for people who don't have that experience, like it's just, it's not a job to default too. It's not an easy job. It's not one that you should do if you don't beyond love kids or understand, just understand... how... how different they can be. And I mean I'm certainly not perfect at what I do. And you know there are kids that will hate me and kids that will love me, um, but they know that's kind of the way I am.

The second participant, Riley, has been teaching for five years but had a very different course planned out for their life. With a mother who was an educator for 35 years, Riley did not find teaching appealing for their future. Wanting to go into law, Riley became an Educational Assistant during the summer off between university and law school, while studying for the LSAT. Through a combination of an impactful university class on youth and crime, along with the atmosphere of the school, Riley went into law school unsure if that was the path they wished to take. After job shadowing a public defender and seeing how unsatisfying the job appeared, Riley went back to university to take the After-Education degree to become a teacher. Having taught in an inner-city high school for their first year, and junior high the subsequent three years, Riley wouldn't change their career path now. Appreciating having an impact on young people's lives, Riley enjoys the connections and caring relationships they form with students. When asked about how they built caring relationships with students over the years, Riley stated that "if I don't feel like I'm an effective teacher, that I'm not making a difference, I won't do it." To me,

this shows the amount of time, energy and care that Riley must put in daily with the youth they teach.

Sam, another teacher of five years, knew they wanted to be a teacher at a young age. Also having a mother who was a teacher, Sam spent much of their youth enjoying being part of the school community and “contributing to the world.” When discussing their school like a small, separate community, Sam describes teaching junior high as high on energy, unpredictable, very rewarding, and exhausting. By focusing on their relationships with students, Sam finds the most rewarding part of being an educator is to see how those relationships grow and change over the three years of junior high; “But when you put that effort in, it’s awesome. That reward, you kind of see the reflection of the relationship that you’ve been cultivating.”

The final participant, Taylor, has been teaching for four years, two of which were at their current junior high school. Teaching and coaching from a young age, Taylor has trained youth in rock climbing, snowboarding, guitar, and karate. Initially, in school for neurophysiology, Taylor became an educational assistant between their degrees. Appreciating the environment of the school, Taylor switched their career path to education. Now teaching math, science, some technology, and outdoor education, Taylor enjoys teaching in the fast-paced environment of junior high. Not only seeing themselves as an educator, Taylor also describes themselves as a life skills educator: “Outdoor-ed is an interesting one because then I’m not just a curricular educator but a life skills educator. I get kind of this other facet of it that way, by teaching them how to care for themselves, and be independent in a place outside of school which is kind of interesting.” These many facets of being an educator are what Taylor enjoys most about their job.

All four participants have some similarities and differences in their backgrounds of becoming educators. What is shared among them is their drive to create caring relationships with their students. The following discussion will explore these caring relationships.

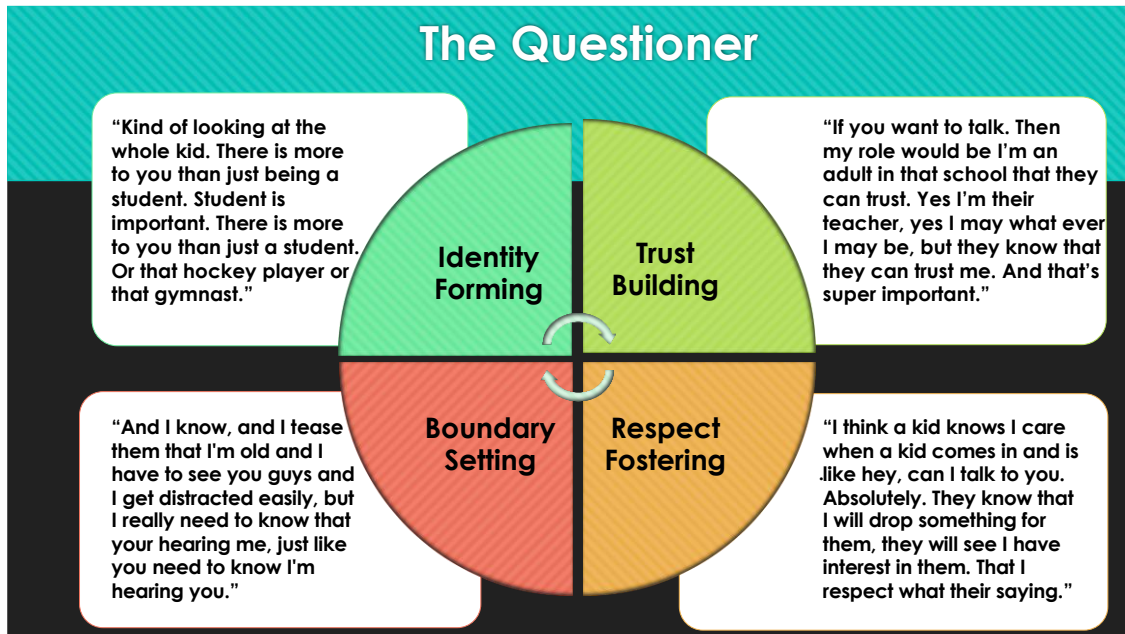
DISCUSSION

So, what have we learned? The main claim of this project is that care is (re)created, fostered, challenged, and reproduced through ongoing, dynamic and meaningful practices which include but are not limited to: open communication, trusting relationships, and overcoming boundaries. Care and a caring relationship are not established and then forgotten but are worked on by everyone involved each and every day. The caring component must be visible and seen again and again, for it to have an impact on those involved. This is what I found through the interviews and journal entries with four junior high teachers. Each of the four participants described their everyday classes in varying, unique ways. Consistent throughout all of the interviews and journal responses were four key components of a caring relationship between a teacher and junior high youth: 1) trust building, 2) boundary setting, 3) respect fostering, and 4) identity forming.

These themes I refer to as the four components of care were described and used by each teacher participant, but what was fascinating was how each individual teacher epitomized one component more prominently than the rest. The following discussion considers more closely each of the four components of care as illustrated in the narratives of the individual participants. I have organized these using the Weberian construction of ideal types, with each teacher being the focus of one 'ideal type' of caring teacher: The Questioner, The Counselor, The Negotiator, and The Community Leader.

Next, I illustrate these conceptions with a visual representation for each ideal type and analysis of the impact of each approach. Notice that the four care components have been organized in a unique way for each participant. The upper left quadrant represents the participants' starting point, or most salient category. From there, the rest of the quadrants follow suit in what I have found to be their unique thread of building caring relationships. Each quadrant has one quote that I believe summarizes how they utilize that component of care.

The Questioner



Jordan epitomized the Questioner teacher because Jordan's care for youth was based on wonder. Jordan's approach to creating relationships with their students always starts with asking questions about who the students are and their lives beyond the classroom. Jordan wants to know the 'whole kid.' Jordan explains: "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." In fact, Jordan is so well known in their junior high for asking questions, that the grade 8s and 9s expect that they will begin every school year with a short essay.

I start every year with an essay. That's crazy, but they know because it's so funny, because the 9's will come in and they'll sit down first thing, and alright [teacher], what's the topic this year? Because they aren't allowed to use computers. You write for two days you hand it in, and then I write one and hand it back to them. So, they get mine on their topic, and I get theirs. And it's just, and people are like "that's mean at the beginning of the year," and it's not because I want them to know that I'm asking their opinion on something and I really want to know. I want to know what you really think about this Pokémon-Go thing that's going around, you know that was two years ago, whenever it was. I want to know. What do you think? You know this year the topic was, um, what are your thoughts on phys-ed. And it was outstanding what these kids were saying about it, so... you know, that's just me. I want to hear what you say.

By asking questions about the students' opinions on matters outside school context, Jordan is addressing the youth as a whole person, someone more than just their grades. This is an example of Nodding's (2003) argument that students want and need teachers to care for them as people (p.244). This approach shows the youth that the teacher respects them, but also that they see them not necessarily as a child anymore, but more like an adult. This compromise between child and adult is what other studies have found to be the mindset of youth in junior high, that they wish to be treated more like an adult, but that they can receive help when they need it (Noddings, 2003, p. 244).

Jordan shared a story of their first year teaching junior high when they were a home-economics teacher, to show me the impact that asking questions and getting to know the youth in your care can have.

So, because we cooked together, that's an incredible way to find out about the kids. So it was things like, hey what are you doing after school? Well, this is my schedule after school. K, so you don't have time to make dinner, no. So I learned their schedules after school, so I would help them... okay so you only have a microwave, so what kind of things that I can help you... that we can make here that you can make at home because you're having to make your own dinner before you go off to this event, kind of thing. So I learned about their activities after school. I also let them know a little bit about me. Um, you know that I was coaching, that I myself was an athlete. That uh, that I had kids their age, kind of thing.

This experience Jordan shared of how they got to know their students outside of the formal classroom, but still teach them valuable life skills such as preparing food for themselves, led to deeper, more personal connections with a few of their students. By teaching life skills, this goes beyond that standard curriculum teachers are expected to teach but is an integral component of the school community and for fostering youth growth (Tyyska, 2014, p. 89).

Jordan's story of home-economics class also sheds light onto another component of a caring relationship, which is trust building. All of the participants described trust as one of the most significant components of a caring relationship because, without trust, there would be no reason for a student to open up to a teacher and ask for help. For Jordan, trust started with sharing their own experiences with the students. By telling their students that they coach and play sports and that they have kids the same age as the students, it shows youth that Jordan is more than just a teacher, just as they are more than a student.

Another way that Jordan builds trust with their students is through listening to what they have to say and by being present. By asking questions, actively listening to their responses, and

by letting students know that they are always available to talk, Jordan creates that trust that youth have in their parents to always be present, but also the identity of being an adult who is not their parent.

They need to trust that they can talk to me. I'm not a counselor or anything like that; I'm not going to say 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 whatever I may be, but they know that they can trust me. And that's super important.

How Jordan earns some of this trust is through honesty. Honesty in the essay they give back to the students at the beginning of the year, honesty in their opinions on subject matters, and most importantly for youth, honesty in how Jordan will react and deal with a student problem. Jordan's students trust them because they are honest in sharing what the consequences will be, or by explaining what actions they will take and then keeping their word. Jordan shared an experience from this past school year in which they were away from class for a day and returned to school the next day to hear about a problem that broke out in class while they were away.

And this situation came up, and I'm going... crap. So you know, talk to the girl, will you tell me what it is that happened? Yeah, she, you know... so we were telling her okay, that's awesome, give me names cause trust me I'm not saying anything, I'm not, you know... this is what I plan to do. So I want to see you in class next, and she showed up which I was stoked about. That showed me that I wasn't in class yesterday, she trusted in telling me, she trusted that whatever was going on that happened last class that I was going to do that, and then I made sure I did. So I think these kids don't have, that they can.... that they really trust.

This interaction between Jordan and their student speaks to Engster's (2005) three virtues of care: attentiveness, responsiveness, and respect (p. 55). The student respected Jordan enough to confide in them, Jordan knew the student would need reassurance about the issue from class, and they both engaged in an active dialogue where one listens to the other before responding.

What Jordan also does to create a trusting atmosphere in the classroom is to address individual learning needs. The main subject Jordan teaches is social studies, in which class discussion is necessary and educational, but in every class some students do not wish to speak out in front of their peers. Instead of calling on these students in front of the entire class, Jordan approaches these students differently to work on their confidence in the classroom.

I get there's going to be some that by the end of the year still aren't going to speak in class. For me that's a big one if they trust that not only me but the kids in class, then they feel more comfortable speaking and that's a big one for me, in social studies, to be able to speak in class. And then there will be some that won't, that will never. And you know I'll do little things like walk closer to them, have private conversations with them because I think that's important to understand, to hear them say they understand.

The respect Jordan fosters with these students who do not wish to be vocal participants in the class also builds trust. The students trust that Jordan will not embarrass them or anger them by calling on them in class, and Jordan trusts the students to approach them if they need help.

Respect is also fostered through boundary setting. These caring relationships formed between teachers and students can be viewed as a fine line between professional and unprofessional if a snapshot is taken out of context. Boundary setting then, is how the participants in the study were able to create and maintain these caring relationships with students. Jordan, who is a coach at the school, enjoys joking around with their students, along

with asking them for honest feedback on course material and format. Because of this honesty and comradery shared in the classroom, that boundary between friendship and teacher-student relationship can be blurred.

I want you to respect the fact that when you roll your eyes at me, it hurts my feelings too. So they need to understand too that sometimes, their reactions to things are hurtful to others. And I'm pretty vocal about that. Not in front of everybody else. I take them aside and say, man when you did that the other day, I felt really crappy, did you realize you'd done that? And sometimes calling them out on these behaviors are some of the best things you can do for them, cause like... and then they sway because they don't realize.

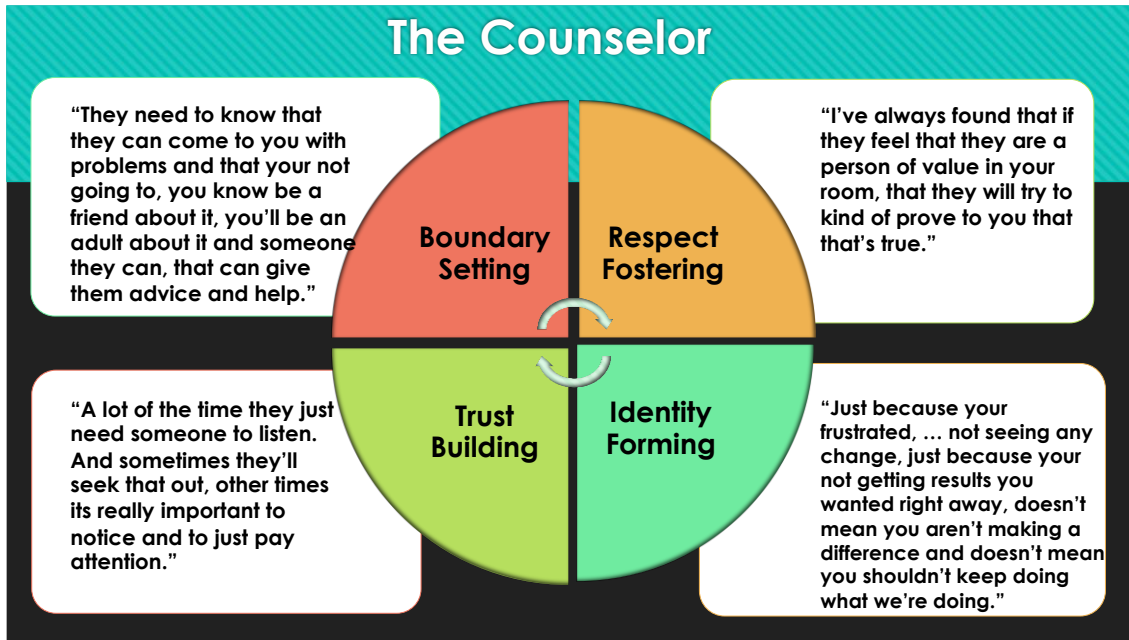
These boundaries are essential in the teacher-student relationship to maintain that distinction of Jordan being a teacher, who is an adult they can trust, instead of a friend.

I had a kid say to me yesterday, make a comment about something, and I said you know what, he goes "This is really stupid to feel this way." Well why not? Tell him you're not stupid. Your feelings are your feelings, so you have to acknowledge those. You acknowledge what their thoughts are. And you acknowledge what And you show that you respect them as an individual.

Ensuring that their students see Jordan as an adult whom they can trust and who respects them as people, helps promote youth identity formation as they transition between being seen as a child and wanting to be seen as an adult.

Building trust, fostering respect and setting boundaries are all conjoined in Jordan's approach to creating caring relationships with their students. Jordan approaches these components of a caring relationship through wonder and curiosity about the students as whole beings, about their identity that they are forming somewhere between child and adult.

The Counselor



The counselor is not a designated role within this study, but a type of teacher that we found prevalent in the interview responses. The counselor is a teacher who works more outside of the classroom content, in order to help youth form their identities and nurture their mental well-being. Sam, a teacher of five years, described themselves as an educator first and a counselor second.

I think the role that you play is almost a counselor sometimes, is the most important one... like that's my job because I need to make sure their mental state and their emotional state is being nurtured as well as their physical safety.

Being a Language Arts teacher, Sam uses the course material and content to learn more about their students' personal lives, and their subsequent problems or difficulties. Through many writing exercises Sam learns about issues in their students' lives, and then addresses these issues individually with the students. In this way, Sam is showing that they care for their students and accepts responsibility for them as whole persons as Nodding's (2003) argues (p.249). This is especially important for the students who do not feel comfortable seeking help.

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, like is this kid who is always smiling, why are they sad, what's going on, and even just a little check in let's say like its hey, how's it going today, is everything okay?

These check-ins that Sam employs are a way for them to open that door of communication to their students, so that they know that Sam cares about them as a person, not just as a student.

As Sam takes on that counselor role, there are different boundaries compared to Jordan's caring relationships that need to be established. Instead of the relationship leaning towards friendship, the counselor role can feel a little too formal or parent-like. Because of this, Sam needs to establish boundaries that allow them to be a trusted adult figure that is not parental in nature. Sam shared a story of one of the most impactful student relationships they could remember with a young girl who came to the school with behaviour problems that Sam needed to draw boundaries with right away.

Like I taught her drama, and one of the first days she like, clung to my leg, like a toddler does. And I thought 'oh my god', like it was just so, and the other kids were just, like its anti-social behavior, it's not something that was done. Um, and like I didn't know how to react at first but it was one of those instances that was firm, and like 'personal space please', conversation afterwards, never an issue again and every time something like that would come up, if you keep that gentle but firm, especially at first, that's very important.

Sam went on to describe how they took this student under their guidance, got the student involved in extra-circulars that Sam supervised, and called on that student for small errands or tasks. By taking these steps, Sam not only set boundaries as an authoritative adult figure, but as a caring adult figure through trust and respect. These boundaries and expectations of behaviour

that Sam exemplifies are some of the external assets that teachers and adult figures can provide for youth and their positive development (Scales, Benson, & Roehlkepartain, 2011, p.264). How Sam guided this student on social norms and behaviour is also an example of what Nodding's (2003) argues about teachers *caring for* their students and accepting "some responsibility for the development of [their] students as whole persons" (p, 249). Not only is Sam helping this student academically, but also socially and emotionally as well.

Fostering respect was another of the key components of a caring relationship for Sam. If Sam felt respected in their role as an educator, and the youth felt respected as students and as individuals, then a caring relationship would form.

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.

I think it's about making them feel that they are a person of value, and they are someone who is noticed and someone who is cared about. And it doesn't have to be like a big, big show. It can just be as easy as saying hello and knowing their name right away and noticing when they're not there.

By treating the students as unique, whole individuals, and not only as students or grades, Sam fosters respect with the students because they feel that they are being treated fairly and as equals. This is the third aspect of Engster's (2005) virtue of care, that people are worthy of respect and care (p.55). This respect is also part of Larson's (2006) third form of scaffolding which is motivation. By communicating confidence in the young person and setting realistic expectations, Sam shows their student that they are a person of worth and that they can trust Sam. Since boundaries are already established between Sam as the adult figure and the students as unique individuals, that respect and trust is crucial in how Sam can take on the counselor role. If the

students did not respect or trust Sam, their opinions, or their subsequent actions, then the students would not approach Sam to help them through their personal problems.

As Jordan explained, trust is one of the most integral components to a caring relationship. For Sam, trust is shown through sharing experiences and stories from their personal lives, both for Sam and the students. As a Language Arts teacher, Sam can see when that trust is built through the students' writing. If the students begin sharing more intimate, personal details about their lives, thoughts or feelings, even if they do not verbally approach Sam with these facets of their lives, they are trusting Sam to read and acknowledge what it is they are sharing.

I teach language arts and I'll see things about their emotions in their, like in their writing that other people might not see. And it's kind of important to follow up like if their writing about how their having an awful tough time at home, and all these things are happening, I need to follow up with that.

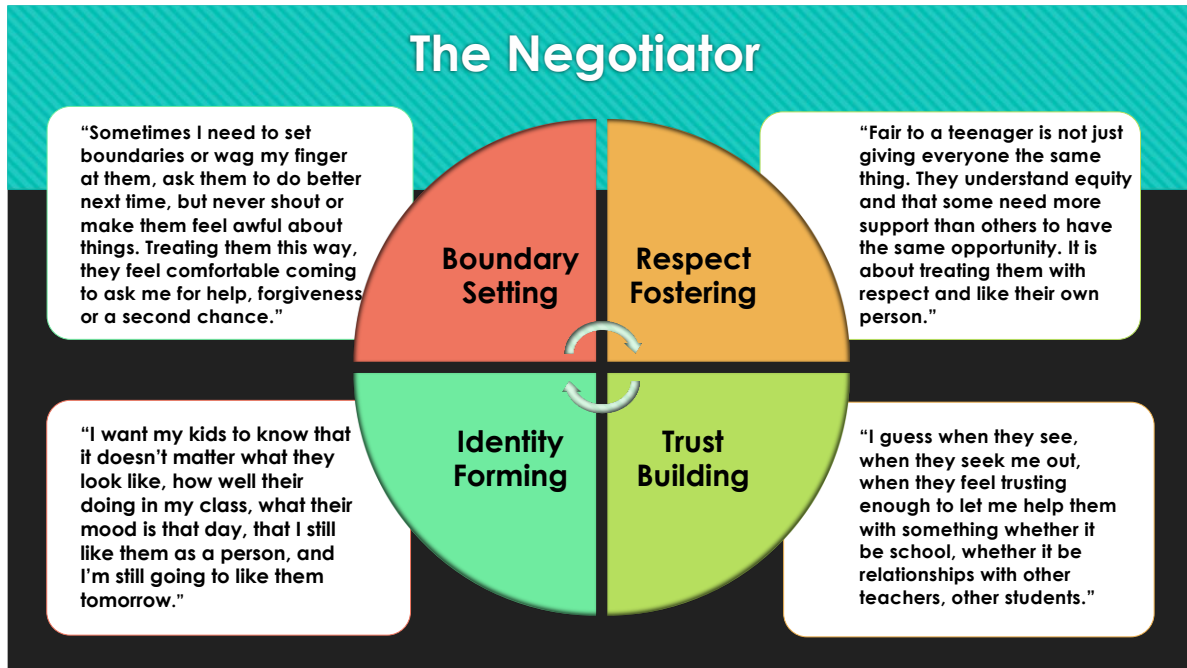
On the other hand, there have been instances where Sam had to refer back to the boundaries and expectations they set for their students when they have broken that trust component within the relationship.

There have been situations though like, where trust has been broken and you can say to the student like this is what we had before and this trust has been lost and it's your job to earn it back, like you don't want to make them feel shunned and rejected but they feel as though the relationship is still there, they just kind of have to work at it a little harder.

These expectations of student behaviour within the teacher-student relationship that Sam holds for their students is another example of Scales, Benson, and Roehlkepartain's (2011) findings of external assets that teachers can give youth to help guide young people toward positive development (p.264).

Overall, Sam views themselves as a counselor as well as an educator. Through building trust, fostering respect and setting boundaries, Sam is able to show their students that they are cared for, and that a caring relationship can be formed through constant effort for both parties involved.

The Negotiator



Throughout the interviews and journal responses, Taylor shared stories of how they navigated and negotiated the environment and the relationships they had within the school. Also, some of the stories Taylor shared were of students saying that Taylor is a fair and honest teacher, which I thought exemplified Taylor's approach to caring relationships very well.

One of the main components in being a negotiating teacher was setting boundaries for the students. By setting boundaries early on in the relationship, Taylor was able to discuss with their students about their behavior and choices in a way that led the students to realize their own mistakes.

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.

I find that at the beginning of the year I really take time with that, like drawing lines, and just being like these are natural consequences for these lines, like I'm not going to- I'm not a teacher that is going sit here and scream at you, but like this is what happens if this is not met kind of thing.

These boundaries that Taylor establishes allows them to maintain that authoritative adult role, without being the nagging parent or the disciplinary, yelling adult. Scales, Benson, and Roehlkepartain (2011) speak to these boundaries and expectations as part of the external assets that adults, such as teachers, can provide for youth and their empowerment (p. 263-264). This leaves Taylor in the position between formal teacher and friend in which the students are able to respect Taylors position of authority without feeling as though they are a burden or mistake, which helps with feelings of support and empowerment for youth.

By fostering respect within these boundaries, Taylor was able to garner the reputation of being a fair, equitable teacher. From not letting students show off their expensive, brand name clothes, to giving more than ample study material, to reasonable repercussions for bad behavior, Taylor gains the respect of their students, while showing them respect in turn. This is shown in how she describes 'fairness' to a teenager.

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. To admit when you have made the

mistake and to explain to them the why instead of just making demands of them. To be fair is also to hear what they have to say like you would anyone else.

By being treated as a unique individual with their own identity, youth feel cared for and are more likely to form caring relationships with adults they respect and trust (Noddings, 2003, p. 244).

Vidourek, King, Mernard, Murnun and Nabers (2011) also found this aspect of caring relationships when they interviewed teachers. They found that teachers who enforce rules regarding student respect is one of the most frequently used strategies teachers use to create an empowering classroom environment (Vidourek, King, Mernard, Murnun & Nabers, 2011, p. 118). Since junior high is such a tremulous time for youth and their identity formation, for Taylor to recognize them as unique individuals, all worthy of care, allows students to reciprocate those sentiments of trust and respect.

While sharing a story about a student who stepped out of line in class one day, Taylor reflected on the encounter as a way to show that student that Taylor cares for them no matter what.

Being patient with them, accepting who they are. And not who we expect them to be is a big... I don't know, I do that very purposefully in my class. I want my kids to know that it doesn't matter what they look like, how well their 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. And if they need anything that I'm there to support them, I guess. It's kind of like a mixture of like acceptance of who they are and making sure that I'm there to support... that they know that I'm there to support them at school. Or it doesn't have to be school stuff, but I'm just there.

Within this story of accepting the students as unique individuals, Taylor touches upon the fact that they are always there for their students, no matter what they need guidance for. Stelmack, Kovach and Steeves' (2017) found that this empathetic response by teachers, along with the teacher's consideration of the students' lives were qualities of an effective teacher (p.3)

Taylor is also describing what was referred to as a 'clean slate' in a few of the interviews. No matter what a student did at school that day, when they come to school the next day, they get a clean slate to work from, to build that caring relationship from. The presence of the 'clean slate' requires trust in the teacher-student relationship. If a teacher did not trust you as a student after a mistake you made, then there would be no caring relationship. Therefore, when a student arrives to school the next day after a mishap, when Taylor gives them a clean slate, it promotes trust in that student and shows that student that they believe in the students' abilities to grow as an individual (Kirk, Lewis, Brown, Karibo, Scott, & Park, 2017, p.836-837).

Trust is also built through sharing experiences and stories from personal lives. Taylor described this well when she shared some of their favorite moments in teaching.

I really appreciate the relationships I have outside of school with these kids too, whether I know their parents, or I see them at the dojo, and we do karate together. Or you know, they see me at the super market, they just want to say hi, or this is my science teacher, we stand in the aisle and talk for a few minutes. Some teachers really just want their down time, but I really, I love that part of teaching. Like just being everywhere in the community, getting to see them out in public.

When Taylor has an opportunity to share personal experiences, this shows students that they too can confide in Taylor with stories of their personal lives. Maclever (2012) argues that getting to

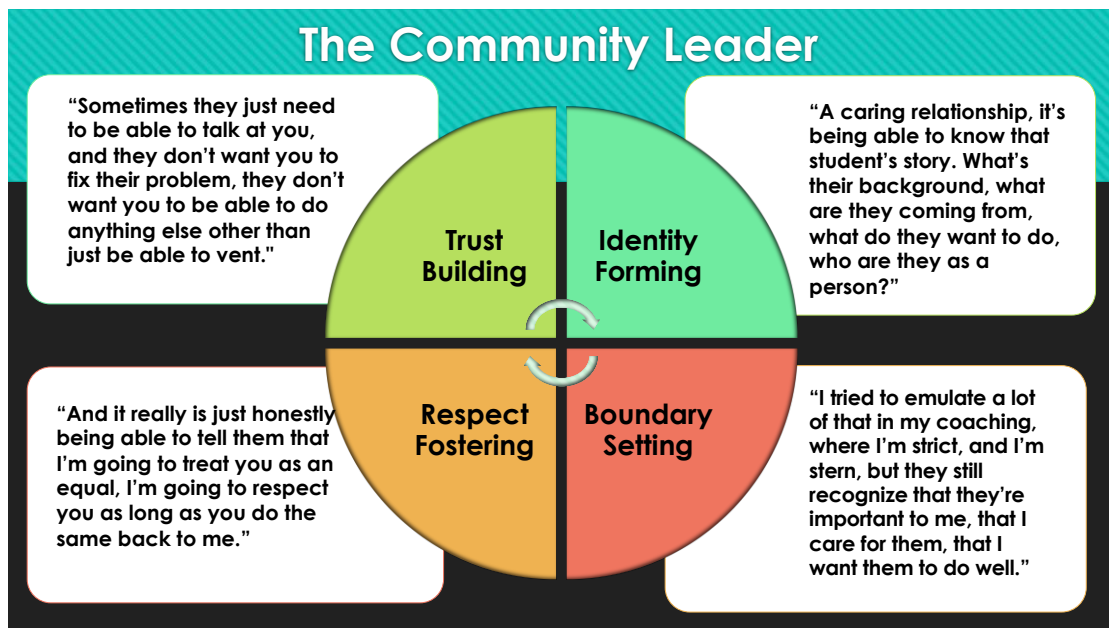
know students on a more personal level, along with open communication, are two characteristics that teachers need to build caring relationships with youth, which Taylor exemplifies.

This trust in sharing experiences is apparent to Taylor when students ask Taylor for help on personal matters.

I guess when they see, 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. I guess, that trust piece. Once we've built that trust piece, that's when we have created, I guess that deeper relationship.

This shows Taylor that the students have resonated with the boundaries set, that mutual respect was fostered by being treated fairly in the student's eyes and knowing that Taylor will see them as more than just students, but as unique individuals.

The Community Leader



Riley was the participant that epitomized the community leader role. The community leader is how the participants are seen in other role model positions such as gym teacher, an options teacher, or coach (whether in or out of the school).

As a role model throughout the community, it was essential to Riley to build a strong foundation of trust first thing within the classroom: “I find that what it takes first is you putting yourself out there to ask the question, and when they trust you, they’ll tell you the answers.” What Riley is stating is that even though you may be putting in all this effort to know your students better, they may not reciprocate right off the bat. They may have to warm up to you first and see that they can trust you before they start sharing their lives with you. Moreover, knowing about their lives and personal stories was integral to Jordan creating those caring relationships with their students.

“I think when you talk about relationships, a caring relationship, it’s being able to know that student’s stories. What’s their background, what are they coming from, what do they want to do, who are they as a person?”

Getting to know the student’s backgrounds and stories is influential in creating a supportive classroom atmosphere and building care between teachers and youth (Maclever, 2012, p. 158). This process individualizes Riley’s relationships with each student, by being empathetic and taking into consideration the lives of the students which Stelmack, Kovach, and Steeves (2017) found to be qualities of effective teachers (p. 3).

Riley is not the only teacher who has implemented knowing the student’s stories into their relationship building. Riley’s school initiated a chart in the teachers’ lounge that has four columns: students names, do I know them, do I know something about them, do I know their story. Once a teacher knows a student’s name, facts about them, or their story, they initial the

chart in the corresponding column. The school implemented this chart to identify the students that may be slipping under the radar, or who do not have that teacher who has a deeper connection with them. When asked in the second interview about the progress of the chart, Riley described it as very full, with more initials on some students' names than others, but that by Christmas the teachers were able to identify a handful of students whom they realized could use that teacher champion or closer caring relationship.

As a coach of multiple sports teams at school as well as being the outdoor education teacher, Riley has the opportunity to see the students in a different setting than the formal classroom. These different settings allow for a more natural exchange of personal stories, both from Riley and the students alike.

When you come here [to this sports team], this is a relationship, this is a team now, and this is the group of the 12 of us here. We will go out for dinner, we will spend a lot of time just hanging out together, and you get to really chat and get to know them more as a person.

These opportunities to know the student as a whole is similar to Jordan's experience in the home-economics classroom. By being both a classroom educator but also a community leader and role model outside the school, Riley is employing Kirk, Lewis, Brown, Karibo, Scott and Park's (2017) findings that a schools sense of community (for example when on a sports team), along with a teachers belief in students ability and equitable student-teacher roles influences youth empowerment (p.836-837).

With these different, less formal settings, boundaries need to be drawn between friendship and the professional, caring relationship. There were many instances throughout the

interviews that Riley mentioned they need to establish boundaries by using different approaches depending on the student.

I think when you look at every student as a unique individual person, you have to be able to change your strategy and style to fit that student. There have been some that I've been very soft with, that I've coddled, that I've tried to make sure they feel safe. And there's some your harsh with, your mean with, and your very, very strict because that's what they need.

So, sometimes when you know, I discipline, or I'm being strict or harsh, it might seem odd, but it's realizing that's what that student needs. And it's trying to figure out a way to deliver that where I'm still letting them know they are cared for, that they are respected but this is what it has to be, and things like that.

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

Like Jordan, Riley employs a stricter approach when boundaries are being crossed regarding behaviour and respect. Riley's example of using a stricter approach speaks to Cemalcilar and Goken's (2014) findings that sometimes youth need a firmer hand from their teachers because they lack that stability from their home lives (p. 98). On the other hand, some youth need to feel that parental, almost unconditional care, in order to feel safe and accepted. Because Riley built that strong foundation of trust first, when the tough approach needs to be used, the students accept that and respond well, showing that they respect and trust Riley's authority and decisions.

Riley also fosters respect in their caring relationships by acknowledging that individual students know what they need at that moment from their teacher and that they do not need to be lectured or educated at all times. When a student approaches Riley with an issue or problem they

need help with, Riley actively listens to what that student has to say, their whole story, before offering counsel or advice for the situation.

So for students it's can you just sit there and listen? And I know as a teacher it's about shutting up and not offering advice. 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. Um, once you're able to do that, the student needs to feel comfortable enough with you. And I think the way they get that comfortability, is by you being vulnerable, and you being able to share aspects or things about your life, that let them in, that know this is who you are as a person and if you want to tell me that, it's okay.

What Riley is describing here is how trust, respect and identity formation all come into play when a student asks for help. By being vulnerable themselves by sharing stories of their life, Riley has opened the door of communication and trust. Once the student feels that trust and the respect of being seen as a whole person, they can approach Riley within the confines of their caring teacher-student relationship to share, vent, confide in them, or ask for help.

Beyond the Classroom

Throughout the interviews and journal responses, what was clear to create these caring relationships, teachers were required to put in a lot of effort and constant attention to their students. Sam states as much in their second interview:

I realize it's more important to be consistent in your caring, and your, like, openness to them than it is for them to always be reciprocal. If you are always consistently saying good morning and smiling at them in the hallway and listening when they talk, it doesn't matter what they say back, because they know that you're there.

Just because you're frustrated, just because you're 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.

“Being there” was a common sentiment throughout the participant’s responses. Always having your classroom door open, showing students that you are willing to drop what you are doing to help them, asking questions to learn more about them as individuals, and individualizing learning opportunities to help students succeed were all ways the participants put in extra effort into cultivating relationships, showed their students that they were always there for them and that they care for them.

In combination with ‘being there’ for their students, the participants also touched on what I termed the superhero role. This role as a superhero that the teachers took on is how they described all their many roles, or in this study’s case, all the ideal types of teacher, into one person. As much as the participants wanted to be, they cannot be all things to all people. Sam was the first to describe their role regarding being a superhero.

Like I can't be [a] super[hero] and do all these 9000 things that I want to do. When I was coming into the field, and I think I've learned to slow down and realize that even if I can't do it all, I can still make a difference and I can still do good.

This reflection came after we discussed some relationships with students that were more difficult or challenging to form because the students involved were quiet students who did not appear in need of a closer student-teacher relationship compared to other students. Wishing they could spend at least ten minutes a day talking individually to each student, Sam realized that they could not stretch themselves that thin and that the community of the school would step in and form those caring relationships with the students that they could not.

Taylor also expressed their thoughts concerning the superhero role.

I try to remember that I'm not going to be able to save every kid, but I try my hardest to impact them in some way.

I have learned that you can't save every kid. I would bend over backwards, make myself available all hours of the day to try and do a wrap-around support for a student, but in the end, it didn't help anyway.

Knowing their limits about how many roles they can take on not only is healthier for Taylor but means that the students who Taylor forms caring relationships with will benefit more so from the extra effort and mentoring Taylor can offer them. Meanwhile, Taylor and Sam both acknowledge that the students they cannot form relationships with will be cared for by other teachers or adults within the student's life.

By 'being there' for as many students as possible, the participants felt the weight of responsibility of their position in society. As educators of young people, there is a lot of pressure put onto teachers by society and parents regarding the development of youth that teachers shoulder on their own. Taylor described the extensive steps they took to prepare their students for a science test the week before our second interview:

I feel quite often I'm doing like literally the most I can like I put in so much effort in, I give them class time, so we- for example, I just gave a science test in chemistry. I gave them 3 study periods. I gave them a study guide online, as well as study questions in their notebook a week ahead of time to start doing that. I was in my classroom every day at lunch and made myself available every day after school this week. And I still had kids who did not study and did not pass this test. And then when I get emails from the parents being like "Why did my kid get this [low of a grade]?" it's like I literally did all I could

for this kid. And I even have some kids who that, I have a group of 11 kids that I take and individually test them orally one by one. So that's another several hours of work that I try to like, try to help these kids succeed so that external pressure of like, "how come my kid, you need to do more" it's like oh my gosh. It can be hard sometimes.

This story of Taylor's embodies the idea of the superhero. They went above and beyond in preparation and individualization of the students learning for the students to do well on the chemistry test, and still, some students fell short. It is this individualization and commitment to youth success that students need to feel to build those caring relationships with their teachers.

On the other hand, the extra effort that the participants put into their students can impact their personal lives as well. When discussing a traumatic experience of having a youth overdose the previous year, Jordan explained how it's not possible as a teacher to separate your work life from your personal life.

But yeah, every time you work with kids, the situation at school right now, I can't not have it affect me. We've got... we've got kids with parents who have passed away and how they're dealing with that. And we've got kids who you know have gone on holidays for a month, and how does that affect them, and what their stories are returning. And just everything underneath about them and that's where it can be so, so hard, because you... and I may be just really bad at it, is separating. You know. You know there are other people who can walk out of their office and go, and they're done for the night. You know at night I'm marking things, or I'm prepping things for the next day, or I'm running my head through... like today the conversation I had, I had three ver- four very important conversations with four different kids about two very different issues. I got notes done on

two of them but not on two of them, and you know, I've got to make sure I get that done.

So, um, yeah. You can't not have it affect you. At least I can't.

Being an educator means you are working with the whole youth, the baggage, the home life, the emotions, and the changes that youth are going through daily. A few participants noted that junior high is the three-year period where you will see the most development in youth due to the growing-up process and their processes of becoming or finding their own identity. Riley, when describing their job as an educator, within both interviews mentioned just how difficult this extensive job as an educator can be.

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 your putting in half-ass effort.

I mean it's, to me it's way too difficult of a job to do well that if I wasn't enjoying it, wasn't living it anymore, there's no way I could continue to do it.

Riley's statements about how difficult a job being a caring teacher is, while at the same time enjoying the effort and challenges put forth by that process, is a sentiment shared by all four participants in my study. Their love of their job and the youth they build caring relationships with outweigh the bad days, the negativity, and the pressure put on them to help these young people.

When asked how the participants knew they had created an impactful relationship on students, the first answer for all participants was that the students return to the school. By coming back to visit and share what is going on in their lives now, the youth move the caring relationship they built with their junior high teachers into the present while they are in high school, and possibly beyond. The first story Jordan shared with me was of a student whom they taught a few

years ago in junior high, that at the time they were in school, Jordan did not think they had made an impact on the student. Now entering into university, that student has reached out to share with Jordan that they are entering university to get a teaching degree.

You know what, the girl who got in touch with me last night... when I say I'm surprised, she is not one I think I've ever really had a conversation with. And it was, I would talk to her, she wouldn't complain. And I.. she would be one I would see, and I just wouldn't know how to connect with her, because I couldn't get anything else out of her, so I would just keep doing what I do, and try and talk to her and stuff like that.

Riley also shared a story about how they felt seeing students, specifically a student they coached on the basketball team for three years, return to the school.

We had our awards night in September and he came back and I got to say some great things about him in front of an entire room of people, and talk about you know, what a great young man I think he's becoming from this little grade 7, you know now into grade 10. Um, just saying you hope you continue that.

All four participants shared stories of returning students and how that connection they made in junior high, whether they knew about it or not, fostered a caring relationship that went beyond the walls of the junior high. Specifically, the participants shared their joy in the accomplishments of these students and to see the identities they were forming during their process of becoming, throughout their time in junior high.

Building trust, fostering respect, setting boundaries, and forming identities are all components of a caring relationship found in this study with junior high teachers. All four participants exemplified these components in different ways to create these caring relationships with their students. Jordan represented how care involves focusing on youth *identity formation*

by asking questions and approaching the relationship with wonder. Allowing the students to feel cared about and that they are more than just a grade, Sam *fostered respect* through their secondary role as a counselor type of teacher. Moreover, by *setting boundaries* between friendship and authoritative adult, Taylor created caring relationships that felt fair and honest for both Taylor and the students themselves. Through *building trust* in and outside the classroom, Riley was able to create caring relationships with their students, that went beyond merely a fundamental teacher-student relationship.

These caring relationships go beyond the four walls of the classroom. By putting in extra effort into student success and building those relationships, the participants took their work home with them frequently as Taylor described with their chemistry test. Whether it was prep for the next day, marking, or figuring out what steps to take next for a problematic situation, the participants in my study all attempted to take on the superhero role that Sam described. By being educators of not only the curriculum but also of emotional and social development as well, the job of an educator is a difficult one that should not be taken lightly, as Riley stated above. However, when that extra effort is put in by the teachers in building those caring relationships, it is shown to be fruitful when students return to the school to visit or contact their teachers with exciting news like Jordan shared with me. In these many, diverse ways, caring relationships between junior high teachers and students are created, recreated, fostered, reproduced, and challenged daily.

Overall, the most prevalent concept tying my teacher participants together is the idea that “every kid is one caring adult away from being a success story” (Shipp, quoted by Mims, 2018).

LIMITATIONS/FUTURE RESEARCH

This study was conducted with participants from St. Albert schools in Alberta, Canada. Due to this limited pool of participants, conclusions drawn by the researcher from the interviews and journal responses cannot be generalized to all teachers. Similarly, there was not an even amount of male and female participants to generalize between genders and what forms of care are used. Overall, the goal of a narrative inquiry study is to get an in-depth accounting of a few participants accounts on the topic. In the case of my research, I achieved this aim by hearing four teachers' stories on three different occasions about the caring relationships they build with their junior high students.

Prospective studies may wish to take a larger sample population of teachers from various school districts to see if these same 'ideal types' of teachers are present in other geographical locations. Also, another avenue of research may wish to examine more closely these four components of care from the teacher perspective to a greater extent, but also the student perspectives, to see if these viewpoints align.

Something that I found within my analysis of the interviews was that teachers also are going through a process of identity formation as educators. This would be another avenue of research for future studies. Similarly, my participants touched on various challenges and barriers that youth face and that the teachers also face when it comes to youth mentoring and caring relationships within schools. An exploration into the various barriers and challenges facing both youth and teachers would add to the discourse on the topic of youth mentoring.

I myself would like to expand upon my study by addressing youth and teachers within the same junior high school to explore how youth build and experience these caring relationships compared to their teachers.

CONCLUSION

The process of becoming that youth traverse through can be positively, or negatively, impacted by the presence of caring adults in their lives. These caring adults may be parents, family members, coaches, or teachers. Between the ages of 11 and 15, youth navigate adolescence and their evolving relationships in an ever-changing cultural and technological landscape in which they face new challenges and struggles compared to previous generations. Given all these changes, the presence of caring teachers and mentors can provide guidance and support as youth transition through their process of becoming (Ferguson, 2018, p.212). When students experience tangible care from adults in their lives, these adults, such as teachers, provide youth with support, empowerment, boundaries, and achievable expectations (Scales, Benson, & Roehlkepartain, 2011, p.264). Within schools, teachers can enable a sense of agency and ownership within youth, communicate confidence in student abilities, and create opportunities and experiences that motivate youth toward positive youth development (Larson, 2006, pp.685-686). Positive youth development, or young peoples' 'optimal development', encourages youth to be more socially engaged rather than social media engaged (Bibby, 2010, p.21), to adopt societal norms from positive role models such as their teachers (Wentzel, 1997, p.411), and to create their own caring relationships beyond the classroom. The position teachers occupy during this time of youth becoming gives them the opportunity to connect with youth and to establish a caring relationship where they serve as a role model and support system. Hence through narrative inquiry, this study examined four junior high teachers' perspectives on how they build caring relationships with youth.

The teachers in my study utilized four components of care when building relationships with youth: trust building, respect fostering, boundary setting, and identity forming. These

components of care were each epitomized by an individual teacher that I classified into Weberian ideal types of the Questioner, the Counselor, the Navigator, and the Community Leader. Within my study, trust was built through honesty, accountability, and sharing stories. The participants fostered respect by treating the students as unique individuals and acknowledging individual learning patterns/comfortability in the classroom. Through trust and respect, the participants acknowledged the identities youth are forming by treating them as the adults they are becoming, instead of the child they are growing out of. And finally, boundaries were set between friendship, and the teacher-student relationship, as well as between the soft, fun approach and the strict, authoritative approach that teachers could use.

Overall, the participants in my study shared insightful stories about how building these caring relationships with junior high youth can be a difficult and exhausting process that is extremely rewarding to see the growth and identity formation that these young people go through in the three years they teach them. In many, diverse ways, caring relationships between junior high teachers and students are created, recreated, fostered, reproduced, and challenged daily, which during the process of youth becoming, can have positive, and long-lasting impacts on young people's identity formation.

Knowing the impact a caring relationship can have for young people, especially during their process of identity formation, I encourage teachers to think of the chart Riley's school implemented this year regarding building relationships with students. Do you know the students' name? Do you know something about them? Do you know their story? Knowing the answers to these questions is the knowledge a teacher requires, along with the four components of care discussed in this study, to build those caring relationships with youth. When youth-adult partnerships, or teacher-student relationships, are executed correctly, they can encourage

behavioural, emotional, and academic gains for youth (Liang, Spencer, West & Rapport, 2013, p.259). With that being said, I would like to end with a story Sam shared with me of youth mentoring, that exemplifies these questions, components of care, and the impact this scenario had on the student within their process of becoming.

Well, my first opposition defiant kid that I ever had in my class. Um so, first answer is no, it really doesn't matter what you've asked him. It could be "Tie your shoes" and it would be no. And it took me a really long time to build any sort of rapport with this kid. He was so closed off, he wouldn't even make eye contact with me, He hated school, first day of class he didn't even look at me and said he hated school. So, it took a really, really long time, so I was like, he made me really ultra-patient because once I started teaching him and I saw that he was having these issues, you go to administration. "Okay, what do I do with this kid? I have to like, crack him somehow." And then everything kind of comes out about the family, and the circumstances they are in and all this stuff. And um, so one day I was, he had broken his pencil and I was getting him another pencil. And he broke that one too and I grabbed him a third pencil. He was like "Are you just going to keep giving me pencils?" and I was like "Yeah." and he's like "Okay I won't break this one." It's like okay. And so... then he started writing and he told me about something that had happened to him in grade four, something a teacher did to him in grade four so since then he's hated all school and teachers. And I was like, "Oh I will try not to do that but if I do, do that than just let me know, because I can make mistakes too." And he was like "I didn't know teachers knew they could make mistakes." Like "Yeah, absolutely but you've got to let me know though." He was like "Yeah okay I'll tell you." And from then on, we had... he wasn't great on the eye contact, really hard to get him to work, but generally we

had a rapport and he'd tell me when he was done or if I had messed up in some way. So, you definitely start to build that relationship. And he'll say hi to me in the hallway even though I don't teach him anymore.

That, is a caring relationship.

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APPENDIX A: Email letter to Junior High Principals

Hello,

My name is Kaitlin Johnson and I am a Sociology Honours student at MacEwan University. I am entering into my second year of the Honours program, in which I am creating and conducting my own research project. The project I have created is to hear the stories, rhymes and reasons how teachers create meaningful relationships with students, specifically at the Junior High level. I wish to interview between 3 to 7 teachers about their process in creating these meaningful relationships, but will not be asking them about specific details, students, schools, etc. I only wish to hear their process, the success stories and their reactions to failed attempts. I will not be interviewing students, nor will I be on school grounds. I am under the supervision of Dr. Joanne Minaker, Associate Dean in the Faculty of Arts and Science at MacEwan.

This study includes two interviews to take place in October and January, along with a set of journal prompts that I would like the teachers to respond to at their leisure in-between the interviews. These journal entries are a way for myself and Dr. Minaker to garner a better understanding of the why's and how's involved in the teacher's relationship building with students.

To conduct this research, we do not want to interfere with the teachers and schools' busy schedules. As such, interviews will be conducted at an agreed upon time and location between the researcher and the individual teachers that is outside of school hours. The journal prompts can be answered at any time that the teachers feel that they have some time to contemplate their stories.

I received ethical approval from MacEwan's research board on July 24th, 2018 and approval from your districts school board on October 12th, 2018.

Please find attached a recruitment poster that can be sent via email or sent around the school if this project is something that you would find interesting, or that you believe you have some teachers that would be willing to share their stories.

If you have any questions or concerns, please email me at johnsonk236@mymacewan.ca.

Thank you for your interest in my project,
Kaitlin Johnson

Looking for Junior High Teachers to Participate in a Research Study on Educators and Care

We are interested in hearing teachers' stories about relationship building with adolescents.

If you are in the Edmonton and surrounding area and are interested in sharing your stories, please contact Kaitlin Johnson.

Email: johnsonk236@mymacewan.ca

Phone: 780-884-6393

APPENDIX C: Initial Email Contact with Participants

Hello [participants name],

My name is Kaitlin Johnson and I am a Sociology Honours student at MacEwan University. Thank you for replying to my ad for volunteer participants for my honour's thesis project. This project I have developed with my supervisor, Dr. Minaker, is about exploring the rhymes and reasons teachers of the junior high level care above and beyond for their students. We wish to hear your stories about the relationships you have built and those that were unsuccessful throughout your teaching career and how this relationship building process has changed for you over time.

This study includes two interviews to take place in October and January, along with a set of journal prompts that you may respond to at your leisure in the 4-6 weeks between interviews. Each interview will take around 1 hour, and the journal prompts should take around half hour each (therefor, about 2 hours total for time allotted to the journal prompts). By mid to late November you will receive the journal prompts via email and we would like to gather at least 4 from you if possible, (about 1 a week). These journal entries are a way for myself and Dr. Minaker to garner a better understanding of the why's and how's involved in your relationship building with students.

I would like to arrange our initial interview for the week of October [___]. Would you please send me your availability for this time period so that we can pick a mutual date and location.

Until then, please see the attached "Consent Form" which we will explain, sign and answer any of your questions when we sit down, before beginning the initial interview.

If you have any questions about the project before our initial interview, do not hesitate to email myself or Dr. Minaker whose email can be found on the consent form.

Thank you for your interest in my project,
Kaitlin Johnson

APPENDIX D: Initial Interview Outline

First, let's start with some background on your teaching career.

- How long have you been teaching? And at the Junior High level?
- Please take me back to your choice to enter Education or your desire to become a teacher.
Would you tell me a little about that journey?

Next, let's talk about now.

- How would you describe your work as a junior high teacher today?
- Has this changed? In what ways? Why do you think this is the case? (reference to previous question)
- Tell me about your responsibilities and the roles you play for youth.
- What is the most rewarding thing about your job?

The next set of questions are about teacher-student relationships

- For you, what's relationship building with young people really about?
- In your own words, how would you describe "a caring relationship?"
 - How do you define care?
 - In your opinion, does everything you listed about caring relationships apply to the relationships with teachers have with their students?
 - How might these kinds of interactions and responsibilities differ? (from what?)
- When you began teaching what did you do to form a relationship with individual students? Can you describe any specific kids, or experiences, that stand out for you? (you don't have to use their names)

- Compared to the beginning of your teaching career, has relationship building changed, and if so, how?
- What are the most challenging aspects of being a junior high teacher? (don't want to imply the challenge is working with adolescents)
- Are there any students that sticks out to you or have come to your mind during our conversation? Can you tell me more about this one/those?

Next, let's discuss any struggles you face.

- Teachers may have times when youth resist. Have there been instances in which a young person has been reluctant to accept support? How did you respond to that situation?

Finally, I'm really keen to learn about how caring relationships have impacted you.

- Have relationships you've formed with students impacted you in any lasting way? How so?
- How do you know when you have created an impactful relationship with a student?

APPENDIX E: Shared Journal Prompts

- What comes to mind when I say the following words: *caring acts, caring for*?
- Looking back, tell me about a powerful connection you made with a student.
- Can you describe a relationship with a student that fell apart?
- What gets in the way of getting through to a young person?
- From your time in Junior High as a student, did you have a teacher or staff member that stood out to you, that you reflect back on your relationship with them? Tell me about that relationship.
- From these relationships you have formed with students, do you as the adult figure learn anything new from these relationships? If so, what types of things have you learned?

APPENDIX F: Shared Closing Interview Questions

- How is your school year going so far?
- Based on your involvement in my project, have there been any student relationships this year that stand out to you as either easy or difficult to form?
- En loco parentis, councillor, and role model are all terms used in the first interviews to describe a teacher's role as an educator. Would you say these roles were part of your teacher education (your degree), or did you learn them through experience in becoming a teacher and on the job?
- You mentioned many times that trust is a key component of these caring relationships. Do you find that with the start of a new school year that this trust and communication takes different amounts of time to build?
- When students come back from December break, do you find that the relationships you formed in the fall have changed in any way?
- What about returning students in September that you've taught previously?
- Do you find then that there are certain types of students that it is easier to build a relationship with?
- Do you believe that some youth appear more in need of a caring relationship whether it's with you or another adult?
- If you could describe your relationships with students in a few words or a phrase, what would it be?



Participant Consent Form

Project Title: Teachers and Care: A Relational Narrative Inquiry of the Power of Education

Researcher(s): Kaitlin Johnson, Student Researcher, Department of Sociology, MacEwan University, 780-884-6393, johnsonk236@mymacewan.ca
Joanne Minaker, Researcher, Office of the Dean and Department of Sociology, MacEwan University, 780-633-3988, MinakerJ@macewan.ca

Purpose of the Research:

- This research study is to examine, analyze and make sense of the many ways in which junior high teachers create and maintain meaningful relationships with their students. This is done through the use of interviews and journal entries in which the researchers will ask you about current and past experiences with students in which these meaningful relationships were established, and those where they were not. The researchers wish to gather a better understanding about how and why you as a teacher create these meaningful relationships with some of your students while being unable to with other students.

Procedures:

- Data collection will be completed in three phases. The first phase is initial interviews which will take place throughout October, into the beginning of November. These will be about one-hour sessions at a location agreed upon between yourself and the researcher. Possible locations for interviews could include the Sociology Lab or Sociology Seminar room in Grant MacEwan University, or a coffee shop. These interviews will be in-depth, semi-structured interviews that will be recorded for future transcription and analysis.
- During these opening interviews the researcher will explain what the next phase of participation will be, which is participant journaling. This process allows for you to not only give written accounts of your caring practices but also a time to reflect and expand on your own experiences in written journal form.
- The journaling phase will occur over a 4-6 week period after the initial interviews are complete. The researcher will send out approximately five prompts for you to respond to at your leisure. You can respond to any prompt, whenever you have the time available, while also having the option to expand or diverge from the

prompts if you wish. In the end, the researcher hopes to gather 4-6 entries from you. Also, there will be no page requirements for the journal entries so as not to restrict your personal narratives. These journal entries will be written on a Microsoft Word document and sent to the researcher via email.

- The third phase of participation will be closing interviews. Like the opening interviews, the closing interviews will be in-depth, semi structured interviews held in a mutually agreed upon location between yourself and the researcher. The closing interviews will be for the researcher to expand on trends, patterns and experiences they found within your journal entries. The closing interviews will take place in January.
- For the purpose of revisiting the interviews at a later date, the interviews will be audio recorded. All personal information shared in the interview that can be linked to or identify yourself as a participant will be changed or omitted when the interview is being transcribed in order to maintain confidentiality.
- Please feel free to ask any questions about the procedures and goals of the study and your role as a participant.

Potential Risks:

- Within the interviews and the journal entries, the researcher will be asking you to discuss past teaching experiences with students, which could arouse possible negative emotions associated with those memories, such as disappointment or embarrassment for example.
- As the participant, there is no obligation to answer questions that cause you emotional or psychological distress; you are free to pass questions as seen fit.
- If there is reason for concern for your well-being or psychological distress, a card with institutions to contact for help will be provided. These cards can be accessed at any point during the interviews and will be offered at the end of each interview.

Potential Benefits:

- During a time of adolescence in which youth are in a state of flux between wanting to grow up and needing adult support and guidance, a teacher's ability to make a personal connection with a student that can be maintained throughout the school year and is felt and understood mutually is of great benefit during this time in society. When schools are packed with kids that outnumber teachers/staff and the kids are shuffled through the grades, these meaningful connections are what stand out and make a large impact on youths' development. This is why the researchers wish to study the why's and how's surrounding teachers' meaningful relationships with junior high youth.

Confidentiality/Anonymity:

- Your participation in this study will remain confidential. Only the researcher Kaitlin Johnson, and her supervisor, Dr. Joanne Minaker, will know the names and some personal identifiers of the participants.
- Possible personal identifiers include the school you as the participant are teaching at now, past schools, other teachers names, students names, etc.
- It is recommended that you do not name fellow teachers, students or schools.
- In the interviews, due to the audio recordings and transcription process, all names and identifiers will be changed or omitted. The researcher will be doing all transcription herself and will maintain confidentiality of all participants.
- The physical audio recordings will be stored in a locked cabinet in Dr. Minaker's office in which only she has a key.
- The transcriptions will be done and stored on Kaitlin Johnson's laptop that is password protected and will have an encryption software downloaded.
- The journal entries that are sent to the researcher can only be accessed through a password protected email. Also, all names and identifiers will be changed within the journal entries and will remain on Kaitlin Johnson's laptop that is password protected and encrypted.
- All data will be stored for two years. Disposal of data will involve secure deletion and proper shredding of research documents, after the conversation period.

Right to Withdraw:

- Your participation is voluntary, and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with.
- You have the right and may request that the audio recorder be turned off at any time.
- You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.
- Whether you chose to participate or not will have no effect on how you will be treated.
- Should you wish to withdraw, you may do so at any time before April. Come April, the researcher's findings will be shared with the academic community at MacEwan on Student Research Day. If you choose to withdraw, your journal entries and emails will be securely deleted, and any audio recordings will also be disposed of.

Follow up:

- To obtain results from the study, please contact the researcher, Kaitlin, via email and she can forward her final proposal to interested participants.

Questions or Concerns:

- If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the researcher(s) using the information at the top of page 1

Questions or Concerns about Ethical Conduct:

- This project has been approved on ethical grounds by the MacEwan University Research Ethics Board on July 24, 2018. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the Board at 780-497-4280 or REB@macewan.ca).

Documenting Consent:

- This consent form does not constitute a waiver of legal rights in the event of research-related harm.

My signature below indicates that I have read and understand the description provided. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher