“It’s just so powerful to have somebody know you…”: The experiences of Indigenous youth and non-Indigenous educators in teacher-student relationships

by

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Abstract

Teacher-student relationships have often been cited as a protective factor in student academic success and social-emotional development (Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013). A cultural match between student and teacher can increase the likelihood of a positive rapport developing (Crooks et al, 2017); however, Indigenous educators are not as prevalent as their non-Indigenous counterparts in school districts across the Fraser Valley. This research explores how Indigenous students and non-Indigenous educators describe their stories of impactful teacher-student relationships. Narrative inquiry, anti-oppressive research practices and Indigenous Research Methodologies informed the research structure. Stories from four non-Indigenous educators were collected during a sharing circle, and stories from three Indigenous youth were collected during one-on-one interviews. Stories reveal the ways in which teachers attempt to connect and make sense of their connections with non-Indigenous students as well as the ways in which students characterize and attribute meaning to impactful relationships they have had with non-Indigenous teachers.

Keywords: Teacher-student relationships; Indigenous research methods; Narrative inquiry; Anti-oppressive research; Education; Counselling

Dedication

This research is dedicated to Indigenous students in B.C. and around the world. You belong. Your stories matter. You matter. I hope that this study was meaningful and contributes to positive and lasting change in the education system. I would also like to dedicate this work to educators who see their students, and go above and beyond to meet their needs. This demanding work is well-worth the effort. Thank you for what you do.

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List of Acronyms

DST	Developmental Systems Theory
IK	Indigenous Knowledges
IRM	Indigenous Research Methodologies
IWMs	Internal Working Models
PAR	Participatory Action Research
SDT	Self-Determination Theory
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
TSR	Teacher-Student Relationship

Glossary

Educator	I use the term educator to refer to any individuals who work with students in a school. This includes, but is not limited to: teachers, education assistants, counsellors, child and youth care workers, principals, etc. Krane et al., (2016) use the term helper to denote adults within the school who are not teachers.
Indigenous	The term Indigenous is a decolonialized, international term used by the United Nations to described the descendants of the original peoples of the land and who have suffered the processes of colonization (Hart, 2007). The term Aboriginal is often employed by Western governments and its legacy does not reflect the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples (Hart, 2007). The term includes First Nations, Métis and Inuit. When I use the terms First Nations or Métis, I am referring to these groups specifically. The terms Native and Aboriginal are used in the literature. I have changed original terms to Indigenous where appropriate.
Student	I use the terms student, learner and youth interchangeably in the first two chapters of this study. When referring to my research, I use the term youth, as some of the participants had graduated high school at the time of writing.
Teacher	I use the term teacher to describe groups that are not composed of other educators. My research was inclusive of educators, but only teachers signed up to participate.

Chapter 1.

Introduction

Statement of the Problem and Rationale

Teacher-student relationships (TSRs), characterized by warmth, open-communication and support (Krane et al., 2017), play an important role in student well-being and success (Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013). An increase in high-risk youth behaviours points to the need for greater connection with supportive adults. Bernstein-Yamashiro and Noam (2013) posit that adolescent drug abuse, depression, suicide and early school leaving are due to increased feelings of isolation and can be attributed to a change in modern family dynamics and the rise in the prevalence in technology. Mental health issues affect approximately 14% of people under the age of 18 in British Columbia, and at least half of mental health issues show up before age 18 (CMHA, 2014). Positive teacher-student relationships can act as a preventative factor regarding student drop out, and impact student motivation, learning and attitude towards school (Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013). Thus, educators have the ability to meet adolescents' need for connection. Study of such relationships has provided insight into the behaviours and ways of being of teachers who are particularly adept at forming quality TSRs.

While research primarily concerned with the TSR has taken place for decades (Sabol & Pianta, 2012), research examining cross-cultural relationships between Indigenous students and non-Indigenous educators is lacking. According to Crooks et al. (2017), Indigenous youth in Canada experience rates of depression, suicide, and other mental health related issues at rates greater than those of their non-Indigenous contemporaries. The Canadian Mental Health Association (2014) acknowledges that Indigenous children and youth, and youth who have experienced trauma or have a family history of mental illness are at higher risk for developing a mental health issue. In addition, there exists a gap between the graduation rates of Indigenous students and their non-Indigenous peers. In the 2006/2007 school year, 48% of Indigenous students graduated within a 6-year time frame in B.C, compared to 83% of non-Indigenous students (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2011). In the 2019/2020 school year,

71% of Indigenous students graduated compared to 88% of non-Indigenous (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2020). There are several reasons for this discrepancy: the historical traumas of colonization and residential schools (Kirkness, 1998) including the impact this has had on the physical and psychological health of Indigenous peoples (Battiste & Henderson, 2012); continued racism from teachers and peers (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011); and Euro-centric curriculum and school structures that maintain Western assimilationist practices to this day (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Thirteen years in B.C. schools represent an 23% increase in Indigenous school completion rates, but there still exists a 17% gap. These statistics may reflect that the learning environment of B.C. classrooms is improving for Indigenous learners, but more research and educator action is required to further engage students. Factors including cultural connectedness and mentorship relationships can improve Indigenous youth psychological well-being (Crooks et al., 2017). Pidgeon et al., (2013) echo this in stating that the relationship between teacher and student is integral to student success and creating the systemic change that will eradicate racism against Indigenous peoples. Changes in the everyday school experiences of youth can begin with the reliable support of a caring teacher. Structural and societal changes beyond the TSR are also necessary, but inquiry into the underlying mechanisms of those changes is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Indigenous peoples have evolved their own forms of education long before colonizers arrived in what is now called Canada (Kirkness 1998; Pidgeon et al., 2013). The cultural genocide and new education imposed on Indigenous peoples by colonizers led to the loss of traditional forms of learning (Kirkness, 1998). Indeed, the barriers facing Indigenous students to participation in education were placed, and defended, by settler governments, past and present – not Indigenous peoples themselves (Pidgeon et al., 2013). Systemic oppression is maintained through the dominant and carefully constructed discourse of Indigenous peoples as self-destructive (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Kirkness (1998) calls for Indigenous-controlled changes of Indigenous education that result in increases in youth self-esteem, self-confidence, pride, graduation, employment and joy. Pidgeon et al., (2013) look forward to the realization of these changes so that Indigenous student graduation rates match or exceed those of their peers, and Indigenous communities have Indigenous graduates working in business, law, health care, politics, etc. who act as role models for future generations. Equity in education matters for the health and self-governance of Indigenous communities.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was formed in 2008 to collect information from residential school survivors, employees, and their families and communities in order to educate Canadians about what occurred at Indian Residential Schools (TRC, n.d.). The aim of the TRC is that, through increased awareness, healing and reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and settlers can happen (TRC, n.d.). In 2015, the TRC produced a report of 94 calls to action including 11 calls to action in the area of education (TRC, 2015). These include, but are not limited to: developing strategies to reduce employment and education gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada; to increase educational funding for all Indigenous children, whether on or off reserve; to engage Indigenous peoples and communities in education legislation; to educate all students (K-12) about the traumatic legacy of residential schools; and to identify and meet teacher education needs in this area (TRC, 2015). Reconciliation is a two-sided, relational process. Therefore, educational policy-makers and educators have the responsibility of acting in ways that promote healing. These calls to action provide some guidance to school districts and educators on how to begin the process of reconciliation, but there is much work to be done. Teachers can begin this process by focusing on their relationships with Indigenous students.

Although graduation rates for Indigenous students have increased in British Columbia, these numbers do not tell the everyday experiences of Indigenous students in school, and limited research exists in this area. Given the research on the positive correlation between strong student-teacher relationships and student learning and well-being (Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013; Klem & Connell, 2004; Muller, 2001), and the importance of relationships in Indigenous cultures (Hart, Straka & Rowe, 2017), further study on the quality of student-teacher relationships in B.C. may provide important data about the impact of these relationships for Indigenous students and non-Indigenous educators in B.C.

Study Purpose and Research Questions

Recent research on TSRs at the secondary level has prioritized the student-perspective (Chhuon & Wallace, 2014; García-Moya et al., 2020; Krane et al., 2017; Yu et al., 2018), yet very little research has examined Indigenous student perspectives of the TSR specifically. The purpose of this research was to create space for Indigenous

students to share their stories about impactful relationships[1] they had with teachers during their time at high school. My aim was to empower students not only to make their voices heard, but also to engage in the research process on their terms. Given the duality of connectedness in relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), I also sought teacher-perspectives of personally impactful relationships with Indigenous students. Stories have the power to advance knowledge (Kovach, 2009). My hope is that the participants' shared experiences will contribute to the body of knowledge on best practice in teacher relationship-building for the purposes of contributing to a sense of school belonging for Indigenous students. Through this, teachers can begin to address the racial inequities in public schooling, and in their own professional practices; and prioritize Indigenous student needs. If such a change in educator practices correlates to increases in Indigenous student connectedness and engagement in schooling, and improved mental health, schools could stand to benefit by supporting Indigenous aims such as self-governance, and increasing public school compliance with the TRC calls to action.

The aim of this study was to highlight specific teacher behaviours that positively resonated with the students in this study, as such behaviours may have a positive impact on many students. Positive reactions to teacher behaviours could be told by the student participants themselves, or observed by the teacher participants. Research results were intended for an audience of B.C. educators, but are by no means limited to this group. Social workers, counsellors and others in human services and health care fields may find the findings of this study helpful for their professional practices as well.

The questions that guided this study were:

- How do adolescent Indigenous students describe their stories of impactful relationships with non-Indigenous educators?
- How do non-Indigenous secondary educators describe their stories of impactful relationships with Indigenous students?

[1] These stories could be positive or negative. Each of the participants elected to share a story about a positively impactful relationship they had had with an educator.

- What can non-Indigenous educators learn from student and educator stories about the mechanisms of impactful TSRs? And, how can we[2] then change and improve teaching practice?

Who am I?

It is customary in Indigenous communities to introduce oneself before speaking (Hart, 2007). So, I begin this thesis with an introduction of myself, paying closer attention to the experiences and aspects of my identity that are most connected to this research. I am Nicole Karr (née Kunkel), a settler educator, student and researcher, born in Surrey, B.C. and currently living in Chilliwack, on the unceded territories of the Pil'alt and Ts'elxwéyeqw. I work in a local school district as an itinerant elementary school counsellor. Both of my parents, children of German immigrants, grew up in the Vancouver area. My father spent his teenage years in the island community of Port Alberni, B.C. I have one younger sister who resides with her partner in Surrey. Growing up, I did not have a close relationship with any of my biological grandparents as both of my parents had suffered long-term abuse as children, and have since cut off those relationships. I know little about my cultural heritage. I believe my paternal grandmother grew up in what is now known as Slovenia, and my paternal grandfather grew up in Poland. My maternal grandfather's cousin and his wife stepped in as loving and supportive grandparent figures for my sister and me.

Throughout most of my schooling experiences, my classmates and teachers largely shared a European cultural background. Most of the people I encountered in education looked like me and had experiences similar to my own. I remember little exposure to Indigenous Knowledges, peoples and communities growing up. My earliest memory of exposure to Indigenous culture came in the form of a story book. As a child, I loved animals. My grade two teacher had a book of Indigenous legends illustrated with elements of Coast Salish design. It was my go-to book during silent reading. I believe this book first kindled my interest in Indigenous culture.

I decided to become a high school teacher in my grade 12 year, with little consideration for where I wanted to eventually work. Several months after completing my

[2] I use "we" because I am a non-Indigenous educator also learning from this work.

teacher training program at SFU, I began working as a French and career teacher in Agassiz, at a school attended by youth living in the Kent, Harrison, Sts'ailes and Seabird communities. I established connections in the community, and the neighboring city of Chilliwack became my home. After two years of teaching, I decided it was time to return to university to pursue a degree in counselling. At the school where I worked, approximately a third of the students belonged to nearby Indigenous communities or self-identified as Indigenous. It was important to me to find a program where I could develop competency to better serve the Indigenous youth at this school. No local M.A. or M.Ed. counselling programs offered coursework in Indigenous approaches to helping as part of their programs. I decided to pursue research that focuses on Indigenous youth well-being in order to address this gap in my knowledge.

I began the process of determining a research focus, largely ignorant of issues surrounding settler shame and Indigenous sovereignty. I did not realize that as a white settler, I should question my role as a researcher with Indigenous communities. I could easily and ignorantly do more harm than good. Through the process of reviewing the literature I have grown my awareness of research decisions that reproduce colonial-centric norms and maintain systems of oppression (Hart, Straka & Rowe, 2017; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Hart, Straka and Rowe (2017) assert that settler allies can have an important role in anti-colonial, Indigenous research, but they have several responsibilities, the first of which is addressing and challenging colonial systems of oppression in the research.

Indigenous research draws attention to practices that maintain Western dominance and the oppression of minority groups (Hart, Straka & Rowe, 2017). Addressing this starts with an examination of the privilege and power afforded by one's position in society. I am a white, middle-class student in an academic system that provides me with power and advantages, and this research directly benefits me and my career. I must take care to be aware of the ways in which I enact colonial practices and impact Indigenous peoples. Colonial practices are embedded in all levels of Western society to the extent that they are often subtle and taken-for-granted (Hart, Straka & Rowe, 2017). Therefore, identification and ratification of colonial dynamics in the research process is required throughout. Additionally, settlers cannot speak to what is right for Indigenous peoples. They must listen to what Indigenous peoples have determined will benefit their communities (Hart, Straka & Rowe, 2017).

Settler researchers have a responsibility to center Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies, which emphasizes a holistic view, in their work. Settler researchers must recognize the impact of the physical, emotional, spiritual and mental aspects of a person on the research process. The research journey involves both head and heart knowledge and learning. Indigenous research practices resonate with me in that I want my focus to be on doing the work in a good way. I also realize that relationships in the research have a transformative impact. I am moved, honoured and motivated by my participants' stories. They have impacted how I make sense of relationships in teaching, and will stick with me for a long time.

This brings me to the third settler responsibility in doing anti-colonial and Indigenous research: the centrality of relationships. Researchers are accountable to their participants and communities (Hart, Straka, & Rowe, 2017). I experienced a level of insider status in my work with non-Indigenous teachers. Insider-outsider status exists on a continuum (Hayes & Singh, 2011). I recognize that, although I had a certain level of comfort working with youth given my experience in teaching and counselling, I was not a member of my youth participants' community. I recognize the great risk participants took in agreeing to share their stories with a community outsider and white person. I honor their generosity in recognizing that I cannot claim the knowledge they have shared as my own. I also honor the participants by committing to do the work in a good way, sharing control in the research process, and sharing their knowledge so that it may have a positive impact on Indigenous youth in the future. At the outset of this research journey, I experienced resistance and hurt when learning about the harms done by settler colonialism, and being held accountable for my part in the continued oppression of Indigenous peoples. I am now at a place where I welcome humility in being held accountable, although this remains emotionally difficult work. I recognize that I still have much work to do in identifying and addressing the ways in which I reproduce colonial practices.

My experiences as a teacher, student and pre-service counsellor have heavily influenced this research. Peshkin (1988) states that a researcher's personal qualities interact with and affect their interpretations of the phenomenon under study. Researchers cannot skirt around the ways in which their identity, and subjectivity impact the research, but instead must identify them and acknowledge their impact (Peshkin, 1988). In reflecting on my relationship to this research at the early stages, I wrote my

own narrative of a personally impactful relationship I experienced with an Indigenous student from my first year of secondary teaching to my last[3]. This student has since graduated, but interestingly enough I had the good fortune of crossing paths with them in the local community and catching up with them. I feel as though my research has, in a way, been bookended by my relationship with this student. I offer my narrative below. I have written myself into this research so that you, the reader, may be able to determine the extent to which I have influenced this research and what that means for you.

My Narrative of an Impactful TSR

In the first four years of my teaching, there is one particular Indigenous student who stands out to me. I first met this student during my first year of teaching, in my grade nine Core French class. I would structure my lessons so that I spent the first half of class speaking and encouraging students to verbally participate, and in the second half, I would ask students to write in French. During the writing portion of class, I would circulate in the room, and sit with students as they needed help. One student, I will refer to her as Evangeline, appeared confused and hesitant to ask for help, simply stating "I don't get this." I sat with her, wrote an example sentence, and explained how to conjugate verbs. Evangeline did not respond to me. I would sit with her for about 10 minutes each time I assigned a writing activity. After a few weeks I noticed that Evangeline would chat with me a little more as we sat together, and participate more during the speaking portion of the lesson. One moment that stands out in my memory is when I asked Evangeline, "Où est-ce que tu viens?" (Where do you come from?). She responded with, "Um, let's just say [name of town]." I know from my earlier chats with her that she lived in [name of community]. It wasn't until this moment that I thought that she was ashamed, in this context, to say where she comes from. I responded, to the class that "I come from Surrey, and I'm proud of it. I know it's got a reputation, and I know you guys know what that reputation is." The students laughed and one said "shootings." Evangeline looked at me with a small smirk. I couldn't tell if she felt awkward or relieved.

The following year, I taught Evangeline in planning 10 during the first semester, and French 10 during the second semester. I remember in planning 10 she would sometimes complete part of her assignments in French. In planning class, I would often

[3] I've worked as an elementary school counsellor for the past two years.

circulate as well and chat with the students about their work. One class, Evangeline showed her work (in French) to me and said, “I can hardly wait for French 10 Ms. Kunkel.”

Later that year, in the final weeks before the summer holidays. I was chatting informally with my grade 10 French class. Evangeline said, “Ms. Kunkel, this summer we should all do a hike up Mt. Ossa[4] and have a barbecue there.” A classmate responded, “Yeah, that would be awesome. Let’s do it Ms. Kunkel.” I replied with, “That sounds like a lovely idea. I think it would be great to hang out like that maybe after you guys have graduated.” I knew it would not be appropriate to hang out with students outside of school functions, but I was touched by the care that Evangeline and her classmates extended to me.

For one of my final French 11 classes, I prepared a simplified French version of Pauline Johnson’s legend, “The Siwash Rock”. The day that I read it to the class, Evangeline stopped by my room at lunch. She said, “Ms. Kunkel, I’m scared of my culture.” I responded with, “How do you mean?” She said, “I’m afraid to go to the longhouse for spiritual ceremonies.” I asked her if that was something she wanted to do. She told me she felt like she should participate, but she couldn’t do it. I told her that that was okay. I shared with her that my relationship to spirituality had changed as I grew older, that when I was a teen, I felt embarrassed about being religious. As I grew older, I saw what I believe, and my religious practices to be a place of refuge that I appreciated in a new way. I told her that I think our relationship to the spiritual changes as we grow older, and that it is normal and okay. Evangeline responded with “okay”, and was silent for a few moments. She then said, “I sit on my band’s youth council, and I enjoy that.” I asked her about what she likes about it. A few minutes later she left saying “Okay Ms. Kunkel, well, have a nice day.”

I have many memories of Evangeline, but the final one that stands out in my mind is during her graduation year when she asked me to write a reference letter for one of her scholarship applications. I asked her if we could sit down together one day at lunch, and if she could explain the scholarship to me, as well as what she would like me to highlight. In addition to the information about grades and extracurriculars, Evangeline

[4] Name changed to protect student identity.

also spoke about how she had learned the traditional way to clean and prepare a deer carcass recently. She seemed excited about this accomplishment, so I said “That’s pretty awesome. I’ve never hunted or cleaned a large animal. Tell me how you do it.” She spoke in detail about the process involved in cleaning a deer carcass.

I developed so much respect for Evangeline over the years of teaching her. I was happy to have the opportunity to communicate this to her in my reference letter to her. Evangeline graduated in June. At her graduation ceremony I remember the principal reading a statement she had prepared earlier: “Some of Evangeline’s favorite memories are good times dans la classe de français.” I hope she is doing well as a young adult.

Chapter 2.

Literature Review

Teacher-student relationships (TSRs) play an important role in student well-being and academic success (Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013). Positive TSRs increase student engagement in learning (Klem & Connell, 2004; Muller, 2001) and can reduce the risk of anxiety and depression in late adolescence as well as the risk of student drop out (Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013; Krane et al., 2017). Positive TSRs are primarily characterized by teacher warmth, approachability, support and feelings of closeness (García-Moya, 2020; Krane et al., 2016). Conversely, negative TSRs can increase the risk of the aforementioned mental health issues, by decreasing student self-esteem, for example (Krane et al., 2017). Negative TSRs are characterized by high friction (e.g., conflict, and lack of respect) (García-Moya, 2020). The importance of strong TSRs increases as students advance through the grades (Roorda et al., 2011), yet, unfortunately, the quality of the TSR declines as students leave primary school (Hamre & Pianta, 2001) as professional distance increases (Hargreaves, 2000).

The purpose of this literature review is to integrate current research on TSRs with research on cultural congruency in education for Indigenous students to demonstrate how increased educator relational competency can have a positive impact on students' experiences of school. I begin by examining current research on the TSR from the student, and then educator perspectives. I then provide a brief discussion of the historical and continued impacts of colonial violence on Indigenous youth, followed by an examination of four studies that provide insight into what culturally congruent educational environments can look like. I touch on B.C. Ministry of Education graduation statistics to draw attention to inequities in current, local contexts. Lastly, I discuss the four theoretical models that have been used to make sense of the TSR: attachment theory, developmental systems theory, self-determination theory and Kirkness and Barnhardt's (1991) four Rs.

Student Perspectives of the TSR

Much of the research on TSRs has examined either the student-perspective (Chhuon & Wallace, 2014; García-Moya et al., 2020; Krane et al., 2017; Yu et al., 2018) or both student and teacher perspectives (Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013; Klem & Connell, 2004; Muller, 2001). Chhuon and Wallace (2014) argue that the developmentally advanced capacities of youth for reflection and communication make their perspectives on the research topic highly valuable. I would imagine that, similar to how clients can provide clinicians with a more accurate rating of their effectiveness (Prescott et al., 2017), students can provide educators with a meaningful and valuable understanding of what constitutes a strong TSR. In any case, the TSR is two-sided and both perspectives are needed for a holistic understanding of its underlying mechanisms. For this reason, I have selected four recent studies that examine the student perspective of the TSR to discuss in detail, and four studies that also examine teacher perspectives. I selected the following four studies because they were conducted with adolescents, and used qualitative data collection methods like focus groups and interviews. I assumed that such studies would result in themes that were likely to appear in my own research.

García-Moya, Brooks and Moreno (2020)

García-Moya et al. (2020) conducted a qualitative study in Spain and England using a narrative approach to examine what qualities foster connection in TSRs. They ran focus groups with 42 students (23 from southern Spain, and 19 from southern England) from 11 to 18 years old. Focus groups were made up of 4 to 8 students who knew each other. The 50-minute discussion was guided by questions and sentence completion tasks that probed student experiences with close teachers. García et al. (2020) identified 6 different subthemes that describe positive, student-identified qualities of the TSR. The first of which is individualized teaching approaches: students liked when teachers knew them by name, dedicated time for informal, personal discussions, told jokes and self-disclosed so that students could get to know them as well. Students also valued teacher empathy and perspective-taking, such as noticing student emotions and offering a supportive response, as well as respecting that students had many responsibilities outside of that teacher's course. Students wanted teachers to show that they cared about their emotional well-being. Thirdly, students felt closer to teachers

when teachers offered their support. Teacher approachability, listening skills, and attentiveness to student need were all cited as positive qualities by students. Students also expected good teachers to reciprocate student effort by employing excellent teaching practices and doing whatever they could to help students succeed. Fifth, students spoke about having respect for teachers who demonstrated good classroom management, as it is the teacher's responsibility to foster an environment conducive to learning. Lastly, students shared that enthusiastic and engaging teaching styles also motivated them to learn. García-Moya et al. (2020) found that close teachers give equal and careful priority to the whole student as well as their academic needs.

Yu, Johnson, Deutch and Varga (2018)

Yu et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative study in the southeastern United States to explore how youth describe positive, impactful TSRs. Yu et al. (2018) highlight the need for more research in this area as previous research has shown a decline in the quality of TSRs (Klem & Connell, 2004) and greater teacher-perceived distance between teachers and students as students progress to the high school grades (Hargreaves, 2000). Yu et al., (2018) interviewed 13 youth between the ages of 10 and 18 twice over the course of one year. Participants were selected from a larger sample of 41 youth because they identified a teacher as their VIP (defined as a reliable person that cares about the youth and inspires their choices). Participants were asked questions about what their relationship with the VIP looked like and how they interpreted it. In their analysis of the student interviews, Yu and colleagues identified two themes: teacher noticing and teacher investment. Students identified little things that teachers did that made them feel closer to them: having nicknames for students, greeting them when they arrived in class, joking around, smiling and cheerfulness. Students also felt noticed when teachers saw their struggles with academics or emotions and offered help. Yu et al. identified "free conversations" as a subtheme of teacher noticing. These involved teacher-initiated conversations about a broad range of topics that led students to feel connected to a teacher. The second theme, teacher investment, describes meaningful teacher actions that communicate to students a deep level of teacher care. Such actions include teacher persistence in helping students understand the material, and "same-level" conversations where students feel that their teacher is talking to them as an equal. The authors of this study also noted student-perceived benefits of the close relationships

they had with their teachers: an increase in academic skills that they then applied to other contexts, an increased sense of self-esteem and a positive outlook on life, and wanting to work harder in that teacher's class. Lastly, some of the factors that students shared help them become close with their teachers in the first place were: knowing each other for a few years, student interest in the course material, and being able to talk to teachers about taboo issues such as racism, sexuality and stereotypes.

Krane, Ness, Holter-Sorensen, Karlsson, and Binder (2017)

In this qualitative study, Krane et al. (2017) used a participatory approach to interview and run focus groups with 17 students who were at risk of dropping out, or knew someone who was at-risk. A co-researcher who had lived experience of early school leaving assisted in developing the interview protocol, attended interviews and assisted with data analysis. Researcher analysis of conversations with students led to 10 themes. In the first theme, students spoke about their responsibility to respond to teacher bids for connection in order to create a positive TSR. Secondly, students addressed the importance of mutual respect: teachers speaking positively to them and about them, and students listening to the teacher. Two teacher behaviours that created deep rifts for students in TSRs were arguments and being treated unfairly in relation to their peers. Fifth, students shared that regular one-on-one meetings with their teachers where they could speak openly about their academic difficulties helped them make progress. Informal, personal conversations about life topics helped students grow closer to their teachers. Students felt seen when a teacher noticed their needs, whether academic or personal, and helped or made adaptations. Students also identified excellent teaching practices, such as individualization of teaching, as strengthening the TSR. Ninth, students were drawn to teachers who had a positive demeanor and treated them kindly. Lastly, students felt close with teachers whom they could trust to be there for them and respect their confidentiality.

Chhuon and Wallace (2014)

In this qualitative study, Chhuon and Wallace (2014) conducted 13 focus groups (5-6 students each) with 77 high school students aged 14 to 20 at three major urban centers across the United States. Facilitators used a semi-structured focus group guide to encourage youth sharing of their experiences with adults in their schools. Chhuon and

Wallace arrived at 3 major themes. In the first, students expressed dissatisfaction with teachers who do the bare minimum and didn't make an effort to get to know their students personally, leading to a perceived lack of teacher care and feelings of disengagement. Second, students expected their teachers to get to know their struggles and goals and offer individualized support in attaining academic and adult-life success. Lastly, students felt distant from teachers who made assumptions about the reasons for their academic struggles and teacher-perceived difficult behaviours. Students wanted teachers to get to know them so that they could better understand their decision-making and problems. Each of these themes reflect how youth who do not feel known or seen by their teachers disengage from school. Conversely teacher-initiated personal conversations, excellent individualized teaching practices, and giving students the benefit of the doubt, all contribute to students feeling connected to their school.

There is much overlap between the identified themes in these four studies. One of the first themes that stands out between the studies is that students like feeling known by their teachers. This knowing begins with little behaviours – being greeted by teachers by name, small talk, and joking around together. A deeper sense of being known occurs when teachers notice various aspects of students' lives and use this information to inform caring behaviours that specifically address individual needs. For example, students appreciated when teachers took an interest in their hobbies and commitments outside of school, and respected that by adjusting homework expectations. Students also felt cared about when teachers noticed how they were feeling and demonstrated empathy for difficult emotions. Another overlap between studies is that students expected teachers to have excellent teaching practices, and to go above and beyond the basic requirements of the job. Students respect teachers who put effort into their jobs. Some of the themes arising from these studies overlap with teacher-identified themes as well as Indigenous student-identified themes in the studies that follow.

Teacher Perspectives of the TSR

In this section of the paper, I first examine how negative teacher-perceptions of students and teacher burn out damage the TSR. I then provide a detailed examination of four research studies examining teacher-perspectives of the TSR. Two, recent, qualitative studies provide information on what teachers see as their responsibilities and best practices in developing positive TSRs. The third, dated, quantitative study provides

interesting information on the correlation between student effort and teacher care. The last, dated, qualitative study examines teachers' emotional experiences of their relationships with students, and was one of the first studies to do so. In reviewing the literature, I found that few recent studies examine TSRs solely from the teacher's perspective. I chose to examine the last two studies in-depth because, although they are outdated, they are frequently cited in the literature on TSRs, and they are some of the few existing studies that focus on teacher perspectives[5].

Negative teacher perceptions of students and teacher burn out

Students who initiate positive interactions with their teachers have already developed resiliency and are experiencing success (Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013). Therefore, it is the teacher's responsibility to initiate a relationship with students who are struggling to develop these skills (Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013). Muller (2001) found that teacher's often perceived male, racial minority students in modified classes as at-risk. Muller (2001) also found that teachers perceived identified at-risk students as less caring and making minimal efforts at school. Teacher perceptions of students inform how they interact with them (Muller, 2001). I would assume that teachers who view students as at-risk due to perceived "laziness" and lack of care behave negatively towards such students when the opposite action is needed. Indeed, there exists increased pressure on high school teachers to move their students towards graduation (Krane et al., 2017), and it has long been common practice to apply pressure to at-risk students through punitive means (Hargreaves, 2000; Pianta et al. 2012). Such punitive teaching practices often lead to the opposite of what the teacher intends: student disengagement, decreased motivation, poor academic achievement and behaviour problems (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Klem & Connell 2004). Krane et al., (2017) offer a suggestion for positively supporting teachers experiencing increasing pressure and workload:

> "…school administrators should be aware of the importance of teachers' wellbeing in the development of positive TSRs and provide a supportive culture that promotes a positive work environment for teachers, to facilitate this development. Teachers' efforts in developing positive TSRs should be

[5] I chose to exclude Klem and Connell's (2004) study on TSRs from my in-depth review because it was limited to the experiences of elementary and middle school teachers and students.

> valued by their managers, and ample time, support and guidance should be provided" (p. 387).

Teachers experiencing burn out likely have reduced capacity to attend to the diverse needs of their at-risk students. Unfortunately, pressure from superiors translates to increased pressure placed on students, which ultimately risks damaging the TSR. Teacher health and happiness are important factors in the development and maintenance of positive TSRs.

Krane, Karlsson, Ness and Binder (2016)

Using a participatory approach, Krane et al. (2016) conducted 4 focus groups consisting of teachers and school helpers in Norway. Fifteen teachers and 12 helpers who had experience working with at-risk students at the secondary level participated in semi-structured focus groups. Krane et al. (2016) identified four major themes. First, all teachers and helpers recognized the importance of seeing the student as a whole person with strengths and challenges. This recognition was embodied by greeting students, checking in with them, giving compliments, and creating safety through active listening. Helpers spoked about how teacher negative expectations, unresponsiveness to student needs and disrespectful remarks contributed to negative TSRs. Second, teachers and helpers identified the collaborative nature of positive TSRs. Teachers recognized that both parties in the relationship must make an effort to grow it, but it was always the teacher's responsibility to model respect. Teachers found it easier to connect with students when they shared a common interest, whether it be in their subject area or in extra-curriculars. Third, teachers and helpers spoke about having flexible boundaries. Sometimes, teachers would do more than was required by their job to meet student needs (i.e., transporting students to school in the morning); however, teachers also addressed the challenges in asserting non-negotiable boundaries, such as referring students to counselling when they perceived a student to have mental health needs. Lastly, participants shared that school scheduling and procedures influenced the TSR. Class size and frequency impacted the ability of teachers to build closer relationships. Smaller classes (e.g., 15 students) where teachers had 10 or more hours of student contact a week allowed teachers to get to know their students quite well. School procedures, such as assigning a mentor teacher to each student, and school mandates to have each student graduate were also cited as helpful.

Bernstein-Yamashiro and Noam (2013)

Bernstein-Yamashiro conducted a qualitative study as part of her dissertation research where she interviewed 119 students and 31 teachers at a high school in northern California. She described four main themes arising from her work with teachers. First, teachers saw high quality TSRs as an integral part of teaching and learning. That is to say, strong TSRs involve more than simply spending quality time with students – student learning is enhanced when students perceived their teachers as caring and safe. Second, teachers saw TSRs as a professional responsibility. Teacher empathy and attunement in order to meet the emotional and academic needs of the student are basic requirements of the job. These first two themes point to teacher effort to foster positive TSRs as best practice in teaching. Third, the teachers in this study shared that positive and close relationships with students gave them a sense of purpose as well as professional gratification. Teachers take a genuine interest in their students and are happy to be a part of their lives and witness their growth. Lastly, teachers acknowledged that TSRs bring challenges, such as becoming overly involved with students, ruminating on student problems during personal time, and neglecting self-care. Some teachers shared that they became better at supporting students with increased experience, and by building self-care into their routines. Appropriate teacher boundaries, such as recognizing the limits of one's competency, also safeguard the TSR. Teacher transparency around their roles and responsibilities reduces the likelihood of student disappointment.

Muller (2001)

In this American study, Muller (2001) used tenth-grade student and mathematics teacher data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988-1992 to examine the relationship between teacher-perceived student effort and student-perceived teacher care[6]. The select data set was made up of several item Likert scales for teachers and

[6] Muller (2001) chose to exclude Indigenous students from her sample because she believed them to be significantly different from other ethnic groups, and would therefore impede meaningful data analysis. Tuck and Yang (2012) address this research process as asterisking Indigenous peoples. It erases the impacts of colonial oppression and theft of land on Indigenous peoples by excluding them from or asterisking them in data sets (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

students[7]. The results of Muller's (2001) analysis indicate that a positive TSR is characterized by the teacher perceiving the student as making an effort, and the student perceiving the teacher as caring. These perceptions appear to be correlated: students who perceived their teachers as caring were more likely to be perceived as making an effort by their teachers. One interpretation of this information is that it is the teacher's responsibility to initiate positive TSRs by communicating unconditional care and support to students, as students are less likely to engage in learning if they perceive a teacher as uncaring, especially students at-risk of academic failure.

Hargreaves (2000)

In his seminal work, Hargreaves (2000) interviewed 53 teachers at 15 different schools in Ontario in order to better understand the emotional landscape of TSRs at both the elementary and secondary levels. It is important to note that, at the time of Hargreaves writing, social-emotional education initiatives were likely not accorded the same importance that they are in schools today. In this study, teachers were asked to recount relational events that they associated with either negative or positive emotions. Both elementary and secondary teachers expressed that they found positive interactions with students rewarding, but the nature of these interactions appeared different. Elementary school teachers attained job satisfaction through continued relationships with students (i.e., teaching students for more than one grade, and being identified as a favorite teacher), whereas secondary teachers felt connected to students with small gestures: greetings and small talk, gifts, and student visits. One of the main differences between teacher perceptions of student emotions at the elementary and secondary levels was that elementary teachers saw their emotional connection to students as foundational for teaching and learning, whereas secondary teachers separated emotions from teaching and learning. These teachers identified appropriate places for overt student emotion as outside the classroom. Secondary teachers also spoke about discouraging disruptive emotions in the classroom, or referring the student to specialist teachers (i.e., counsellor, special education teacher, librarian). It is likely that over 20 years, best teaching practices at the secondary level have changed so that teachers

[7] Examples of items on the student Likert scale include: "When I work hard, teachers praised my effort" and "Most of my teachers really listen to what I have to say". Examples of items on the teacher Likert scale include: "The student completes homework assignments" and "The student pays attention in class".

here accord greater importance to noticing and meeting their students' emotional needs (as touched upon by Bernstein-Yamashiro and Noam (2013)). The structure of secondary education (i.e., increased class size, teaching multiple classes, and time tabling that limit the amount of time students spend with one teacher) does impact the nature of the TSR. Teachers may not be able to build a strong connection with each student, or get to know their students as closely as elementary school teachers do.

One theme that appears in three of the above studies is that it is the teacher's responsibility to initiate and unconditionally maintain positive TSRs. This responsibility is a component of excellent teaching practices expected by both students and teachers. Another reason for this responsibility is that teachers have likely developed interpersonal skills that they can teach to students. Teachers also have the ability to act as role models for students. A teacher's role bestows power on them; therefore, teachers have a responsibility to ensure that they do not abuse such power. Another theme that appeared in three of these studies is professional boundaries, which included an awareness of the limits of one's competency and knowing when to refer a student to a specialist teacher; and self-care, such as being able to leave work worries at work. Teachers in two of the studies acknowledged how school structure, such as class sizes and the amount of time spent with students each week impacted their ability to form close connections with students. Lastly, teachers in two of the studies echoed the student-identified theme of excellence in teaching practices as a basic job requirement. Some teachers saw going above and beyond as fostering close TSRs, and other teachers saw positive TSRs as essential to the processes of teaching and learning.

Before a closer reading of studies that explore student and teacher experiences of education from an Indigenous lens, I dedicate space to how colonialism has impacted Indigenous peoples, including the impact it has had on physical and emotional well-being.

The Impact of Colonial Violence on Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous communities across Canada continue to deal with the devastating and lasting impacts of historical European colonialism and contemporary Euro-Canadian settler colonialism (Gone, 2013). A particularly devastating colonial practice of forced assimilation and genocide occurred in residential schools (Oskineegish & Berger, 2013).

This longstanding oppression of Indigenous peoples has resulted in entrenched poverty, systemic discrimination (Gone, 2013) and physical and mental health issues (Battiste & Henderson, 2012). Battiste and Henderson (2012) directly link a settler legacy of colonialism to decreased health amongst Indigenous peoples:

> "… past and present education systems that have attempted to forcibly assimilate Indigenous peoples to colonial modes have generated multi-generational oppression and trauma. These processes of cognitive assimilation have generated many soul wounds and diseases within Indigenous peoples. It is well-accepted that the forced education of Indigenous peoples was a substantial contributor to the current high levels of suicide, substance abuse and family violence among residential school survivors" (p. 92).

Much of the historical research on schooling outcomes for Indigenous students has focused on individual deficits rather than the systemic and institutional barriers to educational transitions (Parent, 2017). Settler educators and policy-makers in education subscribe to this neoliberal perspective that places the onus for success on students and their families (Parent, 2017), when, in fact, the continued legacy of oppression and trauma hold greater explanatory power for the disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Battiste and Henderson (2012) go on to explain how the settler theft of land continues to perpetuate health issues among Indigenous peoples: "… loss of Indigenous sovereignty, along with dispossession of lands, waterways and customary laws has created a climate of material and spiritual oppression with increased susceptibility to disease and injury" (p. 95). Settler oppression of Indigenous peoples continues with the present-day occupation of unceded lands and settler governance of Indigenous communities. Thus, settler aims to treat health issues that disproportionately affect Indigenous peoples are ineffective when the individual is forced to exist in an environment of oppression (Battiste & Henderson, 2012).

As I touched upon earlier, a meritocratic, Eurocentric perspective heavily informs school systems in Canada. If a student is unable to succeed within the institution, they are required to adapt to the culture of the school via counselling, bridging programs, advising, etc. (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). This deficit view of the student contributes to institutional inaccessibility, when it is the institution's responsibility to accommodate students from minority cultures (Pidgeon, 2008). One of the main barriers to Indigenous students' participation in educational institutions, is the inappropriate fit of the dominant epistemology with Indigenous Knowledges (Pidgeon, 2008). Schools continue to

perpetuate colonialism in their prioritization of singular, dominant epistemologies and ontologies (Pidgeon, 2008). For example, provincial mandates to increase graduation rates for Indigenous students are undergirded by the larger purpose of inculcating students with neoliberal goals of academic and social integration into an idealized society (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). Educators push students to graduate because they want them to be “productive members of society”. The narrow, Western definition of a productive member of society does not leave space for the input of diverse cultural groups in the conceptualization of this term. Indigenous students are yet again required to assimilate into a dominant, foreign culture in order to achieve academic success (Parent, 2017). This dominant cultural view is prevalent to the extent that it is taken for granted by members of the dominant group, and thus, this contemporary form cultural genocide is accepted as the status quo.

What might culturally congruent learning environments look like?

The aforementioned studies focus on behaviours that support positive TSRs, but do not specifically examine the experiences of Indigenous students in the TSR, as told by the students themselves. As elaborated on in the preceding section, in Western culture, school staff often place blame with the Indigenous students and their families for lack of academic achievement (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011). This attitude is grounded in systemic and overt forms of racism and the larger worldview of meritocracy (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011). Social conditions, not children or their families, are responsible for a child’s ability to convert resources into capabilities (Buzelli, 2015). Good teaching practices involve settler recognition of systems of power and privilege and accordance of space and respect to Indigenous ways of knowing within the classroom and larger school system. I could not speak about Indigenous student and non-Indigenous teacher relationships without an examination of what constitutes culturally competent teaching. The following four studies examine actions that both help Indigenous students feel connected to the school community, and distance them from it. One study explores how non-Indigenous teachers can increase their cultural competency, as told from Indigenous and non-Indigenous teacher perspectives (Oskineegish & Berger, 2013). Two studies examine the schooling experiences of Indigenous youth to arrive at recommendations for creating culturally congruent pedagogy (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011;

McGregor, 2019). The last study looks at the ways in which supportive Indigenous adults within the school positively impact Indigenous youth (Crooks et al., 2017).

Oskineegish and Berger (2013)

In this qualitative study, Oskineegish and Berger (2013) interviewed seven teachers (four of whom were First Nations and three of whom were non-Indigenous) in remote First Nations communities in northern Ontario. Interviews were semi-structured and lasted approximately one hour. All teachers had 10 or more years of experience teaching in a First Nations community. The authors identified three major themes upon analysis of the interview transcripts. The first theme described teacher identity and authenticity. Teachers spoke about the need for non-Indigenous teachers to have good intentions, to have an interest in the whole student, and to know their own cultural background and the privilege afforded by it. Secondly, the teachers spoke about building relationships, especially with the students' parents and Elders in their community. Teachers also spoke about the importance of sharing any helpful knowledge with the community, and opening one's classroom to community members as resources are limited in these remote locations. Lastly, teachers spoke about how non-Indigenous educators must recognize their visitor status in the community. This primarily involves learning and abiding by community rules and traditions, and communicating in a non-judgmental, non-directive way.

Many of the recommendations provided by this study can be utilized by non-Indigenous teachers in more populated rural and urban settings as Indigenous students come from nearby communities. The same teacher responsibilities of authenticity, relationship building, checking one's privilege, and acknowledging their visitor status on unceded territories apply in urban settings.

Hare and Pidgeon (2011)

In this study, informed by Indigenous Research Methodology, Hare and Pidgeon (2011) interviewed 39 Anishinaabe youth between the ages of 15 and 21 in two First Nations communities in northern Ontario. The purpose of the study was to understand how Indigenous youth experience their schooling, with the aim of informing culturally competent pedagogy and policy. Researchers arrived at three themes upon close

examination of the youths' stories. Firstly, the youth spoke about facing racism from peers and teachers. Youth experienced peers calling them derogatory names and instigating physical fights. They experienced teachers having low expectations of them, and treating them differently than their non-Indigenous peers. The youth also experienced difficulty transitioning from their community elementary schools, where they felt seen, to the local high school where they felt anonymous. Secondly, youth spoke about persisting at school because of family values and support from family members. Several youth spoke about their grandparents consistently being there to help them, and communicating the importance of schooling to them. Lastly, youth chose to attend alternative schools that could better accommodate their lifestyle. Some youth said that the teachers at these schools helped them and showed that they believed in them. Smaller class sizes helped them grow close to their friends.

This study draws direct attention to Indigenous students' experiences of racism. In a later study (McGregor, 2019), teachers identify their responsibility to reflect on their biases, the advantages their privilege has bestowed upon them, and to challenge racism in all settings. Addressing and fighting racism is an essential and preliminary step in the creation of positive, cross-cultural TSRs.

McGregor (2019)

In her 2019 report, McGregor analyzed and summarized the data from 10 inquiry teams at secondary schools across British Columbia that delved into the ways in which school staff might be able to enhance Indigenous learner transitions to post-secondary institutions. Each school constructed their guiding inquiry question on the topic and determined what activities they would use to engage students and then collect data. Each of the schools led their inquiry over three years, from 2016 to 2019. McGregor then interviewed the teacher teams and reviewed their reports to arrive at 10 key educator-team strategies, the first and most important of which is prioritizing relationships with students, parents and community. All other strategies were built on a foundation of fostering these positive relationships. The second strategy was the use of interdisciplinary pathways to encourage student learning across the subject areas, for example through project- or place-based learning. Teacher teams were willing to take risks and use unconventional pedagogies that may have a positive impact on students. A fourth strategy was teacher reflection on their bias and privilege. Teachers need to

constantly challenge the harmful beliefs they hold about Indigenous learner success by seeking out alternative stories and experiences. Fifth, teachers identified the importance of listening to and honoring all members of the students' communities. A sixth recommendation was to seek and then create space for the emotions that arise in doing change work. Teachers also recognized their responsibility to challenge racism and advocate for Indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems. An eighth strategy was recognition of the limits of one's competence and seeking accountability. Non-Indigenous teachers may do harm, even with good intentions, and must make themselves vulnerable to correction. Ninth, educators felt compelled to share their stories so that others may be touched by them. Lastly, educators recognized the importance of seeking the wisdom of Knowledge Holders and Elders and compensating them for their work.

Crooks, Exner-Cortens, Burm, Lapointe and Chiodo (2017)

In this mixed-methods study, Crooks et al., (2017) conducted surveys and interviews with Indigenous youth in southwestern Ontario on three separate occasions (or waves) over a two-year period. Participation during the three waves ranged from 128 to 158 youth. The purpose of the study was to compare youth who had fully participated in a two-year Indigenous mentoring program, youth who participated for one year of the program and youth who did not participate. Upper elementary students met with young adult mentors for one hour a week. Secondary students met one-on-one with a mentor at least once a week. From the quantitative data, researchers found that youth who participated in mentorship over two years reported better mental health and increased positive cultural identity compared to youth receiving one year of mentoring or no mentoring. Qualitative data yielded four themes. Youth who had completed the program expressed greater understanding and embracing of their cultural backgrounds, and increased confidence. Youth also reported strengthened relationships and greater respect for both their peers and mentors. Youth grew to see their mentors as safe and understanding adults with whom they could discuss their cultural backgrounds. Thirdly, youth spoke about gaining knowledge of Indigenous culture and then using it as a lens through which to interpret their lived experiences. Lastly, youth spoke about learning healthy relationship skills such as assertiveness and vulnerability.

I chose to include this study in the literature review because, although it does not speak to TSRs, it addresses the integral issue of home-culture visibility in the school system and the benefits this affords students. Students can have positive and beneficial relationships with non-Indigenous teachers, but being able to connect with a supportive member of the school community who shares the student's cultural background is invaluable.

An important theme evident in two of these studies is the impact of teacher-parent relationships on the TSR. Just as it is the teacher's responsibility to foster and maintain the TSR, it is also the teacher's responsibility to establish positive connections with student families and invite them to participate in the school community. These studies also add a dimension to educator's professional responsibilities: self-reflection on their bias and privilege as a way of identifying internalized racism and colonial practices. Teachers must re-imagine their position as a guest and adjust their behaviours accordingly. The last common theme in these studies is the benefits of alternative programming. Changing the structure, and even location, of learning has the potential to impact the ways in which students and teachers relate to each other.

Below I include a matrix of themes I identified in the literature. Of course, the identification of themes is researcher-dependent (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There are overlaps between specific behaviours and how researchers chose to group them into different major themes. For example, Yu et al., (2018) characterized behaviours such as small talk, jokes and smiling as teacher noticing; whereas García et al., (2020) grouped such behaviours under the theme "individualized teacher approaches". In this matrix, I re-grouped the themes and identified behaviours into my own categories to draw attention to overlaps in the literature. I later use this matrix to identify how the findings from this study are congruent with the findings below, contrast them, and add to them.

Theme	Description	Garcia-Moya et al., (2020)	Yu et al., (2018)	Krane et al., (2017)	Chhuon & Wallace (2014)	Krane et al., (2016)	Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam (2013)	Muller (2001)	Hargreaves (2000)	Oskineegish & Berger (2013)	Hare & Pidgeon (2011)	McGregor (2019)	Crooks et al., (2017)
Individualized teaching approaches	Getting to know each student through small talk, jokes, self-disclosure, etc. 1-1 meetings with students to offer support; a wholistic view of the student.	x	x	x	x	x			x	x			
- Free conversations	Teacher-initiated conversation about a broad range of topics		x	x									
Teacher empathy and perspective taking	Noticing students' emotions and needs and offering help Teacher authenticity and goodness	x	x	x			x			x			
Teacher offering support	Approachability, listening and attentiveness Students felt cared about when teacher's supported them.	x	x					x					
Excellent teaching practices	Excellent teaching practices (i.e., persistence, adaptations, going above and beyond, etc.) foster the TSR and are an integral part of teaching. The bar is set very high by both students and teachers. Relationships matter most.	x	x	x	x	x	x					x	
Respecting good classroom management	Students see it as the teacher's job to protect the learning environment.	x											
Enthusiastic and engaging teaching styles		x											
Benefits of a close relationship: both perspectives	Students benefit with increased self-esteem, positive outlook on life, and increased effort. Teachers found positive TSRs to be rewarding and personally and professionally gratifying.		x				x		x				
Teachers treating students like equals	Through "same level" conversations and by teachers modelling respect, and by challenging racism		x	x		x						x	
Mutual responsibility in fostering the TSR	Both students and teachers spoke about their responsibility to contribute to a positive relationship.			x		x							
Things that damage the TSR (both perspectives)	Arguments, unfair teacher assumptions, negative teacher expectations, teacher unresponsiveness, disrespectful remarks, racism			x	x	x					x		
Teacher positivity	Smiling; happy			x			x						
Trust	Teachers are reliable and respect confidentiality.			x									
Common interests	Teachers found it easier to connect when there were shared interests. Students believed shared interests could improve the relationship.			x		x							
Professional boundaries	Staying within the limits of one's competency (i.e., knowing when to refer to a specialist teacher); self-care; reflection on bias and privilege					x	x		x	x		x	
Impacts of school structure on the TSR	This can facilitate or detract from the quality of TSRs. Alternative programming (e.g., place-based) or settings, class size, and time spent with students all impact the TSR.					x			x		x	x	
Getting to know and including parents and community	Fostering relationships with those in the child's ecology have a positive impact on the TSR.									x		x	
Family values	Family members encouraging students to do well in school										x		
Cultural connectedness	Sharing cultural identities with supportive school staff had a positive impact.												x

Figure 1. Matrix of Themes in the Literature

Graduation Rates of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Youth in British Columbia

Provincial graduation rates provide some information on the differences in schooling outcomes for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. The 6-year school completion rate for Indigenous students in B.C. has been steadily on the rise. In 2007, 48% of Indigenous students completed high school within the six-year time frame; whereas, in this same year, 83% of their non-Indigenous counterparts completed high school within the same time frame. (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2011). In the 2019/20 school year, 71% of Indigenous students graduated within the allotted six-year time frame, compared to 88% of non-Indigenous students (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2020). Although non-Indigenous student graduation rates are higher, from 2007 to 2020 graduation rates for this population increased by 5%, whereas the graduation rates for Indigenous students increased by 23%. The B.C. Ministry of Education does not provide information on what factors may be responsible for the increase in graduation rates. That being said, Tuck and Yang (2012) speak to how government mandates to improve graduation rates for Indigenous students do little foster connections between Indigenous and public-school communities:

> "Even though Indigenous knowledge systems predate, expand, update and complicate the curricula found in most public schools, schools attended by poor Indigenous students are among those most regimented in attempts to comply with federal mandates. Though these mandates intrude on the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples, the "services" promised at the inception of these mandates do little to make the schools attended by Indigenous youth better at providing them a compelling, relevant, inspiring and meaningful education" (p. 22).

Top-down mandates in and of themselves do not require systemic changes in education, yet this is what is needed. Tuck and Yang (2012) characterize at-risk labels ascribed to Indigenous peoples by governments as settler attempts to appease their guilt and secure settler futurity without giving land and governance back to Indigenous peoples. Governments and school boards walk the line between appearing to reconcile with Indigenous communities while maintaining a sufficient level of oppression to safeguard settler dominance.

These B.C. statistics indicate a problematic discrepancy in the educational outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Several reasons can

explain this disparity: historical trauma, colonial oppression, educator incompetency and bias, systemic racism, educator distance, etc. I have chosen to focus on the TSR as one important way that students may feel connected to their school community in meaningful ways. I hope through my review of the literature, I have communicated that positive TSRs are integral to student-perceived safety and inclusion at school, and, for this reason, they are well-worth exploring in greater depth.

Theoretical Models of the TSR

Several theories that aid in understanding the connection between TSRs and student well-being are evident in the literature. I have chosen to focus on three that appear frequently: attachment theory, developmental systems theory and self-determination theory. I have also included Kirkness and Barnhardt's (1991) seminal work on re-imagining Indigenous student engagement in the educational institution. Their perspective puts forth thought and action integral to fostering a culturally-competent TSR on the part of the educator.

Attachment Theory

Conceptualization of the TSR has been heavily informed by attachment theory (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). The quality of a child's attachment to a primary caregiver impacts their ability to form relationships with teachers (Pianta et al., 2003). Children form Internal Working Models (IWMs) about themselves and others based off of early caregiver responsiveness to their needs (Teyber & Teyber, 2017). In a nutshell, if a caregiver consistently and adequately meets the child's needs for comfort and affection, the child develops a positive view of themselves and the world around them. Conversely, if a caregiver rejects or ignores the child's needs, the child develops a view of themselves as unworthy and the world as a dangerous place (Teyber & Teyber, 2017). Sroufe and Siegel (2011) provide the example: "… a child who's been rejected is likely to interpret the behaviour of others as rejecting and behave in ways that lead to further rejection, continuing the pattern" (p. 5). Thus, it is understandable how children with insecure attachment styles may have difficulty developing high quality relationships with their teachers. Research has shown that a child's sense of safety with parents is correlated to their sense of safety with a teacher in early childhood (Ahnert et al., 2006;

Booth et al., 2003). However, a child's sense of safety is moderated by the significant adult's level of sensitivity (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Other factors also explain the quality of the TSR: children may distinguish between parent and teacher relationships, and early positive TSRs positively influence a child's relationship to schooling, which then impacts how they relate to future teachers (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). The IWMs that children form with early attachment figures shape how they understand relationships with others (Sabol & Pianta, 2012; Sroufe & Siegel, 2011), including the significant adults in their life. Attachment theory isn't as often applied to understanding TSRs at the secondary school levels, as time and distance create difficulties in linking early attachment experiences to TSRs (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). That being said, early attachment styles impact an individual's interpersonal style later in life (Teyber & Teyber, 2017) meaning that an understanding of attachment is important when examining TSRs in adolescence – it's just harder to observe the impact of one on the other.

Developmental Systems Theory

Developmental Systems Theory (DST) has also been used as a conceptual framework to make sense of the TSR (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Under this theory, child competency is understood as a function of the interacting parts of their larger context (Pianta & Walsh, 1998). Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model can offer an in-depth explanation of how child-environment interactions influence development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The individual is found at the center of the model, surrounded by the microsystem – people and organizations that make up the child's immediate environment, and with whom the child frequently interacts (e.g., family, teachers, peers, etc.). At the next level is the mesosystem, made up of the interactions between the players in the microsystem and their impact on the child. The third ring in the system is the exosystem – individuals and organizations that the child is not in direct contact with, but nevertheless have an impact on the child. For example, parents' workplaces and friends, and local school boards and governments. The fourth system is the macrosystem – the attitudes, values and ideas of the dominant culture in the child's larger community. It is because of the macrosystem that certain behaviours or qualities, such as assertiveness and competitiveness are valued in Western culture, whereas other characteristics, such as shyness or altruism, are less valued. The last system, the chronosystem, is concerned with how time – historical events or the child's age – impact

how the child develops and interacts with their environment. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model pays attention to the proximity of the teacher to the child as well as the mutual influences of the TSR on child development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Yu et al., (2018) explain that DST accounts for teacher and student beliefs, attitudes and experiences and how these inform teacher-student interactions. Such interactions between the individual and the microsystem are what lead to cognitive and emotional development, as informed by the individual's larger social context (Yu et al., 2018). Pianta and Walsh (1998) use DST to critique the notion that success or failure is attributable to the child's, family's, or school's competencies or lack thereof. These authors argue that child competency is a function of the interacting parts of the entire system. For example, DST acknowledges how colonialism and historical traumas impact the student and, by extension, the TSR itself. DST offers a more inclusive and holistic conceptualization of the TSR than attachment theory alone. Oftentimes attachment and Developmental Systems theories are applied concurrently to better understand the TSR (Sabol & Pianta, 2012).

Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is primarily concerned with the social conditions that facilitate or hinder adaptive human functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2017). It takes into account the impact of biological, social and cultural factors in explaining psychological growth, engagement and wellness (Ryan & Deci, 2017). SDT is comprised of 5 mini-theories to explain human motivation (Reeve, 2013). I will focus on the first, basic needs theory. Ryan and Deci (2017) assert that autonomy, competency and relatedness are the three basic needs required for motivation and well-being. Autonomy occurs when an individual behaves authentically, in and of their own volition. Autonomy is characterized by feelings of congruency to one's values and interests. Competency involves a feeling of mastery, or belief in one's abilities to meet challenges. The last need, relatedness, involves feelings of belongingness and significance to another person or group of people. Baumeister and Leary (1995) classified the need to belong as a fundamental human motivation, integral to physical and psychological well-being. They outline the criteria for belongingness as follows: frequent interactions that are pleasant or at least free from conflict, a perceived bond characterized by stability and genuine concern, a belief that the other cares about one's welfare, and the mutuality of these criteria

(Baumeister & Leary, 1995). SDT also recognizes the impact of social contexts on an individual's ability to attain these needs (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Evidently, engaging learning environments must support student need for: autonomy by offering choices, freedom and linking learning to student interests (García-Moya, 2020; Reeve, 2013; Ryan & Deci, 2017); for competency through structure, consistency, clear communication, and constructive feedback; and for relatedness through emotional engagement, affection and support (García-Moya, 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Students experience well-being, greater intrinsic motivation, and feel connected to learning environments that meet these three basic needs (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Interestingly, relatedness also has a positive impact on teacher well-being and engagement in the profession (Klassen, Perry & Frenzel, 2012). According to SDT, high quality TSRs meet a basic need for adaptive functioning and well-being.

Kirkness and Barnhardt's (1991) 4Rs

In their seminal work on culturally congruent higher education for Indigenous students, Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) outline four areas in which educators can change their teaching practices: respect for Indigenous ways of knowing, relevance to Indigenous perspectives, reciprocity in relationships, and the responsibility to hold space for and engage Indigenous peoples in the educational institution. Respecting Indigenous cultural integrity involves holding space for and honoring Indigenous knowledge, traditions and cultural values. Educational institutions require culturally diverse students to adopt Western cultural values that displace and devalue their own worldviews. Students who are not willing to reject their home values are often seen as unsuccessful by university standards (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). Educators can demonstrate respect for Indigenous Knowledges by educating themselves on Indigenous issues and ways of knowing, to create a school environment where Indigenous students know their cultural values are welcomed and honored. Making education relevant to Indigenous students involves adopting pedagogy that enables these students to increase their understanding of their cultures and ways of knowing. Naturally, this engenders the responsibility of those in leadership positions to engage Knowledge Holders and Elders in structural reform, so that Indigenous peoples have a say in Indigenous education. Lastly, reciprocal relationships, in Kirkness and Barnhardt's (1991) work is founded upon mutual aid: educators helping students understand how to navigate the system, and

students educating teachers on their culture and how to improve teaching practices. Each of these changes in educational practice and policy can lead to increased participation in education and wellbeing for Indigenous students. An understanding of and commitment to working towards fulfilling these four Rs set the foundations for a culturally competent TSR; however, such an effort must be collective to have a widespread impact on the education system.

Attachment theory provides a basic understanding of the TSR: “caregiver” responsiveness to child need directly contributes to a child’s positive and trusting view of themselves and the world around them. Attachment theory may explain the link between consistent, supportive teacher behaviours and good student mental health and self-esteem. DST is an appropriate model to apply when focusing on TSRs involving students from minority groups, as it emphasizes a holistic understanding of both parties is needed in making sense of the TSR. DST when applied to TSRs also challenges the racist assumptions of educators, as perceived deficits in educational engagement do not reside solely with the student. SDT explains how excellent teaching practices, of which the TSR is integral, foster student motivation and engagement in learning. These three theories alone do not account for the ways that an Indigenous student’s culture factors into the TSR. Kirkness and Barnhardt’s (1991) seminal work provides non-Indigenous educators and institutions with guidance on creating space for and honoring Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies. Cultural competency is a crucial element in creating strong TSRs.

Chapter 3.

Method

This research project rests upon a theoretical framework informed by the social constructionist and Indigenous Knowledges research traditions as well as the narrative inquiry, anti-oppressive and Indigenous research methodologies. Indigenous research frameworks are distinct from the quantitative and qualitative research traditions, and although they are commensurate with qualitative methods of inquiry, such as social constructionism and narrative inquiry, they should not be grouped under the qualitative research paradigm (Kovach, 2009). Although I am not Indigenous, I used Indigenous research data generating methods– sharing circles and stories – in order to be responsive to the youth participants' cultures. Anti-oppressive and Indigenous research practices informed my decision to engage participants at various levels of the research in an effort to share the power and benefits traditionally afforded to the researcher. Ethical research done with Indigenous peoples must have decolonizing aims. That is to say, the research must engender positive change efforts on the part of the colonizers. I begin this chapter with a brief overview of social constructionism and narrative inquiry, followed by a more in-depth discussion of anti-oppressive research and Indigenous research methodologies and how these have guided my methodological decision-making. I also provide an overview of sharing circles and storytelling practices in order to distinguish these data collection methods from focus groups and interviewing. In the second part of this chapter, I describe the study procedures: participants, recruitment and data collection, data analysis and member-checking.

Social Constructionism

"*We don't see things as they are. We see them as we are."* (Rabbi Shemuel ben Nachmani).

This is the quote that springs to mind when I think of social constructionism – a reactionary movement to positivism. From a social constructionist viewpoint, scientific "facts" are arrived at via social processes whereby they become part of a cultural group's language and eventually seen as independent ideas (Gergen, 2020). Social

constructionism invites one to question how taken-for-granted knowledge came to be through social processes (Gergen, 2020). In this section I will touch on the four key characteristics of constructionism: objectivity cannot exist, understanding the world depends on one's context, knowledge is arrived at and passed down through social processes and socially constructed knowledge informs one's actions. I will explain my rationale for choosing constructionism as an organizing research tradition, and, lastly, situate myself in the research.

I chose a social constructionist tradition to frame my research because, in working within a cross-cultural relationship, I am compelled to, at the very least, acknowledge that Western epistemologies have long been positioned as universal when that is not the case. Constructionism draws attention to how taken-for-granted knowledge of the dominant group maintains systemic racism. A constructionist standpoint alone may not provide the impetus for social change, which is why I have also looked to anti-oppressive and Indigenous research methodologies for guidance.

Burr (1995) outlines four key assumptions of a social constructionist stance that can assist in developing a well-rounded understanding of this epistemology. First of all, the constructionist researcher is critical of "objective" stances – just because the world appears to be a certain way, doesn't mean it actually is that way (Burr, 1995). From a positivist stance, empirical inquiry can uncover the explanatory truth behind phenomena – what is attributable to natural processes external to the individual. Berger and Luckmann (1967) were the first to critique claims of scientific fact by maintaining that knowledge is created through social processes which are context dependent. According to Berger and Luckmann (1967), people externalize their ideas through language. These ideas become part of social processes (e.g., dialogue, text, etc.) and eventually expressed by others. Eventually, the idea becomes prevalent enough that people detach it from its social origins and begin to see it as fact. Facts do not exist as such in the constructivist researcher's world as all knowledge has a subjective and co-constructed story about how it came to be.

Secondly, a person's understanding of the world depends on their cultural and historical context (Burr, 1995). Social processes differ depending on geographical, historical and cultural location. According to Gergen (2009), cultural groups choose the ways in which to describe their world and sustain these views and their attached values

through social discourse. Indeed, no knowledge, sometimes believed to be fact, is value free. Groups prioritize certain views of the world because doing so is useful to them (Gergen, 2009). These “truths” can be both essential to the survival of the members of the group, and dangerous to those who do not occupy a position of power within it – more on that later.

Thirdly, knowledge comes from human interaction and communication (Burr, 1995). Gergen (2009) gives the example of an infant who does not see “men” or “women” or “pine trees” because she has not yet acquired the language to describe her world in this way. As this child grows and engages in dialogue with the adults in her life, she will learn how to describe and make meaning of the stimuli around her (Gergen, 2009). In cultural groups, knowledge is passed down from generation to generation and co-constructed through language (Burr, 1995).

Lastly, different types of socially-constructed knowledge bring about a specific set of actions – what one knows about the world informs how they react to what they observe (Burr, 1995). One of the greatest harms of seeing certain types of knowledge as universal and value-free is the stigmatization of certain cultural groups and subsequent scientific justification of harms committed by the dominant group (Gergen, 2012). Oftentimes, the values inherent in harmful discourses aren’t noticed by those of the dominant group precisely because it matches their values (Gergen, 2009). For example, the concept of normal is socially constructed. Group members hold each other accountable to their view of normal as deviations are seen as threatening to the status quo of the group (Sprague, 2016). Thus, a person’s concept of what is normal informs how they act towards others who fit into that description, and those who don’t.

From a constructionist standpoint, all assertions, theories, laws, etc. are situated within their cultural tradition (Gergen, 2012). If a Western idea is treated as universal, beliefs from other cultures are undermined or even destroyed (Gergen, 2012). This is why a constructionist framework provides a better vantage point than a positivist one, from which to decode the gifted stories of Indigenous individuals. It is not a perfectly suitable standpoint for analyzing the data provided by members of this cultural group, as it remains a Western framework; however, Kovach (2009) suggests that congruent Western frameworks can provide a helpful structure for presenting Indigenous research methodologies to a Western audience.

Nothing about research is value-free. Sprague (2016) asserts that, “Research is a continual process of subjective judgment.” (p. 33). My decision-making is evident at every stage of this research. I decide which phenomena will be of focus, which questions I will ask, which theories I will use to construct a conceptual framework, and which methods I will use to collect and make sense of the data I have sought. All of my experiences, biases, and cultural practices shape how I approach the data. Therefore, the research before you is laden with my values and there’s no way around it. This relates to one of Sprague’s (2016) critiques of social constructionism as a research framework: If all knowledge is value-laden, one cannot choose a correct discourse, and if one cannot choose a discourse, one cannot enact valid social change. Yet, according to Gergen (2009), social constructionism invites us to continually challenge our collective viewpoints in order to see the world differently. Social constructionism encourages me to think about how I ended up describing the world as I do, and to imagine alternative forms of knowledge. If I can change my knowledge of the world and engage in social processes to diffuse my ideas, new knowledge will inform new action.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a research methodology that has grown in scope since the time of its inception that a full description of the theory is not possible here. For that reason, I have chosen to focus on the parts of narrative inquiry that have informed shape of my research, starting with a brief description of what a narrative is and what function it serves. I then summarize important characteristics of narrative inquiry and how they appear in this research. Two final components of narrative include the power of language to bring the imagined into shared experience, and acknowledging that narratives provide only a snapshot of one’s larger, dynamic life story.

In simplest terms, a narrative is a recounted course of action with an intentional beginning, middle and end and obvious connections between the ideas contained therein (Riessman, 2008). Narrative links events into a cohesive whole, and some events are attributed greater importance depending on their perceived impact on the greater narrative (Polkinghorne, 1988). The narrator chooses parts of their story to emphasize for the purpose of constructing meaning or orienting future action (Riessman, 2008). Narratives play a large role not only in knowledge transmission, but in how people construct their identities. Arvay (2002) contends that the stories people tell to themselves

about themselves imbue a life with meaning. That is to say, story is the tool with which a person makes sense of events in their life, integrating them into an overarching, cohesive narrative. It is this type of meaning-making, identity-forming narrative that I choose to focus on in my research.

Humans attribute meaning to their experiences through narrative (Polkinghorne, 1988). Thus, an appropriate way of representing and understanding participant experience is through eliciting and exploring their narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The story a person tells indicates what is important to them.

Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) outline four stances that characterize narrative inquiry: reimagining the relationship between the researcher and the researched; viewing language as the primary source of critical data; a focus on the specific and the local; and openness to diverse epistemologies. Narrative researchers understand that they are engaging in a mutually impactful relationship as soon as they make contact with participants (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). A story is always created for a specific audience (Riessman, 2008). Thus, the aspects a narrator choose to focus on are not arbitrary, but chosen based off of their knowledge of their audience. My participants constructed their stories with the knowledge that I would be the immediate audience, and later on, readers of this paper. This knowledge influenced the story they chose, what details they included as well as those they left out. Conversely, narratives can have a personal impact on the listener, such as moving them to empathy or action (Riessman, 2008). The stories the participants have shared with me will stay with me and inform my actions in my school counselling practice. It is my hope that their stories will also motivate readers to reflect on their interaction patterns with students as well. In narrative inquiry, stories are often co-constructed (Riessman, 2008; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). For example, the questions researchers ask direct the course of participant narrative, thus steering the narrator away from other courses of action. As researchers respond and ask questions of participants, they may even shape the ways in which the participants attribute meaning to their narratives. I tried to limit my influence on participant narratives by using an open-ended interview structure and responding to participants with paraphrases or reflections.

A focus on language allows the narrative inquirer nuanced understandings of how participants view the phenomena under study. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) frame

this focus as a critique of quantitative data and its inability to capture the details of human experience. According to Polkinghorne (1988), language allows narrative to come to life – it is the tool humans use to describe the world in meaningful ways. Language also allows individuals to participate in community – creating, sharing and passing down beliefs. Narratives are inextricably personal and social (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Identity development cannot happen in a vacuum – people are shaped by their experiences with others and the stories they are exposed to. On another level, an individual's ability to create narrative is due to the social discourses that shape what they know and how they know it. Narrative is a construct – you can't see it or touch it, and language, achieved through social processes, allows the nonmaterial to exist (Polkinghorne, 1988).

Narratives are contextualized – they exist in a specific place and with a specific history (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). That is to say, narratives cannot be examined as an isolated entity. The narratives contained in this study are a snapshot of a specific point in the participants' lives – a dot on the continuum between past experience and potential future events. People are constantly in a process of personal change (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Any action has the potential for meaning, but it is through examining the context of that action and linking it to past events that meaning is actually achieved (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). We can only know what participants reveal to us, but we must be aware of what we don't know. Context is required to make sense of any person event or thing for it is local social discourses that create knowledge. Beyond the personal narrative is the historical one, much of which can be known. Past events have created the social context that influences how a person experiences the world and how they language it (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). History has created systems that traumatize and disadvantage certain groups and give others power. We cannot make sense of participant narratives without examination of the events that led to the creation of the current context.

When participants speak with me, there is much more at play than a simple act of storytelling. We are engaging in collaboratively recounting an event and its meaning. These narratives are also laden with unspoken information – how all of one's personal experiences and worldviews have impacted how they tell their story and what they choose to focus on. Narrative inquiry allows researchers to gain a deeper understanding of participant narratives by discussing the unseen processes at work in storytelling.

Anti-Oppressive Research

Anti-oppressive research practices appear very similar to Participatory Action Research (PAR), but arise from a different history. PAR grew out of a critique of social constructionism, whereas anti-oppressive practices have evolved more recently as academics critique the unethical ways in which research has been done. Anti-oppressive research invites participants to engage at all stages of the research from designing the research question to disseminating the findings. It asks the researcher to step away from their position as expert, dictator and beneficiary of the research. The researcher may not be able to fairly interpret data from persons with very different life experiences. Researchers hold much power over participants. Anti-oppressive research asks them to draw attention to this imbalance and make efforts to share power. Lastly, it also asks researchers to shift the focus of the problem from the minority group to the dominant group – how can the privileged ameliorate the selected issue, and not vice versa.

During the initial stages of research design, I decided to invite participants to both a) share what themes they saw emerging from the stories as they were told and b) review my analysis of the data and critique it. Initially, I looked to the literature on participatory action research to provide theoretical support for this decision; however, the methodology grew out of Friere's (1972) critical pedagogy work, inspired by critical theory (Kim, 2019). Sprague (2016) positions critical theory as a reaction to the shortcomings of social constructionism. The first of which critiques how the idea of something being socially constructed, may lead to it being viewed as less real, and this is an inappropriate way to view painful realities like poverty, discrimination and inequality (Sprague, 2016). The second critique of social constructionism begs the question, if all knowledge is value-laden, how can the constructionist researcher justify their choice of discourse? If they can't choose a discourse, how can their research enact valid social change? (Sprague, 2016). I believe that constructionist researchers can justify their choice of discourse and enact valid social change, yet I do not wish to marry two research paradigms that are at odds with each other. Instead, I turn to the work of authors such as Arvay (2002), and Potts and Brown (2015) to argue that greater involvement of participants in the research makes sense from a constructionist standpoint. Moreover, the researcher has the ethical responsibility to consult participants

on how they and their stories are presented in the final write up (and to what ends/for what purposes).

As social constructionism maintains that humans co-construct knowledge through language, why are certain parts of research (e.g., data collection) done collaboratively, whereas others are not (e.g., data analysis)? In my narrative research, I heavily influenced the participants' narratives. I told them what to write about, I offered prompts, and during the sharing circle, I asked probing questions. In order to continue the collaborative spirit that is so central to narrative inquiry, I made the choice to consult my participants on my data analysis. Did I focus on what they saw as most important in their story?

Arvay (2002) argues for greater interaction and dialogue at all stages of the research process:

> "Can any of us speak from the positions of our participants when their lives are so diverse from our own? What happens when we attempt to step inside the "skin of the Other?" There are ethical and political questions that address who we can study and how we study them. It is a question of our participants' lives, the politics of voice within our research texts, the subjectivity of the researcher in conducting and writing research, the dialogical and co-constructed nature of the research act, and the art of interpretation in conducting research" (Arvay, 2002, p. 205).

Arvay draws attention to who holds power and what implications the safeguarding of this power could mean for research with diverse groups. As a cultural outsider, I cannot assume that my interpretation of participant stories is the right one. I must seek insider perspectives on the themes that I initially identify in the data, as this can help me address how my blind spots have impacted the meaning I attribute to the data. I must also consider how my interpretations of the data have impacted participant voice. What is presented in the final write up has passed through a subjective filter.

Anti-oppressive research is about drawing attention to who holds power in the research process, and within the social realms of the phenomenon being studied, and committing to furthering social justice in all aspects of the research (Potts & Brown, 2015). However, Anti-oppressive research involves more than furthering social change – it is about more equal distribution of the benefits that come from doing research (Potts & Brown, 2015). What benefits do I get from doing this research? Attaining professional

credentials, gaining experience and hopefully credibility in academia, and access to higher paying jobs. For this reason, I chose to invite participants to get involved in data analysis, and I offered to act as job/post-secondary reference on their behalf. The Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists (2017) stipulates that researchers should "seek to design research… in such a way that [it] contributes to the fair distribution of benefits to individuals and groups…" (p. 13, Standard 1.11). My aim is to maximize the ways in which participants can benefit from being actively involved in this study.

Another important question that Potts and Brown (2015) ask the anti-oppressive research to consider is: "Whose interests are being served by the research question being asked and in this way?" (p. 25). Often, researchers look to minority groups to provide answers to their research questions, but Potts and Brown (2015) question why the same questions aren't being asked of the dominant group. For example, my research question could be reformulated for a dominant-group population: How do non-Indigenous teachers contribute negatively to the school experiences of Indigenous students? Anti-oppressive research seeks to close the gap between the researched minority and the researched privileged (Potts & Brown, 2015). My choice to elicit narratives from both teachers and students is not only about acknowledging the inherently two-sided nature of relationships, but also seeking balance in the identities of participant groups.

Involving participants in data analysis is also a way of sharing power and paying homage to their position as expert of their experience (Potts & Brown, 2015). However, sharing power is also invitational in nature:

> "Further, while it may be ideal to have everyone possible involved in the meaning-making, the reality often is that not everyone has the time or interest to participate. Figuring out how to enable individuals to participate, as they would wish, is challenging" (p. 30).

I have never felt more spoken to by the literature. Engaging participants in multiple stages of the research process during a global pandemic is difficult. I know that people in the school system are experiencing severe burn out, and I want to respect their capacity for participation. Some individuals did not want to be involved in data analysis; others showed an interest.

As a counselling practitioner-researcher, I consider the ethics of involving participants in multiple stages of the research. The Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists (2017) encourages practitioners to "debrief research participants in such a way that the participants' knowledge is enhanced and the participants have a sense of contribution to knowledge" (p. 21, Standard 2.24). It is best practice to make involvement in the research meaningful for participants, and to empower their sense of agency in creating the social changes they may desire.

Sharing Circles

Sharing circles appear similar to focus groups – they contain an in-depth discussion, a small number of people, focused on a particular topic, encourage participant interaction, a facilitator guides the discussion, and participants have shared social or cultural backgrounds (Liamputtong, 2011). Yet they are not be confused with a focus group as they are a distinct method chosen for a specific purpose – storytelling as a way to transmit knowledge and understanding to the next generation (Tachine et al., 2016). My use of this data collection method met the criteria in some ways, but not in others. Most notably, I am a cultural outsider and I do not have experience hosting sharing circles. I also did not have pre-established relationships with the participants. Interestingly enough, it may have been this last point that led to the change in data collection method from sharing circle to unstructured interviews precisely because youth did not feel safe to share highly personal stories amongst strangers.

I chose to structure my data collection as a sharing circle because I believed that it would be a better cultural fit for participants. Tachine et al. (2016) explain that focus groups were developed out of a positivist research tradition and that Western research methods are embedded with racist assumptions about minority groups. Other components that made sharing circles a better fit for this research included: facilitator encouragement of free sharing (rather than asking questions), encouraging detailed personal narratives, sharing food[8], participant and facilitator introductions, turn taking and dedicating space for each participant to speak, and facilitator responses to

[8] My original plan was to take a break and share a meal during the circle. This was not possible due to Covid-19. The sharing circle took place remotely and participants were offered a gift card for a meal instead.

emotionally-charged stories (Tachine et al., 2016). I developed a specific protocol that made use of these components (see Appendix A). The purpose of this sharing circle was to encourage safety and trust in order to elicit deeply personal and emotionally-charged narratives.

In some ways my choice of the sharing circle is not a good fit. As a cultural outsider, do I have a right to lead a cultural tradition such as this? I have appropriated a cultural tradition from a minority group. My choice to do so was to create a data collection event that felt safe for Indigenous participants. Unfortunately, I did not end up hosting a sharing circle with Indigenous participants. An educator at the recruitment site who has been assisting me in recruiting youth told me that a sharing circle may feel too vulnerable and like too much of a time commitment. Thus, I adjusted my data collection methods to accommodate potential barriers to participation. Such a decision, although not what I had initially anticipated, is the ethical choice. Potts and Brown (2015) discuss the importance of listening to participants and adjusting aspects of the research design based on their feedback. This is an integral part of anti-oppressive research. The hesitancy amongst youth could reflect the fact that I had not established a relationship with them, as I had no involvement at the research site beyond my role as researcher. Tachine et al., (2016) discuss the importance of pre-existing relationships between leader and participants in sharing circles as trust is essential for vulnerability. Much like the counselling relationship, it takes time to establish familiarity and trust with participants. Although, I was unable to secure a research site where I had established such relationships, I saw a level of vulnerability in participant stories that I did not expect nor deserve. I am grateful that through repeated contact and conversation, we may have established the beginnings of a positive rapport.

Indigenous Knowledges and Research Methodologies

I could not conduct research with Indigenous youth without an in-depth discussion of Indigenous Research Methodologies (IRMs) and Indigenous Knowledge (IK). As a non-Indigenous person, my engagement with IRMs is controversial as I cannot have an embodied understanding of tribal epistemologies and Indigenous forms of spirituality. On the other hand, I have the ethical responsibility of designing research that is a cultural fit for Indigenous youth. Kovach (2009) maintains that IRMs are essential in academia because research informs policy and programming. For example, Indigenous

educational programming must be informed by Indigenous research in order to be effective (Kovach, 2009). My process and supporting framework must be informed by Indigenous ways of knowing so that I may do the research in a good way. To do research with Indigenous peoples as a non-Indigenous researcher requires a level of discomfort. I have chosen to lean into this discomfort because it keeps me vigilant to the ways in which my actions and words could cause unintentional harm, and orients me towards humility so that I may accept correction and critique with a grateful heart.

The first thing that stands out to me about IRMs is the centrality of relationships – one's relationship to participants, community, self and place. These relationships lead the researcher back to the question: Am I doing the research in a good way? IRMs are informed by tribal epistemologies and carry decolonizing aims – shifting power relations and pushing back against colonialism. IRMs must also be recognized as their own research tradition, separate from the quantitative/qualitative dichotomy. Lastly, IRMs focus the researcher on the 4Rs: respect, reciprocity, responsibility and relevance.

IRMs are primarily characterized by relationality (Kovach, 2009; Lavallée, 2009; Pidgeon, 2019). Indigenous worldviews acknowledge the interconnectedness of all life forms in the natural world (Kovach, 2009). When using IRMs, the researcher must consider the relationship they have to the participants, the larger community, themselves and even the place in which they conduct the research (Kovach, 2009). Frequently, the researcher has a pre-existing and continuing relationship with the participants characterized by honesty and kindness (Kovach, 2009; Pidgeon, 2019). The researcher must also honor their relationship with the larger community through reciprocity. This involves respecting community ownership of the data; researcher transparency about their identity, motivations, processes and supporting theories; and sharing study results with the community in order to reach effective strategies for change (Pidgeon, 2019). The research must be useful to the community, according to the community's definition of useful (Kovach, 2009). When engaging with IRMs, the researcher must intentionally prepare themselves for the research. This involves cultivating a deep understanding of one's purposes and motivations in taking up the research, self-awareness and locating oneself within the research (Kovach, 2009). The researcher acts as a filter through which knowledge passes. This filter is informed by their experience and perspectives. Thus, one must have a rich understanding of what informs one's worldview and communicate this as part of the research. Kovach (2009) provides a guiding question for self-

reflection: “Why did you do that research and why did you do it in that way?” (p. 109). Lastly, the researcher must recognize the impact of place on their research and writing. Kovach (2009) describes her experience of how returning home to Saskatchewan impacted how she wrote about her research. I reflect on how my relationship to the town in which I live, work, recreate and have conducted my research on impacts how I write about it. This is a difficult aspect for me to examine. I am not from this land, but I have never lived elsewhere. I am a stranger, but this land isn’t strange to me.

Equally important in IRMs are the decolonizing aims of the research and the use of tribal epistemologies to inform the research (Kovach, 2009; Pidgeon, 2019). To use IRMs is to push back against the oppression of colonial research and policies – it is meant to transform both the local communities, the researcher and the institution (Pidgeon, 2019). For this reason, my research cannot live in a repository. I need to make it accessible to local communities so that they may choose to use the knowledge it contains. In the past, researching done to Indigenous communities has been used to further the aims of colonizers, further stigmatizing Indigenous groups and reinforcing dominant cultural norms (Pidgeon, 2019). Thus, research with Indigenous peoples remains deeply political (Kovach, 2009). Part of decolonizing research involves addressing this colonial relationship and intentionally engaging participants at all levels of the research – study design, transcription, data analysis, even determining the research topic (Kovach, 2009). These decisions are about intentionally shifting the power relations between the researcher and the researched (Kovach, 2009). In this way, IRMs and anti-oppressive practices are congruent, but for different purposes: anti-oppressive practices focus on sharing power for ethical purposes, whereas IRMs focus on power sharing to push back colonial culture. Additionally, one cannot use IRMs without addressing tribal epistemologies as legitimate forms of knowledge within and beyond the academy, and to dismiss such knowledges furthers colonial aims (Kovach, 2009). IKs inform how the researcher approaches and makes meaning of the data (Kovach, 2009). Kovach (2009) speaks about the various knowledge sources in IRMs. These include dreams, prayers, teaching stories, and smudging ceremonies to name a few. As a cultural outsider, I do not access these traditions; however, I have the ethical obligation to do this research in a decolonizing way. Kovach (2009) asserts “[g]iven the extractive, exploitive history of research within Indigenous communities, efforts to mitigate power differentials in all aspects of the research are warranted, whether using

an Indigenous methodological approach or not" (p. 125). At a minimum, I must make the effort to engage my participants in research design, data analysis and dissemination of the results.

IKs, although congruent with the social constructivist and narrative traditions, emerge from a very different history. IK centers around the interconnectedness of the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of life (Lavallée, 2009) and for this reason, reality cannot be viewed as objective. Lavallée (2009) explains how researchers' connections to those around them, including their participants, means that objectivity cannot exist. Moreover, thinking itself is an emotional process; therefore, we cannot "see" objectively (Lavallée, 2009). IK and qualitative research both see reality as subjective, but for different reasons (Lavallée, 2009). That is to say, social constructionist discourse about knowledge and reality aligns with Indigenous epistemologies, but comes out of a very different history (i.e., a reaction to positivism an objectivity) that doesn't acknowledge holism.

IRMs both fit into a qualitative research framework and exist separately from it (Kovach, 2009; Lavallée, 2009). IRMs have grown out of a unique historical tradition and worldview, separate from that of the quantitative and qualitative traditions (Kovach, 2009). However, IRMs are congruent with many qualitative research methodologies. For example, the concept of self-reflection in narrative inquiry is similar to the Indigenous philosophy of self-in-relation (Kovach, 2009). Even so, IRMs and Western forms of inquiry do not fit seamlessly together. Kovach (2009) acknowledges that the tribal knowledges informing IRMs require an experiential understanding of original language and worldview. Thus, there will be some discomfort in combining IRMs and Western approaches. Kovach (2009) also speaks about how the lack of acceptance of IRMs in academia lead to an insider/outsider divide. I feel this divide as a non-Indigenous researcher. I constantly ask myself, am I allowed to speak about Indigenous forms of knowing and further, do research with Indigenous populations? Kovach (2009) has given me a better understanding of one reason[9] why I might be feeling this: IRMs are not given an equal seat at the academic research table. Western institutions have not accepted the legitimacy of IRMs which existed long before quantitative and qualitative research

[9] Another reason is that I occupy a place of privilege, having directly benefitted from colonialism. I am speaking to people with whom I have no right to speak to, and using research methods that I have no right to use.

approaches (Pidgeon, 2019). Further, I am reliant on an Indigenous researcher to draw attention to my blind spots, ensuring that I do not dismiss parts of IKs that must be acknowledged.

To conclude this section on IKs and IRMs, I will discuss Pidgeon's (2019) application of Kirkness and Barnhardt's (1991) 4Rs to IRMs: respect, reciprocity, responsibility and relevance. Researchers are expected to conduct themselves respectfully, like an invited guest – not a tourist – within the communities they work with (Pidgeon, 2019). Reciprocity involves researcher recognition of how who they are impacts the research, as well as the how the research transforms them (Pidgeon, 2019). The researcher must also recognize their power to spread either knowledge or ignorance, and their duty to give what they have learned back to the community (Pidgeon, 2019). The researcher has the responsibility to engage with and learn from Indigenous peoples in order to understand how their motives impact the community (Pidgeon, 2019). Lastly, the research must be relevant to the community, aligning with their goals (Pidgeon, 2019).

Stories

Stories, in Indigenous cultures, are relational and contextual (Kovach, 2009). That is to say, telling a story creates an immediate connection between the storyteller and their listener(s), and stories are inextricably tied to place. Personal narratives are passed down to the next generation as a way of teaching about consequences and living life in a good way (Kovach, 2009). I collected my participant stories through a sharing circle and unstructured interviews. Less structure provides the storyteller with greater power to focus on what they deem is important (Kovach, 2009). A good interviewer will refrain from interrupting the storyteller and will demonstrate that they are ready to actively listen (Kovach, 2009). Holding space, paraphrasing and limiting questions are important in communicating respect for the speaker's words. Presenting stories in written form is problematic as it removes the relational component – the reader interprets the story without felt input from the storyteller (Kovach, 2009). This is yet another reason why participants are encouraged to check their transcripts, the researcher's analysis as well as how the findings are presented – a reliable representation of participant knowledge makes the research relevant to the community (Kovach, 2009). Thematic analysis of participant stories also poses a problem as this process fragments the story,

drastically changing its original form and function (Kovach, 2009). I chose to use thematic analysis in order to make sense of the data as a novice researcher, but this decision bothered me. The participants' stories were so rich, I felt guilty for breaking them up, knowing that I was altering stories and that the reader would not have a similar relationship to the stories that I did. This tension points towards an incongruency between IRMs and social constructionism. My choice to present narratives thematically is in line with Western research methodology and protects participant confidentiality, which takes priority over holism. For that reason, participant narratives will only be presented in the findings section of this paper.

Indigenous storytelling and narrative inquiry accord stories special importance and make sense of them in similar ways: storytelling is a relational, collaborative, mutually impactful act, researchers can lessen their influence on the narrator's story by actively listening rather than asking questions, and researchers alter stories through transcribing, analyzing and presenting. Indigenous storytelling involves a level of ceremony not evident in narrative inquiry, and stories are afforded special respect. I perceived each story shared with me as a gift that I did not deserve.

Conclusion

In this section of the chapter, I have attempted to weave together Western and Indigenous research frameworks while respecting their distinct identities. In my training, I have grown familiar with social constructivism and narrative inquiry, but this research required me to delve into Indigenous ways of knowing and conducting research. I constantly asked myself, "Can I ethically appropriate these research practices as a white person?" The discomfort was like an accountability partner. Moreover, anti-oppressive and Indigenous research methodologies require me to regularly ask myself: What are the purposes of my research? Who says these are good purposes? How does who I am impact the participants and eventual readers of this study? Am I doing this research in a good way? With the knowledge and experiences I have in this moment, I can say that I have done my best, acknowledging that there are likely still flaws in my thinking. Research has the power to transform, and in my experience, it transforms the researcher the most.

Procedures

Participants

Six Indigenous youth and four non-Indigenous educators were recruited for this study. One youth withdrew after the telephone screening interview, and three youths did not respond to requests for follow up. All teachers met the criteria of currently working at the selected high school, but not all youth participants met the criteria of currently attending high school. I wanted youth and educators to be engaged in schooling at the time of data collection so that the relationships they chose to speak about were current as memory distorts how one remembers an event. However, youth recruitment proved challenging, and I did not wish to turn away an interested youth who had recently graduated. The teacher relationship they chose to describe had occurred within the past 4 years, and I judged this to be a recent relationship. My rationale was that a student in grade 12 could have recounted a meaningful teacher-relationship that occurred in grade 9, and this would have fallen within the same time frame.

Here are brief descriptions of each participant. Participants were invited to select a pseudonym in order to protect their identity. If they did not choose their own nickname, I created one for them.

Z. 17 years old. Grade 11. Identifies as male and First Nations from a neighboring province. Has attended his high school for 3 years. He wanted to participate in the study because he believed it is beneficial for other people. He is hoping to get a reference for his participation and that the information he shares will benefit other kids.

Rory. 15 years old. Grade 10. Identifies as female. Identifies as Indigenous, but unsure of her cultural affiliations. Has attended her high school for 4 years. She wanted to participate in the study because she felt drawn to the topic as soon as she heard about it.

Finley. 19 years old. Graduated. Identifies as two-spirit and Métis. Attended her school for 3 years. Finley wanted to participate in the study because she really likes to advocate for Indigenous rights – a lot of topics don’t get spoken about.

Dawne. Teaches grades 11 and 12 English. Identifies as female. Is not Indigenous, but her son is. Estimates that 15% of the students she teaches are Indigenous. She wanted to participate in the study because her administrator encouraged her to. She thought her story wasn't meaningful enough, but her administrator thought it would be a valuable addition to the study. She is also curious to hear other participants' stories. Dawne previously worked at the school as an Aboriginal Support Teacher and thought it would be a natural fit to participate.

Coach. Teaches grades 9-12 Physical Education. Identifies as female. Is not Indigenous. Estimates that 2-3% of the students she teaches are Indigenous. She wanted to participate because her administrator asked her to. She wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to share and help me out with my research. She is also looking forward to hearing others' stories.

Colin. Teaches grades 9-12 Learning Assistance, and is a Resource Teacher. Is not Indigenous. Case manages 40 students, 8 of which are Indigenous. He wanted to participate because he has a lot of interactions with different students in the school, and he was interested in hearing others' stories. He spoke with his administrator about his story, and he encouraged him to participate.

Sabine. Teaches grades 9-12 as the Aboriginal Support Teacher. Is not Indigenous. All of her students identify as Indigenous. She felt a strong obligation to participate in the research as she is a non-Indigenous Aboriginal Support Teacher. She is hoping to gain insight from others' experiences.

Teacher Recruitment and Data Collection

I partnered with a high school in a community in southwestern British Columbia in order to recruit teachers and youth for this study. School district superintendents and school principals are responsible for conducting their own ethical review of proposed studies in order to protect the vulnerable populations with whom they work. Ethical practice in conducting research with youth often involves engaging a gatekeeper who contacts potential participants on behalf of the researcher. Additionally, student contact information is considered private, and not to be given to an outside party without their consent. Once the school district superintendent and school principal approved of my

research, I began recruiting by sending an advertising poster (See Appendix B), recruitment letters (See Appendices C and D) and consent forms (See Appendices E and F) to the principal, who distributed them to staff and students. The principal and vice principal told staff about the research during a staff meeting and asked individual staff and students who they believed might be a good fit for the research. The vice principal then sent me the email addresses of all interested individuals at the school, to whom I then emailed consent forms and scheduled a time for a screening interview. Each of the four teacher participants were recruited through this gatekeeper "shoulder-tapping" method.

I then went over the consent form and collected basic information (i.e., gender identity, position at the school, grades taught) during a 20-minute telephone screening interview (See Appendices G and H for telephone screening questionnaires). I also explained the focus of the narrative and inquired after potential dates that wouldn't work for the participants to attend a virtual sharing circle. I asked teachers to prepare a narrative about an impactful relationship they had developed with a student during the last four years of their teaching career. Teachers could prepare a written account of their narrative beforehand, make brief notes, or simply commit their narrative to memory. Teacher participants emailed their signed consent forms to me after the screening interview.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the teacher sharing circle took place virtually, but each participant was located on unceded Coast Salish territory. The sharing circle took place in the late afternoon and lasted one hour. I welcomed sharing circle participants and went over limits of confidentiality, reiterating the importance of safeguarding the identity and stories of each participant. I went over group norms, which included recognizing and respecting one another's vulnerability, refraining from interrupting the speaker, and determining sharing order. At this point, I informed participants that I was starting video-recording of the circle. I decided to video-record the circle so that I could identify each speaker when I later transcribed the sharing circle. Each participant introduced themselves and why they chose to participate in the study. Each participant then had unlimited time to share their stories during the first round; however, each participant limited themselves to 10 minutes of sharing. One participant had prepared a written narrative and read it during the circle. One used their notes to tell their narrative, and the other two spoke from memory. During the second round, I asked

participants to make connections between their and others' stories. I also shared what stood out to me and what connections I saw in the narratives, offered paraphrases of participant responses and asked questions. Some of the topics that participants spoke during the discussion were: care and support, going beyond, intentional connection, seeing the whole person, connecting with parents, putting in extra time and work, and awareness of residential schools and intergenerational trauma. In the third round, I asked participants to share a word or sentence that describes a theme they saw in the stories. The words they shared were: connections, meaningful relationships, care and support, and gradual progress. In the last round, I asked participants to share how their time in the circle impacted them. Teachers expressed that they were inspired by their colleagues' stories after a difficult teaching year, and proud to work alongside them.

Youth Recruitment and Data Collection

The vice principal at the partnering school asked individual students if they were interested in the research. He sent me the contact information for two students. Two of the Aboriginal Support Teachers at the school assisted me with recruitment by talking to interested students about the research and providing them with consent forms. As these gatekeepers sent me student contact information, I set up telephone screening interviews with students where I explained the consent form, and collected basic information such as age, gender identity, Indigenous identity and their reason for participating in the study. In one case, I spoke with a youth's parent directly about the study and the consent form. I asked youth to sign the consent form, have a caregiver sign it, and email it to me or drop it off with a school/community gatekeeper. One youth emailed it to me and two left a printed copy with a staff member for me to pick up.

I had recruited three youth for the study, and I had scheduled a sharing circle, but one youth withdrew after I sent out the sharing circle date and time. I emailed with one of the Aboriginal Support Teachers and she told me that the sharing circle was likely a large deterrent for many students. She asked me if I would accept written narratives from students instead. At this point, I had been recruiting students for three months, and I did not have enough participants to run a sharing circle. After consulting with my supervisor, I decided to change my method of data collection in order to make the research more accessible to youth. I asked youth to prepare a personal narrative and gave them the option of telling me their story over the phone or emailing it to me. Kovach

(2009) talks about involving the community at all levels of the research, including study design. Although I did not intentionally seek student input when creating my study, I am very grateful that this educator advocated for her students' needs, thereby helping me reduce barriers to participation. This Aboriginal Support Educator also created a social media page and group chat where I could let students know about the research and answer any questions they had. Another youth was able to connect with me over the group chat.

I also recruited youth at a local youth center. I knew the programs manager and program supervisor personally. They agreed to put up my advertising posters and talk about the study with youth on my behalf. I recruited two more youth with the assistance of the staff at the youth center.

Three youth opted to tell me their story verbally, and one youth chose to write their narrative and email it to me. Of course, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews with youth took place over the phone. Myself and each of the participants were located on unceded Coast Salish territory. Each interview took place in the afternoon or early evening, when participants were out of school, and lasted anywhere from 20 to 50 minutes. I began the interview by checking in with the youth and reminding them that they were in control of what they shared – they could decline to talk about any topics that made them uncomfortable. I let youth know I was beginning to audio-record our conversation, and asked them to begin telling me their prepared narrative. I did not prepare any questions for the interviews. Kovach (2009) explains that conversational, open-ended interviews are congruent with IKs as this aligns with Indigenous oral traditions around storytelling. Less structure gives the narrator greater power to focus on what they deem is important (Kovach, 2009; Riessman, 2008). Similar to counselling practice, I encouraged youth to direct the content of the interview, while I directed the process of unpacking the narrative. I made brief notes as youth spoke, I was careful to not interrupt, and I offered paraphrases[10] when youth paused in their story. My aim was to communicate to youth that I was actively listening to them, and understanding. I asked questions about parts of the youth stories I was curious about, for example: What were some of the things you noticed that helped you start to trust your teacher? What are

[10] These paraphrases were informed by my training in counselling skills over the course of my MA program.

some interactions or moments with that teacher that stand out in your memory? These questions arose naturally as I listened to the stories. I ended my interviews by thanking youth for gifting me their stories, letting them know that I would contact them in about a month to go over my analysis of the transcript, and letting them know to contact me if they needed any help finding community resources.

Data Analysis

I transcribed the teacher sharing circle and youth interviews verbatim, including non-verbal communication such as: pauses, “ums”, exhales, tears and laughs. I relied heavily on Braun and Clarke’s (2006) guidelines for thematic analysis, using their six-step approach. Braun and Clarke (2006) iterate that themes do not simply emerge from the data – it is the researcher who creates links between participants’ words. During analysis, I was constantly aware that participants’ stories were passing through my own subjective filter, so that I might make deeper meaning of them. Thematic analysis is not congruent with IK as fragmenting stories into data extracts fragments them, undermining holistic meaning-making (Kovach, 2009). Essentially, thematic analysis takes parts of the story out of their context, which detracts from meaning-making and can even change the speaker’s intended meaning. For this reason, I asked participants to double-check my interpretations of their words. The final step in the analysis of the data is the lens the reader applies (Kovach, 2009).

Listening to, and then transcribing the audio-recordings is the first step in thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) share that even at the transcribing stage, the researcher is adding meaning given the transcription choices one makes. Kovach (2009) speaks of the importance of the researcher transcribing their own interviews in order to maintain the integrity of the participants’ words. When using IRMs, researchers should have a personal relationship with participants that a hired transcriber would not have. This relationship informs how the researcher approaches transcribing. I transcribed the teacher sharing circle first, as I had not yet finished interviewing all youth participants. Transcribing is the first step of data analysis, even though Braun and Clarke (2006) do not include it as a first step. I then printed the transcript and took notes in the margins. In step two, I began coding excerpts using post-its. Once I had coded the entire transcript, I began grouping codes and their data extracts into potential themes using Excel. As part of this third step, I wrote down all potential themes on post-it notes and began grouping

them together. Once I was satisfied with the groupings, I drew a thematic map to represent the connections between themes. I struggled to group themes into main themes and supporting subthemes. For the teacher sharing circle, I arrived at a type of flow chart, and for the student interviews, I organized the themes into concentric circles. The fourth step, of reviewing themes, took place alongside organizing the theme cards into groupings. Teach and student data was analyzed separately. My senior supervisor reviewed my themes and offered her reflections before I began writing up the findings.

Member-Checking

Member-checking occurred both during and after the teacher sharing circle. As stated earlier, teachers were asked to reflect on the stories shared an identify what stood out to them. During youth interviews I frequently offered paraphrases to demonstrate my understanding and invited the youth to correct me if I hadn't understood their experiences correctly. Once I had completed my analysis, I emailed my themes with supporting quotes, and my themes maps to youth and teachers. Three of the four teachers had indicated during the screening interview that they wanted to review the themes during the telephone screening interview, and all three students indicated that they wanted to review the themes. Since the process of thematic analysis filters participant voices through the lens of the researcher, member-checking is an essential step in ensuring that the participants have shared control over how their voices are presented.

Once I had completed an initial analysis, I emailed my themes to students and teachers. Students only saw the student theme map and supporting quotes and teachers only saw the teacher map and supporting quotes. I invited participants to critique, suggest changes, add to or confirm the themes and descriptions via email or phone. My purposes in inviting the participants to check my data was to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, and ensure that, although I had added to participant voices, that the participants could have input in such interpretations, and challenge my thinking. One youth participant responded to my request for input:

> "Thank you so much for sharing this with me. It's so interesting to see my own words. I noticed a lot of the themes really were about being heard and valued over anything related to culture. and I think that's what it boils down to, kids just want to be loved and heard."

Finley summarized the underlying meaning across the researcher-identified student themes. Finley also said that she was open to reviewing the youth themes section of my findings chapter. I emailed that portion of the chapter to her, inviting her feedback. The remaining two students did not respond to my requests to check the data before the submission of the final write up. Due to the change in data collection with youth, I was not able to engage youth in initial, informal member-checking in the same way I had with teacher participants.

Ethical Considerations

Telling personal stories of relationships can bring up strong emotions. I took steps to prepare participants for the possibility of discomfort in vulnerability. During the telephone screening interview, I let participants know that personal stories of relationships can be tied to aversive or strong emotions, and that they were always in control of what they chose to share. They could stop at any time. This information was also included in consent forms. I also let participants know where they could receive counselling services and supports: teachers through their Employee and Family Assistance Program; and students through various community programs (see Appendix I).

As a listener, I noticed markers of poignancy in each of the youth's stories. Goldman and Greenberg (2015) describe parts of the client narrative that move the therapist. These instances guide the therapist to what could be most pertinent in the client's story. Granted, my relationship to these youth did not constitute a therapist-client relationship; however, I was moved by parts of the youth narratives. Thus, these moments stand out to me in the data set as central moments in the youth's stories.

Another ethical consideration with the teacher group, was that I could not guarantee confidentiality in a group setting. I included this information in the consent form and during the brief telephone screening interview. I also informed teacher participant that their consent to participate indicated their agreement to keep the identity of participants and the information shared in the circle confidential. At the start of the sharing circle, I reminded teacher participants of this norm. I also monitored group dynamics during the circle to ascertain levels of trust, connection and safety. At the end of the sharing circle, teachers verbalized how the sharing circle had impacted them:

> This has been such a tough teaching year, and hearing stories like this, um and whether or not the sort of outcome of the story was positive or negative, but just seeing the lengths that my colleagues will go for their students… yeah, I just – I find that inspiring.

My interpretation of Dawne's statement is that the sharing circle may have impacted her in a positive way after a stressful year of navigating the challenges of a global pandemic. Colin also shared his thoughts at the end of the sharing circle, "…Hearing these stories and all the great people I get to work with and just the lengths that they go to just makes me very, very proud of what we all do." The meaning I ascribe to these statements is that at least two of the educators felt positively impacted by sharing and hearing vulnerable stories.

Lastly, I was cognizant that the stories I was asking participants to share could lead to disclosures that fall outside of the limits of confidentiality. For example, if a youth disclosed child abuse, I would be required by law to report this information to the appropriate authorities. If a participant disclosed suicide ideation, I would be required to report this information to individuals or organizations that could ensure the participant's safety. These limits to confidentiality were included in participant consent forms, and I explained this information during the telephone screening interviews.

The Impact of COVID-19 on this Study

I began developing this study in the summer of 2019. I submitted my proposal to the SFU Office of Research Ethics (ORE) in the fall of 2019. Three days after I received conditional approval, the provincial government announced the full closure of schools and the transition to online learning in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. My ethics approval was dependent on receiving approval from a school district and school principal. I reached out to several schools in my area, but, understandably, they were unable to commit to supporting my study. Schools were required to make a quick switch to online learning, and some schools were required to offer in-person learning for the children of essential workers. As I work in a public school, I have personal experience with how these changes impacted teachers, administrators, students and their families.

When schools returned to in-person learning in the fall of 2020, I was fortunate enough to find an administrator willing to support my research, and I received full ethics approval at the end of 2020. The administrator, recruiting teachers and youth on my

behalf, informed me that many teachers and students were feeling burnt out at this point in the year, and that although they were interested in the study, they did not have the energy to commit to participating.

By March 2021, four teachers had agreed to participate in the educator sharing circle. Of course, I had amended my original study so that all contact with participants would take place remotely, in order to be in compliance with SFU COVID-19 safety protocols. Youth recruitment proved more challenging than educator recruitment. When I conceived of the study, I envisioned visiting schools and classrooms, hosting the sharing circles at a community center, and developing face-to-face relationships with my participants. I believe that recruitment was challenging because 1) youth and teachers were fatigued from navigating a global pandemic and 2) I was simply a name without a face. I found it challenging to initiate a relationship solely through written documents, although I did have the support of the educators and youth programs managers recommendation of me to youth.

In summary, COVID-19 caused me to extend my study by approximately a year, and change my data collection methods.

Chapter 4.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore youth and teacher experiences of the TSR in order to empower youth voices, and gain a better understanding of teacher actions that can improve Indigenous students' schooling experiences and foster a sense of connectedness. I used excerpts from unstructured interviews with the students to elaborate on four main themes and 16 minor themes. I used excerpts from the teacher sharing circle to illustrate eight interconnected themes, some of which have one to three supporting themes. One of these themes had three subthemes specific to it, but the others continued to branch out from each other and did not fit neatly into theme and subtheme categories. I present the youth themes first, followed by teacher themes. In choosing to apply Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step method for thematic analysis, I also made the choice to break up participant narratives. Themes occur in a specific context from which they have been removed. Thus, there is some obvious overlap between the themes presented here.

Youth Themes

The findings from the youths' stories are organized into four main themes, three of which I believe illustrate the stages of positive TSR development. In the first theme, each of the youth spoke about their initial impressions of the teacher that set the foundation for further connection. These impressions ranged from positive qualities the youth perceived in their teachers to student expectations of the teacher role. The second theme represents the core of the TSR – how students know they matter to their[11] teacher. Each of the students spoke about many different teacher actions that impacted their emotions and experience of being in school. These ranged from feeling special to a teacher to feeling connected when the teacher showed an interest in their culture. The third theme focuses on what can happen in the TSR when a high level of trust and

[11] I use possessive pronouns to emphasize that both youth and teacher participants selected one or two teachers or students to focus their story on. My choice is not intended to indicate ownership, but rather the uniqueness of the relationship. The youth did not simply speak about one teacher among many, but a teacher that was one-of-a-kind to them.

closeness has been established: students are able to be vulnerable with their teacher, and they may come to see the teacher in a parent-role as well. Interestingly, some of the students spoke about how they felt that they could better relate to teachers who disclosed some of their life struggles. I identified this as a bridging theme. The last theme focuses on teacher actions that have damaged TSRs for these youth.

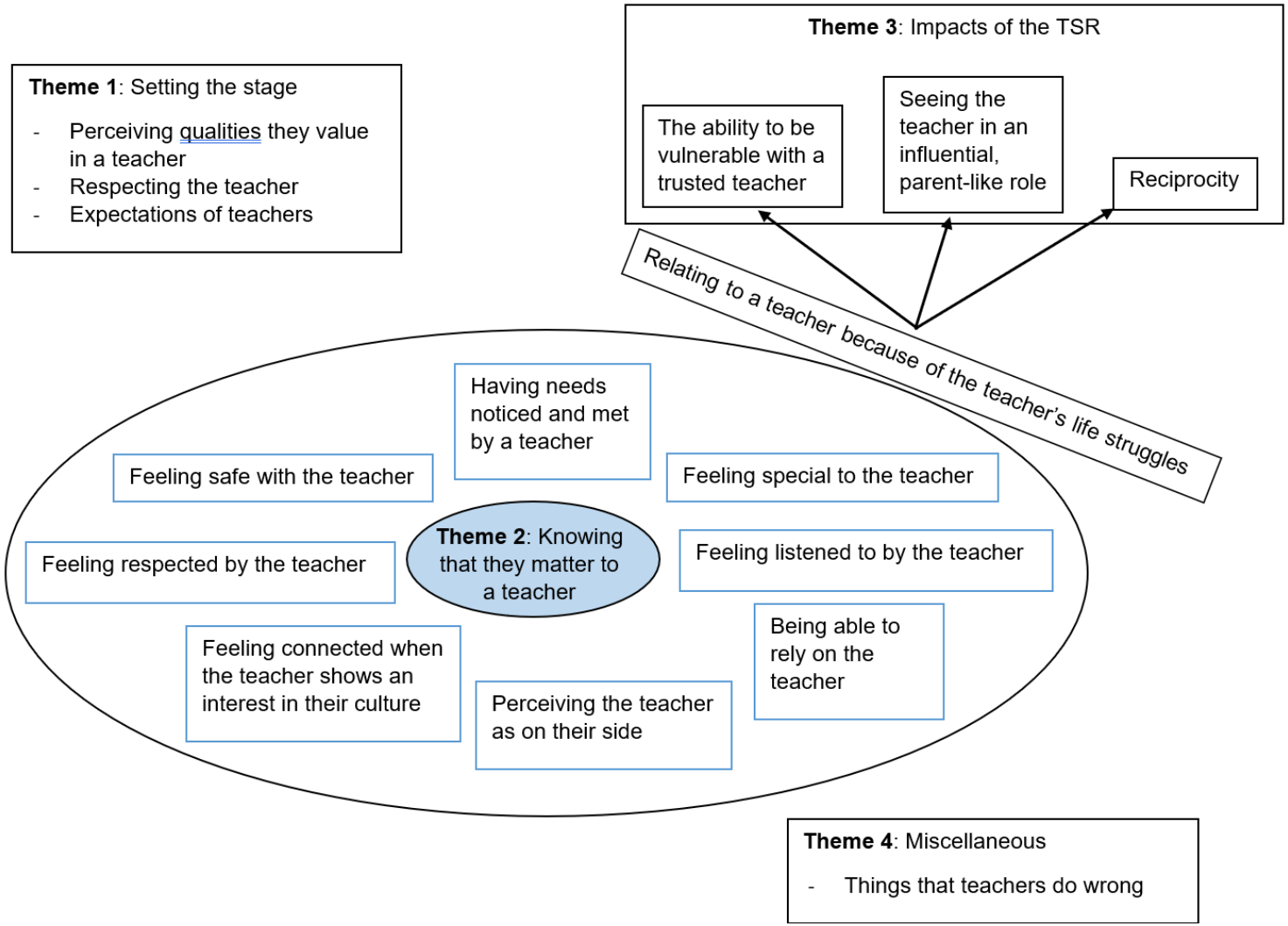

Figure 2. Youth Themes Map.
The first three themes occur in a chronological fashion. The second theme represents the core of the TSR from the perspective of youth.

Theme 1: Setting the Stage

Near the beginning of the youth's stories, I noticed that each youth would talk about their initial perceptions of the teacher that likely set the foundation for developing a positive TSR. Each youth spoke about perceiving qualities that they valued in their chosen teacher(s), respecting the teacher, and how their chosen teachers met their expectations of good teaching. Each of these three subthemes represents how youth may begin to conceptualize their teachers and become open to getting to know them better.

Perceiving Qualities They Value in a Teacher

Each student spoke about qualities that they admired in their chosen teachers. These qualities included honesty, openness, advocating for social justice, a good sense of humor, and good communication skills. Z spoke about how his teacher's honesty was a good fit for him as a learner:

> It was probably the most enjoyable class I've had cause he was honest. He was truthful to a fault. He was-in some cases, um, and what I really like about him is how much he actually like, he prides himself on truth because he was sometimes painfully truthful in the sense where if it hurts someone… he wouldn't try to hurt anybody, but he'd point out if someone was doing something wrong, and if he knew they knew what they were doing was wrong he'd point that out and he would be honest about everything, and he would be honest about how he was grading work and everything, honest on how his class is gonna go…

Z highly values honesty, to the extent that he would rather hear truth that may hurt than have someone keep that truth from him. Perceiving teacher honesty may have helped him trust the teacher more and let his guard down so that he could enjoy shared authenticity in that class. Z goes on to speak about how teacher transparency contributed to his respect for the teacher:

> The law teacher… he also told us teachers… cannot actually legally set a date when homework is due. So, we could give 'em all the homework at the end, he just told us 'Well, you're just gonna make my job harder, so I'm gonna mark you less'. So, he told us like 'yeah-there's no set date, but remember teachers are marking your work'. So that-I respected him for telling us that too.

Z respected that his teacher was open about school rules that could inconvenience him, and how he would react to such inconveniences – giving students conditions to abide by depending on their goals. This quote is illustrative of a real power differential between the student and the teacher. Due to the nature of the relationship and roles of both parties, teachers are given an authoritative role, and this authority continues to exist in positive TSRs. This power-differential is evident throughout the youths' stories, but this quote directly demonstrates one way in which teacher authority is enacted.

Finley spoke about initially feeling drawn to one of her teachers because of his awareness of his own privilege, and his openness in discussing social justice topics with students:

> He's always been just like a really open and curious person, um, and he was like really filled in on current events so we would talk a lot about like… I remember when, um, Childish Gambino came out with This is America, he showed it to the class and we just talked about like the impact of like what it is to be a person of colour in North America. Um, he was just very, like, aware of how, you know in [name of town] we do have a lot of Indigenous people, we always acknowledge that we're on unceded territory. He was always very like just aware of his place, I guess. Um, and I really appreciated that – how candid he was.

Finley may have felt connected to her teacher because in acknowledging his visitor status and creating space for discussions on systemic racism, he welcomed and demonstrated respect for students of minority cultures. Finley went on to talk about how she appreciated her teacher's professionalism, humor, and ability to converse with students in a genuine way. Finley may have also been drawn to her teacher as they shared an interest in social justice education:

> He was like pretty laid back, um… You know, like, he was professional, but it wasn't like some people that are so to the book that it's uncomfortable, um, and he was really good at just talking to and relating to other students. Um… I don't know. He like, cracked a lot of jokes – really funny guy, and he was always just curious, and like, listening…. He was also just like very, um, educated on like, I guess social justice and current events, um, and that piqued my interest…. I don't know, he just was somebody that I gravitated towards, um I think cause he was always open to a conversation no matter like what the content, like um, if it was super heavy or if it was like, you know, asking him how his day was, um… I don't know. He was just like very approachable and always, just always open to talk.

In getting to know her teacher, Finely could trust that she could approach her teacher about a wide range of topics – if she was having a bad day and wanted to connect with someone, or if she simply wanted to chat.

Lastly, Rory spoke about connecting with her LA teacher because he was better at communicating with students who needed help than her academic teachers:

> Nicole: And what did you first think of him when you took that class with him?
>
> Rory: That like, he got around to all the students. He… was able to communicate well, more than other teachers ever would.
>
> Nicole: It sounds like you thought he was a decent teacher, like, right away.
>
> Rory: Yeah, I could tell that he really wanted to help students, and he wanted the students to pass their class. He pretty much did anything for them, or tried his best to, right?

Rory felt that her teacher genuinely cared about student achievement, and would adjust his helping strategies so that each student could move forward in the ways they wanted to. I believe she saw that he made more of an effort to help students than her other teachers, and this led to her feeling connected to him early on in the TSR.

Respecting the Teacher

When Z, Finley and Rory saw the aforementioned qualities in their teachers, it is likely that they began to develop respect for them. Two students, Z and Rory, spoke directly about how their teacher's actions impressed them:

> He seemed pretty kind, and just all around very, very good person. We at our school have this thing called the [name of cafe] and he designed it and built it and everything. So, all the proceeds and all the money that is spent there goes to kids in Africa, and goes to a school he actually runs out there and houses he runs out there, goes to all that so they can eat and run. And all around he's kind of a, how could you say, a man that a lot of people would either want to be or at least want to be around.

Z held his teacher in high esteem and perceived that others did as well given the teacher's altruism. Z respects his teacher to the extent that he possibly wants to seek his teacher out, or even emulate his teacher's behaviours.

Rory expressed surprise at her teacher's ability to help quite a few students without appearing to fatigue:

> The one thing I'm surprised about is how much kids he sees in a day and he acts like it's fine, and like how much kids go to him and he will help them until they're fine, until, like, they're passing their class right? and how much time he puts in to it.

Rory appears to respect the amount of time that her teacher spends with each student.

Expectations of Teachers

Finley and Rory spoke about how they expected teachers to do more than the bare minimum, specifically, to make time for each student.

> Like I've had interactions with teachers that were very negative. People who um, I guess they're just there to teach the curriculum and go home, but I think that like, being a teacher is like so much more than that because, like, so many of these kids look up to teachers, as like important role models and then… when they are dismissed like, that'll leave like a lasting impact on them. I'm so thankful that so many of the teachers I've had weren't like that.

Finley could ascertain from a teacher's behaviours what their priorities were. She felt dismissed when she could tell that a teacher was only there to teach rather than invest time in the students. Finley also acknowledges that teachers can have a significant influence on students as role models and supportive adults given the power attached to their role, and Finley sees it as each teacher's responsibility to honor that position of power by making an effort to positively impact students.

When I asked Rory what teachers do that risk losing her respect, she said:

> I would probably say cause again it's my experience, um, they like, how they would just move on. The kid's hand is just raised, right? Like, they're confused. Why not just go help and then move on, right? It's pretty much like what I said before it's just making sure everyone's caught up, right? Just seeing who needs extra help.

Rory expects her teachers to persist in making sure that students understand the material – not to give up because she didn't understand the first explanation.

Finley and Rory experienced negative TSRs when teachers dismissed their needs, and exhibited behaviours that pointed to other priorities – their personal time, or giving up when struggling to help students.

Theme 2: Knowing that They Matter

This theme describes how students perceive their value to a teacher through student-centered teacher actions. A significant portion of the youths' stories consisted of interactions with teachers, or teacher actions where they felt prioritized by the teacher. This "core" of the TSR is made up of eight sub-themes: having needs noticed by a teacher, feeling special to a teacher, being able to rely on the teacher, perceiving the teacher as on their side, feeling connected when the teacher shows an interest in their culture, feeling safe with their teacher, feeling listened to, and feeling respected by the teacher.

Having Needs Noticed by a Teacher

Each of the students spoke about how a teacher noticed something they needed, whether it was help with school work, a meal, or a relational need. The youth did not necessarily need to ask their teachers to meet their needs – the teachers noticed and acted. Finley shared how she believed that two of her teachers noticed her feelings of isolation and made an effort to consistently connect with her:

> Ms. Young, she was just so sweet, and bubbly, and she like – she was just really invested in me too, the same way that Burke was. Um, I think she saw like, I guess like… how lonely I was, and she had been a social worker before she was a teacher, so she had a lot of experience with like, my situation cause like my family… She was just always there for me. I'm a very like, curious and intelligent person. I really love learning, and having teachers, like present me with other things to learn, and like challenge me – that's really helpful. Um… Ms. Young was I guess, less educated on like social justice, but she was still just like so sweet, and I don't know she just- those two just like took an interest in me, I guess.

Finley felt that Ms. Young and Burke noticed her need for connection, as well as her need to be challenged in her learning. Finley also believed that Ms. Young's previous training may have given her a deeper understanding of Finley's lived experiences of family hurt, so that she had increased competency in working with Finley and her

emotional needs. Finley may have felt that she stood out to both of her teachers as worthy of care.

Rory shared the specific ways in which her LA teacher would help her:

> Just helping with my school work, and especially over covid cause the class-I struggle in most of my classes, but I was able to go for him and he did not question. He just helped me with it. Just like over time, I was able just to go there, and he acted like it was normal and would say like 'What do you need help with?' and he just helped and was able to talk to my teacher, like my Aboriginal teacher that was teaching me, and gave me an extension on my paper I was missing or, just like challenged me like if I could hand it in that night and he would do all that just because.

I infer from this quote that Rory was likely made to feel less than when other teachers may have questioned or negatively reacted to her requests for help. Her LA teacher likely provided her with a corrective experience in treating her needs as a normal part of learning. Rory may have also felt that her needs were met in the specific supports her LA teacher gave her: advocating to another teacher on her behalf and challenging her to try.

Z spoke about how his teacher noticed a need and made sure to address it from thereon:

> I remember every day I came into school around 6 o'clock sleeping, actually on top of the lockers, and every morning he either asked if I wanted breakfast or kinda left out a bit of food for me in the morning because I got to school at 6 o'clock. So, he always tried to make sure I was either okay or at least had something before school started.

Z did not ask his teacher to take care of this need, but felt cared about when his teacher noticed and consistently offered Z food in the mornings. These teacher actions may have led to each of the youth feeling cared for and known on a deeper level by their teachers.

Feeling Special to the Teacher

Each of the youth also spoke about instances where they felt special to the teacher. Z recounted two occasions where his teachers personally requested that he join their classes, Finley spoke about Burke keeping her favorite candies in his desk, and Rory shared that her time with her LA teacher went by fast because she just enjoyed

spending time with him. Z talked about the time his psychology teacher asked him to join one of his classes that was outside the time table:

> But then there's more private courses – the ones that we take on our own time, usually before and after school, he shares a lot lot more, and one of the things that really took me by surprise, and also what I feel was a very, very big, almost compliment was when instead of asking me-instead of just like, you know, me trying out to join his private-more private classes he actually told me to do it, and he asked me, so it felt a lot more like he actually really wanted me to go in.

Z spoke about how he never would have signed up for the course, because he felt like it would have been too challenging for him, but when his teacher invited him to join, he felt gratefully to have the opportunity to be exposed to more difficult psychology concepts, even though he suspected he might not understand all of them. He shared a similar experience with his law teacher:

> I remember last year… right after exams-well I started to get to know him a little bit and he asked me if I wanted to join his law class cause I was talking a lot about the different kinda legal stuff within the care system and the legal stuff within school and all that stuff and he asked me, um, if I wanted to actually join his course and when I did and I showed up on the first day he actually told me he was glad to see I was in his class.

Z likely began to establish familiarity with this teacher with informal chats in the hallway. It appears that the teacher made an attempt to further connect with Z by inviting him to join his course, and showing that he was happy to have him there. Z likely felt welcomed by both teachers, and special for having been asked personally to be a part of their classes.

Finley spoke about smaller teacher gestures that likely made her feel special to her teacher:

> I still email him sometimes and like chat, um… His door was always open, and he had lots of people going in and out. Um… and he kept my favorite candies in his desk which was such a bonus. They were the Werther's hard candy.

Something as simple as getting a student their favorite candy helped Finley to feel seen by her teacher. At the time of our interview, Finley had recently graduated, and she spoke about keeping in touch with the teacher who had had a positive impact on her.

Rory spoke about her LA teacher frequently asking about her interests and commitments outside of school:

> He always asks about hockey or like anything we do outside of school, and we've always had the conversation about my sports cause I play a lot of sports, well, until COVID, and he always asked how it was and if like, how I actually deal with all of it. He like wanted to get to know what we did outside of school.

Rory saw that her teacher took a genuine interest in who she was. She also spoke about enjoying the time she spent with her teacher because of his conversation abilities and good sense of humor:

> It's that like, he does joke around with like a lot of students and it's just him, like different I would say. Being at school with him, or like, the class with him, it just feels like the class goes by that fast and it's just great quality time with him, right? And I realize too the first class I had with him this year. I had him for math, and of course the class is going for a month, right? It felt like 5 days.

Rory likely felt quite a bit more comfortable in this class than she did in her others. Her trust in the teacher, and mutual liking may have led to this class feeling special amongst the other courses in her schedule. Each of these students may have perceived their relationship to their chosen teachers as unique amongst other TSRs.

Being Able to Rely on the Teacher for Support

Two youth spoke about being able to rely on their teachers for support. Rory expressed her confidence in her LA teacher to help her with her schoolwork when she asked, even if she had to wait for his help. Finley was able to rely on her teachers for support with events in her life outside of school. Rory spoke about having a few ways to reach out to her teacher:

> I could, like, go to him at any point of the day, text him at any point of the day on Teams or anything, and he would-it would take him a few minutes cause he would probably be helping other students, but he will get around, he will help and he would probably… he will do his best.

With the school closures due to COVID, many teachers used Microsoft Teams as a way to communicate with students remotely. When students returned to in-person learning, they may have continued to make use of this communication tool. Rory trusts in her

teacher's accessibility, responsiveness, and consistency in putting in his best effort to help. Rory goes on to say that her teacher is as reliable as family:

> Pretty much just like… how would I explain that, um… kind of [laughs] It's that like, he-no matter what I could go through or anything he would probably be there. It's just like another person, like a family pretty much, but like school. Like he would be there.

Finley explains how her teacher, Burke, provided her with support when she was trying to be strong for her foster siblings, and in finding language to describe her experiences of racism in Canada so that she could better advocate for herself and her siblings:

> It's been like really heavy recently, just like, understanding how racist Canada is, and how many systems are in place to like, hurt us. Um, like I have, um like, foster siblings – my biological parents foster kids – and the way that those kids are treated through the system is just heartbreaking. Um, and you know, teachers like Burke they were always really supportive of stuff like that, like in me trying to help them, they were always like my backbone, you know? Um, cause I am still just a kid trying to navigate through this kind of stuff. Um, it's just that a lot of teachers have been helpful in like, finding the right words. Um, and like wording so that I can advocate for people who might not be able to and they've helped advocate for me as well.

In Finley's words, there is evidence of teacher listening, as well as teacher knowledge of systemic racism in Canada. Finley's teachers have used their power to advocate for Finley and support her, and Finley has gained strength from this support. Finley also shared how her teachers supported her in navigating difficulties at home:

> Finley: Cause when I was in grade 11, I moved out of my mom's house, um, and I've had like no contact with her, and that was really hard, but all of my teachers supported me in that cause she hurt me a lot [Exhales].
>
> Nicole: It sounds like your teachers gave you strength in that moment.
>
> Finley: Yeah, and a lot of wisdom too cause like, I don't know, when you're a kid it's like hard to see beyond, you know, the next day. Um… and like they just pushed me to keep going. Um… yeah, um [exhales] yeah.

When Finley decided to end a relationship with an adult in her life, strong ties to other adults provided her with strength, as well as different perspectives of her situation.

Teachers may have encouraged her to think about what her future could look like, even though the present moment was painful for her.

Through repeated positive interactions with their chosen teachers, both Finley and Rory saw their teachers as reliable. They knew that they would receive the care and support they needed, in the ways they wanted it.

Perceiving the Teacher as on Their Side

Two students expressed confidence in their knowledge that their teacher would stand up for them, advocate for them, and believe in them. They could trust that their teacher had their back. Finley, having recently graduated, reminisced on what it was like to know that her teacher believed in her:

> And like, it takes me back, and like, just remembering like what it felt like to have that support from somebody who really was in my corner, and who believed in like, everything I could do. I miss that.

Finley had the fortunate experience of a positive TSR that provided her with a sense of support she did not perceive in areas of her life outside of school. Z spoke about how his law teacher promised students that he would stand up for them if they were ever in trouble with school administration:

> He told us that every teacher in the school should respect us and everything, and if a teacher ever disrespects us, he will back us up, and he has also been an advocate for any kids that got in trouble cause he's a law teacher.

Z also shares how he has witnessed his law teacher come to the defense of students who got called down to the principal's office:

> He's gotten quite a few kids out of some situations too, and he was right a lot of the times. The principals got mad even though the kids technically did nothing wrong. The principal was still looking to get the kid in trouble cause the principal didn't like what he did, but since he technically did nothing against school rules. Uh, like uh if let's say hypothetically a kid did-this one kid did nothing against school rules and sometimes the principal would still think what he did was wrong, a lot of times a lot of us would usually call up our law teacher, and then he shows up, and a lot of times they don't… they don't like when we call him because it makes their job way harder, but it makes it so that we will not get in trouble in the long run.

Z's words hint at a unique alliance he may have felt with his law teacher because he trusted this teacher to be on his side.

Feeling Connected When the Teacher Shows an Interest in Their Culture

Two students spoke about feeling connected to their teacher when that teacher demonstrated an interest in, or respect for their culture. Z spoke about reciprocating his teacher's care for him by making him a unique First Nations piece of art:

> Another thing that connected us was his interest and everything in the Aboriginal culture, and because he's retiring this year, I'm designing a drum for him at the moment. I already have it built and I'm thinking of putting a Coast Salish style and it's gonna be like a… half of a brain that's gonna be Coast Salish. And because he's so interested in that kind of stuff I thought, you know, it's the least I could do.

He noticed that his teacher took an interest in his culture, although he doesn't describe the interactions that demonstrated this. Z perceives his teacher's level of interest in his culture to the extent that he knows he would appreciate the effort Z is putting into making original Coast Salish artwork.

Finley spoke about how her teacher's interest in her culture and his non-judgmental listening provided her with a corrective experience:

> I would like hang out and have lunch in his class all the time and we would just talk about like anything and everything, and he would ask me to share sometimes in class about like my experiences being Native cause I grew up, I guess, quite traditionally. My family is Cree and we practice Sundance, and you know he wouldn't-he was never like disrespectful with any of his questions, which I find some people can be cause some of like, the practices can be-I don't know. It's not like going to church, and often some people are like taken aback by some of these cultural practices and he was always like really careful and respectful about it, um, and he really encouraged me to speak my truth about it, which I kinda loved.

Finley later shared that she had talked about traditional cultural practices with peers and that they would react with shock or disgust, which was really hurtful for Finley. She described her interactions with Burke about her culture as a validating experience.

Feeling Safe with the Teacher

Students could seek refuge from difficult feelings or situations in their teacher's room. A sense of safety could come from simply being with the teacher in their space, or

feeling safe enough to disclose to a teacher. Rory spoke about feeling intimidated to ask a question in front of her peers in most of her classes because she was worried about what others might be thinking about her, but this worry didn't exist in the LA room:

> I will ask for help. or I will go ask the teacher if I can go to the LA room for extra help because there's not really a teacher in there that will help our work like the other teacher. The LA room helps because there's a lot less people in there…. For me, it's like scary to ask in front of like 30 other kids, and I don't wanna be that-I wanna say like, odd person out that keeps asking every single question but everyone else is getting it and then like, it's very simple, but it's not to me.

A smaller class contributed to Rory feeling comfortable to approach her teacher for help. Moreover, she knew and trusted the LA teacher, so she was confident that he wasn't judging her for asking questions.

Finley spoke about spending her free time in Burke's room:

> I was never a very like social kid, like I didn't like going to the cafeteria for lunch. I'd rather just like, sit in a classroom, um… I think that was another, like reason to be in there.

Finley may have avoided places like the cafeteria because she didn't feel comfortable there. Her teacher likely created an inviting space for students like Finley who wanted to find a space that felt safe during unstructured times. Finley also spoke about how she felt safe enough with two teachers to self-disclose. She trusted that these teachers would keep what she shared private:

> I have my kokum, but I was always scared that like if I told her something bad about my mom that she might tell my mom, and I know that like with Burke or Ms. Young, like they weren't gonna call my mom because they said she was mean. I have like, the safety of their confidentiality. I know there's like a line to be drawn like if you were being like hurt or physically abused or sexually abused that they would have to report that, um, but a lot of the stuff that was going on at home was just like… just made me really sad, so it was just nice to be able to talk about that in a safe space.

Feeling Listened to by the Teacher

Two students shared that their teacher was a great listener, but only one expanded on it. They communicated that they did not feel judged by their teacher when they disclosed vulnerable information. Z shared that he, and other students, could go to his teacher to talk about a difficult experience. He knew his teacher would listen to him

and offer insight: “I mean, he’s everybody’s go-to person in all honesty when it comes to that. He’s a great listener. He also gives great advice.”

For Finley, having a teacher embody active listening was a rare and valuable experience. As stated earlier, her teacher Burke would listen to her recount traditional ceremonies without judgment, which was a drastically different experience from sharing this information with her classmates:

> I find especially with my peers, I’ll be sharing like certain ceremonies with them and they’ll be like shocked or like appalled that that’s something that happens. Um, which can be really really hurtful – to be told that like my way of life isn’t valid. Um, so it’s just… I really treasure anybody who like listens to me without judgment or like listens to me with curiosity before like-I don’t know-it’s pretty cool.

Feeling Respected by the Teacher

One student, Z, had explicit conversations about trust with his teacher, which were initiated by the teacher. Z had to feel respected by the teacher before he would reciprocate that respect. He shared how his teacher told his class that he saw them as adults, and that, instead of telling students what to do, he would encourage them to reflect on the purposes of their actions:

> He treated us not like as students, but more of a, like we were equal to him. Like still he taught us, but we were still on the same ground as he was. He said we’re all adults here. I don’t need to parent you. You just need to listen, do the work on your own time, and you will pass this course, and he also-what’s the word-he didn’t treat us, like if we did stupid things during class, it was okay to an extent, and instead of getting us in trouble he just asked why we were doing it – like asking us if that’s helping us during class at all. So, it wasn’t like he thought we were doing something wrong, but he spoke to us like adults and tried to teach us how to do things like adults. In a way where he wasn’t telling us, but making us think about what we were doing.

Z went on to share how another teacher chose to show his respect for students by calling them by their last names:

> He often said that ‘We don’t deserve each other’s respect, but I will give you mine because you are an adult, and you have not given me a reason to not respect you’, and instead of calling us all by our first names, he called us all by our last names because he said “If you guys are calling me by my last name, then why should I call you guys by your first names’. He almost saw it as like, a sign of respect to call each other by our last names.

Z later spoke about how he will respond well to a teacher that treats him like an equal, but if a teacher treats him as less than, he won't go out of his way to make things easier for the teacher, or make an extra effort in that class. From Z's perspective, a teacher has to earn his respect and his hard work.

Theme 3: Impacts of the TSR

This theme portrays the ways in which the TSR impacted the student actions, and how they perceived their teachers fit into their lives. Each youth in this study spoke about how they sought their teacher in a moment of emotional distress. Such acts of vulnerability were likely made possible by the core of the TSR: repeated interactions with teachers that let the students know that they really mattered to their teacher. Two of the youth also spoke about seeing their teachers in an influential, parent-like role, where they looked up to them as role models, or saw them as the main supportive adults in their lives. One of the themes that I though may have mediated these impacts was that some youth disclosed knowing or suspecting their teachers had also experienced life struggles, and therefore; would be able to better relate to what they, the students, were going through. Lastly, each youth spoke about the reciprocal nature of the TSR, whether they themselves acted in ways that showed the teacher that they also cared about the relationship, or were surprised to learn the extent of the impact they had on their teachers.

Mediating Theme: Relating to a Teacher Because of the Teacher's Disclosed Life Struggles

Two of the youth shared that a teacher had disclosed going through difficult life circumstances to them, or that they suspected that this was the case. These youth felt better understood by teachers who had shared their own difficulties, and they could draw similarities between themselves and their teachers. Finley spoke about suspecting that Burke had likely faced difficulties in his childhood, although she didn't specify why: "I think that he probably understood what it was like to maybe be a kid who didn't have things easy, and how important it is to have just that one person who's interested in you and your life." Finley thought that Burke may have been so interested in and supportive of students because he understood what it was like to have a supportive adult who wasn't a parent.

Z was not willing to share his teacher's personal stories, but he did share the impact that these stories had on him:

> I mean I can't really say anything, all I can say is some of the things he's told us that he's seen in his lifetime I-some of it I really related to, in all honesty…. It's his stuff. I can't really say, but I mean, like, I had a pretty violent childhood. Pretty, well, shit upbringing.

These stories changed how Z related to his teacher. He trusted that this teacher would have a much deeper understanding of Z's struggles since he had personal experience with similar struggles:

> And the difference between him and other teachers is, I mean he's been through a lot of shit. So, you know that out of a bunch of others teachers him of all people will understand…. I'd rather tell someone that actually understands what it feels like to hurt versus someone who's been coddled up all their life.

Finley and Z may have confided in these teachers because they strongly believed that they would have personal experience with similar situations, and thus, genuine empathy.

The Ability to be Vulnerable with a Trusted Teacher

Each of the youths' stories contained a key event where the youth made a vulnerable disclosure to their trusted teacher. Each youth's vulnerability was met with teacher compassion and support. Trust is required for self-disclosure, and once students knew that they mattered to their teachers, they likely felt safe enough to self-disclose. Rory spoke about being able to go to her LA teacher when she was feeling overwhelmed because she knew his response to her would help her calm down:

> This one time, I wanna say it was like, during science or something. I was feeling overwhelmed about all the work, uh, how do I put it? It was just getting to the point where it was too much, and, again, I was able to go to him and he was just able to be there and he did everything he could.

Z shared a time when he felt deeply hurt by the actions of some of the school staff. He sought out his teacher who countered the negative things he was feeling about himself:

> I remember there was this, uh, two EAs. They were talking to my girlfriend, and they told her to just – I didn't even know who these people were – they told her to, um, break up with me. They kept on saying, you know, I'm a bad influence, I'm a bad kid. Blah, blah, blah. And, I mean, I pride myself

> on not being a bad person, and you know for people that I don't even know to say that about me took me by surprise. Like if they said that to me directly it wouldn't have hurt me, but they said it to someone that I care about, and that's what hurt. So, I went to his room, and I just broke down and just cried… We talked, and um, he said that I'm the exact opposite of what they said about me, and I didn't even notice I was doing this in my class, but he said I really helped this one girl out. She stopped going to class halfway through, but they said I kept-she kept talking about me. He said that like, she told him that I really helped her out with stuff that was going on at home and I didn't even know. He said that, you know, I was the opposite of what they said that I do help people and all that stuff.

Z's teacher had noticed how Z positively impacted another student in his class – something Z himself hadn't noticed, and then used that example to counter the negative thoughts that Z might have been having about himself in response to this critique from strangers. Z had a lot of trust in his teacher before this event – it can take quite a bit of trust to let out tears in front of another, and speak about one's fears. It is likely that the teacher's supportive response to Z's vulnerability further strengthened the TSR.

Finley also had a positive experience when she self-disclosed to a supportive teacher who communicated his care through listening:

> I was going through like a pretty severe depression in high school. I was just like suicidal all the time, and I remember one day, um, going into Burke's classroom and just being like, so broken, so hurt, and he just sat there with me and he listened, and I think one of the best parts of that was he didn't try to make me feel better. He just made sure that I knew that he heard me, and he saw me, and he like, made me feel valued as a person who was going through pain, and I'm just like, so grateful for that cause like, if I had kept going without anybody seeing me, I mean, I'm not sure I would have made it. Just knowing that I had somebody in my corner was all I needed.

Finley's teacher had a profound impact on her life by positioning himself as a safe and supportive person in her life. Finley trusted her teacher enough to speak openly and found that doing so had a therapeutic effect for her.

Seeing the Teacher in an Influential, Parent-like Role

Two of the students had difficult relationships with parents and shared that their teachers provided their first positive experience with a parent-like figure. The students expressed appreciation for how their teachers influenced them. Finley spoke about how

many of her teachers during the course of her time at high school cared about her as a parent would:

> I guess like growing up teachers were like some of my main supports cause at home shit wasn't very good and some [inaudible] just were. It was just like… like incredible, and you know he isn't the only teacher who's done this kinda stuff for me. A lot of my teachers were like second parents.

Finley elaborated that teachers at her school have the power to change a youth's daily experience by listening to them and taking an interest in them:

> For a lot of kids I know, especially downtown, their teachers are really the only ones who are paying attention to them every day. They see that like maybe they're having a bad day and not doing too well, and when a teacher like reaches out and just acknowledges that, like even if they're not going through anything, it's just so powerful to have somebody like, know you and be interested in you and care about you in this respect.

Z spoke about how his teacher was the first positive male role model he had encountered:

> I didn't have a father-figure around. I didn't have a mother-figure around either. So, he was kinda like my first ever father-figure that I actually like, respected. He's the first adult male that I respected because he showed us that he respects us even though he doesn't even know us.

The Reciprocal Nature of the TSR

Each youth addressed the two-way nature of the TSR. Two of the students, Rory and Z, spoke about caring about a teacher if they knew the teacher cared about them. One of youth reflected on how she was struck by the extent to which she had impacted her teacher after reading a reference letter he had written for her. For Rory, the reciprocal nature of the TSR is simple:

> Rory: It's that like, no matter what I could go through or anything he would probably be there. It's just like, another person, like a family pretty much, but like school. Like he would be there.
>
> Nicole: Yeah. You can count on him. (Yeah.) I think that's a pretty powerful statement to say he's kinda like school family.
>
> Rory: Yeah, because he is. He like cares a lot. He cares about me, so… I care about him.

For Z, knowing that his teacher perceived him as an equal won his respect:

> Let's say I like a teacher. I will like, I will put in 100% effort in that class then, and I will make sure that that teacher is proud of me and I will try to make everything I do in that class easy for that teacher to mark and do everything, so then we can both succeed cause we are equals.

Z would reciprocate his teacher's care when he cared about what that teacher thought of him. In these two examples, a certain amount of responsibility to initiate a positive TSR rests with the teacher. The teacher must be the first person to demonstrate care for the student and behave respectfully towards them.

Finley knew that her teacher cared about her, but she didn't realize that, in the same way he had changed her life, she had also changed his:

> I didn't like, have him as a teacher again after that, but I always hung around his classroom and stuff, and he wrote my reference letter which I have here that I'm gonna read out, um, from when I was applying for scholarships and stuff. It was so like, touching and so beautiful that I have like made this bond, and that I had impacted him as much as he had impacted me.

Strong TSRs are mutually impactful. Both teachers and students can benefit from creating and maintaining positive bonds with each other.

Theme 4: Things that Teachers do Wrong

At the end of my interviews with youth, I asked them what are some of the things that teachers do that damage the relationship from their perspective. Each youth chose to tell a story about a positive relationship, so I was curious about what were some of the teacher actions that led to negative experiences. Rory spoke about how many of her teachers ignored her when she indicated she needed help, and she didn't understand why they would treat her this way:

> I would, just from my experience throughout most of my teachers, is that like they would get around to everyone or they won't probably pay more attention to the kids, because I know that they won't pay attention, right? But when there's like that other person trying to get their attention, but like, I know they're working with other kids, right? But would be able to check up on them and everything. It's-for some experience, some of my teachers probably wouldn't… um… how would I put this. Like, I would ask for help multiple times, and they would just put me last.

Rory understands that teachers have to help a lot of students, but sees it as damaging to the relationship when her teachers put her last.

Z spoke about how being made to feel less than was the biggest mistake a teacher could make in his experience:

> The teachers that treat us like we're less than them makes it so we not so much feel like we're less than them, but the fact that we resent them and want to make their job harder for them, at that point. It's not so much that we wanna do bad in that class it's that we want to make their job harder and we want to make sure that they don't feel welcome cause if you treat us like garbage, we're not gonna treat you like garbage directly, we're gonna… we will just make your job more difficult. It's not so much the fact-but we won't so much try to make it more difficult it's just the connection makes it more difficult-the lack of empathy for each other…. I think that is the biggest thing that teachers do wrong is not treat high schoolers like equals.

Z believes that once students get to the senior grades, they are adults so teachers would do well to treat them as such. Being talked down to or disrespected by a teacher was the main thing that would threaten the potential for a positive TSR for Z.

Finley shared that racist actions by educators was one of the more hurtful actions that stood out in her memories of schooling experiences:

> So, I'm Métis so I'm not like just Native, I'm also white, and you know like having that a lot of teachers have just assumed that I am just white, and that's been really hurtful – just being dismissed. Like when you're mixed like, I have been told by Native people before that I'm not dark enough I'm not Native enough for them, and then to be told by white people that you're not Native either, like it's just kind of-like feeling so in between and it's not like one side or the other, like, that was really hurtful. When I was in elementary school, my mom filled out all the paperwork saying that I was Indigenous, but I was never included with like-I remember so vividly in grade two, the Native kids in my class got to make these paddles, um and I was just never called down to be a part of that, and I like, didn't get it, I didn't know why. That was really hurtful, again. It made me feel like I wasn't enough.

In these instances, Finley's cultural heritage – a key component of her identity – was dismissed by people in a position of power over her. Teacher acknowledgement and demonstrated respect for student culture is also an integral step in establishing a strong TSR.

Teacher Themes

The findings from the teacher sharing circle are organized into eight main themes, some of which have one to three supporting sub-themes. The central theme from the teacher data, intentional connection, is not listed as the first theme, but the third. I decided to begin with the theme of “Seeing the whole student”, and then “Seeing potential” as I found this order better respected the ways in which the teachers presented their stories. The first theme focuses on the parts of the teacher stories that demonstrate their efforts to have a holistic understanding of the student they chose to speak about. In the second theme, three of the teachers spoke about wanting to help their student because they believed in their ability to achieve. The third theme, intentional connection, was identified by the teacher participants and focuses on teacher persistence in establishing the foundations of a strong TSR. Intentional connection also informs the fourth theme of connecting with the students’ families. At least two of the teachers made careful efforts to build a rapport with their student’s caregiver. The fifth theme focuses on how teacher efforts to create safety can lead to student disclosures. In the sixth theme, parts of some of the teacher stories and subsequent discussion demonstrate teacher awareness of systemic barriers that impact student participation in education. In the seventh theme, teachers expect themselves and their colleagues to go above and beyond basic teaching duties in order to have a positive impact on their students’ experiences of school. The last theme addresses how both firm boundaries and conflict between teachers and students make up an uncomfortable part of the TSR.

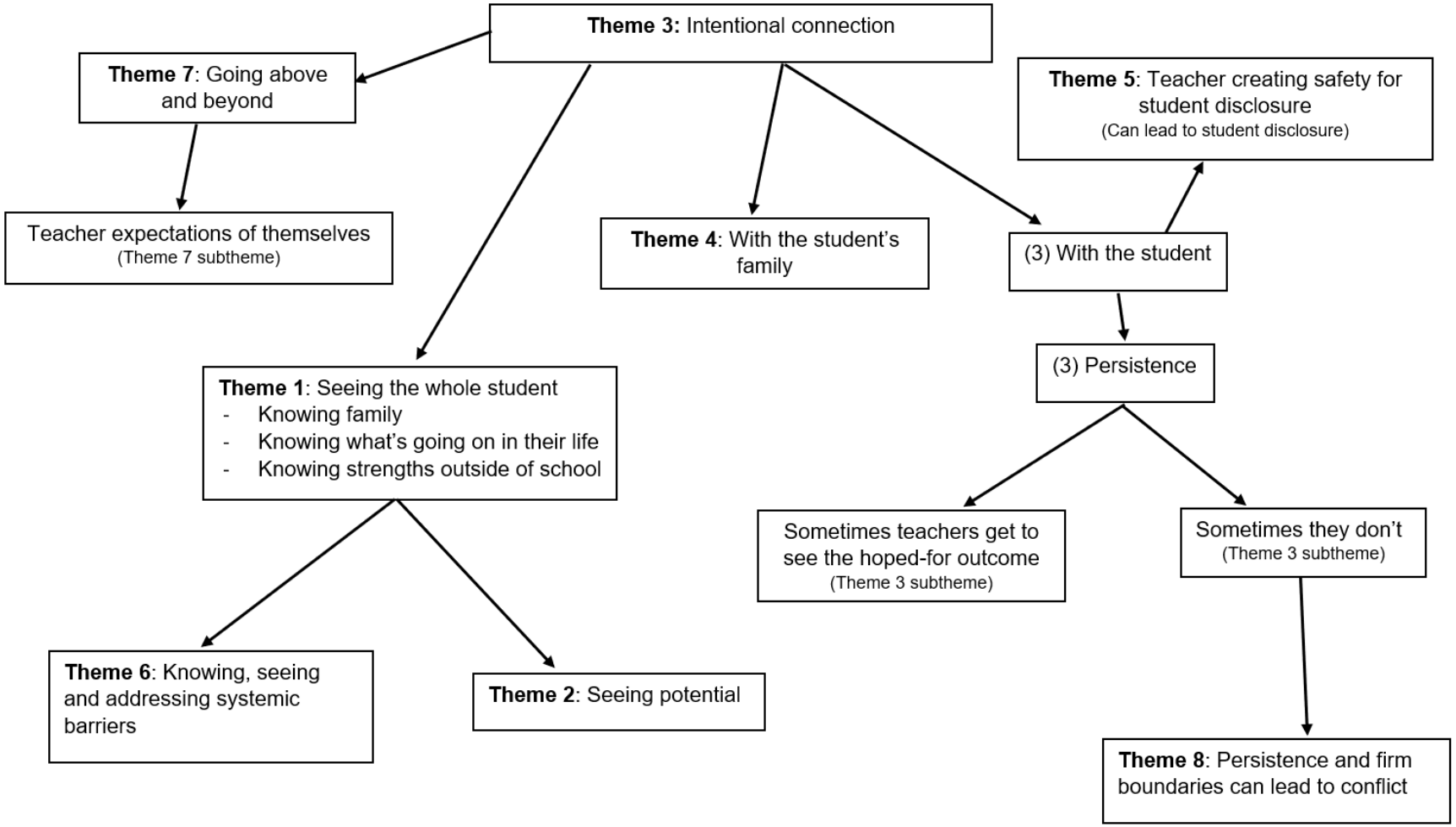

Figure 3. Teacher Themes Map

Intentional connection links all teacher themes in this map; however the first theme is "Seeing the whole student" on the left-hand side in the middle.

Theme 1: Seeing the Whole Student

I made “seeing the whole student” the first theme because this is where many of the teachers’ stories began. In order to have a positive TSR with their students, teachers must know the students first. The teacher participants made an effort to know what was going on in the students’ lives outside of school. This included knowing what the student’s home life looked like, knowing the student’s strengths outside of school and knowing some of the things that were happening in the student’s life. Each teacher spoke about knowing a bit about the student’s family situation. Colin spoke about arriving at the school as a new LA teacher. He began to establish new routines and expectations, and one student in particular was quite resistant to the changes he was making. Colin shared that he arrived at a deeper understanding of this student by listening to what others knew about them:

> One student in particular had a tough time. They were in grade 10 at the time and had been at the school since grade 7, with the same teachers and the same expectations that whole time. They’d also had two siblings who had been at the school, and word had it that they had had a similar experience, being one where the student did not attend class, did not do small group or individual work, and just had to snarl or raise their voice to scare people off and be left alone, but it wasn’t just school that created challenges with this student, there was also a recent divorce and trauma as a result, a medical condition, significant anxiety and a soon-to-be-determined mild intellectual disability.

Colin appeared to approach this student with curiosity rather than authority in order to set the foundations for a positive TSR.

Coach got to know a student quite well through meetings with the student’s legal guardian, as the school team supported this student in finding a home near the school so that she could continue to attend and participate in sports. Coach shared what she came to learn about this student’s past:

> So, this one girl, her mom and dad weren’t in the picture. She had lived with her grandmother on the other side of town, and then, to come to our school, she moved across town and she was living with an aunt, or someone that she called an aunt, so she could be closer to the school, cause her grandma couldn’t drive her and this was the arrangement thus far. So, I knew this, and then her aunt was getting a little bit upset and didn’t want her to stay with her anymore, and her eventual legal guardian said that her aunt was kind of done with her staying there. So, her aunt wanted

> her to go back to her grandmother and stay with her, but we always want to try to do what's the best thing for the student, and in this case, we wanted to keep involving her in sports, and keep her here and we were, you know, invested in her. We never want to give up on a kid. So, she ended up staying with her best friend's mother. Her best friend's mother signed and became legal guardian of her. So, when I started teaching and coaching her, she was the person that I communicated with. So, this mom became her legal guardian [inhales]. So that was great. We thought that was gonna be awesome. So, I had lots and lots of communication with the mom, parent meetings, and um… So, our initial parent meeting at the beginning of the year for basketball – I got to meet her, and she was amazing. She wanted to be fully involved and she was invested in this girl.

Coach had an understanding of this student's past – of moving from home to home – and attempted to connect with the student's new legal guarding in order to support her.

Dawne spoke about noticing barriers in a student's personal life that prevented her from coming to school:

> I had a student in grade 10 English, and her attendance was quite spotty. Nothing sort of stood out as being-she was a nice girl, she did her work. I would say average academically. One that was not on my radar for any concerns, and her boyfriend was also in the class and, she ended up getting pregnant in grade 10, and there was some conflict between her and her partner and she ended up finishing the course and not coming back for a second semester because she was pregnant, and then she left and she took the-her grade 11 year-I think she did some online.

Dawne knew a little about this student's family. She saw potential in her, and really wanted to support her in working towards graduation:

> Any time a student graduates I'm proud of them, but when the student comes from a background where, you know, some of her siblings or her parents did not have a positive school experience, and so all I can think of is I just want you to graduate so that you have that for yourself, so that you have something that you're proud of, that you have something-you know, that you've really made this accomplishment.

Dawne may have hoped to provide this student with a better schooling experience than her family members may have had.

Sabine, in her role as Aboriginal Support Teacher, worked with students one-on-one to help them meet academic expectations. She got to know what home life looked like for some of these students. She spoke about one student she worked with who she knew was facing difficult circumstances outside of school:

> So, then I worked with him on a bunch of assignments, and at that time I don't know-I think he was going through home stuff too. His parents were divorcing and everything, or separating. I mean, the household was chaotic. I think there was a lot of different things going on there with, I don't know, rumor has it maybe some substance abuse stuff and loud, like, uh, hard situations at home.

Sabine also knew about student strengths outside of school. She spoke about one student who needed support in academics, but had a reputation as a skilled hunter in his own community:

> There was one boy who his grandma was the chief at that time. So, they had contact with the school, like, on the reserve this boy was very successful. He was a good hunter, like revered for his hunting skills and his savvy… connection to his culture, okay? So, he was very good, but academically, he was not strong, right?

Sabine also had knowledge of traditional cultural practices that impacted how a student was able to engage with their schooling. She spoke about a student who was having a hard time in his personal life and thus engaged in a traditional healing practice:

> He didn't come to the class a lot because he, he was personally also going through stuff and he went into the smoke house for several months. Three months or four months, so we didn't see a lot of him, and then he did return, and then of course there's a lot of cultural things that come along with that when you're returning back to school and people, and that whole journey that he was on, and I don't think that was his first time in there, but then he came back late.

Theme 2: Seeing Potential

Teachers took an interest in their selected student because they believed in their ability to overcome obstacles to their learning. They saw that the students had skills and qualities that would serve them well in meeting challenges in their schooling. Once teachers saw this potential, they put themselves in the student's corner. Colin shared that he saw leadership potential in the way his selected student resisted the changes he was making to the LA class:

> I knew the student had potential, and I had witnessed them as a leader of the resistance, at the beginning, and later, I saw them grow into a leader of the newly established norms and everything else that was to come.

Through working on the TSR, Colin was able to position himself as on the student's side, and eventually gain the student's trust and support.

Coach really believed in her chosen student's abilities as a basketball player, and she believed that these athletic abilities, when coupled with effort in academics, could lead to a lot of opportunities for this student:

> So, this girl has the potential to be a very good basketball player, and she can go places and we believed in her. So, we were excited that she was gonna be here and at the school and part of a team…. I wanted to create this rapport and, really, a good relationship with this student cause I knew she had it in her. I believed in her to be a, you know, deep down I felt she was a good person and a very good basketball player and I felt there was opportunity there. So, I worked hard at trying to keep her, you know, in it.

Coach faced interpersonal struggles with this student, but was motivated to continue working on the relationship, and encouraging the student to engage in her schooling because she could see the student continuing to do well in basketball.

Dawne spoke about frequently thinking of the student that had to leave school to care for her newborn:

> I always thought about her and I wondered like, "Oh, how's she doing?" because she was one that I saw a lot of potential in. There were a lot of circumstances beyond her control in that situation, but I always thought that-she was one that-that she really enjoyed creative writing, um, and she was one that I felt like, 'Oh I wish I could have done more for her'.

Dawne knew that this student was good at writing, and she regretted not being able to have supported her more. Fortunately, the student returned to Dawne's class and she got the opportunity she had been hoping for.

Theme 3: Intentional Connection

This central, overarching theme portrays teachers' experiences of consistently (and persistently) reaching out in an attempt to create a connection with their chosen student. Some of the participants had discouraging experiences, but they persisted in communicating with the student, trying new things and continuing to be there for them. Some of the teachers didn't get to see a hoped-for outcome with their selected student before the relationship ended, and others did. Colin spoke about testing out many different approaches with his chosen student, consulting with school staff, and connecting with home:

> With this student, I tried various approaches, from soft to hard and many things in between. With some of these I had slight success, and with others, not at all. I got screamed at in the halls, saw tears, got threats and called some pretty nasty names. I tried talking with others who knew him, leaning on the administrators to talk with them, and connecting with home.

Coach also spoke about persisting in the TSR when conflict with the student arose. Coach had a significant amount of contact with her student – she taught her in a couple of classes and was her basketball coach:

> So, obviously she was part of my P.E. leadership class so there was a lot of different expectations there, but some of the issues that we were having besides skipping – a lot were my classes, so I knew that she was skipping [laughs], late. The attitude was starting to get, um, not so great. I felt that she spoke quite disrespectfully towards me, lots of like, you know, lots of eye rolling and, yeah it was very tough, and backtalking, and that sort of thing, but I get-again, I worked really hard to maintain this relationship with this student, um…. She wasn't giving her full effort in class. She wasn't giving her full effort on the basketball team…. When it came time to games, um, I drove her 99% of the time.

Both Colin and Coach experienced conflict with their students, but persisted in their attempts to establish a positive connection. Dawne made an effort to connect with her student by communicating non-judgment of the student's situation:

> She ended up in my English 12 class, and I have a child, but he's about a year older than hers, and so we would often talk about, um, "How's your son doing?" and that was just the way that we bonded over-you know, it didn't matter to me that she-I'm a mom in my 20s and she's a mom as a teenager. That was one way that I think she felt comfortable in my classroom because, you know, she could talk about her son who she was so proud of.

During the second round of the sharing circle, the teachers reflected on how intentional connection was a central theme that they noticed in the stories. Dawne was the first to speak about connection:

> So, hearing stories about, you know, Sabine getting to know the families and having that really personal conversation where that student disclosed that they felt like they were being picked on because they were Indigenous, and then, you know, hearing Coach talk about how she was going absolutely the extra mile for this student and willing to do what it took to make sure that she could participate in sports, and then hearing Colin talk about how that was a big successful moment for him, was connecting to the family, and that was just sort of a common theme that I noticed throughout all of our shares, was, you know, whether it was a positive or a not-so-positive story that that intentional stance of connection that we try

> to take with our Indigenous students, and that was just what I noticed across the board was that word connection.

Coach spoke about how it is the teacher's job to work on building meaningful relationships with students, and that this work isn't done in isolation:

> I think we've thrown this around in our group all the time is students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care, and like, that's why it's so important that we build relationships with each of our students. Yeah. And the fact that we all agree and that bringing everybody in to, you know, it sometimes takes a village to raise kids.

I chose to place intentional connection at the center of the thematic map because it appeared to be a priority for the teacher participants, informing the variety of ways in which they attempted to help their students.

Persistence Doesn't Always Pay Off

At times, some of the teacher participants perceived that students did not reciprocate their efforts in creating and maintaining a relationship. Two teachers did not get to witness an outcome that made them happy for their students. Coach spoke about a pattern of unreciprocated care that eventually led to her feeling exhausted and rejected by the student:

> Eventually it got bad, like she skipped classes and she couldn't play, and she pretty much took that out on me – that's when a lot of the disrespectful words were said, and she ended up having to be suspended from the team, and before this was all happening I set up with our admin and some teachers and the parent meetings and with her so, it was kind of a group effort to keep this kid on the straight and narrow, but, yeah so, she eventually was very upset with me that I actually had to have some-there was punishment involved, and she couldn't come on the team. She ended up finishing the season, sitting on the bench, and then if she still wanted to support the team, which was tough. There were games where she was not allowed to play, and she just decided to go home and, yeah so all in all I felt pretty depleted at the end of the relationship this year. Trying to gain this good relationship. I really felt – I was pretty upset, you know? You're always told not to take anything personal, but I did invest a lot of time and effort into her, and wanted her to be successful and I feel like I either failed or I-yeah I'm not sure where I could have done things differently, but I feel-in the end I felt very disrespected, and there wasn't really an apology in the end, and then it was the next season and she was playing with someone, like, in the comp team, and it was like all that stuff that I had tried to do for her didn't really matter, and, again, try not to take things personally, but, yeah, it hurt in the end.

Coach speaks about how investing in relationships can blur the line between the professional and the personal. Coach's hurt indicates the level of care she attached to the TSR. Naturally, care and emotions are integral parts of relationships, but may cause teachers to feel that they aren't achieving an appropriate level of professional distance. The balance between teacher warmth and professionalism can be challenging to achieve.

Sabine shared that in attempting to support a student by providing him with different educational avenues to explore, she was not yet able to see him graduate:

> So, he didn't come very often, and then we set him up, okay? 'You're gonna, you know, do trades. You're good with your hands. Let's get you there', and he didn't want to do the safety stuff and he was resistant to that. So, unfortunately, he didn't explore that part either, which, he could have been, you know, really enjoyed that cause he wanted to go into that field previously…. Then, fast forward some, and I don't think he did his other courses, and then COVID happened last March, and then he ended up going into the workforce and works at a mill now, and he's doing the adult grad program now cause he turned of age. So, he only had two classes to do. So, he was signed up for online learning, like, learn at home right now with support on the reserve, and here – I could support him on Teams, like we're here for him and there's lots of supports at home. However, he is not taking advantage of that time. He's working at a mill so he works long hours. I think Monday to Thursday and he has Fridays off, or Monday to Wednesday and he's got two days off. So, we arranged a time where he could come in here, but he hasn't done that. He's not going to graduate. Unless, you know, miraculously he does his two courses in a hurry.

Witnessing student success can mean different things for different teachers. For Coach, this may have looked like a relationship characterized by mutual respect. For Sabine, student success means graduating. Student definitions of success were not included in the teachers' stories; however, during the reflection portion of the sharing circle, two of the teachers acknowledged that success could happen later on in a student's life, and they may or may not get to hear about it. Sabine offered a response to Coach's story, normalizing the hurt she experienced:

> What stuck out for me, when Coach-you can't not let your feelings be hurt by that, right? Because you, I've felt that [inaudible] after everything I've done for you, you're gonna act like you don't even know me, like not sit next to me. I mean, it's a little bit hurtful, but we don't do it for that recognition, or whatever, you know, and it's not a reciprocal thing like, you know what I mean? Like maybe when they're older in life they'll look back and you know, perhaps, right? Think that wow, you know, my teacher so-

> and-so did, you know, they made a difference in my life and they're just not able to do that at this time, and, you know? Yeah, I mean Dawne you allowing a baby in your class and everything and that, like, yeah. We do these things because we care and we want the best for them.

Sabine touches on an important point – that teachers are motivated to pursue their students because they care about them, not because they want to get something out of the relationship.

Coach remembers that she has connected with previous students when they were adults with a different perspective:

> "Because they do grow up – I've been teaching long enough now that kids have come back, and actually, there's teachers that I've taught and they're like 'Aw man! We were terrible! We gave you a run for your money', right? Like, whoa I remember this. So, yeah, you hope that you, you know, you've done well enough with them that they will learn some life lessons along the way. [laughs]"

Witnessing Student Successes

Two of the teachers were able to see an outcome that made them happy for their students. This outcome in both cases was graduation. Dawne spoke about her student's success, "She graduated, she passed English 12, and I still keep in contact with her. So, after she graduated, she started following me on social media, and yeah, we chat from time to time, and she's doing super well." Colin also shared the success his student encountered:

> Soon enough they were in class, except for a couple of down days, which still happened, but they became far less frequent. They were doing the work, at an adapted level, and they were on their way to adult graduation, which occurred this past June. Although there were many factors that helped to spur the success, I would most definitely attribute a large part to connecting with home and involving the family in the school.

Teachers hope for positive outcomes for their students. Sometimes they are able to witness student successes, and other times the relationship ends. Part of a teacher's responsibility in the TSR is respecting student autonomy.

Theme 4: Connecting with Family

Two of the teachers had conversations with students' parents and guardians for the purposes of building a relationship with parents and supporting the student in extra-curriculars at the school. Colin shared that he intentionally reached out his student's mother for the purposes of making a connection:

> As time passed, I made sure that I was connecting with home more about positives than negatives. There were times that this was challenging to do, but if you work to, want to, and are looking, you can always find them. Sharing regular positives with mom definitely helped to establish a solid relationship. I recall we once spent an hour on the phone discussing all kinds of things. She came in for regular informal meetings that would often run long. Soon enough, even grandma was part of these conversations as well as even the older siblings from time to time, and the more this happened, the better the relationship with the student got, and their growth and learning accelerated.

Colin had tried a variety of strategies to connect with this student, but it wasn't until he began working on a positive rapport with their mother that he noticed a change in the student's behaviour towards him. When I asked Colin what this process of connecting with the family was like, he said:

> Yeah. It definitely took a fair bit of time. I think a lot of people, when they see the phone number of the school pop up there, I mean they probably didn't immediately go to like okay, 'what's this?' but like, I don't know. I think we do make a lot of just like, regular and positive phone calls, but I think a lot of parents often attribute it to being something negative. And that's how it started unfortunately, and that's where I just made a conscious choice to like turn that around, and make it far more positive. So yeah, and when I started making those kinda positive things, then that's where the relationship started going and she really just started to see like I'm not just calling cause-like I think she'd been getting calls like his entire school career. So, like, eleven years of just getting calls, calls, calls. So, when she really saw that I was focusing on the positive stuff I think that helped with, uh, seeing that I've got the best interests of her child in mind, and um, yeah. I think that just-when parents kind of welcome you in, then kids will do the same, so. Yeah, it was-took a while, but definitely worth it.

It seems that Colin was able to imagine the parent's perspective of him, and experiences interacting with the school in the past. He made the choice to change the way he approached the parent from reporting negative behaviours to meaningful conversation, and in the process, he gained the parent's trust.

Coach shared her practice of regularly meeting with student athletes' families to let them know what committing to the team would entail:

> As a coach of a basketball team, I wanna to try to build rapport with all of our student athletes, and we wanna minimize any conflict in the future from any families, and one way we do this is we always have a parent meeting, and, you know, we talk about expectations. We're all about being forthcoming with, you know, our philosophy, so it's not a surprise or a secret what we ask of our students – our student athletes.

Student athletes likely require a fair amount of support from their families to participate in the sport, such as; transportation to games, funds for clothing and equipment, etc. Coach took the approach of collaborating with families and striving for transparency around school expectations regarding student involvement in sports.

Theme 5: Creating Safety for Student Disclosure

Two teachers, in providing consistent, individualized support shared how their students were vulnerable with them. The students' disclosures carried risk of judgment, but the teachers demonstrated respect and support. Dawne recounted when her student approached her and spoke frankly about the challenges she was facing:

> It was the last semester of the year and so she was scheduled to cross the stage and go to prom, and she had it all set up, that she had childcare and I think she only came for half days, but she had it all set up, and then she came up to me one day and she said, 'Ms. Dawne, I'm not going to finish your class.' And I said, 'Well, what do you mean? Like, of course you're going to finish this class. You're doing well.' And she said, 'Well I don't have childcare anymore.' She had an arrangement with a family member, and she had childcare and she was so determined that she was going to do well in school, but, like, she could do her mom duties at home and her school duties at school, and so she just came up to me one day and I could see the defeat in her eyes. She was like, 'I can't do this. I thought I could do this. I can't do this. My childcare fell through and I no longer have help.' And because it was a family member, she was getting childcare for free, and she said, 'I can't afford a babysitter. I don't know what to do.'

Dawne's consistent bids for connection with this student, her belief in this student, and her non-judgmental stance likely gave the student a sense of safety to the point where the student could be vulnerable with her, and could go to her for support. Sabine also shared a time when a student was vulnerable with her and moved her to empathy:

> So, another student too-so, last year, I did teach him when he was in grade 12. I taught him English, but during that time he was um, he struggled in school. He always has, and so he later disclosed to me that he felt that teachers picked on him because he was Indigenous and they thought that he was stupid. I don't know of all his experiences in the past, but I know that's what he did feel…. So, then when I sat one of these assignments, um, when we did a five-paragraph essay, we looked at him as a student throughout his years and this is where it came out that he disclosed that he thought that everybody thought he was stupid and nobody liked him because he was Indigenous, and he started crying, like, he was bawling, and he um, I don't know – it was, you know, heartbreaking to see that that's what he actually feels about himself.

Theme 6: Knowing, Seeing and Addressing Systemic Barriers

Two of the teachers demonstrated an awareness of the ways in which their students were impacted by colonialism, historical trauma, and systemic oppression. Sabine spoke about her interactions with a student's grandmother and understanding why the school building could be linked to traumatic memories:

> The grandma had [inaudible] and whenever she would walk into the school, so she hated it because it brought back memories, not of, you know, her attending that school, but just of-historically, right? Residential schools and everything like that. So, she carried that-her feelings and obviously passed them down, right?

Sabine recognized the impact of residential schools on children and their families, but did not speak about how she addressed it. One teacher, Dawne, actually removed one of the barriers that the traditional school system presented to an impacted student:

> You know our school doesn't have a daycare. We don't have childcare options, but I didn't want that to be-she already had so much stacked against her in her life, and I didn't want childcare to be a barrier to her being successful in school, especially given that she was scheduled to graduate on time, even though she took a year off, and she did and she definitely missed class some days because she had mom duties, but I was really determined to have her graduate and to have her be successful, and I wanted to make sure that she knew that I would support her and if she needed to bring her son to class then that's what it was…. So, she did. She brought her year and a half year old son to class with her most days. And she plunked him in the car seat and put on a movie for him and, um… There were times where he was maybe a little loud or disruptive, and so our rule was that if he gets fussy then just step out in the hallway and calm him and, you know, come back in when you can, and it just became part of the class culture, that, yeah, we've got a little-we've got a baby in this

> classroom, and everybody else kind of rallied around that and respected that.

Dawne saw a way to adapt her classroom so that a mother could attend school with her young child. During the second round of the sharing circle, Dawne expressed that she was aware of the systemic barriers facing students from minority cultures and wanted to do her part in addressing those barriers:

> One thing that I noticed, hearing from my colleagues was the… connection and the importance of that, and when we are trying, I mean, with every student, but especially, you know, an Indigenous student we know systemically, their families have face challenges over the years that we can't even comprehend, and so, when I see a struggling student like that's my first instinct, just how can I connect to that.

Theme 7: Going Above and Beyond

Within the teachers' stories there was evidence of how they would spend time outside of the timetable connecting with the students or their families. They would do more than their supervisors' or teaching position would require. Colin would spend time after school talking to his student's mother and other family members, spending up to an hour on the phone. Dawne included a student's baby in the classroom community so that the mother could attend. Coach took on parent-like duties such as driving the student and buying them meals:

> I was the one driving her to her basketball games and back home, making arrangements with her guardian to pick up in special places and drop her off in special places just so she could be a part of the team because the guardian already had her hands full and she couldn't do it all. So, I was running around. I have, you know, three kids of my own, and coaching and teaching and, uh, it was a lot to, you know? Some days I'd pick her up at Walmart and then drive her to the school, and then she said she didn't have anything to eat, so then I paid for Subway, so I did-I spent, you know? I fed her, I drove her, I backed her, I wanted her to be successful, I wanted to create this rapport, and really, a good relationship with this student cause I knew she had it in her.

Teacher expectations of themselves

In the discussion portion of the sharing circle, teachers recognized that they went above and beyond their job duties, and they expected themselves and others to as well. Colin reflected on how he saw himself as a teacher: "I hold myself as quite strong with forming student relationships, in a way that is firm yet fair in expectations, and always

happy and friendly and approachable with a smile and a listening ear." Colin expects himself to prioritize student relationships in his role as a teacher. Colin also recognized that his colleagues went above and beyond just teaching as well:

> I just heard some really good, like, teaching practices for most of these, just like that real supportive, caring, just going above and beyond, and it just-I don't know. Made me proud to do what I do and just hearing it from my colleagues as well it's just, yeah, just really, really nice, really positive stuff there.

Sabine echoed this reflection:

> I think that a lot of us, I mean, do go above and beyond like, you know, a teacher type of role, like we're caring about the whole person and everything that that person encompasses, like their extenuating-other circumstances that it's not just them as a student which is hard to do I find, like in an academic way cause I mean like my role they said these last few years is to help with the academic success and improve the graduation rates, right? I am more that kind of minded than, you know, like, come and take a nap on my couch type thing.

Sabine expressed that she struggles knowing when to prioritize a holistic view of the student as she experiences pressure to help students attain success in school.

Coach recognized that not all teachers do go above and beyond as she believes they should:

> I was just gonna mention, like, the four of us are on this meeting, but there's probably a lot of people who wouldn't want to, not only share their stories, but go above and beyond. So, I think that's something that I guess we would hope that everyone would, you know, work a little harder and do what it takes, but I know when I was trying to get meetings set up for my particular student, sometimes it was tough and teachers didn't really want to sit in on those meetings and, um… Yeah, like, you need everyone's buy in sometimes. I guess I just, you know, it's great that we're all saying it, but, you know, the more teachers that are willing to, you know, put out their time and a little bit more effort, goes a long way. Who else would let a baby into their classroom? [laughs] That's, you know, pretty special, pretty awesome.

Coach sees increased teacher effort in fostering positive TSRs as a required part of the role as it can make a big difference in students' experiences of school.

Theme 8: Firm boundaries Can Lead to Conflict

The teachers in this study prioritized student relationships, while maintaining their boundaries. In two instances these non-negotiables led to conflict with some students. One teacher was able to resolve this conflict, but the other had not yet been able to find closure with the student. Coach made continuous efforts to create a positive rapport with her student, but she also had to reinforce the school rules for student athletes:

> Of course, our expectations that we set up at the beginning of the year for any student athlete is you need to come to school if you want to play, you can't skip, you can't-you know, you have to keep your grades up.

Coach had to bench her student when she skipped classes, and this placed further strain on the relationship. The TSR ended when the next season of basketball started and the student decided to play on a different team.

Sabine experienced conflict with a group of students when she limited their use of the Indigenous space in the school – an open space that she also used as her office:

> They wanted to just, come in there and just hang out whenever and do whatever, and yes, it is a safe place, but you know there are expectations and academic, you know, things that should be met before that happens. So anyway, the grandma found out about that, so then she said that I'm not making it a welcoming place, and it's their space and she came in here and like, laid into me about, how, this being their space and that I'm intruding on their space.

I later asked Sabine what had helped to resolve that conflict. She said:

> I think it was just a conversation that, you know, me saying too that, 'You know what? I am respecting that this is your safe place and I want this to continue to be your safe space. However, during certain academic times or something that I do expect you to be in your classes', right? There are those things, like, we share the space together. So, I think that that did help some. I mean, those girls did want me in their grad pictures with them, at the end of the day, but, yeah. It was a hard uh, go because my feelings were extremely hurt when I had this mom and grandma come in and yell at me telling me that I'm not respecting their space-not mine too, right?

There exists the risk in the TSR that students and teachers may intrude on each others' boundaries, which can lead to conflict. When teachers enforce their boundaries, they risk damaging the TSR. This is not to say that teachers should not have boundaries, but rather to show that conflict is a part of this relationship.

Parallels in Youth and Teacher Themes

Similar themes were evident across the youth and teacher themes, and other themes were connected. The relationships between these two groups of themes points to the teacher as principal actor in the TSR.

The “core” of the TSR in the youths’ stories parallels the central theme of intentional connection in the teachers’ stories. Students come to know that they matter when teachers intentionally and persistently prioritize connecting with students. The subthemes of the main student theme of “Knowing that the matter to a teacher” were not explicitly discussed by the teachers, but I can imagine from the teachers’ stories that they were consistently there for their students, that they noticed student needs and addressed them, that they positioned themselves as being on the student’s side, and that they strove to create a sense of safety in their classroom.

Student vulnerability showed up in both youth and teacher stories. Three of the youth recounted times they went to their selected teacher to self-disclose and were received with care. Two of the teachers shared moments when a student shared their fears and emotions with them. When teachers in these stories demonstrated that they were approachable, reliable, and respectful, students likely felt safe enough with them to share their inner world.

Both the youth and teacher participants spoke about the high expectations they have for teachers. Students expected teachers to respect them, take an interest in them, and help students equally. Teachers expected themselves and other teachers to make an effort in getting to know their students. This involved going beyond simply teaching, and incorporating time into the day to prioritize fostering good relationships with students. The participants in this study saw excellent teaching practices as a foundational aspect of positive TSRs.

Within each teacher’s story, there was an element of striving to do one’s best for the benefit of the student. Each youth’s story demonstrated responsiveness to teacher bids for connection. I interpret these qualities to mean that the locus of the responsibility for the TSR resides with teachers. That is to say, teachers are responsible for setting the foundations for a positive TSR, consistently attempting to connect with students, and maintaining the TSR. The youth in this study responded positively to teachers who

embodied qualities they valued, took an interest in them, and made time to talk with them.

Chapter 5.

Discussion

This study explored how Indigenous students and non-Indigenous educators experienced impactful cross-cultural TSRs in their lives. I wanted to address a gap in the literature on cross-cultural TSRs from both the teacher and student perspectives in a Canadian context. Further, I wanted to hold space for the voices of Indigenous youth, so that teachers may learn from their stories. In this final chapter, I apply the various theories associated with TSRs (attachment theory, DST, SDT and the four Rs) to explore another level of understanding of the participants stories. Throughout this chapter, I touch on the ways in which the theories and findings hold implications for teaching practice. I cover the ways in which data from the participants stories aligns with, contrasts and contributes to the findings in the literature that was discussed in chapter two. I add the current study to the matrix of themes in the literature to demonstrate the youth's and teachers' contributions to this field of work. I discuss the strengths and limitations of this study, as well as the ways in which future research might address these shortcomings. I elaborate on the implications this research holds for teaching professionals before offering a closing reflection on how this work has impacted me.

Applying the Various Theories to the Findings

Attachment Theory

Although attachment theory provides a useful lens through which to view the TSR, it is difficult to connect youth experiences of the TSR with their early attachment experiences. The purpose of this study was not to link early attachments to youth's experiences of the TSR. That being said, applying an attachment lens to some of the participants' stories provides a unique perspective. Z and Finley spoke briefly about their families of origin. Although they shared that they did not have good relationships with parent-figures in their life, they were able to create strong relationships with their teachers. Finley and Z's trust in their teachers could be explained by high levels of teacher sensitivity, and possibly previous positive TSRs that impacted their perceptions of schooling and future teachers (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). There is some evidence that

children distinguish between parent and teacher attachments (Sabol & Pianta, 2012), and this could explain why Z and Finley were able to engage in positive TSRs when their attachments to their parents likely looked different.

Attachment theory can also provide a deeper understanding of Coach's student, who, having been rejected by multiple caregivers, may have viewed some of Coach's behaviour as rejecting. In line with Teyber and Teyber's (2017) explanation of attachment, Coach's student likely came to see the world as a dangerous place and rejected Coach's attempts at connection in the interests of self-preservation, as several significant adults had rejected her in the past. Had Coach been able to view her relationship with this student through the lens of attachment theory, she may have had a deeper understanding of this student's behaviour, and adjusted her perspective of the relationship accordingly. This link between the study findings and attachment theory has implications for teaching professionals across the province. If teacher's have knowledge of TSRs and the theories informing them, they can apply this knowledge to their relationships with students.

Developmental Systems Theory

All five levels of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory played a role in the participants' stories. This study was primarily concerned with one component of the student's microsystem – the TSR. Teachers demonstrated their awareness of how a variety of contextual factors impact how students interact with the school environment. Teachers knew about their students' past as well as larger historical factors such as intergenerational trauma (the chronosystem). Dawne and Colin specifically talked about how changes in their students' larger system presented challenges for these students (i.e., Dawne's student's responsibilities as a new mother, and Colin's student's anxiety and parents' divorce). Dawne and Colin each adapted their interactions with their students in an attempt to support them in moving through their unique and challenging circumstances. Sabine shared her understanding of how grandparents' survival in residential schools impacted how students experienced school. One youth, Finley, directly addressed the impact of the macrosystem on her schooling experiences. She spoke about how racism against Indigenous peoples in Canada impacted her understanding of school, and she was grateful to be able to talk about this in detail with her teacher. Teachers' personal experiences made up part of the students' exosystem,

and played a role in the TSR. For example, Dawne's personal experience of having a young child at home allowed her to connect with her student in a personal and supportive way. Z's knowledge of his teacher's aid work in Africa impacted how he perceived and interacted with him. Impacts of the mesosystem on students were evident in Colin's interactions with his student's mother and how this strengthened his relationship with the student; and in Z's story when school staff's conversation with his girlfriend hurt him. Participant stories are full of examples of the interacting parts of the student's environment, much more than what is discussed here. A DST lens can help teachers shift from a deficit-based view to a holistic understanding of a student and their context.

Self-Determination Theory

SDT is primarily concerned with the ways increases in autonomy, competency and relatedness can encourage a student's motivation and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Z spoke directly about his experience with a teacher who encouraged students to think about the possible impacts of their behaviours rather than telling them what to do. Z respected this teacher's approach to increasing student autonomy and responded by putting his best effort into the class. Finley spoke about connecting with Burke over their shared interest in social justice issues, and his support of her work as an advocate for Indigenous youth. Dawne likely had an impact on her student's sense of autonomy, and competency when she supported her identities as both a mother and a student. Competency played a key role in Rory's story: she felt consistently supported by her LA teacher when tackling difficult assignments. Finley also spoke about how Burke's belief in her abilities increased her belief in herself. Of course, the purpose of this study was to examine relatedness. Each of the youth participants expressed feeling emotionally engaged with their selected teacher, valued and supported. Each of the teachers' stories contained moments where student disclosures, actions or successes brought up emotions in them, although I can only imagine the extent to which their students felt connected to them, as their voices were not included in this research. SDT can inform the way teachers structure their professional practice in order to create a learning environment that fosters the TSR.

Kirkness & Barnhardt's (1991) 4Rs

How did the participants' stories reflect the ways in which educators incorporated the 4Rs[12] into their teaching practices? Finley spoke about how Burke demonstrated respect for her traditional cultural practices, and Sabine spoke about accommodating a student's learning needs when they went into the smoke house. That being said, respect for Indigenous ways of knowing involves creating space for Indigenous traditions and cultural values within the institution, and students should feel confident that their cultural values will be welcomed and honored (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). Finley knew that her cultural identity was honored in Burke's class, but this was not the case in all areas of her schooling experience (i.e., with peers). Sabine's story provides some insight into how public schools still require diverse students to adopt Western values. Sabine spoke about the pressure inherent to her role to move students towards graduation, and how she struggles at times to balance caring for the whole student with pressuring them to improve academically. Sabine also spoke about a student who was reputed as a skilled hunter in his home community, but was still seen as unsuccessful by school standards. The label of "unsuccessful" placed on this student shows how educational institutions must continue to work towards respecting Indigenous epistemologies. The youth and educator stories did not touch on making pedagogy relevant for Indigenous peoples. Colin, in his story, took responsibility for engaging his student's family in the educational institution. Although I did not ask participants to include community engagement in their narratives, the lack of such engagement factoring into the stories may indicate that teachers and schools must continue to work on including family and community members in school events and decision-making. Reciprocity in the TSR is characterized by teachers assisting students in navigating the school system, and by students educating teachers on how to improve their teaching practices (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). I would argue that teachers are responsible for inviting students to provide constructive feedback on their work and ensuring that they create safety for students before doing so. Three of the participants' stories touched on teachers supporting students in navigating the system: Z's law teacher supported students in knowing their rights when they were facing discipline, Burke supported Finley in applying for

[12] The 4 Rs are: respect for Indigenous ways of knowing, relevance to Indigenous perspectives, reciprocity in relationships, and the responsibility to and engage Indigenous peoples in the educational institution.

scholarships by writing her a reference letter, and Dawne supported her student by removing a barrier that impacted her ability to participate in education.

I've included this theory last, but I believe that it has the greatest power to assist teachers in transforming the way they approach their work. Teachers who work towards fulfilling the 4Rs can foster strong TSRs by creating culturally congruent and inclusive learning environments.

Congruent Findings

Ten of the themes evident in the literature on TSRs can be identified in the participants' stories in the current study. At least one participant, and in some cases all participants, addressed the following themes in their story: individualized teaching practices (Chhuon & Wallace, 2014; García-Moya at al., 2020; Hargreaves, 2000; Krane et al., 2016, Krane et al., 2017; Oskineegish & Berger, 2013; Yu et al., 2018) teacher empathy and perspective-taking (Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013; García-Moya et al., 2020; Krane et al., 2017; Oskineegish & Berger, 2013; Yu et al., 2018), teacher support (García-Moya et al., 2020; Muller, 2001; Yu et al., 2018), excellent teaching practices (Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013; Chhuon & Wallace, 2014; García-Moya et al., 2020; Krane et al., 2016; Krane et al., 2017; McGregor, 2019; Yu et al., 2018) , teachers treating students like equals (Krane et al., 2016; Krane et al., 2017; McGregor, 2019; Yu et al., 2018), teacher actions that damage the TSR, trust and confidentiality in the TSR (Krane et al., 2017), the impacts of school structure on the TSR (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011; Hargreaves, 2000; Krane et al., 2016; McGregor, 2019) and the impacts of relationship-building with parents (McGregor, 2019; Oskineegish & Berger, 2013). Below I include the matrix of themes in the literature with an additional column to show the congruencies between the pre-existing themes in the literature and the themes I identified in participant data.

Theme	Description	Garcia-Moya et al. (2020)	Yu et al. (2018)	Krane et al. (2017)	Chhuon & Wallace (2014)	Krane et al. (2016)	Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam (2013)	Muller (2001)	Hargreaves (2000)	Oskineegish & Berger (2013)	Hare & Pidgeon (2011)	McGregor (2019)	Crooks et al. (2017)	Current Study
Individualized teaching approaches	Getting to know each student through small talk, jokes, self-disclosure, etc. 1-1 meetings with students to offer support; a wholistic view of the student.	x	x	x	x	x			x	x				x
- Free conversations	Teacher-initiated conversation about a broad range of topics		x	x										
Teacher empathy and perspective taking	Noticing students' emotions and needs and offering help Teacher authenticity and goodness	x	x	x			x			x				x
Teacher offering support	Approachability, listening and attentiveness Students felt cared about when teacher's supported them.	x	x					x						x
Excellent teaching practices	Excellent teaching practices (i.e., persistence, adaptations, going above and beyond, etc.) foster the TSR and are an integral part of teaching. The bar is set very high by both students and teachers. Relationships matter most.	x	x	x	x	x	x					x		x
Respecting good classroom management	Students see it as the teacher's job to protect the learning environment.	x												
Enthusiastic and engaging teaching styles		x												
Benefits of a close relationship: both perspectives	Students benefit with increased self-esteem, positive outlook on life, and increased effort. Teachers found positive TSRs to be rewarding and personally and professionally gratifying.		x				x		x					x*
Teachers treating students like equals	Through "same level" conversations and by teachers modelling respect, and by challenging racism		x	x		x						x		x
Mutual responsibility in fostering the TSR	Both students and teachers spoke about their responsibility to contribute to a positive relationship.			x		x								
Things that damage the TSR (both perspectives)	Arguments, unfair teacher assumptions, negative teacher expectations, teacher unresponsiveness, disrespectful remarks, racism			x	x	x					x			x
Teacher positivity	Smiling; happy			x			x							
Trust	Teachers are reliable and respect confidentiality.			x										x
Common interests	Teachers found it easier to connect when there were shared interests. Students believed shared interests could improve the relationship.			x		x								x*
Professional boundaries	Staying within the limits of one's competency (i.e., knowing when to refer to a specialist teacher); self-care; reflection on bias and privilege					x	x		x	x		x		
Impacts of school structure on the TSR	This can facilitate or detract from the quality of TSRs. Alternative programming (e.g., place-based) or settings, class size, and time spent with students all impact the TSR.					x			x		x	x		x
Getting to know and including parents and community	Fostering relationships with those in the child's ecology have a positive impact on the TSR.									x		x		x
Family values	Family members encouraging students to do well in school										x			
Cultural connectedness	Sharing cultural identities with supportive school staff had a positive impact.												x	
Teacher respect for and interest in student culture	Students felt connected to teachers who were curious about and respected their culture.													x
Teacher self-disclosures	Students expressed that they could better relate to teachers when they knew the teacher experienced adversity.													x

*Youth perspectives in this study were congruent with this finding in the literature, but the teacher perspectives were contrasting, or did not show up.

Figure 4. Matrix of Themes in the Literature Current Study Included

I made the choice to write the literature review after analyzing the data. I wanted to approach the youth and teacher stories without an idea of how they should fit into pre-existing themes in the literature, and give greater attention to what I perceived, as a listener, to be poignant parts of their stories. Naturally, I did engage with the literature from when I began shaping the research until concluding the study, but I did not examine studies in depth until after analyzing the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) discuss that the time of engagement with the literature is a methodological choice: researchers whether detailed knowledge of their topic will enhance their view of the data, or risk narrowing it. I believe that approaching the data with few pre-conceived notions of what I would find aligns with a social constructionist viewpoint which prioritizes the subjectivity of individual experiences and the meanings attributed to them.

Both groups addressed how individualized teaching practices played a role in the development of the TSR. Each of the youth participants recounted a time when their teacher noticed their needs and addressed them. Teacher participants spoke about changing their practices or the structure of the classroom to meet the needs of their student. Participants also spoke about the importance of teacher empathy and perspective-taking in strong TSRs. Youth expressed feeling listened to by their teachers on several occasions, and teachers spoke about feeling moved by their students. Dawne understood the challenges motherhood posed to education, and Colin tried to view the school from a student's mother's perspective.

Teacher support played a role in each of the participants' stories. Teachers saw offering support not only as an important part of the TSR, but inherent to their role as a teacher. Teachers spoke about offering support for academics as well as personal struggles. The youth's stories contained multiple instances of going to their teachers for both academic and emotional support, as well as support for struggles they encountered outside of school.

All participants spoke about excellent teaching practices. The youth in this study held their teachers to high standards. They expected them to show an interest in them, make time to talk with them, show that they respected them and put in their best effort. The teachers in this study also expected themselves and their colleagues to go above and beyond basic teacher duties. Coach believed that a little teacher effort in the TSR could lead to significant changes in future teacher-student interactions. One of the youth

in this study spoke specifically about the importance of teachers treating students like equals as this was foundational to a teacher earning his respect. Teacher respect was a necessary condition of his for a strong TSR.

The youth in this study spoke about teacher behaviours that can damage the TSR. The actions they spoke about were evident in the literature also. Youth in this study experienced teacher racism (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011), teacher unresponsiveness to their requests for help (Krane at al., 2016), and unfair educator assumptions about who they are (Chhuon & Wallace, 2014). Finley remembered being excluded from programming for Indigenous students because educators assumed she was white, Rory recounted being ignored by her teachers when she asked for help, and Z was hurt when educators spoke badly about him behind his back.

The youth stories in this study also addressed the role of trust and confidentiality in the TSR. Each of the youth participants trusted that their teacher would be there to help them, and one youth said that she knew her teacher would keep her words confidential. In the act of storytelling, teacher participants demonstrated respect for the confidentiality of their students by omitting student names.

One youth participant, Rory, spoke about how a smaller class of eight students made it easier for her to approach her teacher for help. One teacher participant, Colin, recounted how the process of getting to know a student's family and including them in their education led to a stronger TSR.

Contrasting Findings

Participants in the current study spoke to three of the themes in the literature on TSRs, but in a different way. These included the benefits of the TSR (Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013; Hargreaves, 2000; Krane et al., 2017), mutual responsibility in fostering the TSR (Krane et al., 2016; Krane et al., 2017), and common interests (Krane et al., 2016; Krane et al., 2017). Two of the studies examined the benefits of the TSR from the teacher's perspective (Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013; Hargreaves, 2000). In the current study, both teachers and youth participants alluded to the benefits of the TSR, but one of the teachers, Sabine, explained that teachers should not be motivated to create TSRs because of any benefits they provide to the teachers

themselves. She went on to say that teachers go above and beyond for their students because they care and want to see positive outcomes for their students. Interestingly, Sabine stated that the TSR is not a reciprocal relationship in that teachers cannot always expect students to respond positively to teacher attempts at connection. In Krane et al.'s (2016) study, teacher participants shared that students had a responsibility in contributing to a positive TSR. In the current study, Sabine added to this theme by asserting that teachers have the responsibility to persist in connecting with their students even when the student may not respond positively. Youth in the current study addressed reciprocity in the TSR, but did not frame this as a student responsibility. Rory simply stated about her teacher, "He cares about me, so I care about him." And Z explained that if he knows a teacher respects him, he will respond with his best effort in that teacher's class. Teacher participants in Krane et al.'s (2016) study also spoke about how common interests can contributed to a positive TSR; however, it was the youth, not the teachers, in the current study that mentioned the interests they shared with their teachers. Z shared an interest in psychology with his teacher, and Finley was drawn to Burke because of their shared interest in social justice issues. The youth participants in Krane et al.'s (2017) student also spoke about how shared interests can improve the TSR.

Novel Findings

Many of the themes that I identified in the current study echo the findings in previous literature. To the best of my knowledge, this study is unique in the literature in that it explores both perspectives of the cross-cultural TSR. Two of the themes from this study stood out to me as novel as I was unable to identify similar findings in previous studies on TSRs. The first novel theme was that Indigenous youth feel connected when their teacher shows an interest in their culture. For two of the youth, Z and Finley, this contributed to their knowledge that they matter to their teacher. Crooks et al., (2017) examined the positive impact that shared cultural identity with a significant adult can have on students. Selection criteria for this study meant that youth and teachers could not share cultural identities; however, teacher interest in culture played an important role in two of the TSRs. Thus, it is likely important for teachers to invite their students to educate them on their home cultures. Moreover, teachers can be transparent about their appreciation for diverse cultures by incorporating cultural works and knowledges into

their teaching practices. The second novel theme was that students may be able to relate to their teacher on a deeper level when they know their teacher has experienced adversity. This finding has unique implications in that in many helping professions, self-disclosure is considered unprofessional; however, some teacher disclosures may lead to students feeling closer to their teachers. In any case, teacher self-disclosure is a personal decision that carries risk.

Strengths of this Study

Of the 12 studies included in the literature review, only one engaged participants in the data analysis stage of the research (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011), and another employed a co-researcher with lived experience of the phenomenon under study (Krane et al., 2016; Krane et al., 2017). This is problematic in that in most of the studies, the researchers had total control over data analysis, findings and the presentation of participant voices. Students constitute a vulnerable population – they have the least power in the TSR. Research that engages youth participants at several stages acknowledges this power imbalance and empowers youth. Using anti-oppressive research practices and IRMs honors youth voices and Indigenous culture. Collecting data through storytelling in an unstructured interview gives the storyteller greater power in that they direct the content (Kovach, 2009), thus impacting the power dynamics between me – the researcher – and the youth. Engaging youth participants in data analysis positioned them as experts of their experiences (again impacting the researcher-researched power dynamic), and amplified their voices, as the voices of youth and the voices of Indigenous peoples have historically not been prioritized in research.

Limitations and Future Research

This research was my first foray into conducting original research. Naturally, there will be several limitations and ways to improve future research on this topic. One of the first limitations is that written stories and thematic analysis are incongruent with IRMs. With written stories, the reader loses the relationship to and felt input from the storyteller (Kovach, 2009). When I read the transcripts and excerpts, I can hear my participants' voices. The reader doesn't get to have the same experience I do in reading

this text. Thematic analysis fractures participants' stories and can change their meaning. This is why it is important for participants to check the researcher's analysis and presentation of their words (Kovach, 2009). Future researchers may wish to present complete participant narratives before discussing findings. Another limitation of this study is that only one youth responded to my follow up emails for member checking. The findings would have been strengthened had each youth and teacher participant responded to requests for follow up. I suspect that the length of time between data collection and my follow up with participants contributed to the lack of responses. Unfortunately, I did not analyse the teacher data until I had finished collecting data from youth, and by this time, three months had passed and teachers were on summer holidays. Another limitation that has stuck with me is that I did not have pre-established relationships with my participants. The school where I had relationships with students and staff was unable to accommodate my research. Thus, I had to look elsewhere for participants. Researchers who wish to replicate this study in the future may address this limitation by working with youth and educators with whom they already have close relationships. This choice would be more in line with IRMs. Youth in the study were given the choice of recounting a positively or negatively impactful TSR and each of them chose to share a story about a positive TSR. It would be interesting to hear stories of negative TSRs, and this may have been accomplished with a larger number of youth participants. Future research may also improve on this study by engaging youth participants at other stages of the research, such as research design. Future research could also partner with a specific Indigenous community, collaborating at all levels of the research process in order to arrive at findings specific to that community's identity and self-identified needs[13]. Additionally, researchers wishing to replicate this study may consider working with youth in a variety of educational programs and schools as school size, location (i.e., remote or urban) and programming (i.e., alternative, place-based, etc.) can impact the TSR (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011; Krane et al., 2017; McGregor, 2019).

Implications for Educators

I have woven various implications that the findings of this study hold for teachers throughout this final chapter. I briefly summarize those here and provide further

[13] Knowledge, beliefs and traditions are unique to each Indigenous community (Lavallée, 2009)

suggestions. Teachers can apply various theoretical lenses (e.g., attachment theory, DST, and SDT) in order to enhance their understanding of students from diverse backgrounds. Teachers can also strive to incorporate Kirkness and Barnhardt's (1991) four Rs into their teaching practice in order to foster a culturally inclusive learning environment. Novel findings from this study suggest that teachers who demonstrate an interest in and respect for a student's home culture strengthen the TSR. Teachers, therefore, have a responsibility to educate themselves on Indigenous history, issues and culture, and to incorporate what they learn into their pedagogy. Teachers can also position themselves as learners by collaborating with students in creating culturally diverse lessons.

I believe that the themes I identified in the youths' stories can inform teachers' ways of being with students. If teachers wish to strengthen their relationships with their students, they can ask themselves questions like: Am I sensitive to unspoken student needs, and do I meet them? Do I position myself as on the student's side, and does the student perceive me this way? Do I actively listen to my students, and communicate non-judgment? Do I make my students feel safe? Can students consistently rely on me for support in multiple areas of their life, academic and non-academic? I believe that the youth's stories should be viewed as highly valuable and educational by anyone who works within schools.

Western education places full ownership of learning on students and their families. Teachers must be vigilant to the ways in which they prescribe to this view of education as a deficit-based perspective of students and their families continues to marginalize students from minority cultures. Teachers must also recognize the differences between Western and Indigenous approaches to education as well as the subtle ways in which they require students to adopt Western cultural values as this maintains modern day colonization processes. As McGregor (2019) asserted, teachers have the professional responsibility to reflect on their privilege, biases and ways in which they inadvertently uphold systemic racism in their teaching practice.

Lastly, teachers must be cognizant of the responsibilities they place on students in relation to the TSR. Do teachers expect students to initiate a connection? Do they expect them to reciprocate prosocial actions? The creation and maintenance of the TSR

is the sole responsibility of the teacher. Moreover, teachers have the responsibility of persisting in the relationship when their efforts are not well-received.

Closing Reflections

Now that I am nearing the end of this research journey, I take time to reflect on what this process has been like. I am amazed at the amount of learning that has happened for me. I remember going over my initial research proposal with my supervisor almost two years ago. My writing at the time risked further stigmatization of Indigenous peoples, and with guidance from my supervisor, self-education and reflection on my privilege and bias, I hope to have arrived at a place where my writing honors the Indigenous youth that I was fortunate enough to work with, and their stories. I know that this process of anti-colonial and anti-racist work does not end. Thus, I am committed to keeping myself humble and open to being held accountable. I am grateful to have had this opportunity and to have been changed for the better because of it.

I have also been impacted by the participants stories, parts of which were filled with emotion. In transcribing and working on the thematic analysis, I felt it in my gut when I listened to or read over certain excerpts from the youth's stories. Although the time we spent together was short, I felt that I did get to know the youth and some of the teachers on a personal level. I was humbled by the youth's willingness to work with me, a stranger, asking so much of them. We were never able to see each other's faces. I have the utmost respect for their bravery, their wisdom, and their hopes of helping other Indigenous youth by contributing to this research. I am grateful to the teachers for their holistic approach with students, their prioritization of student needs, and their unconditional care for their students. Unfortunately, not all educators would be as willing to dedicate such time, effort and care into their work. Each participant has impacted me. I think about them, and I hope that each of them is doing well.

As an educator in the public school system, I view the results of this study as meaningful for my professional practice. The youth and teacher stories have solidified how I make sense of my professional responsibilities to students. I must persist in providing unconditional support to students, especially when I feel that students are not reciprocating my attempts at connection. I must position myself as a consistent reliable adult in their lives regardless of how they interact with me. The participants' stories have

also motivated me to make intentional changes in two areas of my practice: increasing my interest in, and monitoring the ways in which I communicate respect for student cultures, and reaching out to parents with the sole goal of rapport building. As a school counsellor, I have the honor of witnessing student stories each day. Their stories will continue to shape how I approach my duties, my way of being, and how I support my colleagues.

My expectations for the research were very different at the beginning of this process. For one, I expected to conduct the research in one of the schools I worked at. I also expected to speak with participants in person, but a global pandemic had other plans. A handful of setbacks over the course of a year and a half shifted the shape of this research. There was a period in time where I did not expect to be able to complete this project. Thankfully, it did happen, and I am not the same person I was when I started.

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Appendix A.

Sharing Circle Outline

1. The researcher will greet each participant as they log on to the Zoom meeting.
2. Introductions (10 minutes)
    - Introduce myself, and thank participants for joining us.
    - Reminder of the limits to confidentiality and the importance of safeguarding each other's confidentiality.
    - I will go over the agenda for the evening, and remind participants to not interrupt or offer a response to the speaker until after each person has shared. Participants are allowed to share as much or as little as they feel comfortable.
    - Participants have the opportunity to ask questions.
    - Ask participants to introduce each other, stating their name and where they're from, as well as why they chose to participate in the study. Participants may choose to say more about themselves if they wish.
3. Story sharing (1 hour)
    - Each participant has uninterrupted time to share the story they have prepared.
4. Break (20 minutes)
5. Response time (30 minutes)
    - Each participant is able to respond to another's story, identifying the ways in which other stories connected to their own.
    - The researcher will use the following probes to encourage discussion:
        - What impact did this relationship have on how you perceive your work?
        - What similarities or differences can you point out between the stories we've heard this evening?
        - What patterns can you identify across the stories?
        - What are your hopes for future rapport building with Indigenous students?
6. Participant identification of themes (15 minutes)
    - Participants will be asked to share themes or words that they believe summarize and/or represent their story or that resonate across stories.
7. Debrief and closure (15 minutes)
    - Go around the circle and share how the time here today has impacted you?
    - The act of being open and vulnerable, as well as the content of what was shared may cause you to feel negative emotions. What self-care strategies will you use to ensure your well-being?
    - The following resources are available to you, should you need to follow up with a counsellor regarding any negative emotions.

Appendix B.

Recruitment Poster

Appendix C.

Youth Recruitment Letters

SFU SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
ENGAGING THE WORLD

Student Recruitment Letter

Hello,

My name is Nicole Karr (née Kunkel) and I am a student in Simon Fraser University's Counselling Psychology program. I have also been an educator in the Fraser-Cascade and Chilliwack School Districts for the past 6 years. In order to complete my graduate degree, I am conducting a qualitative study, entitled *Indigenous student and non-Indigenous educator relationships: Stories from youth and educators*. This letter has been sent to you because at teacher at your school thought that you may be interested in helping me out with my research.

The purpose of this study is to learn more about Indigenous student and non-Indigenous educator relationships in the context of public high school, and from the perspectives of both students and teachers. Teacher-student relationships have often been cited as a protective factor in student academic success and social-emotional development. Little research has been done examining non-Indigenous educator effectiveness in rapport-building with Indigenous students, as determined by the students. Youth voices are not often prioritized in research. The researcher wishes to empower students not only to share their voices, but to engage in the research process as well (e.g. data analysis).

If you decide that you would like to participate in this study, here is what will happen:

- First, email me at xxxxx@sfu.ca to let me know that you are interested. We will then arrange a time to talk over the phone, so I can collect some information and ask you to prepare a story about an impactful relationship you have had with a teacher during your time in high school. (This can be positive or negative.) This chat should last about 15 to 20 minutes.
- After the screening interview, you will prepare a written story that describes this impactful relationship. Some questions that can help get you started are:
    - How did you meet this teacher?
    - What were your first interactions with them?
    - How did your teacher's words and actions affect you?
    - How did they make you feel?
    - How did you respond to them?
    - What happened next?
    - What is your relationship with that teacher like now?
    - How did it end up that way?
- Don't feel limited to these questions – you can add whatever you feel is important.
- When you're done, email the story to me, or you can set up a time to talk over the phone and tell your story to me, if that feels like a better fit for you.
- If you are open to it, I will email you after you tell/email your story and invite you to review and suggest changes to my analysis of your story. This way, you can check to make sure that I've interpreted your story correctly, and focused on the parts you think are most important.

- Lastly, I'd like to thank you for your participation by offering a $20 Skip the Dishes gift card. Also, if you would like, I can give you a certificate and/or letter of participation in the research study that could use in your application to post-secondary or work. I am willing to act as a reference on your behalf.

I promise to maintain confidentiality to the fullest extent possible: participants will not be named in the final write up, and any recorded interviews will be destroyed at the end of the study. Identifying information about the community in which the research takes place will not be shared in the final report. Community gatekeepers (i.e., school principals, band department directors, etc.) may or may not be able to identify participants in the final write up given their knowledge of the research site and larger community context.

Please note that this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to refuse participation and/or withdraw your participation at any time up until the publication of the study. You do not need a reason to withdraw and withdrawal will not have any negative consequences on your education or future education opportunities. Please note that if you withdraw from the study, any data you provide will not be included in the thematic analysis, or final write up, unless you provide me with permission to do so.

Although there may be no direct benefits to you, your participation in this study will help educators better understand how to create effective rapports with Indigenous students.

If you are interested in participating please contact me, Nicole Karr, at xxxxx@sfu.ca. I will send you a detailed description of the study as well as a consent form. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter of invitation.

Sincerely,

_____

Nicole Karr (née Kunkel)
Principal Investigator

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Alanaise Goodwill, Assistant Professor, Ph.D., Department of Counselling Psychology; Faculty of Education; SFU; Contact Information: xxx-xxx-xxxx; xxxxx@sfu.ca

Appendix D.

Teacher Recruitment Letter

SFU SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
ENGAGING THE WORLD

Teacher Recruitment Letter

Hello,

My name is Nicole Karr (née Kunkel) and I am a student in Simon Fraser University's Counselling Psychology program. In order to complete my graduate degree, I am conducting a qualitative study, entitled *Indigenous student and non-Indigenous educator relationships: Stories from youth and educators*. This letter has been sent to you because your school administration thought that you may be interested in participating in this research study.

The purpose of this study is to learn more about Indigenous student and non-Indigenous educator relationships in the context of public high school, and from the perspectives of both students and teachers. Teacher-student relationships have often been cited as a protective factor in student academic success and social-emotional development. Little research has been done examining non-Indigenous educator effectiveness in rapport-building with Indigenous students, as determined by both the students and their teachers. The goals of the proposed research are to empower students to share their voices, to engage them in the research process, and to hear about the challenges and successes educators experience in attempting to build a rapport with these students. You are being invited to take part in this research study because you are a non-Indigenous educator working at a public high school attended by significant number of Indigenous learners.

If you decide that you would like to participate in this study, you will be contacted by the researcher to consent to participation and to participate in a brief telephone screening interview – approximately 15 to 20 minutes in length. You will be asked to prepare a story (i.e. written, visual, oral, etc.) about a positive and/or negative experience you have had with an Indigenous student in the last 5 years of your time at the high school. You will then be asked to participate in an online sharing circle with approximately 3 to 5 other teacher participants where they share their prepared stories and participate in a discussion. The sharing circle will be scheduled at a date and time that is convenient for all the participants, and will last approximately 3 hours. The principal investigator will be using a secure video-conferencing program to host the sharing circle to maximize confidentiality. A $20 "Skip the Dishes" gift card will be offered to all participants who attend the sharing circle. Teachers will also have the opportunity to review the researcher's analysis of the data they provided, and offer feedback to ensure the integrity of the findings.

The principal investigator will maintain confidentiality to the fullest extent possible: participants will not be named in the final write up, and video recordings of the sharing circle will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. However, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in a group setting. All participants will be encouraged to keep the information from the sharing circle confidential, but the principal investigator cannot promise confidentiality in this case. Identifying information about the community in which the research takes place will not be shared in the final report. Community gatekeepers (i.e., school principals, band department directors, etc.) may or may not be able to identify participants in the final write up given their knowledge of the research site and larger community context.

Please note that this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to refuse and/or withdraw participation at any time up until the publication of the study. You do not need a reason to withdraw and withdrawal will not have any negative consequences on your employment or future employment opportunities. Please note that if you withdraw from the study, any data you provide will not be included in the transcription of the sharing circle, thematic analysis, or final write up, unless you provide the principal investigator with permission to do so. However, due to the nature of filming multiple participants during the sharing circle, video and audio data will not be destroyed until publication of the graduate thesis. The video recording enables the principal investigator to identify the source of the data, so that if you withdraw, the PI will be able to ensure that all of your data is excluded from transcription, analysis, and the final write up.

Although there may be no direct benefits to you, your participation in this study will help educators better understand how to create effective rapports with Indigenous students.

If you are interested in participating, please contact the principal investigator, Nicole Karr, at xxxxx@sfu.ca.

The principal investigator will send you a detailed description of the study as well as a consent form. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter of invitation.

Sincerely,

_____
Nicole Karr (née Kunkel)
Principal Investigator

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Alanaise Goodwill, Assistant Professor, Ph.D., Department of Counselling Psychology; Faculty of Education; SFU; Contact Information: xxx-xxx-xxxx; xxxxx@sfu.ca

Appendix E.

Student Consent Form

SFU SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
ENGAGING THE WORLD

Student Participant Information and Consent Form
Indigenous student and non-Indigenous educator relationships: Stories from youth and educators

Study Team
Principal Investigator: Nicole Karr (née Kunkel), M.A. (Candidate), Department of Counselling Psychology; Faculty of Education; SFU; Contact Information: xxxxx@sfu.ca
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Alanaise Goodwill, Assistant Professor, Ph.D., Department of Counselling Psychology; Faculty of Education; SFU; Contact Information: xxx-xxx-xxxx, xxxxx@sfu.ca

This research is part of Nicole's thesis requirement for completing a Master of Arts (M.A.) in the Counselling Psychology Program. Upon completion, the thesis will be a public document accessible through the SFU library.

What is the purpose of this study?
I am doing this study to learn more about Indigenous student and non-Indigenous educator relationships in the context of public high school, and from the perspectives of students and teachers. Teacher-student relationships have often been cited as a protective factor in student academic success and social-emotional development. A cultural match between student and teacher can increase the likelihood of a positive rapport developing; however Indigenous educators are not yet as prevalent as their non-Indigenous counterparts in many Fraser Valley school districts. Little research has been done examining non-Indigenous educator effectiveness in rapport-building with Indigenous students, as determined by the students. Youth voices are not often prioritized in research. I wish to empower students not only to share their voices, but to engage in the research process as well (e.g. data analysis). You are being invited to take part in this research study because you may identify as an Indigenous student who attends public high school staffed primarily by non-Indigenous educators.

Your participation is voluntary
Your participation, at all times, is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study, and, should you decide to participate, you have the right to withdraw from this study up until the time of the publication. You may withdraw without fear of negative consequences in your education, employment, or other services which you are receiving. Please note that if you withdraw, any data you provide will not be included in the thematic analysis, or final write up, unless you provide the researcher with permission to do so.

What will happen during the study?
If you agree to participate, here is what you can expect:

- During a telephone screening interview, I will collect basic information and ask you to prepare a story about an impactful relationship you have had with a teacher during your time in high school. (This can be positive or negative.) The telephone interview will last approximately 15 to 20 minutes.
- After the screening interview, you will prepare a written story that describes this impactful relationship. Some questions that can help get you started are:

    - How did you meet this teacher?
    - What were your first interactions with them?
    - How did your teacher's words and actions affect you?
    - How did they make you feel?
    - How did you respond to them?
    - What happened next?
    - What is your relationship with that teacher like now?
    - How did it end up that way?
- Don't feel limited to these questions – you can add whatever you feel is important.
- You can email this story to the me, or you can set up a time to talk over the phone and tell me your story.
- If you would like, I will contact you after you tell/email your story and invite you to review and suggest changes to my findings via email.
- I understand that sharing your story may bring up sensitive or personal issues. You have the right to decide what you will and will not share during the sharing circle.
- In total, you can expect to spend 1-3 hours of your time should you choose to participate in this study.
- Please note that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all communication will be taking place remotely.

Are there any risks to participating in this study?
I do not believe there is anything in this study that could harm you or be bad for you. As previously mentioned, the topic could bring up negative feelings that may be brief, or linger. For this reason, a list of community resources where you may seek supportive services is attached to this consent form.

What are the benefits of participating?
I do not know whether you will personally benefit from this study or not. You may be helped in this study by attaining greater self-knowledge, and participating in the process of data collection and analysis. In the future, I hope that other Indigenous students will benefit from this research. In learning about the results of this study, teachers may better understand how to create effective rapports with Indigenous students. This may or may not affect your teachers during the remainder of your time in high school.

Is there any compensation for participating?
I will offer each participant a $20 "Skip the Dishes" gift card upon completing the study, including submission or telling of a narrative and follow-up. If you wish, I am willing to act as a reference to attest to your participation in the study, and your emerging research skills. This may take the form of a reference letter, certificate, or phone call. If you would like a reference, it is important to know that this may jeopardize your confidentiality.

How will identity be protected?
I, the principal investigator, will respect your confidentiality. Participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. Information that discloses your identity will not be released unless required by law. At any point in the study, if you reveal that there has been an incident that involves the abuse or neglect of a child (or that there is a risk of this occurring)

please be advised that the researcher must, by law, report this information to the appropriate authorities. Similarly, if at any point in the study, you tell me, the researcher, that you plan to harm yourself or others, I will report this information to the appropriate authorities.

Identifying information about the community in which the research takes place will not be shared in the final report. Community gatekeepers (i.e., school principals, band department directors, etc.) may or may not be able to identify participants in the final write up given their knowledge of the research site and larger community context.

All electronic data will be encrypted and stored on the SFU Vault. Audio recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of this study. All physical data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the supervising researcher's office. Communication between participants and the researcher that takes place via email or phone cannot be guaranteed to be secure.

What organizations are involved?
Permission to conduct this research study has been sought from the xxxxx school district.

What will happen to the results of this study?
The results of this study will be reported in a graduate thesis and may also be published in journal articles and books. The results of this study will also be made available to the Chilliwack School District. Results may be presented during an information session for district employees and educators. Lastly, the results of this study will be emailed to study participants, if they wish to review them.

Who can you contact for questions about this study?
Please email or phone the principal investigator, Nicole Karr if you have any questions or concerns about participating in this study at xxxxx@sfu.ca.

Who can you contact if you have complaints or concerns about this study?
If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you may contact Dr. Jeff Toward, the Director of the Office of Research Ethics at SFU: xxx-xxx-xxxx or xxxxx@sfu.ca.

Parent/Guardian Consent and Signature
Taking part in this study is entirely up to the youth and their parent/guardian. You have the right to refuse your child's participation and/or withdraw your child's participation at any time up until the publication of the study. You do not need a reason to withdraw and withdrawal will not have any negative consequences on your child's education or future education opportunities.

Your signature below indicates that:

- You have understood the information provided for the study "Indigenous student and non-Indigenous educator relationships: A focus on youth perspectives
- You have received a copy of this consent form for your own records
- You consent for your child to participate in this study.

_____ Date _____
Parent/Guardian Signature

_____
Printed Name of the Parent/Guardian

Parent Phone # _____

Parent Email _____

Additional consent:

1) I AGREE / DO NOT AGREE to have a copy of my child's prepared story presented in the final report.
2) I AGREE / DO NOT AGREE for my child to be contacted in the future to review the data analysis and findings of the research study.
    a. If you agree for your child to be contacted in the future for data analysis, please indicate how you wish for this contact to take place. Circle one:
    b. EMAIL / EMAIL AND PHONE
3) I AGREE / DO NOT AGREE for my child to be contacted in the future to receive the final write up of the research study.
4) I AGREE / DO NOT AGREE for my child to receive recognition (i.e., certificate, letter of reference) for my participation in the data collection and analysis of this study.
5) I AGREE / DO NOT AGREE for my child to be contacted in the future to be invited to present the research at conferences, should the opportunity arise.

Participant Assent and Signature

Taking part in this study is entirely up to the you and your parent/guardian. You have the right to refuse to participate and/or withdraw your participation at any time up until the publication of the study. You do not need a reason to withdraw and withdrawal will not have any negative consequences on your education or future education opportunities.

Your signature below indicates:

- You have understood the information provided for the study "Indigenous student and non-Indigenous educator relationships: A focus on youth perspectives".
- You have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.
- You consent to participate in this study.

_____ Date _____
Participant Signature

_____
Printed Name of the Participant

Participant email address _____

Additional consent:

1) I AGREE / DO NOT AGREE to have a copy of my prepared story presented in the final report.
2) I AGREE / DO NOT AGREE to be contacted in the future to review the data analysis and findings of the research study.
    a. If you agree to be contacted in the future for data analysis, please indicate how you wish for this contact to take place. Circle one:
    b. EMAIL / EMAIL AND PHONE
3) I AGREE / DO NOT AGREE to be contacted in the future to receive the final write up of the research study.
4) I AGREE / DO NOT AGREE to receive recognition (i.e., certificate, letter of reference) for my participation in the data collection and analysis of this study.
5) I AGREE / DO NOT AGREE to be contacted in the future to be invited to present the research at conferences, should the opportunity arise.

Appendix F.

Educator Consent Form

SFU SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
ENGAGING THE WORLD

Educator Participant Information and Consent Form
Indigenous student and non-Indigenous educator relationships: Stories from youth and educators

Study Team
Principal Investigator: Nicole Karr (née Kunkel), M.A. (Candidate), Department of Counselling Psychology; Faculty of Education; SFU; Contact Information: xxxxx@sfu.ca
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Alanaise Goodwill, Assistant Professor, Ph.D., Department of Counselling Psychology; Faculty of Education; SFU; Contact Information: xxx-xxx-xxxx; xxxxx@sfu.ca

This research is part of Nicole's thesis requirement for completing a Master of Arts (M.A.) in the Counselling Psychology Program. Upon completion, the thesis will be a public document accessible through the SFU library.

What is the purpose of this study?
We are doing this study to learn more about Indigenous student and non-Indigenous educator relationships in the context of public high school, and from the perspectives of both students and teachers. Teacher-student relationships have often been cited as a protective factor in student academic success and social-emotional development. A cultural match between student and teacher can increase the likelihood of a positive rapport developing; however Indigenous educators are not yet as prevalent as their non-Indigenous counterparts in many school districts in the Fraser Valley. Little research has been done examining non-Indigenous educator effectiveness in rapport-building with Indigenous students, as determined by both parties. Youth voices are not often prioritized in research. We wish to empower students not only to share their voices, but to engage in the research process as well (e.g. data analysis). We also wish to learn about the challenges and successes teachers have experienced in working to develop positive relationships with Indigenous youth. You are being invited to take part in this research study because you are a non-Indigenous educator working at a public high school attended by a significant number of Indigenous learners.

Your participation is voluntary
Your participation, at all times, is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study, and, should you decide to participate, you have the right to withdraw from this study up until the time of the publication. You may withdraw without fear of negative consequences in your education, employment, or other services which you are receiving. Please note that if you withdraw, any data you provide will not be included in the transcription of the sharing circle, thematic analysis, or final write up, unless you provide the researcher with permission to do so. However, due to the nature of filming multiple participants during the sharing circle, video and audio data will not be destroyed until publication of the graduate thesis. The video recording enables the principal investigator to identify the source of the data, so that if you withdraw, the PI will be able to ensure that all of your data is excluded from transcription, analysis, and the final write up.

What will happen during the study?

If you agree to participate, here is what you can expect:

- During a telephone screening interview, we will collect basic information, and ask you to prepare a story about a positive and/or negative experience you have had with an Indigenous student during the last 5 years of your employment at the high school. This telephone interview will last approximately 15 to 20 minutes.
- Once a date is determined, we will invite you to attend an online sharing circle with 3-5 other participants. The sharing circle will consist of: each participant sharing their prepared story, participant responses and personal connections to others' stories, and finally an identification and analysis of the themes that emerged during the discussion. This sharing circle session will be video and audio recorded and last approximately 3 hours.
- We will contact you approximately 2 months after the sharing circle to invite you to review and suggest changes to the researcher's findings, if you consent to a follow up. Should you consent to a follow up to review the PI's data analysis, you can decide how you would like this communication to take place: by receiving an electronic copy of your transcript via email, and reviewing the data independently, or with the support of the PI over the phone.
- We understand that the topic of the sharing circle may bring up sensitive or personal issues. You have the right to decide what you will and will not share during the sharing circle.
- In total, you can expect to spend 4 to 6 hours of your time should you choose to participate in this study.
- Please note that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all communication will be taking place remotely. The principal investigator will be using a secure video-conferencing program, Zoom, to maximize participant confidentiality.
- The sharing circle will be hosted by Zoom, a US company, and as such, is subject to the USA Patriot Act and CLOUD Act. These laws allow government authorities to access the records of host services and internet service providers. By choosing to participate, you understand that your participation in this study may become known to US federal agencies.

Are there any risks to participating in this study?

We do not believe there is anything in this study that could harm you or be bad for you. As previously mentioned, the topic of the sharing circle could bring up negative feelings that may be brief, or linger. For this reason, we encourage you to contact your Employee Assistance Program to pursue counselling should participation in the sharing circle bring up chronic negative emotions.

What are the benefits of participating?

We do not know whether you will personally benefit from this study or not. You may be helped in this study by attaining greater self-knowledge, strengthening connections with your colleagues, and participating in the process of data collection and analysis. In the future, we hope that other educators as well as Indigenous students will benefit from this research. In learning about the results of this study, teachers may better understand how to create effective rapports with Indigenous students. This may or may not affect your teaching practice.

Is there any compensation for participating?
We will offer each participant a $20 "Skip the Dishes" gift card upon completion of the sharing circle.

How will identity be protected?
Full confidentiality cannot be maintained in a group setting. We strongly encourage participants not to discuss the content of the sharing circle with people outside the group; however, we cannot control what participants do with the information discussed. Identifying information about the community in which the research takes place will not be shared in the final report. Community gatekeepers (i.e., school principals, band department directors, etc.) may or may not be able to identify participants in the final write up given their knowledge of the research site and larger community context.

The researcher present will respect your confidentiality. Participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. Information that discloses your identity will not be released unless required by law. At any point in the study, if you reveal that there has been an incident that involves the abuse or neglect of a child (or that there is a risk of this occurring) please be advised that the researcher must, by law, report this information to the appropriate authorities. Similarly, if at any point in the study, you tell the researchers that you plan to harm yourself or others, the researchers will report this information to the appropriate authorities.

All electronic data will be encrypted and stored on the SFU Vault. Audio and video recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. All physical data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the supervising researcher's office. Communication between participants and the researcher that takes place via email or phone cannot be guaranteed to be secure.

What organizations are involved?
Permission to conduct this research study has been sought from the xxxxx School District.

What will happen to the results of this study?
The results of this study will be reported in a graduate thesis and may also be published in journal articles and books. The results of this study will also be made available to the school district. Results may be presented during an information session for district employees and community members. Lastly, the results of this study will be emailed to study participants, if they wish to review them.

Who can you contact for questions about this study?
Please email or phone the principal investigator, Nicole Karr if you have any questions or concerns about participating in this study at xxxxx@sfu.ca.

Who can you contact if you have complaints or concerns about this study?
If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you may contact Dr. Jeff Toward, the Director of the Office of Research Ethics at SFU: xxx-xxx-xxxx or xxxxx@sfu.ca.

Participant Consent and Signature

Taking part in this study is entirely up to the you. You have the right to refuse and/or withdraw your participation at any time up until the publication of the study. You do not need a reason to withdraw and withdrawal will not have any negative consequences on your employment or future employment opportunities.

Your signature below indicates that:

- You have understood the information provided for the study "Indigenous student and non-Indigenous educator relationships: A focus on youth perspectives".
- You have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.
- You consent to participate in this study.
- **You agree to keep the identity of other participants and the information shared in the sharing circle confidential.**
- **You agree to keep the online meeting code and password confidential.**

_____ Date _____

Participant Signature

_____

Printed Name of the Participant

Participant Phone # _____

Participant Email _____

Emergency Contact Name _____

Emergency Contact Phone # _____

Additional consent:

1) I AGREE / DO NOT AGREE to have a copy of my prepared story presented in the final report.
2) I AGREE / DO NOT AGREE to be contacted in the future to review the data analysis and findings of the research study.
3) I AGREE / DO NOT AGREE to be contacted in the future to receive the final write up of the research study.
    a. If you agree to be contacted in the future for data analysis, please indicate how you wish for this contact to take place. Circle one:
    b. EMAIL / EMAIL AND PHONE

Appendix G.

Youth Telephone Screening Questionnaire

Before proceeding to the following questions, I will review informed consent, including risks and benefits, confidentiality, limits of confidentiality, and the right to refuse to participate and/or withdraw from the study. Upon receiving consent, I will ask the participant the following questions:

1. Do you identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit?

2. What is your gender?

3. What interested you about participating in the study?

4. In what community do you live?

5. What is your age and grade?

6. How long have you attended this high school?

7. If you were to tell your story to me over the phone, would you feel comfortable being audio recorded?

8. In the final write up, I will be referring to participants using a nickname. I would like to invite you to choose a nickname. Please ensure that this nickname does not allow you to be identified in the final write up (i.e., such as choosing a nickname another person uses for you). If you do not wish to choose a nickname, I can create one for you. What is your preferred nickname for the data transcription and analysis? Would you be comfortable with me using your nickname in the final write up of the study?

9. Following the submission/telling of your story, I would like to contact you to review my analysis of your shared story, and check if you agree with my interpretations, and to offer your own interpretations. Would you be interested in checking my analysis? If so, how would you like to review my findings: independently via email, or collaboratively via email and over the phone?

10. I would also like to offer you recognition for your involvement in the research. This recognition can take the form of a certificate, a letter of reference written by me, the principal investigator, or I can ack as a verbal reference to attest to your

participation in informed consent, as well as data collection and analysis. This recognition does pose a risk to your confidentiality. If future employers and/or educational program admission committee members are familiar with the final write up of the study, the may or may not be able to identify your voice in the research. Are you interested in receiving recognition for your participation in this study? If so, what form of recognition would you prefer?

11. There may be the opportunity to present the research, alongside the principal investigator, at research conferences. Would you be interested in presenting your role in the research during such a conference? It is important for you to know that doing so poses a risk to your confidentiality. If you identify yourself as a participant, others who have read the final write up may or may not be able to identify your voice in the writing.

12. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix H.

Educator Telephone Screening Questionnaire

Before proceeding to the following questions, I will review informed consent, including risks and benefits, confidentiality, limits of confidentiality, and the right to refuse to participate and/or withdraw from the study. Upon receiving consent, I will ask the participant the following questions:

1. Do you identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit? (Exclusion criteria question)

2. What is your gender?

3. What interested you about participating in the study?

4. What is your position at the high school?

5. What grades do you teach?

6. Approximately how many students do you teach?
    a. Approximately how many of those students are Indigenous?

7. The sharing circle will take place on Zoom, likely during a weekday evening (i.e., from 3:30 to 6:30), at a date yet to be determined. Are there any dates that will not work for you?

8. Do you feel comfortable with being audio and video recorded during the focus group?

9. Before the sharing circle please prepare a story about an impactful relationship you developed with an Indigenous student. This preparation can take a form of your choosing (i.e., written, oral, visual, etc.). The sharing circle will take anywhere from one to three hours. Do you feel comfortable with the process and time commitment of this research study?

10. In order to maintain participant confidentiality, I will be coding transcripts with a nickname. Please ensure that this nickname does not allow you to be identified in the final write up (i.e., such as choosing a nickname another person uses for you). If you do not wish to choose a nickname, I can create one for you. What is your preferred nickname for the data transcription and analysis? Would you be comfortable with me using your nickname in the final write up of the study?

11. If the participant has agreed to researcher follow up: Following the sharing circle, I would like to contact you to review my analysis of your shared story, and check if you agree with my interpretations, and to offer your own interpretations. Would you be interested in checking my analysis? If so, how would you like to review my findings: independently via email, collaboratively via email and over the phone, or collaboratively in person?

12. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix I.

Community Resources for Youth

Chilliwack Youth Health Centre

- What: Free drop-in counselling at two locations…

Neighborhood Learning Centre	Stó:lō Wellness Centre
Where: 46361 Yale Road in Chilliwack Sr. Secondary When: Tuesdays from 1:00-7:00 p.m. Phone: 604-819-4603	Where: 7201 Vedder Road Building #7 When: Thursdays from 2:00-7:00 p.m. Phone: 1-844-827-2473

- Website: www.chilliwackyhc.com
- Email: chilliwackyhc@gmail.com

Valley Youth Center

- Where: 7086 Cheam Ave., Agassiz, BC
- When: Wednesdays from 1:30-4:30pm
- Phone: 604-703-2030
- More programs are available. Please visit: https://www.agassiz-harrisoncs.ca/services/valley-youth-center

Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868

Youth Space

- What: Online chat
- When: 6:00 pm to midnight
- Phone: 778-783-0177
- Website: www.youthspace.ca

Kuu-us Crisis Response Services

- What: Counsellors trained in Indigenous cultural safety are available 24/7
- Phone: 250-723-2040