

**Caring for adolescent students:
A grounded theory study of teachers'
perspectives on their relationships with students
in secondary schools**

by

Erin Cullingworth

B.A., Simon Fraser University, 2001

Thesis Submitted In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

in the
Educational Psychology Program
Faculty of Education

© Erin Cullingworth 2014

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Fall 2014

All rights reserved.

However, in accordance with the *Copyright Act of Canada*, this work may be reproduced, without authorization, under the conditions for "Fair Dealing." Therefore, limited reproduction of this work for the purposes of private study, research, criticism, review and news reporting is likely to be in accordance with the law, particularly if cited appropriately.

Approval

Name: Erin Cullingworth
Degree: Master of Arts (Educational Psychology)
Title of Thesis: *Caring for adolescent students:
A grounded theory study of teachers' perspectives on
their relationships with students in secondary schools*
Examining Committee: Chair: Jeff Sugarman
Professor

Lucy LeMare
Senior Supervisor
Professor

Paul Neufeld
Internal Examiner
Associate Professor
Faculty of Education

Jennifer Vadeboncoeur
External Examiner
Associate Professor,
Faculty of Education
University of British Columbia

Date Defended/Approved: December 9, 2014

Partial Copyright License



The author, whose copyright is declared on the title page of this work, has granted to Simon Fraser University the non-exclusive, royalty-free right to include a digital copy of this thesis, project or extended essay[s] and associated supplemental files (“Work”) (title[s] below) in Summit, the Institutional Research Repository at SFU. SFU may also make copies of the Work for purposes of a scholarly or research nature; for users of the SFU Library; or in response to a request from another library, or educational institution, on SFU’s own behalf or for one of its users. Distribution may be in any form.

The author has further agreed that SFU may keep more than one copy of the Work for purposes of back-up and security; and that SFU may, without changing the content, translate, if technically possible, the Work to any medium or format for the purpose of preserving the Work and facilitating the exercise of SFU’s rights under this licence.

It is understood that copying, publication, or public performance of the Work for commercial purposes shall not be allowed without the author’s written permission.

While granting the above uses to SFU, the author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in the Work, and may deal with the copyright in the Work in any way consistent with the terms of this licence, including the right to change the Work for subsequent purposes, including editing and publishing the Work in whole or in part, and licensing the content to other parties as the author may desire.

The author represents and warrants that he/she has the right to grant the rights contained in this licence and that the Work does not, to the best of the author’s knowledge, infringe upon anyone’s copyright. The author has obtained written copyright permission, where required, for the use of any third-party copyrighted material contained in the Work. The author represents and warrants that the Work is his/her own original work and that he/she has not previously assigned or relinquished the rights conferred in this licence.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada

revised Fall 2013

Ethics Statement



The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, either:

- a. human research ethics approval from the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics,

or

- b. advance approval of the animal care protocol from the University Animal Care Committee of Simon Fraser University;

or has conducted the research

- c. as a co-investigator, collaborator or research assistant in a research project approved in advance,

or

- d. as a member of a course approved in advance for minimal risk human research, by the Office of Research Ethics.

A copy of the approval letter has been filed at the Theses Office of the University Library at the time of submission of this thesis or project.

The original application for approval and letter of approval are filed with the relevant offices. Inquiries may be directed to those authorities.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada

update Spring 2010

Abstract

This grounded theory study explored secondary teachers' perspectives on their relationships with their adolescent students: the kinds of relationships they want to create, why they believe such relationships are important, and what obstacles they perceive to their construction. Teachers who felt they were able to create positive, effective relationships with their students tended to work in mini-school programs, to practice a kind of "authoritative" teaching similar to Baumrind's (1978; 1991) definition of "authoritative" parenting, to engage in dialogue with them, and to treat curriculum and relationship as a dialectic, not a dichotomy. Teachers who felt frustrated in their ability to create positive relationships with their adolescent students tended to be isolated professionally, to practice a kind of authoritarian teaching, to take student behaviour personally, and to view curriculum and relationship as a dichotomy. Recommendations for high school design, as well as teacher recruitment, training and retention, are discussed.

Keywords: Teacher-student relationships in secondary school; secondary teaching; relational pedagogy; curriculum-relationship dialectic; authoritative teaching; ethic of care

Dedication

This work is dedicated to the 20 public high school teachers who shared their stories with me, warts and all. Thank you.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the support and guidance of my senior research supervisor, Dr. Lucy LeMare. Her commitment to excellence in research conducted for the benefit of children and youth is inspiring, as is her commitment to balancing the needs of her work, her students and her family. She is the kind of professional I hope one day to be.

I also would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Paul Neufeld for his insight and encouragement, and for guiding my work in the right direction.

To Jennifer Vadeboncoeur, I express my appreciation for her willingness to share with me the generous gifts of her time, intellect, and insight.

I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Lannie Kanevsky, without whose initial support and encouragement I would never have begun this research program, and Dr. Kathryn Ricketts, without whose help I may never have finished it.

To the administrators in Graduate Programs, I owe a debt of gratitude for their help in navigating the various administrative requirements necessary to complete this degree.

To the staff of my own school – thank you for understanding why I was so disorganized, and for nonetheless encouraging me wholeheartedly to pursue this research.

I must also acknowledge the support of my friends and family for encouraging me to persevere, and for providing childcare and food when both were sorely needed.

To my husband Steven: thank you for all the tech support, kitchen support, emotional support, and for all those critical conversations. Your perspective, often so different from mine, has been invaluable. I am lucky to live with so insightful an analyst, so skilful a computer tech, and so loving a husband.

To my son James: thank you for being such a good boy while Mommy worked, and such an enjoyable distraction when she didn't.

Table of Contents

Approval.....	ii
Partial Copyright License.....	iii
Ethics Statement.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Dedication.....	vi
Acknowledgements.....	vii
Table of Contents.....	viii
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Statement of the problem.....	2
1.2. Research aims.....	4
2. Review of the Literature.....	5
2.1. The role of the literature in grounded theory research.....	5
2.2. Teacher-student relationships in secondary schools: the literature.....	7
2.2.1. Impact of teacher-student relationships on student outcomes.....	8
But is the link between teacher-student relationships and student outcomes causal?.....	10
2.2.2. Impact of positive teacher-student relationships on teachers.....	11
2.2.3. Characteristics of positive teacher-student relationships in high schools.....	12
2.3. But do they care? The need for further study.....	14
2.4. Conclusion.....	16
3. Methods.....	17
3.1. Grounded theory methodology.....	17
3.2. Procedures.....	19
3.2.1. Obtaining ethics approval.....	19
3.2.2. Conducting pilot interviews.....	20
3.2.3. Identifying the site for study.....	22
The region.....	23
3.2.4. Data collection.....	25
Recruiting the participants.....	25
Selective sampling.....	27
Theoretical sampling.....	27
Participants' profile.....	28
3.2.5. Data collection.....	29
Theoretical sampling.....	29
Coding.....	30
Constant comparison.....	32
Negative case analysis.....	33
The flip-flop technique.....	34
3.2.6. Validation.....	35
Credibility.....	35

4.	Findings	37
4.1.	Caring: “A real commitment”	37
4.1.1.	Counselling.....	37
4.1.2.	Caring, whether they want it or not.....	40
	“Getting parental about it”	42
4.1.3.	Thinking beyond June	45
4.2.	Relational pedagogy: “How to be a human”	48
4.2.1.	Teacher-student interactions: “We lead by example”.....	49
4.2.2.	Using the curriculum to teach “how to be a human”.....	50
	Interpersonal skills	51
	Intrapersonal skills	53
	Attitude	53
	Perseverance	56
	Work habits	58
4.2.3.	Relational and curricular pedagogies as a dialectic	60
	How relational learning and curricular learning interact	60
	How teacher-student relationships and the curriculum interact	63
	Relational and curricular pedagogies as a dialectic: When it doesn’t work.....	65
	Social Studies 11.....	65
	Newer teachers: “It’s a dichotomy of curriculum and relationship”	65
4.3.	“The arrows in the quiver”: What makes it work?.....	69
4.3.1.	An emphasis on relational pedagogy	69
4.3.2.	Dealing with discipline	72
	Taking it home, but not taking it personally.....	72
	The importance of mentorship.....	76
	Finding out why	77
	Explaining why	80
	“Picking your battles”.....	81
4.3.3.	Teaching style	83
	Making it fun: “I have to work really hard”	83
	High expectations: “The foundation of the house”	85
	Authentic	88
	Almost adults.....	89
	Accepting	91
4.4.	“You’ve gotta know what’s the right punch to pull at any given time”: Watching for signals.....	95
4.4.1.	A literal watching	97
	Watching in two different contexts	99
4.4.2.	Soliciting input and feedback.....	102
4.4.3.	“One size does not fit all”.....	105
4.4.4.	Dialogue as Curriculum/Curriculum as Dialogue.....	107
4.5.	“This is home”: Creating communities for students.....	110
4.6.	Summary.....	115
5.	Discussion	119
5.1.	A relational orientation	119
5.2.	Enacting an ethic of care	120
5.2.1.	“Authoritative” teaching	124

5.3.	The curriculum/relationship dialectic.....	127
5.4.	Recommendations	128
5.4.1.	The trouble with high school.....	128
5.4.2.	“Home” classrooms as a possible antidote	129
5.4.3.	Teacher training	131
6.	Conclusion.....	133
	References.....	136
	Appendices.....	146
Appendix A.	Study details	147
Appendix B.	Informed consent: School board #1	150
Appendix C.	Email to teachers: School board #2	153
Appendix D.	Informed consent: School board #2	155
Appendix E.	Interview protocol: School board #2	159
Appendix F.	Interview protocol: School board #1	163
Appendix G.	Email to teachers: School board #1	167

1. Introduction

When I began graduate studies in Educational Psychology, I had been teaching high school for just over five years. It was an experience that had been overwhelmingly positive, if exhausting. Most of my students had been pleasant young people who seemed to easily catch my enthusiasm for Social Studies, and I discovered early on that they were most interested in the material when I allowed them some input into their learning. I began, therefore, to give open-ended projects wherever I could, to solicit student opinions on topics for study, and to change my unit plans, when necessary, to allow more time for questions that interested my students. Along the way, I learned that there is no such thing as a foolproof project or unit. Hands-on activities that excited one class proved “boring” the following year, and while one group of students was interested in one topic, another was captivated by something else.

The trick, I learned, was to know my students. Did they love competition, or loathe it? Was it a human-interest story that would grab their attention, or an abstract exercise like planning the siege of a castle? How often did they need to get up and move around during the course of a lesson? These things differed from class to class and even from year to year for the same class, in those rare instances when I taught the same students twice. Moreover, I found that it wasn't enough simply to ask my students at the beginning of the year what they wanted to study and how they preferred to learn; instead, it had to be an ongoing conversation. This meant the frequent sacrifice of instructional time, of course, but I was willing to make that sacrifice because I believed a reciprocal, positive relationship would result in more co-operative students. More co-operative students would be easier to teach, and that meant I could make up that instructional time over the course of the year.

The belief that meaningful learning and thus, successful teaching, can only occur in the context of positive teacher-student relationships was what eventually led me to study Educational Psychology. Initially, I had hoped to learn psychological “tricks” that

might make me a better teacher. Perhaps, I thought, if I knew more about adolescent development and adolescent psychology, I would be better able to develop the right kind of curriculum for my students. Over the course of my graduate degree, however, I came to understand that there is no prototypical adolescent, just as there is no universal experience of adolescence (see Arnett, 1999). Every adolescent is different from every other adolescent, just as every adult is different from every other adult, and just as no two children are the same. Thus, I gradually came to understand that the only way to understand and meet the needs of my students was to observe and to engage with them; in short, to form relationships with them. I decided, therefore, to devote my graduate research not to the development of an “ideal” curriculum for adolescents, but to the study of teacher-student relationships in high school.

1.1. Statement of the problem

As I began to look into teacher-student relationships in secondary schools, I found that the bulk of the research was conducted in early childhood, elementary, and middle school settings, and that far fewer studies addressed those relationships in high schools (see Anderman, Andrzejewski & Allen, 2011; Beishuizen, Hof, van Putten, Bouwmeester, & Asscher, 2011; Pianta, Stuhlman, & Hamre, 2002; Wentzel, 2002). Where I was able to find high school studies, they focused mainly on high-risk students, though I was interested in mainstream student populations (e.g., Cassidy & Bates, 2005; Floyd, 1996; Murray & Pianta, 2007; Reschly, & Christenson, 2006; Rudasill, Reio, Stipanovic & Taylor, 2010; see also Bergeron, Chouinard & Janosz, 2011; Pianta & Steinberg, 1992; Werner & Smith, 1977/2001). Some studies I found did examine mainstream student populations, but the teachers in those studies had usually been selected because they were determined to be “excellent.” (e.g., Anderman et al., 2011; Beishuizen et al., 2001; Pajares & Urdan, 2008). It was hard to find research into ordinary teachers and ordinary students in mainstream high schools, a gap other scholars have noted as well (e.g., Anderman et al., 2011, Cicchetti, Toth & Lynch, 1995; Pianta & Steinberg, 1992; Pianta et al., 2002; Wentzel, 2002; for exceptions, see Fallu & Janosz, 2003; Gregory & Ripski, 2008; Munthe, 2003; Thuen & Bru, 2000). This lack of research into teacher-student relationships in mainstream high schools, particularly into how such relationships are created and maintained, has been lamented by scholars

such as Anderman et al. (2011) and Wentzel (2002), who claim it has resulted in us knowing very little about “specific dimensions of teaching that might create optimal developmental contexts for young adolescents” (Wentzel, 2002, p. 287).

Moreover, while searching for research into the nature, construction and maintenance of positive teacher-student relationships in secondary schools, I sometimes encountered comments in the literature to the effect that secondary teachers were perhaps not *interested* in forming relationships with their students; that perhaps they didn’t “care” about their students to the extent that their elementary colleagues did. I encountered these comments, for the most part, in respected works on the importance of caring relationships in the classroom: Nel Noddings (2005), for example, claims that secondary schools are less “humane” than elementary schools, and thus more in need of “caring” reforms (p. 70), but does not explain what she means by this, or why she believes it. Riley, meanwhile, in his 2011 book on attachment in the classroom, writes that in his experience:

Primary and secondary teachers appear to be “cut from a different cloth”, in that secondary school teachers in my experience were not as interested in whether the students loved them as many primary teachers were . . . They appeared more interested in whether they had the ability to inspire students to love the subjects that they taught, and worried about their own level of content knowledge. (2011, p. 2)

Riley’s opinion is based on his own experience working in elementary and secondary schools, and he is entitled to it, although it would have been interesting to see it tested or further explored. Indeed, it is problematic to see these apparently unsubstantiated statements made in important works on teacher-student relationships—works that are otherwise careful to provide evidence for claims. Their inclusion in these works lends them a degree of credence they may not deserve, and helps perpetuate what may be an inaccurate stereotype.

In fact, it appeared to me that when speaking of teacher-student relationships in high schools, scholars often spoke in terms of impressions, opinions and generalizations, rather than in terms of research findings. For example, Bergin and Bergin (2009), remark “even in secondary schools, teachers and students believe that good teachers establish trusting, close relationships with students” (p. 150). Why “even in secondary schools”? Should we be surprised that teachers and students in these

schools desire close relationships with each other? In fact, there is ample evidence that adolescents do value close relationships with their teachers (Allen, Boykin-McElhaney, Kuperminc, & Jodl, 2004; Allen et al., 2003; Beishuizen et al., 2001; Emmer & Gerwels, 2006, p. 414, as cited in Anderman et al., 2011; Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997; Patrick, Ryan, & Kaplan, 2007; Poplin & Weeres, 1994; Weissberg, 2004; see also Bretherton & Mulholland, 1999). But do secondary teachers value close relationships with their students? That was less clear. It appeared to me, therefore, that the time to examine secondary school teachers' perspectives on teacher-student relationships was overdue.

1.2. Research aims

The aim of this study, therefore, is to explore secondary school teachers' perspectives on the nature and role of their relationships with their students, and the factors facilitate or impede the construction and maintenance of these relationships. I explored these issues by interviewing teachers at length about their experiences in the classroom, in order to generate a grounded theory on teacher-student relationships in secondary schools. It was important to me to collect data from those working on the front lines of relationship construction because so few studies have done so to date (Anderman et al., 2011; Cassidy & Bates, 2005; for exceptions see Aultman, Williams-Johnson & Schutz, 2009; Cassidy & Bates, 2005).

2. Review of the Literature

2.1. The role of the literature in grounded theory research

Researchers working in both the quantitative and qualitative traditions typically begin a study with a review of the literature. However, there is some debate among scholars using a grounded theory approach as to the appropriate role, and particularly the appropriate timing, of the literature review (e.g., Charmaz, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Some scholars caution against conducting a literature review before data collection begins, arguing that to do so may predispose the researcher to certain ideas and cloud her ability to approach her early data with an open mind; later, she might be tempted to “force” her data to fit existing theories (Charmaz, 1990; Hoare, Mills & Francis, 2012). Instead, they recommend conducting the literature review after data collection is complete, to see where and how theories developed in previous research fit with those that have emerged from the new data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Such an approach, it is argued, helps ensure that the emergent theory is truly grounded in the data, and not simply a creation designed to fit with previous theories reported in the literature.

However, others – including Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Charmaz (1990) – acknowledge the importance of establishing a degree of “theoretical sensitivity” before beginning a study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978). Theoretical sensitivity is principally a mind-set, an ability to see theoretical concepts made manifest in the world around us, that grows out of an awareness of formal and substantive concepts and theories in a given discipline (Charmaz, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In that sense, the theoretically sensitive researcher should be constantly reading the literature, as:

These sources continually build up in the sociologist an armamentarium of categories and hypotheses on substantive and formal levels. This . . . can be used in generating his specific theory if, after study of the data, the fit and relevance to the data are emergent. A discovered, grounded

theory, then, will tend to combine mostly concepts that have emerged from the data with some existing ones that are clearly useful (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 46).

However, for the beginning researcher, this is difficult. The beginning researcher does not possess the same degree of knowledge of concepts in a given field that the more experienced researcher does. For this reason, Charmaz (1990) specifically recommends that beginning researchers engage in some literature review before data collection begins, in order to ensure at least an adequate level of theoretical sensitivity to guide the development of interview questions. Charmaz is nonetheless careful to caution even the beginning researcher to keep careful track of the process of her thoughts during theory development to ensure that what she already knows is no more than a “sensitizing” concept (1990, p. 1165). The process of keeping track of one’s thoughts is referred to as “memoing.” Memoing is the process wherein the researcher not only tracks but reads over and then critiques her own thoughts about an emerging theory in order to ensure that *a priori* assumptions, such as those that arose from the literature review, have not been allowed to seep in (Charmaz, 1990).

In the case of this study, conducted as it was by a novice researcher, the decision was made to engage in a literature review before data collection began. However, the literature review continued throughout the data collection process, and was directed to a large degree by the emerging data. Throughout this process, I wrote memos on which concepts might be relevant, and why; some of these memos were later incorporated into the theory, while some were discarded. In the same way, concepts that came out of the initial review of the literature were later incorporated into the theory and some were not, after the emerging data made it clear that they were either unimportant or erroneous. Indeed, it is typical in grounded theory to use the data to indicate which existing logical-deductive theories are relevant to addressing problems on the ground (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The same was true of my own personal hypotheses: some of them had to be discarded when it became clear that they were not common to most of my participants. An example of this was my early idea around the importance of student choice that, as noted in the introduction, had always been part of my own approach. However, my participants believed that choice was only appropriate

for some students, and then only in the context of dialogue. As a result, “choice” did not become part of the emerging theory.

2.2. Teacher-student relationships in secondary schools: the literature

The review of the literature that I conducted initially seemed to lend support to the assumption that the construction of positive relationships with students is not a priority for secondary school teachers. For example, while students report a decreasing sense of connectedness with all the adults in their lives after the transition to secondary school, relationships with teachers seem to suffer most (Barber & Olsen, 2004; Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997). Moreover, students experience a decline in teacher-student relationship quality overall over the course of their secondary school career (Barber & Olsen, 2004; Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997; Midgley et al., 1989a; Wentzel, 2002), and the proportion of students who say teachers don’t care about them increases over time (Girl Scouts of America, 1989; Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997). Older students are also more likely than younger students to mention “negative relationships” as part of their school experience (Poplin & Weeres, 1994, p.19) and to report less satisfaction with their teachers (Bru et al., 2010; Byberg & Tybring, 2004 as cited in Bru et al., 2010; Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997; see also Thuen & Bru, 2000; Wentzel, 2002). Indeed, while many students report close relationships with their teachers in elementary school (Munthe, 2003; Poplin & Weeres, 1994), only 39 per cent of secondary students report an even “adequate pattern of relatedness” with their teachers, and over half of all secondary students report being “disengaged” from their teachers (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997, p. 89; Klem & Connell, 2004; see also Eccles et al., 1993; National Research Council, 2004, as cited in Murray & Pianta, 2007; Wentzel, 2002).

However, older students think back fondly on the relationships they had with their teachers in elementary school and believe these early, connected relationships “exemplify good things about school” (Beishuizen et al., 2001; Poplin & Weeres, 1994, p. 19; see also Bergin & Bergin, 2009). It should not surprise us, therefore, to learn that adolescents actually want positive relationships with their teachers, and believe “good” teachers establish close, trusting relationships with their students (Beishuizen et al.,

2001; McDowell, 2011; Patrick et al., 2007; Weissberg, 2004). Moreover, it appears they are right, for in those instances when secondary teachers do establish positive relationships with their students, those students benefit enormously (e.g., Cassidy & Bates, 2005; Patrick et al., 2007; Rudasill et al., 2010; Wentzel, 1996, as cited in Wentzel, 1997; Wentzel, 1997; Zins, Weissberg, Wang & Walberg, 2004; see also Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Cornelius-White, 2007; Poplin & Weeres, 1994).

Therefore, there is evidence that teacher-student relationships in high schools are not what they could be, or should be. However, the findings that secondary students often feel negatively about their teachers, and perceive them as providing less support, does not necessarily mean that secondary teachers are making less of an effort than elementary teachers to provide such support, or to construct caring teacher-student relationships. Instead, Bru et al. (2010) argue that older students may be more sensitive to perceived teacher criticisms, due to cognitive changes that occur after the age of 12. That is, because students acquire a more realistic ability to assess their own abilities in comparison with others as they increase in age, and because adolescence is a documented time of intense self-reflection, adolescents may find even the slightest criticism from teachers more cutting, and harder to bare, making them more ready to dislike a teacher (Bru et al., 2010). These cognitive changes may also make adolescent students more critical of the school curriculum, and less likely than younger students to find it relevant (Bru et al., 2010). Moreover, Bru et al. argue that aspects of the design and organization of secondary schools, while not the responsibility of teachers working there, are more likely to make students unhappy and more likely to perceive all teachers working in the school negatively. In other words, Bru et al. argue that declines in student satisfaction with their teachers after the transition to secondary school cannot be attributed only to teacher behaviour and may instead be a function of an interaction between adolescent developmental characteristics, and structural aspects of high school contexts.

2.2.1. *Impact of teacher-student relationships on student outcomes*

The reasons behind the apparent decrease in teacher-student relationship quality after the transition to high school remain unclear, but what is clear is that when teachers

and students in secondary schools do manage to establish positive teacher-student relationships, students benefit enormously. Osterman (2000) has gone so far as to say, "how [secondary] students feel about school and their coursework is in large measure determined by the relationship they have with their teachers in specific classes" (p. 344; see also Patrick et al., 2007, and Wentzel, 1996, as cited in Wentzel, 1997). The research seems to bare this out; in particular, research has demonstrated that students behave better for teachers they like (Cornelius-White, 2007; Patrick et al., 2007; Stout & Christenson, 2009). For example, Gregory and Ripski (2008) found that adolescent students were co-operative and engaged in the classrooms of teachers they trusted; however, these same students were suspended for defiant behaviour in the classrooms of teachers they did not trust.

Similarly Wentzel (2002) found adolescents' positive relationships with teachers were associated with prosocial behaviour, responsibility, and engagement in school (see also Herrero, Estevez, & Musitu, 2006; Patrick et al., 2007; Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, White & Salovey, 2012; Stout & Christenson, 2009). This may be because positive teacher student relationships have a positive influence on students' psychological well-being in class; for instance, students who experience increasing levels of teacher support after the transition to secondary school have corresponding decreases in depression and increases in self-esteem (Reddy, Rhodes & Mulhall, 2003) along with a greater sense of belongingness to school (Wentzel, 2002). Positive relationships with teachers are also associated with a decreased likelihood that students' will engage in aggression, drug use, dropping out, and other high-risk activities (Cornelius-White, 2007; Fallu & Janosz, 2003; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Reschly & Christenson, 2006; Rudasill et al., 2010; Schaps, Battistich & Solomon, 2004).

Students also benefit academically from positive teacher-student relationships. Indeed, students who believe they have a good relationship with their teacher put more effort into their work (Learner & Kruger, 1997; Patrick et al., 2007; Stout & Christenson, 2009), are more likely to seek help from and to listen to those teachers (Gregory & Ripski, 2008), and are more likely to hold mastery goal orientations (Midgley et al., 1989b; Patrick et al., 2007). Unsurprisingly, they also tend to earn higher grades (Chen, 2008; Patrick et al., 2007; Rudasill et al., 2010; Wentzel, 1997). In fact, as compared with other educational innovations, positive teacher-student relationships have stronger

correlations with “participation, critical thinking, satisfaction, math achievement, drop-out prevention, self-esteem, verbal achievement, positive motivation, social connection, IQ, grades, reduction in disruptive behaviour, attendance, and perceived achievement” (Cornelius-White, 2007, p. 23).

But is the link between teacher-student relationships and student outcomes causal?

The correlation between positive teacher-student relationships and positive outcomes for students is, therefore, well established. But what is the direction of the effect in these findings? After all, teachers tend to build positive relationships with students who are already performing well academically and socially (Cornelius-White, 2007; see also Cohen & Willis, 1985). Is it the case that teachers form positive relationships with students who are already experiencing success, or do such relationships actually lead to positive outcomes for students?

It appears that the link *is* a causal one, at least for younger children, where the most research has been done (Birch & Ladd, 1997, as cited in Reyes et al., 2012; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Skinner & Belmont, 1993, as cited in Anderman et al., 2011). For instance, a study of monozygotic twins in different kindergarten classrooms revealed that the twin with a positive teacher-student relationship had higher academic achievement in Grade 1 than did the twin who had had a negative kindergarten teacher-student relationship, even though nearly everything else about the twins was identical (Vitaro, Brendgen, Dionne, Boivin, & Girard, 2012). In fact, the researchers concluded that the teacher-student relationship in kindergarten was the most important factor predicting achievement in Grade 1. Pianta and Steinberg (1992), meanwhile, found that students at risk of being retained or referred for special education who had a close relationship with their kindergarten teacher were less likely to be retained or referred than were students with a poor teacher-student relationship. Pianta and Nimetz (1991) found that improvements in teacher-child relationships in kindergarten were more predictive of adjustment at the end of Grade 1 than were initial kindergarten school adjustment scores. Finally, Cornelius-White (2007) conducted a large meta-analysis on the effectiveness of learner-centered practices, including positive teacher-student relationships for students of all ages, and found that the link between relationships and

outcomes was, in fact, causal (see also Battistich, Solomon, Watson, & Schaps, 1994; Bergin & Bergin, 2009).

There is evidence that the link between positive teacher-student relationships and positive student outcomes may be causal for older students as well. In Gregory and Ripski's (2008) study, for instance, students were cooperative and engaged in the classrooms of teachers they liked, but those same students were suspended from the classrooms of other teachers for defiant behaviour suggesting that teacher-student relationships had a direct impact on student outcomes. Mac Iver, Klingel and Reuman (1986) have made similar findings, noting that when teachers are more respectful of young adolescents' opinions in the classroom, students behave better, find school more interesting and useful, and have higher expectations for themselves, than students in classrooms where teachers are less supportive of student autonomy (as cited in Eccles et al., 1996; see also Legault, Green-Demers, & Pelletier, 2006; Reyes et al., 2012). Similarly, Midgley et al. (1989b) found that when students moved from math classrooms of low-perceived teacher support, to math classrooms of high-perceived teacher support, their perception of the importance and value of math improved. When they moved from classrooms of high-perceived support to classrooms of low-perceived support, the opposite was true. Patrick et al. (2007) too, have found that students have higher levels of academic engagement and task interaction, as well as a mastery goal orientation, when they perceive their teachers as supportive, but not when they don't perceive this support. Finally, the qualitative literature is similarly replete with examples of the way in which a positive teacher-student relationship can encourage an otherwise disengaged student to improve classroom behaviour, effort and grades (e.g., Aultman, Williams-Johnson, & Schutz, 2009; Bergin, 2008; Cassidy & Bates, 2005; Floyd, 1996; Klassen, 2008; Pajares, 2008; Walker, 2008).

2.2.2. *Impact of positive teacher-student relationships on teachers*

Like students, teachers in secondary schools benefit from positive teacher-student relationships. "[All] teachers report their best experiences in school are those where they connect with students and are able to help them. . . . They stay in teaching because of the rewards of 'connecting to' and 'making a difference with' students" (Poplin & Weeres, 1994, pp. 12 & 22; see also Meister & Ahrens, 2011; Reyes et al.,

2012). However, it may be harder for teachers in secondary schools to do this, as most of them teach large numbers of students for only a few hours each week (Eccles et al., 1993; Riley, 2011). The challenge of establishing meaningful teacher-student relationships in secondary schools is likely why teachers there are more likely than teachers in elementary schools to report feeling apathetic, isolated, burned out, and ineffective (Fabry, 2010; Midgley et al., 1989a; Munthe, 2003). This may be because these teachers have too many students to be able to perceive an impact on student learning (Midgley et al., 1989a; see also Wentzel, 2002), or because they believe they have too much content to cover (Mitman, Mergendoller, Packer & Marchman, 1984, as cited in Eccles et al., 1993). It may also be because teacher-training programs do not adequately prepare teachers to teach secondary school (Munthe, 2003). However, just as the establishment of positive teacher-student relationships can improve student motivation to learn, so too can these relationships can improve motivation in teachers. For example, Fabry (2010) found that when teachers engaged in research-based practices aimed at developing relationships with students, they were reinvigorated professionally, and their teaching improved (see also Reyes et al., 2012).

2.2.3. *Characteristics of positive teacher-student relationships in high schools*

From the research, it is clear that positive teacher-student relationships are beneficial to both students and to teachers. But what do these relationships look like? That is, what exactly *is* a positive-teacher student relationship in a secondary school, and how is one created? Positive relationships between teachers and their adolescent students have generally been defined by qualities such as “non-directivity, empathy, and warmth” (Cornelius-White, 2007, p. 23; see also Cassidy & Bates, 2005; Gregory & Ripski, 2008; Noddings, 2005; Ryan & Grolnick, 1986; Wentzel, 1997). “Where positive things about schools are noted,” Poplin and Weeres (1994) have said, “they usually involve reports of individuals who care, listen, respect others and are honest, open, and sensitive” (p. 12). These individuals are also those who often take the time to talk to students about their lives outside school (Cassidy & Bates, 2005; Floyd, 1996; Klassen, 2008; Weissberg, 2004). Klassen, for example, has said of his own experience:

The two teachers who had an impact on my adolescent academic development shared one thing in common: they made the effort to establish a bond with me, a bond that was built through mutual respect and even affection for their less than likeable adolescent students. (2008; p. 70)

These relationships are also what Gomez et al. (2004) have called “reciprocal. [They] entail teachers and students continually developing, negotiating, and maintaining a social connection. Reciprocity also means that not only do teachers influence students, but students also influence teachers” (p. 483, as cited in Aultman et al., 2009; see also Noddings, 2005). Noddings (2005), in particular, has emphasized the importance of reciprocity in the teacher-student relationship. Her “ethic of care” is a “needs-and-response based ethic . . . an ethic of relation” (p. 21). Thus, she encourages teachers to invite, and be sensitive to, student input and feedback around what should be learned, and how it should be taught. Moreover, Noddings (2005) argues that a reciprocal “ethic of care” is primarily an attitude of openness, respect and attention, rather than a prescriptive formula for how to practice care, although she does suggest teachers consider the importance of “modeling, dialogue, practice and confirmation” when developing a caring classroom (2005).

Therefore, scholars such as Aultman et al. (2009), Gomez (2004) and Noddings (2005), agree that creating positive relationships with students means being open to student input, and even being open to student criticism. Teachers who build positive relationships with their students also encourage autonomy in those students, something that is believed to be particularly important to adolescents (Anderman et al., 2011; Aultman et al., 2009; Baer, 1999; Bergin, 2008; Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Beishuizen et al., 2001; Kohn, 1993; Middleton, 2008; Noddings, 2005; Wentzel, 1997). These teachers also tend to provide a good mix of both academic challenge and learning support (Anderman et al., 2011; see also Bergin, 2008; Middleton, 2008; Wentzel, 2002), they differentiate their instruction according to individual student needs (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Chen, 2008; Davis, 2003, as cited in Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Murray & Pianta, 2007; Wentzel, 1997) and tend to situate their lessons within their students’ developmental contexts (Eccles et al., 1993; Howes et al., 1988, as cited in Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Middleton, 2008; Schaps et al., 2004; Whitebook et al., 1989, as cited in Bergin & Bergin, 2009; see also Anderman et al., 2011).

2.3. But do they care? The need for further study

Although the importance of positive teacher-student relationships to student success has been well documented, and although we know something about what these positive relationships look like, little is known about how these relationships are created and whether teachers are actually trying to create them, particularly at the high school level (Anderman et al., 2001; Beishuizen et al., 2001; Cicchetti et al., 1995, as cited in Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997; Wentzel, 2002). This is unfortunate, given that adolescence is a particularly “volatile” period of development (Cicchetti et al., 1995, as cited in Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997; Eccles et al., 1993) and that such relationships are seen as tremendously important for adjustment after the transition to secondary school (Barber & Olsen, 2004; Pianta & Steinberg, 1992). Indeed, while teacher-student relationships have not been adequately studied at any grade level (Pianta & Steinberg, 1992; Wentzel, 1997), it is the secondary school context that has been most neglected (Anderman et al., 2011; Wentzel, 2002).

One of the only studies on record that has looked at whether secondary teachers care about their students enough to build warm, reciprocal relationships with them was Munthe’s doctoral thesis (2003). Her study was a comparison of teachers’ professional certainty at the elementary and secondary levels in Norway, but as part of her research she examined teachers’ attitudes toward relationship building. She found that Norwegian elementary school teachers *were* more interested in building relationships with their students than were secondary school teachers, and that secondary teachers were indeed more likely to emphasize subject content, as Riley (2011) and others have suggested (see also Cassidy & Bates, 2005; Eccles et al. 1993; Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997; Weissberg, 2004). It may be true, therefore, that secondary schools are places where the development of teacher-student relationships is not a priority, but given that Munthe’s thesis is one of the only studies to ask these questions, it is difficult to be sure. Clearly, more research needs to be done to understand what kinds of relationships secondary teachers are trying to create with students, and why. Even if it is true that secondary teachers are not interested in building warm, reciprocal relationships with their students, we need to understand why teachers feel this way, given what we know about the importance of such relationships to student success.

For instance, it may be the case that, as Bru et al. (2010) have suggested, teachers are trying to create relationships in a context that makes this very difficult for them. Although interacting warmly with students, asking them about their lives outside of school, and listening carefully to their answers seem like things most teachers should be able to do, situating lessons within students' developmental contexts is more difficult, particularly when one adds on the dimensions of differentiating instruction according to student needs, and simultaneously encouraging students to be autonomous learners, all in an 80-minute period two or three times a week. That is, it may not be that elementary and secondary teachers are "cut from a different" cloth, as Riley (2011) has suggested but that, as Bru (2010) suggests, elementary and middle schools are better set up to facilitate the construction of teacher-student relationships than high schools are.

Moreover, it should be noted that a tendency for secondary teachers to emphasize subject content – if indeed such a tendency does exist – does not necessarily mean that teachers are de-emphasizing relationships. Instead, it may be that they emphasize subject content out of care and concern for students who are preparing to write difficult exams as part of the university acceptance process, or that they use subject content as a means of creating an area of shared interest with their students, students with whom they have relatively little contact, and with whom it would be difficult to create relationships otherwise (see Bergin & Bergin, 2009; see also Bergin, 2008). Then again, it may be that the emphasis on formal evaluation in secondary schools, as compared with elementary schools, increases students' perception of teachers as gatekeepers, rather than caring individuals, despite teachers' best efforts (Bru et al., 2010).

In fact, despite Munthe's (2003) findings that secondary teachers emphasize the communication of subject content and de-emphasize the creation of relationships when compared with their elementary school colleagues, there is also evidence – most of it qualitative – that meaningful relationships often exist between teachers and students in secondary schools. "Many adults can tell the story of a secondary teacher whose caring had a profound effect on them," Bergin and Bergin have said (2009, p. 153; see also Pajares & Urdan, 2008). As Corno (2008) wrote:

When there is synergy between a special teacher and an adolescent student, it is magical. That relationship carries the student over, even when other relationships they have at school are not so good, and even when the work requires all you can give. The experience broadens beyond the one teacher to affect the whole educational experience. (p. 30)

2.4. Conclusion

Given the importance of teacher-student relationships to student success, it is vital that researchers devote more attention to understanding the construction and maintenance of these relationships in Canadian secondary classrooms. What do teacher-student relationships really look like in mainstream secondary schools? Are teachers trying to construct warm, reciprocal relationships with their students, or not? If they are not trying, why is this? If they are trying, what kind of relationships, exactly, are they trying to create? Do their ideas of positive teacher-student relationships match those outlined in the literature? Finally, what obstacles do teachers perceive to the building of positive relationships with their students? What would make this easier for them? Clearly, any recommendations that researchers make on improving the quality of teacher-student relationships in secondary schools should depend on the answers to these questions, but as yet, no one has asked them (see Cassidy & Bates, 2005).

My aim was to fill these gaps by asking teachers working in mainstream Canadian secondary schools for their perspectives on their relationships with their students. Rather than use survey methodology, I asked teachers open-ended questions in semi-structured, one-on-one interviews. This open-ended format was chosen because so little research has been done into the construction of teacher-student relationships in secondary schools to date that is currently difficult to design a large-scale survey on this topic. Instead, it was hoped that by asking teachers open-ended questions in in-depth interviews, I would gain the information necessary to develop a theoretical framework, which could then guide future study into developing positive teacher-student relationships in mainstream Canadian secondary schools.

3. Methods

3.1. Grounded theory methodology

Qualitative research is an approach that lends itself particularly well to the study of topics about which little is known (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In these cases it can be problematic to isolate variables for quantitative study and many scholars therefore recommend a more open-ended, qualitative approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Moreover, because qualitative data collection usually involves extensive contact with participants, it is an excellent way to access and understand a participant's experience (Charmaz, 1990; see also Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Given the importance to this study on understanding the process(es) through which secondary teachers construct their relationships with students, a grounded theory approach was used, as it emphasizes the processes in which participants engage as they attempt to manage a given problem (Charmaz, 1990).

When conducting grounded theory research, the researcher approaches people who are experiencing a given phenomenon or problem and seeks to understand how those people experience it, with an eye to generating a theory that is "grounded" in their experiences (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; see also Charmaz, 1990). That is, rather than creating a theory through logical deduction and then testing it through data collection, a theory is developed from the data itself; theory generation and testing are simultaneous, iterative processes (Charmaz, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As early as the end of the first interview, the grounded theory researcher begins to formulate and record her tentative ideas about "what seems to be going on here" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.148; see also Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). She then uses these emerging ideas to indicate who should be interviewed next, and how the interview protocol should be modified for these subsequent interviews. This process continues until a coherent theory explaining the problem as experienced by the participants has been generated (Charmaz, 1990). This theory is best thought of not as "objectified

truth”, but rather as “useful theoretical categories” organized in terms of their relationships to each other and rooted in the specific context from whence they came (Charmaz, 1990, p.1171).

Therefore, a grounded theory does not need to be tested in the traditional sense as it has, in essence, already been tested throughout its generation. Because the theory comes from the data, the data necessarily fit the theory, provided they have not been “forced” in any way (Charmaz, 1990). In order to guard against this kind of data forcing, most grounded theorists engage in verification procedures such as memoing and member checking. Memoing is the process described above, wherein the researcher tracks, reads over, and then critiques her own thoughts about the emerging theory. It is a useful way to make clear one’s early hunches, to articulate possible directions for future data collection, to ensure that *a priori* assumptions have not been allowed to seep into the theory, and to ensure that challenging findings have not been ignored (Charmaz, 1990). “Member checking” is another frequently used verification procedure in grounded theory research, in which the nascent theory is presented to participants to see if it makes sense to them and reflects their experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Both memoing and member checking were used in this study.

Grounded theory is a rigorous qualitative approach that emphasizes exploring and explaining the real-world problems of participants in a specific context, in a way that reflects their perspective, makes sense to them, and can be applied by them to address those problems (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It is often seen as the qualitative approach most appropriate for use when an existing problem is poorly understood, and a solution to it is needed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Indeed, it was a desire to develop solutions to real-world problems that motivated Glaser and Strauss to develop grounded theory in the first place (1967). Moreover, because the generation of a grounded theory tends to involve interviewing larger numbers of participants and employing more rigorous procedures for data analysis than is the case in other qualitative approaches, grounded theory is generally seen as the qualitative approach that allows for the greatest degree of generalization – more appropriately called “transferability” – to other contexts (see Charmaz, 1990; see also Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This is not to say, however, that grounded theorists believe their findings are necessarily transferable. Determining transferability is the role of the study’s reader, as the only one who can know if their

context is sufficiently similar to the one described in the theory to make the transfer of findings appropriate (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This requires that a grounded theory researcher provide an adequate description of the context under study, so the reader can adequately determine whether or not the findings are transferable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To that end, throughout this study, I made an effort to describe both the macro and micro contexts in which the participants were working.

In short, because the goal of this study was to generate meaningful understanding of a little-understood phenomenon in a large, complex context – secondary teachers’ perspectives on their relationships with students – grounded theory was selected as the most appropriate approach. Open-ended data collection methods (hour-long, individual, face-to-face interviews) allowed for the identification of several variables of importance, while a rigorous approach to data analysis facilitated the identification of the relationships among these variables, and memoing and member checking ensured that those findings had not been “forced.” The resulting theory could then be verified by participants and used by them to address the problems they face “on the ground.” Adequate description of the study’s context, meanwhile, would leave open the possibility that the theory herein might be transferable to other contexts.

3.2. Procedures

3.2.1. *Obtaining ethics approval*

Consent to carry out this study was obtained from the university’s Office of Research Ethics and the school district’s Research Committee prior to teacher recruitment (see Appendix A). Individual administrators gave consent for teachers to be recruited from their schools, and individual teachers gave their consent to participate by signing consent forms (see Appendix B). Consent was also later sought and obtained to interview counsellors and non-enrolling teachers, once theoretical sampling indicated that as an important research direction. Consent was also sought and obtained from the university a third time, to recruit teachers working in a neighbouring school district that offered a program designed to promote relationships in high schools, but no teachers

there responded to the call for participants, likely as a consequence of their ongoing labour dispute (see Appendices C, D and E).

3.2.2. *Conducting pilot interviews*

I developed the interview protocol (see Appendix F) primarily through a series of pilot interviews, as well as through a review of guides to conducting grounded theory research (e.g., Charmaz, 1990; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), discussions with my senior research supervisor, and in peer review workshops, as well as through the initial review of the literature. The participants for the pilot interviews were selected through a process of “convenience” sampling; that is, they were teachers who were friends, or friends of friends, of mine (Creswell, 2008). These tended to be teachers who cared strongly about teacher-student relationships, likely because those are the kinds of teachers I usually befriend. However, some pilot interview participants were also people I had never met, but who were recommended through friends of friends, and not all of them shared my values regarding relationships with students. The fact that many (though not all) of the pilot interview participants had strong feelings about the importance of teacher-student relationships proved be extremely useful for developing the interview protocol, because questions that did not elicit comments on aspects of teacher-student relationships from them were not likely to work well with other teachers (see Charmaz, 1990, and Morse, 1991, p.127). In the main study, I took pains to recruit all kinds of secondary teachers, including those who perceived relationships with students as particularly difficult.

In total, I conducted seven pilot interviews with nine teachers in a variety of settings: classrooms, staffrooms, and coffee shops. Six were one-on-one interviews, and one interview was conducted with a group of three teachers. The results of these pilot interviews were discussed at length with my senior research supervisor and with graduate student peers, and the decision was made to conduct face-to-face, individual interviews with participants in their classrooms after school, or during professional development time. It was hoped that by conducting these interviews in teachers’ own classrooms participants would feel more comfortable, be more connected to the subject at hand, and be better able to come up with answers to interview questions (see Hoare, Mills & Francis, 2012). Additionally, the decision was made to interview teachers

individually, rather than in groups, as it had become clear during the group interview that one participant felt her own ability to create positive relationships with her students was not as strong as those of her colleagues, and I wanted to avoid situations which could make participants feel inadequate.

Indeed, because qualitative research emphasizes participants' perceptions of their own experience, respect for participants was central to my study (Charmaz, 1990). Throughout this study I strived to be genuinely respectful of participants' thoughts and feelings, validating their beliefs, and displaying empathy when they spoke of struggles in maintaining relationships with their students. To that end, the decision was also made to record the interviews but not to take notes, in order to better facilitate the conversational feel of the interviews. Later, the recordings were transcribed and all participants were sent a copy of their interview transcripts (see Creswell, 2007). Finally, all participants were told that this was an open-ended study that was seeking only to collect information on the reality of teacher-student relationships in mainstream secondary schools, and that as such, they would not be judged against any theoretical standard or ideal.

Another important decision that came out of the pilot interview process and the ensuing memos was to use a long interview protocol that came at the issue of teacher-student relationships from a number of different angles. This is at odds with Creswell's (2008) recommendation that qualitative researchers keep interview protocols brief – generally no more than five open-ended questions – to avoid overly prompting participants. However, during pilot interviews I found that teachers often elucidated different aspects of their “relational pedagogy” (Martin & Dowson, 2009; Reeves 2009; Roorda et al., 2011) in response to different questions. Simply asking them what they believed about the nature, role and importance of teacher-student relationships in secondary schools did not yield as rich a picture of their work to build relationships as did questions on a number of different aspects of their work. All questions were designed to be open-ended and to allow participants to represent their experiences in as authentic a way as possible. Moreover, at the end of every interview, participants were encouraged to discuss any other aspects of their practice that they considered important, but which were not addressed during the interview. Many did take that opportunity, both during the pilot interviews and the later interviews that formed the actual data collection process.

3.2.3. Identifying the site for study

Recruiting in one's own school district is common practice among working teachers who conduct graduate research, for it is within one's own district that a researcher is most likely to find a supportive "gate-keeper" who can introduce them to potential participants (Coyne, 1997; Creswell, 2008). Being a district "insider" can help teachers recruit participants and can also help them to establish a rapport and a high degree of trust with participants (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Hoare et al., 2012). Collecting data in my own school district gave me exactly this kind of insider credential; it also meant that I began the study with a degree of knowledge about issues unique to that district. Such knowledge is highly valuable to grounded theorists (Creswell, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; see also Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

However, the risk of collecting data in one's own district is that one will be *too much* of an insider, unable to discard one's own biases and perceptions in order to more clearly understand the participant's perspective. To guard against this, Corbin and Strauss (2008) recommend disclosing and reflecting on one's biases and perceived hypotheses early, and then continuing this memoing throughout the study, as well as engaging in dialogue about emerging ideas with one's research supervisor and with peers, in order to ensure that the theory truly comes from the data, and not from the researcher's own preconceived ideas. This does not mean that the researcher's own perspectives and experiences do not inform her thinking about the emerging theory but only that the grounded theory researcher should be conscious of which ideas come from her own experience and which come from the data. Ideas that come from her own experience should be validated by participants; therefore, verifying a study's findings with the participants is critical.

It should be noted, however, that my own district was selected as the site for study not only because it was easier for me to collect data there, but also because it is a particularly appropriate site for this kind of study: it is large, culturally and economically diverse, and contains many departmentalized high schools that cater to a wide age range of students, from Grade 8 (13 years old) to Grade 12 (18 years old). As a consequence of these features, teachers in that district were expected to have a particularly difficult time building relationships with students and thus, would have

significant insight into both the strategies that facilitate, and the obstacles that impede, the construction of such relationships. Because the particulars of this context were so important in the decision to select it as the study site, and because adequate description of a study's context is an essential pre-condition for transferability, as noted above, the particulars of this context are described in greater detail here.

The region

The city of Vancouver and its suburbs are located in the southwest corner of British Columbia, Canada's western-most province. Most of these suburbs are cities in their own right, and the district selected in this study is one of the region's largest (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2011). In total, the metropolis known as "Greater" or "Metro" Vancouver, is home to 2.3 million people, making it Canada's third-largest city (Statistics Canada, 2011). The area is culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse. Forty-three per cent of its inhabitants are of Asian heritage, mainly Chinese, Indian, and Filipino (Statistics Canada, 2006; Todd, 2014). The rest are mostly of European heritage—mainly British—although there is also an increasing portion of the population that is of mixed ethnic origin (Statistics Canada, 2006). Just under half the people living in this region say their mother tongue is a language other than English; however, 96 per cent of people also say they can speak English well enough to get by (Welcome BC, 2012). In terms of cultural diversity, Greater Vancouver is also home to substantial gay and lesbian communities (Burrows, 2008; Weichel, 2009). Finally, the area is economically diverse, being home to some of Canada's poorest and wealthiest neighbourhoods (Skelton, 2010; Canadian Business, 2011).

This region is circumscribed by the Pacific Ocean to the west, the American border to the south, and the Coast and the Cascade mountain ranges to the north and the east, and because of that it is particularly dense, at least by Canadian standards (Statistics Canada, 2011). Most school districts—even most schools—are home to a culturally and economically diverse student population. In fact, the participants in this study reported that while their schools generally had a particular ethnic, linguistic, cultural and economic "profile," there was nonetheless a significant degree of diversity within each school. Most teachers believed this was a strength; that is, that their respective schools were tolerant communities that offered "something for everyone" and

promoted an environment of tolerance. In addition to racial, linguistic, cultural and economic diversity, schools in this district were also mixed in terms of student ability. That is, schools in this district included students with a range of different learning profiles, and most teachers interviewed in this study seemed to feel that while public school was a place where all students belonged and should feel welcome, the lack of adequate support for students with special learning needs did impinge on their ability to meet the needs of all their students, including their needs for positive teacher-student relationships.

This district was also one in which the high schools were “departmentalized.” A departmentalized high school is one where teachers are organized into subject-area departments. Teachers in the Math department, for example, would usually teach only Math courses, or perhaps a combination of Math and Science courses only. Therefore, a student would likely have his or her Math teacher for only one course, and would have seven other individual teachers for his or her seven other courses. This is in contrast to the elementary school model, where students have one teacher for all or most of their subjects, or even the middle school model, where two teachers work as a team to teach the same two classes of students together. In elementary and middle schools, relationships between students, between teachers, and between students and their teachers, are actively promoted. However, in this district there were no middle schools, and no special provision was made in the high schools to provide a home classroom for the incoming Grade 8 students, except in rare situations that will be described later.

Finally, there is one last, very important dimension to this context that should be noted. During data collection (winter and spring 2014) teachers in this district were involved in a labour dispute with their government, as were teachers in every school district across the province of British Columbia (Hyslop, 2014; Posadzki, 2014). Their contract expired the year before, and they were therefore working without a contract (Hyslop, 2014; Posadzki, 2014). The primary issues in the dispute were wages, and the removal of class size and composition limits from the teachers’ contract 12 years earlier, in 2002 (Hyslop, 2014; Posadzki, 2014). Since that time, class sizes and the commensurate demands on teachers had been increasing. Teachers had gone on strike three times since 2002, and to their Supreme Court, in an attempt to have those limits reinstated (Hyslop, 2014; Posadzki, 2014). This was something about which most

teachers interviewed in this study seemed to feel strongly. They believed the reinstatement of 2002 limits on class size and class composition would improve both student outcomes and the ability of teachers to form relationships in the classroom.

At the time of the first interview, in January 2014, teachers had been engaged in job action since the beginning of that school year, and were withholding some extra-curricular activities. Over the course of data collection, the job action escalated: teachers voted 86 per cent in favour of a strike and then withdrew their participation from administrative committees; rotating strikes came next (Hyslop, 2014). Throughout, the restriction on participating in extra-curricular activities remained in place, and later the government also locked teachers out of their classrooms at during non-instructional time; that is, at recess, at lunch, and during all but 45 minutes before and after school (Hyslop, 2014). This limited the ability of some teachers in the study to engage in relationship-building activities outside of class time. However one teacher noted that many had defied both their union's edict and their government's lockout legislation, in an attempt to continue the relationships they had been building outside class time.

By the final stage of data collection—the member check luncheon—a full strike was in effect and the luncheon had to take place at my home, instead of at one of the research sites, as planned. By the end of the school year, the strike still had not been resolved; it carried on over the summer and Summer School was cancelled in all but a few cases (Hyslop, 2014). Despite the fact that many teachers worked through the lockout, most were also supportive of the strike. They seemed to feel that withdrawing services was a necessary evil for the sake of their students, albeit one that caused them a great deal of emotional stress. Indeed, in this district, teaching was often framed as a political act, and the experience of teaching was one that galvanized teachers politically.

3.2.4. *Data collection*

Recruiting the participants

As noted, Creswell (2008) recommends beginning recruitment for a qualitative study by identifying known “gatekeepers” at a site of interest. In the case of this study, I knew potential gatekeeper administrators working in schools across the district, some of which could be considered high, and some low, socio-economic status (SES). Because

economic diversity was such a prominent feature of this school district, I felt it was important to collect data in both high and low SES schools. Therefore, I contacted administrators working at three high SES schools, and administrators working in two low-SES schools. Each administrator received a copy of the participant information letter (see Appendix C) and a copy of the informed consent form (see Appendix B) and was asked to forward these on to their teachers. Two of the three administrators in high-SES schools forwarded the information on to their teachers, as did two of the three administrators in low-SES schools. In addition, one of the administrators at a low-SES school sent emails to teachers she had known at a different low-SES school where she had previously worked, bringing a third low-SES school into the study.

However, despite the effort to recruit teachers in both high- and low-SES schools, it was primarily teachers in the low-SES schools who responded to the call for participants. In fact, teachers from all three low-SES schools who received the email responded to it, while only teachers at one of the high-SES schools did. It is difficult to know why there was less interest from the teachers in high-SES schools, and it is certainly possible that this was coincidence. Moreover, it is important to note that my own low-SES school was the one that offered up by far the most respondents, and many people there probably responded to the call for participants because they knew me.

However, it is also important to note that I knew no one at the other two low-SES schools where teachers *did* volunteer to participate, and that one of the high-SES schools that did not agree to participate was my former school, where I knew many teachers. The teachers who did participate in this study offered a possible explanation for the lack of participation by teachers in high-SES schools when they many of them spontaneously mentioned that they believed that teachers in lower SES schools cared more about their students than did teachers in higher SES schools. According to these teachers, there were more opportunities to forge relationships when teaching in lower SES schools, where students needed more emotional support from their teachers. Whether or not this was actually the case was not examined in this study, but the teachers interviewed for this study seemed to believe it was.

Selective sampling

In total, 20 teachers from four different schools were interviewed. Twelve of the 20 were from my own low-SES school; three were from another low-SES school, two from a third low-SES school and the remaining three teachers came from the high-SES school. All participants were offered a \$20 gift card for their participation. The processes through which these teachers were recruited are known as “selective” and then “theoretical” sampling, both of which are common to grounded theory research. In selective sampling, which is normally the first step in participant recruitment, the researcher identifies the group that will best meet the needs of the research. This group is known as the “primary unit of analysis,” and in this case, it was any and all classroom teachers working in mainstream secondary schools across the district. Thus, the first 11 teachers interviewed in this study were regular teachers who had responded to my call for participants. These teachers represented virtually every subject area and worked in a variety of classroom configurations, from academically accelerated or enriched, to trades training, mini-schools, elective arts programs, behaviour support, and more.

Theoretical sampling

With time I began to engage in what is called “theoretical sampling” – looking specifically for teachers who could answer questions that had emerged during the early stages of data collection, or who could fill gaps I perceived in my developing theory. For example, teacher comments on the challenges inherent in working with students of a different cultural background than themselves led me to interview an Aboriginal Education teacher who was not aboriginal himself, while comments on the challenges of being a “counsellor without training” led me to interview counsellors working in secondary schools. I also sought the participation of three teachers who had each taught the same course at two different schools on two different days during the same school year in an effort to better understand how context affected their approach. Finally, I approached five teachers who had been overheard complaining about interactions with students, their desire to “just teach the curriculum” and their feelings of “burnout,” and asked them to participate in the study. Three of these five agreed, bringing the total number of participants to 20.

Thus, I did not seek to interview only “excellent” teachers. Quite the opposite – my goal was to understand the “ordinary” experience of secondary teaching, and to that end, as noted, “burned out”, newer teachers, and teachers working in a variety of situations were actively recruited in order to best understand what is common across the secondary teaching experience. Of course, the “ordinary” experience should be thought of as a spectrum and as such, it was desirable that some highly capable teachers should participate as well, and they did. Among the teachers who answered the call for participants was one who had won a national award in his teaching area, another who was an experienced mentor of newer teachers, and one who was specifically encouraged to participate by her administrator because she was “so amazing.” As noted, these teachers volunteered themselves; I did not have to go looking for them. However, purely by chance, these teachers were three of the first four interviews I conducted, and the memos I wrote after those interviews formed many of my initial notions about “what works” in terms of teacher-student relationships, and thus what topics should be pursued in subsequent interviews. This kind of memoing is central to theoretical sampling.

Participants’ profile

Research in education has tended to be done mainly on white, middle-class participants (Woolfolk, Winne & Perry, 2006), and because the experiences of that group cannot necessarily be generalized to the entire community, in this study I took pains to recruit teachers whose ethnic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds roughly mirrored the profile of the people living in that school district. Thus, ten of the 20 participants identified as either “Caucasian” or “European-Canadian”, including one who specifically mentioned he had “Aboriginal family members.” Five of the 20 identified as “Chinese-Canadian,” and the other five participants were of other ethnic backgrounds, notably, Arab, East African, and Roma. Two participants identified as gay or queer. No participant chose to mention a religious identity. Fifteen of the teachers who participated were female and five were male. All held a Bachelor’s degree, and eight also held a Master’s degree, or were working on completing one. Years of teaching experience ranged from 1.5 to 36, and mean number of years spent teaching public school was 17. One teacher had also spent one year teaching in a local private school, and one had taught in private English schools abroad before entering the public system in B.C..

Also interesting to note is the fact that of the 20 teachers I interviewed, seven – that is, fully one-third – worked in a mini-school setting, where a cohort of students entered in Grade 8 and stayed together with the same few teachers, for two or three years. In addition, four more teachers taught at least part of the time in a school that was so small that every teacher knew every student in that school, and had taught them more than once. This school also grouped incoming Grade 8 students into pods with the same two teachers. Another six teachers taught an elective subject, meaning that the same students tended to be with them for multiple years, given the fact that those students would continue to choose the same course year after year and thus, the same teacher. Three more teachers worked in non-enrolling positions like counselling or Aboriginal Education, which allowed them to have repeated contact with the same students over two or more years. Two of the teachers interviewed taught in two of the above-described settings on alternating days. Therefore, of the 20 teachers interviewed for this study, 18 taught in some kind of “home” classroom, while only two taught in the traditional “departmentalized” model that one typically thinks of as characterizing high school.

3.2.5. *Data collection*

Theoretical sampling

An important feature of grounded theory research is the extent to which participant recruitment, data collection, theory generation and the review of the literature occur simultaneously. That was certainly the case in this study, and for that reason, it was necessary to discuss theoretical sampling above, in the section on participant recruitment, and also here, in the section on data collection. Theoretical sampling is an ongoing iterative process entailing participant recruitment, data collection, review of the literature and theory generation

I have already mentioned how emerging findings led me to interview counsellors, an Aboriginal Education teacher, and self-identified “struggling” teachers, but emerging ideas also directed data collection in other ways as well. For example, during the early stages of data collection, four interviewees mentioned the importance of “having students more than once,” whether that was defined as having the same students two

years in a row, the same students for two courses in the same year, or the same students in both a course and in an after-school club. This emerging idea, of the importance of “having students more than once”, led to the decision to modify the interview protocol going forward, so that every subsequent participant was asked whether they had ever had the same students “more than once” and what that was like.

While these interviews were going on, I also reviewed the literature on so-called “pod” programs (e.g., Barber & Olsen, 2004, Simmons & Blyth, 1984) where high school students are deliberately placed with the same teachers for two courses. At the same I was also seeking Ethics permission to interview teachers working in a special “pod” program in a neighbouring school district; however, as noted earlier, no teachers there elected to participate. I then reviewed the pool of teachers who had responded to my call for participants, but who had not yet been interviewed, and selected those working in mini-schools or mini-school type programs as they worked in settings similar to those offered in pods. Throughout this process, memos were written about the possible importance of “having students more than once.” These memos were based on responses from the mini-school interviews, the responses of non-mini-school teachers to the modified interview protocol, and the information found in the review of the literature on “pod” programs, and became an important basis for the early drafts of the theory.

This, in short, is “theoretical sampling”: an idea emerges from an interview and the researcher seeks more information on that idea, in the literature, through more interviews, with new groups of participants, or some combination of all three, until the idea is deemed to be fully explored and no more new insights on it can be found (Charmaz, 1990; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Hoare, et al., 2012). These ideas are usually called “codes” or “categories” in grounded theory research, and the point at which those categories are determined to have been fully explored is known as “saturation” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Coyne, 1997). Theoretical sampling, therefore, is guided by perceived “gaps” in the emerging theory, and only stops when it is believed those gaps have been filled (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Coding

The process of coding a transcript for categories is a labour-intensive one. In this study, each interview was recorded on the researcher’s smart phone and then

transcribed. Next, the recording of each interview was listened to at least three times before the transcript of it was re-read, so that the researcher would be able to hear the participant's voice in her head as she read over the transcript. The idea was that there were essential clues to participants' meaning in the way they spoke that might not come through in the transcript. Then, when the transcripts were re-read, long blocks of speech were broken up into smaller quotes such that, in so far as it was possible, each quote represented a single idea. The transcript was then "coded"; that is, each quote was labelled as belonging to a particular category and often, to more than one category (see Charmaz, 1990). I generated these codes by asking myself, "What is the participant saying here? What is this quote really about?" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; see also Charmaz, 1990). At this point the codes were "lower level"; that is, they were essentially just descriptions of what the participant had been saying. In so far as possible, lower level codes are labels created using the participants' own words such as, in this case, "one size does not fit all" or "knowing the right punch to pull" (Charmaz, 1990; Hoare et al., 2012). Charmaz (1990) calls these "in vivo codes," and suggests they be simple, direct, vivid words that come directly from the data. Using these in vivo codes helps keep a transcript grounded in participant experience; it also makes the findings more accessible to participants during member checking.

As transcripts came in and coding continued, these lower-level codes were "collapsed" or grouped into broader, higher-level categories. Collapsing codes is an important part of theory generation in that by reducing the number of codes, the researcher begins to create a theory that is clearer, delimited, and generalizable (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). However, it is not enough simply to generate codes and then collapse them into categories. After all, a list of "things participants experienced" is not a theory, and it does not offer solutions to problems faced by participants. For a study to move from beyond the realm of simple description into the realm of deeper analysis, meaningful understanding, and ultimately theory generation, the relationships between the categories must be elucidated. That is, the place of each code in the overall theory has to be determined both in terms of its relationship to other categories, and in terms of the circumstances that gave rise to it (Charmaz, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Moreover, the central category – the one that is most important to participants'

experience and to which all others relate – has to be identified (Charmaz, 1990; Creswell, 2008).

Making those connections is the role of the grounded theory researcher. Glaser and Strauss (1967) initially said the researcher “discovers” theory; more recently Charmaz (1990) has argued that in fact we “construct” it. Indeed, as I have explained, my own role in the construction of this theory was an active one: I chose who to interview, what to ask, determined the direction of theoretical sampling and then spent many hours determining the significance of different categories through the processes of coding, constant comparison, and memoing. Grounded theory is often called the most rigorous of the qualitative approaches, and it is primarily the amount of time that goes into sampling, coding, constant comparison and memoing that gives it this rigor (Charmaz, 1990).

Constant comparison

Constant comparison is the process through which the grounded theory researcher compares each quote in a category with every other quote in that same category as those quotes are coming in (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). To do this, he or she “fractures” participant transcripts, re-arranges the fractured pieces into categories, and then asks questions of the emerging categories such as “How?”, “Why?”, “Under what conditions?”, “With which consequences?”, and “How does it change over time?” (see Charmaz, 1990). The researcher asks these questions of each quote or “incident” in each category as they are placed in that category, and continues to ask them as new incidents are fractured out of their original interviews and into the category. In this way, the comparison of incident to incident can be said to be “constant.”

In this study, for instance, the transcripts were cut up with scissors, and all quotes that had been coded in the same way were grouped together in an envelope labelled with the name of that category, such as “watching for signals.” This process continued for each transcript, until I had envelopes containing multiple quotes that fell under the same heading, but that came from a variety of participants. Throughout this process, I wrote memos about my thoughts about the emerging theory. Then, after the first 12 interviews were coded and fractured in this way, all the quotes within a given envelope were laid out on a single large sheet of butcher paper and organized in a way

that represented the emerging conceptual spectrum of that category. As the remaining interviews were conducted, transcribed and coded, they were similarly fractured and their quotes added to these large butcher-paper constructs of the emerging categories. Constant comparison therefore helped me to better understand the different dimensions of a given category (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). For example, through constant comparison I was able to see that “watching for signals” could happen at the individual student, classroom, or school-wide level, and that it was at times a deliberate activity, and at other times a way of responding to that for which teachers could not plan.

Negative case analysis

It should be noted here that here the coding and incorporating of quotes from later interviews was not as thorough as the coding and incorporating of quotes from earlier interviews had been. Because the categories were almost totally developed after the first 12 interviews (in fact they were largely developed after the first eight, but I continued to fully code four more interviews after that, just to be sure) it was usually enough just to review the recording and transcript of each later interview and select only that which was new, particularly relevant or particularly illustrative, and incorporate that in to the existing categorical structures. However, the fact that the categories were largely developed after the first 12 interviews does not mean that the data from the remaining categories were “forced” into them. Care was taken to ask questions of the incoming data to determine if that data reinforced the existing categories or contradicted them in some way, and where contradictions were found, the entire category was re-examined and re-structured.

This is often called “negative case analysis” and it is something that Kidder (1981, as cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985) recommends that all qualitative researchers do. In negative case analysis, researchers develop an initial hypothesis and then try to apply it to every participant or to every incident in their data until they find an example where that hypothesis doesn’t work; the hypothesis must then be revised. In this study, I used negative case analysis to explore the hypothesis that all teachers engaged in a process of “watching for signals” with the aim of teaching students “how to be a human”, and found that while all teachers wanted to teach their students “how to be a human”, not all of them used the process of “watching for signals” to achieve this (although the majority

did). Moreover, those who were not engaging in this process were those who were the most frustrated in their work, leading me to conclude that “watching for signals” is the process in which *satisfied* teachers engage, and it allows them to achieve their goal of teaching students “how to be a human”; these findings are described in detail below.

The flip-flop technique

In addition to negative case analysis, I also used Corbin and Strauss’s (2008) “flip-flop technique” (2008) to critically examine my data during constant comparison. In the flip-flop technique, a concept is examined from a different perspective in order to make clear its most significant properties. For example, one category that emerged early during data collection was labelled “counsellors without training.” This was the concern, raised by many teachers, that they were ill-prepared for their work as frontline counsellors in the classroom. In order to fully understand this category, I had to perform a “flip-flop” and interview counsellors *with* training – that is, counsellors working in high schools. I asked them what they had felt about counselling while they were in the classroom, how their counselling training had changed them, what they believed their role as counsellors was in supporting teachers, and finally, whether they felt classroom teachers were doing an adequate job of counselling their own students. Flip-flopping is essentially an example of theoretical sampling, and it is a very useful way to round out a given category (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967, for a discussion of the importance of interviewing a variety of “types” of participants in order to achieve theoretical saturation).

Once all transcripts had been fractured, and the data within them subjected to both theoretical sampling and constant comparison, including the processes of negative case analysis and the flip-flop technique, I could be relatively confident that all categories had truly been saturated (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; see also Charmaz, 1990). I had already been writing extensively about the relationships of the categories to each other in my memos since the beginning of data collection, and continued to write and reflect in this way now that all transcripts had been coded and all the categories were saturated. My goal was to ensure that I had adequately understood the relationships of the categories to each other in order to establish the core category, the core process (often these are one and the same) and ultimately, the theory (Charmaz, 1990; Corbin &

Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in a way that accounted for most of the relevant behaviour I had seen (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 30).

3.2.6. Validation

To that end, I presented the drafts of my theory to my senior supervisor, teaching colleagues, graduate student peers, and to the participants themselves. Engaging in this kind of dialogue, particularly with other researchers, was an important factor in my ability to remain detached and analytic enough to generate a theory, even while I was working to immerse myself in my participants' experience. By presenting my findings to colleagues, peers, and senior researchers, and by critically examining those findings myself through memoing, I was able to engage in "persistent observation," an important means of ensuring that one's prolonged engagement in a site results in a meaningful and valid theory, instead of being simply a time of "mindless immersion" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 304). In particular I was very fortunate to have found a group of academics and doctoral students from across North America who were working in grounded theory and who met bi-weekly on-line. Their feedback on the early drafts of my theory was invaluable. The feedback of my senior supervisor was also critical, as it was she who encouraged me to return to the literature and check my data against it – something all grounded theory researchers should do (Charmaz, 1990).

As noted above, I also invited all my participants to a member-check luncheon at my home. Eight expressed interest, and three came. These three participants stayed for two hours and listened to a detailed description of the emerging theory. For the most part, they felt it hit the mark and adequately represented the essential dimensions of their experience constructing relationships in secondary classrooms. However, their questions and the ensuing discussion on the limitations of teacher efforts to construct relationship did lead me to make modifications to the theory.

Credibility

Lincoln and Guba (1985) say the best way for qualitative researchers to establish credibility is to make clear the steps they took to generate their theory; I hope I have done that here. I have explained the care that went into generating the interview protocol and into selecting appropriate sites for study, and how selective and theoretical

sampling were used to recruit participants who would best contribute to the generation of a grounded theory. I have tried to provide adequate description of the context and the participants working in it, and have illustrated participants' views using their own words as much as possible in order to keep the theory truly grounded in the data. I have also used multiple sources of data – 20 participant interviews, visual data collected on site, follow-up emails, member-checks, peer debriefing sessions and reviews of the literature – to check and validate my findings, all of which were examined through the constant comparative method, as well as extensive memoing.

4. Findings

4.1. Caring: “A real commitment”

4.1.1. *Counselling*

The most important finding to come out of this research is doubtless the extent to which secondary teachers cared for their students. One quarter of the teachers I interviewed for this study cried during their interview, and these expressions of emotion were connected to the fact that the teachers cared deeply about what was happening with their students, and felt a degree of responsibility for making whatever was happening right. The incidents that prompted teachers to cry all involved helping students navigate the fallout of a domestic or a sexual assault. Interestingly, while all the teachers in these cases referred their students on to the appropriate authorities, as was necessitated by the criminal nature of the incidents, they also continued to counsel the students themselves, as well. To continue counselling students when a teacher could more easily have left that responsibility to another authority demonstrates what my senior research supervisor called “a real commitment” to students. Indeed, in many ways this level of commitment is a greater testament to teacher caring than is the shedding of tears during an interview. Consider, for example, Harry’s story:

I have one student that – beginning of the year was good, dropped off, got a bit depressed, and started beating his girlfriend. I managed to get him in with his mom . . . and had a serious talk with him to say “Alright, you know what? I’ve been pulling for you for this year, and no one here is pulling for you because it’s just our job, it’s because we believe in you. This is the time in which you decide which wolf you want to feed: is it the one of anger or one of love? You know?”

After that talk, Harry referred the incident to the appropriate authorities, but that didn’t impede his relationship with the student; Harry continued to check in regularly regarding the student’s attempts to “feed the wolf of love”:

He's here. He's here every day now. And he's in counselling, and he's back at home with his mom. He's seeing his girlfriend in controlled bursts 'cause I advised, like, "You need to stop spending time with her." . . . [Becoming emotional] I really care about this guy, so he's here and he's turned it all around and I have to hold that, I have to hold that one, and go "I've got one." (Harry)

Thus, Harry saw it as his job not only to intercept a student at risk and refer him on to a highly trained counsellor, but also to work simultaneously with that student himself. And why, when the student was ostensibly being dealt with appropriately by an outside agency? Part of the answer seems to lie in the fact that when a student discloses a serious issue to a teacher, that teacher feels a profound responsibility to see the issue through. Natasha, another teacher, spoke of the gravity of the sense of responsibility that comes with hearing a student disclose abuse:

I just think about like, this person chose you, out of all the people, so you cannot screw this up. Because if you were to screw this up, they may not come out to say something ever again.

Natasha, like Harry, cried a little when talking to me about how she had struggled during the conversation with the student, and afterward. Had she handled it properly, she wondered, the immense responsibility of this disclosure?

Sitting down with her, talking about why this was happening and the fact that she thought it was her fault . . . and going through the right steps and then following through. . . . [And] I hate to say this about the Ministry but when you do make the call [to report abuse], it was like, "Yeah. And?"

But I just didn't want it to be like on those really stupid, silly, crazy made-for-T.V. movies. "If only somebody had said something!" You know? Right? You really don't want that on your soul.

Like Harry, Natasha continued to monitor the student's progress for months after she had contacted the appropriate government ministry regarding the issue. For both Natasha and Harry, then, teaching was an act of both deep caring and great importance. Their relationships with their students were things that, if handled incorrectly, might be "on your soul" forever. When done right, however, those caring relationships gave the teachers the motivation to carry on; it allowed them to say, "I've got one." These sentiments about the importance of their work, particularly about the relational dimension of their work, were echoed by the other teachers I interviewed. Teresa said:

It's ironic. [The relational dimension] is the thing that makes me feel the most burnt out but it's also the thing that helps me get through those burn out times, you know? Because it matters so much.

In fact, so great was most teachers' sense of responsibility to their students that they often did not refer those students on to counsellors when it was not legally required that they do so. This was a surprising finding, for me, and seemed at first incongruous with the idea of teacher caring. However, it seems that from the teachers' perspective going to a counsellor without a student's consent – when it wasn't legally required – was a betrayal of the student's trust, and of the relationship they had. Stephanie said:

Sometimes I refer things to the counsellor and sometimes I don't. Sometimes the kids, they tell me stuff and I'm like, "Oh my god." So I've had three kids tell me they've had abortions [becoming emotional]. For that I did not go to the counsellor because they didn't want me to. . . . It was such a hard conversation to have already.

Interestingly, neither of the counsellors I interviewed were bothered by the fact that teachers sometimes counselled students on their own. Having first been classroom teachers themselves they understood the nature of that relationship; moreover, they seemed to value the lower-level counselling work that classroom teachers did:

I really value the classroom teachers as frontline people making those connections because there's no way as a counsellor that I can reach all three hundred students [in a grade]. So often I know that for me, I know that the classroom teacher and their relationships with the kids is what keeps the kids engaged and coming to school or feeling okay about coming to school and I'm just an extra layer of support. . . . Sometimes teachers [just need] to chat with a student, and some adult guidance . . . is enough as a first intervention. (Phoenix)

I should note here that teachers did nonetheless frequently refer incidents to counsellors, even when it wasn't legally required; most teachers mentioned counsellors as vital to the school and to the students. Often, the teachers said, the counsellors handled things that teachers felt they weren't trained to handle. However, as noted, there were times when teachers dealt with students' social and emotional problems themselves, and the counsellors supported this "front-line" lower-level "adult guidance." Therefore, it seems that for professionals working in secondary schools – be they counsellors or teachers – teacher caring was an expected and essential part of the school's supportive infrastructure.

4.1.2. *Caring, whether they want it or not*

In the examples cited thus far, the students chose to enlist the help of their teachers, but it didn't always happen that way. The teachers I interviewed shared just as many, if not more, stories of times when they had to essentially foist care upon students who actively resisted their teachers' help. Teresa, for example, had a student who was doing well academically, but struggling socially:

I have a girl in Grade 8 this year, and I find her really hard to deal with . . . she doesn't communicate very well, she's one of those kids that's got the haircut so that she can hide the maximum amount of her face but still be able to see. She's painfully shy, very socially awkward, and I find it frustrating cause you know I try to talk to her and I can't even get an answer out of her on things.

And she doesn't hand in a lot of her work, but she seems really bright. So on a test she'll get an A but then she won't hand in three homework assignments in a row, but then you try to talk to her and you can't get her to say anything. Sometimes I feel like I'm banging my head against the wall dealing with her.

So I find it incredibly frustrating and I really want to not like her because that would be easier, to just write her off as a kid whose going to be a pain in my ass, and you know, her own worst enemy. But anytime I find myself feeling like that about a kid, I realize that's the kid I have to pay more attention to because they're the kind of kid where probably a lot of people in their life write them off.

So that's the kind of stuff I have to try to remind myself of. Sometimes it just takes awhile. Some kids that wall is up for a reason and it might be the thing that makes them frustrating and hard to deal with and hard to teach. . . . And hopefully, if I'm not the person who manages to break the wall down, that somebody else will. But for those kinds of kids I do try.

Teresa reported that she was eventually able to involve the student in an after-school trivia club. She kept the student after school to complete homework that hadn't been done, and because Teresa also sponsors this particular club in her classroom after school, the student ended up "attending" the first meeting during her detention. At the time of the interview, the student had also begun to attend club meetings of her own volition, and other students in the club had begun to reach out to her.

What is most important to note here is that Teresa persevered in reaching out to the student and in trying to find avenues through which the student might connect to

someone – anyone – even though the student resisted those offers of help and even though the student was doing well in the course academically.

Many of the teachers I interviewed cited stories like this one, wherein they had practiced care even when students resisted it. It didn't always end happily, though, and Teresa had another story of a time when she'd had to "completely give up on a student" but says, "it wasn't for lack of trying":

Like one kid, I just remember thinking, "You just really want to go to prison." Nothing that we did for him made a difference, and often when we went out of our way to try to get him support or do anything, he would just throw it back in our face. Pretty much every person in the school who could be involved in this kid's situation was involved, trying to get him on a more positive path, and he basically . . . He was one of the only kids who's ever called me a "fucking bitch" to my face.

And it just got to the point where it was too harmful to me. I was losing sleep over it, and my husband was worried about me. He said, "You know, you have cried more over this kid than you've cried over anything in our whole relationship. . . . There are some people that you can't help because if they don't want it, they're not gonna take it."

Angie had a similar story:

He was off-the-charts gifted, but had a life that would frighten almost everybody. He was so messed up, that poor kid. And I just kept trying to [say] in my head, "I understand why you're such a little jerk."

But he just treated me like I was dirt under his shoes. And the more I tried to engage him, the more I would say, "But you're really smart," [the more] he would be like: "Pfft. Like I need you to tell me that. Get away from me." Right?

So those kids. . . the kids that refuse to have a relationship with me, I guess, are the kids that I find the most difficult, right? Because for me then they're just blocks of wood sitting in my class. I don't know anything about you, I don't know how to connect with you, and I don't know what to do for you.

So that first year I tried everything from, you know, being super kind and being really positive, to trying to bully that kid into submission (laughs). And . . . that can turn a whole class for me. I can put so much time and effort into trying to win that child over, or trying to get that child to just, you know, do something, that it takes the rest of the class, it makes everybody really upset. . . . And so now I'm getting better at going, "Okay, I'll be over here if you need me."

Therefore, teachers were willing to go beyond not only what was strictly required of them, but also beyond what was desired of them, in cases where they felt care was in a

student's best interest. It didn't always work, and they occasionally had to give up, but for the most part, teachers were willing to log many hours of unappreciated, unreciprocated caring before they did.

“Getting parental about it”

Teachers were willing to do what they felt was best for the student *whether or not* the student wanted or appreciated it, and in this sense, teachers were behaving like parents. They were willing to say, “You don't understand this now, but it's what's best for you.” In this way, I call their behaviour “pseudo-parental,” as opposed to being “friend-like.” In fact, this was something many teachers said explicitly; that is: “we're not friends.” Angie tells the following story of a time when her students were “really angry” with her, but she trusted she was doing the right thing for them anyway:

Just before the Christmas break I had two girls try to get out of my English class and transfer into Communications [a remedial English course]. They brought their papers and I refused to sign them. And I said, “No. I won't let you go.”

And they said, “Oh, we're just gonna fail this class.” And I said, “No, you're not. If you stay here and do the work—first of all, pick up a bloody pen—and we'll see how you're doing” [laughs]. And so before Christmas they were really angry with me but now that we're back they're like, “Okay.”

And I just have to trust that a year from now, or two years from now, they are going to be like, “I'm so glad I did English 12.” Right? I'm not their favourite person right now, but . . .

Researcher: Have they a picked up a pen?

Angie: Yeah.

Later she added:

Because we have a relationship, and because I know their lives, and because I know their parents, I feel okay saying to them: “I don't care if you don't want to do it. Just do it.” [Laughs].

You know? I get very parental about it. It's a constant dance between, “Just do what I tell you to do!” And: “Okay, come on, you should do it, you should do it, you should do it.” . . .

And so I've had students be angry with me but come back later and say, “Okay, you were right.” But I kind of think, again, it's like parenting. I know for a fact that my mom made me do all kinds of things, [and] that she wasn't happy about having to be ‘the big stick’ and make me do it. But if you're going to be in a child's life, I think

sometimes you have to be the one who says, "This is good for you, you will do it."

That is, for Angie, "getting parental about it" meant expressing a combination of demandingness and warmth, which is how Baumrind (1978, 1991) defines "authoritative" parenting. Another teacher, Anne, seemed to take a similar approach:

One important thing I clarify with them . . . is it's not my job to be your friend. If you don't like what I'm saying, you have the option of talking to me about it and discussing things with me, but I am not going to do things just to please you. There's an expectation in this room and I expect you to meet it, and if you don't meet it then we'll discuss how we can possibly get you to meet it, but I'm not lowering standards to get you there. I'm not going to coddle you either.

However, she went on to add:

[But] there's always leniency for kids that are struggling, or have different needs. You know, one student just lost his father last week, and that's obviously a different story.

Antoinette agreed with Anne that it's "not my job to be your friend," and with Angie that this is part of "being parental":

No, I'm not—we're not friends. I've learned to establish boundaries pretty solidly. You know, I don't want to eat lunch with the kids, I don't. And I tell them, I say, "You know class is over get out of here, good-bye, go away."

[But] it means I'm a safe adult. I'm somebody they can come to. And so they know that if they come to me it's, you know, it's gonna be treated like a special meeting, it's not a casual thing.

Antoinette works in a school where the adults in many of the children's lives are not "safe." It's a neighbourhood where she says, "I would really hesitate to let my own children to even visit or wander around . . . The stories the students tell are really horrific." For that reason then, it was important for Antoinette to take a pseudo-parental orientation with their students and be, *not* a friend, but a safe adult. Her relationship with her students retained a degree of maturity that let the students know she was someone who would act in their best interests even when they were opposed to that action. This, of course, is something good parents do (Baumrind, 1978, 1991). Like good parents, the teachers I interviewed didn't want to be Mr. or Ms. "Popular," a phrase used disparagingly by one teacher I interviewed.

Teresa agreed that being a good teacher didn't always mean being a popular teacher; in fact, she talked specifically about the risks to students from teachers who tried too hard to be popular:

I'm one of those teachers where *Dead Poets' Society* was one of the things that made me want to become a teacher. I thought, "There's not enough teachers like that, that really inspire you and really share their passion." And then I remember having a teacher like [the teacher in that movie]. It was a double whammy: I saw the movie, and then I had an English teacher like that.

But when I got into Education, I also realized like he did things that weren't very positive. Like, he really played favourites.

And I remember everyone in his class, whenever we wrote short stories or things, you always tried to be funny. Because if you were funny, he would read your stuff out to the class, but if you were more serious you didn't get rewarded and you didn't get that time to shine. So you could be a very good essay writer, but he never read out people's essays; it was always you know, funny anecdotes. Even poems: he was more likely to read out a limerick than like a serious poem about someone's like, heartbreak or something like that.

And so I look back on it now and I think, it's true he was . . . flawed. And I see it with almost every student teacher. They're so worried about being cool.

Instead, of trying to be "friends" with their students, then, or "popular" or "cool," the teachers I interviewed tried to do what was best, and at times this meant caring for students even when those students actively resisted receiving that care.

Joe is another teacher who felt he had to care for his students even when they didn't want it, and even when he himself didn't particularly want to do it. He had overheard his Grade 9 boys talking about pornography they had seen on-line, and although it made him very uncomfortable, Joe decided to engage these boys in a discussion about pornography. Joe felt his boys needed his guidance on this issue; after all, he felt it was affecting their brains, their social development and perhaps, their future romantic prospects:

Unfortunately, you know, it's a challenge for me, but I find some of them are maybe too open with their language. . . . they talk about the stuff they've seen on-line and, you know, it's disgusting.

I tell them how this is affecting their brains and what it's going to be like and how maybe some of the things—how I guess how the world

views things in stereotypes. For example, women's roles or gender roles, and objectifies them, and how in real life that's not what's true.

And, you know, sometimes I'll even put my jabs, like, "Nobody is going to want to be with you if you think or talk like that."

I think the teacher is there to guide the students . . . just guiding them to make the proper decisions in life, encouraging them but knowing that they have to be responsible for the consequences of their actions.

Here again, we see an example of a teaching "getting parental about it." A "cool" teacher might laugh off these comments, or say, "boys will be boys – we all did it once." But Joe wasn't willing to do that. He seemed to feel it was his job to step up and have the conversation the boys needed to have. It didn't matter if the kids liked it or not; in fact, Joe says he was even willing to "put jabs in" when it was necessary. However, he also told me during our interview that he believed he was a popular teacher: students would often come to him for advice, tell him how much they liked him, and ask him to coach their teams or sponsor their clubs. This was also true for Angie, Teresa and Antoinette. For Joe and the other teachers I interviewed, therefore, being "parental" appeared to be something their students liked and appreciated, perhaps because they didn't have many other "safe adults" in their lives who were willing to "get parental," or perhaps because adolescents want and appreciate this kind of parental force.

4.1.3. *Thinking beyond June*

Indeed, whether the issue in question was life-threatening or mundane, nearly every teacher I interviewed believed their responsibility was to guide students in a way that went beyond teaching their "particular subject," that this was something a "safe adult" "in a child's life" was required to do. For them, promoting students' social-emotional development was as much a part of a secondary teacher's job as was teaching the curriculum. Angie says:

I wouldn't want to say that [academics] take a back seat, because I think we all care very much about our subjects and we all care very much about our students becoming educated individuals. But sometimes, you gotta do other stuff first. Because you just do.

This was the case even when it was difficult for the teachers in question to provide care. Consider Joe and Harry's examples again: although both men were deeply disapproving of their students' behaviour – "beating his girlfriend" or viewing pornography – they did

not allow themselves to be repelled by that behaviour. Because these teachers believed it was their job to care for their students, whoever those students might be, and wherever they might be on their journey toward responsible adulthood, they persevered. In fact, the inappropriate behaviour was the very thing that moved Joe and Harry to engage with their students more profoundly, and to take a kind of corrective action with them. In both cases, it would surely have been easier to have pretended not to have heard the students' comments about what was going on, or to have dismissed the comments with a remark such as, "Okay guys, back to work." But to do so would have been to miss an opportunity to "guide" their students toward making "the proper decisions in life."

In this way, the teachers I interviewed were all "thinking beyond June." That is, they accepted that it was part of their job to work with imperfect students and to promote positive developments in those students whether or not they ever saw the results of their efforts. They understood that, by the time June rolled around, the student might still be watching Internet porn, "seeing his girlfriend in controlled bursts," or not "saying anything [and] hiding the maximum amount of her face." But living with the fact that their students' development was ongoing was, it seems, part of the job, and something teachers accepted. Teresa said she understood:

I'm not gonna be like the Oscar-winning lead actress of a movie where I've saved every kid in the class, right? I joke to people, "Yeah, sometimes it feels like *Dangerous Minds*, only it doesn't have the nice, carefully wrapped up Hollywood ending."

These teachers do what they do then, not because they expect a Hollywood ending by June, and not because research has shown that it is the approach most likely to work; instead, they cared for their students for reasons of integrity and because, it seems, caring was something they just couldn't help. Teresa said:

I got into this job because I love the material that I teach, but I stay in it and I put up with all the politics and the crap that comes with it because I care about the kids and because for some of them I know that they don't have a whole lot of people who do care about them.

Angie adds:

Teaching is a crazy hard job. Teaching is a really, really, really hard job. I was the [financial] controller of a multi-million dollar company and it wasn't as stressful as this, right?

[But] if all you ever got to do was plan lessons, and give lectures, and mark work—kill me now! Like, what would be the point of it? It *is* all of the funny interactions that you get to have with kids that keep you coming and doing it. It's the ridiculously silly things that they say, the weird misunderstandings that they have, or when they run in and tell you that something cool happened. Otherwise, what's the point?

It also seems that teachers like Teresa, Angie and others practiced “thinking beyond June” as a survival strategy. After all working in a “crazy hard job . . . a really, really really hard job” where it “feels like *Dangerous Minds* [without] the nice, carefully wrapped up Hollywood ending” could be very trying. “Thinking beyond June” helped teachers carry on. For example, Sharon told me how much it meant to her to run into ex-students years later, when the students had grown up, and see that they really had turned out to be decent human beings. Moments like these helped her to survive the “bratty little kid” phase in Grade 8:

I've bumped into kids who I [had] taught in Grade 8 who were really difficult (laughter) . . . “Oh, hi Ms. Smith! Remember me? I'm so-and-so.” I've had students come up and want me to know that they're okay people now. And they've actually said that!

They wanted me to know that they were an okay person, they weren't that bratty little kid. I've had that happen a few times, and it's a wonderful experience when it happens. . . . It's so lovely to bump into a student and all of a sudden there they are they're working at IKEA or something, and you connect.

Therefore, it appears that these secondary teachers are *not* “primarily interested in inspiring their students to love the subjects they teach,” as Riley (2011) has suggested. Consider, for example, the case of Teresa's student who “got A's on tests” but wouldn't talk to anyone. Teresa persevered in her attempts to get that student out of her shell, despite the fact that student was already doing well academically, to the point that Teresa herself wanted to “bang her head against the wall.” If Teresa and teachers like her were primarily interested in transmitting curriculum to students, why then would they bother expending energy on students who were already meeting the curricular outcomes? Indeed, the fact that teachers chose to provide caring counsel even when they didn't have to, when their students resisted it, when it took an immense emotional toll on them personally, and even when they suspected they would never see the results

of their efforts, belies a deep caring. Clearly, the teachers I interviewed believed their jobs went far beyond teaching the curriculum, into the realm of a kind of pseudo-parental caring that emphasizes the development of the student as a whole person. Of her own perseverance, Teresa said:

I've had lots of kids have those great light bulb moments where they finally 'get' the poverty cycle, or they finally figure out how to write a thesis for an essay, and I'm sure that they go on and academically have a lot of success because of that.

But I don't think any of those kids I would consider to be my biggest teaching successes. Almost all of my biggest teaching successes are the relationship things, the ones where it was a kid who I helped to come out of their shell, or I was the person who was there for them when they needed to talk to somebody about something horrible that was going on that had nothing to do with school. And those typically are the kids who you know, are more likely to come and see me outside of class time. I don't get very many kids who come and see me outside of class time and talk to me about homework.

4.2. Relational pedagogy: "How to be a human"

In fact, when I asked my participants what their goals were, as teachers, they tended not to mention the curriculum. When they did mention it, it was in the context that Angie and Teresa did above, it was the thing that had drawn them to teaching initially, but had become less important to them over time. Other teachers talked about the curriculum in an almost off-hand fashion, as in, "Of course, there's the curriculum and all that, but . . ." or, "Of course, you want them to gain some basic skills, but . . ." Instead, teachers were more likely to respond to my question about their goals with statements like, "I'm preparing them for life . . . just, you know, how to be a human, in a room with other humans." Will, who teaches senior-level Physics and Math, including accelerated Math courses, and who might therefore be expected to extoll the virtues of teaching the curriculum to the exclusion of everything else, expressed it thus:

In a sense I think curriculum delivery is important, but it's almost like a pretext for a more important thing which is just to sort of teach them how to be, like, humans. You know, to try and encounter a situation that's problematic and rather than just folding your cards and going home you solve it, or at least attempt to. It doesn't matter if it's a Math problem or a Socials essay or like, a kid bugging you in the hallway, it's all the same thing. They're just problems right?

Therefore, in teaching students “how to be a human”, teachers’ goals were to help those students develop the relational skills they would need in life in contexts ranging from the workplace to romantic settings. These could include problem-solving skills for dealing with other people, empathy and perspective-taking skills, or self-regulation skills essential to positive interactions. The teachers in this study varied in terms of which of the above skills they emphasized in their teaching, but they shared the belief that the developmental of these skills would help students to function in relationships, to be happy as people, and to make positive contributions to the world around them.

The teachers interviewed for this study appeared to prioritize the teaching of relational over curricular skills because most of them, when I asked, said that they did not believe that their students would go on to be specialists in their given subject area; even teachers working in a Science program for gifted students said they didn’t expect their students to go on to be Science specialists. But all the teachers knew that each of their students would have to be able to function in relationships and make a positive contribution to the world around them; thus, teaching students “how to be a human” was their primary goal. However, in saying they wanted to teach their students “how to be a human”, teachers were not implying that their students were currently somehow less than, or other than, human. Instead, they seemed to be saying that their goal was to go beyond the teaching of their given subject curriculum to teach something much more basic, more fundamental to students’ lives: how to relate to others, both now and in the future. Scholars (e.g., Martin & Dowson, 2009; Reeves 2009; Roorda et al., 2011) have termed this “relational pedagogy.” For my participants, relational pedagogy had two dimensions: the implicit (teacher-student interactions) and the explicit (curriculum delivery).

4.2.1. *Teacher-student interactions: “We lead by example”*

The teacher-student interaction dimension of teachers’ relational pedagogy can be said to be “implicit” in that it was something that teachers enacted every day through their behaviour. That is, teachers said “how to be a human” was something you had to model. Will said:

I think that a teacher/student relationship is about demonstrating to them, by having an example, like, this is how you deal with the crappy stuff that life throws at you. And you deal with it right?

And I think in younger grades . . . you're very direct with your instructions when it comes to being a human.

But in high school it's not like that as much, at least for me. I'm not going to lecture a Grade 11 student about saying please and thank you. I think that in high school we lead more by example, and it's less direct.

So I think in that sense the relationship is just to sort of show them how to function as an adult and to contribute and to make other people around you happy. You know it sounds kind of cheesy but so I think in a general sense that relationship is just about showing them how to function and how to go about your life in a productive way.

Stephanie, a Choir teacher, said:

I think [my role is] to mentor them. I don't know everything, I'd be lying to everybody [if I said I did]. Mentor them, how to help each other, how to be better human beings . . . I think my role is just as a mentor and a friend. Or, well, what they need. I'm not going to be everybody's friend but if they need me, I'm here, and they know that.

Kristy said simply:

I think in teaching how to be human you behave how a human should.

In other words, teachers did not teach students "how to be a human" in a vacuum; it was not a unit they covered, or a 30-minute lesson once a week. Instead, it occurred in the context of the teacher-student relationship. These teachers engaged their students in conversations and in so doing they shared details of their own personal life and history with their students. Thus, these teachers didn't just *tell* their students about how to be a good person, they modelled it as well. In this way, the interactional dimension of their relational pedagogy was implicit: they "behaved how a human should."

4.2.2. Using the curriculum to teach "how to be a human"

Understanding the explicit dimension of teachers' relational pedagogy – how they use the curriculum to teach their students "how to be a human" – is more complex. For my participants, this involved using the curriculum as a "pretext", to quote Will, or as a vehicle for students to learn and practice inter and intrapersonal skills, rather than

treating the curriculum as a goal in and of itself. It did involve the imparting subject-specific skills that might serve students later in life; however, these subject-specific skills tended to be aspects of the curriculum that teachers perceived as essential life skills – such as the ability to fill out a tax form, interpret marketing campaigns, or understand how sexually transmitted infections could be acquired – rather than the curriculum for its own sake. Moreover, when talking about their goals, teachers mentioned inter and intrapersonal skills more than they mentioned subject-specific skills by a ratio of more than two-to-one. Thus, it is important to note that “how to be a human” was primarily defined for teachers in relational terms, rather than in terms of the work-related skills students might need for their future economic lives.

Interpersonal skills

Joe told me that “not every student is going to like your subject, but you want them to get something out of it anyway, and not just be a statistic filling a seat” and most teachers I spoke with agreed with him. In Joe’s case, as noted, part of what the students “got” out of his class was a deeper understanding of the issues associated with watching pornography, such as the ways in which that medium objectifies women, and the consequences that participating in that objectification might have on their developing brains and on their future romantic prospects. But Joe also made a deliberate effort to have his students learn the interpersonal skills associated with “how to be a human” by having them work on curricular projects in pairs:

I think I’m preparing them for life. I have a list of rules at the front and I try to encourage a lot of respect and working together. Like, we do a lot of group work and when they first start working on projects or machines from Grade 8 to 12, they have a buddy. So learning to work with other people. When they go out into the world, people are going to look for certain qualities so I try and give them some tips there.

I just remember when I was their age; it’s a maturity thing. . . . You’re always learning or coming to a realization of life. And so the sooner they can make those connections the better off they’ll be. . . . But it helps to have somebody to encourage and to push you.

Therefore, having students work “with a buddy,” while it may seem like a simple teaching decision, was for Joe part of a larger attempt to teach his students “how to be a human” by giving them some experience, as well as “some tips,” in terms of developing their interpersonal skills. It was also very likely something that created a climate where Joe

could discuss issues of pornography with his boys; that is, because they were already used to getting “tips” and “encouragement” to practice “respect and working together,” such a discussion would not seem out of place.

In Stephanie’s Choir classroom, I found similar evidence of the importance of developing interpersonal skills:

My goal is really to mentor them, you know, how to help each other, how to be better human beings. I think it’s a really important times in their lives and they get told a million different things and they’re on their phones all the time, so I just think [singing] gives them a chance to be real. Like, let’s be together, let’s just share together, just to be open to each other, to their ideas, the way they think.

Music is just a way to get somewhere . . . in singing together they have to be confident in themselves and confident in each other and there has to be a high level of trust. Because you’re very vulnerable when you’re standing there and there’s nothing to hide you, just a folder or a paper.

Like Joe’s, Stephanie’s strategies for teaching her students “how to be a human” appear deceptively simple; “let’s sing together, let’s be real, let’s just share together.” Also like Joe, Stephanie was using the curriculum as a kind of vehicle for the teaching and practice of interpersonal skills, rather than teaching these skills separately from the rest of the curriculum. Moreover, Stephanie was not teaching the Music curriculum for its own sake; despite the fact that she is Choir teacher and passionate about Music, it is ultimately, “just a way to get somewhere” in terms of teaching her students “how to be better human beings.”

Other teachers like Bruce used strategies that were more complicated and that had to be set up alongside the curriculum, although these were nonetheless strategies that still allowed students to learn and practice their interpersonal skills within the context of that curriculum. In his case, Bruce spent a great deal of time each September setting up a “section leader” model in his Music classroom: a senior student was made leader of the clarinet section, another the leader of the percussion section, and so on. In this way, students would learn and practice the interpersonal skills associated with being a human—in this case, leadership—at the same time as they were learning and practicing music. Bruce invested a great deal of time at the beginning of the year teaching these

students how to lead, and then stepped back while they practiced it, intervening only when necessary:

The crossover between the curriculum and social development is in how they work as a team. So through the course of the year they are expected to work as an individual at home, then as a whole group at school, and then also in their own independent sectional rehearsals, once every few weeks.

They organize and plan it themselves. If they want to book a room or need a space they ask me, but otherwise I stay out of it.

All it takes is for something to go really poorly in class one day and the section leaders know it's their problem. And this is part of the culture that's established: if there's a problem it's not these three kids, it's not their issue, it's the section leader. It's that student's responsibility to mentor the rest of the section to get things to work the right way.

And if they can't do it on their own they ask for help. But it places the responsibility on the students, that if they want to succeed they will. I'll never be embarrassed by a performance we're giving. It's their performance, it's not mine.

And I think that the amount of [preparation] each September with the seniors [is helpful]. We talk a little bit about locus of control, that the locus of control in this room is not with the conductor, it's with the students. So you have to, as section leaders or assistant section leaders, take responsibility for your peers and mentor them. They're the ones that are cultivating the next round of leaders, not me. I've laid out some mechanisms for that to happen but it's really about students doing that on their own.

In this way, then, Bruce's students were learning not only to play their respective instruments, but also how to organize and manage other people, how be responsible to other people, how to be responsible for one's self; in short, "how to be a human."

Intrapersonal skills

Attitude

Along with interpersonal skills, many teachers recounted stories of the ways in which they tried to use the curriculum to teach the intrapersonal dimension of "how to be a human" as well. Bruce, for example, recounted one interesting example of a time when he used the curriculum to teach a student the importance of humility:

Early in my time here, I didn't know any of the history on it, a student dropped by one day and was like, "Oh, so you're the new Band teacher."

And I was like, "Yeah, who are you?"

"I used to be in band but then, you know, I really didn't get along with the teacher so I don't think band is for me."

So, I said, "Well, are you any good?"

And the kids were all saying, "Oh man, he's like, the most amazing percussionist, he's so good."

And so I got him back into Band. And the first day that he came in he went over to the snare drums and was going to play the hardest part and move another kid – like basically *bounce* another kid out of the way – so that he could show off.

But the section leader came over and handed him a triangle and said, "No, this is the part you play. I'm the section leader. . . . Mr. Hanson has given me that authority."

And so this kid came to me at the end of the block and was like, "I don't think I can handle this. I mean the kid playing the snare drum part wasn't very good, and I could read it no problem."

And my response was really clear: "This is not about how good you are. I don't care how good you are. If you're that amazing you will play that triangle part with meticulous accuracy and amazing expression. Like, really invest yourself where you are and don't worry about climbing up. Just be where you are and get it done right."

He stayed, and there were a number of students that were really nervous about him coming back in because there have been some really awful ego-based moments, but he stayed.

For Bruce then, teaching his students inter and intrapersonal skills was in some ways more important than teaching them music: if the goal had simply been to have the best music program in town, Bruce might have "bounced" the weaker kid off the snare drum and put the "amazing percussionist" with the "awful ego" on it instead. But he chose to have the "amazing percussionist" play triangle because Bruce could see that what the student needed most was to learn humility. Moreover, Bruce knew that as a teacher, he needed to support his section leader, as part of him having *them* learn to be leaders. Thus, ensuring that his students learned "how to be a human" – again, how to relate positively to other people both now and in the future – trumped everything else. If that meant the quality of the snare drum playing in his music class was affected, so be it.

However, it is important to note here that in discussing this incident with Bruce, I came to understand that he did not believe he was sacrificing the quality of his music program by putting the "amazing percussionist" on the triangle. Instead, Bruce believed

that in the long run, the “amazing percussionist” would improve as a musician by being forced to play the triangle, in that the student was essentially going back to basics:

It doesn't matter how big the challenge is, whatever you get handed you should be able to do perfectly. . . . And if it looks easy on paper then you're missing the point. There's something more. There's something you can read into it. You know, just because you're a good reader doesn't mean you get allegory, right?

Therefore, not only was Bruce teaching his student “how to be a human,” he was using the Music curriculum to do it.

Angie, too, believed the most important thing she could teach her students was to have a healthy attitude, although in her case, she felt her students needed to learn the *opposite* of humility:

These are refugee kids, recently arrived, who have no, sort of, ideas. No desire, no understanding that graduation is even possible, no nothing. They say things to me like, "Why do I need a high school diploma when the only thing I'm gonna do in my life is pick berries?"

So what works for me, and the reason that they go to school, and the reason that they do anything, is that I just keep telling them there's more than picking berries in your life. And you can have those things. And if you keep telling them and you keep telling them, little by little by little they believe you, right?

And I don't think that this group of kids that I'm working with, I don't think that any of them are going to go to college.

Researcher: But there's something between picking berries and going to college.

Angie: Exactly. And then it's, "Well, fine, I'm going to work in a restaurant." Well, great, but you have choices. You could work at McDonald's, or you could work at Le Crocodile, right?

So, my strategy is just to tell them that they're worth more. That they're worth better things and just keep saying it and saying it and saying it. Until they hear it.

Like Bruce, Angie used not only one-on-one discussion with her students to emphasize the idea that “they're worth more”; she also used the curriculum:

When I'm teaching English, I hope that they'll just like a book – any book! Find a book, I don't care what the book is, and just read a book.

I get lots of kids who are in Grade 11 and they go, "Oh my gosh, this is the first time I've actually read a book from start to finish!" And that is a huge experience. It's sets them up for, "I can do stuff."

Perseverance

The other intrapersonal quality that many teachers tried to instill in their students was perseverance in the face of a difficult problem. Indeed, the idea of teaching students to stick with a difficult problem was a theme that came up in several interviews, and most teachers, again, used the curriculum as the vehicle for teaching these intrapersonal life lessons. Janice, who teaches Art, said:

They say, "Oh I can't draw." And so I say to them, it's not about, "You can't." I say, you know, drawing is a skill. Even myself when I was in high school I could barely draw anything but over time, I took courses and my skill developed and so then I became good at it, right? It's all about training your eye.

Antoinette agrees:

A lot of the students who are coming into Art have a lot of fear around it: "I can't draw, I can't paint, I'm not good at it." And it's a really good place to sort of look at who has the confidence and where their strengths are, and change the perception of what Art is. Because a lot of them think that art is just painting like a master painter.

So if I can get them out of that, and have us look at what we're all doing and where other artists—like look at where Van Gogh started. Some of Van Gogh's early drawings and sketches look exactly like their early drawings and sketches. And they're like "What?!" [Laughs]

However, the best example of how a teacher used the curriculum to teach her students the perseverance necessary to "be a human" is that of Anne. Anne taught Chemistry in an accelerated program for gifted Science students. These students were highly capable: most had been the top students in their elementary school classrooms and they were only admitted to her program after they had passed an interview and an aptitude test. These students were used to earning top grades and they came to Anne's class in Grade 8 ready to memorize the information, ace the tests, and earn top grades again. But instead of giving them the information and then waiting while they memorized it – which would have been easier for her – Anne deliberately chose to throw her students off-balance. She believed these kids needed to be placed in a situation where they would struggle, for once; otherwise, how would they learn to handle it?

I talk [to them] about university, because university was the first time that I felt challenged, felt like, "Holy shit, what have I signed myself up for?" I'll try to explain it to them about my experiences of being in Chemistry Honours where you are in with the Pre-medical students, and they're insane. Like screaming in classes, crying in classes . . .

So what I want for [my students] is, when they go on to post-secondary, do they know how to help themselves work?

In other words, for Anne, the material was less important than the life lessons she could use it to teach. She decided, therefore, to embrace an inquiry-based approach to teaching Chemistry to her students:

So I teach them the theory behind dilutions, and then I say go dilute.

And they all sit there and they'll fight and be angry and they're in tears. There's this huge phase in inquiry-based teaching when they literally want to lynch you because you won't just tell them how to do it and instead you give them ways of finding it, or direct them away from things that are not going to work.

I mean, I'll step in if they're going to blow their heads off by putting acid in in the wrong order and creating too much heat or something but, you know, [mostly] I just watch them and I let them suffer. I've flat out said, "I know you want to punch me I can see it in your face and I'm not going to tell you the answer, so."

Researcher: And when does it click, or when do they start to get it?

Anne: They start to trust themselves. And one of the funniest things about inquiry-based teaching, that I've learned, is that it's very hard to do early in the year. So for the first lab I really step them through it. [But] they learn to trust you, they learn to trust that when I'm not helping you, I *am* helping you.

And it's a crazy thing: it's a very fine line to walk between them being very angry with you, and understanding that you will get them there. They have to trust that you are not telling them the answer, but you will get them there in the end. And that's a hard relationship to manage. It's something that you have to work on every day.

Now this is our fourth inquiry-based lab this year. We've spent, like, a month on inquiry, and I've had kids say to me "I know, I know, you're not going to tell me, just give me a minute!" And I'm actually finding them now, in problems, like theoretical problems, [saying] "No, no, don't tell me, I can do this."

They're comfortable in the struggle. That's what I'm trying to say. You get them so that they are comfortable and accepting that they don't get it, they don't understand it, but they will. And so they can spend the time in that uncomfortable zone, and they know they will find their way out, and it's awesome. I mean, it's part of being a human, part of the understanding of the journey of learning.

Thus, Anne used Chemistry as a vehicle to teach her students “how to be a human”; in this case, how to trust themselves and how to persevere through the “struggle.” Also, note the degree to which Anne herself was comfortable with being – briefly – detested by her students. “They literally want to lynch [me] . . . ‘I can see on your face, I know you want to punch me but I’m not going to tell you the answer.’ . . . I just sit there and I watch them suffer.” Like the other teachers I interviewed, Anne took a pseudo-parental orientation; she was willing to say, “I’m giving you what you need, and I’m going to make you do it, whether you like it or not.” In this way, then, it appears that while secondary teachers are not “primarily interested in whether or not they have the ability to inspire their students to love the subjects they teach,” neither were they “primarily interested in whether or not their students “loved them”—the two orientations Riley has proposed (2011, p. 2). Instead, the primary concern of my participants seemed to be, “Am I giving my students what they need? In particular, am I giving them what they need in terms of learning ‘how to be a human’?”

Work habits

Another intrapersonal skill that all teachers seemed to want to develop in their students was an appreciation of the importance of work habits, such as time management, organization, and the adoption of positive attitudes toward work. In discussing this, they often made the point that developing the ability to function “without being coddled” was particularly important for adolescent students who were about to go out into the “real world.” As Stephanie said,

You don’t want them to be babies and coddling them in high school. That’d be so weird. You expect them to bring their pencils, and have all their stuff together.

Will, meanwhile, says that when a student is not succeeding in his Math class:

I’ll contact that counsellor, I’ll give the mom a call, I’ll talk to the kid, I’ll sort of, you know, I’ll check those boxes.

But at the end of the day I’m simply not going to bend over backwards to try and get you to do what the other 27 students in the class have figured out a way to do. But I’ll also explain that. If they’re a little older, I’ll explain it to them.

It’s different in Grade 8. In Grade 8 you really coddle them all. I’m not quite as harsh about it at younger grades.

But by the time they hit Grade 11—we'll stop the train once in a while but we're going to keep moving so it's your choice. Get on or don't.

Therefore, when teachers held high expectations for their students around organization or time-management, this wasn't intended to be punitive. Instead, it was done in the context of helping their students learn "how to be a human." To that end, like Will, most teachers tried to explain the rationale behind these expectations to their students. Like good "pseudo-parents," they wanted their students to understand why they needed to learn these skills, and often gave them chances to practice "better" behaviour (see Baumrind, 1978, 1991). Leah said:

I think something I do with late students is I try to reinforce that they're losing their own time. If they're not here, they've missed something and they need to catch up. So I kind of give them chances.

Like if I notice that a student is chronically late for example, I start adding up those minutes and adding them on to the end of the week. And I'll double it as well, so let's say you're ten minutes late, that's 20 minutes on Friday. But that's just for chronically late students.

[But] then if I notice an improvement I don't want to destroy that improvement. So I'll often say "But if you're early or on time on Wednesday . . .". So then they start coming and showing up on time, and for the most part, I've never had to really keep them after school. Just the idea that they might have to stay after school on Friday makes them come early on Wednesday.

Many teachers seemed to understand that organization was difficult for adolescent students; in particular, lateness was mentioned repeatedly. But most teachers seemed to accept that, just as it was part of their job to guide these sometimes "awful ego-based" or "painfully shy" developing "humans" to a better self that existed somewhere "beyond June", it was also just part of their job to teach organization, time management, and appropriate behaviour generally, to those students as they "make the transition from being a little kid", and they didn't complain about it. Sharon said:

Whether it's the student that is unable to focus and [is] all over the place, or the student that is oppositional, or the student that has a great sense of humour and just doesn't know you can't use it every second, or is trying risk-taking or is insecure or not confident, you can see this incredible person there [but they're] still in progress.

Researcher: But how do you deal with it?

Sharon: You're working to become a more open hearted person as a human being and learn many skills . . . it's a bag of tricks you use.

It's psychology, it's compassion, it's listening, it's listening skills, talking skills, communication skills, just common sense skills, of how you are in the moment and communicate what you need to and also address what the issue is with that person. And sometimes it's taking kids aside, it's sometimes just saying, "You need to get on track."

I find meditation and mindfulness [activities are] a great way of introducing self-regulation and self-knowledge [to students]. So teaching students to be responsible, especially adolescents, to make that transition from being a little kid with a parent or a teacher . . . you know, to make the decisions themselves.

Thus, whether they were using the quadratic equation, hydrochloric acid, Van Gogh's early sketches, or a triangle, most teachers I interviewed used the curriculum as a kind of vehicle for teaching students "how to be humans," particularly how to get along with others, how to have confidence in oneself, how to persevere in the face of difficulties, and how to meet the demands of the so-called "real" world. This goal was common to teachers across subject areas and across program types; it was just as true of a teacher working in a program for gifted students as it was for a teacher working in a program for students with development challenges. It was true in the high SES schools where Eric said parents would "buy a six bedroom house just to get into this school, because it has such a good reputation" and it was true in the school in the neighbourhood where Antoinette "would hesitate even to let my own children wander around." It was true of Math teachers, Music teachers, English teachers, Shop teachers, Social Studies teachers, French teachers and Mandarin teachers.

4.2.3. *Relational and curricular pedagogies as a dialectic*

How relational learning and curricular learning interact

The way in which teachers enacted their relational pedagogies, however, looked different in each of these contexts. These differences depended both on the curricular tools each teacher had at his or her disposal – again, hydrochloric acid, Van Gogh's early sketches, or a triangle – and on the particular needs of their students. That is, teachers were selecting from the existing curriculum things that seemed to meet the relational needs of their students. Sometimes this involved a degree of planning, as when Bruce deliberately taught his section leaders how to lead, when Joe deliberately taught his students to work in pairs, or when Anne planned inquiry-based units. But just as often, teachers were surprised by student needs, and had to use their considerable

knowledge of the curriculum to respond to those needs on the spot: what do I pull out here, and how do I relate it to what we've already done, and/or to what is coming up?

Indeed, while scholars (e.g., Elias et al., 1997; Munthe, 2003; Noddings, 2005; Riley, 2011) often set up relational pedagogy and curricular pedagogy as though they were a zero-sum game – we sacrifice one when we spend time on the other – the findings of this study seem to indicate that in secondary classrooms, relational learning and curricular learning exist instead in a kind of dialectical balance. That is, rather than taking from each other, relational pedagogy *interacts* with curricular pedagogy, and in that interaction the two create a kind of synthesized learning experience of “how to be a human.” Or at least, they can, in the classrooms of skilled teachers. Consider the examples we have seen thus far: Anne used Chemistry to teach her students to be “comfortable in the struggle [and to] trust themselves”; once they had this trust, and were comfortable in the struggle, they were able to tackle increasingly difficult Chemistry problems. Bruce used Music to teach humility to a student; that humility, once internalized, made the student a better musician, in that he was now able to understand that there is always “something more” to get out of a piece. Janice and Antoinette used Art as a way to help students develop confidence, confidence that then gave those students the courage to take greater risks in Art. Stephanie said singing was a way to practice vulnerability; that vulnerability in turn, engendered trust between students, and that trust allowed them to create higher quality music together. And so on.

The teachers I spoke with also provided other examples of the ways in which the needs of the curriculum, and the relational learning needs of students, can function in an interdependent, mutually beneficial, dialectic, way. For instance, Natasha used the study of *Romeo and Juliet*, in the Grade 10 English curriculum, as a vehicle to explore students' own personal and cultural values, with the result that the students then had a deeper understanding of the issues in that story:

One of the debates that really surprised me was on arranged marriage, because at one point Juliet's dad is like “You're gonna marry Paris and that's all there is to it, otherwise you're out on the street.”

And a lot of the girls in the class were like “Well, if my dad said that!” But then there was one particular girl, she said [in her culture] you wouldn't tell your dad “No.” You'd be like “Okay. . . He's my dad. He has my best interests at heart.”

So it's interesting. Sometimes you don't plan on those tangents but it happened and it was a good little 15-20 minutes that I had never planned. But it lent to their essay, cause it was related to one of the essay questions that they had at the end of the unit.

Thus, the discussion on arranged marriage in students' own cultures helped students to think more deeply about their own values as "humans", but also gave them a deeper understanding of the issues at the heart of *Romeo and Juliet*. Natasha also used the curriculum to push the boys in her class to explore issues they hadn't even considered, reflections that then fed back into their understanding of both themselves as "humans" and their understanding of the play:

Again that question of arranged marriages came up in that class . . . and the girls of course were all up in arms about it, [but] the guys were like, [shrugging] "meh."

So when I had them re-write their plays they had it so that it was the inverse. So that it was actually the boy having to choose between two girls . . . how they would resolve that?

In fact, most of the teachers I interviewed did not feel they spent time teaching their students "how to be a human" at the expense of the curriculum. Instead, as has now been demonstrated, because those discussions occurred within the confines of the curriculum, and because the outcome of those discussions then fed back into students' ability to meet the demands of the curriculum, they rarely felt the so-called "curriculum crunch." Indeed, the vast majority of the teachers I interviewed seemed to feel that it was possible to have their relational pedagogies intersect their curricular pedagogies. To review but a few examples of this:

From Bruce:

The crossover between the curriculum and social development is in how they work as a team. . . . And I think that the amount of [preparation] each September with the seniors [is helpful]. We talk a little bit about locus of control, that the locus of control in this room is not with the conductor, it's with the students. So you have to, as section leaders or assistant section leaders, take responsibility for your peers and mentor them. They're the ones that are cultivating the next round of leaders, not me. I've laid out some mechanisms for that to happen but it's really about students doing that on their own.

From Anne:

They're comfortable in the struggle. That's what I'm trying to say. You get them so that they are comfortable and accepting that they don't get it, they don't understand it, but they will. And so they can spend the time in that uncomfortable zone, and they know they will find their way out, and it's awesome. I mean, it's part of being a human, part of the understanding of the journey of learning.

From Angie:

I get lots of kids who are in the 11th grade and they go, "Oh my gosh, this is the first I've actually read a book, the whole book from start to finish." And that is a huge experience, you know. It sets them up for, "I can do stuff."

From Stephanie:

Music is just a way to get somewhere . . . in singing together they have to be confident in themselves and confident in each other and there has to be a high level of trust.

And from Will:

In a sense I think curriculum delivery is important, but it's almost like a pretext for a more important thing which is just to sort of teach them how to be, like, humans. You know, to try and encounter a situation that's problematic and rather than just folding your cards and going home you solve it, or at least attempt to. It doesn't matter if it's a Math problem or a Socials essay or like, a kid bugging you in the hallway, it's all the same thing. They're just problems right?

How teacher-student relationships and the curriculum interact

It was not only that teachers used the curriculum to create opportunities to promote their relational pedagogies and encourage relational learning in their students; they also used their own positive relationships with students to engage students in curricular learning. That is, they invested time in building relationships with their students early on in the year precisely because it would help them get their students "on board" for the tough, curricular work that was to come. For example, Leah said:

Yes, I want them to like me. Because I think if they dislike me, they're gonna sort of dislike what they're learning as well, so then they're not gonna be learning it as much.

She then added:

[But] I don't mind if I come off as you know strict sometimes. Like, if I have to get people's attention in a way that they feel like, "Oh Ms. Willes, she's so *meow*." That doesn't bother me. But overall, yeah, they're people. I want them to like me and I want to like them back.

Ellen said simply:

I would say it's probably right up there: if they like you, then they'll like the curriculum you teach.

That is, these teachers believed that students are more likely to learn from a teacher with whom they have a positive relationship, and so they were willing to spend the time developing that relationship. However, as we have seen several times now, building a positive relationship with students was not, for these teachers, synonymous with being students' friends or with being "popular." It was a caring relationship that was sometimes warm but that took place within the bounds of curricular and disciplinary expectations—to the point that a teacher might come across as "*meow*" sometimes.

These teachers also told me that not only did they use their relationships with their students to get those students "on board" for learning the curriculum, they also used the curriculum as the material for creating those relationships in the first place. That is, because they taught the curriculum in an engaging way, they were able to establish a positive relationship with students. Teresa said:

It's because of all the way that I teach, and they like how I teach, that makes them feel connected to me.

[And] ultimately, if they didn't have that relationship with me, they might not have told anybody that you know their mom was getting beaten up by her boyfriend or that their boyfriend was pressuring them to have sex and they weren't sure that they were ready. And if they didn't come to me and they didn't go to anybody who knows what would have ended up happening?

I mean I got into this job because I love the material that I teach, but I stay in it . . . because I care about the kids.

In the same way, then, that experienced teachers' relational and curricular pedagogies existed in dialectic balance, their relationships with their students interacted and intersected dialectically with the curriculum they taught those students.

Relational and curricular pedagogies as a dialectic: When it doesn't work

Social Studies 11

However, relational and curricular pedagogies did not always interact in this kind of dialectic fashion. There were exceptions, and one of the most glaring was the case of Social Studies 11, one of the only remaining senior courses for which there is still a provincial exam. Because of the exam, those who teach this course have much less flexibility to go off on the kind of “useful tangents” Natasha described, or to incorporate “how to be a human” into their curricular plans. Indeed, the teachers who taught Social Studies 11 as part of their load—Angie, Teresa and Leah—said they were able to meet both relational and curricular needs in every course but that one. Angie said:

I guess in Socials 11, I'm finding it really frustrating, and I'm finding it, you know, makes me feel like a bad teacher every day.

Because I'm just like, "Do the worksheets! Do the worksheets! Do the worksheets! Please do the worksheets!" So I don't think they're learning anything at all, except how to be really bored, and how to manage their time. Maybe they're learning meditation, I don't know.

But in my other classes I don't really care about the curriculum, because I think that everything comes, right? I mean in English, you can write every day about whatever you want. You can read anything and you'll get somewhere, right?

I mean I do prepare them for the test. I do have actual lessons and stuff, I mean, it's not as loose as it sounds, but the Socials class is really frustrating to me. It's this driving curriculum.

Indeed, all three of these women wanted to incorporate a relational pedagogy into the way they taught Social Studies 11, but felt it just wasn't possible given the “driving curriculum.” Leah, for example, said:

Socials 11 is really complex and it's really hard to personalize it. I even tell my students, “If I didn't have to teach [to] this exam!” You know, I would definitely see what they're interested in. And I know what they're interested in and I can tell [but] then we can only do it for a certain amount of time.

Newer teachers: “It's a dichotomy of curriculum and relationship”

In addition to those who taught provincially examinable courses like Social Studies 11, the other group who struggled to see how their students' relational and curricular needs could be made to intersect were newer teachers. Not all newer

teachers, of course, as some seemed to have an almost innate ability to manage this dialectic. But for the most part, knowing how to use the curriculum to meet students' relational needs, while simultaneously teaching relational skills that would support students' curricular learning, was the domain of experienced teachers. In fact, many of the more experienced teachers I interviewed said creating a deliberate interaction of relational and curricular pedagogies had been difficult for them initially, and something they'd had to learn to do. Sharon said:

I would say that as a young teacher I made the curriculum more important. I still valued them as people, but I didn't always have the skills to balance that. . . . Your first few years of teaching are just trial by fire. You're just scrambling.

And through the years I've been working on that. I would say that's been my whole goal as a teacher, to hone those skills and I would say now it's almost like relationship is more important than the curriculum But you try to deliver it in a balanced way.

Antoinette says:

As a new teacher, I obsessed about stuff a lot and I did way too much work. . . . I found that I was doing all the work for the kids, they never had anything to think about cause I did all the thinking and kind of like barfed out [the curriculum] . . . and they were like, "okay", and then they weren't engaged.

So I think my approach to teaching has [changed]: do less, but in doing less the kids get to do more. . . . I leave a lot of questions hanging in the air and you know, I don't really answer them.

That is, over time, Antoinette had learned to focus less on "delivering" the curriculum to her students, and more on creating opportunities for students to ponder curricular questions in the service of becoming deeper thinkers, and more astute humans. This was something, as noted, that experienced teachers had needed to figure out how to do over time, just as Antoinette had had to.

In that respect it was interesting to talk to Judy, a newer teacher, and to present my findings to her at the member-check luncheon. I explained how the experienced teachers I spoke with had insisted on the importance of teaching students "how to be a human," and of using the curriculum in the service of that goal. She protested that this was simply too hard to do in the classroom when you're dealing with "all those snapping alligators," that is, with too many competing demands:

I mean sometimes you don't even get a flag [that something's wrong] until one day you're blowing your stack at someone and you're like "Off with your head!"

And then hopefully you have a good counsellor that can get them to open up and talk about what's going on. Because in a classroom situation when you've got a bunch of monkeys, you can't deal with it, because you'd have to go out [into the hall] and then the monkeys are hanging from the chandeliers and whatnot right?

And you know, they get to a certain age and you can't make them, you know. I don't know. There's a lot of different factors and it really depends on the kid too.

And you know I fully admit that I'm a new teacher [and] even though I've got lots of life experience, I don't have a lot of arrows in my quiver in terms of dealing with specific problem issues. So I do my best but sometimes I feel just overwhelmed because there's not a lot of experience to draw on in the school setting right? And it's hard to know sometimes in the moment, even though I would come from my heart, to know, "Is this the right thing?" I don't know.

I think it's difficult to know because I think it gets in the way of relationships when you get so immersed in the curriculum that you either can't continue a relationship or you can't, I don't know, can't feel that familiarity right? There's a dichotomy of curriculum and relationship.

Therefore, for newer teachers like Judy "relationships" and "curriculum" were a dichotomy; there was "no time" to deal with a kid who might need some extra attention because then "the rest of the monkeys would be hanging from the chandeliers." It is interesting to note here too that Judy seems to believe, in contrast to many of the other teachers in this study, that it the counsellor's responsibility to deal with student behaviour; such behaviour is not an opportunity for the classroom teacher to teach the student "how to be a human." "How to be a human" is just not something Judy feels she has time to teach.

Essentially, what Judy is saying is that without positive teacher-student relationships, she couldn't get her students "on-board" and without her students "on-board," she couldn't teach the curriculum. In this sense, Judy's comments are in fact a testament to the fact that relationships and curriculum are not a dichotomy, but a dialectic. They support each other; or, in her case, they undermine each other. Judy did say that she was starting to think about how to build relationships with her students, by taking them on field trips when she could:

It's a lot of work, but it's more engaging. And then you can have a little side talks with kids more and be, not necessarily on a level playing field, but there's more opportunity for relationship building, you know? That to me is really important and it's hard to fit it in sometimes, especially when you're new and you're trying to figure out "Okay, who are you and what do I need to do?"

Thus, for newer teachers like Judy, relationships were "hard to fit in" when a teacher has more immediate concerns; namely, "Who are you and what do I need to do?" However, the more experienced teachers I interviewed worked to build relationships with their students precisely *because* they were trying to "figure out who are you and what do I need to do?" They believed that once they knew the answers to those questions, the curriculum would be easier to teach. That is, they did not seem to feel that curriculum and relationship were a dichotomy in the way that Judy did. For them, building relationships with students was exactly how they dealt with "all those snapping alligators." Time invested in relationship building early in the year meant dealing with discipline and teaching the curriculum later in the year was easier to do.

For example, Bruce, as a Band teacher, had an inordinate amount of "snapping alligators" to deal with: he ran lunchtime and early-morning classes, as well as international and domestic tours and trips, in addition to his regular teaching load. And yet, he told, me, "the door is open every day."

As much as possible I like to sit in the hallway just outside my room [at lunch]. There are five or six kids that are often around, sometimes more. Sometimes they'll come in here and they'll eat lunch here. . . . [And] when they get to school this is the first place they go. . . . This is home.

Researcher: But given how busy you must be, why not close your door and have some, some personal time? Or try to get to some marking done or whatever? Why do you want this to be the first place they come when that sounds to me like a drain on your time and energy?

Bruce: You know, logistically speaking it can appear to take time away from getting other stuff done, [but] what it ends up doing is I can download some tasks that I don't need to personally do, that the kids can do as a way of demonstrating that they want certain things happen in the program. They're the driving force behind starting a new ensemble, or a new program, or running extra rehearsals or whatever. It may be even going on tour. You know, there's a student tour manager that helps out, there are kids that help organize a whole bunch of different things because they know I can't do it alone and they want the experience, so they're very willing to do those things.

Thus, for Bruce, investing time in creating relationships with his students was something that actually helped him to manage the various “snapping alligators” of extra rehearsals, tours, and new programs. But this was contingent on his students, not only “wanting that experience,” but also knowing – and caring – that Bruce couldn’t “do it alone.” It was contingent on them having a positive relationship with him.

Finally, most of the teachers I interviewed also told me that the relational work they did with students was more satisfying to them than simply “barfing” out the curriculum would be. Even if they had originally gone into teaching, like Teresa, “because I love the material I teach” they stayed in it because, like her, they cared about, and enjoyed working with, kids. Angie was another teacher who had originally chosen teaching because she “just wanted to talk about books all day” but now, as noted, she stayed in it because of “all the funny interactions you get to have with the kids. . . . Otherwise, what’s the point?”

But even Angie, an experienced teacher who loves her work, admits that teaching is a “really, really, really hard job.” Small wonder then, that newer teachers like Judy struggle at times; after all, as Judy says, she doesn’t have a lot of “arrows in her quiver in terms of dealing with problem issues.” This then begs the obvious question: what are the arrows that happy, satisfied teachers have in their quivers? That is, what is it that allows some teachers to experience relational and curricular pedagogies as dialectical, while others struggle in a pool of “snapping alligators” where “monkeys swing from the chandeliers” and where relationship and curriculum are “a dichotomy”?

4.3. “The arrows in the quiver”: What makes it work?

4.3.1. *An emphasis on relational pedagogy*

This study revealed several things that allowed satisfied teachers to experience their relational and curricular pedagogies as dialectical; these were things that frustrated teachers lacked or were still working to develop. The most important of these was the degree to which they emphasized relational pedagogy vis-à-vis curricular pedagogy. Interestingly, although these teachers appeared able to strike a balance between relational and curricular goals, experiencing them as dialectical, most did not speak of

these goals in terms of balance. Instead, they emphasized the importance of teaching students “how to be a human” first. It may be that because the curriculum, when compared with relationships, is so heavily favoured in the way high school is traditionally taught, that only teachers who emphasize relational pedagogies are able to achieve a balance at all.

In contrast, the less satisfied teachers I interviewed did not seem to be aiming for a balance of relational and curricular pedagogies, and they certainly did not emphasize relational pedagogies to the degree that the more satisfied teachers did. Instead, these less satisfied teachers emphasized curricular goals and wanted students to care as much about the curriculum as they did. For instance, Heather, another newer teacher, appeared to take the curriculum in her Foods classroom very seriously, and she became frustrated when her students didn’t care as much about it as she did:

I come from a scientific background. I have a Masters in Science, and I take all this very seriously. I’m really concerned about the state of our society’s food understanding, and health, and obesity, and all that stuff, and so I think that it’s one of the most important things that people have to learn. And yet in the hierarchy of what’s taught in school [Foods] is on the low totem pole; maybe one rung up from Phys Ed in terms of parents’ perspective. . . . The [kids] are sold Foods as, “You get to cook, you get to eat, you get to have fun.”

She added, “I like to do [academic projects] but I get a lot of resistance.”

Elodie, a newer teacher who recently came to Canada from France, seemed to be in the process of learning to do the things that her more experienced, more satisfied colleagues had mastered. Like Heather, she said she initially had a very difficult time managing her students, because she wanted to emphasize the curriculum, but that her students had “resisted that.” However, Elodie said that she was now starting to understand the importance of backing off the curriculum, and of putting relational pedagogy at the centre of her teaching instead, with an eye to promoting a more reciprocal learning relationship, along with more critical thinking:

At first I couldn’t believe the way they were talking to me; it was so familiar! They were using really familiar pronouns—you would never do that in France. In France, if you ever even found out your teacher’s first name it was like a really big deal. So it took me a long time to get used to that familiarity [in Canada].

But this year I think I've changed, both as a human and professionally, because now I interact more with the students and we discuss things, and there's both a professional part and a personal part. They come up after class to talk to me, and that was something I never thought I would do with students.

But now I like it, because I think it makes me more human. I'll even tell them like, "I scraped my knee, that's why my jeans are ripped if you're wondering." It makes them laugh, and it makes me human.

Now I even ask myself, "Why didn't we do it that way in France? . . . It's depressing, the way they do it there. It's always the teacher "giving" information, and the students just receive it, and the teacher knows everything – there's no critical thinking.

Therefore, an emphasis on relational pedagogy was something that often took time for newer teachers to develop, but once they did, it helped them to feel more satisfied in their work. That is likely why Ellen, a Home Economics teacher, devotes much of her own time to mentoring new teachers and teachers in training, encouraging them to incorporate the formation of connections with students into their lesson plans, rather than just assuming knowledge of the curriculum will be enough. She told me:

You have to know the subject matter you have to cover, but once you know it you've got to find a way to make it interesting to the students.

I have a student teacher and her strength is she has loads of knowledge. She has a degree from [a fashion design college].

But she has a really difficult group; one [boy] has Autism, and then there are about four boys that are designated as learning disabled, and they're just very distracted.

So the student teacher is in a Sewing room, the students are working individually on parts of the sewing machine, threading it up, whatever, and she's trying to watch the time, you know, cover the material – it's like, a rush through.

But we have little nametags out, so I said to her, "Okay, now as you move around, every time you go by, look at the cards, try using the names."

And I said, "Did you hear so-and-so say that he had a swim meet? You know, just ask him how he did, and make a note of that."

Or when she told a student, "Oh, you're doing really well," I said to her, "You want to actually just touch them on the shoulder when you say, 'You're doing really well,' or else they don't know who specifically you're talking to if there's like, four or five people [at the table]."

And she went, "Oh, I didn't really think about that." And she said, "It just comes so easy to you!"

But I don't have to worry about the content. . . . My thing is, you know, some little thing: a new outfit, haircuts, basketball, you know, something that they're doing.

So I would say it's right up there: if they like you, they'll like the curriculum you're teaching.

We can see in Ellen's comments, therefore, that the curriculum is not unimportant to teachers who emphasize their relational pedagogies; they need to know it, and they need to teach it – but it doesn't stop there. Moreover, because Ellen knows her curriculum so well, she can teach without worrying about it, and focus instead on the relational aspects of teaching. This, in turn, means that her students are more likely to like the curriculum she's teaching.

4.3.2. Dealing with discipline

Taking it home, but not taking it personally

Another one of the arrows in the quiver of the teachers I interviewed was their ability to “not take it personally” – “it” being student behaviour. These teachers may have taken their *concerns* about their students home with them at night, but they had nonetheless learned not to take student *behaviour* personally. Janice said:

Well, I remember many years ago . . . no matter what I would do the student would not do the work. And it didn't matter what I'd say to him, or if I'd sit down and try to do the work with him, he still showed no motivation to do anything. But I wouldn't say I disliked this student or this student disliked me, I think. I didn't take it personally. I didn't think it was me or my subject. It was just the student himself.

Thus, although Janice cared deeply for her students – buying them food when necessary, going to bat for them when they were in trouble with one of her colleagues, and crying during our interview – she nonetheless seemed to have an easy time “not taking it personally.” In this respect she was like most of the teachers I interviewed.

In fact, it appears that these more experienced teachers have learned to expect a degree of resistance from their students, vis-à-vis the curriculum, and have come to understand that “getting the students on board” is just part of the job. Bruce said:

As much fun as it is to teach Beginning Band [now], I hated it for the first several years of teaching. . . . It took me probably five years to

figure out how it had to be different from Senior Band, how the priorities and the instructional style had to be different. . . .

I now know that perfection isn't the goal; that's one thing. They need to have fun as almost a top priority. This has to be a fun experience if they're going to develop a better curiosity and interest about pursuing the instrument that they're playing. (Bruce)

Therefore, Bruce did not seem to blame his students for the fact that Beginning Band was not going well for the first five years, or take their disinterest in his course personally. He did however, "take it home" in the sense that he took the responsibility for that disinterest on himself, and tried different things until the course "worked." Ultimately, what worked was taking the emphasis off the demands of the curriculum and working instead on building a sense of fun into the course. That is, in contrast with Heather, Bruce didn't mind the fact that his students were "sold" the course as "something fun." Instead, he embraced the "fun" inherent in Beginning Band as a way to get students "on board" with learning the curriculum.

Moreover, Bruce – like the other satisfied teachers I spoke with – continued to reflect on his practice, even though he was now an experienced teacher and a leader in his school. For him, and for other teachers like him, the effort to get students "on board" and to place relationships at the center of their teaching was ongoing. And when it wasn't working, these teachers looked to themselves to understand why, rather than blaming their students, or taking it personally. Bruce told the following story of something that had happened to him in the week of our interview:

On Wednesday I did Grad Transitions [i.e., graduating interviews] for kids who'd been in Band. And as each kid came in, some kids started sharing things, and I felt devastated inside. How have I been teaching you for five years and I didn't know you've been doing ballet since age four? What part of my teaching didn't invite you to share an area of expertise or an in-depth experience that you have in your own life? So that means, was I at fault?

Thus, like Heather, Bruce clearly "took all this very seriously"; he felt "devastated" by his own perceived failures. But Bruce did not appear to take student behaviour personally. He interpreted their reticence as a reflection of his need to improve his practice, but not as a rejection of himself as a teacher. This is a subtle difference, but an important one.

Like managing the relational/curricular dialectic, being able to “not take it personally” was something most teachers had to learn, and to practice, over the course of their careers. Will tells a particularly dramatic story of this process:

I remember in my first year of teaching, I had this girl and she was just a raging bitch. Sorry, it’s horrible, but she really was. We were just at each other’s throats for months and it sort of culminated in this meeting, and this horribly written letter about how much of a jerk I was, and the principal had to get involved, and it was embarrassing.

And I was venting to this guy – he was probably my mentor – and he said, “Listen, the most important thing is: you’re a teacher. You can despise a kid, you can despise half your class, but the second they feel that, you’re toast. The second they feel that you don’t like them, you’ve lost that kid. And it doesn’t matter how vile their behaviour is, you absolutely cannot let that show.”

And so that was my fault because I should have looked at her and found something to like.

I mean, there’s a difference between some jerk up at the front, writing down the quadratic equation, and some *person* up at the front that knows you, and that asks questions about you, and that knows your mom’s name, who’s writing down the quadratic equation. Right?

. . . This guy, who was a genius, he also said that as a teacher you have to take your job seriously but you can’t take yourself seriously, which was just great.

Thus, Will had learned – with the help of a mentor – “not to take it personally” and “not to take himself seriously.” Now, he says, he understands that it’s his responsibility to get students “on board” and “find something to like about them.” It’s hard work, but like so much else, it’s part of the job. In fact, he says he’s learned to enjoy the challenge of having to “prove” himself to his students. He likes it when they’re “critical”:

I find as a teacher my most stressful months are September and October, because I don’t know the kids yet. . . .So it takes them a while to get used to me. Which is good in a sense because it forces you as a teacher to like, prove yourself. Because they’re sort of critical right? They know what they want, and so they sort of they’re judging you for the first couple of months, and so that weird thing happens at the beginning when you kind of have to earn their trust, or earn their ear, so to speak. . .

Stephanie said she also finds it hard not to take student behaviour, and mistakes, personally, because she feels strongly about her subject, and wants to see it done

“right”. But like Will, she’s learning. After all, she says, “It’s not their fault. I have to teach them.”

Music is for me really personal, because that’s how I roll. But if it’s not going right, or the way I want, I have to stop, and explain it [to them] instead of just saying, “Nooo! It’s all wrong!”

It’s actually getting better. I’m getting better at figuring out exactly what it is [that’s not working] and then telling them right away so they kinda get on side faster, rather than waiting until I explode. So I’m trying to control that.

It’s not their fault, I have to teach them.

Some newer teachers were still struggling with the idea that it’s the teacher’s job to find something to like, and that teachers can choose to take their subject, themselves, and their students’ behaviour, less personally. Heather told a story of when a student came late to class and things got personal on both sides, to the point that Heather felt it was “teacher abuse”:

This guy cruises in at like, 11 o’clock in my class, in second block. I’m like “What are you doing here? Where have you been? How come you’re so late?”

“Oh, I slept in.”

I’m like, “You slept in? It’s almost 11 o’clock!”

“Oh well. I have study block first period.”

I’m like “So? It was *study* block. You’ve got a *study* block not a *sleep* block.” And you know, I said, “Come on, you’re in Grade 12. That is such loser behaviour. If I were your boss you would be so out of here. You know, like, get real with me.”

He goes “Are you calling me a loser?”

And I went [snapping noise] “If the shoe fits.”

And he got so pissed off he just went on this big tirade and it just really upset me. And then we end up in this whole dialogue, and all the kids are ganging up on me, “We don’t have to be here!”

And I’m like “Ugh.” I feel like saying, “Oh, fuck off and leave me alone.” I don’t have to deal with this. That is loser behaviour, you know. I don’t have to justify . . . You know, it’s like they talk about student abuse, well, what about teacher abuse?

So I’m not sure how to handle that stuff when that happens . . . I just felt myself going [descending sound] down to his level, you know. So it was just hard to control the dynamic without a little bag of tricks.

Heather did feel like she was starting to develop a “bag of tricks”, but felt it wasn’t happening fast enough:

Here we are in almost March [and] I feel like I’m finally getting rapport with some of them. It took me a long time to learn all the names of all seven classes of kids. It’s a lot. But I figured out this term: “Oh you can give them nametags, and you know see if that helps, or sit them alphabetically so you know where those guys sit, or that kind of stuff.” There are little tricks you can do. So I just figured that out. But you know, there’s so much to learn when you’re you know dealing with new systems in a new school and so on.

The importance of mentorship

Heather is right: there is “so much to learn when you’re dealing with new systems in a new school and so on.” Most new teachers struggle with the kinds of things Heather, Elodie, Angie and Judy mentioned. For instance, we have seen Will’s story of the “raging bitch” who wrote a “horribly-written letter about how much of a jerk [he] was,” and we have heard Teresa’s story of the boy who “just really wanted to go to prison” and made her cry “more than [she] had over anything else.” Other teachers that I spoke to had stories like this, too; thus, Heather’s story of “getting into it” and “getting personal” is not unusual. But the difference between Heather, and Will and Teresa, is that the latter two had mentors or other supportive people who had helped them to use their experiences to add to their “bag of tricks.” Teresa’s husband helped her to see there are some people you can’t help, if they don’t want to be helped; Will had a colleague show him that when “you’re a teacher . . . you have to take your job seriously, but you can’t take yourself seriously . . . [you have to] find something to like.”

But Heather was still looking for someone to help her get her own “bag of tricks” organized, to help her add what Judy called, “arrows to her quiver.” In fact, Heather specifically mentioned during our interview that she felt she needed a mentor. Indeed, it seems that someone like Ellen, who frequently mentors student teachers and newer teachers, could have helped Heather, especially given that Ellen told her own student teacher about one trick – using nametags – that Heather had only just figured out for herself. Another teacher I spoke with, Eric, also sees the need for greater mentorship of newer teachers. He volunteers to run a weekly after-school workshop for the student teachers at his school because, he says, “I don’t believe in that ‘throw them into the fire’ model . . . the way I was taught.” Indeed, it seems that mentorship, the kind provided by

more experienced teachers like Ellen and Eric, helps many new teachers learn the kinds of “tricks” that can help them manage a classroom, and in so doing, free up their attention for developing a dialectic of relational and curricular pedagogies.

Indeed, if we look again at the advice Ellen gave her student teacher we see that it was less a “bag of tricks” than it was a suggestion that the teacher incorporate more relationship-building into her interactions with students:

As you move around . . . every time you go by, try using the names, you know, look at the cards.

And I said, “Did you hear so-and-so say that he had a swim meet? You know, just ask him how he did, and make a note of that.”

Or when she said, “Oh you’re doing really well,” I said to her, “You want to actually just touch them when you say, ‘you’re doing really well,’ or else they don’t know who specifically you’re talking to if there’s like, four or five people.”

That is, Ellen’s advice goes beyond “tricks” like using name cards, to an emphasis on creating genuine connections with students. Consider also Sharon’s comments, on the “bag of tricks” she says she has developed over the course of her career. A closer examination of these comments reveals that they are not “tricks” at all, but again, an emphasis on teacher-student relationships and relational pedagogy:

It’s a bag of tricks you use. It’s psychology, it’s compassion, it’s listening, it’s listening skills, talking skills, communication skills, just common sense skills, of how you are in the moment and communicate what you need to, and also address what the issue is with that person.

“Psychology,” “compassion,” “common sense,” being “in the moment” and having “communication skills.” These are hardly “tricks” that one could outline in a handbook for new teachers. Instead, they are part of an attitude, an orientation toward teaching that seems to be developed and learned over time, through experience and often with the help of a mentor.

Finding out why

In addition to emphasizing relational pedagogy, “not taking [student behaviour] personally”, and enlisting the help of a skilled mentor, the satisfied teachers I interviewed also talked about the importance of “finding out why” a student was engaging in a

particular inappropriate behaviour. In fact, this was part of their ability to “not take it personally”, because they all assumed, like Janice, that it wasn’t “me or my subject” but something about “the student himself.” Moreover, the more satisfied teachers in this study undertook to find out what was going on with the student in question that was causing the behaviour, and tried to work with them on it. For example, Harry said:

What I say to kids [is], “I’m not mad at you for disrupting class, I’m really worried for the reasons why you’re disrupting my class. What is going on?”

. . . [And] I have students that can’t go to school because they need to take their sister to a doctor and there’s no one at home because mom’s working. I’ve had students that could not make it to first class because there’s violence at home and they’re only able to go to sleep at like, 2 a.m. when things calm down. I have students who just can’t come after school cause they have to go home and cook dinner.

Thus, one of Harry’s students, like Heather’s, was late because he “slept in.” But when Harry endeavoured to learn more, he found out the student was “sleeping in” because “there’s violence at home and they’re only able to go to sleep at like, 2 a.m.,” something that Harry does not characterize as “loser behaviour.”

Another teacher who always endeavoured to “find out why” was Eric, who said:

I don’t like to use the hard discipline approach because usually when kids are screwing up there’s a reason right? And so if the kid is having a hard time and you’ve given the riot act for handing in something late, and [it turns out] their parents are in the middle of getting divorced—you know what I mean? Like, you have to find out sort of the deeper issues, you know?

A couple of years ago this one girl was really into everything in class but she wasn’t handing anything in. And she wouldn’t even give me a field trip form, but she wanted to go on the field trip right? And so I knew there was some kind of real disconnect going on at home.

When we finally got her to the counsellor, it turned out dad was staying out all night cruising with his girlfriend, and told the mom to screw off and, you know, there’s all this stuff going on and this girl think it’s her fault, you know.

And it’s just such a bad, horrible story. But if I’d just given her a hard time for not handing stuff in, it’s just making the problem worse right?

So we had a meeting with the counsellor and there was a big cry-fest. I think from subsequent meetings between the counsellor and the girl, you know, she realized that it wasn’t her fault, it wasn’t her

responsibility that her dad was making bad decisions, and that didn't mean she had to make bad decisions, right?

So she sort of got back on track. And she still – she's not in my class now, but she still comes and sees me. She comes to talk.

However, while most of the teachers I talked to usually endeavoured to “find out why” – and did so one-one-one, not in front of the whole class – not all of them had students whose excuses were as good as Eric's, or Harry's. For instance, when Leah asked her students why they were late, she got the following excuses:

“Well, I have to wait for the neighbour across the street who's late.”

“Why are you waiting for the neighbour?”

“I don't know, we just walk together.”

So I'm like, “Well, that person's holding you back so don't walk with them anymore.” And then they show up [on time].

Or . . . one of my students is always outside smoking so she's often late. And a lot of it is, “I slept in.”

And they say, “I'm late for every class, you're lucky I'm even here.” I've had that from a couple of students, but not in a negative way.

I just . . . try and get them to come earlier and earlier and . . . if I see an improvement, I don't want to destroy the improvement. I don't want to just come down on them negatively, because they tend to get later and later and later again. So if they're five minutes late as opposed to 15 minutes late, to me that's an improvement.

Clearly, most of Leah's students didn't have a good reason to be late; one could even say it was “loser behaviour” in most cases. But Leah never called it that, and she didn't take it personally. It seems she didn't interpret student lateness as a rejection of herself or her subject matter, but as evidence that a student hasn't yet learned all the intrapersonal and organizational skills associated with “how to be a human.” For that reason, and because she was “thinking beyond June”, Leah engaged this “loser behaviour” as an opportunity to help her students improve that behaviour and to learn “how to be a human.” That is, she talked to her students about their lateness, gave them suggestions (“Well, that person's holding you back, don't walk with them any more”) and found ways to encourage more positive behaviour (“if they're five minutes late as opposed to 15, to me that's an improvement.”) However, it is also important to note here that Leah didn't just let the lateness go, either. She had expectations of her students: they had to come for detention if they were late, but she tried to use those detentions to

get them to see that they had been taking time away from themselves, in a style similar to that of the “authoritative” parent (Baumrind, 1978, 1991).

Explaining why

The correlate of “finding out why” is, of course, “explaining why.” The teachers I spoke with told me that they found it much easier to get students “on board” and to get them to behave well when students understood why those behavioural expectations were in place to begin with. Harry, for example, had a “notorious skipper” on his hands one year. He wanted to explain to that boy why it was important to be in class but of course, he couldn’t, because the student was so rarely there. Harry ended up having the conversation with the boy over the phone:

The only time I actually got him to come to class was when his dad had called me, and [the student came on the phone] and I said to him, “You know, you need to be here. I know it’s hard, but you know you’re a very bright guy when you’re here so the first thing is. . . . I want you here. I can’t help you unless you’re here. Being in this room will be enough to get us started.”

And he ended up being a really good student when he was there. He started coming more often. He came almost 90 per cent regularly, and it was that firmness that came with the honesty thing, of saying “I want you in this classroom, I want you to be here, I’m not saying this because you’re in trouble, I say it because there’s a problem.”

Teresa, too, found that “firmness mixed with the honesty thing,” which could be characterized as a combination of demandingness and warmth, was the most effective approach. Moreover, she found it most effective when, like Harry, she could get her students to understand for themselves why a certain behaviour was prohibited:

I try to kind of turn it around and just kind of ask them.

Like, because a lot of them are stoners, they talk about, “I’ve got a vaporizer so it [marijuana smoke] doesn’t pollute my lungs.”

And I’m like “Well, how do you think you get high? If nothing’s going into your lungs that could be damaging your lungs, how are you getting high?”

I try to do that, where I make them kind of think through it, because I think at this point they’ve been told constantly and they’re tired of adults telling them what to do. And they need to be thinking about it [themselves] instead.

“Picking your battles”

Of course, there were times when teachers had to discipline their students, to acknowledge something as clearly unacceptable and issue some kind of consequence for it. Again, this was something that most teachers said they'd had to learn to do, over the course of their careers. Will says:

I think as a beginning teacher I was a little too relaxed. It sounds a bit lame, but I think I was trying to be the “cool” teacher. No one sees themselves as strict, so it was hard to be myself and be authoritative. This is what I think about when people talk about finding their teaching voice—it’s basically about learning how to be yourself and be authoritative at the same time.

Teresa says:

I see it with almost every student teacher, they’re so worried about being cool . . . that’s why management is so hard for most people. And that took me a long time, to realize that I didn’t have to be a dragon lady, but I actually found that students responded to me better once I actually started figuring out what appropriate consequences were and having clear boundaries. Kids like boundaries. It’s weird.

At this point in their careers most of the teachers I interviewed seemed to have figured out “how to be yourself and authoritative at the same time . . . how to have clear boundaries and appropriate consequences without being a dragon lady.” For most of them, this involved setting up boundaries with students early on in the relationship, and then being careful not to “come down on” students for anything other than important transgressions of those boundaries. Eric said:

I try not to use a punishment model . . . I talk to the kid about it first. I don’t like the punishment model. There are certain instances, when kids cross the line dramatically, they go to the office or they go to the counsellor or you phone home or something, but most of the time, I don’t like to be a strict authoritarian.

Ande specifically noted that she had to be “strict at the beginning of the year, of course, but then [I can] loosen and relax as the year progresses and I get to know the students better.” Will agreed, and wrote to me in an email: “I tend to be more formal and uptight (strict, I suppose) at the beginning of the year and loosen up as the year progresses.” He added:

I still think that picking your battles is important, though. I've also found that you can't *ever* let on that you really dislike a kid (even when you *really* do). I mean, the pain-in-the-ass kids are used to causing irritation in their teachers, but once they sense that you are picking on them, it's really hard to get them back.

For Will, it was important to treat students with respect, even warmth, most of the time. Most teachers agreed, seeming to believe that it was important "pick your battles"; that is, to be careful about deciding when to "snap" at students. Done right, these "snaps" could actually strengthen the teacher-student relationship; after all, "kids like boundaries." But done wrong, and "it's too hard to get them back." Therefore, it seemed that teachers tried to address disciplinary infractions first with a joke, next with a comment, later by talking to the student, then by talking to the parent or the counsellor, and finally, with a punishment. For example, when I walked into Angie's classroom for our interview I found written on her chalkboard, followed by a big smiley face:

Dear Students: I know when you're texting. Seriously, no one just looks down at their crotch and laughs. ☺

It seemed Angie was still at the "joking" stage in her efforts to have students stop texting.

In fact, when teachers "picked their battles," students seemed more likely to respond to that teacher's comment. That is, teachers had to be "loose and relaxed" most of the time so that a "snap" would be rare and students would know it was serious. Moreover, when teachers were "loose and relaxed most of the time," students would enjoy the teacher-student relationship and so would *want* to step back "within the boundaries" quickly if a "snap" occurred. "If I turn the teacher stare on right away," says Harry, "it doesn't work. It doesn't have power unless I have [a relationship] with them." For that reason, Harry tried to be judicious about "snapping":

I normally don't snap or stand up. I'll joke with them about like, the swear jar or other things, but . . . I had to snap today 'cause they used the word "gay." "That's so gay" they said, and I had to snap in the classroom about that.

I said, "No. That is not being discussed, that term. . . . you can't use that word as though it's bad."

I need to give them a serious kind of expression [sometimes] so that they know that it's serious, but also be light with them afterwards once they stand up and be a little bit more responsible.

Stephanie, like Harry, would “snap” if students “crossed the line dramatically,” but preferred not to use the “punishment model.” She said:

They do [cross boundaries sometimes], but I can reset it if I have to. Usually I can just look at them. And they kinda know and they just say, “Okay, sorry.”

That is, because Stephanie had a warm relationship with her students most of the time, it seems they felt it was in their own interest to stay “within the boundaries.” All it took was a look from her to let them know they’d crossed the line, and they stepped right back “within the boundaries” again. Her students wanted a close relationship with her, and so it was easy for her to “reset” that relationship if she had to.

4.3.3. Teaching style

In addition to their tendencies to be judicious about “snapping,” to “find out why” students had misbehaved in the first place, to try not to take student misbehaviour “personally” and finally, to emphasize relational pedagogy, the other “arrows in the quivers” of the teachers I spoke with had to do with their teaching style. The teaching style of the satisfied teachers I spoke with tended to be authentic, explicit, accepting, and emphasized making things “fun” in the classroom as much as possible. These aspects of teaching style were found in all those teachers who described themselves as happy and satisfied in the classroom, which were most of the teachers in this study.

Making it fun: “I have to work really hard”

These teachers seemed to believe that students would only be “on board” with learning the curriculum if the curriculum was enjoyable in some way. Harry said the boys he taught often struggled to learn, so he had to:

Get into playing, get into games. I use a lot of games in my classroom when I have time, lots of energy breaks, get up, do things, everyone’s gonna move, everyone’s gonna do stuff.

Stephanie felt the same way:

I guess the main thing is to be happy singing together. I get that established right away. . . . So they have to first be happy singing

together then they have to buy into [the idea] that choir is a community and we have to support each other.

Once they get the choir bug . . . they sing the fun music or the hard music, and they go places, I take them to go sing.

Having fun wasn't only the domain of electives teachers; those who taught senior academic courses also saw a correlation between having fun and "getting students on board." For example, Leah said that in Law 12:

We do all kinds of fun stuff! We did a retrial recently; they all had to be different [roles], you know lawyer, judge. And they had to build a case out of a case that had already been tried. We go on field trips, to the Law Courts, have people come in, lawyers and judges and police officers come in and talk to us . . . I also show lots of movies . . .

In Math, Will says:

You try to get them to realize that it can be interesting just for the sake of being interesting. Like that pattern, the fact that it shows up, is really neat. So you try and at least instil in them a certain amount of appreciation for abstract things. And just because you'll never use this in your job and it won't make you any money . . . doesn't mean that it's not just cool because it's cool.

However, teachers were clear that in order to make a class "fun," they had to "work really hard." Stephanie says:

I have to work really hard. I have to kind of be a clown. Just joking around right away. But then I show them the other side, right? We have to be serious about the music, but in between I'm trying to get them to think of things.

For Stephanie, being a "clown" could be exhausting, but it wasn't an option for her not to do it. It was too important to getting the kids "on board." It was an "arrow in her quiver." Paul, a non-enrolling Aboriginal Education teacher who works in tandem with Dave, an Aboriginal Student Support worker, agrees that in order to make learning "fun", a teacher has to work very hard. Even using humour and "having a light touch" was for him, rooted in a substantial amount of learning, work, and reflection:

Both Dave and I have to play on the Aboriginal concept of humour. So we're both—I'm a very relaxed teacher for that. I can't be very harsh or authoritarian otherwise I won't get respect from them.

Part of that comes from a lot of the background reading that I've done . . . Aboriginal history and then Aboriginal literature as well. Humour

for Aboriginal culture is incredibly central. Some of the best storytellers like Thomas King or Shermann Alexie all use humour, and even to some degree self-deprecating humour.

I can't use self-deprecating humour to the same degree, but it's the idea that humour and play is part of learning and so when you're telling stories, story must have humour, must have entertainment. That's how we learn, humans, by oral tradition. We learn by story, and story has to include information and entertainment.

So again, from reading and from just again exposure to that culture, especially hanging around a lot more with Dave and just seeing the dynamic with the students here. You need to have a light touch.

High expectations: "The foundation of the house"

However, the fact that teachers wanted their students to "have fun" didn't mean they set the bar low in terms of expectations. Far from it; in fact, many teachers believed that students had the most fun when they took challenges head on and met them. For this reason, these teachers deliberately held high expectations for their students. For example, Will says that while he wants his students to learn to appreciate Math as an abstract thing that's "cool just because it's cool", it won't actually be "cool" unless they can understand it first. And for that, he says, they have to "step up":

In Grade 11 sometimes I get kids that I feel like they're not intimidated enough. Like, this is going to be tricky; it's called Pre-calculus for a reason. [And] Physics 11, it's awesome but it can be difficult and you have to . . . You have to have a certain amount of respect for the, you know, complexity of the curriculum you can't, you can't just cruise . . .

The expectation to "step up" was found not only in the academic subjects, but in the elective areas too. Bruce teaches Band and says:

One of the famous lines in Beginning Band is "I'm not here to make friends, I'm here to make music, so let's get it done." And if we [make] something amicable out of it, super. You know, that's the bonus, but let's do the real business first. . . .

I think the analogy that I would use is that the foundation of the house is not fancy, it's just a foundation. The designer gets to be excited by what's above ground.

So that time in class that's foundational time . . . there's a high expectation of student achievement. Then out of that hard work, that's where the fun ends up existing and that's that extension that's a tonne of fun, but without the foundation you can't get all that stuff.

For Bruce therefore, as for Will, the ability to “make it fun” is predicated on the idea of high expectations for both student behaviour, and for the curriculum.

Antoinette also teaches elective courses – Art and Drama – and like Bruce, she thinks it’s very important that the expectations for her students be set high. Like him, she believes those high expectations are part of how they will come to master a given discipline and ultimately, have more fun. However, because Antoinette teaches at two very different schools, to two very different groups of kids, the high expectations are different for each group. With one group, she says:

These kids live in a neighbourhood where I would hesitate to let my own children even walk around . . .

Researcher: So what do you think those kids need?

Antoinette: They need consistency, rules. They need to know how to behave in the setting. And not get in trouble for taking risks, but learning what a good risk looks like and what a bad risk looks like. . . .

It’s very easy to just sit and watch everybody do everything but as soon as they’re asked to participate all of sudden, you know, it’s a leap for you know some of these kids.

In this context then, the high expectations are around appropriate behaviour and basic participation. Moreover, in this context Antoinette understands that she has to show her students “what a good risk looks like and what a bad risk looks like.” With the other group, Antoinette says, the expectations are still high, and still based on risk-taking, but because these students don’t need to be shown “what a good risk looks like”, the expectations can be more open-ended:

They’re a group of kids that have been handpicked and they want to do the right thing. They wanna be on the right side of everything.

If they’re allowed to take risks and they know it, then they will start taking risks, but at the beginning of the year there was a lot of “Can I do this? Is this ok? Can I?”

To which I was like “Yeah. And more. Go further. Try this!”

And it’s gotten to the point now where they kind of understand that when they’re given a project my expectation is that they’re gonna figure it out. The projects I give them are much more open-ended and much more, I would say, much more involved in terms of like how far we can go with it, and the connections we can make with it . . .

Kristy agrees that a course is more enjoyable for both teachers and students when the expectations are high. She also agrees that what “high” expectations look like will depend on the students in question. Moreover, Kristy adds that high expectations for students will only work in the context of a positive teacher-student relationship because only a teacher who knows her students well will be able to determine what level of expectation is appropriate for them, as Antoinette did. Moreover, Kristy says students are generally only motivated to meet the high expectations set out by a teacher when they want to please that teacher. She told me the story of a time when her students had not met the level of expectation she’d set out for them, and she’d told them so:

I always put [feedback] on paper, and then I let them read it [privately]. Like: “You guys didn’t practice.”

But one time I did say it [out loud]. I just said, “I’m really disappointed in your presentation. You guys are stellar [students] and you kind of did this lame thing, so I marked you really low.”

But I said it in front of the whole class. That’s one of the only [times] I did that. But because I hold them in such high esteem, and they just did this crap job, I wanted everyone to know that I was disappointed in them.

And then they felt so bad. That was their first term mess up and then second and third term they were better.

Therefore, just as teachers had to be judicious about deciding when to “snap,” they also had to be judicious about deciding when to openly express disappointment in students. Done right, and this criticism can improve the teacher-student relationship in the sense that students will appreciate being held to a high standard by someone they admire, as in the case of Kristy’s students (“Because I hold them in such high esteem, and then they felt so bad, and then second and third term, they were better”). However, when a teacher holds high expectations for her students in the absence of a positive teacher-student relationship, it seems those expectations can cause strife in the classroom. Judy reported the following story:

So the presentation was on South Africa and [the student] did not even mention Nelson Mandela. So at the end I was giving them verbal feedback, and I said, “What about the former president?”

And she said, “I don’t know.”

And I said, “How can you not? How can you do six hours of research on South Africa and not come across Nelson Mandela?”

And she goes, "You're being so mean to me!"

So it's like, "Oh, am I?" You know, all these [thought] bubbles are coming out of my [head] . . . I don't know, it just made me realize that they didn't like me giving . . .

Researcher: Feedback in front of the whole class?

Judy: Well, yeah, exactly, maybe that's it. But it was just really awkward . . . I thought that was a totally valid evaluation but maybe not. It just told me she hadn't really done anything during class time.

But I felt bad cause it was at the end of the year, and that was how they go out, you know? But it was really disappointing. There were a lot in the class that didn't do anything, because it was Tourism, and by that point I was kind of going "Oh, pfft." You know? Like, great, why bother? I don't know. I was so mad.

It was one of those things where maybe I shouldn't have said it out loud, but once you do, [how do] you say you made a mistake?

Therefore, like most of the teachers I interviewed, both Kristy and Judy were passionate about the importance of holding high expectations for their students, and for themselves. However, it seems that high expectations in the absence of a positive teacher-student relationship could backfire on a teacher, as they did for Judy. In Kristy's case, where students knew they were held in high esteem and where care was normally taken to give feedback privately, students responded to those high expectations and worked harder. Moreover they worked to meet those expectations in part to please a teacher they liked. For that reason, most teachers were willing to work "really hard" to make their courses "fun," and "cool," and to have "a light touch," so that "high expectations" would not be resented by their adolescent students.

Authentic

Holding high expectations for students was, for most teachers, an expression of care for those students more than it was a desire to emphasize the curriculum for its own sake. Indeed, while scholars (e.g., Riley, 2011) may believe that teachers are attracted to secondary school because they want to specialize in a given curricular area, this was not the most important factor in the decision of the teachers interviewed for this study to choose secondary over elementary school. Instead, half the teachers interviewed here – Anne, Leah, Angie, Natasha, Joe, Antoinette, Ellen, Phoenix, Stephanie and Teresa – said they had chosen secondary school over elementary school because they wanted to be able to be "real" with their students. Of working in elementary schools, for instance,

Leah said, “It’s almost like tricking them into going along with what you have planned.” She preferred working in high school because she could more easily be “herself” with her students. Stephanie had taught elementary school, too, and agreed with Leah that it was harder to be authentic with younger students. In her case, “joking around” and “being a clown” was a huge part of how she created a sense of community and camaraderie in her classroom. But in elementary school, she said, she couldn’t do that, and felt as a result that she was not being “authentic” as a teacher:

Laughing is good because it gets them to open up . . . I use humour all the time . . . I find holding back is like, not totally being authentic. . . . I’m not that kind of teacher.

But joking around—you can’t joke around with elementary kids. They’d totally go crazy or mental on you. They think it’s so funny you cannot get them back. I found I couldn’t joke around ‘cause then they’d just take me for a ride, so I was really serious.

Almost adults

The teachers I interviewed also said they wanted the ability to work with students who were nearly, but not quite, adults. For instance, many teachers I spoke with said they were attracted to the prospect of helping students make decisions about “real life” and “what’s happening after” high school. Ellen said:

I think it’s the connecting with almost a more immediate future. I talk a lot about what’s happening after, like, do we all have to go to university? And we couldn’t really be talking about that [in elementary school]. . . . [And] with a Grade 3 or 4, I couldn’t talk about my own reflections on growing up.

Natasha felt the same way:

It’s interesting to see, and it’s interesting to be part of like, forming who they become, and how they interact with other people, cause they’re still figuring it out. It’s sort of like they’re running a race and you’re like “Okay, actually you gotta go this way.” And they’re like “Oh, okay,” and they slowly learn to do that. . . .

What I like most about teaching Grade 8 is that it’s that one year where they leave elementary school and their ideas are just forming. So they don’t really know what they like, they don’t really know they’re all about. They’re still trying to figure it out, and I like that.

I do remember what it was like to be 12, 13 years old, going to high school thinking “Oh my goodness, I’m in a bigger fish tank, how am I

gonna get through this?" And I think that, that for me, was really – I chose secondary for that reason.

Thus, teachers like Natasha and Ellen enjoyed being able to talk to students about which way "you gotta go" both now and in the "immediate future." This, for them, went hand-in-hand with "being authentic" because in order to talk about the "immediate future", teachers had to be able to talk about their "own reflections of growing up" and how the students are "gonna get through this", as their teachers once did. Anne agrees with Natasha and Ellen that teaching high school provides teachers a unique opportunity to guide students into a stable adult future:

They need role models. I think they need people that are real and make them feel like everything that they're going through is going to be okay and that at some point in time they will find out who they are. Because every single person in this school that's an adult is obviously getting through their lives fairly okay. Has made it, you know.

Joe adds:

I'm quite comfortable sharing my personal life . . . because I feel like they need to know that, we're real people, we have real challenges . . . there might be something I say that might help them adapt to their challenges that they're facing.

That is, far from simply putting up with "less-than-likeable adolescent students" (Klassen, 2008, p. 74) the teachers I interviewed actually enjoyed this particular developmental stage. It is a stage at which students are able to make choices for themselves, but still need their teachers' guidance. The students are not adults, but they nearly are, and for the satisfied teachers I interviewed, this was absolutely their "favourite age." Anne said:

I don't mind teaching little kids [but] high schoolers are just a better fit [for me]. [There's] more independence in the kids. I find them very funny, I find them very creative, I like their character, I like their unique, you know, look on life. It's a little less hand holding.

Anne added that she particularly enjoyed the "sarcastic sense of humour" of which adolescents are capable. Angie agreed. "I like the cheeky little buggers," she said.

However, it is interesting to note here that the less satisfied teachers I spoke with seemed not to enjoy adolescence, as a developmental stage, as much as the more satisfied teachers did. Some of these less satisfied teachers, like Elodie and Heather

said they had actually wanted to work with adults, who they believed took their work more seriously, but that they'd had to take jobs in high school when they couldn't get jobs working with adults. In fact, Heather still teaches night courses for adults from time to time and when I asked her how she adapted her teaching to suit the needs of adolescents she said, "I don't. I just lower the expectations, that's all." This is in contrast to the other teachers I interviewed who, as we have seen, believed it was important to set high expectations of their students. Those teachers also seemed to relish working in that zone between childhood and adulthood, crafting assignments with high expectations that were nonetheless developmentally appropriate for their adolescent students.

Accepting

Precisely because secondary students exist in a zone somewhere between childhood and adulthood, however, the guidance they require from their teachers can sometimes take on a decidedly adult tone. The teachers I interviewed told me that a secondary teacher can't shy away from talking about sex, drugs, and other taboo issues when they arise. In fact, for many of these teachers, this is precisely why they made the conscious choice every day to be "real" with their students—so students would know they could be "real" with their teachers too. Angie, as we have seen, joked about "looking down at your crotch" when trying to get her students to stop texting. It was clear she tried to keep the discourse between herself and her students decidedly "real." In fact, she told me:

I talk to students like they are real people, and . . . because I had my own high school experiences, I don't freak about the so-called terrible high school things. Right?

Like, I acknowledge that [teenagers] have sexual relationships, I acknowledge that they drink and do drugs. I don't encourage it, I don't say, "Yeah! Go out and find somebody!" and stuff like that, but I also am not judgmental about it. So I leave the door open for them to have real conversations about that if they need to.

Researcher: And do they take you up on that?

Angie: Always. Often. I have bizarro conversations with students all the time (laughs).

I think that I share more of my life, like my previous, younger life, than other teachers do. And maybe than I should, I don't know . . . I try to be real in the classroom. I know sometimes things I say are

offside, but I say things the way I would say them in real life, and the way the kids would say them.

I say things like, "Really, English is just about your ability to bullshit." And they're like, "Oh my gosh, she said bullshit! Okay, let's talk," right? So, I think that I'm willing to share my experiences, and that I'm able to get down to their level, without getting down to their level.

Leah felt the same way:

To pretend [sex] doesn't exist because you're trying to keep your classroom clean, I don't think it's very responsible on our part . . .

One time there was something in a film . . . it was a First Nations creation story, and [the film mentioned] how they needed women to have sex with. And [the kids] all start laughing.

And I'm like, "You know, everybody has sex. Your parents had sex so that you could be born." Just to sort of make it less of a taboo and less silly. Just to normalize it. Everyone has sex.

Teresa said:

I had a kid who thought that if you ate tainted meat that's how you got herpes . . . I'm like, "No, that's how you get mad cow disease. You get herpes from sex, or oral herpes you can get from kissing and oral sex." And I've told kids you know about things like, "You know, a lot of STDs you can get from oral sex as well as regular intercourse."

Therefore, being "real" meant opening a dialogue for students to talk about sex, drugs, or drinking; it meant being "accepting" of the "so-called terrible high school things." Most of the teachers I interviewed believed it was critically important to be accepting of these things because so often, students' parents were not. For instance, Ellen said she once had a student come to her and say:

"I'm having an identity crisis." That's how she started it . . . [Then] she told me she's definitely a lesbian . . .

And she's Asian. And that's huge because if you're Asian you don't talk about sex. Nothing, absolutely nothing [at home] . . . It's all going to come from school. So like I've had the weirdest questions from Asian kids, unbelievable, you know, they just don't understand.

Ande had a similar experience:

I've had a student that said, "I'm pregnant, what should I do? Should I tell my mom?"

She was South American. Catholic!

We had a couple of discussions and I said, "You know what? I think you really need to talk to your mom and you need to figure it out," right? . . . I guess she trusted me enough to tell me first.

Teresa agrees:

At the teenage level like a lot of the stuff they need to talk to a grown-up about they can't talk to their parents about, because it's about sex or it's about drugs and they're worried about getting in trouble if they tell their parents. But if they don't talk to a teacher they're gonna go and talk to one of their friends, or they're gonna go on the internet. . .

They need that connection to somebody who is an adult, whose not going to ground them, or lock them up, or put them in a chastity belt or whatever. Because what they really want is real information about whether whatever they're wondering about is true, if it's a good idea.

Like, I've had kids who have come to me thinking they're pregnant and not sure what to do, you know, who to talk to. I've had kids tell me that their mom's boyfriend hits her in front of them.

. . . Those are the ones that I think, I consider to be more my teaching successes because those are the kids I think whose lives have turned out hopefully for the better because I was involved in their life. Hopefully they made a better choice the next time they were in a similar situation, or they got out of a bad situation because I knew who to direct them to.

It is important to note here that the teachers I spoke with were not afraid to "be real" with their adolescent students, even in situations others may find awkward, as when Teresa's student asked her if you could get herpes from eating tainted meat. Ellen tells the story of time she caught students in the washroom, skipping:

So I actually had to go to the washroom, [but] the ladies' [staff] washroom was occupied, so I went into the students' washroom, and there were six girls in there. One of them was mine, there's a big issue with her [skipping], and I said, "Get to class! You're supposed to be writing a quiz!" And then I went to the washroom [stall] and I shouted out, "And all the rest of you, if you're not out of here by the time I get out, I'm writing your names down! Get to class!" There was scampering feet and everything.

Therefore, Ellen is comfortable enough with her students to shout at them from inside a bathroom stall. It doesn't get much more "real" than that. Her story continued:

So [the skipping student] came after class and she goes, "I was hungry . . ." And I said, "No."

I said, "Where can you get food?" Because I have granola bars, I have dried fruit, I mean I have food, I have juice boxes . . . it's away [in a drawer], it's not like it's out on the counter or anything. And she was like, "Oh yeah, yeah", you know.

Ellen is clearly a caring teacher. She is someone students come to disclose their sexual orientation, and she keeps a stash of food hidden in a place that students know they can access, in private, if they need to. But although she is caring, Ellen is also clearly not her student's "friend": she has no problem saying "Get to class!" or "No. I don't believe you were hungry." What she is, then, is "real." This may seem a strange combination of qualities: authentic, almost overly comfortable, and certainly overtly caring, but a little strict, and with high expectations. In fact, this combination looks a lot like Baumrind's (1978) characterization of the "authoritative" parent, and it seems to be what Antoinette was describing earlier when she talked about being a "safe adult":

We're not friends . . . [But] it means I'm a safe adult, I'm somebody who they can come to . . . I'm very approachable . . . They know that if they come to me it's, you know, not a casual thing.

Being a safe adult such as Ellen, Antoinette, Teresa, or so many of the other teachers I interviewed, is a tricky line to walk. How can one be "real" without ever going too far? In fact, even the experienced teachers I interviewed told me they occasionally struggled with this; that is, they often wondered if they had gone too far. They frequently went home at night at wondered, "did I say too much?" Leah said:

I don't think I ever say anything too bad. But sometimes, you know, there might be some [questionable] content. There was nudity in a film I showed yesterday, and I was like, "Oh, but you're in Grade 12, and you can barely see anything, so I'm fine with that."

And then we just kind of made a joke, and I told a student who walked in late, "Oh, you missed the nudity scene" and he was like "Oh damn."

So I was like, was that inappropriate? So maybe sometimes. But I don't - there was no like, sexual context. It was just - we were just joking around. So maybe sometimes . . .

I said 'the f-ing government' the other day . . . So yeah, you always have to think about what you said. I go home and repeat it: "Was that inappropriate?" But most of the time I judge myself and I say "No, that was fine."

As noted, many of the teachers I interviewed chose to teach high school over elementary school primarily because they wanted to work with adolescents. Even

though students this age could be challenging, sometimes taking teachers a little “too far” into what could be considered “inappropriate” topics of conversation, for the most part, teachers liked the fact that they could “be real” with their students. Moreover, “being real” seemed to be one of the “arrows in the quiver” of satisfied teachers at the secondary level. Their students responded well to them and wanted to be on the right side of their boundaries, likely because teachers who were real with their students also allowed those students to “be real” with them, and students appreciated this.

4.4. “You’ve gotta know what’s the right punch to pull at any given time”: Watching for signals

However, by far the most important “arrow in the quiver” of most of the teachers I spoke with was their tendency to “watch” their students carefully, and to design and modify their teaching – both curricular and relational – in response to the information they gleaned from such watching. This “watching” was central to both teachers’ curricular and relational pedagogies; the reader may wonder, then, why “watching” hasn’t been discussed until now. The answer is that I believe it is only possible to truly understand and appreciate what these teachers meant by “watching” when one has first understood that the teachers I interviewed were practicing a kind of “authoritative” teaching, similar to Baumrind’s (1978) characterization of “authoritative” parenting. That is, as we have seen, most of the secondary teachers I interviewed seemed to be enacting a practice that combined both warmth and high expectations, expectations that, moreover, were based on what they believed their students would need to grow into proper adult “humans.” This is the approach that is also taken by what Baumrind calls “authoritative” parents, and recent research has increasingly begun to explore, and to validate, the idea that good teachers behave like good parents in several important ways (e.g., Pellerin, 2005; Wentzel, 2002).

However, what students need to learn to “be a human”, and thus what constitutes appropriate care and appropriate expectations for them depends on the student in question (see Baumrind, 1978, 1991; Churchill, 2003; Noddings, 2005). Just as good parents need to be “sensitive” to the “signals” produced by their children (see Ainsworth, 1967, 1989; Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978; Bowlby,

1958), and adjust their parenting accordingly, so good teachers need to be sensitive to what's happening with the students in their classrooms. Are they struggling? Is the work too easy for them? Do they seem upset? Have they suddenly fallen out with their friends? In Angie's words:

When I taught Grade 8, all I did was counsel. I hardly ever had opportunities to teach because Grade 8 is just such a mystifying year for [students]. They would come in and they would look so sad. I would have these lessons planned and I would be like, "Okay—what happened?"

And then I'd get tears, and you know, "I'm failing Math! Math is hard! There are so many questions!" So we'd spend a really long time brainstorming ways to do Math even though I was supposed to be teaching them English, you know what I mean?

In Angie's view, then, it's critical that a teacher know when to say, "I know you don't want to do it, but just do it! Knuckle under!" and when to say, "Okay – what happened?" It's what she calls "knowing what's the right punch to pull at any given time." She says she is able to make these judgments by watching her students carefully:

So when my kids are late they have to sing before they're allowed to sit down. They have to sing in front of the whole class. So they don't come late very often because they don't want to sing [laughs].

But you have to judge when they walk through the door, you have to look at their face. Because some days like, they're just late, and they're like, "Okay, I'll sing."

But some days, something's happened. And if I push the issue, "Well, the rules in the class are you have to sing," it's gonna to be a disaster. So you have to know your kids, because you have to be able to know their face, when they walk in the door. . . .

It's like, you've gotta know what's the right punch to pull at any given time, right?

Therefore, Angie holds high expectations for her students in the sense that they were not allowed to come late, but this demandingness is combined with warmth in the sense that she is willing to drop those expectations if she picks up on student signals that "something's happened." Angie admits that at times, when she really feels the pressure of the curriculum, she does ignore student signals. However, she says that when she does, she usually ends up regretting it:

The days that I come away going, "Oh my God, I have so blown it, I was such a shitty teacher today," are the days that I'm like: "I don't care what's going on, I just want things to be the way that I want them to be today."

And then I get like, "Sit down, shut up, let's work, blah blah blah."

And invariably I miss something huge for a kid. Right?

In Angie's opinion, a good teacher is someone who makes "actual lesson plans and stuff" but then abandons them when necessary because again, above all, "you've gotta know what's the right punch to pull at any given time, right?"

4.4.1. A literal watching

For Angie, "knowing the right punch to pull at any given time" came from "knowing [her] students, knowing their faces." But Angie works in a small high school of only 550 students; it's a school in which she says, "every teacher knows every single student in this school." She also says that because the school is so small, she has taught most of her students more than once. This was not the case for most of the teachers I interviewed, who worked in schools of 1000-2000 students. How could those teachers have been expected to know "the right punch to pull at any given time?"

In talking to the teachers in this study, it appeared to me that the answer to that question was three-fold: first of all, there was a degree to which the ability to "know" the right punch to pull was intuitive. "You know when something's going over like a lead balloon, right?" Eric told me, "you just can tell." However, there was also a degree to which the ability to "know" grew out of a commitment to "watching" students, even in larger schools. At times this was a literal watching; at other times, it involved opening up a dialogue with students and asking them: "Is this working for you, or not?"

Anne is perhaps the teacher who provides the best example of literally "watching" her students while simultaneously teaching them the curriculum. We have already seen how she had her students learn "how to be a human" through inquiry-based Chemistry labs, and a major advantage of this approach was the degree to which it allowed Anne to "watch" her students. Recall that when she described what she called "inquiry-based teaching" she said, "I'll step in if they're going to blow their heads off . . . but for the most

part, I sit back, and I watch them suffer.” Later, she explained the importance of watching thus:

I sit in my classroom sometimes and I just watch them work. And I see how they interact, I see what they do when they struggle, I see how they behave, [and] I see and hear what they’re talking about. And you get a pretty good picture of who they are and what they want to be at that moment. And you can really listen to that and understand it.

My student teacher when she was here, she told me, “I see you sitting there and I see you watching the kids; I don’t really know what you’re doing.”

And I was like, “I’m watching them, I’m worrying about them, I’m listening to them, I’m understanding them.”

But she’s like, “Okay . . . I don’t get it.”

And I [told her], “When I’m going to talk to you about them, I’m going to explain things to you like: this kid never ever wants to be asked about his homework ever. He has it done but he doesn’t want you to ask. He’s got some kind of oppositional defiance thing, he doesn’t want to be asked, he wants me to trust that he has it done, so I trust that he has it done. And he’ll be completely compliant and work with you all day long but if you ask him it’s a fight, you know.”

These are the things that you learn when you’re working with your kids every single day.

Therefore, “watching” helped Anne to know what her students needed, so that their “oppositional defiance” and other issues didn’t interfere with their ability to learn. Anne also told me that “watching” was part of her ability to connect with students with whom she would otherwise have difficulty connecting:

The quieter kids, I don’t really know how to bring them out, necessarily. And you can see when you’re talking to them that they don’t want to be called out, or, you know, anything. And so I respect their space and that seems to work for them. But then I don’t really feel like I’ve necessarily made a great connection with them.

That being said, I have run into them at later dates, and they’ve been like, “I loved your class. I really got along with you.”

Or their parents will say, “They love it!”

And I’m like, “We barely talked!” You know? But me just respecting who I picked up on them being was enough.

“Picking up on who they were” allowed Anne to “respect” her students’ “space” and in that way, make the class and the relationship “work for them” to a degree that the

students “loved” her class. But Anne was only able to “pick up” on “who they are” by watching her students carefully. “*You can see* when you’re talking to them,” she said, “they don’t want to be called out.” Watching her students also helped Anne to know what they needed in terms of “how to be a human.” She told me:

We have a cohort that travels together, so we have a lot of inter-relationship cohort issues that arise that need to be dealt with.

We have a lot of girl-on-girl bullying, but it’s very subtle . . . so [the program’s other teacher and I] will both be like, “Did you notice . . .?”

And then we’ll start poking, and things will come up that [the students] don’t want to admit to this person or that person. But they’ll show up all over the place, [like on] twitter.

So there are times we have to watch, because there will be a lot of drama, and so it’s hard to tell.

Another teacher who engaged in a deliberate process of literal watching was Stephanie. For Stephanie, as we have seen, “joking around” and “being a clown” was central to her teaching; it was part of how she created camaraderie and community in her classroom. Part of how she found the material for the jokes that helped her create this camaraderie was through a process of literal watching:

I watch the students, cause they have their projects to work on and I just want to see what they’re doing. So I just sit there and watch.

And sometimes they want you to see, like “Did you see what that guy just did to me?”

And I’m like, “Yeah. That was hilarious!” Or whatever.

Like they’re just working together and I just like the energy and the buzz in the room and they’re really into something, so I just watch.

Watching in two different contexts

In an effort to better understand how, when and why teachers deliberately watched their students, I engaged in theoretical sampling to find teachers who had taught the same course at two different schools, to see whether or not the information they gleaned from watching, in each context, affected their planning and teaching. We have already seen how Antoinette had different expectations for the students at the two schools where she worked, in terms of the risks she wanted them to take; in addition, I interviewed Leah and Natasha about their experiences working in two different schools, and found similar stories of watching for and responding to student signals.

For example, Natasha had taught English 10 in both a very high SES and a very low SES school on alternating days over the same school year, and had had to watch her students carefully for signs of “what was working” and what wasn’t. However, these differences, and the importance of watching for them, was something that had come as a surprise to her when, as a newer teacher, she began this teaching assignment:

I was like “Ok, you’re teaching English 10 at both schools, great! One unit plan.” And in a perfect world that would work but it didn’t . . .

For instance, one activity that I hugely had to modify was a comic strip for *Romeo and Juliet*. It was the balcony scene, the famous scene. It was just based on their preconceived notions of what the scene was all about, and what their dialogue would be in the bubbles, and it was supposed to be for fun.

So at [the high SES school], the kids had already been exposed to *Romeo and Juliet*, they had a bit more of an idea. But at [low SES school] they really struggled with it.

Some of them had never heard of [that scene], and they were like, “So, does she throw herself over the balcony?” Some of the comic strips that I got were actually quite violent; she threw herself over . . .

At [that school] I found that teaching *Romeo and Juliet* always turned into something different, and by different I mean that it was never what I had anticipated . . .

I ended up using *West Side Story* with those kids . . . I found that I was struggling to just keep them coming into class. Like, because they’d missed so many classes they were lost, and they were bored. [But] by showing them just little snippets of *West Side Story* and then also things like *Gnomeo and Juliet*, which is like, a new animated thing . . . it hooked them into it a bit more.

For that unit I was really on my toes, like “Ok, this is what you did there but you can’t do that there.”

Therefore, while newer teachers like Natasha may come out of teacher education programs that emphasize the design and preparation of unit plans, lesson plans, and other curricular activities, Natasha’s initial teaching experiences showed her that a teacher cannot design unit plans or lesson plans without first watching, and therefore knowing, her students. What do they need in order to “be a human?” What kind of care, what kind of expectations, will get them there?

Indeed, while the example here is of Natasha’s watching and making modifications to her unit plan strictly for the sake of getting through the curriculum, she also told me that this sensitivity to students’ signals and needs extended beyond

curricular planning to encompass every aspect of her interactions with them. For example, at both schools, Natasha had students who came to class late. At the high-SES school, she says:

I would have students who were strolling in 15, 20 minutes late with a Starbucks coffee [in hand]. Or like, they would say, "Oh, I was at the beach." That was towards the end of the year.

That was a struggle. And then they demand that you get them up to speed, and I was like, "Well, you were 20 minutes late I'm not going to stop class now because you rolled up on your red carpet. You're gonna have to figure out to come in after school."

And I was almost always available. [But] did they always show up? No.

At the low-SES school, though, she says:

A lot of those kids really struggled Some of them were not even staying with parents, they were like, with foster parents, and then pushed from one thing to the next

So [one late student] finally told me where he was for those first 15 to 20 minutes: he was taking his younger siblings to elementary school. It was quite a ways away, somewhere else, so he had to actually get a bus. So he'd be 15 to 20 minutes late almost everyday for class because the parents or the guardians in question for whatever reason could not do that, so he did it.

Therefore, as Natasha learned more about the students in each of the two schools where she worked, she came to appreciate that each group of students required a different kind of care, and different kinds of expectations. For one thing, she decided to be lenient with the boy who was coming to class late because he was taking his younger siblings to school, but not with the kids who were "rolling up on their red carpet." Unfortunately, the parents at the high-SES school were not always supportive of Natasha's tendency to discipline their children, but Natasha says she learned to hold her ground in those cases. She believed that what the students at the high-SES school needed most was "parental supervision," and if they weren't going to get it from their parents, then she would have to provide it.

However, it appears that for Natasha, the idea that a teacher would have to modify his or her teaching, both in terms of curriculum design and behavioural expectations, was new and not something she had encountered in her recent teacher-training program. She became nervous, and a little defensive, when talking with me

about being sensitive to student signals, as though I might not understand the idea that the “right punch to pull” could be different from one situation to the next:

Honestly, if you haven’t lived it – if I hadn’t experienced it, I probably would have been like, “Well, what’s the difference?” Well, it’s a huge difference. Once you’ve lived it, it’s a huge difference.

A student being late and careless because they had to wait in line at Starbucks, versus a kid who is taking on the responsibility of making sure his younger siblings get to school on time, and safely? Huge difference. He’s being an adult when he’s only 15, or 16. So, judgement call? Yes.

Therefore, as Natasha became more experienced and more confident as a teacher, she began also to understand that making “judgment calls” based on what one observed in the classroom was a central part of good teaching.

4.4.2. *Soliciting input and feedback*

Therefore, “knowing what’s the right punch to pull at any given time” involves a degree of natural ability; these teachers “just know” when “something’s going over like a lead balloon”; they can “just tell” when “something’s happened.” But these teachers did not rely only on their intuition; they also incorporated into their teaching a kind of deliberate watching and listening for student signals. However, watching students carefully for signals in this way takes time, and given that many secondary teachers see their students for only two or three periods per week, incorporating “watching” or “listening” time into a lesson isn’t always possible. Many teachers got around this problem by directly asking students what they needed or wanted to learn, or do. They didn’t give their students everything they asked for, of course, but many teachers did tell stories of how the input they had solicited from their students had influenced their decisions around what to teach. Joe said:

I get students’ feedback. I ask for their feedback, you know, on how I can improve, or what I could do differently. Sometimes we’ll take votes on what they want to do in terms of running their classroom outside of my own expectations.

Note that Joe calls it “their” classroom, not “the classroom” or “my classroom.” Comments by Eric echoed this sentiment. He told me how every year, the projects he assigns become the students’ projects – “their” projects:

I usually introduce a project by talking about the history of the project. This is the first time they're doing it, but the project has been around for ten years. This is how it started, this is how its changed and you're gonna take it the next step and we don't know what that is.

He adds:

[I solicit their opinions] in a number of different ways. I mean you look at what the kids just seem to really enjoy doing; what they ask to do; what they ask to do again . . .

Finally, Natasha—who as we have seen deliberately engaged in watching students and subsequently modifying the same course in two different contexts—also found that by watching to see “what they enjoy doing” and by soliciting student opinions, the learning became “theirs.” She said:

Shakespeare: *Midsummer Nights Dream*. I taught it at [the low SES] school and the kids were like “Why? Why are we studying this? This man wrote this 400 years ago.”

And then all I needed to do, to get them to click into it, was tell them that Shakespeare was the one who created the word “swagger” and had them like that [snaps fingers].

They actually came out enjoying it. What I ended up doing is I just did it as if it were a remix, and they had to present it to teenagers their own age, and that was fun for them and I enjoyed that.

Some boys tried to rap it . . . There was one boy who decided to be Viola, the female lead character, because of course in Shakespeare's day the women's roles were played by men, and it was really interesting how they kind of spun it on its head. Some of them did it in the style of *Shrek* where turned everything up side down . . .

But the point, for me, what I enjoyed most about it, is that they took something old and something that we had to learn, and they made it fun and interesting.

Therefore, Natasha paid attention to her students: when it seemed they were not interested in reading *A Midsummer Night's Dream* she found something that would interest that particular group of low-SES students: the concept of swagger. And then she had them “remix” it according to what they thought teenagers would like, thereby allowing them to make the story their own; in essence, she solicited their input into the project. In the end, she says, “they took something old . . . and they made it fun and interesting.” That is, like Joe and Eric, Natasha speaks in terms of what “they” did, as

opposed to what “she” did, as a teacher. She listened to her students, created space for their ideas, and it became “their” project.

Angie, too, would ask her students what they wanted to learn:

In my regular English classes, their first assignment every year is to design their own curriculum, and then I teach them whatever they want to learn.

So by the time they're in Grade 12, they have been through a whole bunch of classes, right? And it's funny because I always give them the freedom, like you know, “I'll teach you anything you want!” But they always ask for the same stuff. Like, “Well, I guess we'll read a Shakespeare play.”

And I'm like, “Really?!” [Laughs]

Antoinette, meanwhile, didn't start her year by asking students what they wanted to learn, but she incorporated activities into her lessons throughout the year that checked in with students to see what they needed, and to ensure she was giving it to them:

This Visual Arts 9 class I have right now, we're at the point in the term where I'm like . . . “Give me your three big Art questions you have right now. You know, write them down for me, give 'em to me, I guarantee you we're gonna get an answer.” So they all gave me their Art questions and I compiled them all in a big long list . . .

I answered all the yes or no questions like right off the bat, I just went down the list with them, and then I chose the top, cause there were seven weeks left at that point, the top seven [questions]. I said “I'm gonna tackle one of these questions a week with you.”

'Cause they're doing their project but I feel like they need more than that . . . and they had some good questions. So this is a kind of thing that I'm more interested in doing with them is really addressing you know—I want to know how they're thinking.

Like, if you've got all yes or no questions then you're not really doing any thinking. Or if you've got technical stuff, like if eight of you want to know how to make your paintings look more three-dimensional, well, then I can address that with you right?

So it's like that kind of approach, you know, where I kind of give it up for them to decide how they want it to go.

Unlike Angie and Antoinette, Anne was someone who did not ask her students what they wanted to study, although perhaps she had less need to, given that she was the teacher who seemed to set aside the most time in her classroom for “watching” her students.

However, Anne nonetheless solicited her students' input into their learning, in that she always asked them about their experiences with Science in elementary school:

In Grade 8 Science I kind of look at what they're coming out of elementary school with . . . I just, you know, [say], "Hey, how many people had science once a week?" Okay, one hand up. "Okay, how many people had it once a month?" Two hands up. How many people did it once with Science Fair when they were in elementary school?" Most of kids. And so you're like, "Okay."

4.4.3. "One size does not fit all"

According to the participants in this study, "watching for signals" was important primarily because "one size does not fit all," as Angie told me. Some students want to "do everything right" and want to be asked for their homework every day; others, like Anne's "oppositionally defiant" kid, don't want to be asked: "He wants me to trust that he has it done, so I trust that he has it done. But if you ask him, it's going to be a fight." Acknowledging that "one size does not fit all" is important if a teacher is going to adjust his or her lesson and unit plans in order to teach kids "how to be a human" because, as has now been extensively discussed here, what each student needs in order to learn "how to be a human" is different. Eric said:

I try to be I think I try to be accommodating to different students' styles, their communication styles. Some kids will email me during class because that's how they feel more comfortable.

Like, they're physically in the class [but] they email from their phone, or their computer.

And I post a lot of my material on-line so it's accessible to them so they can review anything, they can go over it again. Of course that's [only] a certain amount. I don't like putting a hundred percent of it on the website because you still have to have that engagement of being present in the moment. So the website is more of a reinforcement. You're not going to get the full lesson but you're going to get the details that you need.

Also, there are kids who can't think without talking. As soon as you give them any kind of an idea they want to talk about it right away so you just have to accommodate that. You just have to let them go at it, right?

Thus, Eric, like most of the teachers I spoke with, was sensitive to students' needs, but he did not allow his students to run the classroom. Despite his willingness to be

“accommodating to different styles,” Eric nonetheless had certain expectations in his classroom. For example, students were not going to get all the information off his website, no matter how well that might have worked for them, because Eric believed that his students needed an incentive to be “engaged and present in the moment.” What he was practicing, therefore, was a combination of demandingness (high expectations) and responsiveness (one size does not fit all), or what Baumrind (1978) would call “authoritative” teaching.

It was Angie who first showed me that “one size does not fit all.” During our interview, she told me how she allowed her senior students to design their own curriculum, as noted. I told her that I thought this was a great idea, and wondered aloud if “choice” might not be a panacea for a number of teaching problems. Perhaps “choice” could help a teacher get around the at-times burdensome need to constantly “watch” her students, by allowing them to decide for themselves what they needed, I wondered. Angie quickly disavowed me of this notion and insisted that although “choice” worked in some of her classes, it wasn’t appropriate for every class. In fact, she said you had to watch and know your students before you could know if even choice was an appropriate thing to use:

[Some kids] are like, "No way!" Even when you give them the menu, and they can choose, "For this assignment, you can choose this, this, or this", a lot of kids here get really stressed out by that.

I mean, here we have, you know, lots of refugee kids. Their parents don't know or understand school to begin with and they're being told: "Just go, get an education. I don't know what that means but that's what you're supposed to do in Canada, so just go and do what the teacher tells you."

And then I think a lot of our kids make a lot of decisions all day long about things they shouldn't have to, right? You know, like, do I need to take my mother or my little brother to a doctor? Should we, you know, pay this bill? Should we talk to the landlord about that?

And so I think that in some ways, they come here and to just do what they're told is kind of a relief. So yeah, with [some] I've had lots and lots of pushback . . .

So, I think that this idea... I worry about that you know? Project-based learning, giving kids choices, and all of those sorts of things. Because I see all sorts of kids here who would be like, "That is awesome!"

And then I see a whole group of kids here who would be like, "What? What? I don't even..." Because they don't have natural curiosity, right?

I think it's stunted lives at home sometimes, you know? I think that when you're dealing with trauma in your house, and that when you're dealing with – it's like you know, what's his name? Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, right? When your whole life is a nightmare, you're not really concerned about your education . . .

So – I just I don't know. [Experts] tell us that “one size fits all” doesn't work, but then it seems like they're trying to implant something else that *is* one size fits all, but calling it “choice.”

It may seem surprising, but in Angie's opinion, even offering students the chance to choose for themselves what interests them and what they want to learn, as scholars have suggested (e.g., Kohn, 1993; Noddings, 2005) may be inappropriate at times. A teacher can only know by knowing her students.

Indeed, while pushing students until they “suffer . . . and they literally want to lynch you” was deemed appropriate for Anne's gifted Science students, Angie's “refugee kids” needed something very different. They needed structure, predictability, and routine because “when your whole life is a nightmare . . . just to be told what to do is a relief.” The teachers in this study understood therefore, that one has to be sensitive to students' needs, and to the signals they gave off to indicate those needs, in order to design their teaching appropriately. In fact, the ability to do this is what Shavelson (1973) has called “*the basic teaching skill*. . . . What distinguishes the exceptional teacher from his or her colleague is not the ability to ask, say, a higher order question, but the ability to decide *when to ask* such a question” (p. 144).

4.4.4. Dialogue as Curriculum/Curriculum as Dialogue

While the teachers I interviewed were competent in their curricular domains, their work to plan lessons and units did not begin and end with knowing the curriculum. Instead, the curriculum was both a jumping-off point for their discussions with their students, as well as the end-point for those discussions. What happened in between the jumping-off point and the end-point was an extensive amount of watching and modifying that curriculum so that it would meet students' needs and interests, both with an eye to getting students “on board”, and with an eye to teaching them “how to be a human.”

In other words, teachers enacted a kind of dialectical balance between relationship and curriculum: they used the curriculum as the “stuff” with which they

opened a dialogue with their students, talking with them about arranged marriage, Van Gogh's early sketches, or First Nations creation myths, for example. Those discussions, in turn, led that dialogue into the realm of parental values, students' insecurities, or sexual taboos. Teachers listened to student comments in these discussions, identified student needs, and then continued to use the curriculum as the "stuff" of dialogue, this time, with an emphasis on what they believed students needed in order to "be a human": a critical perspective on one's own values, knowing how to persevere, or understanding safer sexual practices. These discussions became the basis for the personal relationship teachers had with students, and engendered a level of trust between student and teacher that allowed students to then raise other topics with their teachers, such as the fact that "their boyfriend was pressuring them to have sex." This level of trust then led students, often, to follow their teachers into the realm of more challenging curriculum; in this way, the mastery of the curriculum was the "end point" for these dialogues.

For example, as we have seen, Antoinette used the Art curriculum to open a dialogue with her students, showing them Van Gogh's early sketches:

A lot of the students who are coming into Art have a lot of fear around it: "I can't draw, I can't paint, I'm not good at it." And it's a really good place to sort of look at who has the confidence and where their strengths are . . . So if I can get them out of that, and have us look at what we're all doing and where other artists—like look at where Van Gogh started. Some of Van Gogh's early drawings and sketches look exactly like their early drawings and sketches.

This led to discussions on talent, insecurity, perseverance and skill acquisition. She then expanded that dialogue, sharing stories of her own fallibilities as an artist and a human:

I personalize my stories for them. You know, I talk to them about my kids, you know, and I've told all my classes about this spill I took [she was on crutches]. They're all interested, you know. They have to see me as a human who has feelings and who operates in the same world as them and who, you know – I have to gain their trust. Like, they have to trust me before they'll give anything.

Thus, because Antoinette was open about her own life, and because she was accepting, and helpful, when her students told her about their own insecurities around

creating art, they began to trust her. They shared with her their “seven big Art questions” and she modified the curriculum going forward in response. Over the year, emboldened by both their trust in their teacher, her respect for their opinions and their increasing success in Art, the students tackled increasingly difficult projects:

They’re a group of kids that have been handpicked and they want to do the right thing. They wanna be on the right side of everything.

At the beginning of the year there was a lot of “Can I do this? Is this ok? Can I?” To which I was like “Yeah. And more. Go further. Try this!”

And it’s gotten to the point now where . . . the projects I give them are much more open-ended, and much more involved in terms of how far we can go with it and the connections we can make with it.

I just introduced a new project today looking at technology, and our undervaluing old technology in favour of new technology. We’re looking at something called “gorking” which is understanding something implicitly by deconstructing it. So I brought in a whole bunch of old technology, like old rotary phones . . . all of them are working but we’re taking them apart, we’re disassembling them. I brought in screwdrivers and all this stuff.

So there we are in Art class, you know, philosophically discussing technology and how it’s, you know, it’s undervalued, and how we’re all guilty of this. You know, this is working perfectly well but we don’t want it. And you know they’re working physically and they’re totally chatting away. And they’re into it! They’re *so into it*.

In this way, the curriculum was the starting point for a dialogue with students, dialogues that subsequently informed the unfolding of that curriculum over the course of the year. These dialogues took both relational and curricular forms: skill acquisition in Art, Antoinette’s own fallibilities and experiences as an artist, the students’ concerns, both academic and personal, what risks were acceptable, and finally, a philosophical perspective on the undervaluing of technology. It is easy to imagine that if a teacher came into a classroom like Antoinette’s and tried to begin the year with a physical, philosophical endeavour like “gorking,” before such dialogues had been allowed to unfold, it likely would not have been successful. But because Antoinette used the curriculum to address relational pedagogy, students’ ensuing social-emotional growth and trust in their teacher then allowed for deeper exploration of the curriculum. In other words, in Antoinette’s classroom, curricular and relational pedagogies were mutually supporting, and mutually reinforcing. They were dialectic.

This process, of using the curriculum to form the stuff of interpersonal dialogue and then using the outcomes of that dialogue to direct the unfolding and teaching of the curriculum in response to students' perceived social-emotional needs, is at the core of this grounded theory. All the other categories surround it. For instance: teachers are explicit, authentic and accepting with students primarily so that students will be willing to enter into dialogue with their teachers; teachers deliberately use that dialogue to then further their goal of teaching students "how to be a human" as they "think beyond June." Moreover, this process of "dialogue as curriculum/curriculum as dialogue" is central to this grounded theory in that it was enacted by all of the satisfied teachers I interviewed, and by none of those who were dissatisfied, leading me to believe that it is central to the successful construction of positive teacher-student relationships in secondary schools.

4.5. "This is home": Creating communities for students

In addition to continually engaging in "dialogue as curriculum/curriculum as dialogue", in this study I uncovered several other practices that were shared by teachers who felt confident in their ability to create and maintain positive teacher-student relationships with their adolescent students. As we have seen, these include a tendency to be authentic and explicit with students; to be overtly caring; to be accepting of students' realities; to not take things personally but to endeavour, instead, to find out why students were behaving in a certain way; to "explain why" a different path would be beneficial to a student; to use humour and to solicit student input in order to make their class "fun"; and to hold high expectations for student behaviour and outcomes.

However, in addition to the practices they enacted, the more satisfied, more experienced teachers interviewed for this study also shared one important characteristic: they worked in classroom settings that were "home" for their students in some way. These included classic "mini-school" programs where students entered in Grade 8 and remained with the same cohort and the same teachers for at least three years; an elective program, where students ended up with the same fellow students and the same teacher for multiple years by virtue of the fact that they kept choosing the same course; a small school, where every teacher knew every student; or a non-enrolling position, such as counselling or Aboriginal enhancement, where teachers had the same students

on their caseload year after year. Bruce, who teaches in an elective context, explains the benefits of working in a “home” classroom thus:

One of the unique situations is that the Grade 12s that I teach, almost all of them I’ve had for five years. When you have a student every two days for five years, you know all about them, and their interests, and their family. And when there’s something going on – there have been times where I’m just as attuned to what’s going on as their parents are because we spend so much time together . . .

This is their identified home. There are a lot of kids, for example, that want a locker outside this room because when they get to school this is the first place they go anyways. And so the only reason they go to the fourth floor is for a class there, not even to visit friends there. This is home. This is home. And I think there are a lot of kids that feel that way.

Eighteen of the 20 participants in this study worked in some kind of “home” classroom setting, and of these, 17 described themselves as satisfied in their ability to create and maintain relationships with their students. Only one teacher who worked in a “home” classroom setting described herself as frustrated. She was a newer teacher, and it was her first year in the mini-school in question. Therefore, she had not been teaching in the program long enough to experience the benefits of knowing her students year after year, which is the primary benefit of working in a “home” classroom. However, this study’s two remaining teachers, those who were not working in “home” classroom settings and who were working instead in the typical departmentalized “silo” normally associated with high school, were unhappy. Both felt frustrated as they tried to manage the “monkeys swinging from the chandeliers . . . in a pool of snapping alligators It’s a dichotomy of curriculum and relationship.”

Therefore, it appears that there are aspects of working in a “home” classroom setting that make it easier, or more likely, for teachers to enact their curricular and relational pedagogies as dialectic, while those outside these settings experience them as a dichotomy. For one thing, it appears that the amount of time teachers in “home” settings spend with their students is helpful. Teresa, for example, says that the increased time with students afforded by her own mini-school setting, along with the smaller class sizes found there, allows her to better know her students:

A lot of it is just because they are with me back to back. Like, they have a break in the middle of the two classes, so sometimes it’s just

sitting and chatting with them during the break, you know. Or some of them come and see me outside of class time. . .They just kind of wander up from downstairs [after school].

These “chats” help Teresa to enact curriculum and relationship as dialectic, by showing Teresa “things they already know” to which she can then connect the curriculum:

[The kids in the program] are very, like, classic avoiders, `cause school is difficult for them. So they’re always trying to just socialize, to chat with me about their personal lives and things like that.

But it is [actually] somewhat helpful for me to know about their personal lives, because they really do struggle. So trying to find something to like, make a connection and help them understand, by relating it to something that they already know, is quite useful.

Teresa also says that because her students know her so well, they are willing to share important information with her, both about themselves, and about each other:

The guys who’ve been in the program for two years, `cause they do a lot of camping and stuff like that, they get to know each other really well . . . They do actually, I think, have a much closer bond than your typical high school students, who maybe are only with a certain person in [one] class out of eight.

And so they know each other really well, and I think even when they’re not friends with each other they have like, a way of supporting each other. And you know when guys are having bad days they check in with each other.

And they kind of report on each other. Like they’ll come up and say, “Just so you know, so-and-so is sick,” or, “Just so you know, so-and-so is in a really bad mood today.”

You know, so they watch out for each other in a way that I don’t see kids [do], typically.

Ande, too, believed that having students year after year could help her to look out for them, and help her teach them how to look out for each other, as well:

I have one student – this is his third year with me. So he just sits right over there by himself. [But] a few of the other kids I sit with him are kids that I know that are nice kids and, you know, will not mistreat him and be friendly to him.

And so I sometimes will pull the kids aside and say, “Okay, I need you to just –”

And they’ll say, “Yeah, we know.”

And, you know, they know that because they know the student. Because in this particular case it's been years, they've all been together since Grade 8, so they kind of know each other . . .

So you know, just be respectful try to include him in the group. So sometimes when there's something in a group, they'll ask, "Would you like to join our group?"

Teachers like Teresa and Bruce add that it is also helpful when school administrators set their schools up in such a way that contact between teachers and students is increased. At Teresa's school, for example, students have their locker in the same spot for five years, giving her the chance to better know the students whose lockers are outside her room. At a school where I have worked, students had their lockers outside the classrooms of their first-block teacher, which meant that if a student retreated to his or her locker in tears at any other point during the day, the odds were increased they would run into a teacher they already knew. It also cut down on student lateness, and to control student behaviour in the hallway, at lunch-time, as students were more likely to behave well for, and respond to, a teacher they already knew.

In addition to facilitating contact between students and teachers, these "home" classroom settings appear to facilitate connections between teachers as well, to the benefit of students. Elizabeth, Angie, Phoenix and Will all spoke of how helpful it was to be able to go "across the hall" and "collaborate on the curriculum" or just ask, "Hey – is so-and-so having a weird day?" Will says:

Because we follow them right through, and because [it's always] the same teachers, not only do we get to know the students, but we get to know the other teachers and how they function.

So the Science teacher and I, for example, are always in each other's rooms like, "What are you doing right now?" So we can collaborate in terms of curriculum.

And we also know the same kids. So if a kid is having a weird day I can just be like, "Hey, [to the Science teacher] did you and [name] have it out?"

And she'll be like, "Yeah, he was late." And so then I know. So it's kind of a leg up in terms of the kids.

And having them year over year is just awesome, to see them grow.

At Angie's school, students are grouped into a cohort in Grade 8 with one teacher for English and Socials, and another for Math and Science, to facilitate their transition into

secondary school. These are mainstream students; that is, it is not a mini-school with a particular focus. Instead, it is the grouping of all Grade 8 students into cohorts to allow them greater contact with teachers, and to allow the teachers greater opportunities to collaborate with each other. Angie agrees that the opportunities for collaboration between teachers, in particular, benefits students:

It helps us to figure out right away which [kids] are the ones, like, disappearing.

Because when we used to do it the other way, with [kids having] a bunch of different teachers, nobody talks. You don't have enough time to have meetings about kids.

And then suddenly you're at lunch and you'd say, "I have this kid..." And a whole bunch of other people say the same thing, but it's like, four or five months in.

So it's better when there are just two teachers [sharing the same kids].

Other teachers, like Ellen and Will, also spoke of how helpful it can be when teachers who teach the same students meet regularly to talk about those students, and how to meet their needs. As Will says, "it's a leg up, in terms of the kids."

It is interesting to note here too that some teachers worked to build a sense of "home" at the classroom level, in addition to creating a sense of community at the program level. We have already seen here how teachers like Ande worked to build a sense of respect and community in her classroom, and how Bruce created a mentoring program within his classroom via his section leader model. Additionally, in Will's mini-school they have a Code of Ethics of which he says, "My favourite is Number 3: Stick Together." He adds:

We sort of preach that to them and say, "Listen, you guys – you're a group. You're like, a team. Stick together, you know, just because.

So we try and coach them, and I'm personally not very good at [that]. I don't have a good ear for the types of social tensions that can arise when you have groups of students. Fortunately the Science teacher is really good . . . at sort of detecting those weird bullying, kind of, quasi-undercurrents.

But [for me] I think it is helpful to have a [mini] program because you're more familiar with them and you can appeal to their sense of right and wrong.

Thus, the establishment of “home” classroom setting – in this case, a mini-school – not only provides students with more contact hours with their teachers and facilitates connections between teachers, it also helps Will to overcome his own deficits as a teacher. He says he isn’t good at detecting “quasi-undercurrents of bullying” but being more familiar with his students helps him with that, and helps him to direct his students away from such behaviour. Working in a mini-school or other “home” classroom setting, therefore, can help teachers to meet students curricular and relational needs. It can also help them enact a dialectic balance of curriculum and relationship by giving them more intimate knowledge of students and their needs, and by giving them more opportunities to teach students “how to be a human.” Small wonder then that most of the teachers who volunteered for a study on creating positive teacher-student relationships in secondary schools were those working in these “home” settings, and that nearly all teachers working in these settings felt that they were able to effectively do so.

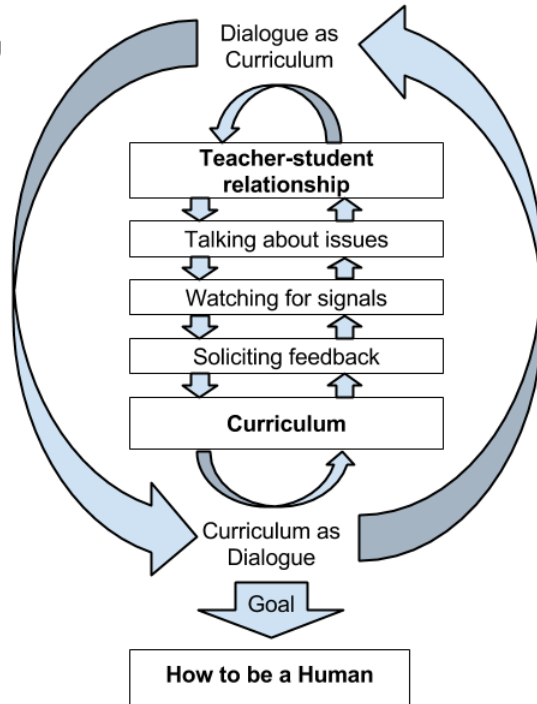
4.6. Summary

The teachers interviewed for this study came from a variety of economically and culturally diverse schools, from across curricular areas, and worked in a range of programs, from those designed for academically-inclined students, to those intended for students completing a high-school leaving certificate. Despite these differences of context, there was much that these teachers had in common in terms of their goals, attitudes, and practices. For example, they spoke of their goals in terms of teaching their students “how to be a human,” or some variation of that. Teaching their students the curriculum for its own sake, or preparing students for university, were rarely mentioned, despite the fact that at least half the teachers taught in programs where students were university-bound. Instead, teachers tended to emphasize relational pedagogies, usually mentioning the curriculum only in so far as they could use it to serve their ultimate goal of teaching students “how to be a human.” Moreover, in order to teach students “how to be a human,” teachers had to “think beyond June.” That is, they had to believe in the potential of students to grow into the kind of human teachers hoped they would be, whether or not they ever actually saw this happen.

In order to teach their students “how to be a human,” the teachers in this study often engaged in a practice of “watching” their students for signals as to what those students needed. Often this was a literal watching and listening to students as they worked, at other times, it involved soliciting student input and feedback as to what those students needed, or wanted to do. Teachers also engaged in conversations with students about what students had said, or what teachers had observed, as needed. This is a process I have called “dialogue as curriculum/curriculum as dialogue”, and it is the basic social process that seemed to enable satisfied teachers to create positive relationships with their adolescent students. In order to engage in this process, teachers had to enact an authoritative teaching style, and it helped if they worked in “home” classroom settings. However, it was the engagement in this process – dialogue as curriculum/curriculum as dialogue – that was most important to their ability to create and maintain positive relationships with their students. This complex process, based on the idea that curriculum and relationship can be dialectical, is depicted below in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Enacting the curriculum/relationship dialectic

Context:
Authoritative teaching
style enacted in
home classroom
settings



As has been noted, the fact that the satisfied teachers in this study had so much in common in terms of their goals, attitudes, and teaching practices, despite the fact they were working in such different contexts, does much to validate the essential points of this theory. In contrast, the three dissatisfied teachers in this study practiced a different, more authoritarian style of teaching, their goals centered on the teaching of the curriculum, and they neither engaged in dialogue with their students, nor saw curriculum and relationship as a dialectic. In short, these dissatisfied teachers were often doing the opposite things that the satisfied teachers were, usually with the opposite results.

Given that such a high percentage of new teachers in North America leaves the profession within their first five years – estimates range from 30 to 50 per cent (see Brown, 1996; Hong, 2012) – any insight into what helps some teachers to feel successful while others do not is clearly very useful. In fact, many studies have demonstrated that feeling connected to students is one of the most important things to a satisfied teacher, and that feeling connected to students is also closely related to a teacher's ability to feel effective in the classroom (e.g., Brown, 1996; Fabry, 2010; Shann, 1998; Munthe, 2003). Thus, understanding what allows some secondary teachers to establish positive teacher-student relationships, while other do not, is critical. I believe the grounded theory presented here has gone some distance toward creating such an understanding.

5. Discussion

My goal in this study was to explore the kinds of relationships teachers in secondary schools are trying to create with their students. Do they desire close relationships with their students, or do they simply want to inspire their students to “love the subjects they teach” (Riley, 2011)? Or is it something else? Whatever kinds of relationships teachers are endeavouring to create, why do they believe such relationships are important? What steps are being taken to create these relationships? Finally, what obstacles do teachers perceive to their creation, and conversely what factors make it easier for teachers to both create, and to maintain, these relationships? In the previous chapter I presented my findings in regards to these questions and summarized the resultant grounded theory of teacher-student relationships in secondary schools in Figure 1. In this chapter I further discuss key elements of my findings and theory in relation to the work of others.

5.1. A relational orientation

Selman (2003) has theorized about teachers’ understandings of the aims of education, that is, about how their “pedagogical visions” relate to their practices teaching and relating to students. He has identified three pedagogical “orientations” in terms of how teachers conceptualize and approach their students’ social-emotional development and competence. These orientations are: external, internal, and relational, with relational being the most sophisticated. Teachers with a relational orientation are able to use the social context naturally present in teaching to promote and foster students’ social-emotional development in a collaborative way, as the teachers in this study did. According to Selman, this ability begins with:

The awareness that strong academic and social competence is necessary *in the service of* educating students to be able to maintain and improve society. As they gain a broad perspective on the educational

and cultural system within which students and teachers operate, teachers at this [relational] level of awareness strive to empower students to *participate* actively in society by fostering their capacity for autonomy (freedom) and caring (love). (p. 159)

Therefore, teachers who possess a relational orientation are interested not only in how the social context can be used to foster students' social-emotional development, but also in how their teaching can encourage students to develop into the kinds of citizens who will positively contribute to that social context.

Selman's description of the relationally-oriented teacher appears very similar to the majority of teachers in my study. That is, the teachers in this study demonstrated a relational orientation in that they strived to integrate student perspectives into the curriculum, showed an appreciation for students' social-emotional development – as opposed to focusing strictly on their academic development – and otherwise emphasized relational pedagogies in the service of teaching their students “how to be a human.” Moreover, in teaching students “how to be a human” and in “thinking beyond June,” these teachers demonstrated a desire to create better future global citizens, as Selman says relationally-oriented teachers do.

5.2. Enacting an ethic of care

The parallels between the practices of the relationally-oriented teachers in this study, and the practices advocated by Noddings in her seminal book *The challenge to care in schools* (2005) are striking. For instance, Noddings argues that “care” is not an attribute that teachers either possess or do not; instead, she says encounters between teachers and students are opportunities to demonstrate care. Care, for Noddings, is a practice of being attuned and receptive to students' perspectives during these encounters. In other words, Noddings agrees that “watching” and listening to students, along with soliciting their input and feedback into their learning, are the necessary practices of caring teachers (see also Hamre & Pianta, 2007; Patrick, Ryan & Kaplan, 2001). For that reason Noddings (2005) believes, like the teachers in this study, that there is no one specific set of steps that represent the best way to teach; instead, it will

always depend on the needs of the students in a given situation, and teachers determine these needs by paying close attention to students.

In particular, Noddings argues that teachers should be wary of well-intentioned goals such as curricular “standards,” as these ignore students’ interests and purposes. Such beliefs are consistent with those of the teachers in this study, who eschewed standardized curricular outcomes in favour of a flexible curriculum that could be modified to meet students’ needs, sometimes even teaching Math in an English classroom, as Angie did. Noddings (2005) has said:

John Dewey (1963) argued years ago that teachers had to start with the experience and interests of students and patiently forge connections [with the curriculum]. I would go further. There are few things that all students need to know, and it ought to be acceptable for students to reject some material in order to pursue other topics with enthusiasm. Caring teachers listen and respond differentially to their students. (p. 19)

These are things that satisfied teachers in this study were, in fact, doing; that is, listening to students, responding differentially to them, and allowing them to reject some topics in order to pursue others with enthusiasm.

Noddings recommends that teachers practice what she has referred to as modeling, practice, confirmation and dialogue. In modeling, teachers engage in the kind of behaviour they want students to emulate. This is reminiscent of the comments of this study’s participants, such as Kristy, who said, “I think that in teaching them how to be a human, you behave how a human should be.” The teachers in this study also tried to give students the opportunity to practice the kinds of behaviour they wanted to see, as when Joe spoke of the importance of making time for students to work together, and giving them “tips on how to do that.” As for confirmation, Noddings (1996) says:

When we confirm someone, we spot a better self and encourage its development. We can only do this if we know the other well enough to see what he or she is trying to become. Formulas and slogans have no place in confirmation. We do not set up a single ideal or set of expectations for everyone to meet, but we identify something admirable, or at least acceptable, struggling to emerge in each person we encounter. (Noddings, p.164)

The teachers in this study spoke of confirmation when they spoke of the importance of “thinking beyond June”, that is, of seeing a student for what he or she could be, rather than only for what he or she was at that particular moment. Sharon spoke eloquently of confirmation when she said:

Whether it’s the student that is unable to focus and [is] all over the place, or the student that is oppositional, or the student that has a great sense of humour and just doesn’t know you can’t use it every second, or is trying risk-taking or is insecure or not confident, you can see this incredible person there [but they’re] still in progress.

Along with modeling, practice, and confirmation, Noddings also recommends that teachers engage in meaningful, ongoing, open-ended dialogue with their students, and in this respect, the practices of the teachers in this study are consistent with her recommendations. As noted, watching students, listening to them, soliciting their input and their feedback and otherwise engaging in “dialogue as curriculum/curriculum as dialogue” were central to the teaching practice of most teachers in this study. This dialogue was in fact the very thing that allowed them to teach their students “how to be a human” effectively, in that it let teachers know what their students needed. It also gave students a chance to learn more about their teachers, and so, to trust them. As Noddings (2005) has said:

Dialogue permits us to talk about what we try to show. It gives learners opportunities to question “why,” and it helps both parties to arrive at well-informed decisions. . . . [But] dialogue serves not only to inform the decision under consideration; it also contributes to a habit of mind [in students] — that of seeking adequate information on which to make decisions. (p. 23)

She goes on to say:

Dialogue serves another purpose in moral education. It connects us to each other and helps to maintain caring relations. It also provides us with the knowledge of each other that forms a foundation for response in caring. Caring (acting as carer) requires knowledge and skill as well as characteristic attitudes. We respond most effectively as carers when we understand what the other needs and the history of this need. . . . Continuing dialogue builds up a substantial knowledge of one another that serves to guide our responses. (2005, p. 23)

The practice of dialogue, then, is central to Noddings' notion of an ethic of care, just as it was central to the approach of the teachers in this study. In fact, other scholars have underscored the importance of dialogue to "excellent" secondary teaching as well, for the very reasons outlined here; that is, that dialogue creates a climate of both trust and sharing, the result of which is deeper knowledge of student needs, and often, a better experience for both student and teacher (Anderman et al., 2011; Aultman et al., 2009; Cassidy & Bates, 2005; Klassen, 2008; Pajares, 2008; Schaps, Battistich & Solomon, 2004; see also Wentzel, 1997; Wentzel, 2002; see also Hamre & Pianta, 2007; Patrick et al., 2001).

Noddings has further argued that genuine dialogue is predicated on the idea that both parties will be accepting of what the other might say. She has said:

We live in an age both blessed and encumbered by a new orthodoxy in speech. Ethnic, racial, and gender jokes are out, and for the most part, that is a good thing But as our language is purged, our fears, misgivings, and dislikes sink into a layer of the psyche that Carl Jung called the "shadow." This is the individual and collective side we deny.

In schools we more often preach than teach in the areas of race, ethnicity, religion, and gender. Dialogue is required here, and dialogue ends in questions or in great sadness as often as it does in solutions Dialogue is open-ended; that is, in a genuine dialogue, neither party knows at the outset what the outcome or decision will be Even in genuine dialogue, the end is often uncertainty and the sort of tension that will lead to fresh and more vigorous exploration. (Noddings, 2005, p. 26)

Thus, being "accepting" of student perspectives, even on sensitive topics, and even when those perspectives may be flawed in some way, is a critical part of genuinely engaging in the process of "dialogue as curriculum/curriculum as dialogue." Students need to feel safe enough to tell their teachers what they really think without fear of being judged. Only then will teachers get the information necessary to modify their curriculum in order to adequately teach students "how to be a human." In other words, only then will teachers be able to truly teach students, rather than simply preach to them. We saw such acceptance of student perspectives, and the dialogue that ensued, in numerous instances, as when Teresa accepted the fact that her students were smoking marijuana and chose simply to ask, "Well, if nothing's getting into your lungs, how do you think you get high?" Recall that she next said:

I try to do that, where I make them kind of think through it, because I think at this point they've been told constantly and they're tired of adults telling them what to do. And they need to be thinking about it [themselves] instead.

That is, for Teresa, acceptance was a necessary precondition for genuine dialogue, and genuine dialogue involved “them thinking through it”, as opposed to Teresa just “telling them what to do.” As Noddings says, Teresa did not know what the outcome of that dialogue would be; that is, she did not know whether or not the students would actually stop smoking marijuana. Other teachers in this study behaved similarly to Teresa, frequently accepting student comments on difficult topics like abortion, herpes, and domestic violence, without judgment and with an emphasis on getting students to think it through, rather than just telling students what to do. For instance, recall that when Harry, upon learning that his student was “beating his girlfriend”, told that student simply: “this is the moment when you decide which wolf it is you want to feed. Is it the one of anger or the one of love?”

5.2.1. “Authoritative” teaching

I have characterized the ways in which the secondary teachers I interviewed practiced care for their adolescent students as “authoritative”, borrowing the term from Baumrind (1978). She described “authoritative” parenting as a responsive, or flexible, combination of demanding and nurturing care, based on the perceived needs of an ever-changing child. Baumrind (1978) says the “authoritative parent”:

“Encourages verbal give and take, shares with the child the reasoning behind parental policy, and solicits the child’s objections . . . Such a parent affirms the child’s present qualities, but also sets standards for future conduct, using reason as well as power . . . to achieve parental objectives.” (p. 245).

This sounds a great deal like the teachers whose stories have been recounted in this study: they solicited their students’ opinions and objections, encouraged verbal give and take, explained “why,” and set standards for future conduct.

The idea that “good’ teaching is similar to authoritative parenting is one that has been increasingly explored, and validated, in the research literature. For instance,

Wentzel (1997, 2002) has found that the practices enacted by the teachers studied here – democratic communication styles, expectations for behaviour, rule setting, and nurture – are shared by both authoritative parents and effective teachers; effective teachers being defined as those whose students were more likely to be prosocial and to earn higher grades (Baumrind, 1978; Pellerin, 2005). Both Wentzel (2002) and Baumrind (1978) argue that democratic communication, such as being willing to listen and to “explain why,” are particularly important to adolescents. This is because in comparison with younger children, adolescents are unlikely to want to do something simply because an authority figure tells them to; they can recognize the difference between legitimate and illegitimate authority and so will need to be convinced on the rationale behind a given rule (Baumrind, 1978).

In authoritative teaching, just as in authoritative parenting, demandingness is very important (Pellerin, 2005; see also Baumrind, 1978). In particular, it appears that the “demanding” dimension of authoritative teaching is especially important for students in low-SES contexts (Shiller, 2009; see also Bergin & Bergin, 2009). The importance of high expectations, particularly for low-SES students, was something that the teachers in this study expressed as well. For example, the reader will recall that Angie, who worked in the poorest neighbourhood of any in this study, refused to let two students transfer from her English class into a remedial course when they asked.

Baumrind (1991) argues in particular, for the importance of high behavioural expectations for adolescents in our current social milieu because, she says:

The optimal ratio of control relative to freedom within the family increases as the modal level of stability and structure in the larger society decreases. The social fabric in which families are embedded has become increasingly unstable; there has been a correspondingly increased need for . . . structure, engagement and discipline. (p. 114)

In fact, Baumrind (1991) says the kind of “radical autonomy” that has been emphasized in North American child-rearing since the 1950s puts adolescents at risk of alienation (p. 115). She argues instead for a gradual “emancipation from adult authority, best accomplished as a gradual process leading to a capacity for interdependence rather than an exaggerated stance of independence” (p. 116). This kind of gradual

relinquishing of adult authority, whether it occurs in a parent-child or teacher-student relationship, will necessarily take place in the context of high expectations, because children can only learn to be responsible, independent adults if they first have the chance to practice this kind of independence under the guise of a watchful, demanding adult. Here again is support for Noddings' idea of "modeling" in the context of dialogue and confirmation. Indeed, most of the participants in this study who talked about giving their students a degree of independence – such as Anne and Bruce – also spoke of the importance of "stepping in" when necessary, to discuss what was not working, as well as the importance of as high expectations.

The last, although by no means the least important, dimension of authoritative parenting is flexibility. Authoritative parents, Baumrind has said, are "flexible" in the sense that:

"They are, relative to other parents, free of ideologies that would deter them from changing as the child matured . . . They [see] the child as maturing through stages with qualitatively different features; however, they did not describe this maturational process as an automatic unfolding, but rather as subject to modification by interaction between the child and child's socializing agents." (p. 267)

Just as this flexibility is important in authoritative parenting, so a tendency to be flexible, to respond to students in a way that takes into consideration both their developmental age as well as cues in the environment, is characteristic of the "authoritative" teachers in this study. Like the authoritative parents described by Baumrind, these teachers are not ideologues: they strive to be free from ideology and to base their teaching decisions instead on what they perceive to be the child's needs at a given stage and in a given situation. That is, they endeavoured to know "what was the right punch to pull at any given time" with an eye to helping their students learn "how to be a human."

This flexibility has been described as critically important to caregiving by other theorists as well, notably Ainsworth (1967) and Bowlby (1958) in their characterization of "secure attachment figures" as people who respond "sensitively" (read: appropriately and flexibly) to a child's verbal and non-verbal signals. In this way, Baumrind's "flexible" parents, and Bowlby and Ainsworth's "sensitive" parents, are like the teachers in this study. Moreover, like authoritative or sensitive parents, these teachers saw their

students' maturational process as resulting in part from interactions with their "role model" teachers. Indeed, just as flexibility is central to the idea of the authoritative parent, so was it central to my own teachers' authoritative approach to teaching, as they strove to "know the right punch to pull at any given time."

Knowing the "right punch to pull" is not easy: it depends on the student in question, and on that student's situation (see Noddings, 2005; Selman, 2003). George and Solomon (1999), in their description of the caregiving behavioural system, affirm the difficulty of "knowing the right punch to pull" in parenting. It is a complex decision depending on:

Conscious and unconscious evaluation of competing sources of information From the caregiver's perspective, he or she must organize the various perceptions and select a response 'Sensitive mothers' have been defined as those who perceive and evaluate their child's cues appropriately, and who respond quickly and contingently. . . . Flexible care . . . is founded upon the mother's ability to attend to and balance cues both from the child (including developmental cues) and from the environment (including cultural press) . . ." (p. 654)

According to George and Solomon, then, the competent parent must evaluate multiple sources of information, from both the child and the environment, and determine the right punch to pull, often with very little time to think about it. Teachers face similar challenges when they attempt to determine the right punch to pull; this was a problem that Heather, a frustrated newer teacher, noted when she indicated that in a classroom full of snapping alligators and monkeys hanging from chandeliers:

. . . it's hard to know sometimes in the moment, even though I would come from my heart, to know, "Is this the right thing?" I don't know.

5.3. The curriculum/relationship dialectic

When teachers are relationally-oriented and engage in authoritative teaching, including being authentic, accepting, attentive, flexible and responsive, they set the conditions that allow them to engage in dialogue as curriculum/curriculum as dialogue. But the idea that curriculum and relationship can exist in dialectic balance, while it is at the center of this grounded theory on teacher-student relationships, is relatively un-

documented in the literature (for exceptions, see Cornelius-White, 2007; Hawkins, Smith & Catalano, 2004; Lortie, 1975, as cited in Munthe, 2003). Instead, curricular and relational pedagogies are usually addressed as a dichotomy, or a zero-sum game (Hawkins, Smith & Catalano, 2004). However, Hawkins, Smith, and Catalano (2004) have argued:

A common critique of social and emotional curricula is that they focus time and energy on social and behavioural goals at the expense of academic learning. The assumption is that academic achievement and social and emotional learning compete in a zero sum game, and schools must choose between the two. However, the social development model suggests that improved social competence, in an environment rich with opportunities for successful involvement, can enhance bonding and commitment to school and prosocial adults, which can contribute to both improved behavioural outcomes and greater academic success. (p. 146)

Similarly, Elias et al. (1997) suggest that by paying attention to student concerns, particularly concerns relating to students' personal lives, teachers can create "a bridge to academic assignments . . . providing the missing piece to students' learning [and] integrate social and emotional needs with academics. [Moreover], this process allows students to personalize and internalize their learning" (p. 19). This is clearly something that most of the teachers in this study believed.

5.4. Recommendations

5.4.1. *The trouble with high school*

That the teachers in this study had found ways to build teacher-student relationships that are consistent with good practice as advocated by scholars such as Baumrind, Noddings and Selman, does not mean this is necessarily commonplace. As noted, the research literature suggests that for the most part, teacher-student relationships in secondary schools are weak (e.g., Chen, 2005; Eccles et al., 1993; Eccles, Lord & Buchanan, 1996; Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997; Klem & Connell, 2004; Reddy, Rhodes & Mulhall, 2003; Simmons & Blyth, 1987; Thuen & Bru, 2000). Understanding factors that enabled the teachers in this study to develop such relationships should point

to recommendations about what secondary teachers as a whole should be doing, and about how they can be supported.

5.4.2. “Home” classrooms as a possible antidote

As noted, 18 of the 20 teachers in this study worked in a model other than the departmental one, at least part of the time. That is, they taught in mini-schools, elective settings, or in non-enrolling positions, and all but one of the 18 teachers working in these settings felt satisfied in his or her ability to construct and maintain positive teacher-student relationships with his or her students. It would appear, therefore, that placing teachers and students in these kinds of “home” classroom settings may present a possible means to overcome many of the obstacles associated with teacher-student relationship construction in high schools noted by scholars.

In fact, researchers have found that when students are placed in situations where they have the same teacher for much of their instructional time, the possibility of positive connections is increased, and many of the declines normally associated with the transition to high school do not occur (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Cornelius-White, 2007). For example, McPartland (1987) found Grade 6 students in self-contained classrooms in junior high schools had better outcomes than did Grade 6 students in classrooms where departmental staffing was used (as cited in Midgley, Feldlaufer & Eccles, 1989b). Barber and Olsen (2004), meanwhile, found that student outcomes did not decline after the transition to junior high school for a group of Grade 6 students who remained in a cohort together and had the same two teachers for their academic courses in their first year there. In fact, for the students in that study, outcomes actually improved in the first year of junior high. However, the next year, when those same students were moved out of this family cohort and into the regular departmentalized junior high school, outcomes declined in the predictable fashion. This led Barber and Olsen to conclude that “it was in the realm of connection . . . specifically with teachers, where the school environment at transition times was most salient to student functioning” (p. 22; see also Reddy et al., 2003; Simmons & Blyth, 1987).

Similar findings have been published elsewhere, although many are anecdotal. For instance, Hargreaves (1998b) noted that teachers:

Prefer core grouping structures that enabled them to ‘roll’ with projects and ‘go with the flow’ in their classes, following the momentum of interest and learning”; they also preferred “following students from one grade to the next ‘because you know them so well, you know their moods and their families and can start right in there with them’” (as cited in Hargreaves, 2000, p. 818).

Hargreaves is saying essentially that teachers who work in “family cohorts” or other “home” classroom settings are better able to watch their students for signals and modify their teaching accordingly which, of course, was a finding of this study as well. Noddings (2005), cites convincing anecdotal evidence for the importance of “continuity of purpose, place and people” when she quotes Jaime Escalante “the real-life hero of *Stand and Deliver*, [who] insists that do the job he has set for himself he needs three years, not just one, with his students” (p. 68). Finally, students in Kidger et al.’s (2010) study, students expressed a desire for a “home classroom” where they could connect with a particular teacher, and feel a sense of belonging. They said they didn’t have such a home, but believed they would benefit from one if they did. For all these reasons, then, researchers have begun to recommend the implementation of such “family” or “home” classroom models (e.g., Barber & Olsen, 2004; Hargreaves, Earl, & Ryan, 1996, as cited Hargreaves, 2000; Pianta, Stuhlman, & Hamre, 2002; Sizer, 1992; as cited in Hargreaves, 2000).

However, there is one caveat that bears mentioning here: it appears that “family cohorts” are not a panacea – they have to be done right. For example, in Shiller’s (2009) study of three different Charter schools in New York, all three schools were small and placed students in “advisory” groupings. However, only at one of those three schools was this advisory model effective; at that school, staff were trained to be effective advisors to their students. No such training was in place at the other two schools. Therefore, such training would appear to be an important correlate of implementing a home classroom model in secondary schools, particularly if we wish such a model to result in the creation and maintenance of positive, teacher-student relationships there.

Thus, the most appropriate recommendation here seems to be not for the creation of a specific “home” teacher that students would check in with from time to time,

but rather for secondary students to be in a genuine “home” classroom, where they would have one or more of their prescribed classes with the same teacher. Pianta, Stuhlman and Hamre (2002) encourage schools to take greater advantage of the setting in which teachers and students naturally find themselves, the classroom, rather than spending time and money developing elaborate and expensive programs designed to increase connectivity in schools (McPartland, 1994; Ungar, 2004; see also Masten, 2001). When schools structure their course offering to allow for “homes” to emerge – such as by having students share a teacher and peers for two courses, as in Barber and Olsen’s study – these classroom can be a low-cost, effective model for establishing connectivity on their own. As Bruce explained of his own classroom:

This is their identified home. . . . This is home. And I think there are a lot of kids that feel that way.

Bruce’s school did not specifically set up his Music room to be a “home” classroom for his students, but by virtue of the fact that Bruce saw his students every year, it became that for them. Bruce was someone who had figured out how to be an authoritative, relationally-oriented “home” teacher over the course of his career. To help other teachers figure this out, and as quickly as possible, it is important that new teachers working in “home” classroom settings be trained to properly connect with and support their students, as Shiller (2009) recommends.

5.4.3. *Teacher training*

Of course, all teachers go through a teacher-training program of some kind, but these programs tend to emphasize curricular knowledge and the development of curricular resources more than they emphasize the development of relational pedagogies (e.g., Birman, Desimone, Porter & Garet, 2000; see also Pianta & Sabol, 2012). In fact, the inadequacy of teacher-training programs in this regard is generally acknowledged (Ball & Cohen, 1999, as cited in Pianta & Sabol, 2012; Haymore-Sandholtz, 2002; Pianta, Masburn, Downer, Hamre & Justice, 2008, as cited in Pianta & Sabol, 2012; Sheridan, Edwards, Marvin & Knoche, 2009; as cited in Pianta & Sabol, 2012). Pianta and Sabol (2012) have therefore argued for an increase in what they call “process-oriented professional development,” as opposed to professional development based on the acquisition of curricular knowledge:

Because of the strong evidence that positive teacher–child relationships matter, and may even promote outcomes for the riskiest children, program developers and policymakers have begun implementing programs specifically designed to alter relationship quality through more direct actions related to knowledge or behavioral change, often called process-oriented professional development . . . Rather than providing teachers with general knowledge unconnected to teachers’ classrooms, process inputs focus on providing teachers knowledge, skills, and support within individual classroom contexts and experiences in order to change teaching practices. (Pianta & Sabol, p. 222)

It might be useful, therefore, to create teacher-training programs with the specific mandate of using a process-oriented approach to help newer teachers to develop relational pedagogies, including the ability to engage in an authoritative teaching practice that emphasizes dialogue and responsiveness.

It is important to note here that such training must also continue after a teacher begins teaching; that is, mentorship must be in place for newer teachers, and process-oriented professional development should be in place for all teachers (Brown, 1996; Hong, 2012; Kidger et al., 2010; Pianta & Sabol, 2012). The newer teachers in this study specifically mentioned the importance of such mentorship and their need for it, but there is currently very mentorship in place for newer teachers (Hong, 2012; Shiller, 2009). The lack of such mentorship is an oft-cited reasons for “why teachers leave” (Brown, 1996; Hong, 2012). This kind of mentorship and professional development must continue for working teachers after their training is completed, even in mini-school and home classroom settings where the opportunities for relationship formation are more apparent because, as was demonstrated in Shiller’s (2009) study, the creation of such programs is not enough if the teachers working in them are inadequately trained.

6. Conclusion

As I have said, I first became interested in exploring the nature and construction of teacher-student relationships in secondary schools when I read Riley's (2011) statement:

Primary and secondary teachers appeared to be “cut from a different cloth”, in that secondary school teachers in my experience were not as interested in whether students loved them as many primary teachers were . . . They appeared more interested in whether they had the ability to inspire students to love the subjects that they taught, and worried about their own level of content knowledge. (p. 2)

The primary aim of this study, therefore, was to determine whether secondary teachers were interested in forming close relationships with their students, or whether they were primarily interested in teaching the curriculum. However, the answer to this question turned out to be more complex than I had expected, as 17 of the 20 teachers I interviewed told me that relationship and curriculum could not be separated from each other in this discreet way. Instead, the teachers believed that relationship and curriculum supported each other, as when teachers used curricular tools to engage in relational pedagogy. Thus, these teachers were not interested in “inspiring students to love the subjects they taught,” but the curriculum was nonetheless central to the work they did enacting their relational pedagogy. These notions appear contradictory unless we understand curriculum and relationship as dialectic.

So if teachers are not primarily interested in teaching the curriculum, does that mean they were primarily interested in establishing close relationships with their students? No; at least, they were not interested in such relationships for their own sake, although most teachers recognized the utility of such relationships to creating the kinds of conditions that would allow them to guide their students toward become a “human.” Certainly, none of the teachers I interviewed used the word “love,” as Riley has, although many spoke in parenthood metaphors and seemed to practice an ethic of care for their

students. Instead, these teachers tended to frame this care in the context of being a “safe adult” for their students, rather than a friend or someone students would “love.” Therefore, when I asked these teachers whether they wanted close relationships with their students, they told me that was not – could not be – their priority. However, many did have close relationships with many of their students nonetheless; apparently, “a safe adult” is someone a student wants in his or her life, even if that relationship is not defined in terms of “love.”

Another important aim of this study was to understand what kind of relationship teachers were trying to create with their students, and it appears this can best be understood as an “authoritative” relationship: caring, nurturing, and accepting, but also demanding. As for knowing when to enact which dimension of this authoritative model, such as when to be demanding and when to be accepting, teachers had to watch their students carefully for signals and to engage in continual dialogue with them. Such responsiveness and flexibility is entirely consistent with an authoritative model of teaching (Baumrind, 1978), and with Noddings’ (2005) ethic of care model, but to date, its importance has not been appreciated (for exceptions see Pellerin, 2005; Wentzel, 1997, 2002). Indeed, given that teacher-student relationships are widely understood to decline in quality after the transition to secondary school, the fact that the teachers in this study seem to have discovered – often on their own, sometimes with the help of a mentor – the kinds of contexts, beliefs and practices that do allow positive teacher-student relationships to flourish, is remarkable.

Finally, this study set out to understand which factors would facilitate and which would impede the construction and maintenance of the relationships teachers were trying to create. In this case, as we have seen, these were authoritative teacher student relationships which supported the enactment of curricular and relational pedagogies as dialectic, and it appears the most important factor facilitating them was teaching in some kind of “home” classroom setting. This is likely because these settings allowed for repeated teacher-student interactions in which students could come to trust their teachers, and teachers could come to know, and thus to plan appropriately for, their students. This is an important finding, because the creation of such classroom settings for core academic courses likely represents a low-cost way to dramatically improve the

quality of teacher-student relationships across the board (see Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Pianta, Stuhlman & Hamre, 2002).

References

- Ainsworth, M.D.S. (1967). *Infancy in Uganda: Infant care and the growth of love*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press.
- Ainsworth, M.D.S. (1989). Attachments beyond infancy. *American Psychologist*, *44*(4), 709-716.
- Ainsworth, M.D.S., & Bell, S.M. (1970). Attachment, exploration, and separation: Illustrated by the behavior of one-year-olds in a strange situation. *Child Development*, *41*(1), 49-67.
- Ainsworth, M.D.S., Blehar, M.C., Waters, E., & Wall, S. (1978). *Patterns of attachment*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Allen, J.P., Boykin-McElhaney, K., Jodl, K.M., & Kuperminc, G.P. (2004). Stability and change in attachment security across adolescence. *Child Development*, *75*(6), 1792-1805. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2004.00817.x
- Allen, J.P., Boykin-McElhaney, K., Kuperminc, G.P., Land, D.J., Liebman Kilmer, S., Moore, C.W., & O'Beirne-Kelly, H. (2003). A secure base in adolescence: Markers of attachment security in the mother-adolescent relationship. *Child Development*, *74*(1), 292-307. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/3696357>
- Anderman, L., Andrzejewski, C.E., & Allen, J. (2011). How do teachers support students' motivation and learning in their classrooms? *Teachers College Record*, *113*(5), 969-1003. Retrieved from Education Research Complete database (Accession Number: 62009218)
- Arnett, J.J. (1999). Adolescent storm and stress, reconsidered. *American Psychologist*, *54*(5) 317-326.
- Aultman, L.P., Williams-Johnson, M.R., & Schutz, P.A. (2009). Boundary dilemmas in teacher-student relationships: Struggling with "the line". *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *25*, 636-646. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2008.10.002
- Barber, B.K. & Olsen, J.A. (2004). Assessing the transitions to middle and high school. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, *19*(1), 3-30. doi 10.1177/0743558403258113
- Battistich, V., Solomon, D., Watson, M., & Schaps, E. (1994). Students and teachers in caring classrooms and school communities. Meeting of the American Educational Research Association.

- Baumrind, D. (1978). Parental disciplinary patterns and social competence in children. *Youth and Society*, 9(3), 239-276. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/docview/1295915443?accountid=1380>
- Baumrind, D. (1991). Effective parenting during the early adolescent transition. In P.A. Cowan & M. Hetherington (Eds.), *Family transitions* (pp. 111-159). Hillsdale, NJ : Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Beishuizen, J.J., Hof, E., van Putten, C.M., Bouwmeester, S., & Asscher, J.J. (2001). Students' and teachers' cognitions about good teachers. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 71, 185-201.
- Bergeron, J., Chouinard, R., & Janosz, M. (2011). The impact of teacher-student relationships and achievement motivation on students' intentions to drop out according to Socio-Economic Status. *China Education Review B*, 273-279. Retrieved from Education Research Complete database (Accession Number: 65534651)
- Bergin, D.A. (2008). Mr. Webb's Zoology class: How one teacher motivated and transformed high school students. In F. Pajares & T. Urda (Eds.), *The ones we remember: Scholars reflect on teachers who made a difference*, (pp. 77-86). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Bergin, C. & Bergin, D. (2009). Attachment in the classroom. *Educational Psychology Review*, 21(2), 141-170. doi: 10.1007/s10648-009-9104-0
- Birman, B.F., Desimone, L., Porter, A.C., & Garet, M.S. (2000). Designing professional development that works. *Educational Leadership*, 57(8), 27-33. Retrieved from database (Accession Number: 3270156).
- Bowlby, J. (1958). The nature of the child's tie to his mother. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 39(Sep-Oct), 350-373.
- Bretherton, I. & Mulholland, K.A. (1999). Internal working models in attachment relationships: A construct revisited. In J. Cassidy & P.R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research and clinical applications* (pp. 89-111). New York: Guilford Press.
- British Columbia Ministry of Education (2011). *Provincial Reports*. Retrieved from: <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/province.php>
- Brown, J.R. (1996). Why do teachers leave? (Unpublished Master's thesis). University of Toronto, Toronto.
- Bru, E., Stornes, T., Munthe, E., & Thuen, E. (2010). Students' perceptions of teacher support across the transition from primary to secondary school. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 54(6), 519-533. doi: 10.1080/00313831.2010.522842

- Burrows, M. (2008, July 30). Gay clubs build community in Vancouver. *The Georgia Straight*. Retrieved from: <http://www.straight.com/news/gay-clubs-build-community-vancouver>
- Canadian Business (2011, November 28). Canada's richest postal codes. Retrieved from: <http://www.canadianbusiness.com/business-news/canadas-richest-postal-codes/>
- Cassidy, W., & Bates, A. (2005). "Drop-outs" and "push-outs": Finding hope at a school that actualizes the ethic of care. *American Journal of Education*, 112, 66-102. Retrieved from Education Research Complete database (Accession Number: 18674913)
- Charmaz, K. (1990). 'Discovering' chronic illness: Using grounded theory. *Social Science & Medicine*, 11, 1161-1172. doi: 10.1016/0277-9536(90)90256-R
- Chen, J.J. (2008). Grade-level differences: Relations of parental, teacher and peer support to academic engagement and achievement among Hong Kong students. *School Psychology International*, 29(2), 183-198. doi: 10.1177/0143034308090059
- Churchill, S.L. (2003). Goodness-of-fit in early childhood settings. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 31(2), 113-118.
- Cohen, S. & Willis, T.A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 98(2), 310-357. doi: 10.1037/0033-2909.98.2.310
- Cornelius-White, J. (2007). Learner-centered teacher-student relationships are effective: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 113-143. doi: 10.3102/003465430298563
- Corbin, J. & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Corno, L. (2008). On relating to a special teacher. In F. Pajares and T. Urdan (Eds.), *The ones we remember: Scholars reflect on teachers who made a difference* (pp. 87-94). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Coyne, I.T. (1997). Sampling in qualitative research. Purposeful and theoretical sampling: Merging or clear boundaries? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 26(3), 623-630. doi: 10.1046/j.1365-2648.1997.t01-25-00999.x
- Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Eccles, J.S., Lord, S., & Buchanan, C. (1996). School transitions in adolescence: What are we doing to our young people? In J.A. Graber, J. Brooks-Gunn, & A.C. Petersen (Eds.) *Transitions through adolescence: Interpersonal domains and context*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

- Eccles, J.S., Midgley, C., Wigfield, A., Buchanan, C., Reuman, M., Flanagan, C. . . . Maclver, D. (1993). Development during adolescence: The impact of stage-environment fit on young adolescents' experience in schools and in families. *The American Psychologist*, 48(2), 90-101.
- Elias, M., Zins, J., Weissberg, R., Frey, K., Greenberg, M., Haynes, N. . . . Shriver T. (1997). *Promoting social and emotional learning: Guidelines for educators*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD Publications.
- Fabry, D.L. (2010). Combining research-based effective teacher characteristics with effective instructional strategies to influence pedagogy. *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching*, 3(1), 24-32. Retrieved from Education Research Complete database (Accession Number: 48917413)
- Fallu, J.S. & Janosz, M. (2003). La qualité des relations élève-enseignants a l'adolescence: un facteur de protection de l'échec scolaire. *Revue de Psychoéducation*, 32(1), 7-29.
- Floyd, C. (1996). Achieving despite the odds: A study of resilience among a group of African-American high school seniors. *Journal of Negro Education*, 65(2), 181-189. doi: 10.1007/s10964-011-9739-2
- Girl Scouts of America (1989). *Girl Scouts survey on the beliefs and moral values of America's children*. New York, NY: Girl Scouts of America.
- George, C. & Solomon, J. (1999). Attachment and caregiving: The caregiving behavioral system. In J. Cassidy & P.R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment* (pp. 649-670). New York: Guildford Press.
- Glaser, B.C. & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Glaser, B.C. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity: Advances in the methodology of grounded theory*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Gregory, A., & Ripski, M.B. (2008). Adolescent trust in teachers: Implications for behavior in the high school classroom. *School Psychology Review*, 37(3), 337-353. Retrieved from Education Research Complete database (Accession Number: 34720633)
- Hamre, B. & Pianta, R. (2001). Early teacher-child relationships and the trajectory of children's school outcomes through eighth grade. *Child Development*, 72, 625-638.
- Hargreaves, A. (2000). Mixed emotions: Teachers' perceptions of their interactions with students. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 16, 811-826. DOI: 10.1016/S0742-051X(00)00028-7

- Hawkins, J.D., Smith, B.H., & Catalano, B.F. (2004). Social development and social and emotional learning. In J.E. Zins, R.P. Weissberg, M.C. Wang, & H.J. Walberg, (Eds.), *Building academic success on social and emotional learning: What does the research say?* (pp. 135-150). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Haymore-Sandholtz, J. (2002). Inservice or professional development: Contrasting opportunities in a school/university partnership. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 18*(7), 815-830. doi: 10.1016/S0742-051X(02)00045-8
- Herrero, J., Estevez, E., & Musitu, G. (2006). The relationship of adolescent school-related deviant behaviour and victimization with psychological distress: Testing a general model of the mediational role of parents and teachers across groups of gender and age. *Journal of Adolescence, 29*, 671-690.
- Hoare, K.J., Mills, J., & Francis, K. (2012). Dancing with data: An example of acquiring theoretical sensitivity in a grounded theory study. *International Journal of Nursing Practice, 18*, 240-245. doi: 10.1111/j.1440-172X.2012.02038.x
- Hong, J. Y. (2012). Why do some beginning teachers leave the school, and others stay? Understanding teacher resilience through psychological lenses. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 18*(4), 417-440. doi:10.1080/13540602.2012.696044
- Hyslop, K. (2014, May 21). Updated: Everything you need to know about BC teacher bargaining. *The Tyee*. Retrieved from: <http://thetyee.ca/News/2014/05/21/BC-Teacher-Bargaining/>
- Kidger, J., Gunnell, D., Biddle, L., Campbell, R., & Donovan, J. (2010). Part and parcel of teaching? Secondary school staff's views on supporting student emotional health and well-being. *British Education Research Journal, 36*(6), 919-935. DOI: 10.1080/01411920903249308
- Klassen, R. (2008). An amotivated adolescence: How one rugby game and two teachers changed my self-beliefs and the course of my academic life. In F. Pajares & T. Urdan (Eds.), *The ones we remember: Scholars reflect on teachers who made a difference* (pp. 67-75). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Klem, A.M. & Connell, J.P. (2004). Relationships matter: Linking teacher support to student engagement and achievement. *Journal of School Health, 74*(7), 262-273.
- Kohn, A. (1993). Choices for children: Why and how to let students decide. *Phi Delta Kappan, 75*(1), 8-16, 18-21.
- Lerner, D. & Kruger, L. (1997). Attachment, self-concept, and academic motivation in high school students. *The American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 67*(3), 485-492. doi:10.1037/h0080249.

- Legault, L., Green-Demers, I. & Pelletier, L. (2006). Why do high school students lack motivation in the classroom? Toward an understanding to academic amotivation and the role of social support. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 98*(3), 567-582. doi: 10.1037/0022-0663.98.3.567
- Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury, CA: Sage Publishing Co.
- Luthar, S.S., Cicchetti, D., & Becker, B. (2000). The construct of resilience: A critical evaluation and guidelines for future work. *Child Development, 71*, 543-562. Retrieved from Education Research Complete database (Accession Number: 3433084)
- Lynch, M., & Cicchetti, D. (1997). Children's relationships with adults and peers: An examination of elementary and junior high school students. *Journal of School Psychology, 35*, 81-99. Retrieved from Education Research Complete database (Accession Number: 133292)
- Martin, A.J. & Dowson, M. (2009). Interpersonal relationships, motivation, engagement and achievement: Yields for theory, current issues, and educational practice. *Review of Educational Research, 79*(1), 327-365, doi: 10.3102/0034654308325583
- Masten, A.S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist, 56* (3), 227-238.
- McDowell, K.R. (2011). Who cares? Who doesn't? An exploration of perceptions of care based on the experiences of secondary school students from different economic groups. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Burnaby, B.C.: Simon Fraser University.
- McPartland, J.M. (1994). Dropout prevention in theory and practice. In R. J. Rossi (Ed.), *Schools and students at risk: Context and framework for positive change*. New York: Teachers' College Press.
- Meister, D.G., & Ahrens, P. (2011). Resisting plateauing: Four veteran teachers' stories. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 27*, 770-778. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2011.01.002
- Middleton, M. (2008). "I will not let this be an intellectual wasteland": Legacy and limitations of an inspiring teacher. In F. Pajares & T. Urdan (Eds.), *The ones we remember: Scholars reflect on teachers who made a difference* (pp. 111-125). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Midgley, C., Feldlaufer, H., & Eccles, J.S. (1989a). Change in teacher efficacy and student self- and task-related beliefs in mathematics during the transition to high school. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 81*(2), 247-258.
- Midgley, C., Feldlaufer, H., & Eccles, J.S. (1989b). Student/teacher relations and attitudes towards mathematics before and after the transition to junior high school. *Child Development, 60*(4), 981-992. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org>

- Morse, J.M. (1991). Strategies for sampling. In J.M. Morse (Ed.), *Qualitative nursing research: A contemporary dialogue* (127-146).
<http://dx.doi.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.4135/9781483349015.n16>
- Munthe, E. (2003). Teachers' professional certainty (Doctoral thesis, University of Oslo).
- Murray, C., & Pianta, R.C. (2007). The importance of teacher-student relationships for adolescents with high incidence disabilities. *Theory into Practice*, 46(2), 105-112. doi.: 10.1080/00405840701232943
- Noddings, Nel (1996). The caring professional. In S. Gordon, P. Benner & N. Noddings (Eds.). *Caregiving: Readings in knowledge, practices, ethics and politics*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Noddings, Nel (2005). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education* (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Osterman, K. (2000). Students' need for belonging in the school community. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(3), 323-367. Retrieved from
<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/1170786>
- Pajares, F., & Urdan, T. (Eds.). (2008) *The ones we remember: Scholars reflect on teachers who made a difference*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Pajares, F. (2008). Mrs. Miller. In F. Pajares & T. Urdan (Eds.), *The ones we remember: Scholars reflect on teachers who made a difference* (pp.63-65). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Patrick, H., Ryan, A., & Kaplan, A. (2007). Positive classroom motivational environments: Convergence between mastery goal structures and classroom social climate. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 103, 367-382. doi: 10.1037/0022-0663.99.1.83
- Pellerin, L.A. (2005). Applying Baumrind's parenting typology to high schools: Toward a middle-range theory of authoritative socialization. *Social Science Research*, 34(2), 283-303. doi:10.1016/j.ssresearch.2004.02.003
- Pianta, R.C., & Nimetz, S.L. (1991). Relationships between children and teachers: Associations with classroom and home behaviour. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 12, 379-393.
- Pianta, R.C., & Sabol, T.J. (2012). Recent trends in research on teacher-relationships. *Attachment and Human Development*, 14(3), 213-231. doi: 10.1080/14616734.2012.672262
- Pianta, R.C., & Steinberg, M. (1992). Teacher-child relationships and the process of adjusting to school. In R.C. Pianta (Ed.) *Beyond the parent: The role of other adults in children's lives* (61-80). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Pianta, R.C., Stuhlman, M.W., & Hamre, B.K. (2002). How schools can do better: Fostering stronger connections between teachers and students. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 93, 91-107. doi: 10.1002/yd.23320029307
- Poplin, M., & Weeres, J. (1994). *Voices from the inside: A report on schooling from inside the classroom*. Claremont, CA: Institute for Education in Transformation at the Claremont Graduate School.
- Posadzki, A. (2014, September 8). What you need to know about labour strife between BC and its teachers. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/what-you-need-to-know-about-labour-strife-between-bc-and-its-teachers/article1>
- Reddy, R., Rhodes, J.E., & Mulhall, P. (2003). The influence of teacher support on student adjustment in the middle school years: A latent growth curve study. *Development and Psychopathology*, 15, 119-138. doi: 10.1017.S0954579403000075
- Reschly, A. & Christenson, S.L. (2006). School completion. In G.G. Bear & K.M. Minke (Eds.), *Children's needs III: Development, prevention and intervention* (pp. 103-113). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.
- Reeves, J. (2009). The impact of dialogue group participation on teachers' relational pedagogy and climate in their classrooms. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Full Text database (Order Number: NS23268).
- Reyes, M., Brackett, M., Rivers, S., White, M. & Salovey, P. (2012). Classroom emotional climate, student engagement, and academic achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 104, 700-712. doi: 10.1037/a0027268
- Riley, P. (2011). *Attachment theory and the teacher-student relationship: A practical guide for teachers, teacher educators and school leaders*. Oxford: Routledge.
- Roorda, D.L., Koomen, H.M.Y., Spilt, J.L., & Oordt, F.J. (2011). The influence of affective teacher-student relationships on students' school engagement and achievement: A meta-analytic approach. *Review of Educational Research*, 81(4), 493-529. doi: 10.3102/0034654311421793
- Rudasill, K.M., Reio, T.J., Stipanovic, N., & Taylor, J.E. (2010). A longitudinal study of student-teacher relationship quality, difficult temperament, and risky behavior from childhood to early adolescence. *Journal of School Psychology*, 48, 389-412. doi: 10.1016/j.jsp.2010.05.001
- Ryan, R.M., & Grolnick, W.S. (1986). Origins and pawns in the classroom: Self-report and projective assessments of individual differences in children's perceptions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 50(3), 550-558. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.50.3.550

- Schaps, E., Battistich, V., & Solomon, D. (2004). Community in school as key to student growth: Findings from the Child Development Project. In J.E. Zins, R.P. Weissberg, M.C. Wang, & H.J. Walberg, *Building academic success on social and emotional learning: What does the research say?* New York: Teachers College Press.
- Selman, R. (2003). The promotion of social awareness: Powerful lessons from the partnership of developmental theory and classroom practice. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Shann, M.H. (1998). Professional commitment and satisfaction among teachers in urban middle schools. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 92(2), 67-73. Retrieved from: <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/27542193>
- Shavelson, R. (1973). What is the basic teaching skill? *Journal of Teacher Education*, 24, 144-151. doi: 10.1177/002248717302400213
- Shiller, J.T. (2009). These are our children! An examination of relationship-building practices in urban high schools. *The Urban Review*, 41, 461- 485. doi: 10.1007/s11256-008-0110-1
- Simmons, R.G. & Blyth, D.A. (1987). *Moving into adolescence: The impact of pubertal change and school context*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Skelton, C. (2010, February 10). Is Vancouver's Downtown Eastside really "Canada's poorest postal code?" (Web log comment). Retrieved from: <http://blogs.vancouversun.com/2010/02/10/is-vancouver-downtown-eastside-really-canadas-poorest-postal-code/>
- Statistics Canada (2011). Population and dwelling counts for census metropolitan areas (Data file). Retrieved from: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/hlt-fst/pd-pl/Table-Tableau.cfm?T=205&S=3&RPP=50>
- Statistics Canada (2006). *Population by selected ethnic origins, by census metropolitan areas (Vancouver)* (Data file). Retrieved from: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/demo27y-eng.htm>
- Stout, K.E., & Christenson, S.L. (2009). Staying on track for high school graduation: Promoting student engagement. *The Prevention Researcher*, 16(3), 17-20. Retrieved from Education Research Complete database (Accession Number: 44684797)
- Strauss, A., & Corbin (1998). *Basics of qualitative researcher: techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Thuen, E. & Bru, E. (2000). Learning environment, meaningfulness of schoolwork, and on-task orientation among Norwegian Grade 9 students. *School Psychology International*, 21(4), 393-413. doi: 10.1177/0143034300214004

- Todd, D. (2014, March 28). Vancouver is the most 'Asian' city outside Asia. What are the ramifications? (Web log comment). Retrieved from: <http://blogs.vancouver.sun.com/2014/03/28/vancouver-is-most-asian-city-outside-asia-what-are-the-ramifications/>
- Ungar, M. (2004). *Nurturing hidden resilience in troubled youth*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Vitaro, F., Brendgen, M., Dionne, G., Boivin, M. & Girard, A. (2012). Social experiences in kindergarten and academic achievement in Grade 1: A monozygotic twin difference study. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 104*(2), 366-380.
- Walker, V.S. (2008). In search of Ms. Steepleton. In F. Pajares & T. Urdan (Eds.), *The ones we remember: Scholars reflect on teachers who made a difference* (pp. 53-61). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Weichel, A. (2009, August 2). Milk protégé praises Vancouver Pride celebration. *CTV News*. Retrieved from: <http://bc.ctvnews.ca/milk-prot-g-praises-vancouver-pride-celebration-1.422070>
- Weissberg, E.W. (2004). When my teachers were not anonymous. *Reclaiming Children and Youth, 13*(2), 66-67. Retrieved from Education Research Complete database (Accession Number: 14227041)
- Welcome BC (2012, December). Languages in B.C.: 2011 census fact sheet (Data file). Retrieved from: http://www.welcomebc.ca/welcome_bc/media/Media-Gallery/docs/communities/Census-2011-Languages.pdf
- Wentzel, K. (1997). Student motivation in middle school: The role of perceived pedagogical caring. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 89*(3), 411-419. Retrieved from Education Research Complete database (Accession Number: 9710121539)
- Wentzel, K. (2002). Are effective teachers like good parents? Teaching styles and student adjustment in early adolescence. *Child Development, 73*(1), 287-301. Retrieved from Education Research Complete database (Accession Number: 5980274)
- Werner, E.E., & Smith, R.S. (1977/2001). *Journeys from childhood to midlife: Risk, resilience and recovery*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Woolfolk, A.E., Winne, P.H., & Perry, N.E. (2006) *Educational psychology*. Toronto: Pearson Education Canada.
- Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg (2004). The scientific base linking social and emotional learning to school success. In J.E. Zins, R.P. Weissberg, M.C. Wang, & H.J. Walberg, *Building academic success on social and emotional learning: What does the research say?* (pp. 3-22). New York: Teachers' College Press.

Appendices

Appendix A.

Study details

November x, XXXX

(Application #: xxxxxxxxx)

Teacher-student relationships in secondary schools: What do teachers think?

Principal Investigator: Erin Cullingworth, Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University

Supervisor: Dr. Lucy LeMare, Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University

Dean of Education: Kris Magnusson

Description of the research project: This exploratory qualitative research project seeks to illuminate the perceptions and experiences of secondary school teachers regarding their relationships with the students they teach. I will meet with 10-20 teachers for hour-long, face-to-face individual interviews, to ask them open-ended questions on this topic (see attached Interview Protocol). It is expected that these interviews will provide the information necessary for the creation of a constructivist grounded theory of the dimensions of teacher-student relationships in secondary schools. Such a theory could guide future study into the characteristics of, and conditions for, positive teacher-student relationships in secondary schools.

Participants: Participants will be secondary school teachers working in Vancouver, a diverse urban school district. Teachers in Vancouver's large departmentalized secondary schools face significant challenges in creating teacher-student relationships and as such, are expected to have significant insight into the phenomenon under study. Using purposeful sampling, I plan to recruit between 10 and 20 participants; the exact number will depend on the point at which data saturation is reached. I am currently in conversation with personnel at the Vancouver School Board to arrange recruitment; however, the Board first requires University ethics approval.

Once the board and the university have approved my proposal, I plan to contact the administrators at six Vancouver schools, representing the economic and ethnic diversity of this community, to solicit their participation in the study. Once these schools are identified, I will arrange to make a brief presentation at a staff meeting at each school. At the end of each presentation, I will distribute information about the study, including my email address and the details of remuneration for participation (see attached handout). A copy of this same handout will also be placed in the boxes of each teacher at each school following those staff meetings. If administrators would prefer I not present at a staff meeting, I will instead contact teachers by sending the attached handout to the entire staff via email.

Interested teachers will contact me via email, at which point I will email them the informed consent form (see attached form). No information about this study or its aims will be withheld from participants at any point during the recruitment or interview process. If after reading the consent form teachers are still interested in participating in the study, we will arrange to meet at a place of their choosing, such as their classroom outside school hours, to conduct the interview. Participants will receive a \$20 gift card to *either* Starbucks or Chapters or Save-on-Foods.

Data Collection: These will be open-ended, semi-structured interviews designed to collect qualitative data on the topic of student-teacher relationships in secondary schools. They will be based on a list of questions soliciting participants' perspectives on this topic (see attached interview protocol). These questions are deliberately broad and general, in order to give participants the ability to represent their experience as accurately as possible. In addition, if there are aspects of teacher-student relationships not addressed by my questions, but which the participant would like to discuss, that will be encouraged.

These interviews are designed to address the following research questions:

What do teacher-student relationships in secondary schools look like?

What do teachers believe characterizes a positive teacher-student relationship in secondary schools?

Are there particular qualities of these relationships that are unique to the secondary school context?

Are teachers in mainstream secondary schools trying to establish relationships with their students? If so, how? If not, why not?

What obstacles do teachers perceive to the construction of positive teacher-student relationships in secondary schools?

There are important potential implications for this work, as secondary school is a time when most students experience a drop in self-esteem and grades, and an increase in risk-taking behaviours. Teacher-student relationships can protect against these negative outcomes; unfortunately, the quality of teacher-student relationships usually declines after the transition to secondary school. Therefore, a qualitative study such as this one, that seeks to identify the variables that interfere with the construction of positive teacher-student relationships, could suggest important recommendations for improving teacher-student relationships – and therefore, student outcomes – in secondary schools.

Data Analysis: Data collection and analysis will proceed iteratively with each interview being transcribed shortly after it is conducted. The text of each interview will be analyzed for emergent themes, using in vivo codes, before I proceed to the next interview. This process will continue until saturation is reached; that is, until no new insights or codes are being gleaned from new interviews. Data will then be used to generate a constructivist grounded theory of teacher-student relationships in secondary schools, which will be reported using extensive quotes.

Throughout this process, I plan to engage in “memoing”, that is, keeping notes and written reflections of my thoughts as a means of deepening my understanding of the emergent themes, and of monitoring any biases that may arise for me. In addition, I will engage in “member checking”, wherein participants will have the option of reviewing my findings, including quotes attributed to their pseudonym, to affirm the accuracy of the representation of their views.

Risk to participants: Risk to participants is minimal. One potential risk that does exist is that participants, after having reflected on their teaching practice during the interview, may feel discouraged if they believe their actual practice falls short of their ideal. However, this is a risk that teachers already face in their daily working lives, as discussions about teaching practice are a common part of teaching.

Nonetheless, in order to mitigate this potential risk, teachers will be interviewed individually, not in groups, so as to avoid the perception that a participant’s practice falls short in comparison with the practice of a colleague. Questions will be open-ended and non-judgmental (see attached interview protocol) and designed only to solicit information about a teacher’s practice and views; teachers will not be judged against a theoretical model or ideal. I will strive at all times to be neutral in my reactions, and accepting of participants’ comments.

Confidentiality: Participants will be asked to sign an informed consent form prior to being interviewed (see attached form), which will include details on how their confidentiality is to be maintained. All participants will also be told that their participation is voluntary, that they can refuse to answer any question for any reason, and that they can withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

Participants will choose a pseudonym by which they will be known when the data are reported. Because this report will rely heavily on the use of quotes, some way of distinguishing one participant from another is required. Pseudonyms are a practical way to maintain participant confidentiality while maintaining the flow of the narrative when the data are reported. Participants will have the option to create their own pseudonym if they like or, if they would prefer, the researcher will choose a pseudonym for them. A key sheet containing the pseudonyms, as well as participants’ names and other identifying details, will be kept in a locked cabinet in the research lab of Dr. Lucy Le Mare, in EDB xxxxx

All interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed, and these transcriptions will be stored on my personal, password-protected laptop, during the period of analysis. These files will also be backed up on an external hard drive, which will be stored in a locked cabinet in my basement. Once the analysis is complete, the external hard drive will be transferred to the research lab of Dr. Lucy Lemare, in EDB xxxxx, where it will be stored in the same locked cabinet as the key sheet for participant identities. After two years, both the hard drive and key sheet will be destroyed.

Appendix B.

Informed consent: School board #1

November x, XXXX

(Application #: xxxxxxxxx)

INFORMED CONSENT

This research is being conducted under the auspices of Simon Fraser University, with permission from that university's Research Ethics Board and from the XXXX School Board. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

The primary concern of SFU's Research Ethics Board is for the health, safety, and psychological well-being of all participants. Should you wish to obtain information about your rights as a participant in research, the responsibilities of researchers, or if you have any concerns or complaints with respect to your participation in this research study as a research participant, please contact Dr. Jeff Toward, Director, Office of Research Ethics at xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Questions may be addressed to the Principal Investigator, Erin Cullingworth at or xxx-xxx-xxxx; her supervisor, Dr. Lucy LeMare at or xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Your signature on this form will signify that you have received this document describing the study, that you have read it and understood the risks and benefits of participating in the study, and that you voluntarily agree to participate.

Title: Teacher-student relationships in secondary schools: What do teachers think?

Principal investigator:

Erin Cullingworth

Tel.: xxx-xxx-xxxx

Email:

Supervisor:

Lucy LeMare

Tel.: xxx-xxx-xxxx

Email:

Purpose of the study: This study will look at what teachers in mainstream, urban secondary schools believe about their relationships with their students: what these relationships are like, what teachers wish they were like, and what obstacles teachers believe get in the way of building these relationships. Because most of the research into teacher-student relationships has been done in elementary or middle schools, a study is needed to help us better understand teacher-student relationships in secondary schools. It is hoped that this research will lead to a broad, general theory of teacher-student relationships in secondary

schools, which could then lead to future study of more specific research questions.

What participants will be asked to do: If you choose to participate, you will be asked to answer open-ended questions about your experience as a high school teacher. This interview will take about one hour, and will take place in a quiet area of your choosing, such as your classroom after school hours. At the end of the interview you will receive a \$20 gift card to *either* Starbucks, Chapters, *or* Save-On-Foods (your choice). After the interview, you will be sent a copy of the interview transcript in case you'd like to read it over. Later, all participants will also receive a draft copy of the research findings, and will be invited to share their feedback on those findings with the researchers if they wish.

Risks: The risks associated with this study are minimal. However, participation in these interviews will require you to talk about, and reflect on, your teaching practice. There is the possibility that, while reflecting on your practice, you may come to feel that your practice is not what you wish it was. Please be assured, though, that the purpose of this study is only to solicit information about the reality of teaching in high schools; it is NOT to judge participants against each other, or against an ideal.

Benefits of the study to the development of new knowledge: Very little is known about teacher-student relationships in mainstream high schools. This study gives you a chance to contribute your perspective on what is going on in our classrooms, and on how and why you teach the way you do, and to the wider knowledge base that is used to develop theories and policies around secondary education.

Provisions of confidentiality: Participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw your participation at any time. If you do decide to participate, the confidentiality of your identity and the details of your practice will be guaranteed by the use of a pseudonym. The name of your school district will not be reported in the data, and any other identifying details of your practice will be changed when the data are reported to further ensure your confidentiality.

One key sheet will be made containing the pseudonym and real name of each participant, along with contact information. This key sheet will be kept in a locked cabinet in the research lab of Dr. Lucy Le Mare, in SFU's Education Building, room xxxxx. It will be destroyed after two years.

Storage of data: All interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed. After the interview, the electronic file of the recording will be uploaded onto the principal investigator's personal, password-protected laptop and stored there during the period of analysis. Transcriptions, as well as copies of emails sent between the researcher and participants, will also be stored on this same laptop.

All these files will also be backed up on an external hard drive, which will be stored in a locked cabinet at the principal researcher's home. Once the analysis is complete, the external hard drive will be transferred to the research lab of Dr. Lucy Lemare, in SFU's Education Building, room xxxxx, where it will be stored in

the same locked cabinet as the key sheet for participant identities. After two years, both the hard drive and key sheet will be destroyed.

Withdrawal and complaints: Participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw your participation at any time. Also, if you have any concerns or complaints with respect to your participation in this research study as a research participant, please contact Dr. Jeff Toward, Director, Office of Research Ethics at xxx-xxx-xxxx.

(Quote Application #: xxxxxxxx)

Contact for use in future studies: The information you have contributed may be used in future studies and may require future contact with you. Do you agree to future contact?

Yes/No

I have read and understood the above details of the study, and I freely consent to participate.

Participant name (please print):

(Last name, First name) (MM/DD/YYYY)

Participant signature: _____

Participant's contact information:

Appendix C.

Email to teachers: School board #2

April x, XXXX

(Application #: xxxxxxxxx)

Teacher-student relationships in secondary schools: What do teachers think?

INVESTIGATORS:

Erin Cullingworth

Lucy Lemare

Tel.:xxx-xxx-xxxx

Tel.: xxx-xxx-xxxx

Email:

Email:

Dear teacher,

My name is Erin Cullingworth and I been a secondary teacher in Vancouver for the last 10 years; currently I am also working on my Master of Arts in Educational Psychology at Simon Fraser University.

Over the course of my graduate studies at SFU, I came to notice that while there was quite a lot of research being done on teacher-student relationships in elementary and middle school classrooms in Canada, there did not appear to be much done on teacher-student relationships in high schools. Eventually, I decided to devote my own thesis research to trying to fill that gap.

I have already interviewed approximately 15 teachers, from a few different schools and representing different perspectives, about their views on teacher-student relationships in secondary classrooms. At this point, my research has led me to become interested in the “pod” or “Middle Years” model offered at your school, wherein students are grouped together for English and Socials and/or Math and Science, often with the same teachers. As a result, I am now specifically recruiting a few teachers working in those settings to interview.

Because these pods are supposed to foster the development of teacher-student relationships – as well as relationships between students – I am particularly interested in what you have to say about this system and whether or not it works the way it is supposed to. Please be assured therefore that I am equally interested in what has not worked, and in any negative experiences you may have had with it, as I am in what has worked. This is an open-ended, non-judgmental study. Moreover, whatever you share with me about your thoughts and feelings on pods will be kept confidential (with the exception of a disclosure that a student was going to cause harm to himself or others, of course).

These interviews will take about an hour to conduct and will be conducted in a quiet place of your choosing, such as your classroom after school hours. Participants will receive a \$20 gift certificate either Starbucks, Chapters, or Save-on-Foods – whichever you prefer.

Your confidentiality will be guaranteed through the use of a pseudonym; your real name will not appear anywhere in the study, not even in the bibliography. Participants' real names will only be recorded on a key sheet that will be stored in a locked cabinet and destroyed two years after the study is completed. Schools will not be named, and the district will only be called "a large urban city in western Canada."

If you think you might be interested in participating, I would really appreciate it. Please call me at xxx-xxx-xxxx or email me at so that I can answer any questions you may have before you decide.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Erin Cullingworth

Appendix D.

Informed consent: School board #2

April x, XXXX

(Application #: xxxxxxxxxx)

INFORMED CONSENT

This research is being conducted under the auspices of Simon Fraser University, with permission from that university's Research Ethics Board and from the Surrey School Board. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

The primary concern of SFU's Research Ethics Board is for the health, safety, and psychological well-being of all participants. Should you wish to obtain information about your rights as a participant in research, the responsibilities of researchers, or if you have any concerns or complaints with respect to your participation in this research study as a research participant, please contact Dr. Jeff Toward, Director, Office of Research Ethics at xxx-xxx-xxxx

Questions may be addressed to the Principal Investigator, Erin Cullingworth at xxx-xxx-xxxx; her supervisor, Dr. Lucy LeMare at xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Your signature on this form will signify that you have received this document describing the study, that you have read it and understood the risks and benefits of participating in the study, and that you voluntarily agree to participate.

Title: Teacher-student relationships in secondary schools: What do teachers think?

Principal investigator:

Erin Cullingworth

Tel.: xxx-xxx-xxxx

Email:

Supervisor:

Lucy LeMare

Tel.: xxx-xxx-xxxx

Email:

Purpose of the study: This study is examining what teachers in mainstream, urban secondary schools believe about their relationships with their students: what these relationships are like, what teachers wish they were like, and what obstacles teachers believe get in the way of building these relationships. Because most of the research into teacher-student relationships has been done in elementary or middle schools, a study is needed to help us better understand teacher-student relationships in secondary schools. It is hoped that this research will lead to a broad, general theory of teacher-student relationships in secondary

schools, which could then lead to future study of more specific research questions.

In particular, your participation is being sought because you have worked in a “pod”-type system, where you taught the same students for two blocks (or more) and wherein students were together for two or more blocks. Because these pods are supposed to foster the development of teacher-student relationships – as well as relationships between students – I am particularly interested in what you have to say about this system and whether or not it works the way it is supposed to. Please be assured therefore that I am equally interested in what has not worked, and in any negative experiences you may have had with it, as I am in what has worked. This is an open-ended, non-judgmental study, and I want to hear from every teacher who has worked in this kind of system. Moreover, whatever you share with me about your thoughts and feelings on pods will be kept confidential (with the exception of a disclosure that a student was going to cause harm to himself or others, of course).

What participants will be asked to do: If you choose to participate, you will be asked to answer open-ended questions about your experience as a high school teacher, particularly your work in a Grade 8 pod classroom. This interview will take about one hour, and will take place in a quiet area of your choosing, such as your classroom after school hours. At the end of the interview you will receive a \$20 gift card to *either* Starbucks, Chapters, *or* Save-On-Foods (your choice). After the interview, you will be sent a copy of the interview transcript in case you’d like to read it over. Later, all participants will also receive a draft copy of the research findings, and will be invited to share their feedback on those findings with the researchers if they wish.

Risks: The risks associated with this study are minimal. However, participation in these interviews will require you to talk about, and reflect on, your teaching practice. There is the possibility that, while reflecting on your practice, you may come to feel that your practice is not what you wish it was. Please be assured, though, that the purpose of this study is only to solicit information about the reality of teaching in high schools; it is NOT to judge participants against each other, or against an ideal.

Benefits of the study to the development of new knowledge: Very little is known about teacher-student relationships in high schools. This study gives you a chance to contribute your perspective on what is going on in our classrooms, and on how and why you teach the way you do, and to the wider knowledge base that is used to develop theories and policies around secondary education. In particular, your confidential feedback could inform the debate around whether or not the pod model should be expanded beyond your jurisdiction, to others.

Provisions of confidentiality: Participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw your participation at any time. If you do decide to participate, the confidentiality of your identity and the details of your practice will be guaranteed by the use of a pseudonym. The name of your school district will not be reported in the data, and any other identifying details of your practice will be changed when the data are reported to further ensure your confidentiality.

One key sheet will be made containing the pseudonym and real name of each participant, along with contact information. This key sheet will be kept in a locked cabinet in the research lab of Dr. Lucy Le Mare, in SFU's Education Building, room xxxxx. It will be destroyed after two years.

Storage of data: All interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed. After the interview, the electronic file of the recording will be uploaded onto the principal investigator's personal, password-protected laptop and stored there during the period of analysis. Transcriptions, as well as copies of emails sent between the researcher and participants, will also be stored on this same laptop.

All these files will also be backed up on an external hard drive, which will be stored in a locked cabinet at the principal researcher's home. Once the analysis is complete, the external hard drive will be transferred to the research lab of Dr. Lucy Lemare, in SFU's Education Building, room xxxxx, where it will be stored in the same locked cabinet as the key sheet for participant identities. After two years, both the hard drive and key sheet will be destroyed.

Withdrawal and complaints: Participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw your participation at any time. Also, if you have any concerns or complaints with respect to your participation in this research study as a research participant, please contact Dr. Jeff Toward, Director, Office of Research Ethics at xxx-xxx-xxxx. (Quote Application #: xxxxxxxxx)

Jeff Toward
Office of Research Ethics
Simon Fraser University
8888 University Drive
Burnaby, B.C.
V5A 1S6

for use in future studies: The information you have contributed may be used in future studies and may require future contact with you. Do you agree to future contact?

Yes/No

I have read and understood the above details of the study, and I freely consent to participate.

Participant name (please print):

Date:

(Last name, First name)

(MM/DD/YYYY)

Participant signature: _____

Participant's contact information: _____

Appendix E.

Interview protocol: School board #2

Interview protocol

Interviewer:

Interviewee's teaching load:

Date:

(MM/DD/YYYY)

(Remember to go over: purpose of the study, procedures for complaints and withdrawals, confidentiality, and testing the recorder).

Have interviewee sign the consent form.

Potential questions:

What is your current teaching load?

Why did you decide to go into teaching?

Why, in particular, did you choose secondary teaching over working in elementary or middle schools?

Before you taught in a pod system, had you ever taught the same students two courses at the same time, or the same students more than once?

Why did you decide to teach in a pod model?

What do you like about it?

What don't you like about it?

In your experience, what's different about working in a pod system, as compared with working in a regular high school classroom?

What are your goals for your students; that is, what do you hope they'll get out of their year with you?

Are these goals different depending on the ages of your students; that is, would you have different goals for your grade 8s than you would for your grade 11s, for example?

Are these goals different for the students in a pod, than they would be for students you teach in a different context?

Is it easier for you to establish good relationships with some students over others?

What qualities in a student, do you think, encourage you to create a good relationship with that student?

Can you give some examples?

What are the qualities in a student that make you want to avoid them, or that discourage you from fostering a relationship with them?

Can you give some examples?

Does the pod system facilitate or hinder the establishment of good relationships, in your opinion?

Can you give some examples?

Think of your most challenging student, the one you find it hardest to get along with. How do you handle that relationship?

Can you give some examples?

Do you do anything in particular to help them, either with their schoolwork, their behaviour issues, or their relationship with you?

Can you give some examples?

Does the pod system encourage or discourage difficult teacher-student relationships, in your opinion?

Can you give some examples?

When you are notified about a student of yours who is experiencing some kind of personal difficulties, how do you handle that?

Can you give some examples, without betraying any confidential information?

Have you ever noticed on your own that a student seemed to be having a difficult time and initiated any kind of action on your own?

Can you give some examples, without betraying any confidential information?

Do you think working in a pod system makes it easier to notice these kinds of things? Why or why not, in your opinion?

What do you see as the role of the teacher-student relationship in the high school classroom?

Can you give some examples at the individual student, whole class, and between-student levels?

Would this be different in a pod classroom, as opposed to in a regular classroom?

Do you do anything in particular to create these good relationships with your students? If so, what?

Why is it important to you to do these things?

What, in particular, gets in the way of you having the kind of relationships you'd like to with your students?

Given all the things you want to accomplish and all the pressures on you as a teacher, how important is "covering the curriculum" to you?

Do you find it challenging to balance the necessity of covering the curriculum with finding time for relationships?

Can you give some examples?

Is there room for students to come up with topics or questions to explore, or to choose the kinds of projects they want to do – anything like that?

Do you ever share details of your history or personal life with your students?

When and why do you choose to do this?

Can you give some examples of things you've shared?

If you could change something about the way high school is set up and taught, what would it be?

Can you give some examples?

(Thank interviewee for his/her participation and give them their remuneration. Remind them to contact me if they think of anything else).

Appendix F.

Interview protocol: School board #1

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Interviewee's teaching load:

Date:

Time:

Place:

(MM/DD/YYYY)

(Remember to go over: purpose of the study, procedures for complaints and withdrawals, confidentiality, and testing the recorder).

Have interviewee sign the consent form.

Potential questions:

Why did you decide to go into teaching?

Why, in particular, did you choose secondary teaching over working in elementary or middle schools?

What are your goals for your students; that is, what do you hope they'll get out of their year with you?

Are these goals different depending on the ages of your students; that is, would you have different goals for your grade 8s than you would for your grade 11s, for example?

Can you give some examples?

Given all the things you want to accomplish and all the pressures on you as a teacher, how important is "covering the curriculum" to you?

Do you find it challenging to balance the necessity of covering the curriculum with finding time for relationships?

Can you give some examples?

Is there room for students to come up with topics or questions to explore, or to choose the kinds of projects they want to do – anything like that?

Do you ever share details of your history or personal life with your students?

When and why do you choose to do this?

Can you give some examples of things you've shared?

What do you see as the role of the teacher-student relationship in the high school classroom?

Can you give some examples at the individual student, whole class, and between-student levels?

Would this be different for different ages? That is, is a "good" teacher-student relationship in Grade 8 different than a "good" teacher-student relationship in Grade 11?

Do you do anything in particular to create these good relationships with your students? If so, what?

Why is it important to you to do these things?

What, in particular, gets in the way of you having the kind of relationships you'd like to with your students?

Is it easier for you to establish good relationships with some students over others?

What qualities in a student, do you think, encourage you to create a good relationship with that student?

Can you give some examples?

What are the qualities in a student that make you want to avoid them, or that discourage you from fostering a relationship with them?

Can you give some examples?

Have you ever taught the same students more than once? What was that like?

Can you give some examples?

Think of your most challenging student, the one you find it hardest to get along with. How do you handle that relationship?

Can you give some examples?

Do you do anything in particular to help them, either with their schoolwork, their behaviour issues, or their relationship with you?

Can you give some examples?

When you are notified about a student of yours who is experiencing some kind of personal difficulties, how do you handle that?

Can you give some examples, without betraying any confidential information?

Have you ever noticed on your own that a student seemed to be having a difficult time and initiated any kind of action on your own?

Can you give some examples, without betraying any confidential information?

Is there anything your school in particular does that makes you able to reach students more effectively, whether we define that as reaching them emotionally, or as being able to teach concepts more effectively?

Can you give some examples?

If you could change something about the way high school is set up and taught, what would it be?

Can you give some examples?

Some people say that teachers in high school don't "care" about their students as much as teachers in elementary school do. What do you think?

What does that caring look like, to you?

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

(Thank interviewee for his/her participation and give them their remuneration. Remind them to contact me if they think of anything else).

Appendix G.

Email to teachers: School board #1

(Application #: xxxxxxxxx)

Participant ID: _____

Teacher-student relationships in secondary schools: What do teachers think?

INVESTIGATORS:

Erin Cullingworth

Lucy Lemare

Tel.: xxx-xxx-xxx

Tel.: xxx-xxx-xxxx

Email:

Email:

Dear teacher,

My name is Erin Cullingworth and I been a secondary teacher in Vancouver for the last 10 years; currently I am also working on my Master of Arts in Educational Psychology at Simon Fraser University.

Over the course of my graduate studies at SFU, I came to notice that while there was quite a lot of research being done on teacher-student relationships in elementary and middle school classrooms in Canada, there did not appear to be much done on teacher-student relationships in mainstream high schools. Eventually, I decided to devote my own thesis research to trying to fill that gap.

As a result, I am looking for approximately 20 teachers, from a few different schools and representing different perspectives, to interview about their views on teacher-student relationships in secondary classrooms. Are these relationships important? Why or why not? What is the reality of teacher-student relationships in high schools, given all the other things we have to worry about in our classrooms every day, and what do we need to make them better? These are just some of the questions that interest me and that I will be exploring with the teachers I interview.

These interviews will take place before the end of February XXXX. They will take about an hour to conduct and will be conducted in a quiet place of your choosing, such as your classroom after school hours. Participants will receive a \$20 gift certificate either Starbucks, Chapters, or Save-on-Foods – whichever you prefer.

Your anonymity will be guaranteed through the use of a pseudonym; your real name will not appear anywhere in the study, not even in the bibliography. Participants' real names will only be recorded on a key sheet that will be stored in a locked cabinet and destroyed two years after the study is completed. Schools

will not be named, and the district will only be called “a large urban city in western Canada.”

If you think you might be interested in participating, I would really appreciate it. Please call me at xxx-xxx-xxxx or email me so that I can answer any questions you may have before you decide.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Erin Cullingworth