

Teaching (with) Love: Relational Engagement in Educational Settings

by

Jennifer Vincent
Bachelor of Arts, Ryerson University, 2010

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the School of Child and Youth Care

© Jennifer Vincent, 2016
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author.

Supervisory Committee

Teaching (with) Love: Relational Engagement in Educational Settings

by

Jennifer Vincent

Bachelor of Arts, Ryerson University, 2010

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Jennifer White, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria

Supervisor

Dr. Carol Stuart, Departmental Member, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria

Co-Supervisor

Abstract

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Jennifer White, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria

Supervisor

Dr. Carol Stuart, Departmental Member, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria

Co-Supervisor

The purpose of this study was to investigate school professionals' conceptualizations and experiences of love in their work with children. In order to investigate the place of love in educational settings, semi-structured interviews with school professionals were conducted. Results from the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis and feedback on the identified themes was provided by participants during a second phase of interviewing. There was agreement among all participants that loving practice and good pedagogical practice are compatible, and that loving practice benefits students' overall school experience. Key similarities across participants' descriptions of loving practice include; the importance of positive relationships and positive boundaries within these relationships, the social, emotional and academic benefits of loving practice, and the relevance of self-care. Parallels are drawn between understandings of praxis in child and youth care and loving practice as defined by the participants in this study. The roles of building community and conscious reflection in loving practice are also explored. Through this work, I hope to offer the reader an opportunity to be more mindful about the role of love in their own professional practice.

Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Table of Figures.....	vi
Acknowledgements.....	vii
Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
Research Inspiration.....	1
Purpose of the Research	3
Research Question	4
Reflexivity - Finding Balance in Relational Inquiry	4
Framework	5
Chapter Two: Literature Review	7
Conceptualizing Love.....	8
Love in the Caring Professions	19
Love, Ethics and Professional Practice	34
Situated Love.....	37
Chapter Three: Methodology.....	42
Research Question	42
Situating the Inquiry.....	42
The Research Process.....	46
Trustworthiness and Rigor	53
Identifying the Research Codes and Themes.....	54
Chapter Four: Findings.....	59
Love as a Relational Process.....	59
Fostering Connection	59
Relational Boundaries	65
A Universal Developmental Need	67
Love as an Endeavor.....	70
Evaluating Values	71
Beyond Academics and Curriculum	74
Self-Care	78
Summary	80
Chapter Five: Analysis and Discussion	82
Love as Relational Praxis	82
Building Loving Communities.....	88

Teaching and Learning about Love: A Conscious, Reflective Endeavour	91
Limitations	95
Future Research Potential	96
Concluding Remarks	96
References	99
Appendices	107
Appendix A	107
Appendix B	108
Appendix C	112

Table of Figures

<i>Figure 1: Initial Thematic Map</i>	56
<i>Figure 2: Developing Thematic Map</i>	57
<i>Figure 3: Final Thematic Map</i>	57
<i>Figure 4: Final Thematic Map Including Grouping of Initial Codes</i>	58

Acknowledgements

This work is dedicated to all of the people who patiently stood by me the whole way through.

Thank you to my advisors, Jennifer White and Carol Stuart, and to my husband, who each put effort toward holding space for me at times when much of my effort was focused on this work.

You supported me in making some difficult choices, offered unconditional love and support, gave guidance when I needed it, and made me feel safe enough to pause and reflect, and to even move backwards with this work, so that I could reach this point in a way that feels authentic.

I also want to thank the individuals who took the time to participate in this research study with me. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to learn from your experience and to share the love that you bring to your work.

Chapter One: Introduction

Schools play an integral role in the development of citizens and the functioning of communities. While the school's historical role has focused on implementing academic curriculum, debate regarding the expansion of the focus of education to consider the relational needs and ethical engagement of young people in their school environment is ongoing. This research aims to examine the place of love and relational learning in an environment that is traditionally focused on academic learning from the perspective of the diverse group of professionals who work with children in schools.

Love is a powerful word. It has the power to evoke vivid mental images, strong emotion and in some instances a visceral physical response. We use the word to communicate a vast array of widely different emotional experiences, and because of the diversity of how we use this single word its meaning is not always clear. Though discussions about love's role in professional practice and the public sphere of service relationships have started to appear in academic literature, there is still some uncertainty about love's place in professional interactions. Where children are involved, this kind of uncertainty can lead to apprehensive and even fearful responses. This research study aims to investigate the perceptions school professionals have of love as an ethical and beneficial component of their work with children.

Research Inspiration

When I initially contemplated this research, I had intended to focus on investigating and understanding the role that school professionals play in providing social and emotional support to students. I was interested in exploring the informal ways by which teachers and other professionals working within the context of schools (for example, principals, social workers,

educational assistants, child and youth counsellors etc.) attend to students' non-academic needs. What I quickly discovered is that with the known benefits of social and emotional support, the language of 'social-emotional' has already been taken up by the dominant discourse of standardized curriculum and education, and therefore much of the support being provided to students in this domain has moved from the informal to the formal. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is a conceptual framework regularly discussed in the literature on school based supports arising out of the United States. According to Buchanan et al. (2009), SEL refers to the process by which individuals acquire knowledge and skills to help navigate through life's challenges (p. 189). Much of the published research regarding SEL describes a movement towards establishing evidence based techniques (EBTs) which promote SEL, that can be implemented in a number of different schools (Mowat, 2010). Given that my interest is in the *informal* ways school professionals provide support to students, I saw the need to shift the language I would use to establish the foundations of this research study.

Instead of investigating the ways school professionals provide social emotional support to students, I have chosen to explore the place of love in schools, and the conceptions school professionals have regarding the inclusion of love as a component of ethical practice with students. I cannot take credit for arriving at the term love by my own devices. While I had spoken informally with a select few professionals (child and youth care practitioners and teachers) from my past about the place of love in schools, it was not a theme I had ever considered broaching in my own writing. My assumption was that by introducing love into my academic writing I would face challenges regarding the merit of my work, that my research would be dismissed as wishy-washy, and that I myself would be regarded as having poor

boundaries and unhealthy attachments with the children I encounter in my own practice. It was in my final course in the Master of Arts program in the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria that I was introduced to Michele Butot, a critical feminist social worker, who helped me to understand that love could be engaged with in the context of academia. Michele Butot had come to speak to my class about her practice, and her own experience conducting research as a graduate student. Butot's (2004) Master's thesis entitled *Love as Emancipatory Praxis: An Exploration of Practitioners' Conceptualizations of Love in Critical Social Work Practice*, sought to "offer participants an opportunity to speak love as positive, critical practice into existence in the social work literature" (p. 2). The conceptualization of love that Michele had arrived at through the course of her research study, and the way she described the place of love in her own practice were congruent with my own beliefs about love in the context of school based practice. I owe Michele and her research participants (Butot, 2004) my gratitude for opening my eyes to the courage of many practitioners from various disciplinary backgrounds that are speaking and writing about the place of love in their own practice. Following their inspiration, I began this research into the place of love in school based practice.

Purpose of the Research

The objective of this research is to better understand school professionals' conceptualizations and experiences of love as a component of their work with children. My aim in conducting this research was threefold. I first wanted to understand how professionals working with children in schools experienced love in relation to their professional practice. I also wanted to generate a well-balanced frame of reference for professionals working in

educational contexts that could act as a starting point to facilitate reflective thought about what it means to adopt a loving stance in work with others. Finally, I wanted to address a gap that I saw in the research, and bring the voices of the professionals who work with children in Canadian schools on a day-to-day basis into the conversations about love as a component of professional practice in the caring professions.

Research Question

How do school professionals understand and practice love in their work with students?

Reflexivity - Finding Balance in Relational Inquiry

When I began work on this research project, I knew that it would not be possible to set aside my own values about love from the project. Through my own experience in the field of child and youth care, working in schools, as well as in families' homes, and in residential treatment centers, I had come to recognize the difference between the professionals who love their work and bring love into their everyday interactions with children and adults, and people who are physically present at work, but are not necessarily engaged or mindful of what they are doing and the people they are interacting with. I wanted to learn more about how other professionals working in schools experienced love in their professional environments. I set out to investigate love from a positive frame of reference, and in doing so it could be argued that I left out possible other perspectives on the topic. I accept this potential critique and embrace the notion that I did not capture an objective viewpoint of the research topic. As the individual who conceived of, conducted, and reported on this research I am very much a part of it. When I began this research, it was with what Pelias (2004) refers to as "a desire to write from the heart" (p. 1). I wanted to be upfront about the values and point of view I bring to this research,

instead of feigning objectivity. Pelias (2004) suggests that instead of hiding behind objectivity, a researcher who writes from the heart “brings himself forward in the belief that an emotionally vulnerable, linguistically evocative and sensuously poetic voice can place us closer to the subjects we wish to study” (p. 1). With that in mind, I acknowledge the various factors that have influenced my perspective on this topic and my engagement in the research. I began this research from within the field of child and youth care (CYC). I brought a social constructionist understanding to the work and viewed knowledge and reality as being flexible and contextually based. I am a Caucasian female, raised in a middle income family in an urban community that is known to be politically left leaning. My experience in the CYC field is relatively limited (at less than 10 years) as compared to many others. Although my position is not fixed, it is situated within a particular social, political, and historical context, and this context has influenced my engagement in the inquiry process.

Framework

This research study is presented here in five chapters. Chapter One offers an introduction and is intended to provide a brief overview of the research throughout the remainder of this report. Chapter Two presents a review of the current literature surrounding love and relational engagement in the helping professions. The literature review focuses on three key areas; defining love, the views of love across some of the different care-based professions, and the contextual factors influencing the inclusion of love in educational settings in Canada. Chapter Three outlines my methodological approach as well as the particular methods employed throughout this inquiry, and is followed by a detailed analysis of the results in Chapter Four. The final chapter, Chapter Five, presents a discussion of the results as they

relate to current research on love, and to Child and Youth Care practice, as well as discussion on the limitations and future potential for related research. The chapter finishes with my own closing remarks, which are meant to summarize this research and offer an opening for continued discussion about love's place in professional practice.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a broad overview of the current literature on love and relational engagement in the helping professions. Specifically, the literature review focuses on three key areas. The first area focuses on defining love in a manner that reflects the engagement and interactions between individuals or groups in professional and public relationships, and differentiates this from the kind of love present in private and romantic relationships. The second section of the literature review focuses on the ways that love is currently being talked about and practiced in different professional contexts. The third and final section explores the current ethical and political context, and looks at the factors influencing loving practice in educational settings in Canada.

The primary means of gathering research for the literature review was through the Google Scholar search engine and the University of Victoria's Library database. The following keywords were used in various combinations to search the databases:

- "Love"
- "Care"
- "Compassion"
- "Relational Engagement"
- "Education"
- "Teaching"
- "Health Care"
- "Nursing"
- "Child and Youth Care"
- "Ethical Engagement"
- "Helping Professions"

Any articles which cited information relevant to the study were reviewed. Though the literature search primarily focused on articles that were peer reviewed, a broader search was also used to access a wider variety of thoughts and philosophical perspectives on love in professional interactions. Since educational systems vary significantly across jurisdictions, it is important to recognize that the literature on love and the educational environment is contextually based and not necessarily applicable in all school environments. For instance, literature emerging out of the United States, while important to the broader philosophical discussion about the place of love in multidisciplinary school environments, does not necessarily reflect a Canadian perspective.

The literature on love as a component of ethical practice in the helping professions is largely embedded in the literature on the role of relational engagement, care and compassion in fostering more positive experiences for clients. The body of literature related to love and professional practice has expanded in recent years; perhaps suggesting a resurgence in interest and awareness toward love's role in professional contexts. There has been discussion regarding the role of love in professional practice emerging in the literature from the child and youth care and nursing and counselling fields. Love has also previously been discussed within the field of education (e.g., Hardy, 1953). However, discussions about love and strategies to foster a loving environment in multidisciplinary school settings are less prevalent.

Conceptualizing Love

In Western, English speaking cultures, the word love is used and understood with multiple interrelated meanings. We do not have one shared understanding of the meaning of love, and hence meaning is often lost or misinterpreted in conversations on the topic (Stickley

& Freshwater, 2002). Perhaps, if we had such an understanding, love as both an emotion and an action would be better understood (hooks, 2000, p. 3). Love, like care and compassion, has traditionally been a concept restricted to the realm of the personal and private; practiced and valued primarily within the context of the family home. While discussions about love's role in professional practice and the public sphere of service relationships are emerging, and rich descriptions of loving practice are adding to our understanding of love, there continues to be some uncertainty about love's place in professional interactions.

The risks and challenges of talking about and defining love within professional practice have been expressed throughout the literature (Arman & Rensfeldt, 2006; Hargreaves, 2000; Hoyle & Slater, 2001; Loreman, 2011; Smith, 2011; Stickley & Freshwater, 2002). Simply bringing love into conversations outside the context of familial and romantic relationships often seems to evoke feelings of uneasiness (Smith, 2011). While there are risks associated with embracing an oversimplified representation of love, one that is "indulgent and romanticized", in professional practice, the benefits of a love that is contemplative and encourages critical engagement are also recognized (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 811). Smith (2011) suggests that the ambivalence that exists toward love in professional settings is a symptom of modernist ideals which assert that as a professional, one must be able to separate their personal experiences and emotions from their interactions in the professional environment. Smith (2011) dismisses the notion that reason can be separated from emotion, and characterizes the idea that the personal self can be separated from the professional self as a "modernist conceit" (p. 190). Love cannot be erased from public, professional interactions, but in acknowledging love in professional contexts, Hargreaves (2000) also cautions that we cannot diminish emotions, like

love, to “technical competencies” (p. 814). Classifying emotion work or “emotion management” as a competency with a set of defined behaviours which act as a structured guide to enable the identification, evaluation and advancement of specified behaviours in individual professionals “limits how we approach, understand and try to shape the emotional work that people do” (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 814). Arman and Rehnsfeldt (2006) draw attention to the challenge of extracting and contemplating love as a practice distinct from other concepts, such as “empathy, presence and relationships”, that have over time become mired. They pose the question, “is love, like suffering, by its ontological depth a concept that we need to recapture to enrich and deepen the art of caring in order alleviate patients’ suffering?” (Arman & Rehnsfeldt, 2006, p. 5). Notwithstanding the many complexities of entering into conversations about love’s place in the caring professions it is necessary to continue the dialogue in order to encourage thoughtful engagement with love, and other emotions, in professional practice. Hoyle and Slater (2001) suggest that within the confines of “modern capitalist democracies” it is increasingly important to engage in conversations about love’s role in practice, as love offers a counterpoint to individual competition, anomie and other capitalist ideals that are often privileged in Western cultures.

Love’s components. In contemplating the role of love in professional practice, many authors have drawn attention to related concepts, such as care, compassion and empathy (Arman & Rehnsfeldt, 2006; Giata, 2012; hooks, 2000; Smith, 2011). Perhaps this is because throughout modern history there has been a greater sense of openness and comfort with talking about how these concepts fit within the realm of public relationships. Jacono (1993) suggests that our lack of comprehension of ‘what loving is’ within society causes fear and

uneasiness towards the term. This fear then leads us to seek out alternative ways to convey loving. Caring, according to Jacono (1993), is simply a “euphemism for the word loving” (p. 193). By relying on euphemisms to communicate our emotions and actions, the intention of those actions is diluted. However drawing on related concepts, and understandings of love presented from various historical and cultural perspectives, also provides the opportunity to add great depth and richness to the descriptions of love in professional practice that are developing in the academic literature and entering into conversations in daily practice. Care, acceptance, empathy, sympathy, compassion, presence, recognition, respect, honesty, commitment, trust, and a sense of community are all identified throughout the literature as key components of loving interactions and loving relationships (Arman & Rehnsfeldt, 2006; Giata, 2012; hooks, 2000; Määttä & Uusiautti, 2013; Hoyle & Slater, 2001). While related, these concepts individually, represent only pieces of a larger picture. And yet, without them, we cannot achieve a complete understanding of loving in professional practice.

Knowledge of others is a vital component of loving interactions, in that without awareness and knowledge of others it is very difficult to contemplate the needs of the other and the dimensions of loving that will best meet those needs (hooks, 2000, p. 94). Practicing awareness, according to hooks (2000), allows us to think critically and evaluate our actions in order to “see what is needed so that we can give care, be responsible, show respect, and indicate a willingness to learn” (p. 94) in order to support others. Consciously practicing awareness allows us to bring all the dimensions of love into our daily interaction with others, and embrace what hooks (2000) refers to as a “love ethic” (p. 87). Loving then, is not as simple as indiscriminately dispensing pleasantries and kindness in all environments. It requires

mindfulness and responsiveness to recognize the needs of others, and freely offer support to meet those needs (Jacono, 1993, p. 193). A sense of yearning to interact and connect with others, to be in community with fellow humans is another necessary component of love's structure (Hoyle & Slater, 2001, p. 791). Loving interactions require connection (be it physical, psychological or spiritual) to other living beings. Loving is part of our humanity (Arman & Rehnsfeldt, 2006; Smith, 2011), and love is a universal human concept (Arman & Rehnsfeldt, 2006; Loreman, 2011). It can be communicated through our actions and our attitudes, and in offering love we can acknowledge our connection and shared dependence on our fellow human beings (Arman & Rehnsfeldt, 2006, p. 11).

Multiple perspectives on love. In some ways the English language limits how we are able to express love for others. We use the word love to express a vast array of emotions and associated actions. We use "love" to characterize our emotions and behaviours in relationships that could otherwise also be described as friendly or "brotherly", "erotic", passionate, "faithful", dedicated, or altruistic and "dutiful" (Arman & Rehnsfeldt, 2006, p. 11). It becomes challenging to interpret meaning with a single word being used to describe such diverse relationships (Arman & Rehnsfeldt, 2006; Stickley & Freshwater, 2002). Throughout the literature many authors have drawn on other languages and different cultural and historical perspectives on love to add detail to their descriptions of loving in professional contexts (Adarkar & Keiser, 2007; Alston, 1991; Arman & Rehnsfeldt, 2006; Boellinghaus, Jones & Hutton, 2014; Klaver & Baart, Loreman, 2011; Skott-Myhre & Skott-Myhre, 2007; Stickley & Freshwater, 2002). Classical Greek theories, for example, use the terms *Eros*, *Agape* and *Philia*, to describe the nature of love (Stickley & Freshwater, 2002). *Eros* refers to a love that is

passionate and often associated with erotic or sexual relationships, it “seeks satisfaction”, and is not recognized as a form of love relevant to ethical interactions in professional caring relationships (Arman & Rehnsfeldt, 2006; Skott-Myhre & Skott-Myhre, 2007). *Philia* is often referred to as familial or brotherly love, it involves a desire to “participate in and be loyal to social groupings” (Loreman, 2011, p. 6; Skott-Myhre & Skott-Myhre, 2007). Skott-Myhre and Skott-Myhre (2007) suggest that *philia* might fit well with a love that is also political, one that allows for free expression of individuality in contested spaces. *Agape* is unconditional or pure love (Arman & Rehnsfeldt, 2006; Loreman, 2011; Stickley & Freshwater, 2002). At its foundation, *agape* is a reciprocated love between God and all human beings (Loreman, 2011). Though more broadly, *agape* recognizes that all beings are related, and “includes a love for all humanity” (Loreman, 2011, p. 6; Stickley & Freshwater, 2002). This kind of selfless “unprompted” love (Arman & Rehnsfeldt, 2006), is often referenced in connection to love in professional caring relationships.

The Latin term *caritas* has also been offered in support of descriptions of loving in professional contexts. *Caritas* is an expression used to communicate charity, unselfish or altruistic love, that is “expressed in action” (Arman & Rehnsfeldt, 2006, p. 6). Regard, love and esteem are closely related English terms used today (Stickley & Freshwater, 2002, p. 251).

Buddhist traditions have complemented discussions about loving in professional practice throughout the literature (Adarkar & Keiser, 2007; Boellinghaus, Jones & Hutton, 2014; Klaver & Baart, 2011; Loreman, 2011; White, 1999). The Buddhist term *upaya* literally translated is “expedient means..., [it] is any skilful means that help us empower others to help themselves” (Adarkar & Keiser, 2007, p. 250). The concept sheds light on the nature of the

other's role in a loving encounter. Buddhist teachings affirm that it is possible to live every moment, every thought and every action in a constant state of love (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2007). Thich Nhat Hanh, Zen Buddhist Monk, teacher and peace activist, describes the "The Four Immeasurable Minds", a Buddhist concept which encompasses the four foundations of "true love" (2007, p. 2). Loving kindness (*maitri*), compassion (*karuna*), joy (*mudita*), and equanimity (*upeksha*) are the four Immeasurable Minds, or elements of love (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2007). Each element is described as a desire; loving kindness – "the desire to offer happiness", compassion – "the desire to remove suffering from the other person", joy – "the desire to bring joy to people around you", and equanimity – "the desire to accept everything and not to discriminate" (Boellinghaus, Jones & Hutton, 2014, p. 130; Thich Nhat Hanh, 2007 p. 2). True love, in this sense is indiscriminate, and given freely, without judgement or consideration of creed or community because it is something all "living beings need" (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2007, p. 2; Klaver & Baart, 2011). It is not effortless; it requires mindfulness and attentiveness to the other in order to recognize the means to support their happiness and wellbeing (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2007; Klaver & Baart, 2011). It is also active, intentional and "present-centered", in that "each thought, feeling or sensation that arises in the attentional field is acknowledged and accepted as it is" (Klaver & Baart, 2011, p. 689). Thich Nhat Hanh (2007) stresses that loving kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity are not simply "aspirations that exist in the mind" (p.16). Rather, through practice in the midst of our day to day interactions our ability to offer true love grows, until we are able to share it even with those who "have acted towards us in ways that are most unlovable" (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2007, p. 16).

Love beyond emotion. There is strong consensus throughout the literature that love is not simply an emotion or idea; it is not a passive engagement. Love is active and intentional, and it is communicated through behaviours as well as words (Arman & Rehnsfeldt, 2006; hooks, 2000; Jacono, 1993; Lanas & Zembylas, 2014; Määttä & Uusiautti, 2013; Smith, 2011). Love is not simply present, it is “embodied and performative...brought into existence by doing” (Lanas & Zembylas, 2014, p. 36). Butot (2004) explains that she perceives a notion of love in practice which extends beyond emotion, and includes the conception of love as “a stance, approach or way of being; a choice to move in the direction of a loving way of seeing, hearing and experiencing the other” (Butot, 2004, p. 1). The ability to offer, and the ability to accept are both important features of loving (Jacono, 1993, p. 194). Love is sometimes expressed more honestly by the way we treat others, than by the words we say to them (Smith, 2011, p. 192). Declarations of love are often made in relationships in which one or both parties act towards the other in ways that are indifferent, neglectful or abusive. However, hooks (2000) would argue that such declarations of love are false, because “no one can rightfully claim to be loving when behaving abusively” (p. 22). While words can express love, to speak the word “love” to another does not necessarily convey loving, as it is described in the literature. Love is wilful (hooks, 2000), and requires conscious effort. Every human relationship, whether fleeting or invested and long lasting, creates a space that holds the potential for loving interaction (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2007). The choice to love is not a singular decision; it is a choice that we must continuously reaffirm (Lanas & Zembylas, 2014, p. 36). “Love is an attitude we willingly cultivate towards others” (Lanas & Zembylas, 2014, p. 36). An ethos of “service beyond self” (Hoyle & Slater, 2001), and striving to understand and ensure the well-being of the other (Arman

&Rehnsfeldt, 2006) are at love's core. Justice and integrity are love's prerequisites, without them love cannot grow (hooks, 2000). Love creates openness and opportunity that enables vulnerability (Brito et al., 2014). As a universally understood human condition, vulnerability, though often very personal, holds potential to bring people together (Brito et al., 2014) and nurture loving relationships. The emotional understanding involved in loving another is not simple, there are no step by step instructions, and in every relationship love unfolds differently. Unlike cognitive understanding, developing emotional understanding is not a linear process. It occurs "instantaneously, at a glance, as people reach down into their past emotional experiences and 'read' the emotional responses of those around them" (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 815). With attentiveness to those instantaneous readings and mindfulness to the others needs for welfare, love is possible.

Määttä and Uusiautti (2013) contemplate the identification of love as a human virtue. Their research on Finnish people's conceptions of love helped them to categorise the different features of love described by their participants as emotions, acts, and knowledge and skills. Love's emotions included joy and happiness, bonding and a sense of togetherness, appreciation and a sense of responsibility, and swinging emotions and accepting changes in feelings. Love's acts were active observation and caring, encouragement, empathy, and the decision of commitment. And love's knowledge and skills included accepting oneself and the other as is, interaction skills, problem solving skills and gaining strength from trouble, self-control and forgiveness, and enthusiasm and humour. The result of these features of love coming together in the right balance is love that "grounds on and is equal to virtues" (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2013, p. 114). According to Seligman (2002) love and humanity together are one of six human virtues

that are common across almost all religions and philosophical traditions. After the review of a vast expanse of religious and philosophical texts, including the texts from Old Testament, the Talmud, Aristotle, Plato, and the Boy Scouts, Seligman (2002) identified wisdom and knowledge, courage, love and humanity, justice, temperance, and spirituality and transcendence as the common virtues of humanity (p. 133).

Love's counterfeits. To bring greater clarity to the practice of love in professional encounters, many authors have also highlighted behaviours and ideas that are incompatible with love (Giata, 2012; Brito et al., 2014; hooks, 2000; Smith, 2011). While the literature positions some concepts, namely abuse, neglect, fear, and indifference, in stark contrast to love (Brito et al., 2014; hooks, 2000; Smith, 2011), others, such as enthusiasm, passion and intense interest, though similar are identified as love's "counterfeits" (Giata, 2012, p. 765). According to bell hooks (2000), abuse and neglect invalidate love, because they stand in opposition to care and affirmation, which are core elements of love. Power is inconsequential in loving relationships; the desire to exert power and the supplementary act of submitting to it are not compatible with loving (Giata, 2012, p. 765). Love is not contingent on lavishing rewards, or indulging the other's every want (hooks, 2000). Nor does it involve taking over and experiencing another's suffering as one's own. To love another, and act with compassion in response to their suffering, does not involve taking on and experiencing that suffering as one's own (Boellinghaus, Jones & Hutton, 2014). Compassion fatigue, which is often identified as a risk of invested, loving professional relationships, could more realistically be described as "empathetic distress fatigue", because it is responding to suffering with "empathetic/personal distress" and personal identification with the suffering of others that leads to hopelessness, stress, anxiety

and burnout, rather than love or compassion (Boellinghaus, Jones & Hutton, 2014, p. 130). Smith (2011) suggests that fear impedes one's capacity to reach out to others and offer love, because fear is "the greatest inhibitor of human growth; it makes us scared of others and scared to reach out to them" (p. 190). The choice to bring love into everyday social encounters, is also a choice to "move against fear" and reach beyond the comfort of sameness to embrace difference with care (hooks, 2000, p. 93). Loving is an active, mindful choice, that requires persistent contemplation and intention (Arman & Rehnsfeldt, 2006; hooks, 2000; Thich Nhat Hanh, 2007).

Teaching and learning about love. Loving is an art that requires practice (Fromm, 1956; Stickley & Freshwater, 2002). Fromm (1956) suggests that there are no prescriptions for developing the capacity to love. Rather than being taught how to love directly, we learn to love indirectly through daily practice, mindfulness, cultural norms, being in loving relationships, experiencing security and closeness, and caring interactions with others. All people possess the capacity to love, but they need guidance in order to develop that capacity. It is the responsibility of adults to provide "guidance in the ways of love" to all children (hooks, 2000, 29). Love cannot be contingent on meeting expectations, and children need to "perceive that they are loved, cared, and accepted as they are", not only when they have attained a certain standard (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2013, p. 90). Määttä & Uusiautti (2013) describe the role of pedagogical love, love to all, regardless of their aptitude and skills, in the formal education of children. The practice of pedagogical love is unaffected by the response of the recipient. It does not involve seeking to indulge a student's every want. It is concerned with strengthening learners' perseverance and self-discipline. "Pedagogical love does not try to keep a pupil in

constant dependency with a teacher, nor allow a youngster to become independent” (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2013, p. 98). Instead it seeks to recognize the mutual dependence and need for relational connection with others. It is not possible to foster meaningful relationships or pedagogical love, while also attempting to hold on to a position of power over another (Gharabaghi, 2008a). The structures of power present in the “long discredited disease models of treatment” are counterproductive to the practice of building meaningful therapeutic relationships (Gharabaghi, 2008a, p. 31). According to Määttä & Uusiautti (2013) pedagogical love is not simply the natural warm feelings a teacher has for their students, it is a contemplative, reflective way of teaching. This mindful approach to teaching holds the potential to bolster learners’ success through unconditional acceptance, “positive learning experiences”, excitement about learning and “perceived success” (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2013, p. 97).

Love in the Caring Professions

In relational fields of work, where daily interactions, and in some cases formal role descriptions, include engaging in helping and supporting others in the context of a professional caring relationship, love is an essential element of practice (Smith, 2011, p. 189). Many people from many traditions have looked at love in different ways. In an attempt to understand the role of love in the context of children’s education it may also be important to understand more about how love is viewed in other caring professions. The sections that follow, highlight discussions about love that are taking place within the academic literature from the fields of health care, child and youth care and education.

Health care. Love has been recognized as an important component of practice for health care professionals, including paramedics (Wahlin, Wieslander & Fridlund, 1995), nurses (Arman & Rehnsfeldt, 2006; Kendrick & Robinson, 2002; Stickley & Freshwater, 2002), and physicians (Willer, 2014), throughout the health care field. One might assume that medical science and the art of loving are incompatible, however the literature regarding the practice of love in health care professions does not support such division. Klaver and Baart (2011) express that “professional loving care is explicitly not the opposite of good medicine” (p. 687). While competent medical care is important, “the relief of pain or curing diseases is never a goal in itself” (p. 687); the primary aim for all caregivers is to be attentive to the needs of the other. The daily practices of nursing and caring are infused with loving practice, through both the giving and receiving of love in carer-patient interactions. However, an explicit connection between the practices of nursing and loving practice is not identified (Stickley & Freshwater, 2002). The practice of compassionate love in health care goes beyond the provision of social support; instead of focusing on caring words and behaviours, compassionate love also attends to the other’s thoughts and emotions (Willer, 2014). Though similar to compassion, empathy and bonding, compassionate love is different in that its focus is more comprehensive; compassionate love is offered to everyone at all times, rather than being specifically focused on those who are experiencing suffering (Underwood, 2009; Kendrick & Robinson, 2002). Where the word compassion alone “can imply detachment”, compassionate love implies “emotional engagement” and “emphasizes the enhancement of human flourishing” (Underwood, 2009, p. 4). According to Underwood (2009) the defining qualities of compassionate love include:

- *Free choice for the other* – An active choice must be made to orient oneself toward the other with love and to be responsive to the needs and emotions of the other rather than simply reacting to their health care needs.
- *Some degree of accurate cognitive understanding of the situation, the other and oneself* – Compassionate love requires that one be mindful and aware not only of their own strengths and limitations for caring, but also the needs and feelings of the other.
- *Valuing the other at a fundamental level* - Without respect for the other as an individual compassionate love is not possible. Respect, in contrast to pity, allows one to elevate the emotional experience of the other.
- *Openness and receptivity* – Though not specifically related to any religious or spiritual affiliation, this quality of compassionate love refers to one's willingness to “leave room for this kind of divine input or open receptive quality” (p. 8).
- *Response of the ‘heart’* - Rather than the physical heart, heart in this case refers to the essential self, and response of the heart involves some level of emotional engagement.

While conversations related to love in health care practice have traditionally focused on nurses (Willer, 2014), Willer's (2014), research on health care providers' compassionate love and women's infertility stressors indicates that patients' perceptions of physicians' compassionate love also have positive effects on self-esteem and treatment stress levels. Willer (2014) suggests that medical care which extends beyond the treatment of suffering and physical health enhances the determination and enthusiasm that patients bring to their treatment.

While the patient's experience of being cared for is compromised when health care professionals "ignore the human side of healing" (Greil, 2002, p. 110), the literature also recognizes that bringing love into every interaction is not simple or easy. Research regarding compassion fatigue and the stresses sometimes involved in caring and relational work, is in fact more prevalent than research related to the positive impacts of compassionate care (Willer, 2014). Campbell (as cited in Kendrick & Robinson, 2002) proposed the term "moderate love" to describe "how love is shaped and refined to meet the conflicting demands of practice" (p. 293). Health care professionals who typically need to monitor and attend to the needs of multiple patients may not always be able to spend the time and demonstrate their loving in the exact ways they would like, because they have professional responsibility to provide care for other patients who are also deserving of the same loving.

In caring for others, caregivers also need to attend to and care for their own wellbeing. Being able to love oneself is an important aspect of being able to give love to others, and in turn receive their love (Arman & Rehnsfeldt, 2006). Klaver and Baart (2011) contend that in the field of health care, professionalism and loving care are interconnected because of the relational nature of providing care for others. They explain that the entire system of care needs to be adapted in order to "structurally guarantee professional loving care" (p. 687).

Child and youth care. Child and youth care (CYC) is a diverse field, with practitioners providing support to children, youth and families across a variety of settings. As a relatively young human services field, practitioners are often faced with having to define child and youth care to members of the public. In 2008, The Canadian Council of Child and Youth Care Associations (CCCYCA) implemented the following definition:

“Child and youth care practitioners work with children youth and families with complex needs. They can be found in a variety of settings such as group homes and residential treatment centres, hospital and community mental health clinics, community based outreach and school-based programs, parent education and family support programs, as well as in private practice and juvenile justice programs. Child and youth care workers specialize in the development and implementation of therapeutic programs and planned environments and the utilization of daily life events to facilitate change. At the core of all effective child and youth care practice is a focus on the therapeutic relationship; the application of theory and research about human growth and development to promote the optimal physical, psycho-social, spiritual, cognitive, and emotional development of young people towards a healthy and productive adulthood; and a focus on strengths and assets rather than pathology.” (Stuart, 2009)

Relational engagement and being in relationship with another are central features of CYC practice. The relationship between a CYC practitioner and a child is, itself, often identified as the intervention (Garfat & Fulcher, 2012; Gharabaghi, 2008a; Stuart, 2009; Thumbadoo, 2011). Within the field, conversations regarding relationship often refer to the space between individuals (Gharabaghi, 2008b), the “in-between” between two people (Garfat, 2008), or “co-created space” (Garfat & Fulcher, 2012). The concept of space and dimension helps to create distinction between being in relationships and having relationships. Garfat & Fulcher (2012) differentiate between having relationships, something all people do, and being in a relationship, which involves meaningful, attentive engagement and has an impact on both individuals involved (p. 9). The co-created space between a CYC practitioner and a child who are

in relationship together is influenced by each individual and their unique life experiences and knowledge, as well as the shared interactions between them (Gharabaghi 2008b p. 191). The meeting of different identities, experience, knowledge and values makes the relational context distinct and unpredictable (Gharabaghi, 2008a, p. 31). Gharabaghi (2008b) draws attention to the significance of our values in relationships with children and youth, identifying values as the “underlying thread of all healthy relationships” (p. 185). It is not possible to extract one’s values from their interactions with others, or their decision making; values, therefore are “integrally connected to ethics in the field” (Gharabaghi, 2008b, p. 185). In the value ridden context of relational CYC practice, objectivity is a misleading notion. Objectivity suggests that CYC practitioners are capable of contemplating matters and decisions from a position outside of their individual biases, interpretations, and feelings, which is not possible while profoundly engaged in relationship with another. Conversely, subjectivity “allows us to incorporate our values, biases and judgment into the relationships we have with children and youth, and by doing so we can mitigate their potentially harmful effects” (Gharabaghi, 2008b, p. 191). The aim in CYC is for practitioners to be mindful of their values and act ethically, “in moral as opposed to merely technical ways” (Smith, 2006, p.6).

The field’s title ‘child and youth care’ calls to mind the centrality of acts of caring in relationships with others (Ranahan, 2000). Caring and relationship are strongly tied. The primary focus of care is that it is “relational”; it concerns two individuals and everything that happens between them (Smith, 2006, p. 6). Ricks (1992) asserts that caring is the foundation of CYC practice. There is recognition across the child and youth care field that caring extends beyond the daily tasks of attending to a child’s physical needs; it is not simply a procedural

endeavour (Ranahan, 2000; Smith, 2006; Smith, 2007; Smith, 2011; Thumbadoo, 2011). Caring in CYC involves both action and outlook; it is way of seeing the world and being with others, a “disposition” (Smith, 2006, p. 9; Smith, 2007). According to Smith (2006), caring is not simply a practical venture, it is “ultimately a moral endeavour” (p. 5). Caring is demonstrated through recognizing and responding to another’s needs, adapting one’s interaction style in order to provide necessary support, “demonstrating patience, honesty, and trust; instilling hope in order to promote growth and courage to face the unknown; having a willingness to learn without arrogance; and possessing humility” (Ranahan, 2000, para. 3). Words are not necessary to communicate caring (Smith, 2007, para. 6). Ranahan (2000) suggests that CYC practitioners need to consciously bring the various aspects of the Self, which includes one’s knowledge, patience, trust, honesty, past experience and “openness for learning” to their work with children and youth in order to be present and available to respond (para. 4). Caring in CYC is not something that is saved for, or withheld from particular children (Smith, 2006). Smith (2006) asserts that though there may be times we encounter relationships with clients that are conflictual, we “nevertheless feel and have a responsibility towards them – a responsibility that is infinite and demands nothing in return” (p. 8).

Love has also been recognized as an important component of relational CYC practice. The significance of therapeutic relationships and the daily life context of practice in CYC create the right conditions for interactions that some would describe as loving. Smith (2011) suggests that as “irredeemably a practical, moral and relational endeavour” (p. 192), CYC generates an ideal environment for love to develop and grow. Love grows in the little details and the routine tasks of daily life events. In CYC practice, life space intervention promotes growth through

everyday moment-to-moment interactions. This growth is not necessarily quantifiable, rather it is “the kind of love that emerges from human connection and relationship” (Smith, 2011, p. 192). The caretaking tasks that CYC practitioners do are not necessarily meaningful or capable of promoting growth and conveying love. Expressing love has more to do with how a task is done, how the practitioner imbues love in the task, than what the task is (Thumbadoo, 2011, p. 194). At the same time, expressing love involves more than the verbal communication of a practitioners feelings. It involves translating feelings into actions (Thumbadoo, 2011, p. 194). Ranahan (2000) argues that “the act of caring is concrete, specific, and detailed” (para. 22), whereas loving extends beyond this, and entails how the practitioner brings the Self into the relationship with the other. Garfat and Fulcher (2012) identify CYC practice as an act of “love and loving”, in that CYC practitioners attend to, cherish and ultimately act “in the context of love in a non-exploitative manner (p. 17).

Fear of being misrepresented as exploitative, unprofessional or possessing poor boundaries leads some to feel discomfort with identifying CYC practice as loving (Ranahan, 2000; Smith 2006). In contemplating the role of love in her own practice, Ranahan (2000) questions whether it is possible to have appropriate boundaries and also bring love into her practice as a CYC practitioner. Smith (2006) argues that fear is not a reason to cast aside love and sacrifice its presence in CYC relationships, “so long as we act justly in expressing that love, especially in our relationships with those less powerful than ourselves” (p. 13). To act justly requires that CYC practitioners are constantly mindful of their own thoughts, values and intentions, while also being aware and respectful of the boundaries between themselves and the children and youth they work with (Smith, 2006, p. 11). These boundaries are complex and

need to “take into account the importance of honouring and preserving both our vital autonomy and our inextricable mutual interdependence” (Artz, 2000, p. 297). While enhancing one’s connection to another, love perplexingly also supports the development of each person’s individuality and independence (Maier, 1987). Love cannot grow in interactions where one party is intent on maintaining power over the other. Domination, ownership, possession and control are concepts that oppose love (Artz, 2000). CYC practitioners do not inherently possess authority, instead their authority is based on “the strength of [their] status as a beloved and admired model person” (Brendtro, 1990, p. 82) in the eyes of the children and youth they work with. The expression of love is beyond expectation, it is given freely regardless of a child’s behaviour and achievements (Ranahan, 2000, para. 22). Love is not a prerequisite of positive behaviour, and should never be withheld or used only to reward particular behaviours (Brendtro, 1990, p. 80). Love is “a process, a way of being, an expression that moves and shifts” (Ranahan, 2000, para. 22). It is not conditional or judgmental. It seeks to “understand each individual’s subjective experience” (Ranahan, 2000, para. 22).

In the CYC field, love alone is “not enough” (Bettelheim, 1950, as cited in Maier, 1987, p. 38) to ensure positive outcomes for children and youth receiving support. Practitioners must also possess the appropriate knowledge of human development and be able to apply that knowledge in their everyday interactions with children (Maier, 1987, p. 38). Skott-Myhre and Skott-Myhre (2007) propose a definition of love in CYC that encompasses “the act of giving fully and completely of oneself without the worry that one would run out of oneself; with the knowledge that you are infinite in your creative capacity to produce yourself” (p. 197). With this understanding of love in practice, there should be no fear or uneasiness about bringing love

into CYC. “Love does not need to be viewed as separate or outside of professional practice; it can “co-exist” with professional child and youth care work (Thumbadoo, 2011, p.197). In the context of relational engagement and life-space intervention, which are central to the field, love complements CYC practice (Garfat & Fulcher, 2012; Ranahan, 2000; Skott-Myhre & Skott-Myhre, 2007; Smith, 2006; Smith, 2011; Thumbadoo, 2011).

Education. In the field of education, teaching academic concepts to students is one important component of an educator’s role, though it is not the only important component. Historically, the doctrine of *in loco parentis* has imparted a broader legal and philosophical role for educators with respect to their students’ learning and development (Conte, 2000). *In loco parentis* is a legal concept which grants certain parental responsibilities and authority to teachers in the school environment. When the term was initially applied to the teaching profession in the late 1700s, it was with respect to the administration of corporal punishment to the student by educators (Conte, 2000). Philosophically, *in loco parentis* has been used more broadly to encapsulate the significance of the educator’s role in the overall emotional and social development of students (Conte, 2000; Givens, 2007).

Teaching is not only about a subject matter, it is also about students, as teachers teach students (Elton, 2000, p. 258). Aoki (1992) draws distinctions between the “curriculum as a plan” and the “lived curricula of students” (p. 273). He explains that by acknowledging the existence of both designed curriculum and the lived curriculum of students educators are placed “in a different landscape, one populated by a multiplicity of curricula” (Aoki, 1992, p. 273). By recognizing the “generative interplay between planned curriculum and lived curricula” (Pinar, 2004, p. 73) educators are able to support a more holistic view students’ education. In

order to support students' academic success, teachers need to engage with their students and remain attentive to their emotional health (Brito et al., 2014; Giata, 2012; Hargreaves, 1998; Hargreaves, 2000; Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012; Noddings, 1995b). A teacher's interaction with their students sets the foundation for the learning atmosphere in the classroom (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012). Määttä & Uusiautti (2012) identify teachers work as "a form of relationship work" (p. 32). Teaching is a mutual engagement, with teachers and students traveling together on a "path of continuous discovery" (Elton, 2000, p. 260). Without awareness of this joint endeavour and a sense of excitement, the quality of teaching and learning are both impacted (Elton, 2000, p. 260). Classroom relationships and the emotional bond between teachers and students are the elements that set the framework for the development of academic concepts. "Interest, enthusiasm, inquiry, excitement, discovery, risk-taking and fun" are characteristics of classroom relationships that prioritize positive relationships (Hargreaves, 1998. 835). Giata (2012) cautions that the significance of relationships in teaching must not be overlooked, because without entering into a relationship with another it is not possible to understand anything about them (p. 761). Teachers often hold a significant place in the lives of their students, it should therefore be appropriate and sensible for them to spend time and effort in their work on fostering caring relationships (Noddings, 1995b). Though the balance of power in a teacher – student relationship is asymmetrical, with the teacher holding power over the student, the teacher must view the student as a potential equal, regardless of the current power imbalance, in order to maintain a positive relationship and support the student's learning and growth towards independence (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012, p. 26).

Recognition of, and attention to emotions in the classroom is also pertinent to students' education. Brito et al. (2014) state that "the search for knowledge must include feeling" (para. 4). Teachers who "work affectively" are able to be "more effective in the learning situation" because students' "cognitive scaffolding is held together with emotional bonds" (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 817). Good teaching involves more than subject matter expertise and high competency ratings; good teachers are emotionally responsive, "passionate beings who connect with their students and fill their work and their classes with pleasure, creativity, challenge and joy," (Hargreaves, 1998, p. 835). Teachers' and school leaders' emotions can impact the students, parents and other staff they encounter in the school both positively and negatively. As emotional practitioners, teachers can make classrooms exciting or dull and leaders can turn colleagues into risk-takers or cynics" (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 812). They therefore need to consciously attend to the emotional environment of the classroom and the school in order to foster a caring, compassionate learning atmosphere (Hargreaves, 1998; Hoyle & Slater, 2001). Emotional relationships support positive social outcomes and learning and growth for students in areas that are not necessarily addressed in traditional academic curriculum (Hargreaves, 1998. 840). Hargreaves (2000) suggests that though it is essential to recognize and attend to emotions in education, the process of emotional engagement should involve critical thought, so as to avoid romanticism and self-indulgence (p. 813). Noddings (1988) describes the potential of care to support positive emotional engagement and educational outcomes for students. She explains that care "expands students' cultural literacy", "helps us connect the standard subjects", and "can give students a feeling of wholeness in their education" (Noddings, 1995b, p. 676). The role of a caring teacher is to respond to "the needs, wants, and initiations" of their

students (Noddings, 1988, p. 219). A teacher's caring response is "characterized by engrossment (non-selective attention or total presence to the other for the duration of the caring interval) and displacement of motivation (her motive energy flows in the direction of the other's needs and projects)" (Noddings, 1988, p. 219). A caring teacher attends to the emotions of their student and acts to support their well-being.

Like care, love also holds the potential to positively influence both students' and teachers' educational experiences (Giata, 2012; Johnson, 1991; Lanas & Zembylas, 2014). Lanas and Zembylas (2014) argue that in the field of education love has remained largely absent from discussions in the academic literature and as a result the "transformative power of love" has not been fully recognized (p. 33). In contrast to elementary teachers, secondary school teachers were "more likely to describe their positive relationships with students in terms of acknowledgement and respect than loving and liking" (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 820). Throughout the literature, the positive impact of loving interactions were not specified to any particular age group. Lanas and Zembylas (2014) suggest that research and conversations about love need to continue in order to gain a more thorough understanding of the potential schools and teachers hold for educating loving citizens. Noddings (1995b) advises that we need to expand the goals of education to include fostering "caring, competent, loving, and lovable people" (p. 676). Love is not a competency that can be measured (Hargreaves, 2000). It is a disservice to teachers and to students to reduce love and the emotional work that teachers do to technical competencies; doing so limits our understanding and ability to recognize new potential for love in educational practice (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 814). Patience, trust and forgiveness are signs of love in teaching (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2013, p. 98). Freire (1998) speaks to the salience of patience in teaching,

he remarks that “it is impossible to teach without the courage to try a thousand times before giving up. In short, it is impossible to teach without a forged, invented, and well thought-out capacity to love” (Freire, 1998, p. 3). At times when a student is struggling to progress, and their development is slow or inconsistent, a loving teacher ensures that the student’s trust in their own learning is preserved through periods of frustration (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2013, p. 99). Johnson (1991) explains that teaching students to accept themselves requires love. She reveals “I know lots of ways to teach subtraction, lots of ways to help children improve their printing, I only know one way to convince [them] that they are loved. The way to do that, for me, is to love them” (Johnson, 1991, p. 84). Love and positive emotional experiences influence how we view and experience the world around us; when children experience joy, and the feeling of being loved and capable at school they are able to focus their attention and energy on attaining their goals (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2013). According to Daniels (2012, as cited in Lanas & Zembylas, 2014) a teacher’s love is characterized by “a strong and deep commitment to protecting, caring for, and empowering students in the face of social barriers and oppressions that surface in their everyday lives, as well as a political passion to inspire and support marginalized youth” (p.34). Brito et al. (2014) suggest that “education, at its core, is an act of love” (para. 1) in that it continuously seeks to empower others through supporting the development of knowledge and critical thinking.

Määttä and Uusiautti (2012) describe the interconnection of pedagogical love with pedagogical authority in education. Pedagogical love “means loving students wholly without expecting any rewards or services in return” (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012, p.25). It has been identified as a key element of good teaching. A loving teacher unfailingly seeks to support

student's welfare, they have innate trust in students' learning and assist them to recognize and shape the elements of their own development (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012). Teachers demonstrate pedagogical love through their "trust and belief in the learners' talents, presence, attachment, intimacy and positive sense of duty to support" (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012, p. 29). Pedagogical authority involves "power, prestige, status, influence, or paragon" (p. 25). Authority can be built on the coercion or reward of subordinates; it can be legitimate and "based on proficiency" and "expertise", or it can be individual and stem from "personal characteristics" (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012, p.25). In general, authority means the same as influence, and its essence "depends on whether the influence is based on coercion or shared understanding" (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012, p.26). Määttä and Uusiautti (2012) explain that each teacher's capacity for pedagogical love and pedagogical authority is unique, and that teachers influence the learning environment through how love and authority are practiced and demonstrated in their interactions with students. The ability to recognize and attend to students changing needs for varying degrees of pedagogical love and pedagogical authority, and then subsequently adapt one's own interaction style to meet the needs of the student is known as pedagogical tact (Haavio, 1948, as cited in Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012, p. 30). Mindfulness towards one's own natural interaction style and flexibility in altering or adapting to another style (i.e., their level of pedagogical tact) enables greater responsiveness to students' needs (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012, p. 32). There is not a singular ideal balance of pedagogical love and pedagogical authority that will meet all students' need, or even a single student's needs at all times; it would therefore be unreasonable to propose any singular archetype of

pedagogical love and pedagogical authority for all teachers to strive toward (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012, p. 32).

Although professional distance is often recognized as a necessary and beneficial component of ethical practice in teaching, it can also sometimes be viewed as counterproductive to the goal of supporting students to learn (Loreman, 2011). Loreman (2011) proposes that the notion of professional distance impairs teachers and students, as well as the broader society, in that it prioritizes a model of relationships that inhibits meaningful connection to others. Though education in the traditional academic domains will likely continue to be a priority for many in the field of education, there is a need to recognize other educational priorities (Hoyle & Slater, 2001). Academic competition and measures of cognitive performance “need not take the place of happiness, love and service.” (Hoyle & Slater, 2001, p. 794). Embracing a vision of a more “flexible professionalism” empowers teachers to adapt and shift their interaction style to accommodate students’ needs and with a loving outlook meet each student where they are at (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012, p. 29).

Love, Ethics and Professional Practice

Recognizing that some understandings of professionalism hinder meaningful connection between caring professionals and the people they work with (Hargreaves, 2000; Klaver & Baart, 2011; Loreman, 2011; Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012; Ranahan, 2000; Smith 2006) there is a clear need for ongoing discussion about what professional, ethical practice entails. Many of the scholars who have engaged in conversations regarding the place of love in schools have reasoned that engagement in loving practice is an ethical responsibility and is therefore more important than other occupational responsibilities which are formally articulated in policy

(Adarkar & Keiser, 2007). Love as ethical engagement with students does not infer inappropriate, romantic relationships (Starratt, 1991) though, it does require engrossment and caring attention. Adarkar and Keiser (2007) contend that teachers who engage with students are obliged to “work toward the ethical and equitable education of all students” (p. 247). To educate ethically is to adopt a loving stance “centered in compassion and reinforced by an awareness of suffering” (Adarkar & Keiser, 2007, p. 247). To recognize and acknowledge the presence of suffering among children (and adults) in our schools as well as around the world is not “bleak or pessimistic...it is an assumption about what happens in the world” (Adarkar & Keiser, 2007, p. 251). Without the recognition that suffering exists nothing can be done to love and care for those who suffer. “As we acknowledge, and pay appropriate respect to the suffering of our students, we bring them into a space where all of us are human”, enabling movement toward learning environments that embody the qualities of love (Adarkar & Keiser, 2007, p. 254).

Smith (2006), stresses that understandings of professionalism need to be based on the qualities required to complete one’s job proficiently and ethically. Therefore, in fields where practitioners’ roles involve supporting children and youth to grow “being professional requires that we engage with kids in very immediate ways in the mess and ambiguous reality of their life worlds” (Smith, 2006, p. 14) and any claim that it is necessary to disengage and distance oneself from another is in effect unprofessional. Reflective practice, and the ability to self-monitor and self-asses are at the heart of all ethical practice (Bellefeuille, McGrath & Jamieson, 2007, p. 723). Particular values matter less than one’s awareness of their own values and the value systems that they operate within, and how each effect decision making and intervention. In

relational work, objectivity is not possible because one's values are tied up with another, and it is not possible to make an evaluation from an external viewpoint while concurrently being involved in the situation (Gharabaghi, 2008b, p. 190).

In relational work, ethical practice is intrinsically tied to concepts of love and care. Compassion, care and love are the "ontological basis of ethics... Ethics and morality are needed as norms and rules when the spontaneous love and responsibility towards others is absent or in crisis" (Arman & Rehnsfeldt, 2006, p. 9). Love as a component of ethical professional practice is both political and personal (Alston, 1991, p. 386). Teachers (in all fields) need to be conscious of students' vulnerability, so as to avoid indifference and disrespect, and ensure a caring learning environment. In supporting children's learning and growth, it is "morally irresponsible to simply ignore existential questions and themes of care" (Noddings, 1995b, p. 677); we need to address and untangle them together as part of the learning experience. In doing so, we practice "living consciously", and also support children with the skill to live consciously – to think critically about themselves and the world they live in (hooks, 2000, p. 55). Asking and answering the "basic questions who, what, where and why... provides us with a level of awareness that enlightens" (hooks, 2000, p. 55). Hooks (2000) describes a "love ethic", which is an ideal way for all humanity to approach the world. She explains that "a love ethic presupposes that everyone has the right to be free, to live fully and well" (hooks, 2000, p. 87). To universally embrace a love ethic, Western society would need to dramatically shift its values and practices in order to embrace love as a social phenomenon, as opposed to a "highly individualistic, marginal phenomenon" (hooks, 2000, p. 87). However, individually all people are capable of adopting a love ethic in their daily interactions with others. Tronto, (1993, as cited in Smith, 2006)

identifies the four elements of an ethic of care which are essential to professional caring relationships. The four elements of a care ethic are: to “demonstrate attentiveness” to others; to “take responsibility for caring”; to demonstrate “competence” through awareness and intentionality in attending to others; and be responsive to the vulnerability and needs of the other (Smith, 2006, p. 9). In considering ethical practice and professional codes of conduct it is necessary to “question whether regulation, however perfect, can in fact bring about the kind of safety it is intended to” (Smith, 2006, p. 14), or whether it will ultimately hinder ethical practice.

Situated Love

A common thread throughout the literature which discusses the place of love and caring in schools is the specific challenge presented by adopting a stance of love in an institutional environment which prioritizes standardized curriculum and academic competition (Adarkar & Keiser, 2007; Hargreaves, 1998; Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012; Noddings, 1995a; Noddings, 2005). Adarkar and Keiser (2007) argue that “increasingly, teachers are pushed away from teaching moments and positions in which they can inspire positive citizenship, and into roles in which they merely administer rigid curricula and exams” (p. 247). When teachers feel pressure to adhere to strict curriculum standards they are less likely to spontaneously adapt lesson plans to address the interests and needs of students, which in the end compromises the potential for learning and leads to missed opportunities to foster student’s individual strengths (Adarkar & Keiser, 2007). Adakar and Keiser (2007) assert that to adopt a stance of love in a school environment, is both challenging and courageous, because it requires taking a stand against current practices of standardization and competition, and challenging the “dominant

quantitative paradigm” (Adakar & Keiser, 2007, p. 247). In exploring the introduction of an ‘ethic of care’ to the school environment Noddings (1988) suggests that changes to “almost every aspect of schooling” would need to be considered, including changes to “the current hierarchical structure of management, the rigid mode of allocating time, the kind of relationships encouraged, the size of schools and classes, the goals of instruction, modes of evaluation, patterns of interaction, [and] selection of content” (p.221).

Noddings (2005) suggested that current standards for evidence based practice and formulaic curriculum delivery stifle opportunities to interact with students in spontaneous ways which demonstrate caring and attentiveness to students’ in-the-moment expressed needs. She also argues that the objective of education for young people needs to shift from achievement in the traditional academic sense towards the development of loving citizens (Noddings, 1995a). Even if academic achievement remains the primary goal of young peoples’ education, it would be prudent to invest greater effort into understanding ways to encourage loving interactions in the school environment because of the correlations between students’ perceptions of being cared for and their academic success (Muller, 2001). Where standards for uniformity in curriculum delivery are strictly enforced, opportunities for students to explore individual interests and develop individual strengths are severely diminished, and as a result the potential for true learning to take place is also diminished (Adakar & Keiser, 2007).

Emotions, both positive and negative, are present in all organizations, including schools. To discount their presence in a school is detrimental to anyone who occupies the learning environment (Hargreaves, 1998, p. 835). Emotions are central to people’s day-to-day experiences and cannot be compartmentalized away from the relationships that children have

with caring adults in their schools (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 812). In times of turmoil or crisis, schools often bring in outside professionals to provide support, when the ongoing “compassion and presence of adults who represent constancy and care in their lives” could represent a more meaningful source of support (Noddings, 1995b, p. 678). Noddings (1995b) claims that “artificially separating the emotional, academic, and moral care of children into tasks for specially designated experts contributes to the fragmentation of life in schools” (p. 678). Rigid time tables and curriculum standards, and a highly competitive social environment are all factors that place high, ultimately constraining demands on teachers (Noddings, 1995b, p. 676). In the current climate, which focuses on evidence-based practices, measurable outcomes and the attainment of specified standards, “the value of human relationships (which is not necessarily a measurable phenomenon) and the associated emotion is lost” (Stickley & Freshwater, 2002, p. 250). In this climate, practicing love in the relational school environment, which has been recognized as beneficial, becomes increasingly challenging (Fromm 1956, 103).

Policies and procedures which seek to establish rules or guidelines for caring may be introduced in relational fields of practice in order to establish particular standards of care. However, Smith (2011) claims that policies and procedures which are applied to care “dull our caring impulse and indeed redefine the caring task away from a practical/moral one to a technical/rational one” (p. 190). The attempt to standardize and measure good professional practice results in professionals feeling torn between an “economy of performance” which involves achieving specific professional competencies, and an “ecology of practice” which involves individual and collective commitment to good practice (Stronach, Corbin, McNamara, Stark, & Warne, 2002, p. 109). The move towards universal practice procedures is “led by policy

makers rather than professionals” (Stronach et al., 2002, p. 112). We are currently faced with the challenge of finding ways to include themes of care that are flexible and allow teachers to be responsive to the needs of their students in formal curriculum documents in order to formally acknowledge that value of the relational work that teachers do (Noddings, 1995b). Love and care should not be ignored in the political processes related to educational reform; nor should they be standardized (Hargreaves, 1998, p. 836). We need to leave room for teachers to adapt and change the way they practice love in their classrooms so that they have flexibility to meet their students where they are at (Hargreaves, 1998, p. 839). “The apparent lack of the concept of love in national and international educational policies is a value statement, rooted in education based on the demands of the market economy characterized by concepts such as measurement, competition, accountability and efficacy” (Lanas & Zembylas, 2014, p. 39). Capitalist and individualist values are seemingly prioritized in our current educational system over equality and social justice. There is a need for explicit dialogue about love in education; which means “asking difficult questions about the values promoted by formal education and, ultimately, the role of formal education” (Lanas & Zembylas, 2014, p. 39). Lanas and Zembylas (2014) assert that formal education should be less responsive to current societal trends, and instead should “root itself to values”, and provide a moral compass.

Love is political; “it is an embodied practice which reflects societal power relations” (Lanas & Zembylas, 2014, p. 32). Because love is relational it can be shared by individuals and by groups, and it can have substantial influence on social and political identities. Love has a transformative capacity, it can influence social change and serve as a “moral and strategic compass for concrete individual and collective actions” (Lanas & Zembylas, 2014, p. 33). Chabot

(2008, as cited in Lanas & Zembylas 2014) advises that “if we wish to contribute to a loving revolution, we need to focus on the long-term process of transforming power in our institutions and everyday lives, not primarily on taking power and overthrowing the current government in the short run” (p. 33). The significance of love needs to be recognized and revered in educational reform (Hargreaves, 1998, p. 850). Because love is relational and requires responsivity to the needs of others, loving acts need to be contextually defined, and educational reform therefore needs to be considerate of the context in which it occurs (Lanas & Zembylas, 2014, p. 39).

As discussions of love change and evolve within and across the helping professions, understanding more about how professionals working with students experience love in the school environment is important. This section explored definitions of love, views of love across the caring professions, and the contextual factors influencing the inclusion of love in educational settings in Canada. In the following chapter, I have outlined the methods for this research inquiry.

Chapter Three: Methodology

After reviewing the literature about loving practice across the helping professions, I chose to explore the topic further from a qualitative perspective involving interviews with professionals willing to discuss the place of love in their practice. In this chapter, I identify my methodological approach and outline the particular methods used throughout this inquiry into the place of love in educational environments. I also set out to create a space in which I could contemplate and reflect upon my own position and influence in this process of inquiry.

Research Question

How do school professionals understand and practice love in their work with students?

Situating the Inquiry

The aim of this inquiry was to explore school professionals' conceptualizations and experiences of love as a component of their practice with children in educational settings. I hoped to gain understanding about the place of love in educational settings through the first hand, lived experiences of school professionals; and as such I felt that a qualitative exploratory approach was most congruent with my desire to learn through, and with the experiences of these professionals. Qualitative research allows for a more holistic, in-depth understanding of few cases (O'sullivan, Rassel, & Berner, 2008). Denzin and Lincoln (2007) describe qualitative research as a "situated activity that locates the observer in the world" (p.4) via their engagement in the inquiry process. In qualitative research, the entire research context, which includes the researcher and the participants, is interconnected and part of inquiry process (Padgett, 2008). In taking a qualitative approach to this study, my aim was to avoid becoming preoccupied with condensing 'data' into generalizable findings; instead, I have attempted to

authentically reflect the experiences shared by participants and the knowledge that was co-created throughout the inquiry process (Bellefeuille & Ricks, 2010). This desire arose out of a recognition of relationships and social interaction as the site of knowledge construction (Bellefeuille & Ricks, 2010; Gergen & Gergen, 2004).

Qualitative inquiry does not “take place in a conceptual vacuum” (Padget, 2008, p. 11); and while the connection between qualitative research and theory is complex and sometimes contested (Carter & Little, 2007; Padget, 2008), I have chosen to openly address and reflect on the theories and contexts that have brought me to this research study as they have contributed to and shaped the entire inquiry process. This inquiry falls within the paradigm of ‘generic qualitative research’, which is defined by Caelli, Ray and Mill (2008), as research “which is not guided by an explicit or established set of philosophic assumptions in the form of one of the known qualitative methodologies” (p. 2). Instead, generic qualitative research is guided by epistemological, theoretical commitments which are made explicit by the researcher. Throughout the process of conducting a generic qualitative inquiry, it has been important for me to be cognisant and transparent about the epistemological, theoretical and contextual position from which I approached this study (Caelli, Ray & Mill, 2008; Carter & Little, 2007). In research, epistemology is always present. “A reflexive researcher actively adopts a theory of knowledge. A less reflexive researcher implicitly adopts a theory of knowledge, as it is impossible to engage in knowledge creation without at least tacit assumptions about what knowledge is and how it is constructed” (Carter & Little, 2007, p. 1319). While I began this inquiry by framing it within the context of social constructionism and relational child and youth

care, I also entered with a sense of openness and flexibility to allow space for organic development as I learned through the experiences and social interactions within the process.

Social constructionism. In taking an exploratory approach to this research project, I sought to approach the inquiry from a place of curiosity, and invite the participants into a relational process of conceptualizing the place of love in educational environments. I am aware that my perspective is rooted in particular social, cultural and historical contexts, and that this context has influenced my experience of this inquiry and the way that I have represented the research findings. I have made a conscious effort to bring the participants of this process along with me and accurately reflect their contributions throughout this work. This approach reflects my acceptance of a social constructionist epistemology and commitment to reflexivity. Social constructionism asserts that reality is fluid and changes with the perceptions of individuals, and society as a whole (Gergen & Gergen, 2004). According to social constructionism, whenever reality is defined it is contextually biased by the specific cultural tradition from which the definition has emerged (Gergen & Gergen, 2004, p. 11). Social constructionism recognizes the plurality of knowledge, asserting that “there is not “Truth for all,” but instead “truth within community” (Gergen & Gergen 2004, p. 71). From this perspective, knowledge emerges out of human interactions, or relationships, which are rooted in a particular community and influenced by the social, cultural and historical context of the community (Gergen, 2011.). Gergen (2011) states that “within the constructionist dialogues we find that it is not the individual mind in which knowledge, reason, emotion and morality reside, but in relationships” (p. 109). The centrality of relationships to the generation of knowledge resonates with me, and was influential in the way this inquiry developed. Since I sought to investigate love, a concept

which I viewed as inherently relational, I knew that the past relationships of the research participants would be intrinsic to the meanings they brought to the topic, just as my own past relationships influenced how I approached the topic. Together, through relationships, this inquiry would lead to the co-construction of knowledge regarding the place of love in educational environments.

Relational inquiry. My academic experience and practice in the field of child and youth care have been instrumental in shaping the design and process of this research study. The importance of relationships in my studies, and practice in the field of child and youth care led me to pursue a process of inquiry that recognized the role of relationships in knowledge generation. In an article proposing a child and youth care approach to research Bellefeuille and Ricks (2010) acknowledge the “collaborative meaning-making process that is central to CYC practice” and thoughtfully proposed “a philosophical approach to Child and Youth Care research that is congruent with the underlying epistemological assumptions of relational practice” (p. 1235). Whether practice based, or research based, relational inquiry involves genuine curiosity and a desire to lean in to learn from and with another (Bellefeuille & Ricks, 2010; Hoskins & White, 2012; Pelias, 2011). When we “lean in” (Pelias, 2011) in relationships, we make a conscious choice to shift our presence in the relationship. Not only does our physical presence change by leaning in, but we also become more mindful of the interaction. We are attentive to the other, listening deeply, and staying present in the moment while also remaining open to all possibilities of what may come (Pelias, 2011, p. 9). Each time we enter into an engagement with another the space in-between is new (Garfat, 2011); “we arrive in the relationship as extensions of previous patterns of meaning making. And as we move outward

from our relationship to communicate with others, they also serve as supplements to our relational pattern, thus altering the meanings we have generated” (Gergen, 1998, p. 7). Garfat (2009) explains that “without our presence in the in-between, there is no opportunity for a co-created connected experiencing to occur” (as cited in Bellefeuille & Ricks, 2010, p. 1235). Knowledge emerges from this “in-between” space between two beings; it emerges from our relationships, or, from our social interactions with others (Bellefeuille & Ricks, 2010; Carter & Little, 2007; Gergen & Gergen, 2004). From the moment I began thinking about this inquiry, I have been fully immersed in it. It felt disingenuous to be in the process without identifying my role within it. This inquiry evolved both in and through relationships – my relationships with participants, participants’ relationships with others, and my own relationships with others – and through those relationships we have collaboratively engaged in a process of making meaning about the place of love in educational settings. Bellefeuille and Ricks (2010) describe relational inquiry as “messy by its very nature, in that it is more about process than method, and in that it depends much more upon connectivity, communication, participation, and pure love for wanting to know” (p. 1236). This inquiry would not have been possible without the research participants. Without their engagement, which was perhaps at times messy, but also connected and collaborative, this relational inquiry could not exist. They are as much a part of the process and the collaborative knowledge which the process resulted in as I am.

The Research Process

All recruitment strategies and research materials were approved by the Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) at the University of Victoria prior to commencing participant recruitment or contact. Through the ethics approval process I was granted permission to recruit

participants for this inquiry through purposive sampling. Prospective participants included any school professional employed at a public, separate, or private school in Canada, who had worked with students in an educational environment for a minimum of three academic years. I sought to include participants involved in innovative school programs who self-identified or had been identified by a peer as an individual who practices from a loving stance. The initial phase of recruitment involved distributing information about this research to my own professional and educational networks. Through these networks, I was connected to the participants of this research. This method of recruiting participants was selected in order to promote a purposeful sampling of practitioners who were willing to engage in dialogue about the place of love in their practice with students. Snowball sampling was a secondary source of recruitment. Participants were invited to participate in this research via an electronic letter of invitation (Appendix A). Five individuals responded to the invitation, and agreed to participate in the inquiry process. In accordance with ethics regulations at the University of Victoria, all participants received information regarding the inquiry process, the terms of consent and how to contact myself (the researcher) prior to participating in the interview (Appendix B).

Participant Demographics. Of the participants, four identified as female and one male. Two participants worked with high school age children and three worked with elementary age children. Three participants were employed as teachers, one as an educational assistant, and one as an educational consultant for children with developmental delays. At the time of the interviews participants were currently practicing in Alberta, Ontario and the Yukon. Participants' experience working in a school setting ranged from three years to 21 years, with the average being ten years. All participants had experience working within both traditional

and non-traditional school based programs. Participants' experience in non-traditional programs included the following: work focused on supporting the social communication and emotional regulation of children with neurodevelopmental complexities in inclusive classrooms; work in an interdisciplinary program focused on the environment and building leadership skills and community; work in an independent all female program; work in a faith based public school program, and work focused on traditional indigenous teachings and integrating information about the history of Canada's residential school system.

Interviewing as relational engagement. Engagement and dialogue with school professionals is the principal source of data for this inquiry. I engaged in qualitative semi-structured interview conversations with each research participant. My aim was to engage in interviews that were "generative and relational" and would "ultimately result in thick and rich descriptions" (Hoskins & White, 2012, p. 180) of participants experiences of love in their professional practice. Interview conversations were conducted in person whenever possible, however due to the wide geographical range of participant recruitment, some interviews were conducted over the phone. I used an interview topic guide (Appendix C) which included open-ended questions aimed at exploring respondents' subjective understanding, and lived experiences of love in the context of schools. Questions in the interview guide focused on issues related to care, compassion, love, ethics, the school environment, and school routines. I chose to use an interview topic guide with a few general prompts, as opposed to an interview script which provides specific questions to be asked in a particular order. I wanted to ensure that important aspects of the inquiry topic were not missed during the interview dialogue while allowing the greatest possibility for an organic interaction to unfold and allow the co-

construction of knowledge for this inquiry. The semi-structured interview, in this sense, was “neither a free conversation nor a highly structured questionnaire” (Kvale, 1983, p. 174). By designing the inquiry and inviting participants to engage in dialogue about the place of love in schools, I set the foundational structure for the interview conversations. However the contexts and past relational patterns that encompassed each particular interview were unique, and therefore inextricable and imperative to the research process and the knowledge generated in this inquiry. The relational nature of each interview conversation meant that in each interaction the research participant and I were reciprocally influencing each other, and we therefore are both represented in the “data”, or rather, the knowledge generated in this inquiry (Kvale, 1983). Each participant participated in two interviews. The purpose of the second interview was to discuss each participant’s feedback on the preliminary analysis I had engaged in following the first round of interviewing.

Analysis process. Audio recordings and transcriptions of the interview dialogue with each participant make up the substance of this research study. They “provide a descriptive record of the research” (Pope, Ziebland & Mays, 2000, p. 114), though in of themselves, they do not provide any analysis or interpretation. As the primary researcher, part of my role during the analysis phase of this process of inquiry has been to engage with the knowledge that was jointly created through the interview dialogue, and interpret and reflect upon the broader contextual applications of that knowledge (Pope, Ziebland & Mays, 2000; Thorne, 2000). According to Thorne (2000), data analysis is the most complex and mysterious of all of the phases of a qualitative project (p. 68). Since the “data” being analysed in this inquiry emerged out of “co-created, embodied, and dialogical encounters” (Bellefeuille & Ricks 2010, p. 1238) with each

participant, it felt appropriate and necessary to also include participants in the data analysis process. I have described the actions and ideas which were part of the analysis process here in order to increase transparency and encourage engagement with all the interconnected phases of this inquiry.

Throughout the inquiry process, I engaged in journal writing or “sketching” (Krueger, 2006) as strategy to hold on to and process the experiences I was having as I interacted with the research literature and with research participants. Krueger (2006) explains “the immediacy, movement, scene, and dialogue in a sketch provided a context that was more consistent both in the way the experience came to me in short bursts of reflection and in the way my mind moved from one thought to another” (p. 251). My own experience of sketching immediately following each interview and the transcription process helped me to capture the movement and progression of my own thoughts. Through my sketches, the analysis process was interwoven throughout the inquiry process, rather than occurring as one static phase after the participant interviews. Sketching also helped me to organize and track my thinking as I immersed myself in the analysis process and attempted to identify themes within interview transcripts and draw connections to relevant literature. Writing is integral throughout the entire analysis process, not only in the final stages of reporting results (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Carter & Little, 2007). The researcher’s “thinking and interpretation generally develops via the writing process” (Carter & Little, 2007, p. 1319). Writing played a prominent role in the approach I took to analysis, a process which evolved through my writing of sketches, interview transcripts and mapping emerging themes. I also read, re-read, highlighted, colour coded, organized, summarized, categorized, and frequently consulted the research literature to help situate and

support the themes I identified in my records of the interviews. Through a process of reflection and juxtaposition of my sketches, the interview transcripts, current literature, and representations of love in popular media, I was able to consolidate and refine the themes I was identifying in the interview transcripts (Krueger, 2006). From the onset of this inquiry, I have attempted to be transparent about my epistemological assumptions and theoretical understandings, and how I see them interacting in this research study. Carter and Little (2007) describe the interconnection between a researcher's epistemological views, research methodology and research methods, including data analysis. They explain that when these elements are out of sync the result is an incongruent, deprived study. In the process of identifying themes, I had to repeatedly orient myself to the bigger-picture, a picture, in this case, which is framed by my epistemological views, theoretical orientation and individual positionality. My attempts to achieve transparency in these areas were also meant to provide greater clarity regarding my process of analysis. Identified themes were discussed with research participants, reflected on through a relational lens, and juxtaposed with current research literature in order to begin to explore implications for future practice and research.

Thematic analysis. After completing the first interview with each participant, and transcribing it, I began a process of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was a flexible method which served to guide me through the identification, analysis and reporting of themes within the interview transcripts. As this process of analysis did not involve the research participants, I have attempted to reflect the active role that I had in this analysis through the language I have used. For example, the themes within the interview transcripts came from patterns that I "identified" and "selected". I was actively engaged in reading and re-reading the interview

transcripts as I attempted to identify and name recurrent patterns. No themes or patterns inherently existed in the interview transcripts. I did not “discover” the themes, I chose them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Because of the active role that I played in this analysis, it was important for me to be clear about the epistemological assumptions that I was approaching the analysis with. After identifying and refining themes within the interview transcripts, I invited each participant to provide feedback on the analysis process during a second interview. This was an attempt to support the research participants to have a voice in the analysis phase of the research. Braun and Clarke (2006) identify a six phase process for conducting thematic analysis. They caution that the phases are a guideline, and are not meant to be used as a linear process. The process is flexible and allows the researcher to move back and forth between the phases as necessary. Phase one involves becoming familiar with the research data through transcribing, then reading and re-reading the research data. In phase two, the researcher begins to identify “codes”, which are the most basic elements of the data that are of interest. Identifying codes supports the organization of data into meaningful groups, however codes are different than themes which are often more broad. Phase three involves sorting the codes identified in phase two into potential themes. In this phase the researcher is encouraged to begin think “about the relationship between codes, between themes and between different levels of themes”. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 20). In phase four themes are reviewed and refined so that they are internally consistent, and also distinctly separate from other themes. In phase five, themes and sub-themes are defined and named. The essence of each theme should be clear at this point. The final analysis and writing of the research report takes place in phase six, after mapping out the final themes and sub-themes. The report needs to do more than simply describe the

research data, its purpose is to take a position in relation to the research question. After reaching phase five in my analysis of the transcripts from the first interviews, I invited participants to offer feedback about the codes and themes that I had identified in a second interview. I incorporated participant feedback into the report writing in phase six.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

Throughout this inquiry process I have aimed to achieve consistency between my theoretical orientation, the research methodology and the research methods. My ongoing objective has been to remain transparent and explicit, while conducting an inquiry in partnership with the research participants that is internally congruent, while at the same time flexible (Bellefeuille & Ricks 2010; Newbury & Hoskins, 2010). Carter and Little (2007) assert that rigor in qualitative research can be elevated when the sampling, data collection, analysis, and reporting phases of a research study are repeatedly related. "As analysis and early writing reveals unexpected insights, sampling and data collection can be modified to better support the integrity, focus, and explanatory power of continuing analysis and, thus, the final product" (Carter & Little, 2007, p. 1325). They also assert that internal consistency among the researcher's epistemology, the research methodology and the research methods is "a key marker of quality in qualitative research" (Carter & Little, 2007, p. 1326) and that evaluating rigor in this way "transcends checklists" and reflects the "flexibility and diversity that exist across qualitative research practice" (p. 1317). I have also attempted to maintain a high degree of trustworthiness by addressing the four basic requirements for generic qualitative research suggested by Caelli, Ray and Mill, (2003). These requirements include: identifying my own theoretical positioning as the researcher, establishing congruence between the methodology

and selected methods, establishing rigor, and identifying the analytical lens through which I will analyse the data (Caelli, Ray & Mill, 2003 p.5). Audio taping and transcribing interviews, cross-checking my analysis with participants and seeking theoretical agreement with the literature are other strategies I have used to ensure integrity throughout this inquiry. Audio taping and transcribing interviews myself helped ensure that I was familiar with the concepts discussed by participants throughout the interviews which decreased the likelihood that relevant information which arose during interviews would be left out of the analysis process or the description of the research findings. By cross-checking my initial analysis with participants I allowed them to review my own interpretation of what was discussed during interviews, and to correct, clarify, or elaborate on content from the initial interview dialogue and my interpretations of it. While I did review the literature consistently throughout the research process, I did not disregard information from the interviews that was not identified in the literature. Instead, I made note of these differences and identified them as topics where ongoing discussion would be beneficial.

Identifying the Research Codes and Themes

In following the six phases of thematic analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), I began the analysis of participant interviews by transcribing and then reading and re-reading the entire body of the interview transcripts. As I typed and read through the interview transcripts I was paying attention to and making note of potential patterns and topics of interest. After reading through the data set twice and taking general notes, I began to select segments (i.e., phrases, sentences or paragraphs) from the interviews that represented something meaningful in regards to the research topic (i.e., recurrent patterns and unique or divergent items). I then

identified codes to represent and begin to organize these meaningful segments. Codes are different than the research themes in that they are typically more narrowly focused and are used to categorize the data without beginning to interpret or analyze. The codes that I identified in this phase were:

- Positive Emotion
- Human Connection
- Human Development
- Joint Aspirations and Goals
- Relationship and Community
- Personalized/Individualized
- Beyond Academics/Curriculum
- Authentic Interactions/Intentions
- Teacher Training and Education
- Boundaries and Expectations
- Hesitation with the word love
- Conflicting Ideals
- Feeling Judged
- Love is not...
- Self and Self-Care
- Modelling Loving Interactions
- The Role of Family
- Reciprocation is not Expected
- Showing Love/Loving Actions

Research Themes. After reviewing each interview transcript and identifying the codes above, I began to consider how different codes related to one another and how they could be combined to form overarching themes. I combined codes to arrive at an initial thematic map presented in Figure 1.

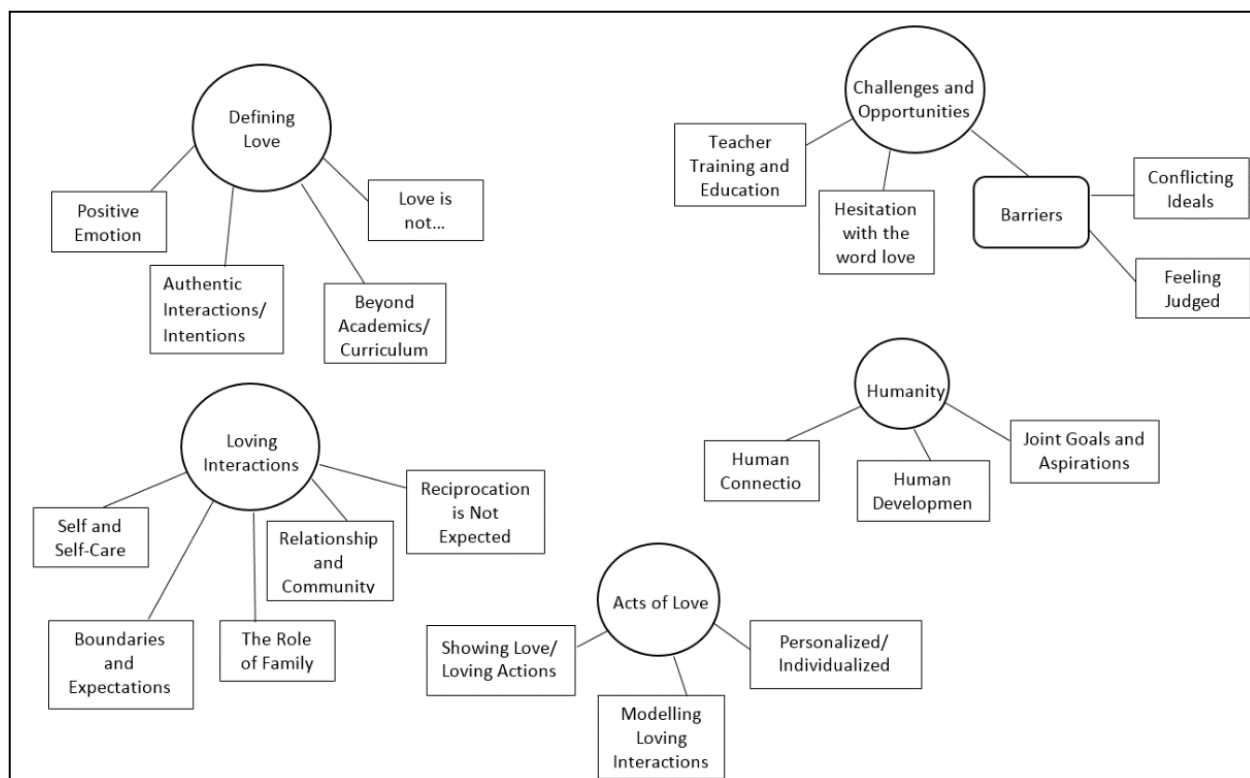


Figure 1: Initial Thematic Map

In phase four of Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines for thematic analysis I continued to refine the research themes to ensure internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity, meaning that there was coherence across the data contained within each theme, as well as clear distinctions between the themes. The thematic map, which represents this ongoing development of the themes, is represented in Figure 2. Phase five of the analysis focused on final refinements and identifying the essence of each theme so that themes could be defined and named. Figure 3 depicts the final thematic map, with the themes and sub-themes which I felt best represented the data from participants' interviews. Figure 4 illustrates the final thematic map with the initial research codes shown faintly in the background, connected to the themes where I felt they fit best. This thematic map, along with the others, was shown to

participants during the second interview to allow them to provide feedback on the analysis that I had conducted.

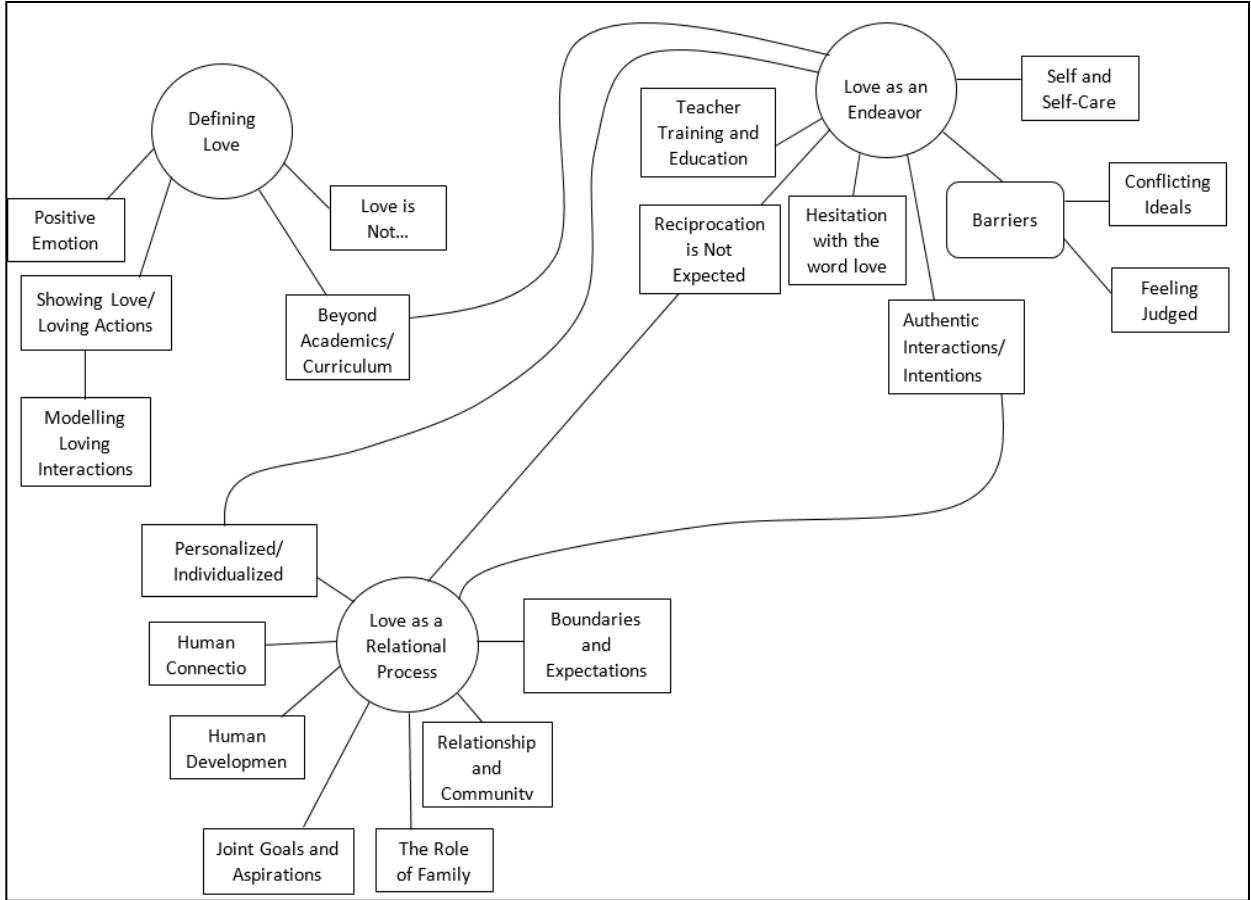


Figure 2: Developing Thematic Map

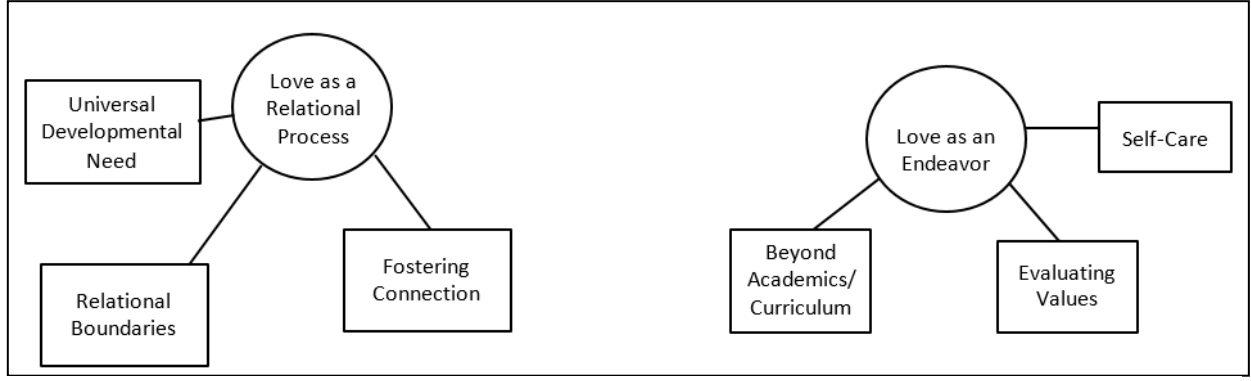


Figure 3: Final Thematic Map

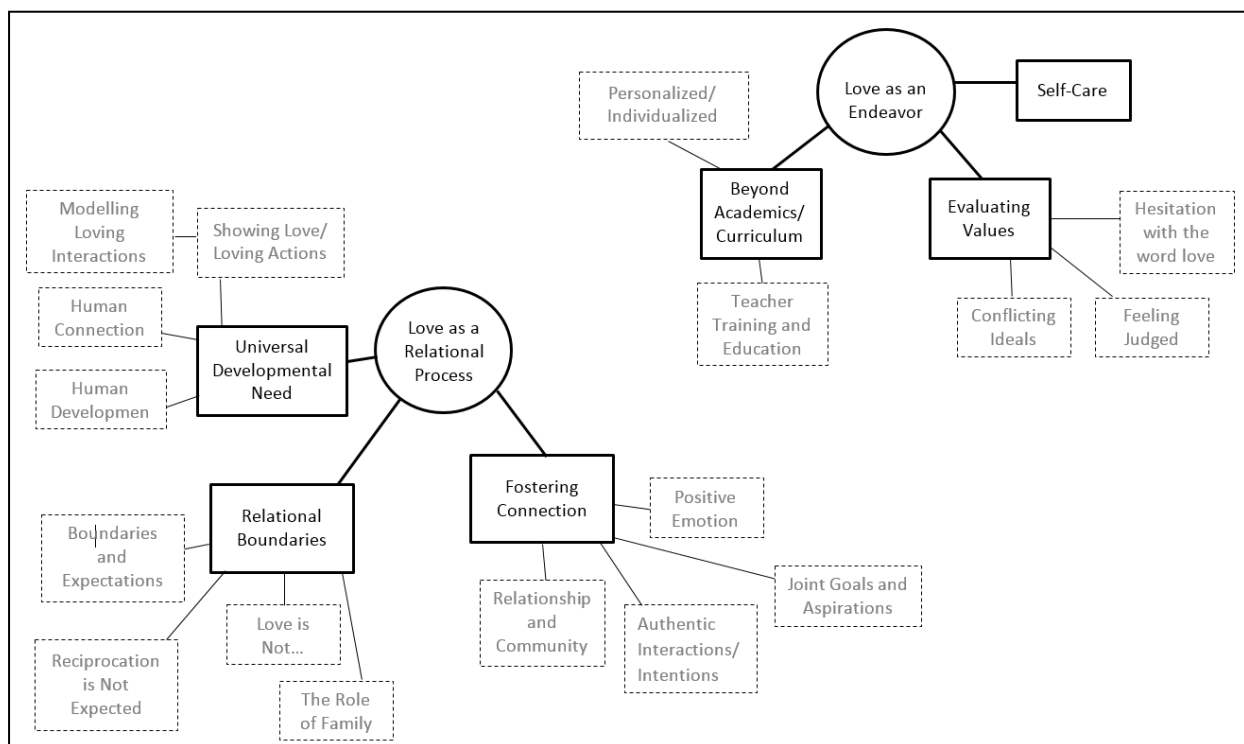


Figure 4: Final Thematic Map Including Grouping of Initial Codes

Each participant expressed agreement with the themes presented in the final thematic map. No suggestions for changes were offered, though one participant did comment about the lines indicating connection between codes and themes in the developing thematic map and suggested that there could be many more lines of connection added. The participant expressed that with love being a “less definable, less tangible concept” it was easy to endlessly draw connections between different aspects of the topic. One participant also specifically commented on the theme “love as an endeavour”, expressing that the word “endeavour” felt appropriate because it “expressed intentionality” versus the words “work” or “labour” which did not reflect the participant’s view of loving practice.

Chapter Four: Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the findings from the interviews conducted with participants. The themes and sub-themes contained in the final thematic map (See Figure 3 above) help to provide the structure which I have used to report participants' thoughts and experiences of love in the educational settings where they work. With the exception of minor editing in order to ensure anonymity, extracts from participants' interviews are presented verbatim. In order to maintain confidentiality, interview extracts have not been linked to one another or attributed to the participants.

Love as a Relational Process

Relationship was a central theme across all of the interviews. Participants' descriptions of love in a school setting all involved how they relate to other people, particularly to their students, but also at times to their students' families or to fellow colleagues. I chose to use the word "process" to describe this theme because each participant talked about ongoing efforts and daily interactions that were a part of loving practice. The idea of love as a relational *process* was rooted in the active language that participants used, for example in the verbs "build" "create" and "foster", to describe the connections that they developed with others in their school environment. Fostering connection, relational boundaries and love as a universal, developmental need were sub-themes associated with this overarching theme. Each sub-theme is described in detail below.

Fostering Connection

Fostering connection takes time. All of the participants described the investment that they put into building relationships with their students on a day-to-day basis and throughout

the school year. Loving practice, from the participants' perspectives, seems to be about knowing students as people, not just knowing their academic and cognitive abilities. One participant explained that loving practice *"has a lot to do with taking the time to build relationships with students and getting to know them on a personal level."* Another participant explained that love is conveyed to students through *"a simple interest daily in who they are and what they're doing."* They went on to explain that this daily interest takes the student-teacher relationship beyond the traditional relationship that a student would have within the school system. In describing the ways which love is demonstrated in a school environment one participant noted that, *"there is a lot of modelling that goes into [showing love]"*, and described several strategies such as writing notes to students and sending pictures home to parents that they felt demonstrated love. The participant explained that these practices are *"good tangible reminders of their accomplishments, but also of the relationships that are being formed."*

Trust was another element which participants identified as important to loving practice and building relationships with students. One participant remarked that *"one of the top priorities as an educator should be making a connection to build trust, above all the curriculum and making sure that they understand the material."* Another participant described how including love as a component of daily practice supported the development of trust with students, noting that it is evident when *"decisions are grounded in love and respect."* The relationship between school professionals and the students they interact with is not intrinsically positive. Participants described the *"time"*, *"effort"* and *"intentionality"* that they devote to the relationships they have with students. One participant remarked that developing relationships with students is important for all school professionals, and that while many new teachers feel

that they need to “demand” respect from their students, respect should instead be earned, much in the same way that one would earn respect from their colleagues.

It was also noted that fostering connection is not easy or simple, and can be challenging at times because students are not always pleasant or caring to the adults in their lives. One participant expressed a particular concern for children with developmental complexities and communication challenges who often display challenging behaviours, such as causing injury either to themselves or others. Their concern for these children was that the adults they encounter throughout their education would experience these behaviours as barriers to creating a loving, caring environment for their students. The participant explained the need to approach these students *“from a place of understanding,”* and reasoned that challenging behaviours are not about students *“being bad”* rather, they are *“a sign of a challenge that [a student] need[s] help with.”* In describing the advice they would offer to new teachers, another participant suggested that they take the time to *“get to know their students”*, build relationships, and try not to *“take it too personally if they’re having a bad day and they take it out on you”*. Overall, participants maintained that in practice that is predicated on love, efforts to foster connections with students are not dependent on a student’s skills, abilities or behaviours.

The benefits of positive relationships. The time devoted to fostering a loving environment and connection with students has benefits for the students and adults in the environment. Participants described how a loving environment can influence students’ academic success and their ability to manage other life stresses. One participant affirmed that *“when kids feel loved, a lot of the challenges that they enter this building with are sizably*

reduced just by feeling valuable and comfortable and wanted and accepted.” Another participant explained that, *“love is important because people need to feel safe and cared for at school”* and that it is more difficult for a student to learn if *“[they] don't have that relationship.”* A third participant noted the benefits of feeling *“valued”* and *“worthy of attention and success”* for children and adults, explaining that *“you just do a lot better in terms of your social interactions, and how you relate to people”* compared to when the work environment is *“miserable”* and *“you're just there because you have to be.”* In this sense loving practice is about more than the individual students as it impacts the broader school environment as well. Participants spoke extensively about loving practice in relation to connecting students to something bigger than themselves. Love was defined by one participant as, *“the ability of a person to pour into another person. To make them feel valuable, to make them feel important, to make them feel like they are a part of something bigger.”* A second participant described love as *“all encompassing”*, then continued, *“I think it is having the compassion, which involves knowing your students, knowing where they come from, knowing their home life and knowing their personality, their likes, their dislikes, their strengths and their weaknesses, and being compassionate to their world view.”* Another participant identified relationships as the conduit for allowing the school experience to become more for students. They resolved that *“it is simply allowing students the space to open up, and being interested in them as people that forms the relationship that allows school to go beyond the cold experience that it often is in a room filled with plastic seats and bells that ring.”* That same participant went on to say that the *“whole point”* of *“the love that a teacher brings in”* is that *“it leaves the classroom”* and that when this happens it makes *“an incredible difference”*. Participants’ statements made it clear

that loving practice is intentional and planned, and provides benefits to everyone in the environment. It is more than liking particular students. One participant noted that, *“there is a difference between a teacher that has a few pet students that they really like working with, and somebody who really enjoys kids, period. In that, if you are a teacher whose classroom is based on respecting and liking the kids you are working with, then that goes out into the whole school environment.”*

Loving practice and the ability to develop meaningful relationships with students was not something that participants identified as unique or special to the specific environments they worked in. One participant told a story to highlight their conviction that professionals working with students in a traditional school environment have the capacity to foster impactful interactions and relationships. They shared that, *“Probably my highlight in the last few years, and there's so, so many of those, but I was at a stop light in town around 8:00 at night. It was getting dark, and I really couldn't see the kid's face. This car pulls up beside me, starts honking the horn, rolls down the window and this kid that I taught once in a civics or carers class in high school starts talking to me and he's like "Hey. Hey, how are you? You know I was in your class? Just wanted to tell you I got into Police College". He started telling me his life story at the lights. The lights turned and he's still talking and then there is a car honking behind me, but he was just so proud to tell me what he had achieved, and I taught this kid once like 5 or 6 years before hand. That is not expected out of the regular system but, it was a highlight for me because it can be done in the regular school system. You can reach out and get kids along those lines. In terms of what you would call regular teaching, you can, through doing small extras, manage to reach out and make connections with kids and then develop a relationship that goes beyond, that will*

inspire them to do other stuff." This story illustrates how the relationship one participant had with a student in a traditional classroom setting resulted in a lasting positive impression on the student.

Fostering connection with students' families. Participants who worked with elementary aged, versus high school aged, students had different perspectives on the role of also fostering a connection with students' families. Participants who worked with high school students did not describe the same benefits of connecting with students' families as the professionals who worked with younger children. One participant who taught students in high school identified that *"what kids think about the teacher usually colours what the parents think about the teacher,"* and highlighted the fact that since it was the kids that they taught, and not the parents, there was less time spent developing relationships with parents. On the other hand, the professionals who worked primarily with younger children expressed the importance of building relationship with students' caregivers. One explained *"I think my kids would know that I love them because their parents know that I love them. And I put a huge amount of time and energy into making that apparent to parents. Not for show, but because it is true. And I find the easiest way to do that is to make sure parents know right away that you know their kids well, and communicate with them upfront and often, and not just when there is a problem. So, I put a lot of time into my parents at the beginning of the year because if they feel that, and they have that confidence in the relationship I am going to have with their child, their children will have confidence in their relationship with me."* Another participant identified communication with students' parents as one of the ways that love is shown in a school. They indicated that *"love is demonstrated through communication with students' families and bridging the gap*

between home and school life." The difference in how fostering connection is viewed by professionals who work with elementary and high school students perhaps reflects the developmental differences in parental involvement as children age.

Relational Boundaries

Maintaining clear expectations and boundaries was central to many participants understanding of love in a school environment. Participants asserted that *"love begins with mutual respect"* and that both *"expectations and communication are a big part in being able to show love"*. Participants expressed that loving students does not mean that they are always pleased with the rules and expectations that are in place. However, participants also felt that it is important to maintain expectations and boundaries to support students' long term success. One participant described their efforts to strike *"a balance between showing love because a student needs it, but also setting boundaries and letting the students know what is appropriate and not appropriate."* Another noted that loving students does not mean that they are going to be *"comfortable 100% of the time."* They described being labeled by students as "strict" and related this label to their consistency in maintaining boundaries and expectations. The participant explained that *"boundaries are really important to me. If you took a poll of the playground I think strict is the word people would use most often. I prefer the word consistent. But, I don't feel offended by "strict" because I think it is true that I have very high expectations for people, and children are people, and I think it is loving and respectful to expect a lot of people who have a lot to offer."* They went on to clarify that their preference for the word consistent was *"because strict does not come from a place of love."* The participant further explain that they had come to be *"comfortable"* with being labeled as *"strict"* since *"it's the*

word that people use and understand.” However, they maintained that “Strict doesn't come from a place of love and most people who are favorite teachers aren't strict, they're just unfailingly the same.”

Two participants talked about the impact of language in communicating expectations and described how expectations could be communicated with students in a loving manner. One stated *“I have really positive relationships with students. I think they know the boundaries within our classroom, and they know why they exist, and we wrap a lot of love language around those boundaries, for example, “This rule exists because...”, or “Is that respectful to our friend?”* The other reported *“I try to instil ownership on the students so that if they do not abide by the general school expectations, and those are always transparent to them, then the ownership is on them, not the teacher. Putting the ownership back on students and saying ‘hmm, what do you think? Is that respectful? Are you being mindful of the others around you? No? Hmm, well, you as a group need to figure out how you can fix this.’ This kind of conversation builds love between the students because they learn how to communicate with each other and be a part of a classroom community.”* For both participants, maintaining boundaries did not mean that they needed to stop being loving at any point. Rather love was a part of interactions even when identifying inappropriate actions and behaviours.

School boundaries and family boundaries. Three of the interview participants referred to the love that is shared among family members when attempting to define the boundaries of loving students in a school environment. One participant observed that love in a school environment *“would be a bit different than thinking about love at your home and loving your family.”* Another, in describing the supports being offered by the entire school to a student

expressed a desire that the student *“feel that it's like a family”*, but also acknowledged that it was *“different”*. A third participant asserted that *“it is important for families to know us within the boundaries of professionalism and to learn that you can have a respectful and loving relationship with someone without it crossing into anything inappropriate, and I don't even mean bad I just mean fuzzy. I think you can be loving and kind and impactful and still be the teacher and not the mom.”* They went on to explain that boundaries in a professional, loving relationship are *“a bit counter intuitive”*, in that when you give too much *“you're not always building capacity, sometimes you are building co-dependence.”* In working with families they identified that *“the most loving thing I can do for them is teach them how to exist independently of our relationship and to supplement and be a part of what's successful for them, but not to be the reason [for their success].”* It seemed that for all of the participants, maintaining appropriate boundaries was viewed as more loving than having no boundaries or having inconsistent boundaries.

A Universal Developmental Need

In describing the reasons why love was an important component of their practice, each participant described love as something that was needed universally, by all people, but particularly by children, whose development is impacted by experiencing love and a sense of comfort. Participants' comments included: *“love is important because it is something that everyone should feel”*, and *“there isn't a time when love is not important.”* Participants also described the importance for all students, not only the ones who have been identified as having particular needs or challenges, to experience love. One participant discussed the importance of meeting the needs of all children in the classroom including those that may be *“academically,*

socially, middle of the road kids.” They went on to explain that they had never met a child that they “didn’t love” or was “not worthy of [their] love”, and stated, “It’s my job as a teacher, but it’s just also my job as a human being.” Another participant talked about the impact of a loving environment on students’ education. When asked why love is important in a school environment, the participant replied: “Oh gosh, for so, so many reasons. Well I think the foremost reason would be simply giving students a human experience that we all crave. So, if you throw the curriculum out the window, it’s providing that safe, nurturing atmosphere where people feel they can learn, be who they really are, explore the world, whatever the case may be. The biggest reason is simply creating a human environment. In terms of its impact on education, that’s Maslow’s hierarchy of needs as far as I’m concerned. A student who isn’t feeling comfortable, whether it be with their own life, or whether it be in the classroom, is not going to be anywhere near as productive, engaged etcetera, if they don’t have an environment where they feel comfortable.” Participants identified that the presence of love in a school was impactful on the adults as well as the children. One reasoned that “without love in the picture, or without love being taught or demonstrated, or being a focus as an overall daily life skill, it would be detrimental to students, teachers and other staff members in the school. Simply because without compassion, understanding, mindfulness, etcetera, it’s not possible to foster a healthy environment.” The connection between love and a positive learning environment was identified by each participant. One expressed the need to communicate more broadly within the field of education about the importance of loving practice, stating, “I think something that is important to transmit at this time in education, when there are so many demands on us as professionals, is that love is important. Loving kids authentically is important. Not so that

parents feel better. Not so that you love your job. But, just because that is where the most authentic learning happens, that's where the most authentic relationships are built and that's the context within which we know kids develop most quickly, and most wholly. And I think that's the thing that is hardest to teach." Participants also recognized the impact of loving interactions on children whose brains are developing and being influenced by their interactions and their environment. One participant expressed that while the time that professionals spend with students *"may seem inconsequential"*, it does *"impact upon their development, and how they see the world, and how they treat and see other people."* They further described that loving practice is *"good modelling"*. As children grow and develop, love is demonstrated in different ways to meet their developmental needs. One participant provided an example: *"for the little ones there is that physical connection that you have, where they want to hold your hand, or they need a hug, or they want to sit near you. But, with the older kids, I think it is more the teacher showing respect to the kids. Ensuring they know you see them as a person and you care about them."* The way that love is communicated throughout the lifespan, and to each individual can be different depending on the needs of the person at a specific moment in time.

A good class? Two participants specifically commented on being asked by colleagues or friends: *"Do you have a good class this year?"* Each explained that this was not a question that they would ever ask. One participant contended that the question itself is *"fundamentally flawed"* because it is based on the presumption that there is such a thing as *"a bad class."* The second participant questioned what information was being sought by asking that question. Stating, *"People say to me every year, 'Do you have a good class this year?' What does that mean? Right. Nobody is keeping the good ones at home. They are sending their best kids to*

school. I have never had a bad class...and that is because when I evaluate that statement, it's not about how they impact me, it's about the potential I see in them." This participant expressed that loving students *"does not always mean that they are happy with me, or that things go beautifully well, or that I cough rainbows,"* and explained that the role of a loving teacher is different from a loving parent in that it is to *"be a guide without a pre-existing relationship"*. They continued, *"kids aren't always cute, and they are not always perfect, and, that isn't a condition of loving anyone."* Participants agreed that loving environments and loving interactions are beneficial to all people, and that their love for their students was never conditional.

Love as an Endeavor

The word "endeavor" means to "try hard to do or achieve something" (*Oxford Dictionaries online, 2015*). The choice to describe love as an endeavor was one I contemplated carefully. I wanted to convey participants' descriptions of the conscious effort that they put into creating environments and building relationships based on love. Though the words "work" and "labour" have definitions very similar to endeavor, they are often portrayed in colloquial conversation as negative or mundane. For example, one might comment, "I've got to go to work", "I feel like all I do is work", "I'm looking for cheap labour", or "we need to save on labour costs". The terms "work" and "labour" seem to be more associated with a job, or paid employment, then with striving to attain a meaningful goal. Throughout the interviews participants described the energy they put towards making decisions about the best interest of their students, particularly when those decisions were different and sometimes judged by others. I called this theme love as an endeavour because of the deliberate thought that

participants described in assessing how to best support their students. Participants also talked about the actions they take that are outside of academics and teaching the curriculum, and the importance of caring for and loving themselves. Beyond academics/curriculum, evaluating values, and self-care were the sub-themes identified to represent these patterns across participants' interviews. Each of these sub-themes is described below.

Evaluating Values

In discussing their beliefs about why love is important in a school environment, each participant described the value they placed on supporting their students' success and wellbeing. All of the participants indicated that love was important to their practice because it was about meeting the "needs" of their students. They all also explained that loving students related to wanting "*the best things*" for them, and wanting them to be "*successful*" and "*excel*." Two participants explained that the "*best interest*" of students is always central to their decision making and their daily interactions. One participant indicated that a foundation of "love and compassion and respect" is what allows them to make decisions in the best interest of each student and to "*advocate for them most authentically*." Each participant expressed that knowing their own values was central to guiding their decisions about their practice with students. One participant identified defining values as a "big process" and explained that through experience, values become clearer. That same participant talked about their experience mentoring student teachers, and how having to explain the reasons behind their decisions strengthened their own confidence in their values. The participant explained "*I feel less inhibited now than I used to about making loving decisions on behalf of my kids, or having boundaries on behalf of my kids, because I know very clearly why those things are important to*

me." Each participant seemed to have carefully considered their own values and be conscious of how their values influenced their professional decision making with students. I attempted to reflect that conscious consideration in the title of this section.

The "L" word. Though no participants explicitly questioned my choice of the word "love" in the title or focus of this study, four of the five participants made one comment throughout the course of the interviews that hinted toward some hesitation with using the word love. One participant noted at the beginning of the interview *"it's such an interesting topic"* and *"I'm glad it's being talked about,"* then later identified love as a *"tricky"* topic. Another participants identified love as a *"precarious topic."* In regards to defining love, one participant commented *"I think standard teachers college will have problems with it"* and then questioned *"Do you want to utter that word? What is the full power of that word?"* Two participants identified the potential to be misunderstood when talking about love in regards to school practice and how it could be viewed as inappropriate. While talking about the research themes that I had identified during the second interview with one participant, they clarified *"I feel comfortable talking about it to you"* and suggested *"I think it should be something we talk about more."* It is clear from the full discussion with each participant that they all would identify love as a valuable component of practice in schools. However, the passing comments which indicate some hesitancy with talking about love in this context are perhaps a sign of participants' recognition that love is not a widely discussed, or accepted, practice in the field of education, and more generally, in any work with children in professional contexts.

The administrators' values and the school environment. All of the participants spoke about how the values of the administrators (i.e., the principal or vice-principal) where

they worked influenced their own capacity to incorporate love into their practice and make choices in the best interest of their students. One participant stated that *“in a school your administrator is the biggest factor in determining how present challenges are and how impactful they are in your teaching.”* Four participants expressed a desire to feel *“supported”* by their school administrators. One participant explained, the *“philosophy”* and *“values”* of an administrator *“can become a barrier”* when they do not align with your own values about what is in the best interest of the students. Another participant talked about the different administrators they had worked with throughout their career and their experience of feeling supported by one administrator and inhibited by another in a different environment. The participant expressed *“it's important for me to work within a loving context as well.”* They explained that working in a loving context does not require being *“best friends”* with the administrator, or *“always”* needing to *“agree.”* *“But”*, they continued *“I need to feel valuable, and like I am a contributor, and as though I will receive support when I need it.”* Three participants talked about how the values of an administrator can influence the entire school context, making their values very influential. One talked about the importance of the *“whole school”* environment and asserted that *“it is important that the culture of a school, that the base understanding, be everybody is worthy of love.”* The values of the administrative teams in each of the participants' schools was influential to their practice in positive and negative ways.

Feeling judged. Four participants talked about how the judgements of other people created potential barriers to developing relationships with students and incorporating love into professional practice in schools. One participant stated that *“the barriers come in terms of how others see your relationship with students.”* They explained that in relationships between

teachers and students, rigid rules make outsiders more comfortable, and *“things outside the traditional formal relationship raise bells for people.”* The participant talked about the discomfort that others felt because strict rules regarding how students address adults were not enforced in their classroom (i.e., students were not required to address adults as Mr. or Ms.). They suggested that *“the outside world...want[s] those barriers, they don't want that emotional tie coming in.”* Two participants talked about the importance of feeling “safe” and “supported” by their school principal to incorporate love into their practice in a school setting. One explained that the benefit of feeling “safe” was that it was comfortable to take risks, and taking risks created opportunities to *“broaden [their] ability as a professional.”* Another participant talked about how knowing their own values made it easier to not worry about the judgements of others. Stating *“I have learned over the years that if I am doing what I know is the right thing to do, and the loving thing to do, then I need not worry about the teacher down the hall. It won't change them and it can't change me.”* While participant’s identified outsider judgements as problematic and a potential barrier to loving practice for some professionals, they also expressed that the judgements that they had felt did not impact their resolve to honour their own values and take actions in the best interest of their students.

Beyond Academics and Curriculum

All of the participants identified love as something “extra”, or beyond their formal job description. One suggested that to practice love in a school environment means *“going that simple extra mile.”* Each of the participants noted that love was not necessarily related to academic education, but that it could augment students’ academic education when it was integrated into daily practice.

Individualized instruction and attention. Each participant talked about loving practice involving something beyond academics and teaching a curriculum. Participants described teaching that is based in loving practice as being focused on knowing each student as an individual and meeting their unique needs. One stated *“there is a great importance on personalizing instruction.”* Another described their teaching *“as coaching”*, explaining that *“there is a different standard”* for all students, which involves meeting students *“wherever they are at, to make them better as who they are and what they are working on”*. Two participants talked about writing notes to students as a way to personalize encouragement. Getting to know students well as individuals was identified as an important factor in being able to recognize when a student needs extra support, and what kinds of support are needed. One participant observed that providing support directly to a student, and *“knowing when you are not enough and being able to connect them to a resource”* are both *“ways of demonstrating love.”* Teaching with love, according to one participant, is *“not about the curriculum, it’s about know the person.”* For all of the participants, knowing each student individually and being able to personalize instruction and supports to their needs was a part of loving practice in a school.

Teaching with love also meant a focus on supporting students’ learning outside the traditional academic subjects. One participant explained children *“definitely need to learn outside of academics... the bigger picture of life is caring for other people, contributing as a member of society, to show love for everything, for other people, for nature, for the environment.”* Another participant identified that making an effort to *“instil mindfulness and independence in each student”* as a sign of loving practice. All of the participants talked about how the relationships they had with students supported the students’ learning and success.

Devoting effort toward developing these relationships was viewed as a part of loving practice, and in this way loving practice influenced how participants supported students' learning, and what students' learned in school. One participant remarked that *"the relationship is quite important to [the students'] ability to acquire knowledge and to connect knowledge."* Another participant suggested that working in a school is *"a lot more relational than most people think."* They proposed that there is more to working in a school than teaching, acknowledging that *"yes, there is teaching, and there is information being transferred, and students are learning skills, but it really is also about how to interact with other people."* One participant identified that loving practice involved relationships with students being *"based on respect and going beyond the traditional role of a teacher as stated in the education act."* Another contrasted teaching with and without love as a component of daily practice, stating that *"you can be a very good technical teacher and without that piece there is a section of kids you won't ever quite reach."* Each participant acknowledged that it is evident to students when the adults in their school are going above and beyond. One commented that something as simple as *"offering extra help"* could signal to students that you are *"willing to go that extra step to allow them to be successful."* A second participant talked about how fostering relationships with students supports their engagement in learning and long term success. They asserted that *"if [students] are not engaged in what they are doing, they're not actually really learning anything and taking it with them."* On the other hand, when students are engaged *"because they have that relationship with the teacher that nurtures them, that makes them feel like they can, that they deserve to explore learning and the world. That skill set, that passion, is what will make the knowledge relevant, and will take them on to where they want to end up going in life. Whether*

it's subject specific, or simply they learn to love learning because it was a positive experience, because of that relationship." A third participant identified building relationships as a central component of an ongoing goal to *"really be impactful in terms of what [students] learn and how far they develop cognitively and academically as well as socially and emotionally."* A vision of love as something that is beyond or more than traditional academic teaching was shared by all of the participants. Though teaching and learning is possible in the absence of loving practice, participants agreed that love enhances students' school experience and learning.

Loving relationships and teaching academics: Both are possible. Participants contended that having loving or caring relationships with students improves their academic experience and learning. One commented *"it is possible in the regular classroom to go beyond and care about students, and it completely changes how you teach and how they learn."* Another participant discussed the challenge of establishing balance between a focus on loving relationships and a focus on academic teaching, suggesting that *"the pendulum swings"* between the *"two extremes"* but *"never sort of hits dead center."* The participant reflected *"there are people who think that no kid remembers what they learned in math, but they all remember what they did the day before Christmas."* Then expressed disagreement with this perspective, stating *"I actually do remember what I learned in math, and my favorite teachers were the teachers who taught me interesting things."* They concluded *"I think it is very possible to be in a loving relationship with a student and also be impactful and help them to grow."* Though all of the participants agreed that loving practice and taking time to build relationships with students enriches their learning, three participants specifically noted that there is little information or discussion around supporting school professionals, particularly new teachers, to

develop their knowledge or skills about building relationships founded on love with students. One participant stated that *“there was that big component missing”* from their teacher education. The participant questioned, *“How do you teach love and compassion?”* Another participant suggested that training for new school professionals needed to include discussion *“about how to integrate authentically loving relationships into really good pedagogical practice.”* This participant emphasized that *“it's important to be a good teacher technically, to be constantly improving your skills, and it's important to be a loving practitioner and pour into kids.”* This participant also contemplated about the ways we teach professional about loving relationships; questioning *“how do we, not even teach people how to be loving, because I do believe people are inherently able to be loving, but how do we create situations in which it becomes habit instead of the exception to incorporate loving practice into good teaching? I think both are possible and I wish more people would say that and teach that and practice that.”* Although incorporating love into daily practice in a school environment was identified by participants as something that required effort and was beyond what would formally be expected of them, each expressed the benefits of this effort for students learning and overall school experience.

Self-Care

As participants spoke about the effort that was required to integrate love into daily practice and foster relationships with students each also spoke about the necessity to be conscious of their own need for care. Each participant spoke about experiencing thoughts and emotions from their work outside of the school environment. One participant commented *“it's one of those jobs that follows you home.”* Participants talked about self-care being important

because it supported their capacity to do their job completely, which includes being available to identify and respond to students' needs and to build relationships with students. One participant suggested that *"loving yourself and caring for yourself is also important"* because without that self-care, it *"breaks down"* an individual's *"strength as a professional"* as well as the relationships in the *"classroom as a whole"* and *"with each individual student."* This participant argued that self-love and self-care are *"paramount"* because students are *"so aware"*, and the impact to the school environment would *"be obvious"* to them. Participants spoke about how stress affected their ability to foster relationships with students, and one participant commented that stress and lack of sleep *"can impact upon how caring, and how flexible and empathetic you're able to be with other people."* Fostering connections with other professionals within the school environment was one potential way that two participants identified for supporting self-care. While talking about what enabled them to be loving in their work, one participant explained *"it's important for me to work within a loving context as well."* The other explained that because *"the school environment is so intense and fast paced"* it is *"important to build connections with other adults in the building"* to foster an accepting and *"comfortable"* work environment. Three participants observed that when school professionals are under too much stress, there is potential for that stress to negatively impact the professionals' perception of their students, and as a result, impact their capacity to take actions in the best interest of their students. One participant noted that it is important to be able to *"take time for yourself"* because when *"you can't show yourself some kindness, like sleeping, exercising and having social time, then you're going to be a lot more irritable a lot more quickly."* She summarized that *"when you love yourself, you are able to love others as well."*

Another participant explained that when professionals begin to have negative or blaming thoughts about their students, it is a good sign that they may need a break. The participant commented that *“even teachers with very difficult groups who have truly invested in their kids can usually say ‘today was a difficult day’ instead of ‘oh my god, those kids! They’re such bad kids.’”* It is clear from discussion with participants that self-care or self-love is a key factor in supporting the integration of love into school based practice.

Summary

Overall, the interviews generated in depth conversations with each participant regarding their experience and beliefs about love as a component of practice in a school environment. While participants experience was varied in terms of the populations they worked with and the structure of their work environment, there are several key similarities in respect to their conceptions of what love as a component of school based practice means; including the importance of positive relationships between students and professionals, the necessity for positive boundaries within relationships, the benefits of love for students’ social, emotional and academic success, and relevance of self-care in supporting one’s capacity to incorporate love into their practice.

Despite agreement among all participants that loving practice and good pedagogical practice are compatible, and that loving practice is beneficial in terms of students overall school experience as well as their academic learning, four out of five participants made one comment throughout the course of the interview discussions which hinted toward some hesitation with the language of “love”. Each participant felt that love was a topic which warranted further

conversation among school professionals, and which would be beneficial for new school professional to be exposed to early in their academic and practical training.

Chapter Five: Analysis and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to gain understanding about how school professionals conceptualize love and integrate it into their daily practice with students. In addressing this question, the literature review examined current research regarding perspectives on love as a component of professional practice across the helping professions. Semi-structured interviews with professionals from diverse educational backgrounds and fields of practice provided further insight into the thoughts and experiences of professionals currently working in schools with students. This chapter analyses and discusses the significance of participants' perspectives, in light of the current knowledge about love in professional practice presented in the literature review, and discusses potential implications for professional practice and training. The limitations of this study and possibilities for future research are also addressed.

Love as Relational Praxis

The theme of relationship was central to how participants in this study defined love. This was consistent with descriptions of love in the literature across the helping professions. Each participant identified love as a concept that moved their work with students beyond academics, while at the same time being something that bolstered students' school experience and academic success. Again, this aligns with the ways that care and love are described in literature from the field of education. Hargreaves' (1998) research into the emotional responses of 32 grade 7 and 8 teachers from Ontario, Canada, for instance, found that the teachers' classroom focus extended beyond cognitive instruction to include "their emotional relationships with and connections to students; their desire to care for students; to develop them as tolerant and respectful citizens,... to develop their students' social skills,... and to create

an inclusive atmosphere,” and that these emotional practices were “essential to [students’] successful academic learning” (p.845). Given the active quality of the descriptions of love and relationship used throughout the literature, as well as by the participants in this study, (for example, descriptions of each concept included verbs such as build, pour, read, make, move, create and foster), it is clear that love is not a static or absolute state that either exists or does not exist. It is a process that is active and intentional. In this way, perhaps love, in the context of education, could most accurately be described as relational praxis.

Differing from practice and theory, praxis is commonly understood to be a combination of the two, an “integration of knowledge and action” (White, 2007, p. 266), with both possessing equal value. In her description of Child and Youth Care as praxis, White (2007) contends that praxis is “much more” (p.266) than the addition of theory to action. Citing Aristotle and Paulo Freire, White (2007) highlights the influence of morals and values in guiding decisions toward the betterment of human life and the world as key features of praxis. She further explains that praxis “includes conscious reflection both on and in practice”, that it is an ongoing commitment to “moral action” and “practices of accountability”, and that it is context specific and can therefore “never be proceduralized” (White, 2007, p. 266). This explanation of praxis which emerged from the field of child and youth care seems congruent with participants’ experience of love in school environments. In theorizing a transformational political concept of love in critical education, Lanas and Zembylas (2014) identify love as praxis as one of six different viewpoints on love (other viewpoints included: love as emotion, love as choice, love as response, love as relational, and love as political). They identify love as “both intention and action” (p. 39), and as such see praxis as an applicable model. Lanas and Zembylas (2014) assert

that no particular acts are inherently loving. They explain that because love is “a relation” as well as “a response,” the definition of a loving act is dependent on the parties involved in an interaction and the context in which the interaction takes place (Lanas & Zembylas, 2014, p. 39). Participants’ statements also pointed to a definition of loving practice that is context specific. For each of the participants, relationship and “*really getting to know*” students was central to their definition of loving practice. Interestingly, the distinction between the descriptions of loving practice offered by participants who worked in secondary school environments versus those who work in elementary schools is illustrative of the contextual nature of loving practice. The participants who worked with high school students spoke more about conversations with students and being involved with students outside the classroom, for example, in extra-curricular activities, as ways of demonstrating love than participants who worked in elementary schools. Participants who worked in high school were also more likely to shift between using the words “care” or “caring” and “love” or “loving” to describe their practice; while participants who worked primarily in elementary schools used the words “love” and “loving” more consistently. One participant specifically commented on the changing needs of students as they get older and move through school. The importance of context was also indicated in participants’ recognition of the role of connecting students to their community, which included not only their classroom and school community, but the neighbourhood and all humanity as well. Context, for the participants in this study was about responding to the varied and shifting needs of their student.

The idea of movement and an active process is another parallel between descriptions of praxis and loving practice. Klaver and Baart’s (2011) description of love as “active, intentional

and present centered” (p. 689) reflects a conscious, effortful understanding, consistent with White’s (2007) view of praxis. According to Lanas and Zembylas (2014), “love is praxis, because it transforms and transports” (p.39). The way participants described loving practice also included the idea of change and movement. White (2007) indicated that she deliberately chose to emphasize verbs when defining the concept of praxis as it relates to child and youth care, because this choice of words “signals the active and dynamic character of praxis” (p. 226). I would suggest that the thoughtful definitions of loving practice offered by the participants in this study would also fit the description of “active and dynamic”.

The symmetry of praxis and loving practice continues with the views of professional ethical practice and reflexivity that are presented in the literature as well as by the participants in this study. Participants talked about boundaries, making decisions in the best interest of their students, and knowing their own values. White (2007) defines praxis as “ethical, self-aware, responsive and accountable action, which reflects dimensions of knowing, doing and being” (White, 2007, p. 226). Though none of the participants talked about knowing, doing and being, I would argue that these dimensions are strongly reflected in the ways that they describe their understanding and experience of love in schools. In regard to knowing, participants talked about getting to know students by being in relationships with them, about knowing and responding to the needs of students, and about knowing their subject matter, good pedagogical practice, and how best to teach and support students’ learning. White (2007) identifies five assumptions about knowledge which inform her understanding of knowing as a component of praxis in CYC. These assumptions include:

1. Knowledge/knowing is inherently social and collective

2. Knowledge/knowing is always highly contextual
3. Singular forms of knowledge/knowing (e.g. empirical or experiential) are insufficient for informing complex, holistic practices like CYC
4. Different knowledges/ways of knowing are equally valid in particular contexts
5. Knowledge is made, not discovered (White 2007, p. 232).

All of the participants talked about how knowing their students through the relationships they have with them changes the learning environment and allows them to support their students better. They all expressed value for this kind of knowing. Three participants specifically talked about their formal education and the kind of knowledge they obtained through that venue, indicating that knowledge about relationships was a missing component. Participants in this study demonstrated acceptance and appreciation for a more complex, multi-dimensional vision of knowledge. I would contend that this view of knowledge is shared by other professionals working in school environments, and that it would benefit all school-based practice in general if different assumptions were explicitly discussed and contemplated in a more interactive, public manner.

The dimension of doing was reflected in the ways participants presented their thoughts about love in their practice. Each talked about teaching and building relationships and what they did to support each child. White (2007) relates doing to “skills and competencies” (p. 236). In a school environment, where supporting students’ academic learning is a priority, competencies related to teaching practices are realistically a focus. However, the participants in this study identified that these skills should not be the only focus, because building relationships, which involves different skills, also supports students’ learning. The three

participants who commented about formal education which prepares professionals to work in school environments expressed that education focused on the skills related to interacting with students, and building relationships was not a part of their formal education. White (2007) notes the advantage of competencies to identify standards of practice, though she also critiques the notion that defined, observable, and measurable skills are the only necessary component of critical, self-aware, ethical and competent professionals. Instead of disregarding the use of competencies, White (2007) specifies that her intent in proposing a praxis approach to CYC is not to “reject or replace a competency based approach” (p. 230). Rather, she has offered an approach to broaden the scope of thinking about CYC practice “in a way that explicitly recognizes its social, moral and political character” (p. 230). This model could expand the realm of thinking within school based practice to recognize the same social, moral and political character that exists in the school environment.

The dimension of being is more difficult to articulate, perhaps because it is challenging to count or measure the ways one is present in their job (or in their life) (White, 2007). White (2007) connects “ways of being” with one’s “expression and embodiment of values and virtues” (p. 236). The dimension of being is perhaps similar to the distinction that Garfat and Fulcher (2012) note between having relationships and being in relationships. Being, or being in relationships, involves “meaningful, attentive engagement and has an impact on both individuals involved” (Garfat & Fulcher, 2012, p. 9). As the methods of this research study did not involve direct observation, it is not possible to comment on how the participants behaved and whether those behaviours were congruent with the values they spoke about during the interviews. However, I would argue that participants’ reflections on their values throughout the

interview dialogue and their description of their interactions within their schools is a strong indication that they are conscious of, and actively reflecting on their role in the daily interactions they have with students. I am curious whether the degree of conscious thought that the participants in this study seemed to put toward their practice is reflective of a majority of professionals in the field. More open, explicit discussion about love and praxis would arguably benefit the many professionals and students who interact with one another each day when they enter their schools.

This praxis model could offer a beneficial frame of reference for professionals working in school environments and expand the scope of how competent practice is contemplated, talked about, and valued. Loving practice, as described by the participants in this research study, could also be described as school based praxis which strongly values, and therefore embodies, the qualities of love. As White (2007) points out, teaching (and I would suggest, school based practice in general) is like child and youth care, and other helping professions, in that it is “characterized by diverse ways of knowing, interpersonal relationships, practical obligations, value-laden decisions and complex ethical challenges, all of which take place within a complex context of sociopolitical, historical, cultural and institutional forces” (p. 242). A more conscious reflection on these factors surely could enhance professionals’ understanding of the context they work in, and their capacity to think reflectively on their role in that context.

Building Loving Communities

Interaction with students and building relationships was a key focus of the interviews with participants. One participant identified that building relationships is what allows the school environment to “*go beyond the cold experience that it often is in a room filled with*

plastic seats and bells that ring.” For all of the participants, relationship was not just about developing one to one connections with particular students, it was about fostering a relationship with each individual as well as amongst the group as a whole, and with the broader community. Though the role of love within the wider community was not central to any of the interview discussions, the fact that it was noted by each participant is significant. It points to some level of acknowledgement of a greater system, rather than just a group of individuals. It gives a picture of a love that is more holistic and beneficial to all people. Social constructionism, which has been my frame of reference and the backdrop to this inquiry, recognizes truth as community specific (Gergen & Gergen, 2004). Instead of a capital T, transcendental Truth that is true for all, social constructionism views knowledge as “the product of particular communities, guided by particular assumptions, beliefs and values” (Gergen & Gergen, 2004, p. 71). This view of knowledge is consistent with the way knowing is represented in praxis, and supports the subtle differences in how participants talked about love. For example, one participant talked about the differences in how love was perceived and valued in two different schools that they had worked in. There were also differences in the actions that participants from elementary and high schools identified as loving. As schools are one environment where children spend much of their time learning and developing their knowledge, not only within particular subjects, but of the world in general, a focus on the broader community which they are a part of is important. In school environments, where professionals come from multiple academic backgrounds with diverse theoretical training and perspectives, the acknowledgement that not all knowledge is universal is also important.

The interconnection between relationship and community is strong. Macmurray (1965, as cited in Gaita, 2012) states that “the reciprocal relation of two persons, as persons, is basic to community, in all its forms” (p. 761). Relationships between individuals is the foundation of community and as relationships branch out to include more and more individuals, communities grow. The relationships that school professionals have with students reach outside the walls of the school, in that students take the knowledge (including academic, social, and emotional knowledge) and bring it into their interactions with all of the people they interact with outside of the school day. Hoyle and Slater (2001) advocate that “we must create schools that lay the foundation for community, that give our children the experiences that will stimulate their desire to be connected to other human beings in a common enterprise” (p. 794). They assert that love is what is needed to build the foundation for community. Some classroom practices and institutional policies and procedures that front line professionals arguably have little control over (e.g., standardized testing and ranking of students’ scores) can undermine a sense of community and instead foster an environment of competition. When professionals are conscious of the potential of every classroom activity to convey some value or another, they can be more mindful of how they present these activities to the students they work with. According to hooks (2003) the goal of professionals working in schools should be to “make the classroom a place that is life-sustaining and mind-expanding, a place of liberating mutuality where teacher and student work together in partnership (p. xv). One of the participants in the study spoke about being a part of her students’ success, but not the reason for their success. The participant viewed learning as a mutual endeavour, but not a dependent one. Learning happens within the classroom or school community, but also beyond. Teachers and other

school professional can be a part of the deeply relational process of learning with their students, but when they can support a connection between a student and the broader community they set up the possibility for the students learning to move beyond the school and continue through the lifespan. Again, open discussion about the role of community relationships and the social, institutional, and political factors that may communicate contradictory values is important among professionals working in a school environment. Initiating these discussions in the formal education programs that prepare professionals to work in schools, as well as among team members in the context of daily practice may help to support an atmosphere where this kinds of contemplation and conversation is more widely accepted and valued.

Teaching and Learning about Love: A Conscious, Reflective Endeavour

How would classrooms and schools look if learning was more social, and emerged from more of our daily life experiences? Bellefeuille, McGrath and Jamieson (2007) highlight a commonly held, but problematic assumption that “learning has a beginning and an end, is best separated from the rest of our social activities, and is the result of teaching” (p. 723).

Participants in this study saw relationships as a vital part of learning and recognized learning as a process – a view which starkly contrasts with the aforementioned assumption. Bellefeuille, McGrath and Jamieson, (2007) also refute this static, authoritarian view of teaching. Drawing on their combined life experiences, they assert that it is “engagement in collective learning experiences” (p. 723) that creates opportunities for leaning. They make links to social constructionism and knowledge generation within communities, advising that “local governments and service organizations and communities work interdependently to develop

[knowledge]" (p. 723), rather than knowledge being transferred in a top down manner. This truth within community perspective on knowledge "fosters active learning over passive learning, cooperation over competition, community over isolation, and tentative knowledge over absolute knowledge" (Bellefeuille, McGrath & Jamieson, 2007, p. 723). While recognizing the benefits of environments that are supportive of cooperative, mutual discovery and local knowledge, the challenge remains; how do we further develop policy structures to support greater flexibility for professionals working with students so that the back and forth process of teaching and learning can meet the needs of the students in the environment, while also ensuring that academic curriculum objectives are realized to their full extent? Noddings (1995b) suggested that organizing "the curriculum around themes of care - caring for self, for intimate others, for strangers and global others, for the natural world and its nonhuman creatures, for the human-made world, and for ideas" is one potential strategy to foster community centered learning that address the "questions and issues at the core of human existence" (p. 675). Throughout the interviews, one participant talked about collaborating with other staff in their school with the explicit purpose of fostering relationships and learning opportunities between students and teachers across the school, rather than within an individual classroom. This kind collaborative work demonstrates greater awareness of the robust influence of community, as well as a sense of openness to ongoing and collective learning. In this kind of situation, the adult professionals who work in schools and are often seen as the people responsible for teaching, are themselves, also learning.

In addition to the suggestions that participants made for formal education programs to address issues of love and relationships, I would suggest that all professionals, and in particular

new professionals, would also benefit from direct training and ongoing opportunities to engage in reflective practice and conscious contemplation of the social, political, and institutional factors that influence the community context, as well as the role of the “self” in relational work. In short, the kinds of training that would align with a praxis model. In the child and youth care field, the “self” is a central focus of formal education programs and daily praxis. The notion of “self” is tied to “reflexivity and critical self-awareness”, which are long lasting commitments in the field. Opportunities to learn and develop a greater understanding of the role of the “self” could be highly beneficial to the diverse group of school professionals whose daily work involves engaging, and developing relationships with the students in their schools. Commitment to reflexivity and self-awareness, like other professional values, is context specific and highly dependent on the leadership in an organization and where their focus lies. It is likely that reflexivity, the role of self, and the role of love are a central focus of practice in some school environments. However, given the benefits of relationships and loving practice described by participants, and their own experience of this content lacking in their formal education and in some cases their daily work environment, it could be suggested that professionals, and in turn the children they work with, would benefit from these topics being discussed and practiced more openly.

One participant suggested that ongoing opportunities for mentorship between professionals who work in schools would be a strategy to support continued learning for professionals, and also encourage networks to support self-care. In the field of nursing, Stickley and Freshwater (2002) reason that clinical supervision “holds the potential of being a nurturing environment within which, among other things, the art of caring and the art of loving can be

fostered, examined, savoured, honoured and developed” (p. 255). Perhaps mentoring relationships could offer the same possibilities for professionals working in school environments. Greater flexibility in daily timetables and the pace at which curriculum outcomes are meant to be achieved might also support school professionals to have more opportunities to work collaboratively and schedule time for mentorship. How to achieve this level of flexibility is a question yet unanswered.

There likely is not a singular answer for how to implement changes that will better foster classrooms and whole school environments that support love, relational praxis, or community based knowledge. Chabot (2008, as cited in Lanas & Zembylas 2014) advises that “if we wish to contribute to a loving revolution, we need to focus on the long-term process of transforming power in our institutions and everyday lives, not primarily on taking power and overthrowing the current government in the short run” (p. 33). Arming professionals with information about the role of the “self”, the forces that impact the community and its knowledge, and the benefits of relational work (i.e., being in relationship and learning with students, rather than having relationships and transferring knowledge in one direction) and establishing opportunities to engage collaboratively with these topics is perhaps a starting point. The best solutions might yet come from within individual school communities. If we wish to encourage the collaborative contemplation and dialogue that could lead to such solutions, we need to start by creating spaces where school professionals feel safe to talk about the place of love in their work with students.

Limitations

According to Mills (1959) it is important to maintain “a ‘self-conscious’ attitude toward intellectual work”, which “should result in an acknowledgement of the limitations of research” (as cited in, O’Connor, 2008, p. 120). In an attempt to maintain self-consciousness toward this study, I have attempted to identify the limitations here. While this study provided substantial insight into how a few school professionals make sense of and experience love in their day-to-day interactions with students, and offers a starting point for future dialogue about the place of love in school based practice, there are limitations. The sample size for this study was small, and therefore offers a limited view of the ways which a very diverse group of professionals who work in schools might view love in their professional lives. Participants were also individuals who self-identified as someone willing to engage in a conversation about the role of love in their professional work. Which means that a particular viewpoint, in this case a positive view of love in professional practice, was specifically targeted through recruitment materials, leaving negative or more critical views unexplored in this research. To better support the themes constructed from the interview dialogue with participants, and to explore additional understandings of love as a component of professional practice in school environments, further discussion with a variety of professionals (including school based child and youth care practitioners, school consultants, principals and vice-principals) from diverse educational communities (including urban, rural and remote areas) is needed. The aim of the inquiry was to begin to explore the place of love in schools, and allow school professionals to add their voices to the academic literature. My hope was to open a space for dialogue about the place of love in

educational environments, rather than to suggest an ideal model for introducing love into the school environment.

Future Research Potential

This research was not designed to establish generalizable truths about the place of love in school based practice. The social constructionist orientation from which I approached this research calls into questions the notion of transcendental truths, and as such it was never my intent to discover or be able to offer such information. What this research does offer is a starting point from which to further explore the ways which love is understood and being practiced within school environments. Future research therefore, could take several different perspectives. For example, it could use this study as a starting point to encourage dialogue and seek information at a local level to support the development of community based practices to facilitate love within a particular school context. Additionally, it could explore the concept of love on a larger scale, seeking to engage research participants from across Canada, and potentially internationally, from different professional backgrounds and practice contexts. This research could also be expanded to include the perspectives of students and their families about the place of love in school environments.

Concluding Remarks

With the social and political landscape in Canada constantly shifting it is important to engage in ongoing discussion about the values being taught to our children, both formally and informally through daily interactions. Modernist archetypes of professionalism which idealize the separation of personal experiences and emotions from the work environment are being questioned (hooks, 2000; Hoyle & Slater, 2001; Smith, 2011). Instead, the literature from across

the helping professions (Elton, 2000; Garfat & Fulcher, 2012; Gharabaghi, 2008a; Giata, 2012; Klaver & Baart, 2011; Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012; Noddings, 1995b; Smith, 2011; Stuart, 2009; Thumbadoo, 2011; Underwood, 2009) and the individuals who participated in this study are recognizing the relational nature of work that involves supporting others. Being a relational concept, love needs to be understood within the context of the relationships where it is present. Until recently, love was often understood to be present only in familial or romantic relationships, but that limited definition is changing. This research offers insight into the ways that some school professionals understand and experience love as part of their work with students.

In school environments, a praxis approach that encourages “conscious reflection both on and in practice” (White, 2007, p. 266) facilitates active contemplation of the day-to-day interactions that professionals have with students. The language of “knowing”, “doing”, and “being” (White, 2007) offers a starting point for all professionals engaging in relational work to think about and discuss not only the place of love, but the influence of other values on relationships with young people and their education. Context holds equal weight in all practice environments where professionals engage in relational work, and conscious reflection on context, which includes the social, moral and political environment as well as the values of all involved parties, is equally important for all professionals. The professionals who chose to participate in this research study and share their reflections on the place of love in their own work have provided a starting point for conversations about love’s place in education across the diverse school communities throughout Canada. The participants’ insights are an example of how a love that is reflective and invites critical engagement can be beneficial for students and

teachers, and the broader school community. Increased awareness of the impact of community and the potential it carries for cementing and expanding knowledge could potentially help take the benefits of love beyond individual classrooms. Opportunities for collaborative learning among school professionals, particularly new school professionals, could also support reflective practice and foster the kind of love that is beneficial for students versus a love that is glamourized and self-indulgent. As the social, moral and political environment continuously shifts with changes in government at all levels, and with changes in local leadership (i.e., within school boards and individual schools), it is important that the professionals working directly with children in schools feel comfortable and supported to reflect on and talk about the place of love and the influence of other values on their work and their relationships with young people.

References

- Adarkar, A., & Keiser, D. (2007). The Buddha in the classroom: Toward a critical spiritual pedagogy. *Journal of Transformative Education, 5*(3), 246-261.
- Alston, K. (1991). Teaching, philosophy and eros: Love as a relation to truth. *Educational theory, 41*(4), 385-395.
- Aoki, T. (1992). Chapter 14: In the midst of slippery theme-words: Living as designers of Japanese Canadian Curriculum. In Pinar, W., & Irwin, R. (Eds.), *Curriculum in a new key: The collected words of Ted T. Aoki* (pp. 263-278). New York, NY: Rutledge.
- Arman, M, & Rehnsfeldt, A. (2006). The presence of love in ethical caring. *Nursing Forum, 41*(1), 4-12.
- Artz, S. (2000). The meaning of Love in the teaching and healing arts. *Child & Youth Care Forum, 29*(5), 293-298.
- Bellefeuille, G., McGrath, J., & Jamieson, D. (2007). A pedagogical response to a changing world: Towards a globally-informed pedagogy for child and youth care education and practice. *Children and Youth Services Review, 30*, 717-726.
- Bellefeuille, G., & Ricks, F. (2010). Relational inquiry: A child and youth care approach to research. *Children and Youth Services Review, 32*, 1235–1241.
- Boellinghaus, I., Jones, F., & Hutton, H. (2014). The role of mindfulness and loving-kindness meditation in cultivating self-compassion and other-focused concern in health care professionals. *Mindfulness, 5*, 129-138.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.

- Brendtro, L. (1990). Powerful pioneers in residential group care: A look at our roots and heritage. *Child & Youth Care Quarterly*, 19(2), 79-90.
- Brito, M., Fink, A., Friend, C., Heidebrink-Bruno, A., Moe, R., Shaffer, K., Robin V., & Wharton, R. (2014). Love in the time of peer review. *Hybrid Pedagogy*. Retrieved from <http://www.hybridpedagogy.com/journal/love-time-peer-review/>
- Buchanan, R., Gueldner, B., Tran, O., & Merrell, K. (2009). Social and emotional learning in classrooms: A survey of teachers' knowledge, perceptions, and practices. *Journal of Applied School Psychology*, 25(2), 187-203.
- Butot, M. (2004). Love as emancipatory praxis: An exploration of practitioners' conceptualizations of love in critical social work practice (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.
- Caelli, K., Ray, L., & Mill, J. (2003). Clear as mud: Toward greater clarity in generic qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2(2), 1-13.
- Carter, S., & Little, M. (2007). Justifying knowledge, justifying method, taking action: Epistemologies, methodologies, and methods in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(10), 1316-1328.
- Conte, A. (2000). In loco parentis: alive and well. *Education*, 121(1), 195.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2003). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.). *The landscape of qualitative research. Theories and Issues*, 1-45
- Elton, L. (2000). Turning academics into teachers: A discourse on love. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 5(3), 257-260.

- Endeavour. (2015). *Oxford Dictionaries online*. Retrieved from
<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/endeavour>
- Fromm, E. (1956). *The art of loving*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Freire, P. (1998). *Teachers as cultural workers: Letters to those dare teach*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Garfat, T. (2008). The inter-personal in-between: An exploration of relational child and youth care practice. In G. Bellefeuille & F. Ricks (Eds.), *Standing on the precipice: Inquiry into the creative potential of child and youth care practice* (pp. 7–34). Edmonton, Canada: McEwan Press.
- Garfat, T. (2011). Waiting for the in-between. *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice*, 24(4), 76-78.
- Garfat, T., & Fulcher, L. (2012). Characteristics of a relational child and youth care approach. In T. Garfat & L. Fulcher (Eds.), *Child and youth care in practice* (pp. 5-24). Cape Town, South Africa: The CYC-Net Press.
- Giata, R. (2012). Love and teaching: Renewing a common world. *Oxford Review of Education*, 38(6), 761-769.
- Givens, R. (2007). Mending walls: Recognizing the influence of boundary issues on the teacher/student relationship. *Christian Scholar's Review*, 36(2), 127-140.
- Gergen, K. (1998). When relationships generate realities: Therapeutic communication reconsidered. Unpublished manuscript. Retrieved October 24, 2014, from
http://www.swarthmore.edu/Documents/faculty/gergen/When_Relationships_Generate_Realities.pdf
- Gergen, K. (2011). The self as social construction. *Psychological Studies*, 56(1), 108–116.
- Gergen, K., & Gergen, M. (2004). *Social construction: Entering the dialogue*. Wallingford, PA: Taos Institute Publications.

- Gharabaghi, K. (2008a). Reclaiming our toughest youth. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 17(3), 30-32.
- Gharabaghi, K. (2008b). Values in child and youth care. *Child and Youth Services*, 30(3/4), 185-209.
- Greil, A. L. (2002). Infertile bodies: Medicalization, metaphor, and agency. In M. C. Inhorn & F. Van Balen (Eds.), *Infertility around the globe: New thinking on childlessness, gender, and reproductive technologies* (pp. 101–118). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hardy, D. (1953). Teaching needs love. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 30(6), 326-327.
- Hargreaves, A. (1998). The emotional practice of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 14(8), 835-854.
- Hargreaves, A. (2000). Mixed emotions: Teachers' perceptions of their interactions with students. *Teaching and teacher Education*, 16, 811-826.
- hooks, b. (2000). *All about love: New visions*. New York: Harper Perennial.
- hooks, b. (2003). *Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope*. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Hoskins, M., & White, J. (2012). Relational Inquiries and the Research Interview: Mentoring Future Researchers. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 19(3), 179 –188.
- Hoyle, J., & Slater, O. (2001). Love, happiness, and America's schools: The role of educational leadership in the 21st century. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 82(10), 790-794.
- Jacono, B. (1993). Caring is loving. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 18, 192-194.
- Johnson, K. (1991). Loving and teaching. *Educational Leadership*, 49(2), 84.
- Kendrick, K. & Robinson, S (2002). Tender loving care as a relational ethic in nursing practice. *Nursing Ethics*, 9(3), 291-300.

- Klaver, K., & Baart, A. (2011). Attentiveness in care: Towards a theoretical framework. *Nursing Ethics*, 18(5), 686-693.
- Krueger, M. (2006). Sketching child and youth in the seventh moment. *Child Youth Care Forum*, 35, 249–262.
- Kvale, S. (1983). The qualitative research interview: A phenomenological and a hermeneutical mode of understanding. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 14(2), 171-195.
- Lanas, M., & Zembylas, M. (2014). Towards a transformational political concept of love in critical education. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 34, 31-44.
- Loreman, T. (2011) *Love as pedagogy*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Määttä, K., & Uusiautti, S. (2012). Pedagogical authority and pedagogical love – connected or incompatible?. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, 8(1), 21-33.
- Määttä, K., & Uusiautti, S. (2013). *Many faces of love*. Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- Maier, H. (1987). Essential components in care and treatment environments for children. *Child & Youth Services*, 9(2), 35-86.
- Mowat, J. (2010). 'He comes to talk to me about things': supporting pupils experiencing social and emotional behavioural difficulties—a focus upon interpersonal relationships. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 28(2), 163-180.
- Muller, C. (2001). The role of caring in the teacher-student relationship for at-risk students. *Sociological Inquiry*, 71(2), 241-255.
- Newbury, J., & Hoskins, M. (2010). Relational inquiry: Generating new knowledge with adolescent girls who use crystal meth. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(8), 642 –650.

- Noddings, N. (1988). An ethic of caring and its implications for instructional arrangements. *American Journal of Education*, 96(2), 215-230.
- Noddings, N. (1995a). A morally defensible mission for schools in the 21st century. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 76(5), 365-368.
- Noddings, N. (1995b). Teaching themes of care. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 76(9), 675-679.
- Noddings, N. (2005). Identifying and responding to needs in education. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 35(2), 147–159.
- O'Connor, K. (2008). "You choose to care": Teachers, emotions and professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24, 117–126.
- O'Sullivan, E., Rassel, G., & Berner, M. (2008). Research methods for public administration (5th ed.). Toronto, ON: Pearson Longman.
- Padgett, D. (2008). Qualitative methods in social work research (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Sage Publications.
- Pelias R. (2004). A methodology of the heart: Evoking academic and daily life. Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.
- Pelias, R. (2011). Leaning: A poetics of personal relations. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Pinar, W. (2004). A lingering note: An introduction to the collected works of Ted T. Aoki. In Pinar, W., & Irwin, R. (Eds.), *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted T. Aoki* (pp. 1-88). New York, NY: Rutledge.
- Pope, C., Ziebland, S., & Mays, N. (2000). Qualitative research in health care: Analysing qualitative data. *British Medical Journal*, 320(7227), 114-116.

- Ranahan, P. (2000). Reaching beyond caring to loving in child and youth care practice. *Journal of Child and Youth Care, 13* (4), pp.55-65.
- Ricks, F. (1992). A feminist's view of caring. *Journal of Child and Youth Care, 7*(2), 49-57.
- Seligman, M. (2002). *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment*. New York: The Free Press.
- Skott-Myhre, H.A. & Skott-Myher, K. (2007). Radical youth work: Love and community. *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice, 20*(3), 48-57.
- Skott-Myhre, H.A. (2014). Becoming the common. In K. Gharabaghi, H. A. Skott-Myhre & M. Krueger (Eds.), *With Children and Youth: Emerging Theories and Practices in Child and Youth care work* (pp. 26-43). Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press.
- Smith, M. (2006), Act justly, love tenderly, walk humbly, *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice, 19* (4), 5-17.
- Smith, M. (2007). On the other side of care. *CYC-Online, 98*.
- Smith, M. (2011). Love and the child and youth care relationship. *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice, 24*(1-2), 189-192.
- Starratt, R. (1991). Building an ethical school: A theory for practice in educational leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 27*(2), 185-202.
- Stickley, T. & Freshwater, D. (2002). The art of loving and the therapeutic relationship. *Nursing Inquiry, 9*(4), 250-256.
- Stronach, I., Corbin, C., McNamara, O., Stark, S., & Warne, T. (2002). Towards an uncertain politics of professionalism: Teacher and nurse identities in flux. *Journal of Education Policy, 17*(1), 109-138.

- Stuart, C. (2009). *Foundations of child and youth care*. Iowa: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company.
- Thich Nhat Hanh (2007). *Teachings on love*. California: Parallax Press.
- Thorne, S. (2000). Data analysis in qualitative research. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, 3, 68-70.
- Thumbadoo, Z. (2011). Isibindi: Love in caring with a child and youth care approach. *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice*, 24(1-2), 193-198.
- Underwood, L. G. (2009). Compassionate love: A framework for research. In B. Fehr, S. Sprecher, & L. G. Underwood (Eds.), *The science of compassionate love: Theory, research, and applications* (pp. 3–25). Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Wahlin, U., Wieslander, I., & Fridlund, B. (1995). Loving care in the ambulance service. *Intensive and Critical Care Nursing*, 11, 306-313
- White, J. (1999). Ethical comportment in organizations: A synthesis of the feminist ethic of care and the Buddhist ethic of compassion. *International Journal of Value-Based Management*, 12, 109-128
- White, J. (2007). Knowing, doing and being in context: A praxis-oriented approach to child and youth care. *Child and Youth Care Forum*, 36(5), 225-244.
- Willer, E. (2014). Health-care provider compassionate love and women's infertility stressors. *Communication Monographs*, 81(4), 407–438.

Appendices

Appendix A

Email Invitation Script

Dear _____,

My name is Jennifer Vincent. I am a graduate student in the School of Child and Youth Care Masters of Arts program at the University of Victoria. I am conducting a research study as part of my course requirements entitled, "Teaching (with) Love: Relational Engagement in Educational Settings".

I am looking for professionals who are willing to engage in a conversation about their experience and ideas related to love in educational settings, and whose work involves interacting with children in a school environment. I found your contact information (describe where contact information was found).

I have attached a Participant Consent Form which will provide you with more detailed information about this research project and what would be required of you should you choose to participate. Your role would consist of two interviews, each approximately one hour in length, conducted in person or over the phone.

Please review the information enclosed in the attached Participant Consent Form and do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or comments, or would like further information about participating in this research project. Should you choose to participate, we will review and complete the Participant Consent Form prior to the first research interview. I can be reached at this email address, or by phone at ###-###-####.

Thank you for considering assisting me with this research. Your time is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Vincent

Appendix B

Participant Consent Form

Teaching (with) Love: Relational Engagement in Educational Settings

You are invited to participate in a study entitled **Teaching (with) Love: Relational Engagement in Educational Settings** that is being conducted by Jennifer Vincent.

I am graduate student in the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria and you may contact her if you have further questions by emailing vincnet4@uvic.ca or calling ###-###-####.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a Master of Arts degree in Child and Youth Care. This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Jennifer White. You may contact Dr. White by phone at 250-721-7986 or by email at jhwhite@uvic.ca.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to explore school professionals' conceptualizations and experience of love as a component of their practice with children in educational settings. Current research suggests that support for a school agenda that moves beyond academic and curricular matters and strives to compassionately attend to students' overall well-being, moral character development, and civic engagement is strong. Through interviews with participants this research project will explore themes associated with love, empathy, care and relational engagement in educational settings to gain a more thorough understanding of how school professionals from diverse disciplinary backgrounds understand and experience love in the school environment. The primary research question is: How do school professionals understand and practice love in their work with students?

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is important because in Canada schools play a significant role in addressing not only students' educational needs, but also their social, emotional and relational needs. The school environment is a primary site of engagement, growth and change across several developmental domains; and school professionals play a key role in supporting this development. This research project aims to examine the place of love and relational learning in an environment that is traditionally focused on academic learning. The intention of this research project is to contribute to the rather limited body of Canadian research in this area, and to expand current knowledge by clarifying how school professionals from multiple

disciplinary backgrounds understand their role as providers and preservers of loving classrooms and schools for all students.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you have identified yourself, or have been identified by a peer as a professional whose work over the past three years or longer, has involved interacting with children on a regular basis in a school environment, and you have volunteered to participate in an interview discussion regarding your ideas and experiences related to love as a component of professional practice in schools.

What is Involved?

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include two interviews, each approximately one hour in length, conducted by the researcher approximately 8-10 weeks apart. The first interview will focus on participants' ideas and experiences related to love as a component of their professional practice in a school setting. During the second interview, the researcher will provide a brief summary of the preliminary analysis from the first round of interviews for participants to review and offer feedback or further insights about the topic. Whenever possible, interviews will take place in person at a time and location agreed upon by the participant and the researcher. In cases where an in person interview is not possible interviews will take place over the phone at an agreed upon time.

Audio recordings of each interview will be taken and accompanied by hand written notes made by the researcher. Following each interview a full transcription will be completed by the researcher. Various statements made by participants may be referred to or quoted verbatim in the final report detailing this research study.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including consuming your time, possible travel expenses to and from the interview location, and/or possible communication expenses in cases where interviews will be conducted over the phone.

Risks

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include the opportunity to voice your thoughts and experiences surrounding the topic of love in relation to professional practice in schools. A further benefit to the broader society is the contribution of knowledge that can be used to open up dialogue within the field of education and other helping professions about role and benefits of love in professional contexts.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will not be used unless you give permission to do so. Should you decide to withdraw, your data will be destroyed and will not appear in the research.

On-going Consent

To make sure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, I will verbally confirm your ongoing consent at the start of each interaction related to this research project.

Anonymity

Due to the nature of the research recruitment and interview process, interview participants will not be anonymous to the researcher. For research participants who have been referred to this study through a third party, the researcher will not communicate to the third party to confirm or deny your decision to participate in the study.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by removing all participants' names and any identifiable information, including the names of colleagues and places of employment from the research report. All interview data presented in the final report will be aggregated so that individual participants and communities cannot be identified. Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the research data will be protected by storing all paper copies of interview notes, and all audio recording equipment in a locked filing cabinet. All electronic copies of interview data will be individually password protected and stored on a password protected computer, accessible only by the researcher.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways:

- Thesis submission to the University of Victoria
- Thesis presentation to an academic board in the process of the report's defense
- Submission to the graduate studies theses collection in the University of Victoria library
- A copy of the final report will be provided to any research participant who indicates that they would like to receive a copy from the researcher

Disposal of Data

Upon completion of this research project, all data collected throughout the research process will be disposed of by erasing/permanently deleting all electronically stored files (including audio recordings of interviews), and shredding any paper documents.

Contacts

Jennifer Vincent, *Primary Researcher*

Phone: ###-###-####

Email: vincent4@uvic.ca

Dr. Jennifer White, Primary Research Supervisor

Phone: 250-721-7986

Email: jhwhite@uvic.ca

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

Name of Participant	Signature	Date
---------------------	-----------	------

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

Appendix C

Interview One Topic Guide

Participant:

Position or title:

School board/type:

Years of experience working in schools:

Location in Canada:

1. Tell me about your current and past experience working with students in schools.
2. In relation to the work you do in schools, how do you understand or define love? What constitutes love in the context of a school environment?
3. Why is love, as we've described it here, important in a school environment?
4. How is love relevant in how you define or make sense of your practice in a school setting? Can you give me examples from your own practice that highlight the relevance of love in a school setting?
5. Can you tell me about how you view love in relation to authority?
6. How do you imagine/understand love's relevance to the broader context of school based practice?
7. In a school environment, professionals often come from diverse educational backgrounds and fields of practice. How does working with others impact your capacity to influence a loving school environment?
8. Have you ever encountered challenges or barriers to practicing from a loving stance in a school environment? What factors do you think contributed to the barriers/lack of barriers you have encountered?
9. What has been the most important aspect of our conversation for you?
10. Is there anything we have missed that you feel would be important to add to a discussion about love in school based practice?