

BE-COMING TO CARE:  
TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON CARING

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**FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH**  
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Lisa Marie McCann, candidate for the degree of Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction, has presented a thesis titled, ***Be-Coming To Care: Teachers' Perspectives on Caring***, in an oral examination held on July 24, 2017. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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## Abstract

This research is a qualitative study aimed at growing towards a deeper understanding of how teachers be-come caring teachers. Using current thinking in affect studies, particularly the work of Massumi (1995, 2005) and Ahmed (2004), narratives are created to highlight the subtle gestures, miniscule slidings, and everyday occurrences that can be overlooked and that intimate the relationship between teacher and students.

Through teachers' own performance of their narrative and using the diffractive framework of Barad (2003) and Lenz Taguchi (2012), a flattening of the relationship between researcher, participants, theory, and data (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013) emerges and an opening is created to a difference, a movement, a newness, a change (MacLure, 2013). This study is aimed to render a clearer picture of affect and care in education that captures all the good being done, to open up new conversations about alternate thoughts about education, primarily where education *is* care.

## Acknowledgments

To Paul Hart, I would like to express my deepest appreciation and thanks for your expertise, your patience, and above all, our conversations. This thesis is a work on affect, and I will fondly remember every time we chatted and you would say, “Like this, this affect” and motion between the two of us. I found a kindred spirit in you and I am forever grateful.

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Thank you for sitting with me a while and sharing your stories. This work comes alive through your voice.

## Dedication

To Aynsley and Xavier,

You have taught me more about care than I could ever express. Being your mom has truly helped me *see* my students.

To Dan,

Thank you for your love and support. For sitting with me, walking with me, and being with me for *more* than a while.

## Table of Contents

Prologue: An education in care.....	1
To Be, or to Be-come .....	2
Be-coming to Care .....	3
Walking Around Daily Lives .....	5
Chapter 1: Education is Care .....	6
My Turn to Qualitative Work.....	7
My Story Matters, Too .....	8
Sammy’s Shoes: The story of the small gesture.....	10
The Pit Stop: The story of caring.....	10
The Three B’s—Basketball, Baby, and Babysitter: The Story of Relationship.....	12
Seeing Makes All the Difference .....	13
Effect, No A-ffect.....	15
To Be a Caring Teacher .....	17
Hopeful Storytelling.....	19
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	21
The Research Question.....	21
Part 1: Engaging Concepts—Grounding the Study .....	22
Arriving too late: What is be-coming? .....	22
Surfing the intensity: What is affect? .....	24
Emotions, affect & be-coming.....	28
Part 2: Setting the Stage—The Research .....	29
The Inscribing Encounter .....	29
The hyphen (Granek, 2012): Where we come to know.....	31

The classroom and beyond—the setting for be-coming and affect .....	32
Part 3: The Researcher, the Participant, and the Research.....	33
The strangled scholar: Be-coming and researcher positioning.....	33
The something scholar: “Affect” and researcher positioning.....	34
Author and focus: Narrative inquiry, the researcher, and the participant.....	35
Chapter 3: Methodology .....	38
A Trail of Research .....	38
Research Methodology.....	39
Identifying possible participants.....	39
Pilot study .....	40
To Narrate is to be Human .....	41
The conversations .....	42
Working with primary data.....	46
It's Going to get Messy.....	46
Making Sense .....	48
Chapter 4: We are Affect .....	50
The Teachers .....	52
Joy.....	52
Beth.....	53
Anne.....	54
Conversations, Transcribing, Creating Narratives .....	55
Knowing: Sliding Closer.....	58
Moving: Pushing Away and Coming Back.....	63
Feeling.....	71
Seeing.....	77

Knowing, Moving, Feeling, Seeing... Be-coming.....	82
Chapter 5: We Remain With.....	84
The Bridge: Only Halfway There.....	85
The twisting trails .....	87
And wondrous worlds I've known .....	88
The last few steps you'll have to take alone.....	90
A Final Thought: Where do we go from here? .....	93
References.....	94
Appendix A: REB Approval Form .....	100
Appendix B: Participant Consent Form.....	102

## **Prologue: An education in care**

I thought I had arrived the day I entered my first classroom assignment. I was wide-eyed and full of possibility. I was young and ready to master this new phase in my life, perhaps the final rung on my professional ladder. I had spent four years studying, planning, and plotting my trajectory from university student to employed teacher. I was 22 at the time, only ten years older than my sixth-grade students and a distant 20 years the junior of their parents, but I was all set to teach! I was proficient at planning—my desk was full of curriculum guides that I was adept at scrolling through, my bulletin boards were virtual billboards of all the latest strategies, and my day planner was neatly organized to ensure a report was not missed. In a technical sense, I had arrived. In a relational/care sense, I did not know what I did not know!

That first year of teaching I received my education in care. I came all set to be a good teacher, a good technical teacher, but on top of my technical skills I learned what it is to care for students. I thought I had checked off the *care boxes* by being personable, always ready with a little quip, a hand on a shoulder. I truly enjoyed my time with my students, yet I do not know if I fully understood just how interrelated and related we would become. Now, looking back through years of professional and life experience, I was a student myself—observing, experiencing, and reckoning what caring actually meant in a classroom.

In my inaugural year, I learned what it felt like to care for students. My experiences in that classroom were so much larger than I knew at the time. These experiences would change how I would see teaching, care, and relationships. I know it has almost become cliché to discuss where we were during 9/11, but I was sitting with a group of sixth graders who knew enough of the world to be scared, but then again, so was I. We spent the whole of our language arts class

trying to make sense of something beyond our comprehension. In that moment, I see that we *were* related—we were together. I remember a note left on my desk at the end of my second day of teaching from a little girl who wanted to tell me she was nervous about being in my class, but that she already liked me. In that moment, my student and I were together, as I was just as nervous. Most of all, I remember laughter. Those students were witty and fun, and I think we revealed our relationships in those moments where we laughed together. This is what I did not know about teaching when I only thought about strategies, bulletin boards, and reports, that there is care and relation. In seeing this care and these relationships I have been changed. Not all at once, but slowly and surely until I began to see these moments, these together moments, all around me and realized that for me care and relationships are what teaching is all about.

### **To Be, or to *Be-come***

I was under the impression that *being* something was the goal of adulthood and maturation—to be an adult, to be a teacher, to be a parent. I did not realize that we are never fully actualized, that even while we are busy *being* something we are also *be-coming*. *Be-coming* spoke of a messiness, a certain made-up-ness (Watson, 2006), of a journey. This thesis is a product of my messiness, my made-up-ness, of the journey that I have taken in my personal and professional life, of my *be-coming* a caring teacher.

When I entered the teaching profession, I was not expecting teaching to become inextricably tied up in who I am as a person. But gradually, and yet all at once, I realized that teaching is how I express who I am, and who I am impacts the sort of teacher I am. For each new experience I had, as a teacher, a mother, a friend, I would be led on a journey that would reinforce my belief in the importance of care and relation in teaching. *Be-coming* a teacher led me on an academic and existential quest for sought knowledge on a topic, and a self- knowledge

(Conle, 2000) through teaching and my relationship with students. Just as my university classes had been the crucible for forging my technical proficiency, my experiences inside and outside of the classroom were the site of my understanding more deeply the role of care in teaching.

### ***Be-coming to Care***

Looking back, small interactions are where my heart is drawn—a small act of kindness, the joy of a hard-won smile from a student, talking and laughing with students in the in-between moments of our days. These are the moments that would leave me breathless. This is not to say that a healthy dose of exasperation, frustration and sadness didn't mire my days. I was always captivated by these seemingly small acts that I would witness throughout the course of my teaching day and, in time I would come to see the arc (Kim, 2016) of my teaching experience intermingle with my own be-coming through relationships and care with my students.

Be-coming left me uneasy, undefined. To see be-coming as a journey created a dualism that I had never encountered before, a dualism that divided me. I like order and objectives, yet be-coming spoke to me of living in the subjective, grayer areas of which I was ill at ease. I am proud of achievements and pieces of paper with a fancy stamp and my name on them, but be-coming set me to think it was relationships not paper that made me a teacher. Be-coming meant I was *in-the-making*, no longer in a monochromatic world, unfinished, where I desperately wanted to be finished. Perhaps the greatest tension that being aware of *be-coming* has brought to my life is that I could no longer separate my personal and professional lives, that if I really examined my teaching career I would see how I was living out my subjectivity, my be-coming as a human being through my teaching.

Through experiences in my life, and in particular in my teaching, I have come to believe that caring matters to me, small gestures matter to me, relationships matter to me. This is the

lens through which I view the world. The care, the gestures, and the relations weren't just incidentals of my teaching practice, but were what I looked for, pursued, and how I measured myself to be a teacher, far more important than checklists, tests scores, and report top sheets. Any achievement, any objective, any event big or small, was perceived and experienced through my world view where caring, relationships, and gestures were essential to education. This worldview that I held was not just my *teaching* beliefs, but my beliefs as a human being. I was not just a teacher, but a person living out my humanity through teaching.

Until I was introduced to the concept of be-coming, of a messy, non-linear journey, I never really stopped to think about the humanity in my profession. My profession was clean, clear cut, singular in focus; teach the subject matter, just get the job done. Humanity was messy, irregular, with too many foci, or maybe no focus at all. Now I see that all this humanity is what makes the profession more meaningful to me. All the achievement in the world would seem for naught if my students and I were not engaged, enlivened, and enriched by each other. I can sit with the requirements and discourse of my profession with all of its curricular objectives and checklists in one hand, as well as my experiences with my ever-so-human students in the other hand, and recognize that the messiness, the neediness, the bodies, and the relationships I have with my students is the very landscape where I want to live out my professional life.

As I stated previously, caring, relationships, and small gestures matter to me. Reading about caring and then more recent work on the idea of affect, I came to see that I wanted to use affect as the entry point into my study on how teachers come to care—to observe and then discuss the subtle gestures that speak of a relationship and care. I see affect as how our bodies communicate with each other in the teacher-student relationship. I have visited classrooms with 28 energetic fifth graders, walked down a school hallway as the recess bell rang, sat with

students in the throes of conflict in conference rooms, and sensed and felt the closeness and push of bodies. But if I look closer, if I truly see, I see a kind arm on a slumped shoulder, a full-fledged belly laugh in response to a perfectly timed quip, and a classroom thoughtfully constructed so that the teacher-student relationship is a seemingly continuous verbal and non-verbal, sensed dialogue. This is affect at work, our bodies' non-conscious, independent and unintentional (Naraian & Khoja-Moolji, 2016) communication with each other. Affect delineates the surface of objects and places feeling on these objects that are outside of the boundaries of ourselves, in essence, affect makes bodies and these bodies share encounters (Naraian & Khoja-Moolji, 2016). To me, affect conspires to hint at a *relationship in the making* or reveal relationships already made.

### **Walking Around Daily Lives**

There are so many ways that we can observe, write, and rewrite our own and others' overt experiences, the big and small events of a lifetime. In this inquiry, I hope to witness teachers' "walking around daily lives" (Bessey, 2013, p. 63), to explore and get inside the subtle nuances that make up our every day. I have come to recognize these subtleties as integral to my be-coming a caring teacher. I am looking for our non-conscious gestures, that all too often evaporate into the surrounding space as breath does when exhaled on a cold day. It is my desire to use these gestures to open a conversation about how teachers have come to care, how care relates to their worldview and fulfillment of their profession. I wish to come closer to seeing and feeling what they do when they look out into their classrooms full of bodies, classrooms full of excitement and sadness, disappointment and joy, and are simply together with their students.

## Chapter 1: Education is Care

I am a teacher of numbers, and letters, and theories, and I am a student of care. I came to know of care through sitting in a classroom where I was supposed to be the teacher and instead became the student learning at the feet of the relationships and care I was experiencing with my students. This care took on a far greater role than I could ever have anticipated and became how I measured myself as a teacher and how I measured success in education. I came to meld my innate sense of subtle gestures with how I viewed care with my students; a smile, a gentle hand, a laugh. Not for want of trying, I simply can't remember any instances of care in my own school days, but perhaps time, or the inability to truly *see* hindered me from recognizing care as a student. What I do know is there is a long line of experiences in my teaching career that have led me to believe that life is education, and that education, is care.

Life is not an *either/or* proposition it is an *and/and* proposition. For every experience we think will define us, there will be ten other experiences that will define us just as much, and yet not at all. The truth is, I did not wake up one day and take a turn to value the more relational and caring side of teaching, I was gradually brought into communion with experiences that made me more aware of relation and care. A sacred space was opened up to me where the binaries I had become familiar with—objective/subjective, body/mind, then/now—failed to represent my reality (Hendry, 2007). This thesis' starting point is not some grand transformation, a life altering encounter, it is the story about the myriad ways that I came to see myself as a teacher who believes caring matters, and to articulate myself in the daily experiences I had throughout my entire life.

## **My Turn to Qualitative Work**

The landscape of my teacher education and early career professional days was set against the backdrop of standardized testing, objectives driven outcomes, and top-down managerial, teaching environments. I had sat in on more staff meetings than I care to admit discussing improving the outcomes of testing, bigger class sizes, and new report formats. Admittedly, I bought into all these conversations. I bought into the fact that student learning, achievement, and classroom experience could be measured on a test. I did not have any choice but to buy in; it was all I seemingly knew. Yet, there were always the dissenting teachers at these meetings that would talk about the group dynamic of a particular class and the pointless inaccuracy of testing. Even though I paid little heed, those comments always stuck with me. Why did those teachers see things differently? What did they value that was different from the discourse I was immersed in?

Those comments stuck with me and I began to find answers in my Research Methods Class. It was there that a safe space was opened up to say that there was more than just published test scores in education. That there were children behind those numbers, teachers involved in their students' lives, and classrooms brimming with learning, and curiosity, and activity that could not be measured in a spreadsheet published in the local paper. And not only were these children, teachers, and classrooms present, they were valuable on their own and worthy of greater understanding. Their experiences mattered; who they were mattered. I came to appreciate, and more importantly, to believe, that when we come to further understand others' experiences we come closer to knowing who they are than any test ever could.

Qualitative research began to make even more sense to my interests when I began to recognize how constituted by the dominant discourse teachers are, and that in this realization

there are no solely objective truths concerning people. What was absolutely, unmistakably true for one individual is not universally true for all. Just as I found truth in my early professional days in standardized tests, my colleagues who would bring up the more human side of the same result found their truth in a different worldview. The acknowledgment that there was no *Truth*, but only incomplete, subjective truth that can, at best, be communicated inadequately (Hatch, 2002) gave me permission to play around with ideas of what I valued in education—small gestures, relationships, caring—and how I could come to further understand these ideas. Hatch (2002) claims that to do qualitative research there is no right answer, but that you must have your own answer to why qualitative research matters. My short answer is for my interests: I came to believe that lives matter more than theories, that people matter more than statistics, and that stories matter more than generalizations.

### **My Story Matters, Too**

It is a funny irony that I am so interested in others' experience and stories, yet have a hard time believing that my own stories and experiences, the impetus for why I am doing this thesis, are worthy. I feel like I am not smart enough, not well versed enough in theory, not concise enough in my ideas to have my experiences laid bare in this work; but isn't that what qualitative work is all about? I want to look away from the abstract theory, the generalizations and stock answers, and come to hear another story, another perspective, another experience. I want to turn toward teachers and value their experience and know that each story contributes to the broadening of our understanding of the human experience.

The concept of lived experience as story (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000) furthered my resolve that qualitative research was necessary and worthwhile. As Hendry (2007) states, "I have looked for stories, and stories have also found me" (p.488). While reflecting on my own

lived experience, I became aware of the stories that surround each one of us, and how these stories intermingle on whatever common landscape we happen to share at the time. In my Methods class I can vividly remember my mind going back to a certain experience, a story in my past that connected what I was learning with what I had already encountered. I could not find, within a spreadsheet, answers to why those teachers long ago in our staff meetings seemed to have a different worldview than myself, but in qualitative research there was a space, an opportunity to ask the formerly unaskable question. In story, I inadvertently found a medium to answer my questions. It was through this intermingling of new information with my storied life (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) that I became convinced of the importance of story in making meaning of our lives.

We are our narratives (Hendry, 2007); our stories are our truth. Our narratives do not exist outside of ourselves, but are the very breath that gives life to our being and gives meaning to our experience (Hendry, 2007). We organize our memories into incomplete stories by highlighting and omitting certain details based on how we make sense of the world (Watson, 2006). My own storied experience is the impetus for this work. In essence, the story of my life is propagating the further storying of my life. As Davis (1992) states:

“stories we observe, hear, and read, both lived and imaginary, form a stock of imaginary storylines through which life choices can be made. The choices I make in the current moment depend on the storyline I take myself to be living out.” (p. 69)

My recognition that small gestures, relationships, and caring matter to me came about through the stories of experience in my own life. It was the feelings and lived experience within these stories that motivated my interest (Conle, 2000) in affect, care and relationship. As in Davis (1992), some of the details I recall may be imaginary, some stories are first hand and some

were retold to me, but above all, these stories became part of my journey, my becoming a teacher who views care as paramount to my profession. When the time came for me to decide on a research topic, story was where I started. Certain stories stuck out in my mind, certain feelings were evoked by these stories, and I found myself more and more inclined to dig deeper into these stories that obviously meant enough to me to stay with me over time.

**Sammy's Shoes: The story of the small gesture.** *I was enjoying a peaceful start to a Monday morning, prepping for the busy week ahead, when a teacher friend of mine walked into my classroom carrying a pair of tiny, pink shoes sparkling in her hands. She was a close friend, and her and I collaborated often as she had taught many of my students the previous year. We exchanged pleasantries, commenting on the ending of a TV show we both enjoyed, and lamented the fact that report cards were due at the end of the week. After an unusual, slightly awkward pause, she went on to say that she had noticed on Friday that a student of mine, Sammy, had had on very worn out shoes and that over the weekend she had taken the opportunity to go through her daughters' old shoes, finding a pair that would surely fit Sammy. She placed them on the little girl's desk, quickly left, and I assume went about her day. But my day and every other day after were changed. I was struck by the generosity of the shoes, but more significantly by how this teacher, not even the girl's own teacher, had seen a need and filled it.*

**The Pit Stop: The story of caring.** *The warning bell had rung in the school marking that only five minutes remained until the start of the school day. As I surveyed the classroom that I would be guest teaching in that day, I came to the conclusion that a last-minute stop in the rest room was in order, as I could only imagine when my next minute alone would be in the day to come. I quickly scanned door markers as I resolutely walked down the hall keenly aware that time was short, I finally came upon the door I was looking for. Just as I was about to turn the*

handle, the door was haphazardly flung open revealing a boy no more than 5 or 6 looking up at me. I immediately sighed, thinking immediately that I had stumbled across the student washroom; a washroom I had no intention of visiting, confirmed by anyone who has had to use the student washroom! Yet, as I checked the door plaque it distinctly read "Staff Washroom". My little restroom co-user quickly scampered out of the way, leaving me to catch the door before it slammed shut. As I locked the door behind me, my eyes fell on the countertop where lined up neatly were a child's toothbrush, toothpaste, and a comb all placed on a wash cloth. It quickly became apparent why the student had been using this restroom, and I stood in a mixture of joy and sadness at the sight before me; joy that someone cared for this student enough to create this arrangement, yet sadness that this student required these alternate arrangements at all. I assumed I would never get to know why the toiletries were placed in the staff restroom, yet was pleasantly surprised by a teacher waiting outside the door for me when I emerged. She was quick to apologize if I had been run over by the student earlier, saying he didn't like others knowing he was using the restroom in the morning. I quickly eased her concern by saying I was not worse for wear for the encounter. I pushed my luck a little further then, stating how touched I had been to see the rest room stocked for him. And then to my surprise, I saw it again – the quick glance around, a slight wave of the hand, and a hasty explanation about how he wasn't even her student, but she was the outdoor teacher supervisor and had set it up when he had started coming to school unkempt and began to become self-conscious about his appearance. The rest is a blur to me. No doubt a bell rang in the distance, the teacher walked off to her day, but I certainly hope I told her how what she was doing was so meaningful. Perhaps, it was the validation I had wanted to give my colleague all those years ago with the shoes, or maybe this time I was no longer stunned by the action, but just in awe of the care this teacher had shown the

*student and wanted to convey that sentiment. That day of guest teaching must have been completely unremarkable in every other way as I have no recollection of anything else. But the feeling in that moment of gazing at that tiny batman toothbrush solidified in my mind that teachers care deeply for their students.*

**The Three B's—Basketball, Baby, and Babysitter: The Story of Relationship. I**

blustered into my vice-principal's office and promptly sank down into one of the uncomfortable chairs across from his desk. I had just come back from another exasperating basketball practice with the senior girls and was at my wit's end with the endless demands. I had come to this coaching task reluctantly (I was the new teacher) and had only accepted once the vice-principal assured me he would help. That was why I was in his office that day—I needed help finding something to like in this task and was coming up empty. He immediately laughed at my dismay stating something like, “That’s just what it is.” I awkwardly sat across from him, staring into space, and after a few moments he told me a story of relationship.

*Years earlier, he had been the high school basketball coach of one of the best teams in the province. It was not uncommon for his players to move on to university across North America and with notable scholarships. One of his star players approached him after basketball season in the spring informing him that he would not be able to play his final year the upcoming fall. My friend inquired as to why and the player stated he was about to become a father and couldn't manage school, ball, and the responsibilities of fatherhood. My friend understood, being a new father himself, but the player's situation never left him until he had a proposal for the player. The coach had a one-year old son at home whom his mother-in-law would look after if he and his wife were otherwise occupied. After checking with his mother-in-law, my friend approached the player and gave him his possible solution: the baby could stay with his own child and his*

*mother-in-law during practice and game times when needed, freeing the new father to play and giving him a better chance at a university scholarship. The player was reluctant at first, but eventually accepted the offer. He eventually went on to university and my colleague has stayed in touch with him.*

My vice-principal relayed this story to me as if it was no big deal. There was no wave of the hand this time, but his demeanour and tone seemingly understated the act and impact on the student. I was caught off guard by this story; my heart in my chest. I do not remember how that conversation ended, but I will never forget it.

These stories are the ones I kept coming back to each time I searched for an interest that I wanted to further study. Combined with my experience that first year of teaching, of caring for students beyond the perfunctory in loci parentis, it began to become clear to me that I could see caring all around me, in my own work and in the work of my colleagues. What we did in our walking around daily lives was so much more than checklists, and objectives, and reports. We provided support, cultivated understanding, created community. We cared deeply. These stories are also so impactful to me because I can see the nuance in my colleagues' gestures as clearly as fireworks going off on a dark summer night. This affect, these small gestures have always mattered to me. These same gestures are what drew me to these stories of relationship (Conle, 2000), and what I hope to see through my conversations with teachers.

### **Seeing Makes All the Difference**

To state that social truth is subjective is also to imply that how we *see* things makes all the difference in the world. What we *see* speaks of what is important to us, what we value, and ultimately, who we are. Seeing is be-coming. What our eyes are trained on may very well be what we view to be most important. My eyes are trained on gestures, and relationships, and

caring, I simply cannot help but see these things in my walking around daily life. And while my view of these things may never be whole, the anecdotes and short stories I do encounter mean the world to me.

There have been times in my life where *seeing* has just happened. I *saw* shoes on a desk, toiletries in a restroom, and a basketball coach in front of me going above and beyond. In the seeing, I longed for a back story, a reason, and an experience that led to these acts of caring. Yet, seeing isn't guaranteed, it is a matter of focus and attention, and maybe even luck. I am guilty that I have also looked at and even through a student in my class, grasping nothing of their own experience, their own story. I have looked at human situations, school incidents, and helped as best I could, but deep down know I didn't understand.

Seeing impacts my be-coming. Seeing is recognizing something (a touch, a gesture, or the slightest comment) as if through a glass, darkly. Seeing these *some things* has changed my life, put this study in motion. Through my work, I want to look through this murky glass of how teachers come to care and wipe away the smudges so that I can more fully understand what teachers see, to enlarge the picture that we all see when we gaze upon a caring teacher.

Seeing is tricky to me, as it can associate itself with common sense, and at times shows a vulnerability. I see the little gestures that go into a caring relationship and it is beyond me to think that everyone doesn't see the way I do. I feel it's common sense to look into the office at the school and see the office manager holding a bucket for a child vomiting and know there must be care there. For others, they may see the grossness of the situation and count their lucky stars that their own job doesn't have that particular descriptor attached. However, I know for sure that I miss numerous things that other people see as significant, and am afraid to ask further about

what the person sees because it would somehow be an admittance that I don't have all the answers, that I am vulnerable.

My son loves mangoes, and every time I pick them out I invariably have a one in three chance of picking a good one. I can't tell you how many times I have stood beside people picking their own mangoes, people that look like they know exactly what they are looking for, and longed to ask what they see that I don't in this mass of fruit. But I don't, because I am shy, afraid they will think I don't possess even basic common sense in selecting, ashamed to admit I don't know something. So instead, I roll the dice on my own fruit selection, and sadly miss the opportunity to get a glimpse of what someone else sees.

In my study, I want to converse with others to further understand what they see, to know what they know. Teachers are not very good at talking about themselves and what they do. They wave you off like my colleagues and their acts of care. Maybe we feel our actions are common sense, or we do not want to be vulnerable in conversing with someone who may see things differently. We think that we are the only ones who are tired, frustrated, energized. That we are the only ones that found that interaction funny, or had a moment that broke our hearts that day. Maybe we are, but in telling all these stories, in hearing others' stories, we can begin to wipe away the smudges on the glass and see the whole of what it is like to be a caring teacher.

### **Effect, No A-ffect**

I am a small gestures type of person. I slink away from the spotlight, preferring to be a wall flower. Perhaps this is why affect appeals to me. It is tiny gestures, miniscule slidings (Ahmed, 2004), and imperceptible shifts (Massumi, 1995). That feeling in your chest before the mind takes over; all things I see and feel. Grand gestures feel like they expose too much, but a subtle hand on a shoulder, a compassionate look, are things that I feel more comfortable

initiating and can see with more clarity than some others, seeing meaning in their brevity and simplicity. I am anticipating, and very hopeful, that I will see many *under the radar* actions while conversing with participants, and I hope to use these actions as the starting point to discuss with teachers how they have come to care for their students. I am sure that these subtle gestures are not where their caring stops, or even the roots of where their caring begins, but these gestures are the entry points for my discussion with them and coming closer to finding out what it is like to be a caring teacher.

Affect mixes neuroscience, psychology, and philosophy (Naraian & Khoja-Moolji, 2016), bringing a new depth to every day experiences. Words like intensity, depth, capacity (Massumi, 1995) and concepts such as the “experience of the experience” (Massumi in Zournazi, 2002, p. 107 ) seem lofty and academic, but the reality is that we are living affect in our classes, when we are packing lunches and checking piano homework. Although, different in focus, I particularly connect with affect in terms of movement and transition (Ahmed, 2004; Massumi, 1995), and being different than you were from the moment before. Be-coming to me is a moment to moment endeavor, caring to me is one touch, one smile, one laugh at a time.

I want to know others’ experiences of these subtle movements, these almost imperceptible transitions, in affecting and being affected. As Massumi (Zournazi, 2002, p.106) says of affect: “So depending on the circumstances, it [affect] goes up and down gently, like a tide, or maybe storms and crests like a wave, or at times simply bottoms out.” Sometimes, we are moved to tears; at times we are not moved at all. Sometimes our gestures are part of a long line of relation, at other times, a brief moment in time. What I want to know is how teachers come to care in all the moments and relationships, the subtle and not so subtle gestures, in all the ways they show care for their students.

In this work, I have chosen to explore affect as the intermediary between the subtle and nuanced tiny acts and the giant, messy, body pressing world within our schools. I believe it would be difficult to burst into a caring act midway through and to start asking questions. What I can do is carefully observe, truly see the gestures, and make inquiries. I am interested to see how affect plays a role in be-coming, how we shape and are shaped by small acts. Seeing affect is not for everyone. It is the *something* that is almost impossible to look for, and only seen through eyes carefully trained on the subtle and small. To study something under the surface and subtle is daunting to me, but I believe that we should be concerned with more than the “impress of the literal and measurable” (Eisner, 1995, p. 3). Dillard (1974) perhaps said it best when she stated that she understood the plight of painters trying to decorate a room for a client. Every client sees the same colour differently; or in her example a green frog was anything but. The data I am looking for is not “data” in the numerical sense, it is the deeper understandings that are to be found hidden in the discourse of the school institution, like the green frog, at times non-conscious, as diverse as each participant, even regarded as common sense by some.

### **To *Be* a Caring Teacher**

A more practical purpose of my work, aside from learning of the valuable experiences of others, is getting at the heart of what it feels like to *be* a caring teacher. What it is to be a teacher—the emotional, physical, environmental, logistical. Through reading “The Waitress: On Affect, Method, and (Re)presentation” (Dowling, 2012) I came to understand how little we actually know about what it is like to be in someone else’s shoes. I thought I knew about being a waitress, but I had never stopped and thought about a waitress’ story. The physicality, the emotion, and the environmental constraints working in tandem to create a waitress, to *be* a waitress. At the end of the article, I felt the weariness of the waitress, the tension of living in a

job well done and the consequences of not perfectly executing a task. The article changed how I saw a waitress, and this is what I hope to do for teachers—to further understand what it is to become a caring teacher.

I aspire to create a world within these pages so that my readers may see what it is to *be* a caring teacher. I have this vision of my participants taking me on a journey. A journey that sees them whirl around a classroom as they tap one student on the shoulder, make themselves almost miniscule to squeeze through desks in order to garner the attention of another student, and painstakingly not engaging a third student because a moment respite is what that student needs. I want to sense the imperceptible rising of the curtain as they begin a lesson, audience in the palm of their hands, and feel the unspoken interaction that occurs as the teacher and students affect and are affected by one another. I want to *see*, up close and at a distance, what they see that is beyond apparent in a situation, to know what is beyond known, and understand what is seemingly instinctual.

Affect is knowledge, not book knowledge, but the knowledge gained through bodies acting on bodies (Dowling, 2012). “Affect is thinking, bodily; consciously, but vaguely, not yet a thought” (Massumi in Zournazi, 2002, p.109). The teacher in my hypothetical dance above is making connections and translating those connections into cognitive and affective reflections that allow her to comprehend and theorize her experience (Dowling, 2012). The atmosphere, sensations, and mood are what are guiding her, more than overt facial expressions, exasperated signs, and shuffling feet. Just as we can read to learn, I believe that affect is how we learn to read people, our bodies interacting with their bodies. The trick is that the learning of affect is non-conscious and conscious, all at the same time, just there. We are learning something while not even recognizing it. It is the mundane, the impactful, the lighthearted, the troubled, the

fleeting, and the forever that make up the moments that we live and continue to be-come as we teach and learn, learning ourselves as we help our students.

The challenge for me as the researcher is that affect is pre-reflective. We don't reflect on what stimuli we are perceiving before we act. We simply act. Before we move desks in our classrooms, we may have a dozen instances of affect and being affected that leads to new configurations, and once the new configuration is in place we may be hard pressed to explain why we did it. We are no more aware of affect than we are of our own breathing. You simply can't catch affect while it's happening to you. The best I can hope to do is observe it in others and understand what they are trying to say to me. I can sit with my hands open, receiving the stories they are sharing, relying on my own personal experiences, empathizing with teachers, seeing some things, and marvel at the things I missed.

### **Hopeful Storytelling**

When teachers find out I am working on my thesis, I get the “What problem are you going to solve?” question a lot. The truth is, I do not endeavor to solve a problem, I hope to engage others in what it is like to be a caring teacher: “Like a scientist following hunches, like artists trying to embody a yet undefined vision” (Conle, 2000, p. 198), I have a belief that schools are full of caring, relational moments that are so ordinary, so run-of-the-mill, so invisible unless you learn to *see* what is really going on, but make such a profound difference in teachers' and students' lives. My work will not be a treatise on how to improve schools. I wish to offer a hope that is not focused on optimism, but a hope that breathes life into uncertainty, maneuverability, empowerment—what we deal with every day (Massumi in Zournazi, 2002).

I see and feel exhaustion, exasperation, and negativity around me when I visit schools. I wish to take a look behind the obvious and learn to “see” the artificial obvious (Dillard, 1974).

The extra miles being sought, the one more chances being given, and relationships being sustained. It is so easy to get caught up in the discourse of institutionalism; standardized testing, top-down managerial styles, endless reporting requirements that to see, to really *see* the miniscule gesture becomes an almost herculean task.

My aspiration is that my storytelling reflects the hopefulness that I have come to see fulfilled in my experience in schools. To “continue this maddening, frustrating, exhilarating practice so as not to reproduce what we already think, know and experience” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013, p. 269), but to produce an alternate thought where education is care. We are living our lives at a distance. Too full classrooms, too many pages of paperwork, too many stressful days. I seek to look beyond to the people, the context, the connection to time and place and to see the good (Conle, 2000). My deeper experiences and relationships with students have led me on this path, a be-coming that cannot help but see how the smallest gesture can have a lasting impact, or maybe only offer relief in the moment, yet hold those two possibilities as equally honorable. This thesis is about my journey to realizing that education is care, and in this realization desiring to look more deeply at how teachers come to care for their students.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### The Research Question

How teachers come to care for their students is the primary focus of my thesis. What events, positive or negative, help to frame teacher-participants' worldview about care in education? How are they demonstrating their care for students in the present? And what sort of future may they be storying for themselves even as they negotiate their past and present. Story is non-linear, and it is this attribute of recursive 'circling back around' that makes our lives, and our narratives, so complex, so rich, and so meaningful. This circling story is where I hope to gain further understanding into the role of care in education through a teacher's perspective.

In seeking to understand the *how* of how teachers come to care I need to be alert, to observe, and to immerse myself into the professional and personal lives of teacher-participants in the study, to see the "artificial obvious" (Dillard, 1974, p. 20) by letting go of what I should see and making myself present to what I am seeing. I imagine immersing within the complexities of interactions, to *see* living, breathing actions and gestures between teachers and students, relationships being fostered and strained, bodies communicating with bodies (Dowling, 2012). I imagine using these moments to start conversations about how teachers intra-act (Barad, 2003) with their students and, more deeply, how these actions may implicate caring relationships.

I desire to look at teachers' be-coming as they are caring for their students. I am curious to know how their perspectives, their values, may provide windows into caring. Did they have caring teachers in their own school days? Did they have an uncaring experience? Did one experience make them caring teachers or did a variety of subtle events impact how they view care? What were some of their significant life experiences regarding care? What was the influence of parents or certain others?

Story, as narrative knowing, is what drives the *how* and the *be-coming* in my study. It would be impossible for me to ask outright, “How or why do you care” or “What is your worldview surrounding caring and teaching?” I can imagine blank stares, or worse, some attempt to contrive answers conceived for my benefit. Instead, I want our encounters to enable spaces for a sharing, a storying, to take place, a mutual knowing to emerge (Granek, 2012; Thayer-Bacon, 2009). In talking about the affective moments, perhaps other stories, other remembrances may come to light and we can find ourselves on diverging and converging paths that interact about what care has to do with be-coming a teacher.

My research interest and question requires an understanding of be-coming and affect. While these two concepts share many ideas and concepts, there are certain elements of each that are grounded separately in the literature and in my review. This literature review has been comprised to engage and then utilize these concepts for my own purposes, focusing on the encounters, the relationship of teacher and students, and teachers and others. How we all come to *make up* our be-coming, how our bodies speak, and react, and come to know through others is the lens through which I hope to truly see my participants’ stories.

### **Part 1: Engaging Concepts—Grounding the Study**

**Arriving too late: What is *be-coming*?** I may be a novice researcher, but I am pretty sure that interested teachers and I will not have conversations where ideas of be-coming are the focus of discussion. Instead, we may have conversations about experiences in their past, a student in their present classroom, a situation that they find funny or sad. This is because be-coming is not a destination with sign markers and a clear path, be-coming is a process (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013). Manning (2010) states that “becoming has no beginning or end, and, more

importantly, it cannot be experienced as such” because “each phase of becoming—each being—is absolutely what it is” (p.120).

When I reflect metaphorically on experiences in my life, each being a dense fold (Manning, 2010; Seyfert, 2012), an intensity (Massumi, 1995), an interaction, I think I can see how in the moment of experience and cognition there was nothing else but who I was in the moment. I cannot go back. I cannot interpret what happened by smoothing the topography of my interaction, and I cannot forget what I had just experienced. Similarly, I could not anticipate what this ‘new being’ of myself would encounter, the next dense fold in the geography of my life, or how I would react. In that moment, I was just myself.

Be-coming is not about being something. It is about encounter, relationship, contradiction, moving towards something and away from others, and back again. It is about moving in circles, not lines. It’s about moving sideways and back and forth (Ahmed, 2004) in the same breath. Be-coming moves in the depths, but also in the flattened areas, always unfolding, as crystals growing on the edges of our experience (Deleuze, 2004, p.12 in MacLure, 2013). As Judith Butler (2005) states, “I always arrive too late to myself” (p. 79). By the time we are able to convey who we think we are, we are already past that description, we have already be-come what it is we were be-coming and have moved onto the next be-coming (Massumi, 1992).

In my first classroom, I was constantly surprised by how much I cared. I always recognized care as I turned to review the events of the day and never could foresee where I might be required to care before the day began. I would inadvertently comfort, encourage. I stumbled my way through care. Now I am more deliberate. I understand that I am communicating non-consciously through where I stand, or how I interact with my students. But I am still ever

surprised when shoes appear on a desk, toiletries in a washroom, or a babysitter appears seemingly out of nowhere. Maybe there is a blessing in always arriving late to ourselves in that we are always being made, always being made up, as our encounters with ourselves and others are our be-coming, even before we know it.

I am being made in the little gestures and moments of my life, in being with others. Ahmed's (2004) description of perception as the inter-corporeality of being with others (p. 31), that we are sliding to another, added further depth to my working knowledge of be-coming as a process, not a journey. My be-coming is not a solitary endeavor, but a constant sliding to another, another story, another individual, another emotion. Massumi (Zournazi, 2002) furthers this claim when he likens affect to a "transition, stepping over a threshold, a change in capacity" (p. 106). In my study, I would expect our teacher-to-teacher interactions to remain focused on small, subtle events, the stepping over, the sliding to another, the moving through, the connective *transitions* that make up our days. These events, accumulated over time and circumstance, may lend further understanding into how teachers come to care, as we perhaps co-construct accounts of our experiences.

**Surfing the intensity: What is affect?** Affect is a flattening, an attentiveness, to the binaries that we have grown accustomed to (mind/body, nature/culture, subject/object, inside/outside) that come to constitute each other and something new (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013; Papoulias & Collard, 2010). What does this all mean in the terms of a very real classroom, with a very real teacher and students? In affect, we are bodies communicating and making something new—a relationship, a connectedness, a togetherness. I love MacLure's (2013) view of affect as a kind of "surfing of the intensity of the event that has caught us up, in order to arrive somewhere else" (p. 106). A classroom is a lot like surfing—just ride the next task, the next action; keep

your head above water. I was caught up in the events of my first classroom and deposited into a more caring perspective about teaching. I want to know other teachers' experiences of surfing in their classroom, what is really going on in the interactions, signals, gestures, and how this impacted their perspective of care in teaching.

The study conducted by Naraian & Khoja-Moolji (2016), discussing affective norms in the classroom, shed light on what I may find in my own study. This study focused on what affective norms teachers were putting into place, based on their own perspectives about what a classroom should be, and how in turn the students and teachers were connecting in these classrooms. All teachers wanted classrooms to be happy places, varying from a familial feel to an environment where learning and achievement were valued. All the teachers cared deeply, but in very different ways. The teachers in these inclusive classrooms took up the affective responsibility, and, in doing so, produced meanings of disability within the classroom by managing and modifying their own and their students' affective performances and orientations. The element that was most interesting to me was how the teachers described how their students affected them and how the researchers narrated what they were seeing in the classroom. These observations were captured in the researcher's appraisals: *"Marcelo's negative affect moves from him to the teachers to become inscribed as their fear"* (p. 1140).

*"[An] affective trajectory that drew him and the teachers into a relationship where his disability became one of the many constituent elements of an endearing personality"* (p.1141).

*"The laughter that Sam invoked in the teachers pulled him to them, enveloping him in an endearing light"* (p.1141).

Moves, inscribed, drew in, constituent, invoked, pulled, envelope—these are the words, concepts and ideas I am interested in. Sam's laughter does not literally make him enveloped in

his teachers' arms. It is about a feeling. The boy with the disability and his teachers do not have a relationship based solely on that one element of his personhood, but it is undeniable that his disability is essential to that relation. The fact that Marcelo's negative affect is registered as fear in his teachers is not readily witnessed in one act. It is a feeling, a subtleness. You must be a keen and patient observer to see these tiny things.

*The theory behind affect.* I suppose I could have focused exclusively on what I sensed, felt, caught glimpses of that I believe to be affect, but wished to dig a little deeper into the current thinking on affect—what exactly *is* affect? In this endeavor, I found the theoretical thinking in the work of Spinoza and Guyau as presented by Robert Seyfert in “Beyond Personal Feelings and Collective Emotions: Toward a Theory of Social Affect” (2012) helpful. In Seyfert (2012) I see value in taking the Spinozan view of the body being “a myriad of bodily forms, both human and non-human that continuously affect and are affected by one another” (p.30). Guyau's notion that there are a “virtually infinite range of affective interactions” (Seyfert, 2012, p. 35) seems a logical next step in studying affect. If there are an infinite number of changing, in-flux bodies affecting and being affected then certainly the number of affective interactions possible is limitless.

Guyau's determination that each of these affective interactions are not mutually exclusive and each contain “a frequency, a differently dense fold in the continuous affective field” (Seyfert, 2012, p. 38) reminds me of the topographical folds expressed by Manning (2010) at the surface of the ‘becoming-body’. For Manning (2010), these topographical folds are where new compositions emerge, life processes are brought to life, and where new forms of feeling and subjectivity are wrought. Taking these two ideas together, these folds can be said to be the affective interactions where our becoming-body is shaped.

Equally pertinent is that the dense folds, the affective interactions, that we would first guess as having the most impact (haptic, acoustic) are in actuality the ones with the lesser frequency. As Guyau (Seyfert, 2012) states, it is the “transmission of nervous vibrations and mental states” (p. 38) that display the greatest frequency, and has the greatest impact. This is similar to my experience that there is *something* at play here below which our body is cognizant. The visual frequency of seeing shoes on a desk or a child’s toiletries in a staff washroom was not all that moved me. It was something else. My colleague’s voice was not the catalyst to my affective response to the basketball story, there was something else.

This *something* else is not possessed by one entity, but is an encounter, a between-ness (Seyfert, 2012), between bodies and bodies and environment. Affect is the quintessential and/and that I struggle to articulate. Each body’s capability to affect and be affected alters affective interactions. My interaction with my colleague was a between-ness (Seyfert, 2012) amongst himself and I, a conglomeration of our experiences and capacities (Massumi in Zournazi, 2002) to be affected, and the environment that we were sharing. In that moment of encounter, I was impacted by the creative nature of affect, “a field of potentialities” (Papoulias & Collard, 2010, p. 34), a surfing (MacLure, 2013), a capacity in me that could change how I interacted with others.

Affect is “the said as much as the unsaid” (Foucault in Seyfert, 2012, p. 34). Affect is a mutually attuned psychic parallelism. This parallelism can create a sympathy, a co-affectedness, and a compassion (Seyfert, 2012). I associate this sympathy and compassion with Guyau’s observation about art stimulating movement and provoking action. I would propose that this sympathy and compassion, when applied to human body to human body, provokes the acts of caring that I hope to further understand in my study.

**Emotions, affect & *be-coming*.** A discussion of affect and emotion is perhaps best served through the discussion surrounding science and cultural theory. In Papoulias & Collard (2010) the case is presented that affect can benefit from neuroscience's investigations into the "micro-geography of synaptic connections, cellular interactions, and electro-chemical flows below the surface of consciousness" (Papoulias & Collard, 2010, p. 35). These physical changes in our brain speak to the fact that affect is more than socio-cultural phenomena, but actually transforms our bodies. While these scientific discoveries enable the furthering of the case for affect as biology, it must be noted that it is up to the humanities to "conceptualize and philosophize" (Clough, 2010) what these biological data mean in terms of what we know of interaction and sociality.

The emotionality that Ahmed (2004) speaks of are the emotions that we come to associate with certain actions, actions that may have affect undergirding them. These emotions, generated by my interactions both affective and overt, lead me to position (Davies, 1992) myself in a certain way as I move forward. Multiplied over many encounters, or maybe a singular event, the emotions we associate with our positioning can extend to our *be-coming*. My experiences within these encounters and discourses, set my trajectory through subsequent related and unrelated discourses, the narrativization of which is my identity, my *be-coming* (Mishler, 1999). This trajectory is effortful (Watson, 2006) and dynamic. The dynamic nature of identity is made present as each experience can lead to a new positioning. With each new discourse, positions are "discursively and interactively constituted and shift with each speaking, within this or that discourse, in this or that way" (Davies, 1992, p. 57). Hence, affect is linked to performativity (Swirski, 2013). Our response to each encounter, or conversely lack of response, can lead our position to change in the next encounter we are present in. This is the heart of what

I wish to study—to experience a teachers’ performance of care through their stories, and discuss why they care and position themselves in a particular way.

## **Part 2: Setting the Stage—The Research**

**The Inscribing Encounter.** Encounter is essential for be-coming and affect, and the cornerstone of my study. My hope is to explore beyond the cognitive realms of experience, in this case the encounter, to go beyond thinking about knowing, to ‘think anew’ about the non-conscious (Clough, 2010). I wish to elevate the status of the physical body (Swirski, 2013) to further understand how teachers and students go from being strangers sharing space, to bodies who are inscribing their own materiality on the others’ laboring body (Dowling, 2012), impressing themselves upon each other (Ahmed, 2004).

Inscribe means to write or carve, especially in a formal or permanent way. In geometry, it means to draw a figure within another so that their boundaries touch but do not intersect (Merriam-Webster). Is this not how our bodies communicate with each other? Our experience of others transforms us, if even for just a moment. “Our body keeps itself together by virtue of keeping in touch with other bodies and with a world” (Venn, 2010). Our bodies are crafted and are made performative when we delineate the surface of objects, placing a feeling or emotion on these objects, and encounter these objects as other (Naraian & Khoja-Moolji, 2016). When a teacher interacts with a student, there is at once a delineation of self and other, but also an emotional component that can make an encounter a sociality (Ahmed, 2004).

Ahmed (2004) states that we are individuals who are created socially. Our perception is founded on the basis of how we come into contact with the world and the emotionality that we attribute to the contact. This emotionality is what registers on our body at any given moment as our “accumulated memory, habit, reflex...” (Massumi in Zournazi, 2002, p. 107), a record of a

creation of past and future (Hohti, 2016). Just as our skin is impressed upon by the world, so are we formed by our encounters, our interactions with others and their impression upon our individuality.

I do not believe that we are transformed by nothing. There needs to be a “bumping place” (Clandinin, Downey & Huber, 2009, p. 142). These bumping places are not necessarily places of conflict. They can be a stretching, a circumstance where we are challenged to something different, transformed, moved to a feeling. I was stretched every time an act of care left me breathless. As identity, be-coming, isn’t interior but relational (Watson, 2006), it [identity] depends on a dialogical relationship with others (Gee, 2000), “the self as continuously constituted through multiple and contradictory discourses” (Davies, 1992, p. 57). In terms of affect and care, it is the dialogical relationships that give rise to multiple discourses that can be identified as the encounters, the sliding towards, that we experience with others. While we tend to associate discourse with language, I propose that, in regards to affect and care, that discourse can also include the non-conscious, the biological, preceding the “over-writing of the body through subjectivity and personal history” (Papoulias & Collard, 2010, p. 34). Put another way, our be-coming is affecting and being affected by affect.

Our experiences in the world generate emotions that impact who we are as individuals and this emotionally constructed identity, this be-coming, in turn informs what meaning we put on new experiences and how we interpret past experiences (Shapiro, 2010). I am a determined and dated individual, at once part of my past and future readings (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013, p. 265). The stories I accumulate for my thesis may impact how I view care and relation in my life today, yet my current experiences change how I view those same stories. My present is changing how I interpret my past. I hope that the teachers in this study will have vibrant stories of their

own, and it is my desire to encounter these stories and gain understanding in how they came to their own perspective on care and act on care the way they do.

**The hyphen (Granek, 2012): Where we come to know.** Granek (2012) provides an interactive model I want to adapt as I consider how my participants and I will co-create our knowing, our understandings of how caring teachers *be-come* caring teachers. Just as I came to see be-coming as a process, I have come to view knowing as something negotiated in our experiences and encounters. Granek (2010) speaks of inter-subjectivity, expounding on Crossley (1996) with a beautiful image that inspired me to look differently at the concept of the hyphen. Her image of the hyphen artfully illustrates what *bumping places* are. At first glance, the hyphen looks like a rigid, static line, yet if we stop looking at the hyphen and enter *into* the hyphen, we see the interface where we bump up against ideas, experiences, and spaces with which we are unfamiliar. The hyphen becomes the setting of our inter-subjectivity. We grow on this line. The hyphen can divide, when looked at merely as a way to differentiate between one and another, or it can connect the two if they choose to enter into the intersubjective space of the hyphen, generating meaning in the space between the subject and the object (Hetherington, 2003, p. 1938). The hyphen becomes the visual representation of Massumi's threshold (Zournazi 2002) where the binaries, object/subject, researcher/participant, teacher/student, are flattened and we are constituted by one another (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013). With all that is known about coming to construct our identity socially and internally (Zembylas, 2003), this inter-subjective space of the hyphen can be the manifestation of how we come to know, "the epistemology of the hyphen" (Granek, 2010, p. 180).

In my own case, concerning affect, my use of the "epistemology of the hyphen" (Granek, 2012, p. 180) focuses on what I have come to know, and who I have be-come, within my

experiences and relationship to affect and caring (Thayer-Bacon, 2009). I now understand that we come to know through emotions (Zembylas, 2003a), relations (Noddings, 2005), contradictions and sameness (Watson, 2006). In Dewey (1938/1955 in Thayer-Bacon, 2009) we are implored to see the ‘we-ness’ of knowledge. That knowledge should be more accurately described as an active verb in knowing, and that this knowing is constructed in our interactions not only with each other but also with the world around us.

**The classroom and beyond—the setting for *be-coming* and affect.** You can feel a classroom. I distinctly remember the feeling in my first classroom, the connection, the togetherness. It is almost as if classrooms exude their own emotions in much the same way as their inhabitants. There is a multiplicity of affective interactions: haptic, olfactory, aesthetic, and unconscious (Seyfert, 2012). I liken the case study cited in Seyfert (2012), regarding the affective interactions made manifest between a stock market ticker and stock traders, to a good working description of a classroom, and more pointedly the affective interactions that can be encountered between teacher and student. Just as the ticker with a certain swiftness about it, a certain decibel level, is the tool used for communication and the communication itself, students can be perceived as much the same in the classroom. Students are noisy and quiet, they are swift and slow in their actions, they are bundles of life or lumps of inactivity. Yet at all times they are affecting the teacher just as the teacher is affecting them.

Oddly enough, another study about stock traders (Venn, 2010) put me in mind of what I have felt in my own classrooms. When a stock trader was asked what the ‘flow of the [stock] market’ means to him, his response is, “Everything. Everything.” The “minutiae of the sequence” (Dowling, 2012, p.109) of a stock trader’s day is interacting in loud, cubicle laden spaces, focusing on computer screens, watching trends in the market and in a newsfeed, all at the

same time. This “instantaneous correlation of every type of information: facts, signals, rumours, news, moods, emotional energies behave as both an individual and as a collective” (Venn, 2010, p. 132). This is the best description I can find for how I feel in my own classroom with my students. My day is marked by small, seemingly inconsequential events that make up the *everything*, the environment of the classroom. It is as if my students and I are an organism onto ourselves, where little bolts of interaction, bolts of emotion set off in the room, affecting each one individually and in turn affecting others. This is the setting of my study, the hum of a classroom, and the underlying gestures that inscribe (Dowling, 2012) themselves on teacher and students in their connections with one another.

Yet, teachers move, and breathe, and conduct their lives far from the classroom’s reach, and bring their encounters with students with them. Teachers’ care reaches far beyond the moment-to-moment affective encounters within the classroom. They search for shoes late at night, prepare toiletries long before the school bell, make childcare arrangements in the car stuck in traffic. Teachers be-come caring teachers even when they are away from their classrooms and students. The joy, the anger, the sadness, and the relief of a good day, or a tough year all follow teachers across the threshold of their homes and into their personal life. I want to be open to these stories, too, to longer narratives about frayed nerves, difficulty dealing with spouses and children, and being invigorated by the days that are too good to believe. How be-coming a caring teacher is not a task that you complete from 9:00 am to 3:30 pm, but is a way of life in all the other moments.

### **Part 3: The Researcher, the Participant, and the Research**

**The strangled scholar: *Be-coming* and researcher positioning.** It has been pointed out that there is not enough ‘me’ in my writing, that I hide behind ideas, theory, and literature,

that what I write seems a little strangled. This is completely true, I am a little strangled in my writing, but I am a little strangled in my walking around life. I have a sense of humour, maybe even a quick wit, but am not gregarious and, certainly not overly open about my opinions, experiences and feelings.

In many ways, this thesis speaks of my ability to position myself in interaction. Being interested in others takes the spotlight off of myself. Perhaps my interest in other teachers' caring relationships is a vicarious way for me to learn more about myself and my own interest in and beliefs about care while trying to negotiate how to live out this belief in my everyday life. It is my challenge to let myself be seen in and through this thesis, to admit that I think that caring relationally is the most important part of education. And so, I wonder about others and how deeply they think about the relation of care to community, to learning, to accomplishment.

Truth is, I think and, perhaps hope, that I can sort out my relationship with care and teaching even as I discuss the ideas of caring relationships with other teachers. I am be-coming in and through this study. I must resist the urge to retreat into theory and ideas when I am unsure of how I feel or how I should act in the next step, when I am unsure of how caring fits into the puzzle of a teacher's day, when I believe caring becomes the most important piece. However, I have a feeling that in opening up a space to share mine and others' stories of experience of being a caring teacher, I am creating conditions to understand my own story more fully.

**The *something* scholar: "Affect" and researcher positioning.** As stated over and over again through these pages, my worldview has been coloured and animated through caring. MacLure's (2013) words, "We have chosen something that has chosen us" (p. 661), spoke to my relation with affect. I have come to realize that I have always sensed, interpreted, and acted upon affect, and through this work I am taking this *particularity* of mine and using it as an entry point

into my study of how teachers come to care for their students. I want to observe those little *some things* in the life of a classroom—touching desks, tapping shoulders, eyes darting here and there. I want to invite teachers to tell me what these actions are all about, what it means to them. I also want to focus on their embodied stories outside of the classroom: How they describe shaking hands when getting upset with a store clerk because of the day they had; how they pause while telling a story, or how seeming gaps in memory hold meaning. Through the lens of affect, I want to understand what it is to *be-come* a caring teacher.

**Author and focus: Narrative inquiry, the researcher, and the participant.** If we are indeed the author and focus of our lives, then we are most certainly not passive observers in the unfolding story of our lives. In my study, the participants and I will be actively, creatively, imperfectly writing the story of our lives. This story is not ‘Truth’, but is my own ‘truth’ (Hatch, 2002; Watson, 2006). This “inventively, purposefully, judiciously fashioned” story has within it a certain madeup-ness that isn’t based on objective truth, but is my ‘true to life story’ (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p.28), how I come to construct my identity, my be-coming, within my narrative.

I acknowledge that ‘stories to live by’ Connelly & Clandinin (2000) has been over-used and may be outdated, but the phrase still articulates what I think of when I encounter narrative epistemology. We all need stories to make sense of our encounters, to frame our experiences, and to shape what our future will entail, to guide us in living. These stories may be torn down in the next encounter, may be fortified in our next relationship, or may lay dormant with no real purpose.

For myself, to look at experience narratively and relationally, materially and discursively, is to be given a key to unlock a room that you have had within your mind forever—a room with

plenty of collectibles just waiting for the next treasure to find its way onto the shelves, yet all the while these collectibles also curate how the new treasures are catalogued. None of my experiences made any sense—shoes, washrooms, basketball players, touches on shoulders, fleeting eye contact—until I looked at these experiences as stories and more specifically, at the affective interaction that weaves its way through each story, the site of the inter-subjective (Crossley, 1996; Granek, 2010) I wish to focus on. When I self-narrate my stories (Currie, 1998, p.17), I come to know myself better as a character and come to understand how I relate to the supporting cast of characters.

I want to truly listen to teachers' caring stories: to come to further understand what makes them come to a professional calling that is difficult at the best of times and next to impossible a lot of the time; what focuses their attention on their students and care; and what actions have they taken in pursuit of that attention. I want to hear of the little triumphs and the less than stellar days, all the stories that make up what it is to *be* a caring teacher. But I must also recognize this is a story.

As stated above, I love story and I was appreciative when in amongst all the confusion and unsettledness that existed surrounding becoming, affect, and my new found understanding of knowledge, that I could lean on the familiarity of my old friend, story. And story really is an old friend, isn't it? Our stories are our good times, and our bad times. We remember our stories over a warm drink with a friend, or yell them out in frustration when we need to defend ourselves. Story is always there. But perhaps in story's perceived omniscience we forget that story does not have explanatory power to recount original experiences and that narrative cannot always explain nor represent our experiences (Hendry, 2007). In essence, a story is just a story.

When I came to accept my role as researcher in light of the communion I wished to enter into with my participants, I was able to dare to ask the big question: “What might it mean to recognize that life is such a complex process that it can never be understood, let alone represented?” (Hendry, 2007). If life is indeed this complicated, and I am pretty sure that it is, then I want to sit with others and hear their stories, not so much to represent them, interpret them, but to sift through the noise to truly hear these stories, let others hear them, and recognize their value. I do not need to be present to add value to these stories, but I want to honor my participants with my interest and willingness to hear and appreciate their stories. As I said in my introduction I desire to focus on the good being done. I cannot add to this good through my meagre offering of this paper, but I can lend an ear and aid in declaring the ordinary acts that are quite simply extraordinary in the relationships between teachers and students.

## Chapter 3: Methodology<sup>1</sup>

### A Trail of Research

My area of study is deceptively simple, yet complex in its execution. I wish to study what it is to *be-come* a caring teacher (Dowling, 2012). How teachers *are* physically, emotionally, socially, and culturally, always paying careful attention to how caring for students is implicated in the participants' be-coming. In order to gain a greater understanding of *be-coming* a teacher, I believe that as a researcher I have to acknowledge and value the lived experience of teachers (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000), all the while being cognizant that a narrative is the "ordering of particularities" (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2013, p. 13), and that the meaning-making is rightfully in the participants' hands and not my own. I look toward the notion of *affective states* as my entry point into these conversations, as I believe the small gestures, glances, and body positions we use throughout our day as teachers are both subtle and significant (Eisner, 1995), and aid in looking at both the particular and universal in a single breath.

My study focuses on the sensory, embodied, lived (Swirski, 2013) experiences of teachers and the sense they seem to make of these experiences. I believe that "bodies always 'mean' something" and that mindful stories are told by and through bodies (Andrews et al., 2013, p. 130). This broad, embodied notion of story means that my data, as performed text, will not present itself in a neat, linear fashion, instead offering a variety of locations and times as sites of knowing. I imagine that memory work, emotion, and inter-action may work in tandem to

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<sup>1</sup> I acknowledge the use of the present tense in this chapter. It is a deliberate choice to demonstrate the recursive process that is be-coming. I wish to remain *in-the-making*, as opposed to reflecting on events in the past tense.

produce a nomadic “trail of research” (Hohti, 2016, p.1153). As stated in my introduction, I imagine sensitivities, kindnesses, as well as tough love stories, but mostly “to see affirmative inventions in practices” (Hohti, 2016). I hope that I am able to gain some insight into the complexity of what it is like to be-come (physically, emotionally, spiritually, psychologically) a caring teacher.

As a collective, all of us seem to live in our heads an awful lot. We count calories but rarely taste food, we wear a Fitbit but never look at our walking path, we debate on Facebook but never see the faces of our foes. In this thesis, I wish to complement the “colourless abstraction of theory” (Eisner, 1995, p.3) with the vibrant colours and gray scale that mark our everyday lives. To find theories of affect and be-coming as emplaced in the very real, sometimes energized, sometimes exhausted, always caring bodies of teachers.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Identifying possible participants.**

Prepare a brief overview to distribute to potential participants

Initial meeting(s) with potential participants

REB Approval

Signing of consent forms (done prior to first conversation)

Throughout the course of my proposal writing, I have been interacting and keeping note of potential participants in my study. In the spirit of hearing varied voices and experiences, I have been aware to not only choose teachers who I may view as particularly caring, but also interact with teachers that I may not have shared a teaching style or explicitly caring worldview towards teaching. I have also carefully noted any teachers that others who are aware of my study have

suggested, and look forward to furthering my discussions with teachers I may not have met otherwise. I am writing a one page brief summary to distribute to possible participants (4-5 teachers) to gauge their interest and looked forward to furthering my discussions with them.

**Pilot study.** I was fortunate enough to meet with teachers (some individually, some in a group setting) socially to discuss my proposed research interest - How teachers come to care for their students. The conversations were enlightening and caused me to re-think a few of the key assumptions I had made about my research methodology.

The pilot study teachers were not as keen on *affect*, admittedly an unfamiliar and complex concept, as I was as a possible entry point into their worldview and actions of care toward students. While all agreed that care was essential to education, and that affect was key to these caring encounters and their sense-making of these encounters, they felt that by only focusing on the small actions of affect (gestures, glances, desk tapping) I would be missing a great deal of the story. In retrospect, I think I did a poor job of explaining and drawing concrete examples of affect into everyday life. Examples such as “I had a *feeling* that this was going to be a difficult parent discussion” or “I was instantly aware that this student was having a particularly difficult day” or “I swelled with pride when my student performed in the talent show that year” would have perhaps given a depth and clarity to the affect that I was referencing.

**Participant 1 in pilot conversation:** *“If you focus on just the hand touches, you may be focusing on a student I don’t have a particularly great relationship with. Then I would feel like I have to make something up. Start a conversation about care and I’ll give you all you need without you suggesting any students in particular.”*

**Participant 2 in pilot conversation:** *“My present class isn’t where I would choose to discuss care. My more interesting moments are from years past.”*

These comments set me back a bit. I was sure I had come up with the best way for teachers to open up about care through affect, yet all these teachers were adamant that just talking was enough, that I did not need evidence of care to start the conversation. Through reflection, I came to understand that my pilot study was not predicated on my observations of affect, and yet discussions were rich and meaningful. One teacher discussed her shaking hands at being upset by a situation, another talked about getting mad at her husband because he did not seem to understand how much care she put into her students. The teachers were only too willing to share, almost at times as a catharsis. It was as if the distance away from the classroom with a group of individuals not familiar with their work environment, reminiscent of Kuntz & Presnall (2012) gave them leave to make sense of these caring actions for themselves.

### **To Narrate is to be Human**

Creating narratives, storying, is what makes us human (Andrews et al., 2013). It is through this storying, that I witnessed a small part of through my pilot study, that I became cognizant that storying is essential to sense-making. I wish to focus on experience narratives as defined by Patterson (2000) in Andrews et al. (2013) as “texts which bring stories of personal experience into being by means of the first person oral narration of past, present, future or imaginary experience”.

While teacher-participants may give me event narratives based on one encounter, I know now that I can also entertain the idea that the theme of care will weave its way through our discussions. How did they feel after a particular caring action? How does care impact their personal lives? How was their behavior at a separate, unrelated event impacted by caring for their students? My own narrative in the introductory chapter is not event centred, but experience

centred with care interweaving itself through experiences, impacting my present self, and colouring how I look to my future.

**The conversations.** I anticipate that this study will engage stories from a wide variety of teachers from diverse backgrounds, conversing with them between one and three times. I acknowledge that an individual story is not made any more powerful or real if it is corroborated by numerous others, and so aim for understanding, complexity rather than corroboration. I understand that teachers are not coming from assumed normative positions, but that they are emergent through interconnections with students and others (Hohti, 2016). I will be catching my teachers in the *second act* if you will. My participants are not clean slates that come without prior history or expectations, they will come to our conversation as *individuals in progress*, who they are in the moment is who they are. But they are evolving from who they were in the past, with unique experiences and stories about where their caring comes from. Their experience and mine will create an interweaving that seeks to create and not constrict (Swiski, 2013, p. 348), reminiscent of the “epistemology of the hyphen” discussed in Granek (2012, p. 180). We will be on the line together. Our teacher/researcher, subject/object binaries flattened so we may be attentive to how we each constitute something new in our interaction (MacLure, 2013).

The success of my initial conversations with pilot study participants has bolstered my confidence in conceptualizing and contextualizing my own conversations, but I am still daunted by the task of the conversation as being “a complex and contested social encounter” (McDowell, 2010, p. 161). While conversations are seen as possibly less interpretive in nature than interviews have been in the past (McDowell, 2010), I worry about how to complicate the conversations of teachers’ stories of experience as we co-create meaning beyond traditional

observe and re-tell. I am concerned about the discursive practices of power in relation to myself as well as participants, so I will come to my participants as *one of them* (Jarvinen, 2000), and invite my participants in, despite their interest not being as vested in this study as I am (McDowell, 2010). My aim is to always come to my conversations as a curious participant myself. As someone who wants to learn from them, someone who wants to co-create meaning with another, and hope this enthusiasm and interest is infectious.

(Swirski, 2013) suggests a kind of interweaving conversational engagement as a manifestation of the entanglement within assemblages (see also Hohti, 2016) that can be said to *be* the classroom if I should be invited in. Classrooms are messy. Students, teachers, sharp-corned desks, smelly lunches, neatly constructed bulletin boards, messy hidden cupboards, boot racks, coat racks, book racks—these are the entangled assemblages. The complementary space that is present in these entanglements may form part of my discussions with teachers. I am eager to visit classrooms, if invitations are extended to me, to see for myself these entanglements, but I realize for practical purposes this may not be possible.

Conversely, I can easily see myself having conversation with teachers at coffee shops, restaurants, in my home, wherever it feels comfortable and productive. Even though the classroom seems to present as the perfect example of entangled assemblages, of be-coming and ideas, so are minivans full of teachers' own children, kitchens when dinner is rushed to be made, spouses who unwittingly get the brunt of the day by virtue of being the first one encountered upon arriving home. Teachers' care is made manifest far from the classroom. The weight, the feeling, the affect of care is not just in the moment of teacher/student interaction but produces effects in all directions at all times in the life of a teacher.

If we hope to deepen our understandings of the embodied, lived experience of caring teachers then our conversations must convey the importance we place on teachers' embodiment and their material world. The conversations convey the import of "Everything" (Venn, 2010)—setting, time of day, what part of the school year, the day participants just had, if they suffer from allergies, dislike of the portable they are in – must go into the relation between myself and my participants. If conversations are complex and contested then they are also wholly engaging encounters. Through paying careful attention to the embodiment and materiality of participants, even while seeking out the theme of care, I wish to put my participants back into the intra-actions; of the human and non-human material-discursive practices (Barad, 2003) within our conversations (Kuntz & Presnall, 2012), to make account of their performativity in the relational ontology and epistemology that we are engaged. This requires a whole body listening where we seek to extend meaning beyond ourselves to a "becoming-with event as it patterns affect" (Kuntz & Presnall, 2012, p. 740).

I relate to the idea that methodologies are non-linear (Byrne, 2015) with Hohti (2016) becoming a starting place for this study. In Hohti (2016) examining a teacher's and students' record keeping led to a co-creation of life in a classroom, as the students and teacher recorded their own impressions, versions, and meanings of what was going on in the life of the classroom, the *everything*. Just as there will be a nomadic trail of research (Hohti, 2016), my own thinking and writing will be nomadic (Byrne, 2015), as I negotiate what I am observing, collecting in my findings, and discussing with my participants. By conversing with participants on an on-going basis through face-to-face encounters, or email and phone conversations, I wish to provide an additional space that takes into account how the participants' lives continue after our conversations and offer time to reflect on the experiences in the midst of experiences (Russel &

Bullock, 1999 in James, 2007). Just as Hohti's (2016) teacher would sometimes write her own synopsis of the day, or add to the students' already written piece, we as researchers and participants may even attempt to co-create meaning through our collaborative storytelling of our individual and shared experiences.

In the case of Byrne (2015) the author used poetry to convey her findings, her own reflections, and pertinent literature, bringing all these elements into a cohesive, and at times deliberately disjointed, whole. This polyphonic, non-hierarchical representation of her findings enabled the various voices (the participants, the researcher) and even the reader to draw their own understanding and meaning from the findings—to perform. My own texts, whether my field notes or the finished narrative, will reflect these complexities and complications of voice within the messiness that accompanies human life, with the hope that this assemblage of many voices will connect with the readers in a way that is personally meaningful.

My aim in this study is to engage participants in deciphering the broad and diverse theories of be-coming and affect and perhaps bring them down to earth. I wish to have readers encounter 'lived theory' (Kim, 2008, p. 253) of the classroom in our work. By connecting theory with practice, I envision a kind of co-creation as “organic, ontological, evolving and recurring” (Kim, 2008, p. 258) lived theory that extends our understanding, if only marginally and particularly, of what it is to *be-come* a caring teacher. Affect and be-coming deals in the social, emotional, psychological, biological, and cultural. In our desire that at looking at the relationships: the sadness, frustration, and joy, the heart racing and skin tingling, the classroom and the school institution in tandem, we may come closer to illustrating how affect and be-coming may actually look, and feel, and sound. This study is not to be the definitive study on affect, but nor is it

intended to be, but it will be a thoughtful and hopeful work of particular individuals in a particular social context in a particular time (Kim, 2008).

**Working with primary data.** My ultimate goal for this study is two-fold: to look at the good things that are going on in our everyday school lives through the lens of affect and to connect with readers so that they may feel like they know what it is to *be* these teachers. Through this connection, I hope to spark the reader's own imagination about how this study may relate in some way to their own lives and practices (Kim, 2008). To succeed in these goals, I invoke a narrator's voice to present the stories within a theoretical voice to conceptualize what is being storied (Kim, 2008). I must also be mindful to take myself out of the story when required to ensure my teacher-participants can perform their own stories absent of my own interpretation.

### **It's Going to get Messy**

As a child, I spent hours setting up my doll house. The furniture and accessories exactly where I envisioned them, oriented in just the right way for the best light. But the truth is, my dolls spent very little time in that meticulously curated house. I just couldn't bear to mess it up. As a teacher, I enjoyed classroom setup. I would spend days putting up bulletin boards, arranging desks, and labelling objects. On the first day of every school year, before walking down the hall to meet my new students, I would always turn and inspect my room one last time. I can still see each of my classrooms in my mind's eye just as they were right before students blustered through the door. These images of a pristine doll house and well-appointed classroom have helped me understand my role in my own research and how to represent, or not represent, my participants.

My research comes from my interest and my design, not unlike my doll house and my classroom. But my research cannot stay untouched like my doll house, it has to become like

my classroom. While I can plan, and implement, and execute, I also have to let my participants in, mess up the area together, and construct something new. I rarely let my dollhouse become messy, but with my classroom I had no choice. And in that mess great things were born - ideas, events, interactions. My role as the researcher is present by virtue of my interest (Byrne, 2015), my job is to narrate stories of experience and to apply theory where the theory works, to take myself out would be like walking into a bare classroom. Instead, these teacher-participants walk into a classroom already designed, but just like my students there is room to change where the desks go, the labels will peel and fade, bulletin boards will be changed as the themes we study change— but we will do that together.

None of us are angels and there is no such thing as an angelic interview (MacLure, 2013). Instead, we are bodies, and emotions, and pasts, and futures unfolding all while we interact on the line (Granek, 2010), in the threshold (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013). Understanding will not be wrought easily, if at all. There will be unexplainable moments that may be seen as impediments or simply ignored (MacLure, 2013). Reflective comments, self-theorizing, contradictions and gaps, tones, pauses, laughter (Andrews et al., 2013). I must be heightened in awareness to these moments, and in acknowledging these impediments, acknowledge there is a story beyond words and symbolism.

“What gets made, not understood” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013) is what I keep going back to when I think of my conversations and data collected in my study. While the stories elicited will not be complete, and for every story told another could have easily taken its place, I am interested in the meaning that we can create within the conversation. To hear the “unstable voices that surprise us, both pleasantly and uncomfortably, with previously inarticulated and unthought meanings” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013, p. 263). I hope it is not too much to ask that

both my participants and I have the experience of an “ah, ha!” moment. That not everything we are discussing make sense, but that it does make us think.

### **Making Sense**

The co-constructed narratives will be experiential, focused on experiences that contribute to the meaning of teaching for the participants. The narratives will reflect more global, broadly held ideological commitments, spiritual purposes, identity, and phenomenological qualities of teaching (Rosiek & Atkinson, 2007). These more ontological views will look past teacher’s practice to what it is to be a caring teacher.

In order to engage in an ongoing, dialogic conversation with the reader, to engage the reader to think about affective interactions between teachers and students, I need to demonstrate my *arting* in creating a work that is particular and unique (Eisner, 1995), to use art to inform and not only reflect (Byrne, 2015), to start a conversation. This complex, layered, and dynamic reality (Kim, 2008, p. 253) is a moment in time and I hope to use the spark of language to cast shadows around words (Swirski, 2013) such that readers can retrospectively evaluate (Kim, 2016) and perhaps find an element of their own ‘truth’ within.

I believe in poststructuralism’s approach to narrative as multiple, socially-constructed and constructing, reinterpreting and reinterpretable. In these narratives, I also believe in new materialist re-integration of ‘body talk’ within these social constructions and performances. In my conversations, I anticipate my participants will share narratives that may be performed differently in different contexts and see wisdom in Andrews (Andrews et al., 2013) “that words never mean the same thing twice” (p. 51). My participants and I will be *on the hyphen* but that hyphen is not static and stable. Our inconclusions are ever changing, as meanings wrought and

discarded. But even in this instability, there is beauty and value, and truth, that at this moment this is our sense making.

My crafted words are necessary but insufficient in revealing everything that I see, hear and feel in my conversations with participants. My writing will be messy, as it should be to convey the messiness that is human life. I look to wipe away the polished sheen of a neatly told story, to create something that is not too precious to engage with, disrupt, and discuss (Byrne, 2015). Using Eisner (1995) as a guide I believe that I can at least try to capture a vivid world and empathy within my word choice and accounts of what I observe. I wish to move away from stock answers, looking for generalizations, and focus on individual teachers, students, and classrooms. All of this requires a ‘wide-awake-ness’ (Greene in Eisner, 1995) that is akin to seeing. To see “particular situations in their detailed complexity, humorous combinations and ‘tiny’ things matter” (Hohti, 2016, p. 1157). To see that education is care.

## Chapter 4: We *are* Affect

The opportunity to write this thesis has become one of the greatest privileges and honours of my life. I have liked degrees with my name on them, but I love that this work is inscribed with the stories, the emotions, the experiences, and the care of some of the finest teachers I have ever had the privilege to sit with. I have discovered I am a person who can sit, who can wait, who can breathe, because you have to sit and wait and breathe to truly hear with, feel with, and become- with (Kuntz & Presnall, 2012; Taguchi, 2012) others. My task at hand was to have teachers tell me their stories of care, and they did, but they also let me tell my stories in the process, and although we did not find answers, we found an immanence (Barad, 2003 & Jackson & Mazzei, 2013), confirming that there is *something* here.

The participants and I laughed and we teared up, we put our hands over our hearts and dropped our jaws in shock. At times, we spoke so fast and all at once that it was almost unintelligible, and at times sat in silences that were chasms laden with meaning. But above everything, I am awestruck that within this study about caring and relationship and affect, I have become the one who has felt cared for, in relationship, and have had more moments than I can count that have taken my breath away.

In chapter one I said I wanted to *see* the artificial obvious (Dillard, 1974, p. 20). Through my conversations, not only have I seen the extra miles being sought, but I have walked a distance, I have witnessed the one more chances being given, and I have felt the relationships being sustained with my participants. I set out to tell a hopeful story, and I got so much more. I became a part of a web of *see-ers* as I have come to think of us, *see-ers* who theorize through practice and experience (Kim, 2016), who see the tiny things, the small humans, and the subtle shiftings we work and live in that create an alternate thought of what education is. I have learned

that education truly is care, and that the beauty of this statement lies in the fact that the definition of care and relationship lay in the hands of the *see-er*.

These stories are not sweeping novels. They do not offer beginnings, middles, or definitive endings. What these stories offer are glimpses, proof of small gestures, moments. I appreciate how the stories come in mid-act. There is no preamble, no background, we join the narrative right in the mix and sometimes play catch up to put the missing pieces together. A lot like life. We are always in the midst, always be-coming (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013), never-ending. What I am most struck by is that there are no endings, just “a partial, incomplete, re-telling and remembering (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013). There is a lot of “I don’t know what happened after that”. Much like life. We don’t always know what happens after our students walk down the hallway, change schools, leave our classrooms. But we must become accustomed to, maybe even comfortable in the midst, to know something of who we are if not where we are going.

As the time for my conversation with teachers drew nearer I felt I was disproportionately nervous. I cannot explain my trepidation as these were fellow teachers, teachers who had been chosen for their care, their relationship with others. But this was a different dynamic for me. There would be dialogical, performative, and social tensions that are not present when chatting with a co-worker after class. I also felt equally humbled that these teachers were sharing their stories with me. That I would “see the face of a human being” (Beuthin, 2014, p. 123) across the table from me. I desired to be on the hyphen (Granek, 2012), a researcher open to new potentialities and capacities, not the “always already subject”, and for the participants to be open to new possibilities as well, and not the “always already object” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013). I never fully resolved my feelings before the conversations, I cannot even say I got better at

managing my nervousness, but I became more comfortable in the muddiness (Beuthin, 2014) of it all; the stories, the laughter, the gently guiding, the following that each conversation entailed.

### **The Teachers**

I think of my time with my participants as a sort of communion (Hendry, 2007). It was indeed an intimate act of sharing, of fellowship. This does not presume to eliminate the awkward moments that we struggled through, or my nervous cough when I could not think fast enough on my feet to continue the conversation down the path I desired, but the moments where I felt like we were sense-making, constructing meaning together (Granek, 2012), truly sharing far outweighed the previous moments. It felt as if we were orbiting each other as we would draw nearer and farther away, but always with a sense of where the center, the heart, the care, remained.

In an effort to introduce the participants, I have constructed short biographies about each that speak specifically to the conversations we shared with hopes of contextualizing who they are and where they are coming from. I have drawn on some key aspects of the participants that struck me through our conversations and include them as a way of introducing their performance later in the chapter.

**Joy.** We laugh. If our friendship had a musical score it would be our laughter. Our conversation for this work started out with laughter at nothing in particular, but mostly because we were excited to see the face of the one we feel a true kinship towards, a physical manifestation in the moment of just breathing in the other person.

She does not just laugh with me. Her whole family is laughter. I have spent some time with them, and I can remember no time that we shared that wasn't struck through with laughter.

And they care. Last I checked, they share Sunday dinners together, they take care of an aging grandmother together, they move in together when houses are remodeled.

We talk a little about our aging faces. Raising children, cultivating marriages, and professional triumphs and struggles have created some lines at the bridge of our noses and around our eyes that we point and laugh at. She is a more seasoned teacher than I am, she speaks with an ease about herself and her teaching that I marvel. She knows who she is, she knows what kind of teacher she is. She balances a classroom full of kindergarten children all day, and comes home to beautiful children of her own that are the same age. She speaks of how she *becomes* her students and their parents first introduction to the school system. How she sees herself as a helper, like the one that Mr. Rogers invoked when he said, “Bad things happen, but always look for the helpers.” Bad things have happened to her students and their families, and she has been their helper. Her care is in taking care of the little things, these little people she teaches who sometimes hurt their knees and sometimes lose a loved one to death, who aren’t hungry when they first get up but need someone to understand that they are ravenous when they get to school, who when they are hurt want only their parent or guardian but are lucky enough to have their teacher in that moment.

**Beth.** I do not know Beth well. We have been in the same circles at times, but have never had any in-depth conversations about teaching or anything else. When I ask her to be a part of my study, she quickly agrees. I am a little nervous at how this conversation will play out. Will it be awkward? Will we get each other or talk around and over each other? She is currently on sabbatical taking her Masters degree focusing on mental wellness. We meet in the afternoon and I could not have enjoyed a conversation more if we were in a tea house somewhere talking conspiratorially in hushed voices and boisterous laughter as old friends do. I so enjoy talking

with her about our Masters programs. She reveals her auto-ethnographic study entitled “Listen to what I do, not say” about her experiences of her parents’ divorce when she was young. How she was communicating through what she was doing and not saying to her teachers all those years ago. She is the living embodiment of what I have theorized about.

She is a kindred spirit in my work in relationship and care. How she articulates herself with barely a pause in the conversation quite simply leaves me awestruck. She apologizes numerous times for rambling, and I assure her from the bottom of my heart that she is not rambling, she is bringing to life the connection, the care, and the little moments that are teaching to her and to me, too. She gets *affect*, understands how our bodies are communicating with each other, how shared experience is the root of our understanding of one another. In her years of teaching in elementary grades she has cultivated a practice that looks beyond the curriculum to the child.

What I love is her realness. She has no pretense about her. She speaks from the heart. She is not afraid to admit when she failed or how she felt in a situation. To be equally reflective when discussing triumphs and failures, joy and fear is a hallmark of someone who thinks and feels deeply. She wears a scarf that day, and when she grows excited or nervous, she pulls on it. I feel like she is pulling me along, leading me into her story. When she speaks in more theoretical or reflective terms, she relaxes and leans back like she is imparting something, loosening the slack on the scarf and myself, letting me in, letting me process what she is telling me.

**Anne.** Anne speaks love. Where I have become acquainted with care and relationship, she has taken the bold move to live in the love she feels for her students. She teaches in a school where the students’ needs are so high that most teachers would grow weary from heart break or,

become desensitized from the juxtaposition of not enough food in a house when an expensive iphone inhabits a parent's pocket. But not Anne. She loves through it all. She speaks of her heart being full in sadness and in joy. She holds those two emotions equally. If affect is about smoothing of the binaries (MacLure, 2013; Jackson & Mazzei, 2013; Papoulias & Collard, 2010.), she is living that smoothing, living on the hyphen.

She is so animated. Sometimes she doesn't say the word but acts it out. A wave, a hug, a smile. Her body is communicating, not just her words. She came back to teaching after taking time with her family, and now we can share deep reflections on our university learning and our teaching experiences. We share thoughts on how university prepared us for being good technical teachers and how our lived experiences have led us to becoming caring teachers.

She is not afraid to speak from the heart. Of peace and joy, being haunted by students whom she worries about, and speaking of the bond she feels with others. Love is real to her. She creates books of love from her students. Just think about that...a book of love. What could be more meaningful and a more concrete representation of the affective connection we have with others. She meditates on peace and joy, and to talk to her is to see that she radiates those same gifts.

### **Conversations, Transcribing, Creating Narratives**

I met with each of these teachers for between one and two hours initially. We would begin with basic pleasantries of varying length and then move into the topic of conversation. I readily admit there was always a hiccup in my transition between our casual introduction and our topic conversation, an awkwardness on my part I never overcame. I had provided participants earlier with a graphic organizer to highlight our conversation, but it had minimal utility. I found

the teachers tended to talk to the points I provided until I probed further into certain details, stories, or individuals they had shared. If there were any follow up thoughts, ideas, or comments from either myself or the participants we would converse over the phone or through email. These subsequent encounters were always enjoyable as we would discuss new thoughts since our initial conversation, news about our lives, and they were always kind enough to inquire about the progress of my study. I was heartened by this, as I felt it was a sort of community building, and maybe a sign that I had accomplished one of my goals of starting conversations surrounding care that would outlive the lifespan of this study.

I transcribed all conversations myself. It was arduous and I always dreaded staring down that little recorder with a blank cursor blinking at me on the computer screen. But I never regretted the time. There is something so personal, so intimate about listening to someone's voice, especially when it intermingles with your own. Words did in fact take on a new meaning as I listened to tone, inflection and silences, and I found myself finding the different participant's varying speech styles endearing and telling about what meaning making they were actively pursuing through our conversation. I had constructed the conversations to contain wrap ups of varying length that focused on the participant's interests, personal news, etc. I always listened to this part even though, initially, it had seemed superfluous to the study. In the end, it was like the epilogue of a great book. A moment to listen, to enjoy, to just be with another and soak in the artificial obvious (Dillard, 1974). We do not have the opportunity to savour the voice and presence of those we admire and who are dear to us, and I was grateful for the opportunity to do so. In fact, these moments remain one of the highlights of my entire work.

The narratives wrote themselves. I was always amazed that a five-word prompt from myself would lead to paragraph after paragraph of narrative text from the participants. I

distinctly remember listening and looking into their faces and thinking, “How are you constructing this narrative so seamlessly, while I struggle with the introduction at the beginning of the conversation?” They were breathtaking. They truly were inviting me into their stories. They would lean in, recline to one side or the other, brush back their hair, knock on the table, all the while checking in with me to see if I was following along. Almost as if to say, “Are you listening?” “Can you hear what I am saying, what I mean...?” Sometimes participants were boisterous, sometimes were more reserved, sometimes acknowledgement from me was welcomed, and sometimes the story rushed to its own ending, with hardly a nod from me. I did not begin to really appreciate the richness of the stories until I listened while transcribing because their ability to tell a story was so captivating. In the moment, the experience outweighed the words.

I have chosen to work within a diffractive framework (Lenz Taguchi, 2012) when discussing the narratives within my work, by flattening the relationship between myself as the researcher, the participants, theory, and data (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013) and being open to a difference, a movement, a newness, a change (MacLure, 2013), and not a retrospective, interpretive representation. The positive differentiation that this method espouses blends well with my goal of really trying to see all the good being done, to open up new conversations about alternate thoughts about education, primarily where education *is* care. I believe the transcorporeal thinking that sees humans, non-humans, and more than humans intra-act to produce not *the* reality, but a potential real that complicates my representation of how I view teachers, students, and the environment intra-actively as they are affected and affect others,. By de-centering the subject, in this case the teacher, and focusing on the environment, the relation and the situation, a newness (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013) is wrought that looks beyond

representation to performance and what it means to be a caring teacher (van Manen, 2007).

Further, this approach places myself as the researcher in a knowing-with, becoming-with (Lenz Taguchi, 2012) posture, in that I, myself, am in the making through this work, equally affecting and being affected by the conversations, events, and intra-activities that are inscribing themselves upon my own be-coming.

If this chapter is about more than my experience, and my experience of others sharing their experiences with me, then I am being a hypocrite to my own work on affect and be-coming. I can't describe or articulate someone else's experience of affect, but I can let them perform their own experiences and understandings of affect and, in doing so diffractively build immanent conversations about what affective caring means to each of us. It is my hope that in this sharing, there will be spaces that allow us to become more deeply aware of and attuned to the affective spaces in our lives. My own experiences of affect throughout this work and in my conversations with participants are italicized and act as moments of reflection and theorizing throughout the chapter. The chapter headings—Knowing, Moving, Feeling, and Seeing—serve as different, diffracting concepts I wish to explore within the participants' own words. You will notice that these headings are ing-words, processes that I have come to believe are always actively be-coming, being affected by and affecting others.

### **Knowing: Sliding Closer**

Knowing-in-being (Taguchi, 2012, p. 271) is a process by which our body-mind intra-acts with human, non-human, and more than human matter. The assemblages (Hohti, 2016) that are our classrooms are most often the site of these intra-actions and begin and extend past physical proximity, a virtual nearness that starts before our students walk into our classrooms. I have been the sun-tanned, well-rested teacher judiciously studying the class list come the end of

summer, looking at the names, letting them roll off my tongue, thinking back to hallway encounters last year when these students were someone else's and wondering, "What are you like?" We come to know our students as we intra-act with their name tags, their desks, their spaces in our classrooms. This knowing is not limited by these materialities, there are shoulders that need hugging, names and bodies that need knowing, and bonding activities that need to be initiated, but this knowing-in-being is made richer through acknowledging the variety of relational-materialist and discursive ways we come to know-with our students.

**Beth:** I think because it shows that you've been thinking about them before they got there. And, I think that even little people know that to sit down and write a name tag takes them time, and when I'm literally looking at their name. The name is so personal that, and I'm sitting there and I'm writing it out a hundred times. It just shows that somebody's thought about them even before they've even gotten there. And I don't know if little kids would think about that, or even elementary at all, but just the whole 'who's going to sit beside who, based on what' thoughts that go through a teacher's head.

I think the way you start things is really important. Something that I have learned over the years, is I work really, really hard before they get there to make the classroom a space that they feel like they have their own spot in. It may seem little, but for me it's making sure their coat hook has their name on it, or making sure their desk has their name on it. Like some of the individualized touches.

**Anne:** This is the first year I've taught my grade twos in kindergarten and grade 1 in music. That helped out a lot this year with building relationship because on day

one I knew them by name as they came in the door, I could give them a little pat on the shoulder and look them in the eye and say their name as they came in.

This naming and knowing is not just between teachers and students, but also students and students.

**Joy:** I do responsive classroom, so we always have a morning meeting. And we greet each other every day, we have time for sharing. It might be a question that I am asking or something that has come out of the children's need to share. And then, during that time we also have a message and an activity together. It's a bonding experience, we're all sitting in a circle, we all see each other, we're all at the same level. And also, my classroom is so play-based, and when you play with someone then you start to talk, and you start to share, and you start to understand more of who they are.

As Beth introduces herself to her new, sight impaired student on the playground at the end of one school year she begins a connection that builds to what will become their relationship in the next school year.

**Beth:** It was a fairly small school of one class at each grade level. So, when I knew that I was going to be teaching grade 2, I saw him out on the playground one day and I was with another teacher and he was visiting with her. And I said, "Oh, Michael, it's Ms. B." and he goes, "Yeah", and I go, "Michael, do you know that I'm going to be your teacher next year." "Yeah", he says. (Laughter) And so, we kind of had a little bit of an introduction the year before. But, yeah, that day when he came in, I was nervous. Like, my heart was racing, and I just remember thinking

(pause) like how scary it is, honestly, to be a teacher for someone with those kinds of needs. Just because I've never done it before, and...it's...it's a big responsibility. But yeah, I was super nervous, and then I was just kind of awestruck just watching him physically move around the room and be so inquisitive and curious and excited.

Our classrooms are assemblages of bodies, and desks, and coat racks, of smells and stickiness, of air thick with activity, and of relationship. Anne beautifully demonstrates these assemblages through a beginning of the year activity that can easily be seen to not only demonstrate affect, but also in a most profound way, enables students the capacity to affect and be affected.

**Anne:** And one thing that I do is get a big ball of yarn and we all sit in a circle and as we're getting to know each other we'll throw the ball across to someone else, and we'll say something about ourselves, and you throw it, and you throw it, and you throw it, and eventually it becomes like a web. And we talk about how we're all connected, 'cause we're all one big family and then I have someone drop theirs [piece of yarn]. You see when so and so dropped their piece the whole web felt it. And that's what it's like in our classroom, we're all connected. When one's sad, we're all sad. When one's happy, we're all happy. And so, that's a visual for them and they can feel, feel it when it's nice, tight and strong and then when there's slack. That's something we do a lot at the beginning of the year is just focusing on a lot of building trust within the classroom with me, and them, and with each other. We do a lot of group work. A lot of group work.

*As Beth relayed how she prepares her classroom she placed her hands on the table in front of her and subtly pretended to write out a name tag. In my mind, I could see those same name tags.*

*Their laminated finish, their ruler markings at the top, and their dashed lines to make sure uppercase and lowercase letters were distinguishable. I could see and smell the black marker on the name tag as I would write out name after name. In that moment, I realized that I would intra-act with those names, that this act is the beginning of coming to know my students. Sometimes there would be excitement, sometimes dread, sometimes ambivalence if I could not put a face to a name. The participants were not speaking of direct social relations with their students, they were talking in a more relational- materialist approach (Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010), how matter matters. In their interconnectedness with tags and coatracks and spaces in their classrooms, with individual students and classroom sharing time, the participants are emergent, be-coming in their knowing-in-being with their students.*

*In my literature review I had stated that you can feel a classroom, that there is a multiplicity of affective interactions at work at all times. Anne's story of the web became a strong working image of a classroom you can feel. When she spoke of the web, I could visualize the strong black yarn connecting each person in the circle, I could feel how the tension of tiny hands holding on so tight could create the vibrations, but more importantly, I could see the yarn drop and create slack. It was in this slack that the vibrations were more pronounced. Assemblages are much like a web. Time, things, teachers, and students are co-produced (Hohti, 2016) in these webs of affective interactions. Not all materials in a classroom are interacting together simultaneously, some are dropped, some are taken up, some reconfigure. By interacting with objects in the classroom, we begin to place a feeling or, maybe to feel a placing, on an object, a person, a symbol. It is perhaps the start of our knowing-with, of our growing in relationship with one with whom we create a space for.*

**Moving: Pushing Away and Coming Back**

Knowing-in-being is not just found in beginning of year activities, the bonding moments, the hours of peaceful play time. Knowing occurs in difficult situations, when we are moving farther from another, rejected, pushed away by our students, or when physical closeness is disrupted, made difficult through circumstance.

**Joy:** So, I could tell that when she was not going to do well and she needed that closed in space, she would work under my desk at my feet. That's where she wanted to be...She wanted to be in this little corner. And a lot of teachers are not flexible and wouldn't allow that. And so, because I did, and she needed help, her academics were weak. Like she was not able to keep up, she needed a lot of encouragement, a lot of support. And when she did, I praised her, you know. And then she, and she kept coming back 'cause I was always there.

**L:** Now, do you remember getting to know that little girl?

**J:** I do, it took a lot of patience.

**L:** Did it?

**J:** Yeah, 'cause she wanted to..., she would push you away. That was her way of connecting or seeing if you were going to stick around. She would yell...at you, she would push you, she wanted to see if you would be there. So, you know, when you see those commercials about, you know, I took in a foster child, and I kept saying no, I kept saying no, they being that rock, and then they realize, and I think that's what that was. She couldn't get rid of me, I wasn't getting rid of her. I rarely sent her to the office, because that's what everybody did. They just sent her away,

sent her away, I can't handle you, go to the office, go to the office, go to the office [waving arms to the left as if sloughing something off]. Yeah, and I really...didn't do that. And then if she went to the office, I was marching right beside her. [opens hand and places it at her side, as if walking alongside someone]. Like that was getting her in there. But you know what I mean?

**L:** You were always there.

**J:** Always there.

**L:** She couldn't get away from you.

**J:** No.

And of another student.

**Joy:** I have a little guy in my class who has autism, and we have a program for him. If he needs it, to have to go do some outside of the classroom extra work. But my whole goal is for him to always be able to be in the room [gestures towards self]. I don't want him out, where I think other people, like I want him to feel that he's, he's just as valuable and part of the team as everybody else. Because he is.

For Anne, some experiences were about students drawing away from her or her unwillingly leaving her student because of safety concerns.

**Anne:** One little guy in particular would have what you would expect a tantrum of a two year old – screaming, throwing things, really big lion roars where he would just lose it. And kids would just be helping him clean up the cars, but he didn't want them to, so he would go into this rage, like...normally he was just sweet,

sweet as can be and then [snapping fingers] it would be this rage. And we would have to empty the classroom, like I would have to take all 22 out until he was calm. Because the principal would come up and stay with him until he was calm.

And of another boy:

**Anne:** The first time I kind of got through to him was after Halloween. And he had wanted to bring a jack knife to school for show and tell...

**L:** Oh.

**A:** And I had said very clearly, "No weapons." So, I had said no weapons, you can't bring your jack knife to school. But I didn't realize he had actually brought it, I thought he was just asking. So, when I saw it, I had to take it away from him and it was kind of a series of events where I had asked him to partner with someone he didn't want to partner with, and he started to cry, which is a good thing because he normally doesn't show emotion. He hid under the table and he wouldn't come out. So, then we had to evacuate, get everyone else out, the principal comes up with the youth care worker and brought him out. Which was good that they were at the school, on that day. And he pretty much said, oh, and before he went under the table he had cried, um... "I don't want to live anymore."

**L:** Oh, you're kidding.

**A:** Seven years old. I don't want to live any more. And he went under the table and my heart was breaking for this kid. And so, when he met with the counselor he actually was put on suicide watch because he had said he was going to take his life using the jack knife.

**L:** You're kidding.

**A:** Seven years old.

**A:** So then when he met with the counselor and she said, "Well, it's more than him being depressed." He had a plan. (Long pause). Right, and so we got mental health involved.

As I heard these stories, I was unable to articulate how I felt. Moving away from anything—a situation, a person, a place is always difficult even if the end result is beneficial. These teachers were courageous in moving away and coming back. They recognized, either through reflection or out of necessity that there needed to be space given, but that did not deter them from caring. I wish I would have asked more details surrounding how they felt moving away from their students, but they both seemed inclined to want to get to the part of the story that would see them make a connection, a bond with the one who was moving, pushing away.

As Joy recalls her later relationship with the girl at her feet:

**Joy:** Then when I went to my new school, she actually wrote me letters to try and stay connected. And I wrote her, and I met her at a restaurant one day with her grandma, I was not there anymore and I was gone, you know to try and stay that connecting piece. But, in time things... So, I don't know where she is today and I don't know.

And for Anne and her student:

**Anne:** One time he was really upset because the lunch monitor, duty lady blamed him for something. And he said he didn't do it, but they didn't believe him. And

so, he was out in the hallway and I had just happened to come back on my lunch break and I started to talk to him. And he said, [yelling] “Mrs. S., I didn’t do it. I don’t lie, you can ask my grandma!” (Laughter.) Well, I believe you. And who said you did it. And he said another student, who is not reliable at all. I just said if you’re telling me that you’re telling the truth, then I believe you. And I think that was a real turning point in our relationship, too. Like for him to even share that with me was a step for him, but after that um...after that day. I always sniff out the truth, it doesn’t take long. So, I pulled out the other one [the other student], and was like “Sooo, you actually saw...” And she was like, “Wellllll, well.” [sneaky grin on Anne’s face]. So, then she apologized to him. You know the dynamics of your students. So, that really kind of changed things. And we started making gains with him, because he was actually quite bright. By the end of the year he was reading above grade level, his math was fine, his written output was really hard for him because he didn’t do anything in kindergarten and grade one. He did nothing. So, then I allowed him the flexibility, if you want to write on a clipboard on the bench you can go, if you want to stand, whatever you need to do to write, you just do it. So, giving him that flexibility to move or go to the rainbow table, or go to the bench, I think that helped give him a little bit of control. And I think the problem in his life was that he didn’t have any control.

Beth brings a different perspective to knowing and moving away.

**Beth:** Oh, I felt like the worst human on the planet the last day of school, because I told you I was really emotional and whatever. Literally, like that week there had been transitions for him and he was going to a new day home and like, you know

this lady meets her day home kids at the bottom of the hill where the soccer field is, like literally the last week of school, right? So, he says to me, I'm standing at the door, I was all emotional and he's standing there and you know, end of grade three getting ready to go into grade four, and here's this little guy and he's so upset and he's crying and holding my hand. Like end of grade three, that's pretty major for a little boy. Anyway, and he's panicking, I can tell. And he says to me, "I don't know, I can't remember where I'm supposed to meet them." And I said, "It's ok, Ms. B. isn't going anywhere. I promise I will be right here. Yesterday you met them over by that tree." And he said, "Yeah." I said, "Ms. B is going to wait right here. Go ahead. Go to the tree, and if they're there great, and if they're not, come back and I'll help you. So off he goes. He goes, "Ok...Ok" and off he goes. And then something else happened, some other parent came to say good-bye whatever. What do I do? I go back in the school, close the door, I don't even think about him. I was just like...(zipping sound)...it left. There was so much going on and it was so emotional. And I knew that the other little girl who I was telling you about, her and her mom were waiting in my classroom because they had a gift for me. So, I'm thinking they're down there, I'm a mess, so I go back to my classroom. And we're visiting, me and this mom and this girl, and then there was a knock on my door. It's another teacher and she's got this little guy and he is losing it. I was like, "Ohhh", like I totally betrayed him. I promised him I would be standing at that door. And he couldn't find his crew and then I wasn't there either. I was devastated. And he was actually ok. Then this other little boy, thank God, who I taught two years previous, comes down the hall and says, "Oh, I'll take him. He's

with me.” I’m like, “Thank you, Matthew, you just saved my life!” And off they go. And you know, that was a really hard moment for me because that was the last time I would see that little boy and I felt like I had let him down. And I felt like I had let him down so much. And he was ok, I know he was ok. And as he left, he’d stopped crying and he turned and he waved. He always had this huge wave, and he was like “Bye, Ms.B.!” “Bye, Buddy!” But, I just was like, “Damn it! I just totally dropped the ball.” Like... it... those little moments that mean so much to me, that’s when I feel like I screw up when it’s the little moments that I...

**L:** For me when I feel those moments of failure, the moments after I can recall, it’s almost like a video.

**B:** Absolutely, it...I’ll see it forever.

This narrative evoked in me what Kuntz & Presnall (2012) described as whole body listening. I have to acknowledge as MacLure (2013) the glow of data, of making themselves [data] intelligible to us, seen or, rather felt. It was as if my whole being was involved as I heard Beth talk about the boy, the tree, her shutting the door and walking back inside, and his larger-than-life wave good bye. All I could think of were shoes on my student’s desk. It was as if in these fleeting moments, Beth and I were becoming-with in this affective event, that through her performing this story we were immersed in a relational ontology and epistemology—how we viewed the world and understood knowledge coalesced as our stories intermingled. Beth’s use of the word betrayal was meaningful to me. It is the word I may have chosen to use myself when describing the shoes had I not been self-conscious about admitting how much of a failure I felt in that moment. Theoretically, I had understood that affect works in sliding, in back and forth, closer and farther, but I had never understood it in my experience so poignantly as when I heard

Beth talk of her student being out by the tree and me standing behind my desk as shoes were placed on my student's desk. Sometimes, affect is felt in our away-ness from another, not only in our nearness, sometimes it is easy to understand why an event moves us and at other times we can only look back to gain some understanding.

*Everything about Beth's posture, from how she leaned in close, kept tightening her scarf around her neck as if she were hanging on for dear life, and her eyes to the ceiling every time she needed a breath, a respite in order to continue, spoke of affect. Her body and her words were telling me the importance of this event. It was also the first time she stated empathically how much those little moments mean to her. I feel we shared a kinship in our failure to see or do something, and I unconsciously matched her vulnerability by stating I see those moments like a video after the fact. Through our conversation, I was filled with a sense of, "Yes, me too!" and then a muddiness in which I was "sensing I am changed but not yet sure how" (Beuthin, 2014)*

*This sense of unsure change is explained well by Massumi (2005) when highlighting Zeno's paradox. If Zeno's arrow is the event, and subsequently the affect, it is not measurable as a plotting of points on the arrow's trajectory. The event, the affect, is like Zeno's arrow in that we can only understand the trajectory after it hits the target. The same can be said for myself and the shoes, and perhaps Beth and her playground boy. We do not know why we had such a strong emotion to this event, we can guess that we felt that we had betrayed our students, but what we do know is that our arrow's target is our new reality, how we viewed ourselves after the event is changed. This retrospective reality bears a likeness to Butler (2005), "I always arrive too late to myself" (p. 79). Beth and I knew we were changed but to over-analyze, parse out, or deconstruct the movement of the event would be to lose its meaning, the affect, the thought, and the unthought (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013, p. 263).*

## Feeling

**Joy:** I picked my battles, I let things go, and I loved her.

**Anne:** There were times in that first year that I was crying on the way home cause my heart was so full. I think the hard part was coming home and seeing how happy and how loved my kids are. And my kids were that age when I started. It was shocking to me to see how some children live and what some children, like that's their normal. And so, the six hours that they're at school, that's their safe place. Home is supposed to be your safe place. So, the thought that I was their safe place was like...I took that very seriously, very seriously. I wanted to be that safe place for them.

**Beth:** Loved them both, terrified as shit when they walked in. And then by the end, I loved them, I wouldn't change it for the world. But it is, it's totally cyclical. It comes full circle. You watch them walk out the last day, and you think 'Oh man, when you walked in the first day I was shaken in my boots.' Because you do. There's that buzz in the air.

These selections are honest and real; the participants performing their own subjectivity. We do not spend a great deal of time admitting we love someone, or how our heart feels, or that we are terrified. We like to keep these things hidden. Dowling (2012) points out that affect is a body knowing, knowing vaguely, but not yet a thought. The participants declared these feelings without even a second thought, as if it was something they felt and not something they had to think about.

**Joy:** And then one day, I remember she had a birthday party. She invited everybody in the class, she invited me. I went to the birthday party and two kids were there out of like, twenty. (Long pause).

She had no friends. She had nobody. So, she had no parents, she had no friends, she had one grandmother, and me. (Pause). That was it. And I just remember thinking, this is wrong. This is horrible. Why has this happened? Why wouldn't anybody come?

**Anne:** He left our school, unfortunately he's at another school now. But I saw him last summer at the pool, when I was there with my kids, and I wasn't swimming I was just watching and it was like I knew he was there right away. I could spot him out of like a hundred kids. And then I just kind of watched him and you know, he's with this other boy, and the other boy is bad news, swearing and all that kind of stuff. And then he caught, he caught my eye, and it's just like, it was just like so sweet. Like his eyes just kind of widened and it was just this really beautiful smile and then it was a little [wave]and then he kept playing. The connection was really strong with him. Yeah, he worries me, like he kind of haunts me. He's one that I, I pray for and I hope that he'll make it, but I ...

**L:** I don't know how to say this, but do you just have a sense that he needs prayers?

**A:** Yeah. Yeah, he's one that I worry that down the road he might make some really poor choices.

At least if they stay in the school, I still see them at music, at recess, but now that he's gone it's a lot harder. And he needs so much affirmation, but he would never show you that it meant something to him. But he needed so much.

He gave me, I still have it up on my mirror actually upstairs, he drew me a little star one day. He drew a little star, and cut it out in a circle, and gave it to me. And I still don't know why. But it meant a lot to me, this little star.

**L:** Your connection is not verbal, its more deep-seeded than verbal words.

**A:** I think so, I think so.

These teachers are caught up in the intensity of affect and they arrive somewhere else (MacLure, 2013, p. 106). Joy arrives in a place where the situation she finds herself in does not make sense to her, but her feelings remain strong, "She has me", she says. Anne's experience at the pool is a good example of how affect can be said to flatten the binaries that we have grown accustomed (Papoulias & Collard, 2010 & Jackson & Mazzei, 2013). She and her former student ceased to be teacher and student, adult and child, they were bodies interacting and connecting with one another, she could feel him there. And he could feel her. The briefest of glances confirmed that there was *something* between the two of them. Anne demonstrates her connection by keeping his little star on her mirror and still praying for him.

Connection and shared experience comes up time and again for the participants as they express their feelings towards their students and how shared affective experiences deepen understanding and relationship to the other.

**Beth:** And so, like with her, that little girl, I really connected with her. But it was really just about the small moments. When she was walking out the door, every day after school she would grab my hand, like she would just grab my hand, and I would just squeeze her fingers and I would say "Bye, Sweets!" and then...Her mom told me later, like way later in the year, she would get into the car and say, "Mom, Ms. B. called me

Sweets.” Little things like she came in one day and we had the same pair of shoes on, like these pink Converse runners. And I’m like, “Ok, time to take a picture. We’ve gotta take a picture of that!” And just like those teeny, tiny little things, well they seem tiny, but I think to a little person, you know, they mean that someone’s thinking about me as the individual.

**Beth:** And I’ll never forget one time, I had this video of my dog because she’s a little bit kooky about cauliflower. I videoed Sally with this cauliflower because she would take a piece of cauliflower, and she would put it in her mouth, and she would spit it out, and then she’d jump at it and attack it...it was really cute. So, I just said to the kids, “Do you want to see a video of my dog?” And they’re all cheering or whatever. That year, whenever we would watch a movie or something, I would sit with him and explain to him [Michael] what was happening. So, same thing with Sally. So, in your typical movie at least he’s hearing you know, the dialogue, or music, but Sally wasn’t making any noise she was just jumping around. So, I was kind of describing it to him, and the kids are laughing, so he’s laughing. And then later that day he said to me, “Ah, you know Ms. B., you know what the best part of the day was?”. And I said, “Oh, what’s that?” He’s like, “That movie of Sally. It was so funny, wasn’t it?” And I thought, bless you your soul. You didn’t ...you didn’t even see it, right? You don’t know what cauliflower looks like.

**L:** So what was funny? Was it the experience?

**B:** I think so. And I think the shared experience of like...you know...my teacher and all my friends are laughing so it must be funny. And like that sense of being able to share the joy, do you know what I mean?

**Anne:** I guess it must have been February, his brother fell off a 60-foot cliff at work. He was a construction worker and he died. And so, it was so sad to walk through that with T, but at the same time so beautiful how the group, how the class just loved on him so much. Like they loved on him sooooo much. And were able to say, because they didn't know he died right away. T didn't know his brother died right away, they kind of waited a couple days before they told him, which was kind of awkward. But the next day T was just really sad. So, we shared T is feeling really blue zone, he's really sad because his brother fell off a cliff. So, K puts his hand up and he's like, "I'm really sad, too, because I haven't seen my mom in a long time." And then another little girl says, "I'm really sad too, because I miss my dad." And then another little boy...and they're sharing all these really deep emotional hurts. "I haven't seen my dad ever since I was born. He lives in California." It was just this beautiful, sacred moment where there was such sadness, yet such love. So just seeing them walk through that. We made him a book of love. And what they wrote for him was just...One little girl wrote: T, oh, T. My heart hurts for you. You'll always have his memories in your heart. T, oh, T. Just beautiful. And they're seven. And I have a little girl in my class who has Charge syndrome. She's legally blind, she can see, but she's legally blind, partially deaf, and has a lot of issues, but even what she wanted to write down was: I will hold your hand. Isn't that so sweet. And even she was able to get it, too. And that doesn't come unless you have a caring, loving environment.

These passages bring the physicality, the performativity (Swirski, 2012), the embodiment (Ahmed, 2004), and materiality (Dowling, 2012) of affect to the fore. Rocking with laughter at a dog's antics, sharing real grief and sadness, yet loving through it. The students make no

distinction between how they feel and what they want to do. They will laugh even if they cannot see the reason to laugh. Their hearts hurt for their friend. They will hold their classmate's hand. This affect, the feeling, the intensity they share means they feel with the other, they laugh, they cry, they walk beside the other.

Beth shared a little about one of the tools that Gabriel used in her classroom.

**Beth:** He had this little, teeny, tiny saw. It was like, it was on a push, like the shape of a pen, and he would push it and it would create holes in the paper. The holes would be raised, so when he would colour he would know where the lines were.

This tool has become a metaphor for how I view affect and feeling. The holes the saw creates are the humans, non-humans, and more than humans we are confronted with every moment of our lives. We are forever being created and re-created, and re-created again through our connections between these raised holes. The spaces in between the holes is affect. Seyfert's (2012) between-ness, the encounter can be illustrated in these spaces. Affect is what seeps in or pours through these spaces between the holes, changing how the holes co-constitute one another. The holes remain and to the person not open to seeing, the spaces of affect may go unrecognized. But to these teachers and students making connections in these spaces, some teeny, tiny moments, other moments large and impactful, is where they are being made, be-coming in these spaces.

*I will admit to having a deep fondness for these moments, as they are most closely aligned with the moments that started my interest in affect. The participants interacted and narrated these moments far better than I could ever have hoped. I was always a by-stander; with the shoes, the washroom, and the basketball player. The participants were in the first person, living the*

*moment. I felt these moments. My hand would go over my heart, or to cover my mouth. I would purse my lips and narrow my eyes to almost try and see what the teacher saw at that moment. The participants were almost serene in their re-telling. My field notes remind me that they all spoke softly and slowly through these narratives, a juxtaposition with myself as I felt my stomach tighten at the intensity of it all. Joy and Beth both spoke with a heaviness of being one of the only guests at the birthday party or realizing that Michael was laughing at a situation he could never physically visualize, but Anne was all joy. Her smile lit up our conversation, and there was a twinkle in her eye, when she acted out how her student gave her a little smile and a wave. Beuthin (2014) speaks of not letting constructionist threads hold a narrative so tightly that the narrative becomes distorted, and in these stories, I see this lesson. These moments are perhaps some of the most socially constructed moments of my whole thesis, as I felt heavily invested as these were the exact moments I was seeking to find out more about. But taking Beuthin's advice, I acknowledged my own tension within these moments, realizing the particular constellations (Tinggaard, 2009) within a researcher participant relationship, accepting that there is always a negotiation of meaning within qualitative research, and then setting these tensions aside. In this setting aside, I was able to immerse myself in the story, to co-construct meaning as best I could with the other, and let the effect of affect, the spirit and amazement at these moments, wash over me.*

## **Seeing**

“I had been my whole life a bell, and never knew it until at that moment I was lifted and struck.”

(Annie Dillard, Pilgrim at Tinker Creek)

These stories are the stories of see-ers. The see-ers who in the bustle of a school day and the uneven rhythm of a school year are sliding, moving, feeling. They take the time to connect, not perfectly, but imperfectly with a “permission to see the small things”, as Beth noted. To see the tiny moments, the things that others may miss. They express their seeing, their worldview, in all different manners, yet in their own way believe that education is care.

**Joy:** I think, I think that as I’ve learned as a teacher, I think we all have our gifts and our talents, and through I think my faith, to be honest, I think that teaching for me is almost like my ministry. How can I show love to other people? And so...that...because people, it...just...it just always comes, for some reason, I just, I don’t know why, but it’s, it’s, there’s lots of tough, there’s lots of stuff that comes my way, and I just think that... everyone deserves to be loved, everyone deserves to have a chance.”

I’m not going to go off to UNICEF, I’m not going to do that. I can’t, I know that...and so it’s like, it’s like, “Well what can we do?” You know, everyone’s been called to do something. And you have to kind of figure it out, but I think...for me...it’s not like it was an “A ha” moment, but I would say in the past few years it’s evolved because there’s been tragedies in my classroom. Real...life...tragedies. And, I thought, well, what can I do? How? I can’t stop these things from happening to these families. This is not...as you get older, right? As you know, things happen. So, what can I do? How can I be a helper? What can I do and...and then I remembered that, that Mr. Rodgers’ quote, you know, and he said like, “Bad things happen, but always look for the helpers.” There is always going to be a helper. And so, I...when these bad things were happening, I wept, I cried for these families that I had and then I just... it’s like God just said, “Like, this is

it.” Like you can’t necessarily say the religious part, but you can show the love, the love part. And so, that’s what I’ve just done. And trying to do.

Anne meditates on how she wants to be in her classroom and in her life.

**Anne:** I’d recite Galatians 5:22-23 which is the fruit of the spirit. And I would say, “For the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness...and I would recite that all the way to work. And then when I’d pass a certain stoplight I would say, “I will have your peace, and I will have your joy for myself and for the classroom” and I would repeat that until I got to school. And so, I focused on joy and I focused on peace and it made a huge, huge difference in my classroom and in myself. Because when I would start to feel stressed, I would just stop, take a deep breath and “I will have your peace and I will have your joy.” For myself and for the classroom.

Beth believes that:

**Beth:** I think honestly for me, and coming out of this year of mental health, is that (pause) with some, I would like to say with all kids, but some in particular, their education won’t be as beautiful as it could be if they don’t feel cared about. I think it’s the backbone. I think that kids are actually really intuitive and they know, they sense genuine people and they know when you care about them, and I think that’s the foundation of helping them learn in all areas. Whether that’s math, or whether that’s how to be kind to the next person.”

These teachers are the bells that Annie Dillard speaks of. They see the child, the moment, the sliding. They see, they feel, and they do. Anne is the living embodiment of joy and of peace in her classroom and her actions lead her to know when a beloved student walks into a

pool, to let a student have a little space, and to create a classroom climate where a little girl wants to hold a little boy's hand because he is hurting. Joy is not just a helper, she is help. She grieves, cries, rejoices with families and then helps. She lives out her faith in her classroom. These teachers capture what van Manen (2007) states, "Even our gestures, the way we smile, the tone of our voice, the tilt of our head, and the way we look the other in the eye are expressive of the way we know our world and comport ourselves in this world" (p.22). How we think or feel is how we act, we act is who we are, and who we are is who we may be be-coming.

Beth gave me the honour of reading some of her own work. She had written a paper about what her sight impaired student, Michael had taught her about leadership, but these words also speak of her worldview, of how she views education and care and her role as an educator.

Michael changed my life – as a teacher and as a human being...

At eight years old, Michael exuded such happiness and a zest for life. He was LOVE. He was my leader. And he still inspires me to this day, even though I have now moved to a different school and my contact with him is usually just through an occasional email here and there...

Despite the hardship and challenges that Michael faces because of his visual impairment, he is truly an example of what it means to live love. He has taught me so many things – has been a true leader for me. He showed me the importance of gentle physical touch.

"Ms. B," he would say, "Is it okay if I touch your necklace to see if I know which one you're wearing today?"

Or, "Ms. B, I need you to be my sighted guide when we go to the gym – I forgot my cane at home today." And he would grab my elbow and follow close behind...

When Michael would need me to lead him through the halls at school, I was maybe only just a step ahead, but mostly, we were side by side. When I would sit with him in the classroom, we were side by side. When he would use his cane in the hallways, I would often walk behind him. When he goes on patrols with a sighted partner, he stands side by side with that child...

He taught me the importance of paying attention in the moment.

This is seeing. Beth sees her student as love itself. This acknowledgement of help, and joy, and peace, and love as what we *are*, not what we do, is profound to me. In “The Phenomenology of Practice” van Manen (2007) proposes that practice suggests what points beyond it. These teachers see a situation in a certain way because it is part of their in-seeing (van Manen, 2007), akin to the seeing so eloquently appropriated by Dillard (1974). The participants practical knowing, their being, is always being informed by their in-being, or “their everyday being-involved-with the things of the world” (van Manen, 2007). Their actions speak to their worldview and how they view care in education.

Another dimension of this seeing and being, as care being who we *are* and not just what we do, brings to mind Ahmed’s (2004) observations on Audre Lorde’s (1984) “Sister Outsider” in which the girl thinks there is a roach that sits between her body and the woman in the fur coat and hat. In looking for the roach, the girl discovers the hate and disdain the lady exudes is not for some imaginary creature, but for her, this little girl, and the fancy woman’s desire to not be dirtied by this girl’s presence. In that moment, the girl registers herself as the hate this woman feels. She is hate. In my current work, I have been trying to understand affect, the unnamed *something* that I only felt until I discovered the *concept*, to get a little closer to how affect feels to another, trying to use more words, or better words to describe what happens when we experience

affect, but maybe we *are* affect. Maybe our being, or not being, our nearness and our distance, our seeing and our blindness is all I can hope to describe in this work. Dillard notes she was thinking about nothing at all before she saw the tree with the lights, and affect is much the same. We cannot think affect into being, we can just wait and be open to seeing, be open to the connection, the relation, and the care. These teachers are Dillard's bells, they are effected by affect, they slide closer to another, they sometimes take action, sometimes remain still.

### **Knowing, Moving, Feeling, Seeing... *Be-coming***

Earlier I stated that I think that life is an and/and proposition, that every experience and story we have could easily be replaced by another. Through a diffractive lens, the and/and proposition has taken on another meaning as Deleuze & Guattari (2004 in MacLure, 2013) state, "things relate in the material-discursive manifold in a logic of 'and'". Now I also believe that life is a *with* proposition. That not only are there no binaries but there is a passing into, an emerging (Massumi, 2005). I am now more aware of knowing-with, as I have come to know with my participants, with their stories, with my environment, and even with the *something* that I suspected when I first became interested in affect. Diffraction is how waves spread out and the corresponding interference as they pass over an edge, this is a fitting image as much of my theoretical discussion has surrounded the dense topographical folds (Manning, 2010), and flattening of binaries (Papoulias & Collard, 2010), where one experience, one thought, one feeling meets another, and creates another be-coming. Every knowing-with, moving-with, feeling,-with or seeing-with experience created a new be-coming in me. A dynamic continuous be-coming where I came to understand that there is a web of see-ers that hold a worldview that sees the small, the subtle gestures that are the sensations that may lead to acts of care, and an

alternate thought of education where caring comes before anything else we may accomplish in our classrooms.

## Chapter 5: We Remain With

### This Bridge

This bridge will only take you halfway there  
To those mysterious lands you long to see:  
Through gypsy camps and swirling Arab fairs  
And moonlit words where unicorns run free.  
So come and walk awhile with me and share  
The twisting trails and wondrous worlds I've known.  
But this bridge will only take you halfway there-  
The last few steps you'll have to take alone.

Shel Silverstein

This children's poem about imaginary and faraway lands with twisting trails and unicorns speaks to me of the experience I have had writing this thesis. While I did not reach faraway lands, I outstretched my hand past the realm in which I was comfortable to look at the experiences and stories of others. I certainly never spied a unicorn in all my conversations, and reading, and writing, but I walk past this experience realizing just how unique and particular each of our stories are. And, yet I see that in our uniqueness and particularity there are threads that bind us together.

## **The Bridge: Only Halfway There**

The imagery of this bridge only going halfway brings together many revelations and ideas I have had along the way. I thought my thesis would build a bridge to the other side of wherever I was going. My tendency to like numbers and charts and objectives, led me to believe at the end of my bridge would be answers to hard questions, objective truths, definitive courses of action. That there would be no unanswered questions. But what I am privileged and honoured to have built is a bridge halfway to more questions, more conversations, more books to be read, and more imaginings to where inquiry may lead. I have come to realize that this work is just my work; imperfect, unfinished, but *my* work. I could have chosen a different topic all those months ago, I could have chosen different participants, read different books, searched different articles, but I chose this work. This work that looks at seeing caring through the affective interactions experienced by like-minded people who see the importance of care in education.

The other half of the bridge might be made up of teachers' stories. These stories are not mine; they are the teacher's stories. Their stories inscribe and imbue this work with its meaning, with affect and sensation unencumbered by meaning. I learned to simply let them perform (Swirski, 2013) their stories, their lives, their own truths (Hatch, 2002). I interacted with them on the hyphen (Granek, 2012) as we shared our experiences and our understandings. The stories produced were at this time and in this place, how we are today (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013), how we view care and how we educate, limited only by the experience of trying to capture lived experience. I used to be saddened when I thought about only being able to, at best, capture a moment in time, but as I have had more time to reflect on this moment, I realize what an anomaly it is to be able to pause and capture one moment in time. We don't make that a priority very often, and to pause means that for a split second you were present in the moment instead of

rushing by to the next moment, or that you allowed yourself to be swept up in the moment and simply felt the sensation of being lifted off the ground.

My bridge is only half complete because readers of this thesis must find their own meaning and experiences from our work here, feel addressed by our work (van Manen, 2007). I have tried to re-create even a small bit of a Bakhtin novelness in that the voices heard are polyvocal (Kim, 2016), non-hierarchical, and most importantly, heuristic (Rosiek & Atkinson, 2007). I have resisted with everything that is within me to come to conclusions, to over-analyze, to create signposts within my writing that scream, “This way!”. It was possibly the hardest part of my writing process, to open my hands and give the story to others. I used to think that books were owned by the author, even after I had read them they were still exclusively the author’s. The ideas, the concepts, the themes were mine to read not own. Now I know differently. Authors take a courageous leap in not only writing their words but in sharing ownership of their work. To take our innermost thoughts and revelations and invite someone to interact, and intra-act, and possibly join their own ideas with ours may be one of the most courageous things you can do. It means that you may change a person’s mind, you may spark a memory or an experience, or you may leave them completely unaffected. All courageous endeavours.

**So come and walk a while with me and share.** All my life, I have always been a rushed person. Next task, next report, next person. Even though affective moments perforated my reality, I remained oblivious. I was always in a hurry. Maybe it was youth, maybe it was ambition, maybe it was not knowing any better. This work has given me permission to be still awhile, to breathe a while, to slow down long enough to *see* affective moments. In reading and writing, I have spent a great deal of time by myself, thinking a while, arguing a while, imagining a while. With my participants, we have sat and talked a while. It was so enjoyable, so

meaningful. I hate a fuss made over me. Birthdays, wedding, graduation, all make me uncomfortable. I think the downside of this aversion makes it hard to believe that people are interested in me, care about me, want to celebrate with me because I never give them the opportunity. So, I felt honoured that my participants cared enough about my work and my interests to sit awhile with me.

And we did sit a while, and we did share. We laughed, and gasped, and talked over each other, and encountered silences that were hard to break. In all of this, we were together. For my part, I can say that I feel like something was made, maybe not understood completely, but something was made (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013). The stories, experiences, and ideas that I had going into our conversations intermingled with the participants'. Sometimes this intermingling led me to see my own experiences in a new light and sometimes I felt like I had only scratched the surface of my experiences. But this was the beauty of it; the opportunity, the acknowledgement that we have the potential to be changed and to change each other and our stories, that we are affected and affect others.

**The twisting trails.** Becoming has been and will continue to be my twisting trail. Just when you think you are in a clearing and there is room to breathe, you realize your path is changing, perhaps your worldview has shifted, and you must continue on. As Massumi (1992 in Jackson & Mazzei, 2013) states, "Becoming cannot be adequately described. If it could, it would already "be" what it is becoming, in which case it wouldn't be becoming at all" (p.103). I have heard that running coaches often advise runners to never glance back, because in that split second they will lose their lead. The moment to glance back could be a wasted victory. This is the trick of be-coming, describing be-coming is their unbecoming. Unlike the runner's finish line, be-coming is not pre-determined. Be-coming is like the wave that we get swept up in and

deposited somewhere else. The being swept away is the be-coming, when you reach the destination you are already something else (MacLure, 2013).

I have come to think of this *being swept away* as learning how to see the multiple discourses that are operating in our relationships. For my part, this study firmly placed me in dialogical relations where care was paramount, after all, the participants were selected based on their interest in care and education. These discourses have impacted my positioning (Davies, 1992) and have altered the narrativization of my life, my identity (Mishler, 1999) by allowing me to see and feel how other teachers are be-coming caring teachers. These conversations, but perhaps more importantly, be-coming conscious of the affect I saw and felt within these conversations, have positioned me to want to know more about how affect is at work in our classrooms and in our lives. For these teachers, their be-coming is in the moments they spend with their students—at birthday parties, under desks, or being a sighted guide. My be-coming is in listening to their stories, sharing my own experiences, and writing this thesis—be-coming more aware of myself and my worldview.

**And wondrous worlds I've known.** At times during this study I think I tricked myself, despite my devoted nature to the particular and contextual, that I would maybe, just maybe miraculously stumble onto some overarching understanding of affect. Every time I read a new article, or jumped into a new book, or had another conversation, I would relish the moment of discovery I would take from these encounters. Sometimes I would think to myself, if only I could find the link between all these ideas, feelings, and moments. But the fact is, there is no need to find a link beyond human experience, and now I know that is enough. And not only enough, but more than enough.

When I started on this journey long ago, I had no idea why my breath caught in my chest, or I brought my hand up to my heart. I did not ignore these gestures, but I certainly did not linger in them either. Through my research, I can discuss the physical changes of affect (Papoulias & Collard, 2010), the affective interactions (Seyfert, 2012), and the performativity (Swirski, 2013) of affect to a greater degree than when I started. But I still cannot capture the *something* that I still feel. All I can do is recognize and acknowledge these moments.

Through my work, I have come to give myself permission to linger in these spaces, to just be in the *something*. I recently had an experience with another person who was highly emotionally charged in the moment. She reached out to hug me, something I am usually not too keen on, and commented how this particular moment was filled with so many emotions. My old self would have cracked a joke, avoided eye contact, prayed for this awkward, yet necessary and natural show of emotion to abate. But in this moment, I did not. I let her hug me, and when we parted I breathed in the moment as I placed my hand on my heart and simply said, “Moments like these are good for us, good for our heart.” She smiled and went on. I moved on, but I let that moment in and that is all there is.

This is the work of the moments we are in. They are just moments. Some lift you up, some bring you sadness, some are only understood in rushes of reflection long after the fact or trickle in over time. All these moments bring you the experience of what it is to be human. What I have come to think on is the ability of teachers to see the individual in the moment. The specific situation, the capacity of one person, the challenges and successes of but one child in one moment. There is an undeniable attentiveness and a constant knowing-with, moving-with, feeling-with, and seeing-with on the part of these teachers.

The truth is, that my wondrous worlds grew smaller and smaller the deeper I grew in connection and communion with participants. But they are no less wondrous because they contain tiny slidings, miniscule gestures, the briefest of glances, tiny moments. By giving myself permission to dwell in the small, I have opened up a whole new world to myself and hopefully started a conversation with others. Will I always dwell in the affective, in the tiny, the next, the again, the more? Perhaps not, but I hope so. I will remember every time I do dwell in the affective, in the subtle, all these moments and experiences I had during the course of this work that made me more convinced than ever that tiny things matter (Hohti, 2016, p. 1157).

**The last few steps you'll have to take alone.** Writing a thesis is lonely work. I have spent many hours, days reading and writing, re-reading and re-writing again. The conversations I had with participants were like lights at the end of a dark tunnel. I could feel the imposing darkness of solitude every time a conversation would finish and the tasks of transcribing and writing and reflection would be once again at hand. Having said all this, this has been an experience like no other. I would not trade it for anything. Writing has become a larger part of my life than I had expected. In fact, I now see it as part of my be-coming. That the ideas I toyed with on the page, became the ideas that I played around with in my life.

I recently read a book entitled “Grit” by Dr. Angela Duckworth (2016). At the end of the book, she quotes a recent MacArthur winner, Ta-Nehisi Coates, who speaks of his writing process.

The challenge of writing

Is to see your horribleness on the page.

To see your terribleness

And then go to bed.

And wake up the next day,

And take that horribleness and that terribleness,

And refine it.  
And make it not so terrible and not so horrible  
And then go to bed again.  
And come the next day,  
And refine it a little bit more,  
And make it not so bad.  
And then to go to bed the next day.  
And do it again,  
And make it maybe average  
And then one more time,  
If you're lucky,  
Maybe you get to good.  
And if you're done that,  
That's a success.

(p. 277)

When I embarked on this work, I did not consider myself a writer, and while I still do not consider myself skilled at the task, I now understand writing to be putting your thoughts and ideas on the page, no matter what it looks like. It does not have to be pretty, in fact, it can be horrible, but it has to be you.

I have come to see the value in rest and refining. Ideas, concepts, and words cannot be rushed. You simply cannot will them into being. Perhaps, one of the hardest parts of writing is letting something just be. An ugly sentence, an incomplete thought almost always remained so until I took some rest. Whatever happened in my subconscious in those moments and hours of rest almost always made the next sentence, or idea, or day better. If rest was the hardest part of writing then refining was a close second. It is so hard to let go of a favorite line or cherished idea when it no longer makes sense in the context. A lot like life. Equally difficult was making subtle changes to improve my writing. I loathed deleting a paragraph that I had worked hours

on, but I rarely regretted it. If anything, the space made vacant was where the next great idea could go, and the idea after that, and the idea after that.

Rest and refining, regressing and improving do not happen once and for all, but occur again and again as Coates (Duckworth, 2016) states in his writing. There were times when it would have been easier to quit, when the latest draft seemed worse than a former draft, but I kept writing again and again and again. It reminds me a lot of the participants who chose the little moments again and again and again. Who chose care time and again. In one of my drafts I noted that what our eyes are trained on may very well be what we view to be the most important. My eyes have always been focused on the tiny, the gesture, the moment, and by extension I remained focused on this writing as a way of remaining in what means the world to me, that education is care.

And lastly, what is success? As Coates (MacArthur Foundation, 2015) states in an interview, “We labour in the dark, if anybody reads what I’m doing, that’s a success.” If one person reads this thesis, it’s a success. If they read it, and engage with my writing, seeing their own experience and stories with the ones contained in this work, I will have shot the moon. If I make one person think for a moment longer than they would have about shoes on a desk, or a birthday party, or about joy and peace residing within a teacher, and maybe even recall moments in their own lives, then I will have done my job. But even if no one interacts with or sees themselves in this thesis, this work can stand on its own as a marker of my particular thoughts, at this time, in this place.

**A Final Thought: Where do we go from here?**

This is a question that has plagued me the whole time I have been conceptualizing, researching, and writing my thesis. The truth is: we stay here. We stay in the miniscule slidings, in the conversation, in the laughter and the silence, in the frustration and the ambivalence. We stay close to one another. We stay where we can see the small things around us, and are quiet enough to register a feeling, a heaviness. I know I will grow sad when one day I realize I did not act with the greatest of care to a student. That I was too busy, too sure of myself, too blind to the person in front of me. It will perhaps be a sadness made all the greater because I should know better, after all I spent years of my life studying care. But redemption in that moment is that I now know for certain there are others out there seeing, and knowing, and helping. That maybe what I miss, is what they cannot help but be focused on. That for every instance we miss, there is another opportunity waiting if we only open our eyes, extend a hand, and proclaim in the smallest voice “I see you”.

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## **Appendix A: REB Approval**

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR  
Lisa McCann

DEPARTMENT  
Education

REB#  
2017-043

SUPERVISOR:  
Dr. Paul Hart

TITLE  
Be-coming to care: Teachers' Perspectives on Caring

APPROVED ON:  
March 9, 2017

RENEWAL DATE:  
March 9, 2018

APPROVAL OF:  
Application For Behavioural Research Ethics Review  
Consent Form  
Interview Guidelines

Full Board Meeting

Delegated Review

The University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named research project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this research project, and for ensuring that the authorized research is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol, consent process or documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

#### ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: <http://www.uregina.ca/research/for-faculty-staff/ethics-compliance/human/forms1/ethics-forms.html>.



Dr. Katherine Robinson  
Chair, Research Ethics Board

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Please send all correspondence to:

Research Office  
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Research and Innovation Centre 109  
Regina, SK S4S 0A2  
Telephone: (306) 585-4775 Fax: (306) 585-4893  
[research.ethics@uregina.ca](mailto:research.ethics@uregina.ca)

## **Appendix B: Participant Consent Forms**

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**Project Title:** Be-coming to Care: Teachers' Perspectives on Caring

**Researcher(s):** Lisa McCann, Faculty of Education, Graduate Student, University of Regina, 306.205.2014, [mccann4l@uregina.ca](mailto:mccann4l@uregina.ca).

**Supervisor:** Dr. Paul Hart, Faculty of Education, 306.585.4626, [Paul.Hart@uregina.ca](mailto:Paul.Hart@uregina.ca)

**Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:**

- To gain a deeper understanding of how teachers care for their students and what impact this has on their identity as a teacher
- Data collected will be used in a Masters' thesis focusing on how teachers care for students and construct their identity as teachers based on their perspectives on caring

**Procedures:**

- Interviews will be held with participants, lasting approximately 1 hour, at a mutually agreed upon location and time. Interviews will be recorded.
- Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role.

**Potential Risks:**

- There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research
- Participants will be given a copy of the transcript obtained from interview and all passages of thesis relevant to their participation. Participants will have the opportunity to edit, revise, or delete any information they so choose at any time. The thesis, in its entirety, will be made available upon completion.

**Confidentiality:**

- Participants' identities within the completed work will be safeguarded through the use of pseudonyms.
- Details of the school and other possibly identifying information will be omitted or disguised in the final thesis.
- All information regarding participants and data collected will be stored on a password protected computer and a specially designated usb drive. All paper work will be stored in a locked filing cabinet.
- **Storage of Data:** All data will be stored for a duration of five years. After that time, all data will be electronically deleted or shredded.

**Right to Withdraw:**

Your participation is voluntary and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the interview process for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.

- Should you wish to withdraw, all data collected relevant to your participation will be destroyed.

- Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until June 1, 2017. After this date, it is possible that some results have been analyzed, written up and/or presented and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

**Follow up:**

- To obtain results from the study, please contact researcher using information at the top of page 1.

**Questions or Concerns:**

- Contact the researcher using the information at the top of page 1;
- This project has been approved on ethical grounds by the UofR Research Ethics Board on (insert date). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the committee at (306-585-4775 or [research.ethics@uregina.ca](mailto:research.ethics@uregina.ca)). Out of town participants may call collect.

**SIGNED CONSENT**

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

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
_____	_____	
<i>Researcher's Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>	

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