

Human-to-Human Relationship Model as a Strategy for Student (and Teacher) Success

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Abstract

The goal of teaching is arguably best and most reliably achieved not by great teachers or even their most diligent students, but through interpersonal relationships between them, built on the prerequisite of treating each other as people instead of the stereotypical "teacher" and "student". This means that they are, first and foremost, not only persons, rather than categories or role players, but utterly unique individual human beings. Proximity ethics, also known as ethics of care, provides the conceptual formulation of an I-You connection between human beings, something that distinguishes typical teacher-student interaction from a genuine human-to-human relationship between teacher and student. Further, proximity ethics sheds light on the nature of these I-You relationships, especially where there exists an obligation on the part of one individual to care for and help meet the needs of the other. This is not a novel formulation; to say that there is a great deal of associated scholarship to be found in the field of relational pedagogy is a vast understatement. What this article aims to contribute is insight gained as a result of centering nursing theorist Joyce Travelbee's theory of the Human-to-Human Relationship as the process by which these most impactful of relationships can be created between teachers and students. The authors discuss in detail Travelbee's five phases: encounter, emerging identities, empathy, sympathy, and realization of the Human-to-Human Relationship in rapport, revealing the critical issues and challenge that must be addressed for each phase, many of which feature the presence and pertinence of familiar aspects of Process Education. The authors then explain why it is the Human-to-Human Relationship between teacher and student, with its characteristics of caring and relation, that holds the key to student success, finally focusing on how Process Education might borrow that key and offer teachers and students alike promise of greater success.

"A fog of forgetfulness is looming over education. Forgotten in the fog is that education is about human beings. And as schools are places where human beings get together, we have also forgotten that education is primarily about human beings who are in relation with one another."

(Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004, p. 4)

Introduction

"The ultimate goal of education is student success" is a phrase so trite that you, dear reader, are probably sighing or rolling your eyes right now. The difficulty, we're all assured in countless conferences, books, and workshops, is in what can be done to make students successful: Teach this way...use these tools...etc. But in looking back at our own experiences in school, **none** of us had student experiences. Our individual experiences occurred during specific times, as we did specific things, interacting in memorable or dull ways with other individuals, some given greater authority in the place we gathered than others. We say "When I was a student..." or "My students this semester..." but *student* is an abstract noun! We experience life as concrete and individual human beings with a full array of thoughts, feelings, and associations at every moment we are conscious and breathing. In our rush to render this

individual concreteness as something that can be classed and dealt with theoretically, we focus beyond the unique individual's experiences, as if we can meaningfully affect human beings without worrying too much about individual human experiences. Thus, student success without any flesh and blood students. Or teachers.

And while this may be true in the most meaningful sense, if we insist on standing that ground, there isn't much more we can say. This article would need to end here.

It obviously does not.

We shall proceed and make careful use of abstract classes but must remain aware that phrases such as *student success* are as deceptive as they are convenient, leading us to potentially overlook the individual human experiences taking place in the classroom. If *student success* has any meaning that is not purely statistical or theoretical, that meaning **must** be at the level of individual human experience. Indeed, that is where this article focuses: on the individual human experiences that first constitute education and then student success. It should not be terribly surprising that the level of meaning beyond the pure solipsistic individual is that of human beings in relation with one another: You and me. Or in the classroom and preferred terms of pedagogy, two individuals we recognize in relation to one another as "student" and "teacher."

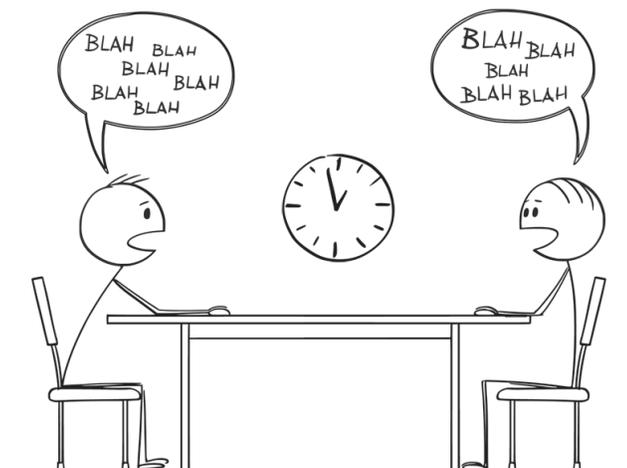
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At its most effective, this basic educational relationship is one of caring and not without parallels in the field of nursing. Nurse and author Joyce Travelbee wrote extensively about the relationship between carer and patient, creating the Human-to-Human Relationship model which described the five-stage process carer and patient move through from their first meeting, where they are only abstract classes to one another (carer and patient) to an eventual relationship marked by rapport where they experience one another as unique individuals (you and me). The authors take the liberty of changing the locus of the relationship of caring from nursing to education, replacing carer with teacher and patient with student within the Human-to-Human Relationship model.

What follows is an examination of the five stages of the model, with in-depth discussion of the important characteristics of each stage, including where, how, and to what degree these characteristics are in accord with the scholarship of Process Education. Through this process, we find that the Human-to-Human Relationship model is itself an example of relational pedagogy, a relatively recent approach to education where theory is put into practice through the intentional building of nurturing relationships between teachers and students. We then move temporarily from abstract discussion to concrete individual experience through examples of students and teachers building human-to-human relationships. Finally, the authors demonstrate that it is the human-to-human relationship between individual teacher and student, that is most promising for helping the individual student to succeed. This is laid out theoretically, buttressed with a wide range of statistics, and meaningfully affirmed through specific individual students sharing their personal experiences of how their relationships with specific individual teachers was critical to their success...something which is, after all, is the goal of education.

Figure 1



Pre-requisites to Building a Human Relationship

Before we can begin to describe how to build a human-to-human relationship, we must take a moment to look at what relationships are made of and how they come to be. If we had a recipe for a basic human relationship, it might read as follows:

Basic Human Relationship

(see Figure 1; serves 2)

Ingredients: 2 human beings

Directions:

Step 1: Put both humans together in the same place for some period of time.

Step 2: Test for doneness (presence of a relationship) by poking with a toothpick by checking for the presence of dialog.

Recipe notes: Step 1 concerns the context of a relationship between the two humans; it extends both temporally and physically. Step 2 focuses on dialog, which is the most basic way that human beings interact with one another. It is not limited to only verbal communication but can also include body language, such as a shared smile or congratulatory fist bump. Without dialog, while we might assume a relationship exists, those in it may simply be two human beings holding mutual regard for one another, without either knowing they are meaningful to the other.

Interestingly, nurse and researcher Barbara Tarlow (1996) notes that three of the prerequisites and constants in order for caring to begin are **time** (actual physical time) **being there** (presence), and **talking** (dialogue). This is in perfect alignment with Hintze et al. (2015) who explain that meeting as human beings occurs “in that moment, in that meeting, and during that dialogue” (p. 6).

Time

Of these three pre-requisites (time, presence, and dialog), time is the most easily understood as it mirrors our daily experience in relationships with others. From our celebration of anniversaries in personal relationships (the length of time we’ve been together) to speaking of contact hours between student and teacher, we intuitively and practically understand that relationships can only happen when the participants are together for some duration.

Presence

Unlike time, *presence* is not at all an obvious concept. Being present to or for someone is not the same as existing near

them for a period of time or even interacting with them; presence requires meeting the other as a human being. Using the terminology of proximity ethics as formulated by Hintze et al. (2015), a meeting of two human beings, each of whom is present for the other is an “I-You” meeting—Martin Buber’s “I-Thou” (Buber & Kaufmann, 1970)—where a bond is formed between the two as a result of the meeting. (A relation between two individuals where there is no mutual presence is an “I-It” connection.)

The difference between these two kinds of presence is poignantly explored by James Lang, professor of practice at the University of Notre Dame’s Kaneb Center for Teaching Excellence, as he recounts working in a soup kitchen with his daughter. As he was busy focusing on placing food on trays and handing trays to people, he was gently thanked by a man who had stopped and made eye contact after receiving his tray. In Lang’s words, “I was providing food but was not really present to the people in that line—at least until that man broke the barrier between us” (Lang, 2015, para. 7). In other words, Lang saw himself as an “I” but treated the people he was serving as a series of “It” objects. His comfortable assumption of I-It stopped working when someone reached out to him not as an It, but as a You. The words and face of the Other¹ “interrupted” him, as the philosopher Levinas phrases it (1969), immediately shifting “I-It” to “I-You.”

This profound I-You meeting led Lang to focus on a “pedagogy of presence”—the idea that there is value in being present as a human being when teaching (Lang, 2015). Presence entails obligation that is there from the first meeting. Lang admits to feeling shame for previously not taking the time and effort to be fully present for the individuals he was helping in the soup kitchen (2015). We might ask why Lang would feel this particular emotion. After all, wasn’t he meeting the most obvious need of those he was helping by ensuring they received food? The answer is, as Levinas reminds us, that the obligation to the Other is an ethical demand that is there even if we don’t see it or choose to ignore it: “I am not free to ignore the meaningful world into which the face of the Other has introduced me...it is irrecusable” (Lévinas, 1969, p. 219). Hintze et al. (2015) elaborate:

(The) foundational obligation that results from the meeting of two individuals, face-to-face, is not rational; it occurs prior to our reflecting upon the situation vis-a-vis the Other or even the status or particular circumstances of the Other. It is one of the most basic mechanisms that occur in and between human beings. (p. 7)

What is the nature of the ethical demand our presence places upon us? According to the ethicist Løgstrup (1956/1997), we have some part of the Other’s life in our hands and have only two options: whether to make their life large or small, bright or drab, rich or dull, threatening or secure. There is no neutral position; if we do not admit of our obligation and continue in “I-It” mode with the other, we refuse their presence, deny their humanity, treat them as an object, task, obstacle, or worst of all, a means to our own ends. *Psychopathy* could be defined as the pathological denial of the ethical, as, according to Patrick et al., the psychopath lacks empathy and exploits others for their own purposes (2009). Derrida (2011) shows us the utterly alienating result the individual experiences when led into but ultimately refused a mutual “I-You” connection

I know a sentence that is still more terrifying, more terribly ambiguous than “I am alone,” and it is, isolated from any other determining context, the sentence that would say to the other: “I am alone with you.” Meditate on the abyss of such a sentence: I am alone with you, with you I am alone, alone in all the world. (p. 1)

The opposite of the psychopath would be an individual who not only sees and understands the obligation that human presence entails, but who chooses a vocation dedicated to being present for Others and making their lives larger, brighter, richer, and more secure—in short, to caring for Others. While there are many vocations overtly dedicated to caring for others (e.g., nursing, social work, psychology), we may not typically count teaching among them, at least beyond the primary years. But as Owens and Ennis (2005) share in their work *The Ethic of Care in Teaching: An Overview of Supportive Literature*, “The caring ethic suggests that teachers approach student needs from the subjective perspective of ‘I must do something’ rather than the more objective ‘something must be done’ approach” (p. 393). For a teacher, accepting the ethical demand/obligation entails being genuinely present for students and working to build mutual “I-You” relationships with them, in addition to (or possibly as fundamental to) fulfilling any unique disciplinary function.

Dialogue

“That we are compelled to respond, with words or actions, when approached (met) by the Other, is what creates our responsibility to the Other. It is only through dialogue that I and You can relate and fully meet.” (Hintze et al., 2015, p. 6)

1 Note that the authors use “Other” (capitalized), as a correlate for “You” in an “I-You” relation. The same relation can be rendered somewhat less impactfully as “Self-Other”. Our hope is to preserve the primacy of a specific Other as well as to distinguish it from the simple alternative expressed by the uncapitalized “other”.

Imagine two people sitting on a park bench. How would we determine if those individuals had a relationship with one another? Our basic recipe noted that the existence of dialogue should be taken as a sign of relationship between two people. We would, in simple terms, look to see how they interact. Do they speak with one another? Is there body language wherein they mirror one another (Iacoboni, 2009)? Might one show the other something on their phone and they both chuckle about it? All these actions would count as dialog and would indeed lead us to conclude that they shared the bond of a relationship, no matter how temporary or incidental it might be.

Dialogue is what triggers us to shift from “I-It” to “I-You”; as expressed by Eide et al. (2011), “To say anything at all is to tell of ourselves, more or less, but always something; even our tone, whether in anger or humor, opens ourselves up to the Other” (p. 69). When the gentleman in the soup kitchen spoke to Lang (2015), saying “Hey, thank you. I really appreciate what you guys are doing. Without folks like you, there wouldn’t be ...” (para. 3), he instantly became a “You” to Lang’s “I”.

Paolo Freire (2000) gives us additional vocabulary when he writes, “Whereas faith in humankind is an *a priori* requirement for dialogue, trust is established by dialogue” (p. 91). In these terms, in addition to his literal words, the gentleman communicated “I have faith in your humanity and I trust you”. Little wonder, then, that Lang was stopped short upon experiencing the interruption of the Other! Though he doesn’t use the term *dialogue*, Lang (2015) speaks of it in sharing his understanding and reaction:

What he wanted with his meal, I realized, was a moment of human connection. That seemed as important to him as the food. After he passed by, I made more of an effort to look up from my task and observe the people in line. And I was surprised to note how many of them were watching the volunteers, waiting to make eye contact and say a word or two of thanks. I realized how many people had passed before me already and seen nothing but the top of my head and a gloved hand. (para. 5)

In retrospect, it seems obvious that Lang was engaged in a situation of caring. His very actions were giving hungry people food to eat; how much more basic can caring be? Yet somehow the human dimension of caring had slipped by, ostensibly because of his focus on the actual task at hand (i.e., giving food to those in line). It was dialog that pulled Lang back to the essence of a caring relationship.

Nel Noddings, educator and philosopher specializing in the ethics of care, conceptualized dialogue as one of four

sequences in caring relationships, preceded by modelling (showing what caring is), practice (doing), and confirmation (validating). She understood that dialogue “reflects an open-ended common search for understanding, empathy, and appreciation” (Noddings, 2010a).

Not only is dialogue the catalyst for human relationships; it is also how we maintain them. We cannot use dialogue to build a relationship and then revert to silence without seeing that relationship dissolve; a human relationship continues and can be made ever stronger and resilient through continued dialogue. This is also true of relationships between students and teachers, as it is dialogue that “allows students to connect to each other and the teacher through language and shared experience” (Owens & Ennis, 2005, p. 395). While there are some specific particulars of student-teacher relationships, the importance of dialogue as their catalyst and means of maintenance is not one of them.

Nursing and Teaching as Relationships of Caring

Both nursing and teaching are relationships of caring based on interpersonal connections, facilitating the progress of another, and assisting in meeting unmet needs. Disciplinary differences aside, the success of each practitioner depends, in great measure, on their willingness to be open to the Other and meet them in an “I-You” relationship, accepting the obligation of helping/caring for the Other. And while we might not be accustomed to calling a tenured professor of Electrical Engineering (for example) a “carer”, Noddings explains that *caring* also refers to “the relationship between student and teacher, not just the person who cares...as teachers work closely with students, we will be moved by their different needs and interests” (Noddings, 1999, p. 14).

Hintze, et al. (2015) explored the applicability of proximity ethics as an ethic of care to the classroom and teacher student relationships in their article “Between You and Me: A Comparison of Proximity Ethics and Process Education,” but ultimately determined that beyond providing some limits and guardrails (e.g., act always in the best interest of the student), it didn’t provide a great deal of guidance. While this lack of prescriptiveness is admittedly one of the strengths of proximity ethics as an ethical “system”—because one should use whatever works in a given situation—it also leaves us guessing with respect to how to put its ideals into practice other than in a case-by-case way.

It is on this basis of teacher-as-carer that the authors introduce the Human-to-Human Relationship model of Joyce Travelbee as one applicable to educators.

Travelbee's Human-to-Human Relationship

Joyce Travelbee (1926-1973) was a nurse and nursing theorist who focused on the interpersonal aspects of nursing as well as psychiatric nursing (Petiprin, 2023). Her most impactful contribution to nursing education is her five-phase model of the Human-to-Human Relationship (see Figure 2) which she called "the means through which the purpose of nursing is fulfilled" (Travelbee, 1971, p. 119). The authors are confident that this holds true as well for education and its purpose, a point that will be made later through discussion of the model's phases (listed in Table 1).

Table 1 The Model's Five Phases

Phase 1	The Original Encounter
Phase 2	Emerging Identities
Phase 3	Empathy
Phase 4	Sympathy
Phase 5	Rapport

Definitions

In reading Travelbee's *Interpersonal Aspects of Nursing*, we can pull together a definition of *the Human-to-Human Relationship* as

an experience or series of experiences between the human being who is the nurse and an ill person, or an individual in need of the services of the nurse... who possesses and uses a disciplined intellectual approach to problems combined with the therapeutic use of self; it is purposefully established and maintained by the nurse practitioner (1971).

Transposed to the educational context, we read it as

The Human-to-Human Relationship consists of experiences between the teacher and student wherein the teacher uses a disciplined intellectual approach to problems combined with the therapeutic use of self; these relationships are purposefully created and maintained by the teacher.

For Travelbee (1971), a human being is not defined biologically (as we might expect), but as "a unique irreplaceable individual—a one-time being in this world, like yet unlike any person who ever lived or ever will live" (p. 26). This is in accord with proximity ethics and tells us that a Human-to-Human Relationship will be of the "I-You" variety, with all that entails vis-à-vis ethical obligation.

The "disciplined intellectual approach" (Travelbee, 1971, p. 17) is not, to use today's popular phrasing, 'vibes-based'; the teacher is a professional who evinces self-discipline in how they approach problems.

Combined with the disciplined intellectual approach is "therapeutic use of self" (Travelbee, 1971, p. 19). The meaning of this phrase is far from obvious. We gain basic but critical insight in considering the term *therapeutic* from an etymological perspective. *Therapeutic* (θεραπευτικός in ancient Greek) is usually presumed to be focused on healing but the stem *therapeo* (θεραπέω) literally means to "attend, do service, take care of" (Liddell & Scott, 1889) or perhaps more usefully in the French as *s'occuper de, entretenir, soigner* (English: to take care of, maintain, look after) (Bailly, 1935, p. 928). *Therapeutic use of self* is thus using oneself to attend to or care for another.

Travelbee explains *use of self* as using one's personality and elaborates that it is done consciously and with self-awareness, with the goal of establishing relatedness (Travelbee, 1971, p. 19). Lest we mistake use of one's personality, even when done consciously and with awareness, as a trivial matter, Travelbee (1971) informs us that "it requires self insight (sic), self understanding (sic), an understanding of the dynamics of human behavior, ability to interpret one's own behavior as well as the behavior of others, and the ability to intervene effectively" (p. 19). Echoing Travelbee, author and previous leader for the Council of Nursing Ethics, R. S. Natvig (2004) calls one's self "the most important tool one has" (p. 95).

Using ourselves in this way is decidedly non-trivial, but neither is it something most of us don't do on a daily basis, to a greater or lesser extent. It is awareness of how we affect and are affected by those with whom we interact and the ability to mediate our actions on the basis of feedback from others. It is seeing confusion on the face of someone you are talking to and explaining something you said as a result. It is appreciating that you made a wrong assumption about someone you are talking to and apologizing and correcting yourself. It is, plainly put, most "I-You" interactions when understood as such, with the implicit goal of ever clearer dialogue and a more caring relationship.

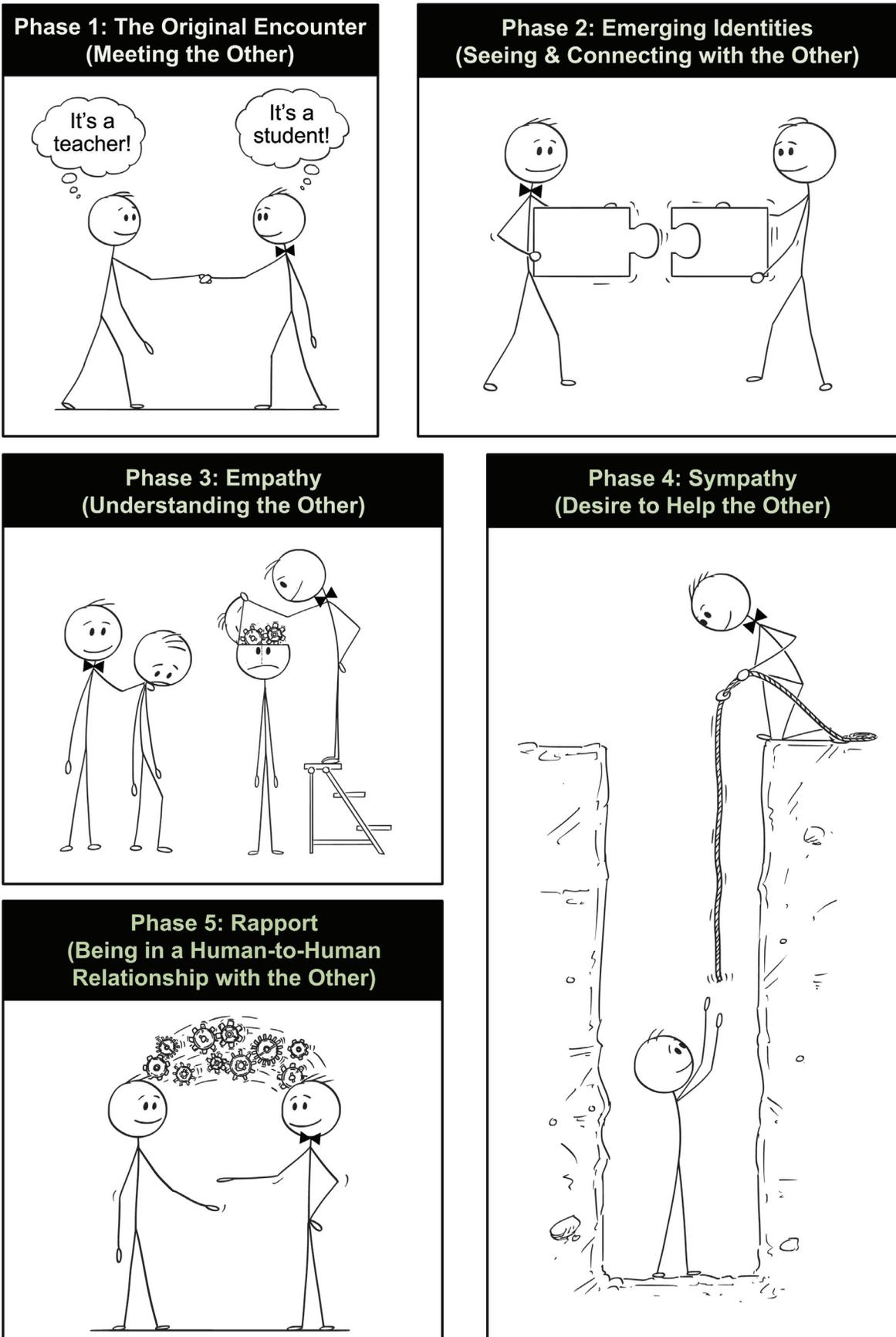
Putting all the pieces back together gives us a working appreciation of a Human-to-Human Relationship as:

The experiences between the teacher and student wherein the teacher uses a disciplined intellectual approach to problems combined with conscious and self-aware use of their personality in an attempt to establish and maintain a caring relationship.

Human-to-Human Relationship Model

Note that the authors have elected to use the terminology of a physical classroom and in-person meeting. This should not be taken as precluding the application to online classes or virtual meeting spaces as well, though that is not the current focus.

Figure 2 Travelbee's Model of the Human-to-Human Relationship as Applied to Teacher and Student



The Human-to-Human Relationship model is not a straightforward A-to-B-to-C process with an established timeframe, and the model's phases certainly don't proceed at the same speed for every student or teacher. Because the most effective learning takes place only after Phase 5 Rapport, occurs, it is important an educator knows the process and how to efficiently move themselves and learners through the process of doing so.

Phase 1: The Original Encounter (Meeting the Other)

At the point of encounter there are neither utter ignoramuses nor perfect sages; there are only people who are attempting, together, to learn more than they now know (Freire, 2000, p. 90).

The original encounter is where the teacher and student come together both in place and time. The goal of this first phase is for the individuals involved to progress from "I-It" to something like "I-Human being" or "I-Someone I want to know more about." Plainly put, getting from the first case to the second is the challenge that must be addressed within this phase.

Inclusion

The most basic ingredient in the human relationship recipe was two human beings; this goes for the initial meeting of teacher and student as well. But ensuring that a student will be part of that meeting transcends mere physical presence, as the teacher must find ways to include the student, pre-emptively supporting any willingness to interact and engage in dialogue. We can think of this as insisting that everyone matters. As author, educator, and social critic bell hooks (1994) explains, "To begin, the professor must genuinely value everyone's presence. There must be an ongoing recognition that everyone influences the classroom dynamic, that everyone contributes" (p. 8).

A general strategy for this is intentionally shifting agency to students and allowing them to co-create the learning space and processes. "Students' active participation, learner empowerment, shared decision-making, student agency, and negotiation of learning and teaching [all fall] under the umbrella of co-creation" (Bovill, 2020, p. 1024). Practicing these processes from the first class meeting helps to set the culture as one of inclusion. Apple and Smith (2007) share a suggestion that is explicitly focused on eliciting active student participation.

It is important to arrange the group space where learning is to take place so that each student can readily contribute to the discussion or activity. Using circular tables or arranging chairs in circles works well. (p. 317)

It is of no small interest that the concept of *inclusion* depends on a sense of *mattering*, as in having one's presence valued **and** that Apple and Smith speak of arranging the matter in the meeting space (i.e., material things such as tables and chairs) in a way conducive to ensuring that individuals matter. Karen Gravett (2023), author of *Relational Pedagogies: Connections and Mattering in Higher Education* speaks specifically to these two senses of the term *matter*

Throughout the book, matter is both who matters – who should be considered and valued – and matter as a material substance...this book considers how attending to matter, in both definitions of the word, might be helpful to our understanding of learning and teaching in higher education – and disruptive to our ways of thinking too. Relations and connections are both human-to-human relationships, the interconnection between self and others and the relations we have to and within a much broader, material world. Matter matters. (p. 3)

Completing the circuit, not only does matter matter, but **mattering** matters. Professor of Relational Practice Harriet Schwarz (2019) likely speaks for many of us when she writes about mattering: "When I think back to my most important teachers and mentors I realise that feeling as if I mattered to them was a common thread in all the relationships" (p. 131).

Roles

The first meeting tends to be when the participants are most self-conscious and least self-assured. This means that the unsure student will tend to hide, remaining silent within the role of the anonymous student, choosing not to risk exposing themselves to the others present and most especially to the teacher. And the unsure teacher will do something similar, emphasizing that they are in charge and to be listened to while the students remain silent. In both cases, are the individuals choosing to remain within the stereotypical roles for this encounter, whether we call them "educator", "instructor", "teacher", "professor", "student", "learner", or "pupil"? That both the teacher and student are human beings is at once obvious to us and yet something we rarely stop to consider. And that's the point of these kinds of roles: they are a function of what individuals **do**—in this case teach and learn—rather than who the individuals in those roles **are**. If we want to move beyond "I-It-in-a-role", we need to progress beyond the roles themselves, both on the part of teacher and student.

Teacher-as-Facilitator

The responsibility for addressing this challenge and making this progression necessarily falls to the teacher, not only as the individual with the greater experience in meeting students as a teacher, but also as the party who is, by training and education, the most aware of how the budding relationship should work and what they can do to positively influence it. Additionally, as Hintze et al. (2015) clarify with respect the ethic of care in asymmetrical relationships, “When in a position of power over another, we are obliged to act in his best interest, not our own” (p. 9). In Travelbee’s (1971) terms, the teacher should already have a “disciplined intellectual approach” as a result of experience and training but must also tend to the building of an “I-You” relationship with students through therapeutic use of self (p. 17). Recalling Travelbee, this use of self asks that the teacher have and show:

- self-insight
- self-understanding
- an understanding of the dynamics of human behavior
- the ability to interpret one’s own behavior
- the ability to interpret the behavior of others
- the ability to intervene effectively

A teacher who is able to do this and accepts it as part of their obligation as a teacher is what we call a *facilitator*. In Biesta’s (2017) phrasing, “a facilitator of learning rather than as someone who has something to bring to the educational situation and who has something to give to students...” (pg. ix). The apposition of the facilitator of learning to teacher and student involved in a series of transactions only reinforces both teacher and student as “It” in the sense of roles as giver and receiver. Freire (2000) highlights the bleakness of the role-based transactional approach:

Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the “banking” concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. (p. 72)

If we want the student and teacher to begin to move from “I-It/role” toward a mutual “I-You” appreciation of one another, the teacher-as-facilitator must find ways to make that happen. This is not an obligation beyond being a facilitator of learning, but part and parcel of embracing the goal of facilitating learning *in every sense*, as a human facilitating other humans who are learning.

We find articulation of this approach to facilitation within Process Education, where rather than a teacher in control of a transaction or banking process, the student explores, inquires, and constructs their understanding, with the facilitator making the process possible. As Burke et al. (2009) make clear, “There are many different strategies for facilitative learning; the main goal of each is to move the teacher away from the center and locus of control” (p. 37).

The Importance of Names

Moving from the roles of teacher and student to “I-You” includes learning one another’s names. The importance of this cannot be underestimated; when someone calls us by our name, we tend to presume that they know who we are and that we should, in turn, know who they are, beyond any role. Use of someone’s name is a statement of a real or intended “I-You” relationship. Dale Carnegie (1936) shares that “We should be aware of the magic contained in a name... a person’s name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language” (p. 108). It is easy to hide or disappear if no one knows who we are and our names are a fundamental part of everyone’s individual “I”. Names matter to us in a fundamental way. Consider:

- When someone disappears with help of the government, the witness protection program gives them a new name and identification in that name. As part of the deal, that person must also sever all current relationships, unless they’re married, in which case their spouse must also give up their known name and all other relationships.
- The friendly neighborhood bar, Cheers, is a place where you want to go because everybody there knows your name (according to the theme song lyrics). When the regular, Norm, walks in, everyone in the bar calls out “Norm!”
- In the Grimm’s fairy tale, the miller’s daughter, for whom Rumpelstiltskin spun straw into gold when she was imprisoned in the tower, is later only able to save her first-born child by learning and using Rumpelstiltskin’s name

In *Seven Timeless & Universal Principles of Student Success*, Professor of Psychology and Educational Consultant Joe Cuseo establishes “Personal Validation” as a critical part of student success. Among practices promoting Personal Validation is “Advisors, instructors, and support staff who learn the names of their students, make them feel known (refer to them by name), and know about them (e.g., their career goals, educational plans, and personal interests)” (Cuseo, 2012, p. 4).

There are many techniques to move from roles to individual names during the first meeting, such as using easily readable name tags or signs at each student seat/table (Apple & Smith, 2007). Continuing to use one another's names beyond the initial encounter through subsequent meetings clearly communicates 'I still know You' and works to keep the process of building the Human-to-Human Relationship on track.

Thus far, our examination of Phase 1 has considered the issues of roles, teacher-as-facilitator, and the importance of both inclusion and names. The only other issues remaining is that of pre-conceptions/pre-judgments.

Pre-conceptions and Assumptions

When it comes to the initial student-teacher meeting, Apple and Smith (2007) note that:

People like to start with a "clean slate" that has no history or baggage that could negatively influence the building of a new relationship... Also, realize that students are coming into the class with information they have gathered about the instructor" and judgments they have made about him or her. (p. 318)

Not only do we associate roles with stereotypes (e.g., 'teachers' love being in charge, 'students' are helpless), we also pre-judge based on what we *think* we know ("history or baggage" in Apple and Smith's terminology) about others. This goes beyond prejudices based on assumed gender and race to include pre-conceptions based on what we think we know of another's social class, intelligence, religion, culture, political leanings, and so on. It is not possible to hold perfect objectivity towards another; we all make use of mental categories when we size up a stranger. Neither, explain Apple and Smith (2007), is it possible to ignore what we might know (or think we know). What we must strive to do is show no prejudicial attitude toward the Other, approaching them "with a clear and open mind" (p. 318).

Phase 2: Emerging identities (Seeing and Connecting with the Other)

"Just because a student and teacher are placed in the same social space does not automatically guarantee a relationship" (Rodríguez, 2008, p. 538).

The challenge to be addressed in Phase 2 is to realize a mutual "I-You" relationship between the humans who were teacher and student to one another in their original encounter. This is critical not only as a step in building a Human-to-Human Relationship, but also because, as much-honored educator and author Parker Palmer (1998) reminds us, "Real learning does not happen until students

are brought into relationship with the teacher, with each other, and with the subject" (p. xvi).

According to Travelbee (1971), Phase 2, Emerging Identities, may not happen naturally; the teacher may need to deliberately attempt to get outside of themselves to appreciate the other with their individual identity. While Phase 1 dealt largely with being aware of and countering our pre-conceptions and assumptions, Phase 2 is about seeing the other for who they are, as a unique person. This means that we remain actively aware of our reactions to the Other as we begin the work of understanding them.

Looking versus Attending

The moral philosopher Iris Murdoch explains the critical difference between what we might think we see and what we are obligated to see, through the application of what Travelbee calls self-insight and self-understanding. Murdoch (1964) introduces the idea that there is a difference between "looking" and "attention"; while *looking* is a neutral word where information is simply taken in, *attention* "express(es) the idea of a just and loving gaze directed upon an individual reality" (para. 50). Murdoch's example is that of a mother-in-law who has a negative reaction to her new daughter-in-law, but who wants to change that. The mother-in-law admits "I may be snobbish. I am certainly jealous. Let me look again" (para. 24). Noddings (2010a) refers to this as "attending receptively" and explains that this effort of moving past our assumptions is "a matter of seeing the other in the best possible light. It means examining our own frame of mind and how it influences our understanding" (Noddings, 2010a, p. 11). This reminds us that "attending" is one of the primary definitions of acting in a *therapeutic* way (Liddell & Scott, 1889).

Unique Individuals

"I care, I do, there's no one like you" (Hall, 1974)

In Phase 1, a student and teacher necessarily meet as such. This is because, prior to the teacher having any idea who their students would be, they knew there would *be* students. And the student knew, prior to the start of any classes, that there would *be* a teacher present in each. But as soon as the teacher and student begin to learn more about one another, the individuals involved become increasingly differentiated to each other. Aspelin (2020) refers to the "particular other person" (p. 590) in the budding relationship; this is what Travelbee (1971) calls the "unique irreplaceable individual—a one-time being in this world" (p. 26). In *Methodology for Creating a Quality Learning Environment*, Apple and Smith (2007) share that "From the faculty perspective, it is important that each learner be recognized as an individual; for

who he or she is, for what he or she can contribute, and, most importantly, to be respected for his or her potential to perform” (p. 318). Noddings (2003) reveals the goal of relating to students as unique individuals—as a “You” to the unique individual of the teacher’s “I” when she writes that “We affect the lives of students not just in what we teach them by way of subject matter but in how we relate to them as persons” (p. 249). This is put into helpful context by Sean, the fictional example of a teacher who is emotionally invested in his students when he says, “I’m not teaching English, I’m teaching people” (Hinze-Yates et al., 2011).

The value to a student of being treated as a unique individual—a “You”—cannot be overstated, as bell hooks (1994) makes clear:

I have been most inspired by those teachers who have had the courage to transgress those boundaries that would confine each pupil to a rote, assembly-line (sic) approach to learning. Such teachers approach students with the will and desire to respond to our unique beings, even the situation does not allow the full emergence of a relationship based on mutual recognition. Yet the possibility of such recognition is always present. (p. 13)

Complete Human Being

Beyond being treated as a unique individual, the emerging “I-You” identities entails relating with the student as not only their cognitive abilities or the learning opportunities they present, but as a whole human being. The Relationship aspect of the Transformation of Education notes a constellation of phrases that all point to this notion: “Whole person; Students and instructors are complete individuals with social and emotional dimensions; Emotional intelligence” (Hinze-Yates et al., 2011). Aspelin (2020) explains that the potential of the teacher to “influence the student in depth” hinges on meeting the student as a “You” because the teacher then “is not occupied by the student’s abilities, but is concerned by the person as a whole.” (p. 594)

We find explicit support for student-as-a-whole-person within Process Education, most specifically in the “Classification of Learning Skills” (Leise et al., 2019), which adds the Social domain and greatly expanded Cognitive and Affective domains to Bloom’s original Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Anderson et al., 2001). It is critical to appreciate that learning skills are not simply abilities or aspects that students have, but skills that, when strengthened, make learning more effective. The implications of this are far-reaching. Consider that the

learning skill **trusting**, defined as “expanding the ability to recognize authentic expressions of support”, is thus a skill not only that students should learn in order to strengthen their ability to learn, but one that a teacher is obliged to address within the classroom. When we survey various learning skills from the Social and Affective domains, we come to appreciate that the teacher is very much faced with whole persons as students, each with a near-infinite variety of traits and preferences!

This is a world away from what Brookfield (2015) writes in *The Skillful Teacher*: “The language of student learning is, on the whole, fairly bloodless. Learning objectives, learning styles, domains of learning, transfer of learning; all these suggest that learning is primarily a cognitive process to do with processing information in various ways” (p. 55).

Additional instances that presume teachers must work with students as complicated human beings are found in the *Theory of Performance* (Elger, 2007), where individuals have “Personal Factors” (variables associated with their individual situation, such as health or home environment) and “Fixed Factors” (variables unique to an individual that are immutable, such as genetic factors) and *The Accelerator Model* (Morgan & Apple, 2007) which outlines an approach to teaching whereby students are challenged (the ‘accelerator is pressed’) such that they feel and must deal with a range of affective states (e.g., anxiety, frustration, and anger). The Accelerator Model presumes that students’ emotions can both positively and negatively impact their cognitive abilities and that critical abilities such as perseverance and grit can be developed within the classroom. Not only is the view from these examples that students are whole human beings, but, echoing Aspelin, that the teacher must be concerned with students as complex individuals.

Present and Future

Martin Buber (1947), with whom the “I-You” terminology originates as a result of his philosophy and writing on how human beings meet and treat one another, believed that for the genuine educator, “concern is always the person as a whole, both in the actuality in which he lives before you now and in his possibilities, what he can become” (p. 104). This concern on the part of the teacher for the other, not just now but extending into the future and based on possibilities, finds full-throated support in Process Education, the first principle of which states that “one’s potential is not limited by current ability” (Beyerlein et al., 2007, p. 194). Apple and Smith (2007) explain what this means for teachers, “From the faculty perspective, it is important that

each learner be recognized as an individual; for who he or she is, for what he or she can contribute, and, most importantly, to be respected for his or her potential to perform” (p. 318). James Hadley, in “The Language and Culture of Success” (2007a), shares, “...recognizing the inherent potential of every student contributes to an atmosphere of trust, openness, and honesty during authentic dialogue”, concluding that “Approaches to learning that recognize both human potential and the frailties of the human condition can only benefit students” (p. 502).

Support for students’ future potential can also be found in the consideration of long-term behaviors as fundamental to both program and course design demonstrates awareness of a student’s future life and possibilities. Long-term behaviors are not limited to professional life but are “the behaviors that a graduate should practice throughout his or her life and professional career” (Davis, 2007, p. 257).

The Teacher: Identity and Vulnerability

“Here is a secret hidden in plain sight: good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher.”
(Palmer, 1998)

When we meet the Other (when my “I” encounters your “You”), we are presented with a choice of whether or not to risk ourselves (Eide et al., 2011). This is true for both participants—student and teacher. But for the teacher in particular, investing one’s self in the Other means losing a measure of control over the ensuing dialog and its direction. This concept is anathema to the traditional view of teaching and the role and responsibility of teacher. Loss of control? What a terrifying prospect for the professional who believes that being in control is a sign of proficiency! Karen Gravett (2023), professor and author of *Relational Pedagogies: Connections and Mattering in Higher Education* points out that “the notion of expressing vulnerability is closely intertwined with how we perceive our roles and identities as teachers” (p. 39).

Sharing Experiences of Failure and Challenge

According to Travelbee (1971), teachers who are willing to share some of the reality of their “I” with their students show “...the vulnerability of the strong who neither fear life, nor fear to be an authentic human being” (p. 4). It can be difficult to show this kind of courage when performance evaluations for teachers reward expertise and control. Nevertheless, there are clear benefits to students when teachers accept this challenge. Hadley (2007b) notes that teachers must evince

empathy when students fail, something of which they are capable when remembering their own past failures. In Hadley’s formulation, sharing information about past failure with students can help motivate them to persevere, working as a kind of survivor story. Gravett (2023) believes that “By sharing our own vulnerabilities, challenges and identities, we present ourselves as fallible and as ongoing learners, alongside our students”, something that has the potential of disrupting “traditional teacher-student binaries and power hierarchies” (p. 38).

The question teachers must confront is to what degree does sharing challenges or failure help to create an “I-You” relationship between teacher-as-human-being and student-as-human-being? Within Process Education and many more general collaborative learning spaces, teachers ask for student feedback on teaching performance. This is a terrible thought for the teacher unwilling to be vulnerable. But modeling the open acceptance of assessment-based feedback is how students learn to do the same. Again, the question is whether we prefer to model egoistic infallibility or whether both we and our students might be better served by modeling taking risks, failing or being wrong, and then recovering.

Phase 3: Empathy (Understanding the Other)

Empathy is not at all an obvious concept. Travelbee relies on the definition used by Schafer (1959) in his article *Generative Empathy in the Treatment Situation* when she writes that empathy “is basically the ability to enter into, or share in and comprehend the momentary psychological state of another” (Travelbee, 1971). While the term *empathy* has its roots in the Greek, meaning “passion”, the modern English understanding of *empathy* has its origins in German aesthetics as *Einfühlung* (empathy, sensitivity, understanding) where it was part of a theory of art appreciation that maintains appreciation depends on the viewer’s ability to project their personality into the viewed object (Harper, 2024).

The basis of empathy as existing between people (between “I” and “You” rather than “I” and “It”) is first and perhaps best articulated by Edmund Husserl (1960) who defines empathy as a “*transcendental theory of experiencing someone else*” (p. 92). By *transcendental*, he meant *a priori* knowledge that is not dependent on personal experience. This carries with it the idea of the interrupting nature of the Other upon our sensibilities as something that is built into the very nature of human beings.

The interruption is not constant, nor is it permanent. This is because empathy is not ongoing; a teacher can have many interactions with an individual student and only empathize one or a few times. When we have empathy with someone,

we are simply in an “I-You” relationship with them and actively working to understand them better, for however long, something we do by being open, eager to learn, and willing to listen and take risks. This is an important point for the teacher who is fearful of the potential emotional toll of empathizing with students; we do not remain in a state of interruption. But the more willing we are to be open, the greater our impact as teachers.

Empathy is a Cognitive Process

Travelbee (1971) elaborates on Schafer’s definition of *empathy*, sharing that “It is an almost instantaneous process characterized by the ability to comprehend the meaning and relevance of the thoughts and feelings of the individual concerned” (p. 136). Her use of the term *comprehend* both here and in echoing Schafer is not incidental. It very intentionally signifies that empathy is ultimately concerned with understanding rather than any kind of emotional response; it is knowledge gained about the other, allowing them to be seen ever more clearly: “During the empathic process the uniqueness and individuality of each person are more clearly perceived and appreciated” (Travelbee, 1971, p. 136).

While Phase 2 was about **seeing** a unique other person, Phase 3 is focused on **understanding** this unique Other as an intentional undertaking. Within the Human-to-Human Relationship Model, “The end result of the empathic process is the ability to predict the behavior of the individual with whom one empathized” (Travelbee, 1971, p. 136). This is the challenge to be addressed in Phase 3: coming to know the Other to such a degree that their behavior can be predicted.

Two Stages of Empathy

Travelbee writes about empathy as “sharing in but standing apart from” (1971, p. 136). As a result, the authors conceive of empathy as a two-stage process that begins with seeing yourself in the Other (identifying) followed by conscious recognition that the Other is not you, a stage the authors call **decoupling**. Identifying consists of “a match between the observer’s and the other person’s affect or cognition” (Feshbach & Roe, 1968; Stotland, 1969: cited in Bošnjaković & Radinov, 2018, p. 126). *Decoupling* is then continuing to recognize the match, but fully attributing the qualities themselves to the Other.

Failure to step beyond identifying and decouple—differentiate between the self (“I”) and Other (“You”)—is generally either as a result of overidentification or projection, both of which include losing the appreciation of the other as a distinct and completely unique individual. We can too easily end up telling the Other what or how

they should feel. The process of empathizing can trigger value judgments (Travelbee, 1971) which are often the result of overidentification of projection. A positive value judgement on the part of the teacher is often indicative of over-identifying with the student, that is, failing to decouple after identifying with the student. Negative value judgments tend to be a result of projecting unliked aspects of oneself on to the student and can indicate mis-identification of the Other as well as failure to decouple. Value judgements are to be avoided, regardless of whether they are positive or negative, as either indicates we are not completing both stages of the process of empathy. Travelbee (1971) did not believe that a carer could remain free of judgment with respect to the Other but through remaining self-aware of one’s reactions and practicing self-discipline, could keep personal reactions from coloring the relationship. It is not enough to remain in that state of judgment but is instead an obligation of the teacher as carer to pursue the ability to project Murdoch’s (1964) “just and loving gaze directed upon an individual reality” (para. 50) of the student; to learn to see the other “in the best possible light” (Noddings, 2010a, p. 11). Hintze et al. (2011) express it as “Projection of positive feeling towards all learners no matter what their background or past performance” (pg. 14).

The goal is to always be conscious of the self (“I”) while engaging in the process of empathy. If we find ourselves making value judgments, we must proceed as Murdoch’s (1964) mother-in-law and admit our assumptions and continually say, “Let me look again” (para. 24) in our bid to attend receptively.

Reciprocity

While the “I-You” connection is critical to the creation of a Human-to-Human Relationship, we must not lose sight of the fact that the obligation of the teacher is not the same as the obligation of the student, as the relationship is asymmetrical. Aspelin (2011) notes that “a relational process is experienced in different ways depending on which side of the relationship a person is...the partner in front of the teacher is not identical with the partner in front of the student” (p. 9). It may well be that the student completes Phase 3 and empathizes with the teacher to the degree that they can predict the teacher’s behavior, something that happens more often than many of us might be aware of because students don’t share with us everything they learn, including understanding they may have about us. A typical example might be a student who sees that their teacher is disappointed but trying not to let it show. The student could connect this behavior with their own experience of feeling disappointment that they felt they shouldn’t show. That creates empathy

(fellow feeling) from the student to the teacher—empathy felt by the cared-for for the carer.

Empathy is, in fact, a critical life skill and something to be sought after in students and therefore modeled in the classroom. But regardless of how much we may want the student to empathize, there is no *obligation* for them to do so. It is not necessary for empathy to be mutually equivalent between the student and teacher, as the obligation to care for is one-sided. Noddings (2010b) explains this beautifully:

The response of the cared-for is an act of reciprocity, but it is not the contractual reciprocity so familiar to us in traditional Western philosophy. The cared for usually cannot do for the carer what the carer can do for the cared-for, nor must he promise payment of some kind. The act of recognition is itself a form of reciprocity—completing the relation and providing confirmatory evidence that the carer is on the right track. (p. 391)

Communicating Empathy

Empathy is not demonstrated by telling someone you empathize with them, or even saying “I understand you.” Instead, empathy as understanding must be demonstrated to the Other. There are myriad ways to do this; even rephrasing what the Other has said or sharing a similar example from one’s own experience demonstrates understanding. Simply reaching out and asking someone if they’re OK, as exemplified in the fictional (but based on personal experience) example from the Relationship aspect in the Transformation of Education, can be a powerful demonstration of empathy.

Lauren was blown away when she received an e-mail from her political science instructor. He had noticed that she had missed three classes in a row. That his e-mail expressed concern rather than anger or a warning made her realize that it meant something to him whether or not she was ok and not just that she wasn’t in class. “I can’t believe it. I mean I know he knew my name, but I had no idea it actually mattered to him whether or not I was there. I haven’t been doing very well lately and even just knowing that I’m not invisible is really something. But this was more than that. He cares.” (Hinze-Yates et al., 2011, p. 88)

In their *Methodology for Creating a Quality Learning Environment*, Apple and Smith (2007) share that a teacher must demonstrate:

- Acceptance of each student as an individual with unique value

- Understanding of students’ individual personalities and learning preferences
- Connecting with students’ cultural values

These are all ways that teachers can demonstrate empathy. That sounds overwhelming, given the number of students a typical teacher might have at any given time, but there’s no rule against encouraging students to bring their own individual personalities, preferences, and cultural values to the learning experience. In fact, asking that students construct their own understanding presumes that students will use their individual prior knowledge and experience in doing so! Thus assignments, projects, and tasks that ask students to grapple with topics and ideas on this basis will not only communicate to the student that the teacher sees and respects them as “You” but understands that who the student is, matters when it comes to learning. There is a second purpose to assigning students this kind of work: it makes it possible for the teacher to increase their understanding of the student and therefore their empathy for the student.

Another strategy is to be as familiar as possible with the context of our students at any given time and drafting problem statements or questions on the basis of that understanding. At the time of the writing of this article, such a problem statement might read something like this:

There are a total of 11 Taylor Swift eras. In planning her next world-wide concert tour, she wants to offer a minimum of 5 concerts per continent, excluding Antarctica (it is a little-known fact that penguins prefer Beyoncé). If each concert will feature 3 eras, how many concerts must she give, total, in order to offer each era the same number of times at concert?

This is a fairly typical mathematical word problem that references currently popular artists and shows enough familiarity with specifics of Swift to pass for at least being ‘clued in’ to current pop music. This communicates “I know the world in which you live, and it matters to me and doesn’t have to be excluded from what we do in the classroom and our learning.” That’s a powerful statement of general empathy and desire to empathize. The problem statement also shows a bit of humor, something that can greatly help to lower students’ affective barriers. When we laugh together or appreciate one another’s humor, we are in an “I-You” relationship for however long.

The International Child Development Programme uses the term “zone of empathy” as a way to talk about the “I-You” relationship between carer and cared-for (n.d.,

para. 4). This is a useful term and one we should consider using with respect to how not only problem statements but curricula in general are designed, as it should demonstrate that we as teachers are willing to do the work to meet our students in a zone of empathy.

The “Why” statement in a process oriented guided inquiry learning activity should, according to author David Hanson (2007), “put the activity in context for the learner by addressing three questions: What will the student learn? Why is it relevant to the subject? Why is it relevant to the learner?” (p. 282). The sentence in the “Why” section that answers that third question “provides justification for the activity from the perspective of the individual learner” (Hanson, 2007, p. 282). That is, it should demonstrate that the teacher has successfully empathized with students to the degree that the teacher understands their perspective and can predict what will matter to them. Or, put more succinctly, it should use and demonstrate a zone of empathy.

Phase 4: Sympathy (Desire to Help the Other)

When empathy is coupled with a desire to help, it becomes sympathy. In Phase 3, we empathize with the Other by understanding them, including their issues, problems, and challenges. In Phase 4, we are moved by these things and want to help the Other. When we show our interest in the Other as a unique human being (“You”) and actively care for them, we express our sympathy. Noddings speaks of *sympathy* when discussing the duty of care, finding it inseparable from caring (2010a). In Travelbee’s (1971) words

The empathic person can perceive another’s distress, identify its source, and anticipate the behavior which will result from it. But the sympathetic person feels another’s distress. He is touched by it and wants to do something actively to assist or alleviate the condition. (p. 142)

In their work, “The Ethic of Care in Teaching: An Overview of Supportive Literature”, Owens and Ennis (2005) conclude that “The caring teacher assumes the responsibility for recognizing that something needs to be done and then does it, frequently acting assertively, without being asked” (p. 402). In the study that gave rise to Barbara Tarlow’s grounded theory of caring relationships, she found that “Respondents agreed that teachers who cared about students, taught them by any means necessary to facilitate learning” (Tarlow, 1996, as cited in Owens & Ennis, 2005, p. 402).

Tarlow’s phrasing evokes the fifth principle of Process Education: “Faculty must accept fully the responsibility for facilitating student success” (Beyerlein et al., 2007, p. 194). It is critical to recognize that this does not mean that a teacher is responsible for student success; it means

that facilitating it—*making it possible*—is a core part of the teacher’s obligation to the student.

The challenge to be addressed during this phase is figuring out how to best help the Other. Recall that in Phase 2: Emerging Identities, the caring teacher needed to find ways to help students accept the risk of sharing their unique human identity and then respond to them in meaningful ways. Figuring out how to help the student who needs it is a parallel process that first depends on creating an environment where the student can expose their need, only after which the teacher can identify the need and determine how best to meet it. The classroom environment conducive to personal risk-taking, sharing one’s vulnerabilities, and asking for help is the same environment created in Phase 2, but deepened and made more secure and familiar to the student as a result of the increased understanding of the student the teacher has and has demonstrated by Phase 4.

Emotionally Invested

Being moved to care, to actively address the needs of the Other, is built upon the ultimately intellectual enterprise of understanding the Other but goes beyond it in that when we are moved to care, it is a result of emotional investment we make in the Other. That emotional investment requires that we, as teachers, be involved with students in a way that even identifying with them (Phase 3) does not, as we are seeking to fulfill our obligation to them, for their benefit and well-being. Travelbee (1971) describes this involvement as “the ability to care for and about other human beings and to translate this caring into helpful behavior... Involvement, then, is a commitment to a way of life” (p. 145). Putting this in terms familiar to Process Educators, it is “way of being” for the emotionally invested teacher (Hinze-Yates et al., 2011; Quarless, 2007).

The rendering of help that addresses the actual problem (i.e., “helpful behavior”) will, however, always be the result of a disciplined intellectual approach. Objections to the call to be emotionally invested in students is often phrased as “I’m not a psychologist” or “I don’t have the expertise to give this student what they need”. But being emotionally invested means being willing to be present **for the student** and use a disciplined intellectual approach to help them find the resource(s) that address the actual problem.

Teacher as Mentor

The relationship aspect of the Transformation of Education traces a continuum between the historical tendency of emotional distance as the preferred relationship between teacher and student and a future direction of emotional investment. The difference between these two

cultures is “how much time, energy and emotional commitment faculty and staff are willing to devote to being servant leaders who mentor the at-risk population of their academic community” (Apple et al., 2018, p. 82). This effectively promotes the teacher from teacher-as-facilitator to teacher-as-mentor (at the very least). Apple et al. (2018) rely on both Leise’s (2007) definition of a mentor as a “trusting but clearly bounded mutual relationship between a mentor and a mentee for the purpose of personal change or growth” (p. 477) and Straus et al. (2012) in their description of a successful mentoring relationship as one characterized by reciprocity, mutual respect, clear expectations, personal connection, and shared values. Taken together, these two descriptions seem to paint an ideal portrait of classroom-teacher-as-mentor. Yet looking more deeply, Leise (2007) explains that the purpose of mentoring “is to facilitate growth in individuals who already function well” (p. 478). And the conclusions arrived at by Straus et al. (2012) are based on interviews limited to faculty members (from the Departments of Medicine at the University of Toronto) and the conclusions themselves concern only “career success and satisfaction” (p. 82). What Leise and Straus et al. describe are not then typical teacher-student and classroom-based approaches to mentoring, but something more structured and formal, potentially aimed at a level beyond that of at least an undergraduate student.

Perhaps what we’re looking for is a definition of *mentor* that differs from the more traditional, sustained, and formal mentoring relationships such as Leise (2007) describes, which involve “a definite time commitment”, “clearly defined goals/outcomes”, and “quality performance assessments” (p. 477). These less formal mentoring connections are called by a variety of names: mentors of the moment, just-in-time mentoring, and mentoring on the run, to name a few. What they seem to have in common is an understanding that for many students (and not just a few faculty), there is room for meaningful mentoring connections that not only *can* happen in the classroom but can do so as a deliberate result of planning. Glenn Omatsu (2002), coordinator of the Faculty Mentor Program at CSUN, shares that it was recognition of the fact that those freshmen who failed his class did so not due to “low academic abilities” but rather because they

...did not use support services such as tutoring, did not learn how to ask questions in the classroom, did not visit me to ask for help during of-office hours, did not participate in study groups, did not seek out the advice of more experienced peers, and did not learn to see mastering time management as a process. (p. 3)

What Omatsu realized was that these were skills that needed to be mentored. Rather than trying to pass these students off to a study skills center or similar, Omatsu simply chose to incorporate opportunities for his students to learn these skills within his course. In his words, “I now build into my academic assignments components related to time management, study groups, tutoring, etc.” He calls this process of “infusing consciousness of mentoring” into the classroom “mentoring on the run” and works to help other teachers do the same (Omatsu, 2002, p. 3).

The authors find it worthy of noting that Omatsu’s specific approach stands in contrast with the more proscriptive descriptions of mentoring found in Process Education scholarship and curricula:

- “It is not the mentor’s job to remediate the mentee’s problems” (Leise, 2007, p. 477)
- “In mentoring, the professional works intensively with one person while focusing on affect management and skill development” (Smith, 2007b, p. 345)
- “The mentor and mentee put together a quality plan; both mentor and mentee make a commitment to follow through with the plan” (Apple et al., 2024, p. 529)
- In effective mentoring relationships, the mentee’s purpose and goals are clearly defined, and the mentee is willing to challenge themselves in an area of performance that will produce future benefits (Apple et al., 2024, p. 526)

These are not the only characterizations of mentoring within Process Education; on the contrary, there are many resources that Omatsu would recognize immediately as describing something very like “mentoring on the run”, which is really just *sympathy-in-action*. This brings us full circle to Apple et al. (2018) on the emotional commitment of faculty and staff who are willing to mentor the at-risk population of their academic communities. It would seem that teacher-as-mentor is indeed a critical piece of being emotionally invested as a sympathetic carer; we simply need to ensure that our definition of what constitutes a mentoring relationship and our assumptions of how such relationships are supposed to work are those that do not create a barrier between the student in need and the teacher who can help.

Phase 5: Rapport (Being in a Human-to-Human Relationship with the Other)

The final phase of the Human-to-Human Relationship model is Rapport. Unlike the other phases where there were issues to discuss and a challenge to address, “rapport is the

experiential aspect of the human-to-human relationship” (Travelbee, 1971, p. 150). Once rapport is achieved, the “role stereotypes of ‘student’ and ‘teacher’ are shattered” and the relationship becomes one of “transient moments of experienced relatedness” (Travelbee, 1971, p. 152).

This relatedness is where education happens, according to Gert Biesta (2004) of the School of Education and Lifelong Learning at the University of Exeter/Örebro University; “Education is located not in the activities of the teacher, nor in the activities of the learner, but in the interaction between the two itself...the ‘relationality’ of the relationship” (p. 21). The Human-to-Human Relationship model serves as a kind of blueprint for how that relationality (Travelbee’s “experienced relatedness”) can be created from an initial meeting between teacher and student.

The most familiar definitions of *rapport* are all based on the idea of communication or ongoing dialog between individuals. And so it is with realization of the Human-to-Human Relationship; dialog was both the means to achieve that goal, as well as the goal itself. To continue rapport, “All we need to do is make sure we keep talking” (Pink Floyd, 1994).

Examples of Human-to-Human Relationships Being Built

Human-to-Human Relationships can be built very quickly in some instances, while other times, it may be a much more drawn out process. Consider the following examples, each of which has its basis in the experience of the authors.

Example 1 (built quickly)

The teacher has noticed that one of her students seems to get frustrated during some of the course lectures, though not during group work. Joe sort of withdraws and disengages when it happens. The more the teacher thinks about it, the more she suspects that it might be a language or processing issue. The teacher shows up early at the next class and finds the student standing outside the classroom. They’ve got a few minutes before class starts and the teacher asks the student if they can walk and talk for a few minutes. The student agrees. The teacher says “Joe, I’ve noticed that you’re having some moments of frustration in class. What can I do to help?” Joe mumbles that he’s still learning English and that when he hears a new word that he doesn’t understand from context, by the time he looks it up in his Spanish to English dictionary, he’s missed out on what was going on. “Ah,” says the teacher, stopping and looking directly at him. “I really get that. I spent a year in Germany as an exchange student and nobody tells you how hard it is to try and keep up while you’re still learning the language. It’s like jumping hurdles while everyone else is just running.” Joe looks at his teacher and says, with feeling, “That’s exactly what it feels like.” The

teacher thinks for a minute then says, “OK. I have an idea. When I’m lecturing and I use an unfamiliar word, you just raise your index finger.” I’ll keep you in my peripheral vision and no one but me will see, but I’ll find a way to clarify what I’ve just said; I’ll rephrase and say it a different way.” Joe is extremely relieved and thanks his teacher. The teacher thinks, “I suspect this will be helpful for a lot of the students in the class. Probably for me as a teacher too.”

Example 2 (built slowly)

On the first day of class, our teacher took all of us outside. He told us to find a partner we didn’t already know. Once we did that, he told each pair to wander around and find another pair. Then the four of us had to find another group of four. Once we had our groups of eight, he took us back inside and had each group sit around a table. Each person had to present themselves to their group and talk for two minutes. That’s a long time in front of strangers! We continued working in groups during the semester and got to know the people in our groups well. The teacher liked using role play; he told us it was an unavoidable result of having been a psychologist before he started teaching. One of the things he loved was to wander around the classroom and just join groups in their role play. He had a good sense of humor and could laugh at himself. Over the semester, he told us a lot about himself...what he was like as a student, how he learned to ski the fiendishly steep local slopes, what restaurants he liked and why, etc. He would ask us questions too, surveying what we thought about things, and remember our answers. I recall him making mistakes and being so amazing about learning from us when it happened. I think about it now and I’m not so sure they were real mistakes...I think maybe he was showing us how to be open to learning. He didn’t make strong relationships with all the students, but any student who was willing to speak up and be brave (put themselves forward) would definitely tell you that this teacher was one of their favorites.

Relational Pedagogy

When proximity ethics or an ethic of caring is practiced in a sustained way in the classroom, such as through the building of Human-to-Human Relationships between teacher and student, we can call it by its best known term: *relational pedagogy*. As the name makes clear, this is a model of education that is relational rather than transactional (bonding instead of banking). Relational pedagogy emphasizes **relationships** between students and teachers that are meaningful to both (Bovill, 2020; bold ours), going beyond the traditional notion and roles of both teacher and student, focusing instead on “**trust, empathy, mutual respect, and understanding** as the foundation for a successful learning environment” (Melbourne School of Design, 2023; bold ours).

Based on the evidence presented to this point and deeper reading and research, the authors have determined that Process Education is generally amenable to the more specific field of relational pedagogy. In addition to what has been presented throughout the discussion of the Human-to-Human Relationship—which we now see was a discussion of relational pedagogy—it is worthy of noting that there are fundamental commonalities shared between the description of a quality learning environment (Apple & Smith, 2007; Roscoe & Peterson, 1982 cited in Apple & Smith, 2007) and the definition of *relational pedagogy* shared in the previous paragraph. We find evidence of a correlate for all five important (**bolded**) terms/concepts as seen in Table 2.

The Promise of Human-to-Human Relationships for Students and Teachers

Rapport/Caring and Student Success

“Master teachers’ interactions with students are characterized first and foremost by their call to care” (Agne, 1999).

It is worth recalling that for Travelbee, the Human-to-Human Relationship is how the purpose of nursing is achieved. The authors previously claimed that this also held true for teaching: that the Human-to-Human Relationship is how the purpose of teaching is achieved. This is true **if** the purpose of teaching is student achievement/success.

The question must then be asked:

Do caring teacher-student relationships lead to student success?

From the Perspective of Teachers

In considering the A-B-C-D model of student achievement (Rose & Medway, 1981) which links (A) Teacher Belief to (B) Teacher behavior to (C) Student behavior to (D) Student Achievement, author and researcher Karen Agne sought to address the basis for student achievement by focusing on the nature of Teacher Belief (A).

Her work demonstrated that “pupil control ideology” was the **single greatest predictor of effective teachers** (more so than teacher efficacy and locus of control), as determined by selection as Teacher of the Year (Agne, 1991, p. 94). *Pupil control ideology* essentially comes in two flavors: custodial orientation and humanistic orientation. Willower, et al. (1973) defines *custodial orientation* as we might expect, with teachers exerting a high degree of control over their classroom and students. Moreover, “Relationships with students are maintained on as impersonal a basis as possible” (Willower et al., 1973, p. 6). A teacher with a humanistic orientation instead will “assume active interaction and communication, develop effective relationships between themselves and their students...and create democratic classroom climates” (Willower et al., 1973, p. 6).

This largely echoes the control aspect of the Transformation of Education, which establishes the locus of power/authority for the learning situation or experience on a continuum between the historical tendency of “Faculty-centered” and the future direction of “Learner-centered” (Hintze-Yates et al., 2011), though it goes much further, explicitly associating *control* with *relationship*, which is an entirely separate aspect in the Transformation of Education.

Agne’s work led her to reconceptualize the ABCD model, inserting “Student belief” between “Teacher behavior” and “Student behavior,” as it became clear to her that teachers who held caring beliefs demonstrate that through their behavior in their classrooms, something which led to students caring as well (see Figure 3). This should not surprise us; when we are met openly and with respect and trust by someone who treats us as a “You” instead of an “I,” our impulse is to meet them in that space, engaging in a mutual “I-You” relationship.

This focus on teacher belief leading to student belief is found in Peter Smith’s (2007a) work, “Establishing Initial Respect Without Prejudging”:

Table 2 Terminology Correlates Between Relational Pedagogy and the Methodology for Creating a Quality Learning Environment (p. 318)

Relational Pedagogy	Methodology for Creating a Quality Learning Environment
<i>relationship</i>	“establishes an interpersonal relationship”
<i>trust</i>	“environment of trust”
<i>empathy</i>	“takes on the student’s perspective”
<i>respect</i>	“establish initial respect”
<i>understanding</i>	“understands his or her personality and learning preferences, and connects with his or her cultural values”

It is difficult to establish respect for student performance at the start of a course because the facilitator has not yet observed the participants in action. At this stage, the teacher has to respect each student's potential to perform, and to express this belief so strongly that students begin to trust that they will be supported through both success and failure. (p. 321)

While Smith speaks in terms of performance, it is clear that respecting a student's potential to perform is inseparable from respecting the student themselves. This belief on the part of the teacher is, Smith explains, critical to the student's belief in themselves. In other words, the teacher believes in the student's potential (A) and "expresses" it (B) so that students trust they will be supported (C) in trying to succeed (attempting D).

We find this same approach in the description Apple et al. (2020) share of a learning to learn experience:

The whole design of the Learning to Learn Experience (Apple et al., 2018) is about the individual learner. At the beginning of the process, students quickly realize that they are the center of the experience—each student is critical to the process itself, as well as to their learning community. They leave the first meeting knowing that

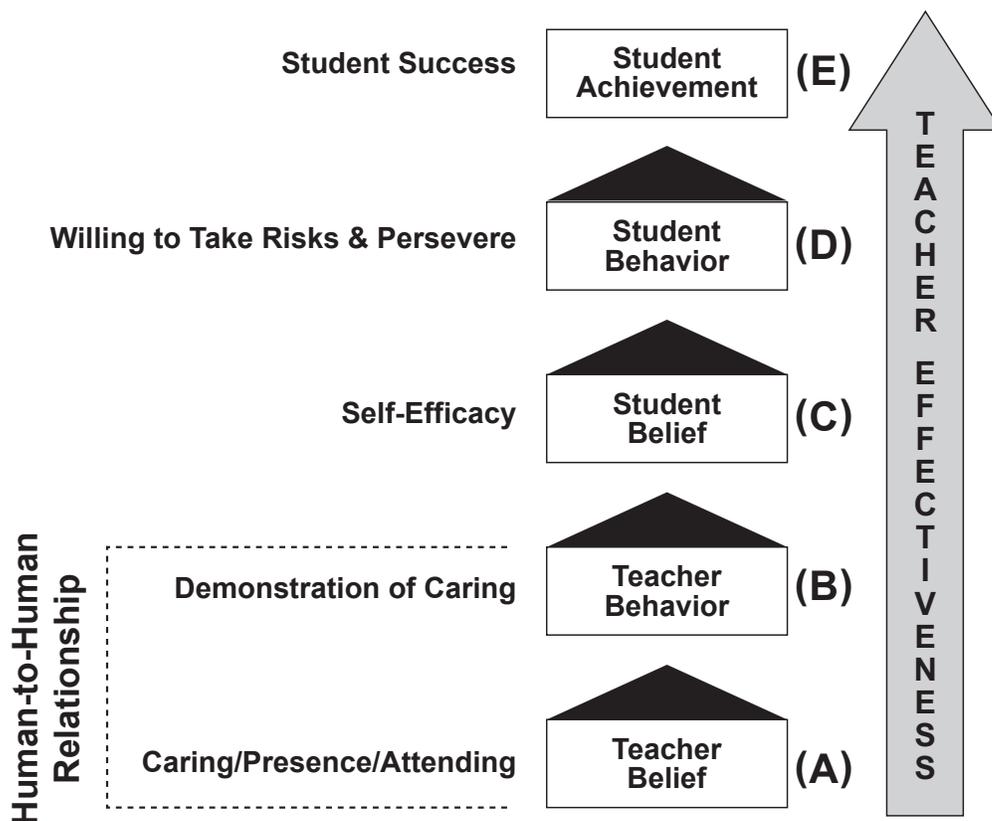
the coaches believe each student can and will be successful. (p. 33)

From the Perspective of Students

Teacher-student relationships (relationships of caring/relational pedagogy) are clearly part of this recipe for success based on humanistic orientation and its call for personal and "effective relationships" between teachers and students (Agne, 1991). What we've considered to this point is the effectiveness from the perspective of teachers. But Agne's progression and set of dependencies can also be found in the perspective of a student participating in a Learning to Learn Camp. Participant A8 from Murray's 2019 study of student perceptions of the Learning to Learn Camp experience shares

The instructors and everything that was, I felt they actually cared for me as an individual and they wanted me to meet my individual needs. It wasn't a whole, well this person is doing this. Focused on me. It makes a difference when we know you all actually care for us and you want us to figure it out. It made me want to actually come to learn. Learning to learn, it's terrible, it's hard. It was a hard week, but knowing that you have people pushing for you, you don't have a support system at home, it makes a difference. (Murray, 2019, p. 20)

Figure 3 Human-to-Human Relationship Overlaid on Agne's Model of Teaching/Learning Effectiveness



Moving from the perspective of a single student to the result of Astin's (1993) landmark longitudinal study of 24,847 students across 309 different institutions shows that "...the student's peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years" (p. 398). But second only to students' relationships with other students was the import of students' relationships with teachers.

Students who had interpersonal relationships with teachers (whether in class, outside of class, or even as a result of visiting them in their homes) benefitted from these relationships. The more frequent these kinds of contact between student and teacher, the greater the benefit to the student in terms of grades, graduation, and "every self-reported area of intellectual and personal growth" (Astin, 1993, p. 384).

Educational psychologist and prolific author Joe Cuseo (2012) has collected an impressive array of studies that illustrate the correlation between teacher-student relationships (especially outside the classroom) and student success as defined by:

- **academic achievement and cognitive development** (Astin & Panos, 1969; Centra & Rock, 1970; Pascarella, 1980; Thompson, 2001; Wilson et al., 1975 cited in Cuseo, 2012)
- **personal and social development** (Endo & Harpel, 1982; Lacy, 1978; Lau, 2003; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1978; Reason, Terenzini, & Domingo, 2006 cited in Cuseo, 2012)
- **educational aspirations** including interest in pursuing advanced graduate (Astin, 1993; Astin & Panos, 1969; Sax, Bryant, & Harper, 2005; Kocher & Pascarella, 1987; Pascarella, 1980; Stoecker, Pascarella & Wolffe, 1988 cited in Cuseo, 2012)

Conclusion

As we've explored and discussed the five phases of Travelbee's Human-to-Human Relationship model, as modified to refer explicitly to teacher and student instead of nurse and patient, we've seen many points of congruity with the field of relational pedagogy and more specifically, with Process Education. The degree of this congruity is such that as the authors of this work, we recommend that the Human-to-Human Relationship model be brought into the fold, so to speak, and offered to educators who are philosophically aligned with Process Education, POGIL, active learning, and the general democratization of education (all of which disdain the transactional or banking approach to teaching and learning). As shown by Agne's work with the

A-B-C-D-(E) model of student achievement and the previously unnoticed existence of the Human-to-Human Relationship model as naturally embedded in A and B, actively practicing the creation and maintenance of the kind of student-teacher relationships that are the hallmark of an ethic of care are the best foundation for student (and teacher) success. This claim is buttressed not only deductively by the sample population yielding Agne's model (teachers of the year) but inductively as well through individual student voices across a myriad of studies.

Next Steps

As noted previously, there is a real ambivalence in Process Education scholarship with respect to the concept of *mentoring*. While we have addressed the most proscriptive definitions of mentoring (Leise, 2007), there is other Process Education scholarship that is much more liberal in its perspective. Schlesinger and Apple (2007), for example, define *mentoring* as "the term used to describe the teacher/learner relationship that makes profound personal development possible" (p. 231).

And the profile of a mentor in the *Mentoring Institute Handbook* (Pacific Crest, 2009) offers a description that features many of the key aspects of a human-to-human relationship (these terms are in bold, below):

A mentor is **open-minded** and through active and respectful listening provides practical guidance on key issues defined by the mentee. The mentor establishes a very strong **rapport** and professional friendship by being able to **relate and be empathetic**. The mentor provides **encouragement, motivates** and challenges performance. A mentor is **honest** and confidential in giving reliable, realistic, and **appropriate** advice through innovative thought and **strong problem solving**. A mentor provides a strong perspective and is **accessible professionally to share relevant experiences**. The mentor is willing to **take significant risks** to support the right type of advocacy. (p. 25)

While Duncan (2007) writes of the "two purposes of education" (teaching and mentoring) (p. 198) in the *Framework for Implementing Process Education*, all five pathways in her concept map of Process Education begin with "Mentors" rather than "Teachers", thereby subsuming **all** educational processes (assessing, planning, designing, facilitating, etc.) under the aegis of mentoring (2007, p. 200). We see something similar in *Overview of Quality Learning Environments*, where Smith and Apple (2007) conflate "teacher" with "mentor":

In order to persist in the face of failure, the learner needs to believe that the **mentor** is committed to his or her success. Conversely, a **teacher** is reluctant to invest in students who show no interest in learning. (p. 311; bold, ours)

They also note that mentoring is a function of faculty within the classroom: “It is just as important **in a quality learning environment for faculty to regularly mentor and assess each student** as it is for the students to provide feedback about the environment” (Smith & Apple, 2007, p. 312; bold, ours).

Given the contradictions between the proscriptive and liberal approaches to mentoring within Process Education, we believe that it may be time to formally differentiate between the two. Each has its utility, and **formal mentoring**

(for example) would be an ideal term denoting the more proscriptive approaches, such as found in Leise (2007), Straus et al. (2012), and the Mentoring Methodology, which is based on Leise’s 10 Principles of Effective Mentoring (Apple et al., 2024). These certainly have their place, most often in graduate school or for very specific growth and professional development purposes. The more liberal approaches to mentoring could then be termed **relational mentoring** or **interpersonal mentoring**, both names which calls to mind the “I-You” aspect of two individuals working together. Regardless of terminology, we find that some degree of organization or systematization is called for to prevent “mentoring” from losing all meaning within Process Education, as its current definitions and characterizations certainly run the gamut.

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