Leading Restorative Culture Change:
A Case Study of an Ontario Middle School

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RESEARCH OVERVIEW

RESTORATIVE MODEL
The restorative model for leading school culture change was the result of a qualitative case study in an Ontario middle school, using data from students, support staff, teachers, and administration. The case study was a part of my dissertation at Brock University in St. Catharines, ON, Canada

STRONG CULTURES

Huang et al. (2012) describe that groups are loyal to their members as they find commonality around their values and their norms.

Cloete (2014) upholds that the strength of a social network is in its ability to bridge to other groups. We seek to bridge people into I-Thou cultures.

CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

Restorative practices is a philosophy of dialogue, using affective conversation, restorative circles, the restorative questions, and restorative conferences to create space for encounters to build relations.
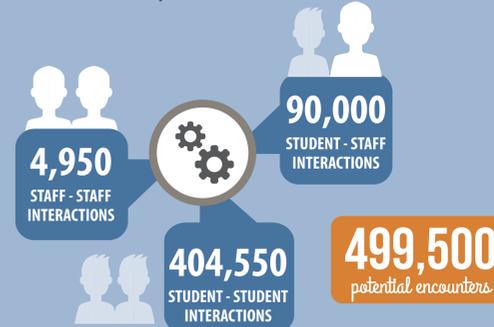
It is in face to face interactions that relationships will change, for this is the medium for building empathy (Wallis, 2016)

Leaders in our schools must create physical space for moments of encounter where it is safe for members of the school community to take risks through dialogue in order to strengthen relations. The sum of these relations will represent the cultures that exist in our schools.

THE MODEL

CREATING CULTURE
In a school of **900 students**, and **100 staff**, there are **499,500** potential one-on-one encounters.

4,950 STAFF - STAFF INTERACTIONS
90,000 STUDENT - STAFF INTERACTIONS
404,550 STUDENT - STUDENT INTERACTIONS
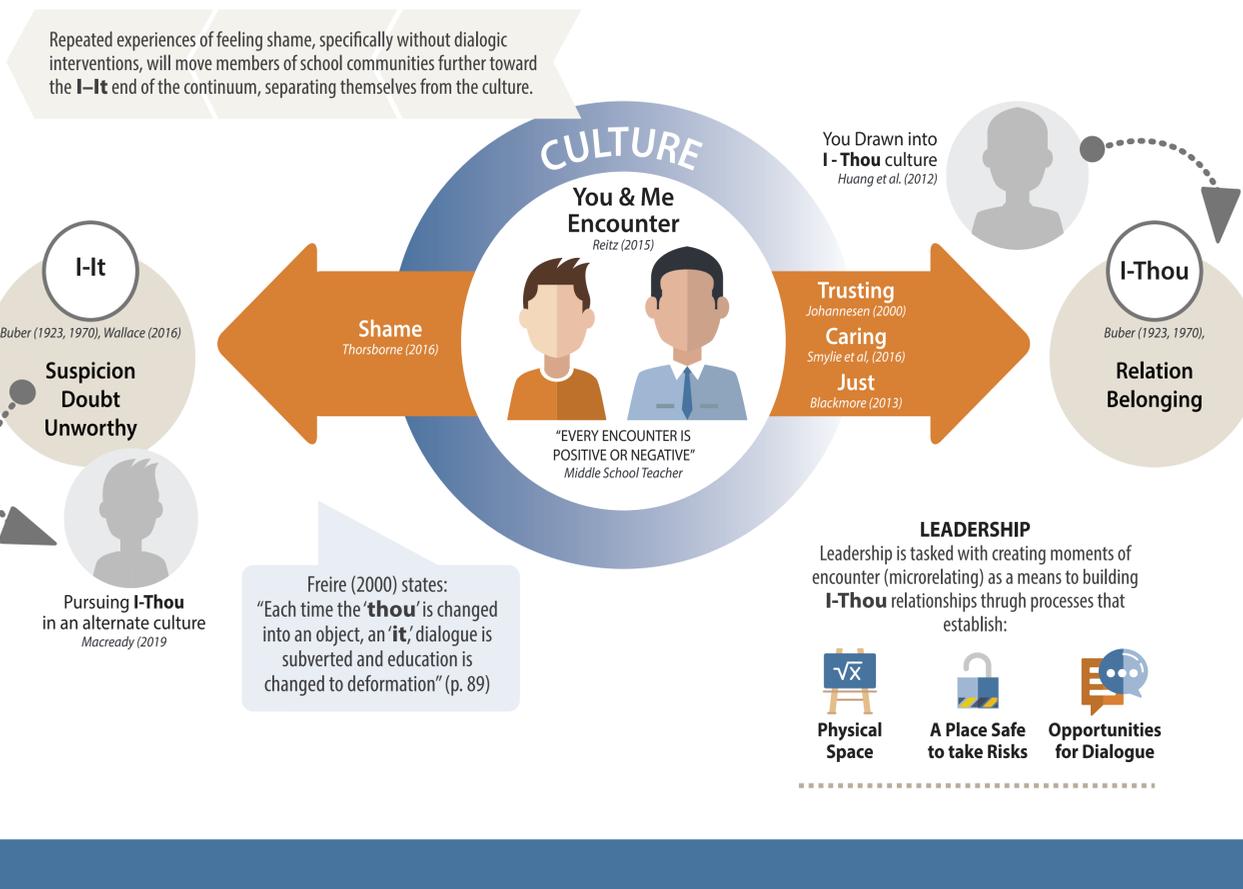**499,500** potential encounters

CULTURE STARTS WITH ENCOUNTERS
In the context of relational leadership and dialogue, Reitz (2015) speaks to a theory of leader–follower encounters. Before we think in terms of relation, we must think about creating encounters.

Martin Buber described relationships as word pairs: **I-It,** where the other is objectified; **I-Thou,** where the other is upheld as fully human.

Encounters reinforce I-Thou Relations or I-It relations

Restorative practices seek to move individuals from a position of shame to one of belonging, The more that these encounters can happen effectively, the greater the likelihood of shifting the culture.

Repeated experiences of feeling shame, specifically without dialogic interventions, will move members of school communities further toward the **I–It** end of the continuum, separating themselves from the culture.

CULTURE

You Drawn into **I - Thou** culture
Huang et al. (2012)

You & Me Encounter
Reitz (2015)

I-It
Buber (1923, 1970), Wallace (2016)
Suspicion Doubt Unworthy

Shame
Thorsborne (2016)

Trusting
Johannesen (2000)
Caring
Smylie et al, (2016)
Just
Blackmore (2013)

I-Thou
Buber (1923, 1970),
Relation Belonging

"EVERY ENCOUNTER IS POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE"
Middle School Teacher

Pursuing I-Thou in an alternate culture
Macready (2019)

Freire (2000) states:
"Each time the the '**thou**' is changed into an object, an '**it**,' dialogue is subverted and education is changed to deformation" (p. 89)

LEADERSHIP
Leadership is tasked with creating moments of encounter (microrelating) as a means to building **I-Thou** relationships thrugh processes that establish:

Physical Space
A Place Safe to take Risks
Opportunities for Dialogue

I -THOU *a place of relation and belonging*

It is necessary to constantly assess how the social condition of followers can be improved. In upholding care, trust, and the social condition of followers, power imbalances are reduced (Shields, 2010).

CARE: Schools must create opportunities for students, teachers, and principals to interact; to learn about each other; to develop long-term, deep, and trusting relationships; and to engage in caring action and interaction. (Smylie et al, 2016)

TRUST: Students upheld positive relations with their teachers as caring and trusting, reinforcing Johannesen (2000), who speaks to I–Thou relations as honest, truthful, frank, loving, and demonstrating care.

JUST: Blackmore (2013) notes that leadership needs to be inclusive in order for the school culture to be one of inclusivity, upholding a just learning environment.

I -IT *feeling unworthy and seeking an alternate culture*

"Distancing in social relationships can lead to a negative cycle in which individuals seek solace and encouragement from those who share similar positions and attitudes" (Macready, 2009, p. 212).

shame …

"Mechanism that lets us know when something that is good has been interrupted… Words we use to describe that shame has been triggered and that we have become aware of it include." (Thorsborne, 2016, pp. 31-2)

- frustrated
- confused
- embarrassed
- humiliated
- uncomfortable
- rejected

- disrespected
- diminished
- remorseful
- powerless
- hurt
- inadequate

- foolish
- isolated
- helpless
- worthless
- wounded

- awkward
- shy
- excluded
- patronised
- insulted