“It’s important to take care of each other”- health promotion in schools based on Swedish schoolchildren’s experiences

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Introduction
Health promotion is according to the World Health Organization the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health. In order to do so being able to identify and to realize aspirations, to satisfy needs, and to change or cope with the environment become important. This fits well with using a strength-based stance when studying health promotion in school focusing on what schoolchildren value, appreciate, and find important for their health and learning. The aim was to describe and understand schoolchildren’s experiences of health promotion in school settings.

Methods, context and participants
The two studies took place in two different municipalities in the northern part of Sweden within the research and development projects *Arctic Children*. In the first study 19 schoolchildren in grade five were creating, leading, and participating in student-driven health promoting activities in cooperation with their teacher. In the second study 15 schoolchildren in grade three made drawings and multimodal productions about meaningful school encounters. Data was processed using a phenomenological analysis.

Results and conclusions
In the first study the schoolchildren created, lead and participated in health promotion activities including music, massage, physical activity, and the outdoors as health promotion tools. In the second study the schoolchildren exemplified meaningful encounters relating to both learning and well-being including aspects of growing and achieving, learning in different spaces, being free and having fun, as well as caring and sharing. In both studies the relational dimension was central. For example the schoolchildren explained, “we want to offer feelings of friendship, calmness, and relaxation” and “it’s important to take care of each other”. Based on the comprehensive understanding of these two studies using Siegel's notion of
‘feeling felt’ and Lévinas’ description of ‘Thinking-of-the-Other’ I argue that relationships and partnerships allowing for emotional connection between schoolchildren’s peers and adults in school should be a prerequisite for any health promoting effort.