A Phenomenological Study of Faculty-student Connection: The Faculty Perspective

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

Vicki K. Pitstick, M.A.

Graduate Program in Educational Studies

The Ohio State University

2020

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Tatiana Suspitsyna, Advisor

Dr. Amy Barnes

Dr. Colette Dollarhide

Abstract

There has been an overabundance of research studies that have shown why Faculty-student interaction is beneficial for students, from higher academic performance to being more successful in life overall. Despite this, it is a struggle for those who work to get faculty involved with students outside the classroom, usually student affairs professionals, to find effective ways to get faculty to engage in various co-curricular initiatives. Some faculty pursue opportunities for this different type of relationship with students, while others do not for variety of reasons. There are also programs that tend to foster Faculty-student connection more than others, but it is rare for these programs and/or research to focus on the faculty perspective regarding why they continue to participate.

Based on Cox's (2011) typology of Faculty-student interaction outside the classroom, this study will focus on faculty who would say they have experienced Personal Interaction with students. At this level, interactions became intentional and a "fundamental shift" happened in the relationship. Students realized they were valued by the faculty member as a unique individual and possibly even friend and knew that the faculty member had a genuine concern for their well-being and success (Cox, 2011, p. 52).

For this study, I will employ phenomenological methodology to seek a deeper understanding of the lived experience of faculty members who indicate they have experienced Personal Interaction with students. By studying Faculty-student connection from the faculty perspective, my hope is to assist student affairs and academic affairs professionals in better understanding faculty motivations and needs when getting involved with students outside the classroom. This information can then assist them in designing intentional processes and programs that will encourage more Faculty-student connection.

Final findings and implications will be discussed at the conclusion of the study.

Dedication

To my parents, Larry & Ellen Cawley

Thank you for your unconditional faith, love, and support for me throughout this process.

You are the epitome of Christ's love and a daily example of how humans

should treat one another.

Acknowledgements

My journey through my PhD program, doing my research, and writing this dissertation was complicated due to various factors, both personal and professional. I could never have accomplished any of it without the following people who served as my support and cheerleaders throughout the process. I am blessed with and eternally grateful for these people.

My parents, Larry and Ellen Cawley. They provided financial support and never-ending love and prayer. There will never be enough words in this world to tell you what you mean to me.

My "unofficial" advisor, Dr. Molly Schaller. Without your on-going support, patience with my questions, and your endless cheers, I could have never made it through this entire process. I am honored and humbled to be your colleague and friend. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Peggy – my dearest sister and one of my very best friends. I knew I could call you no matter what and no matter when and you would listen. You are one of the sweetest, most loving, and generous human beings that has ever been on this earth. Thank you for supporting me, loving me, and being my sissy.

Barry, Juliet, Beth, Kitty, & Celia – the five of you are truly the greatest best friends a woman could have. Thank you for listening to me complain, supporting me, and loving me unconditionally. I am so blessed to have you in my life.

My Committee - Dr. Tatiana Suspitsyna, Dr. Colette Dollarhide, Dr. Amy Barnes – thank you for your time, your gracious compliments and your support in always helping me be better. I also want to thank *Dr. Antoinette Errante* in this process. Although you were not able to continue on my committee, your enthusiasm and care about students inspired me as well.

The STEP 2014 – 2018 Faculty, especially Dr. Rebecca Bias, Dr. Lisa Cravens-Brown, Dr. Mark Rudoff, Dr. Rick Livingston, Dr. Melissa Beers, Dr. Darcy Granello, Dr. Steve Bibyk, and

STEP Director, Dr. Linda Martin. Due to your commitment to students and the changes I witnessed in each of you as you interacted with students, you served as the inspiration for this PhD and research. In addition, your endless support of me was overwhelming and greatly appreciated. If you would have told me early in my career, I would have such amazing faculty friends in my corner, I would never have believed it. I am humbled and honored to be one of your friends. All of you showed me what the standard of educators should be. Thank you a million times over.

The seventeen faculty who participated in this study. Thank you for your time, support and entrusting me with your stories. I was honored to hear them; they were absolutely beautiful and left a permanent mark on my heart. The seventeen of you are inspiring in your level of commitment to and connection with students. The university is a better place because of faculty like you.

My husband, Donovan, and my three amazing girls, Abigail, Lydia, and Allison. I know there were many times you wondered why I was doing all of this. I remember Allison saying one day, "you are always typing; what are you doing?" The reality is I did all of this for the four of you and our family, in the hopes that it will serve us all well in the future. Thank you for your patience, understanding when I needed quiet time, and for always loving me. The four of you are my world!

Lastly, I could never have done this without *my faith in God* to carry me through. He is the connection I need to live this life, and I thank Him every day for all He does to love and sustain me. *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct thy paths."* Proverbs 3:5-6

Vita

1989 ..... B.A., English & Education, Otterbein University

1994-1995 .....Graduate Administrative Associate,
Student Personnel Assistantship Program
The Ohio State University

1995-1996 ..... Graduate Administrative Associate
Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs
The Ohio State University

1996 ..... M.A., Higher Education & Student Affairs
The Ohio State University

1996-97 ..... Coordinator of Meetings, Conferences, & Programs
The Missouri Unions, University of Missouri-Columbia

1998-2001 ..... Director, The Missouri Unions
University of Missouri-Columbia

2002-2005 .....Program Coordinator, The Mount Leadership Society
The Ohio State University

2005-2013 .....Program Manager, University Honors & Scholars Center
The Ohio State University

2014-2018 ..... Senior Program Manager
Second-Year Transformational Experience Program
The Ohio State University

2018-2019 ..... Graduate Administrative Associate, Arts & Sciences
The Ohio State University

Publications

Girls Circle Curriculum: Identity and Empowerment on Social Media, Once Circle Foundation, December 2019

Pitstick, V. (2018). The Ohio State University's Second-Year Transformational Experience Program. *New Directions for Higher Education*, *183*, 97-107.

Women's Circle Identity: Who I Am Curriculum, One Circle Foundation, March 2011
Women's Circle Relationships Curriculum, One Circle Foundation, March 2011
Women's Circle Being a Well Women Curriculum, One Circle Foundation, March 2011

Fields of Study

Educational Studies

Specialization: Higher Education & Student Affairs

Table Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1

Introduction

It was my second year in my position with the Second-Year Transformational Experience Program (STEP) at The Ohio State University. I had spent the majority of my first year with the program creating resources and training and development opportunities for the 75 faculty that were a part of the program. We were charting new territory by placing a faculty mentor with a group of 15 – 20 second year students and asking them to guide the students through their second year and help them create a proposal for a transformational experience that would result in engagement in a high impact practice such as study abroad, undergraduate research, or service-learning. The faculty needed a lot of support; running small groups was quite different from standing up in front of a classroom delivering a lecture, and while some of them had no trouble facilitating a small group, others struggled with how to do this. They knew they needed to get to know the students and keep them engaged, but some had no idea where to start. They were enthusiastic about the program but also needed some guidance themselves. I spent many days answering countless e-mails and answering phone calls to help faculty understand the rationale behind the program and how it was structured. One engineering faculty member, in particular, drove me a little crazy. Every e-mail I sent out, he responded with multiple paragraphs with his own thoughts and philosophy about the program. While I appreciated his engagement with the program, I sometimes grew weary of his e-mails as many times they questioned or contradicted what I was saying and trying to communicate. Then came a shift.

We ended up in a workshop together at the beginning of the summer and had a chance to sit and talk. I told him more about my background and interests, and he did the same. By the end of the day, I had told him how reading Brené Brown's book, *Daring Greatly*, had impacted my life in a very positive way. Being the curious scholar that he was, he read her book that

summer. We met in late July for lunch to discuss his thoughts on the book. A casual lunch turned into a three-hour discussion on the value of vulnerability and connection, how these things were not valued in the academy, and how he planned to use his new knowledge about these concepts with his students. From that day on, this gentleman and I formed a connection and a bond that I had never anticipated. This tenured, engineering professor became one of my favorite colleagues and every semester going forward we made time to get together to talk about how he was connecting with his students in his STEP cohort that year, as well as new ideas that he had for furthering his connection with students. He became one of my most valued faculty partners in the program and even created other innovative initiatives within the program to assist students in creating stronger connections with one another, their academic major, and the community. Many times, he told me the opportunities he had working with me and the STEP program were unlike any he had encountered before at a research I university where the rigor of tenure and promotion was consistently looming in the background. We remain connected as colleagues and friends to this day, and he continually works to find ways to make a deeper connection with the students he teaches and mentors.

As the year continued, I began to hear stories from other faculty about achieving a different type of relationship with students than they had ever experienced before. I started to wonder how this different level of connection had come about for my engineering friend and these other faculty members. What had changed? How were they experiencing these different types of relationships with students? And how were these experiences at a different level of connection informing or influencing other parts of their faculty roles?

Purpose of the Study

This connection with my engineering faculty friend and the stories I began hearing from many of the other faculty about how they were connecting with students throughout the next four and half years I worked for the STEP program inspired me to pursue my Ph.D. and my proposed research. I began seeing faculty in a new light and feeling like we shared more common ground than I had ever thought possible as someone trained to be a student affairs professional. Faculty shared stories with me about how they were understanding students better and realizing they needed to relate to them differently. I began wondering how this appreciation and desire for a deeper connection with students could be fostered in faculty.

Interestingly, Cox (2011) developed a typology of Faculty-student interactions outside of the classroom after interviewing students and faculty at a large research I university. He asserted that there are five different levels of Faculty-student interactions that are "fluid, contextually influenced, and presented in decreasing order of observed frequency" (Cox, 2011, p. 50). The first level was Disengagement which refers to faculty who do not engage in interactions with students outside the classroom at all. Even though there is no interaction at all, it was included in the model due to the high level of faculty who fell into this level. Incidental Contact was defined as unintentional interaction between a student and faculty member which might occur at a common destination such as the library, student union, or other local establishment. Cox explained that, at times, these interactions could be awkward but could also have an impact on how a student viewed a faculty member. If the student was completely dismissed and not even acknowledged, the student could walk away from the encounter not feeling valued and discouraged from interacting with the faculty member in or out of the classroom in the future. The third level he deemed Functional Interaction. These interactions were academic in nature

and occurred within the campus environment. They included encounters in the classroom, during office hours, serving on the same committee, or undergraduate research projects. Students and faculty remained in the formal roles within the university system at this level of interaction. The fourth level was called Personal Interaction. At this level, interactions became intentional and a "fundamental shift" happened in the relationship (Cox, 2011, p. 52). Students started seeing faculty as "actual humans" at this level and realized they were valued by the faculty member as a unique individual and possibly even friend. Students knew that the faculty member had a genuine concern for their well-being and success and enjoyed engaging with the faculty member in personal, interesting, and "fun" conversations (Cox, 2011, p. 52). Clearly, a different level of connection occurred at the Personal Interaction level of Faculty-student interaction. The final level was classified as Mentoring which entailed a convergence of the personal and functional interactions, but at this level the faculty member also became involved with assisting students with career and professional development, emotional and psychosocial support, and role modeling. In Cox's (2011) typology, this was where the faculty student relationship became the most personal and longest lasting.

Cox's fourth level, personal interaction, is the level I am looking to explore in my research. This level is not quite as deep as mentoring, but it is distinctly different than the first three mentioned as it involves that "fundamental shift" he refers to. I want to know more about that shift, how it happens, and the enhanced sense of connection with students that results. This is place where "humanizing" and "personalizing" takes place for both faculty and students and one that seems to be lacking in our institutions even though such an understanding is "critical; without it, efforts to develop structures and cultures that foster these educationally productive

interactions will be limited in both their efficiency and effectiveness" (Cox, 2007, p. 4). This is where the focus of my research begins.

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore Faculty-student connection for faculty and how they make meaning of that connection at a research I institution. For my research, Faculty-student connection will be defined using the typology developed by Cox (2011), described earlier as Personal Interaction. Again, this is a time when the Faculty-student relationship became friendlier, more interesting, and personally fulfilling for both the student and the faculty member. An aspect of Brown's (2010) definition of connection will also serve as a guide for this phenomenon; "the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued (p. 19). Using this definition as the foundation, I will pursue answers to the following research questions:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): How do faculty who make connections with students experience that connection?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): How does this experience inform or influence their role as a faculty member?

These broad research questions provide the foundation for numerous, additional, detailed questions that will be utilized during interviews with faculty, which will provide data for this qualitative study. The questions will be in the episodic narrative methodology style, which will encourage participants to share their stories and will reflect my interpretivist epistemological assumptions.

Significance of the Study

Kuh (2008) advocated for and stressed the importance of Faculty-student interaction in the majority of the curricular and co-curricular high impact practices he identified; these

included first-year seminars, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing intensive courses, collaborative assignments and projects, undergraduate research, internships, service-learning, and capstone courses and projects. In addition, Schreiner, Louis, Nelson, & the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition (2012) found that satisfactory Faculty-student interaction was a strong predictor of college student academic success as well as a positive overall college experience. A Gallup-Purdue study (Ray & Marken, 2014) stated,

> if graduates recalled having a professor who cared about them as a person, made them excited about learning, and encouraged them to pursue their dreams, their odds of being engaged at work more than doubled, as did their odds of thriving in all aspects of their well-being (n.p.).

Even though there is a myriad of research on this topic, incorporating faculty into strategic plans, events, and programs to find ways to give students more access to faculty, as well as the opportunity to connect with them, proves challenging for the student affairs professionals, the people who implement many of the experiential, co-curricular activities Kuh (2008) deemed beneficial for all college students. If student affairs professionals had more knowledge about and insight into how faculty experienced Faculty-student connection, they could be more purposeful and intentional in the types of programs or initiatives they design. This knowledge would also provide them with information on how to work more effectively with academic affairs to provide preparation and on-going support that faculty require when working and connecting with students when they become involved in co-curricular initiatives.

Viandan (2014) acknowledged that even though there are many cultural differences between faculty and student affairs professionals, both enjoyed similar benefits in working with

students. These benefits included: holding conversations with students about topics not related to class; greater interaction with students; feeling like they made a difference in students' lives; feeling like they had furthered the academic mission of the institution; and experiencing an increase in interaction with student affairs professionals, faculty, and staff other than their own. Since shared benefits exist between faculty and student affairs professionals, gaining more knowledge about how faculty understand Faculty-student connection and how they come to value this different type of relationship with students, as well as the contexts where they develop these types of relationships, could encourage a more collaborative culture at a university. Organizational change at the university level for both faculty and student affairs professionals might also result in a better overall experience for students as well.

Theoretical Framework

The combination of two different theories, feminist pedagogy, specifically focusing on the theory of an ethic of care, and adult development theory, will serve as a framework for this qualitative study on Faculty-student connection and are described in detail in Chapter Two but will be summarized briefly here as well. The theory of an ethic of care stemmed from the work of Noddings (1984) and focused on the premise that there is always the "one caring" and the one being "cared for" in an educational setting. Noddings' theory was considered a feminist pedagogical framework and specified characteristics and activities that were indicative of an ethic of care approach. Hawk (2017) stated that "An ethic of care assumes a significantly well-developed capacity to understand boundaries, individual needs, and deeply personal aspects of self" . . . and requires competencies such as listening, empathy, responsiveness, mindfulness and humility (p. 673).

Aspects of adult development theory will be utilized as well to provide further insight into the Faculty-student connection. There are many versions of adult development theory; the works of Jung (1954), Erikson (1982), and Levinson (1986) are mapped to show some of the progression of the theory. Then the work of Cytrynbaum, Lee, and Wadner (1982) is reviewed to show more of an application to higher education and the relevance of this theory to the study.

Both of these theories provide a theoretical framework that suggests a focus on caring is essential in the Faculty-student relationship. This will serve to provide more of an understanding about the experience of faculty connecting with students within the structure of a university that many times sends message that deeper relationships with students are not necessary or a part of their roles that is valued in any way by the administration or upper level faculty (DeAngelo, Mason, & Winters, 2016).

Research Design

The design of this study makes use of a phenomenological research methodology. Phenomenology is concerned with focusing on an experience a certain number of individuals have with a particular phenomenon to "a description of the universal essence" (Creswell, 2013, p.76). Phenomenologists ultimately attempt to describe the essence of the phenomenon in terms of the significance it holds for the participant (Moustakas, 1994) based on interviews with people who have experienced the phenomenon and analysis of both what the individuals experienced and how they experienced it. Phenomenology research centers on understanding a shared, lived experience (van Manen, 1997; Patton, 1990). From a phenomenological description, a reader should be able to know what it is like to experience the phenomenon described in a study (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014).

The site for data collection will be a large, four-year public Midwestern university. The university community includes colleagues who will serve as key partners in the process of identifying faculty participants. This campus will also be suitable for the study because of its myriad of opportunities of Faculty-student interaction both inside and outside the classroom.

Patton's (1990) logic of purposeful sampling will guide the process of participant selection, with the importance of selecting information-rich cases at the foundation (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 1990). Qualified participants will need to meet all of the primary criteria, which are described in Chapter Three. I will identify participants from colleagues who have been involved with faculty through programs that require sustained involvement with students. Colleagues from Residence Life, First Year Experience, the Office of Service Learning, the Office of Undergraduate Research, the Second-Year Program, and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion will be contacted and asked to share lists of faculty who have been involved in these different initiatives. I will then extend an invitation to the faculty who meet the criteria I have established.

Once potential participants respond with an interest and are identified, I will ask them for their informed consent and proceed with my interviews using a method known as episodic narrative interviewing.

Data collection for the study will consist of 60 – 90-minute semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with each of the faculty participants, recorded using a digital recording device and transcribed by myself or another transcriptionist. In phenomenological inquiry, the interview is an indispensable method of gathering data about the essence of the human experience in question (Jones et al., 2014).

The interview protocols will be grounded in the two research questions developed for this study but will be structured based on the template appropriate for episodic narrative interviewing, further outlined in chapter 3. A second semi-structured interview may take place with some participants if clarification or further investigation of the interaction with the student or students they discuss is needed to understand more about the phenomenon of Faculty-student connection. I will also incorporate in-process member checks as a way of verifying the data gathered. All procedures mandated by the Institutional Review Board of the university in question will be recognized and followed in the collection of data for this study.

Definition of Terms

The following key terms will be defined accordingly within the context of this study:

Faculty-student Relationship, Interaction, Involvement, or Engagement – these terms will be used synonymously and generally to describe any type of relationship between a faculty and a student in or out of the classroom.

Faculty-student Connection – a term used to describe a more personal, deeper level of connection defined by Cox (2011) as Personal Interaction as a time when the interactions between faculty and student became intentional and a "fundamental shift" happened in the relationship (p. 52).

Sustained Involvement – this type of involvement will be characterized by faculty being involved in programs or initiatives that have lasted for at least one or more semesters and in which the faculty member met with the student(s) at least ten or more times throughout a 15-week semester. Cox, McIntosh, Terenzini, Reason, and Quaye (2011) advocated for faculty participation in initiatives that ask for sustained involvement; they explained that not only are

Faculty-student interactions outside the classroom too infrequent, but they occur more at the casual level rather than at the substantive level where the highest educational potential exists.

Faculty – this term will refer to persons at the university who hold a PhD, are a part of a particular department's teaching staff, and who are already tenured.

Summary

This study will expand on the literature regarding the value of Faculty-student connection. As opposed to the student perspective of this type of interaction, which has been heavily researched, the study will focus on exploring Faculty-student connection from the faculty member's perspective by asking them to articulate how they experience this connection, filling a significant gap that exists in the research. A greater understanding of how faculty experience a sense of connection with students will provide student affairs professionals with much needed insight into how to better recruit faculty for programs that we know are enriched by faculty involvement, as well provide some ideas for how to better work with and support faculty who do become involved with programs or initiatives outside the classroom. In addition, this study may provide student affairs professionals with knowledge around what faculty find valuable in programs or initiatives they participate in beyond the classroom as well as the contexts that foster Faculty-student connection. The next chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the literature relevant to the study and a detailed description of the theoretical framework that will be utilized. Chapter three follows with a detailed outline of my proposed research design and methods. Chapter four will focus on the findings of the interviews with study participants, and chapter five will provide a concluding discussion of the results within the context of the existing literature, limitations of the study, and implications for further research and practice.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Overview

In this chapter I highlight the body of scholarship that takes a deeper look into Faculty-student relationships by first reviewing the importance of the Faculty-student relationship, what students want from faculty regarding a relationship, as well as the benefits of Faculty-student relationships in and out of the classroom. I then outline the reasons faculty do not choose to participate in these types of relationships and the role institutions or departments play in hindering or preparing faculty for Faculty-student interactions or relationships. The review will then turn to examining how interactions with students is different than connecting with them, what characterizes connection and why connection is important, and how campus initiatives can impact Faculty-student connection.

There is an abundant amount of literature on the importance and value of Faculty-student interaction and relationships by well-known scholars such as Astin (1984), Tinto (1987), Kuh (2009), and Pascarella and Terenzini (2005). These scholars have done numerous studies to examine how this interaction positively affects student classroom learning, skill development and emotional well-being. Mayhew, Rockenbach, Bowman, Seifert, & Wolniak with E. T. Pascarella & P. T. Terenzini, (2016) summed it up well in the most recent edition of *How College Affects Students*. They reported that 21st century research has yielded the following findings regarding the Faculty-student relationship,

> [the relationship] promotes various indicators of psychological change, attitudes and values, moral development, and career aspirations and preparation . . . both support and challenge from faculty bolster self-concept, leadership, political and civic engagement and moral development (p. 554).

They also stated that the higher the frequency of Faculty-student interactions, the more students exhibited increases in psychological well-being, emotional health, social development, freedom in gender-role expression, and spiritual development.

Since evidence suggests this is the case, we need to better understand the Faculty-student relationship in order to engage faculty in initiatives outside the classroom as well. Student affairs professionals are familiar with the literature on the value of Faculty-student interaction, so most of them are continuously looking for the ideal way to get faculty more involved with students outside the classroom. There are a number of ways in which this can be achieved, but a common way is by involving faculty in the programming that happens on campus. Usually this is done by involving faculty in residence hall programming or through the teaching of first-year survey or seminar classes (Browne, Headworth, & Saum, 2009; Soldner & Duby, 2004), but the reality is that incorporating faculty into strategic plans, events, and programs to find ways to give students more access to faculty continues to prove challenging for the student affairs professional. Because of this, it is important to review the literature on the Faculty-student relationship to gain insight and determine possible avenues for change in the future.

The Importance of the Faculty-student Relationship

The Faculty-student relationship is one that faculty should be concerned about as it can affect student views about learning, positively impact student behavior and performance in the classroom, and because students desire good relationships with faculty. Students highly regard a faculty member who is able to exhibit expertise or competence (Sherman & Blackburn, 1975; Myers & Bryant, 2004; Gruber, Reppel, & Voss., 2010). Students want faculty to exhibit knowledge and wisdom in the classroom regarding their content area (Sherman & Blackburn, 1975). Myers and Bryant (2004) expanded on this and found that faculty competence is

conveyed through content expertise, affect for students, and verbal fluency. If faculty engage in communicative behaviors such as competence, caring and character, they "play a more active and influential role in whether students consider them to be credible" (Myers & Bryant, 2004, p. 26). In addition, Farley-Lucas and Sargent (2009) stated that positive Faculty-student interactions encouraged students to work harder on classwork and be more engaged with the discipline, built self-confidence in students, and even affected writing and research skills. Bolkan and Goodboy (2009) also found that students who felt their education was more personalized – where the instructor was dynamic and showed individualized consideration - found their instructors more credible. Gruber et al. (2010) focused on expertise in the subject area and the logical structure of a lecture as a quality attribute in students' eyes. Establishing credibility was important as it improved motivation, increased learning, and resulted in positive teaching evaluations by students (Myers & Bryant, 2004; Myers & Brann, 2009).

If students are not motivated, it can hinder their learning (Dandy & Bendersky, 2014). Studies have found that for learning to occur, faculty and students need to share some consistent beliefs about learning and come to some understanding about the learning process (Addy, Simons, Gardner, & Albert, 2015; Dandy & Bendersky, 2014; Ewing & Whittington, 2009). "Faculty should focus on teaching to their definition of learning, a definition that students share, and work towards teaching students how to address the key learning components both inside and outside the classroom" (Dandy & Bendersy, 2014, p. 363). Focusing on these "student-centered" beliefs and adopting "student-centered practices" is necessary if faculty want to impact student learning (Addy et al., 2015). Involving students in the process of developing an understanding of learning and discussing course content with them will allow students and faculty to operate at similar cognitive levels as opposed to students simply being passive about what is happening in

the classroom (Ewing & Whittington, 2009). “And the main goal for a teacher, in any capacity, is student learning” (Giorgi & Roberts, 2012, p. 66).

In addition, faculty have the potential to have a major impact on students’ lives simply through a simple comment (Giordano, 2010). Faculty comments can “relate to changes in self-understanding or identity development” and “the personal transformation that results from these moments is of utmost importance” (Giordano, 2010, p. 15). Faculty might also be able to encourage students toward self-authorship and decision-making when they come up against “provocative moments.” In turn, they can possibly “enhance student’s abilities to see themselves as capable of constructing knowledge” (Pizzolatto, 2005, p. 637). It is obvious that faculty can make a definite difference, so it is to the benefit of our students that faculty strive to exhibit these behaviors and make an effort to have relationships with students.

Not only will positive Faculty-student relationships assist students to perform better in the classroom, they also desire positive relationships with faculty members. Numerous studies found that certain personality characteristics are preferred by students (Sherman & Blackburn, 1975; Myers & Bryant, 2004; Benson, Cohen, & Buskist, 2005; Gruber et al., 2010; and Webb & Barett, 2014). Sherman and Blackburn (1975) reported that students want “a commonsense or down to earth dimension to the teaching situation” as well as a faculty member who exhibits “open-mindedness, and acceptance and... reasonableness and graciousness” (p. 125). An instructor’s character was also conveyed through immediacy, flexibility, promotion of understanding, and trustworthiness while caring is conveyed through responsiveness, accommodation, and accessibility (Myer & Bryant, 2004). Gruber et al. (2010) revealed that “attributes such as friendliness, approachability, enthusiasm, being receptive to suggestions and

humour show the highest impact on student satisfaction" as these behaviors "help humanise" the faculty (p. 183).

Humanizing faculty also helped build rapport with students (Gruber et al., 2010). Another way this happened was through faculty self-disclosure. Myers and Brann (2009) found that "When instructors self-disclose material that students perceive to be relevant, they feel instructors are trustworthy and caring," (p. 12) and students needed this connection to develop trust with their instructors. Benson et al (2005) found that teachers who established rapport could also count on their students to attend class, pay attention, and enjoy the subject. Building rapport with students is necessary to maintain positive interactions between students and faculty, and students are particularly dissatisfied if faculty do not show respect toward them (Gruber et al., 2010).

Faculty-student Interactions Outside the Classroom

Faculty Communication Outside the Classroom

There is no denying that Faculty-student interaction happens inside the classroom, but research shows that Faculty-student relationships are developed outside the classroom as well. One way students judge whether a faculty member does or does not have these desired characteristics/behaviors is through the communication practices of the faculty member outside of class (Dobransky & Frymier, 2004; Farley-Lucas & Sargent, 2009). Dobransky and Frymier (2004) encouraged out of class communication because they discovered it builds a more interpersonal relationship between the faculty member and the students. Their results showed that students felt empowered and experienced a deeper level of intimacy with the faculty member. Farley-Lucas and Sargent (2009) found that out-of-class communication was so important because it affected how students reacted to faculty in class as well as their likelihood

of approaching faculty outside of class. According to their findings, student's reactions were affected by a faculty member's willingness to be helpful and communicate care and empathy, as well as when they felt faculty were concerned about their individual needs. On the other hand, inappropriate faculty behavior and negative communication led to students avoiding a faculty member outside of class.

Encouraging students to seek involvement with faculty outside the classroom is crucial. Cotton and Wilson (2006) found that contact with faculty outside the classroom can impact how a student behaves inside the classroom. Students reported that it raised their comfort level with a faculty member, and a more personal relationship with a faculty member incentivized them to perform at a higher rate because they did not want to let the faculty member down.

Faculty Involvement in Programs and Initiatives Outside the Classroom

Groccia (2018) focused on faculty behavior outside the classroom on a broader level. He termed these interactions student engagement and explained that it was multi-dimensional and included learning within and beyond the classroom. Faculty getting involved with campus activities that students participated in outside the classroom was important as these activities assisted students in crossing disciplinary boundaries and provided them the opportunity to encounter real world problems and apply course content to work through these problems, which led to intellectual growth and increased personal responsibility. In addition, he asserted that students learn at the doing, thinking, and feeling levels and it was the responsibility of faculty and the institution to engage students on all three levels to reach optimal student learning as well as higher retention and student satisfaction rates, which many times can be achieved out of the classroom as well as inside the classroom. Cuseo (2018) added that faculty engagement with students outside the classroom is influential possibly because it is less informal, less evaluative

than a classroom, is one on one, and makes students feel like they matter and are important to the university. Cox (2011) suggested that Faculty-student interaction can happen on many levels and found the following: even small interactions can have a positive effect on students; one interaction with a student can lead to more interactions; the quality of the interactions makes a difference; and students tend to generalize about faculty interaction, so one good relationship with a single faculty can favorably affect a student's entire perception of all faculty.

Where Faculty-student Interaction Happens

Faculty-student interaction can occur in a variety of ways including students attending a faculty talk outside of class; Faculty-student lunches on campus or dinner in a faculty member's home; faculty working with students on undergraduate research or participating in community service projects; or a faculty member advising a student organization or getting involved in residential living learning communities. The level of involvement varies with some of these interactions, and even though some researchers (Pizzolatto, 2005; Giordano, 2010; and Cox 2011) discovered that even the smallest interactions between faculty and student matter, it seems that sustained involvement in some of these outside the classroom initiatives might have even more of a positive impact on students. Cox, McIntosh, Terenzini, Reason, and Quaye (2011) verified this and explained that not only are Faculty-student interactions outside the classroom too infrequent, but they occur more at the casual level rather than at the substantive level where the highest educational potential exists. Since this is the case, exploring the fourth level of Cox's typology of Faculty-student interaction, interpersonal connection, where a more substantive connection with students seems to begin, is necessary. As part of this exploration, the reasons this level of Faculty-student interaction does not occur as regularly, even though studies indicate the undeniable value of it, is worth delving into as well.

Reasons for Limited Faculty-student Interaction

Even though there is extensive research on the importance of Faculty-student relationships and the positive effect outside the classroom behavior and involvement in programs and initiatives can have on developing the Faculty-student relationship and there are numerous opportunities provided to faculty to get involved in outside the classroom initiatives on many campuses, there are faculty who choose not to get involved in outside of the classroom programs or initiatives. The reasons for this vary from messages faculty receive about their roles, to the focus on tenure and promotion, to the fact that faculty simply do not know how to engage with students outside the classroom (Mooney, 1990; Fairweather, 1993; Golde & Pribbenow, 2000; Arreola, Theall, & Aleamoni, 2003; Einarson & Clarkberg, 2004; Vianden & Smith, 2011; Chen, 2015; Gentry & Stokes, 2015; and Malesic, 2016).

Messages about Faculty Roles

Faculty members are sent distinct messages about their roles at the university; the expectations placed on a faculty member are sometimes overwhelming and at times it is difficult for them to determine what holds the most value. The roles of a faculty member are numerous and revolve around the areas of teaching, research and service, but much more is contained in these three words than one might assume. Arreola et al (2003) asserted that the role of the professor should be acknowledged as a "meta-profession that builds upon and extends beyond each faculty member's content expertise, [then] the various skill and performance elements required in teaching, scholarship, and service. . . can become more clearly identified" (p. 6). These roles also included advising, curriculum development, service on campus-wide committees, as well as others, and faculty were expected to perform at high levels in all of these areas even though they received no specific training on most of them (Arreola et al., 2003).

These findings suggested that faculty strived to do well in roles outside of their area of expertise to parallel what their department or institution deemed important, even if they did not feel entirely competent in those areas. Most likely, this included interacting and communicating with students in and out of the classroom in some capacity. In addition, DeAngelo, Mason, and Winters (2016) explained that when faculty are asked to engage with students beyond advising and teaching, this is seen as "extra-role behavior" and not one that is formally rewarded in any way within the institutional structure (p. 323).

Chory and Offstein (2017) made it inevitably clear why faculty do not view relationships with students, especially out-of-classroom relationships, as a top priority as part of their role. They explained that faculty feel constrained by "their lack of training in teaching/mentoring/advising, professional socialization toward discipline expertise, competing demands on the use of their talents, existing reward structures, and lack of resources" (p. 20). Despite the benefits to students, faculty are conflicted on how much effort to put into building relationships with students due to the demands and messages of the university about their roles.

For most research I universities, research is the main responsibility of a faculty member, and the one she is expected to focus on the most. Chen (2015) explained, "Most of the evaluation criteria regarding world university rank are about the amount of research products and ratio of citations" (p. 23). In other words, research is a critical part of the promotion and tenure process as it has a large impact on a university's reputation and ratings.

Teaching and Tenure

Because research is the most highly valued contribution of a faculty member and plays such a major role on whether a faculty member receives tenure or not, the promotion and tenure process has a major impact on how a faculty member spends time, particularly at a research I

institution. Fairweather (1993) conducted a study of over 4,000 full-time, tenure-track faculty at four-year institutions and found that research productivity continued to be seen as the preferred path to achieving promotion, tenure, and a higher salary in academia. He also noted that faculty peers and administrators perpetuated this reality and gave very little support for teaching in determining a faculty member's pay. Gentry and Stokes (2015) pointed out that for some faculty this is not a fair process, "A principal concern is that some faculty perform an inordinate service load at the university but when placed in their academic portfolio it is not very beneficial in earning promotion and tenure" (p. 5). Activities such as teaching and mentoring and/or working with students outside the classroom, usually categorized as service, contribute very little to the tenure and promotion process, so faculty do not prioritize these activities as much. Since classroom interaction and outside the classroom activities are where interaction and connection usually happen between a faculty member and a student, the tenure and promotion process does very little to encourage the Faculty-student relationship in any way. In a personal essay, Malesic (2016) agreed; he confessed he gave up a 40-year career due to the pressures of tenure; "Academic culture fosters burnout when it encourages overwork. . .and offers little recognition for good teaching or mentoring" (p. 5). Gentry and Stokes (2015) felt the process needs to be re-evaluated and clearer criteria need to be provided for evaluation, particularly for those faculty who teach and serve at the university more than they do research or publish. The message that research was more important was also found in hiring practices, again, particularly at research I institutions (Areolla et al., 2003). Mooney (1990) reported that when hiring faculty, three in four department heads at research I institutions "were more concerned about the applicant's research" as opposed to the quality of their teaching (p. A15).

Not Knowing How

Conversely, a study by Einarson and Clarkberg (2004) refuted this reasoning. Their study examined the patterns and correlates of Faculty-student interaction outside the classroom from the faculty member's perspective at a research I university. They found little support for the assertion that faculty members do not participate in out of the classroom programs due to lack of time or institutional rewards and recognition. In contrast, the study found that the reasons most faculty avoided out of class interactions was due to their core beliefs about their roles at the university and their interpersonal knowledge and abilities. The study explained that faculty who valued teaching over research were most likely to get involved in out of the classroom programs (Einarson & Clarkberg, 2004), but, if faculty felt they did not possess the ability to navigate "the social dynamics of student relationships," they tended to not have the confidence to participate in programs outside the classroom. Golde and Pribbenow (2000) also suggested that some faculty "simply feel uncomfortable or unskilled in building interpersonal connections with students in unstructured, out-of-class contexts," so they avoided these types of interactions (p. 33). In addition, Viandan and Smith (2011) found similar results from a qualitative study with faculty who shared that they do not engage in out of the classroom initiatives due to boundary issues; feeling unprepared to assist students with emotional issues; unstructured programs; feeling like they do not fit in; and feeling rejected by students. Armstrong (1999) reported that faculty voiced comparable fears and concerns before getting involved in The Duke University Faculty Associates Program at Duke University. Einarson and Clarkberg (2004) concluded their study suggesting that institutions find opportunities to help faculty members learn the "actual "how to's" of making [Faculty-student interactions] work (p. 29). It is clear from these research studies, which were more focused on the faculty perspective, that universities need to be doing

more to help faculty feel more comfortable and confident in engaging students outside the classroom.

Fostering Faculty-student Relationships

In light of the research stating that faculty do not know how to develop Faculty-student relationships and that they are reluctant to engage in Faculty-student relationships outside the classroom, one might wonder if and how institutions or departments are working to foster relationships between faculty and students. Again, although the research does support the importance of Faculty-student interactions, there is a limited amount on how faculty are prepared to navigate them. Thompson (2001) found that interaction with science and math students outside the classroom was valuable, but only if faculty did not "persist in an aggressive teaching style or in a manner not conducive to the learning style preferred" that can sometimes be characteristic of math and science faculty (p. 48). Micari and Pazos (2012) researched an organic chemistry class and discovered there was a positive correlation to student outcomes in the course when students looked up to the professor, felt comfortable with the professor, and felt respected by the professor, but they did not provide many recommendations on how to achieve these favorable interactions. Finally, Reeves, Hinson, and Marchant (2010) surveyed agricultural economics faculty involved in co-curricular activities and found that faculty felt personally rewarded by these interactions with students and agreed that they contributed to preparation and networking opportunities for the students, but little was mentioned about how this participation helped faculty better relate to students. Cox et al. (2011) did find that a greater number of humanities faculty and faculty from professional schools tended to interact more with students outside the classroom than those in natural or social sciences, but no explanation was offered for why this might be the case or how they interacted with students differently than

faculty from other disciplines. It appears that there is very little research on how faculty are prepared to interact with students outside the classroom, regardless of the discipline.

On many campuses the effort to think differently about interacting with students, at least in the classroom, is being achieved through the establishment of centers on teaching. Schumann, Petters, and Olsen (2013) explained that these centers were established as a result of a recognized need to help faculty grow and develop in their teaching skills and methods in order to become more effective teachers. The main purpose of these centers is "keeping up with the latest teaching trends and acting as a catalyst to bring about needed change, moving the faculty and the institution from old pedagogical models to new ones" (p. 21). Every state in the United States has at least one university that includes a center focused on teaching as do many countries (Kansas University Center for Teaching Excellence, n.d.). These centers are focused on assisting faculty to teach better, but it is not clear what they are doing, if anything, to help faculty personally relate to students better to help them form effective Faculty-student relationships.

The issue with these studies and efforts by institutions and departments is that they do not really focus on the "how to" of helping faculty develop better relationships with students that Einarson and Clarkberg (2004) advocated. A vast majority of the research is focused on telling *why* Faculty-student interactions are positive and beneficial to the students, mainly from the student perspective, but there is very little on *how* to help faculty develop these types of relationships with students beyond listing basic suggestions such as build rapport with students; be enthusiastic; learn the students' names, share personal stories when relevant, vary your pedagogical practices, and be sure to answer e-mails promptly (Rallis, 1994; Dobransky & Frymier, 2004; Farley-Lucas & Sargent, 2009; Buskirt, Busler, & Kirby, 2018; Groccia, 2018). These suggestions are valid, but they simply tell faculty what to do to build relationships, not

how to build them. Pattison, Hale, and Gowens' (2011) comments about teaching in the classroom can be related to general interactions with students as well: "The fact that the articles [from scholarly journals] predominantly identify characteristics, instead of behaviors, complicates the process of using them to improve" (p. 41). They further explained that until faculty know what behaviors communicate a desired trait or characteristic, such as respect, they cannot be effective in their interactions (Pattison, Hale, & Gowens, 2011). Vianden and Smith (2011) added to the idea that faculty struggle with the how and, at times, even feel discomfort interacting with students outside the classroom. Their study, focused on faculty who were involved in residential academic initiatives, found that some faculty felt there were boundary issues and struggled with the line between being friendly and being professional. Other faculty reported being fearful of possibly having to deal with student emotional issues outside the classroom; they did not want to feel as if they might be called upon to take on a counseling role. Some faculty were at a loss for what to do when in environments with students outside the classroom that provided little structure or purpose; others felt they lacked the social skills to interact with students; and finally, many faculty were concerned about being viewed as incompetent or uninteresting, so interacting with students was even considered scary. In addition, Cotton and Wilson (2006) exemplified how important "the how" is as well, reporting that many students felt belittled by faculty as opposed to feeling empathy from them and felt unimportant to faculty when they experienced non-responsiveness after expressing a concern.

There are some programs on campuses that have lent themselves to helping faculty develop a skill set for better Faculty-student interactions. Teaching first-year experience seminars can help faculty develop a greater understanding of students, their concerns, and the problems they encounter (Wanca-Thibault, Shepherd, & Staley, 2002; Soldner, Lee, & Duby,

2004). Working with undergraduates on research can also heighten a faculty member's skill at interacting and building relationships with students (Wolf, 2018). Service-learning pedagogy and experiences have shown to positively impact faculty relationships with students as well (McKay & Estrella, 2008). These experiences increase a faculty member's ability to be more student-centered in their interactions with them, but they still do not provide great insight into the *HOW* to build better Faculty-student interactions or provide ideas for what those types of relationships might look like.

A Generation Seeking Connection

Maybe connection is the key. Instead of just thinking about them as Faculty-student interactions, maybe more of a focus on helping faculty develop connections with students should be the goal, the personal interaction level advocated by Cox (2011). In other words, maybe it is time for a change in how we are working with faculty in student affairs and higher education, especially when working with this generation of students.

It appears that today's college students are actively seeking the connection the Personal Interaction level Cox (2011) described. Holyoke and Larson (2009) found that the generations that are attending college today, from older adult baby boomers to the young adults of generation Z are seeking connection in the classroom. In addition, Espinoza (2012) advocated for a change in perspective from faculty as he described the values of the current generation. He explained that the students of Generation Z have higher expectations than ever before of faculty - they want more say in the classroom, a quicker response, an explanation for why; and they expect faculty to be affirming, informal, friendly, and willing to take the time to build "real relationships." He encouraged faculty to let go of the power of their positions and instead focus on "the power of

relationship" (p. 33). In other words, it is necessary to take time to connect with this generation of students.

Turkle (2016) suggested that authentic connection was needed more than ever in a society that is ruled by technology as it is now the main way students communicate, display emotion, and make decisions. For many of them this constant electronic connection seems great, but it actually comes at a cost. According to Turkle, the students of today's generation are losing the capacity for empathy. The ability to empathize is a valuable skill when working with people and trying to solve problems. If students do not have this skill and have no place to develop it, they may really struggle in the workplace and in life. Twenge (2017) added that in 2016 college students were spending fewer hours a week in in-person social interaction due to increased hours of screen time on their phones, iPads, etc. She concluded, "An hour a day less spent with friends is an hour a day less spent building social skills, negotiating relationships, and navigating feelings" (p. 71).

Faculty can have an impact on helping students build the connections they are lacking. If faculty want to assist students in their growth and development and help them be successful, it is no longer acceptable for them just to focus on their content area. They need to be aware of the generational characteristics of students that are coming to their campuses and where they fall developmentally; Holyoke and Larson (2009) stated that this knowledge "provides a unique teaching as well as learning experience" (p. 20). They also need to understand how to build relationships. Turkle (2016) stated

> Studies of mentoring show that what makes a difference, what can change the life of a student, is the presence of one strong figure who shows an interest, who, the student would say, 'gets me.' You need a conversation for that (p. 248).

Since students are looking to faculty for real relationships and connection, faculty are the ones who need to facilitate this process and this connection. If faculty do not know how, the students are the ones who suffer.

The Value of Connection in the Faculty-student Relationship

There is great value in creating connection when interacting with students in and out of the classroom and approaching students with what many scholars termed as "heart" as opposed to just with the mind (Palmer, 1998: Ciocchetti, 2011; Pattison, Hale, & Gowens 2011; Brown, 2012; Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018). Palmer (1998) talked about connection and advocated for a personally focused approach to interacting with students. He asserted that teaching needed to be more than the particulars of the profession; teaching also needed to be about heart and connectedness.

Approaching students with "heart" can imply a myriad of characteristics, but authenticity, vulnerability, and empathy are three concepts that are particularly discussed in the literature. Cranton and Carusetta (2004) explained that authenticity is a "multi-faceted" concept that includes "being genuine, showing consistency between values and actions, relating to others to encourage their authenticity, and living a critical life" (p. 7). These ideas are related to developing self-awareness and awareness of how the Faculty-student relationship manifests itself. They hypothesized that as a faculty member becomes more aware of these things, she becomes more authentic. They also asserted that authenticity has not been given the attention it deserves. Focus is given to teaching methods, practices, theories and principles instead of encouraging faculty to look inside at the self and examine how beliefs and values affect their practice. This look inside the self can be a very vulnerable experience for a faculty member who is accustomed to simply focusing on the roles that the university expects and following the

protocol of the academy. Many studies have shown that authenticity also plays a major role when working with and connecting with different populations of minoritized students (Nielsen & Alderson, 2014; Cutri & Whiting, 2015; Linder, Harris, Allen, and Hubain, 2015). Palmer (1998) admitted that approaching students with heart also takes courage and requires a vulnerability that goes against the standard view that the main role of teaching is to impart knowledge, but if faculty did not find a way to weave their personal and public lives together when interacting with students, they risked losing the passion that led them into the profession from the beginning (Palmer, 1998).

Vulnerability can be viewed as a negative characteristic, especially in higher education. Faculty typically view the university as a place for academic learning only and not a place to share stories or emotions. Brown (2012) admitted,

> Emotional accessibility is a shame trigger for researchers and academics. Very early in our training we are taught that a cool distance and inaccessibility contribute to prestige, and that if you're too relatable, your credentials come into question (p. 12).

Despite this view, research has shown that students see vulnerability as an important part of the Faculty-student relationship. In addition, research studies have revealed that faculty vulnerability has many positive outcomes. Vulnerability establishes trust with students (Bearman & Molloy, 2017; Myers & Braunn, 2009); builds credibility as faculty self-disclose (Myers & Braunn, 2009; Schrodt, 2013); contributes to faculty authenticity (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004; Cutri & Whiting, 2015; Kelchertermans, 2009; Linder et al, 2015; Nielsen & Alderson, 2014; and Rowe, 2016), can impact student motivation (Cayanus & Martin, 2004; Mazur, Murphy, & Simonds, 2007), and can contribute to an ideal learning environment (Mazen, Jones, and Sergenian, 2000; Rowe, 2016). Particularly, Kelchertermans (2009) argued that being

vulnerable and allowing authentic interaction to take place can allow for meaningful education and enlightening experiences.

Rigger-Piehl and Sax (2018) studied a topic that many faculty would consider vulnerable, spirituality. They reported that Faculty-student interactions outside of the classroom involving discussions around spiritual topics such as exploration of meaning and life purpose and personal/life decision-making were positive predictors of student spiritual development. Development in this area is crucial for students as it improves their physical and mental health and increases their resiliency, as well as their capacity for empathy and care for others. Even so, vulnerability is a skill that scares many faculty and one that even more are not clear on how to develop.

In concert with vulnerability, empathy plays a role in connection with students. Brown (2007) referenced Theresa Brown's, a nursing scholar, four attributes of empathy when defining the word: to be able to see the world as others see it; to be nonjudgmental; to understand another person's feelings; and to communicate your understanding of that person's feelings. Nadler and Nadler (2001) found that if students felt a faculty member was empathetic in out of class communication with students, they were much more likely to attend office hours, be satisfied with faculty communication, and give faculty higher marks on evaluations. In Rallis' (1994) suggestions for creating partnerships between faculty and students, she encouraged faculty to be more sensitive and empathetic to students' lives outside the classroom. For example, if an older student needed an extra day for an assignment due to dealing with a sick child, the faculty member should be empathetic and flexible with the due date. Also, Pattison, Hale and Gowens (2011) advocated for empathy as a way to affirm and connect with students.

Clearly, connection matters to the Faculty-student relationship. In a reflection by Ciocchetti (2011) he stated "The secret lies in the ability to genuinely connect with students. Connecting really matters – even if it takes some personality adaptation and thrusts academics out of their comfort zone" (p. 385). Buskist and Groccia (2018) encouraged those in higher education to question whether our approaches to student engagement "are connecting with students at the level of doing, feeling, and thinking" (p. 111). He stressed that if we are not connecting with them emotionally, something needs to change. In addition, Pattison, Hale, and Gowens (2011) went a step further and identified four categories of actual behaviors that reflect excellent connected professors: affirmation of students; taking time for students in and out of the classroom; being prepared, organized, and excited about the task of teaching; and having good communication techniques. Their research reflects a more focused attempt to move from just listing desired characteristics of Faculty-student interaction to providing the how to create connection.

Even though the literature is limited on how to help faculty build this connection with students, one way can be through programs and initiatives that encourage faculty to participate in sustained involvement with students outside the classroom.

Effective Programs That Foster Connection

For the purposes of this research, sustained involvement is characterized by programs or initiatives that are more than just meeting for coffee, doing a lecture in a residence hall, or having students over for dinner occasionally. Sustained involvement will be characterized by faculty being involved in programs or initiatives that last for at least one or more semesters and ask faculty to meet with the students at least ten or more times throughout a 15-week semester.

Residential Learning Communities

After reviewing the research, there appeared to be programs that do assist faculty in connecting with students on a deeper level. Much of the research is focused on different versions of residential learning communities. The Ernest L. Boyer Laboratory for Learning (McDonald, Brown, Littleton, 1999), The Duke University Faculty Associates Program (Armstrong, 1999), and Rhett Talks at Boston University (Healea & Ribera, 2014) were examples of residentially based programs that successfully connected students and faculty. These programs were built on fundamental, theoretical principles that specifically addressed Faculty-student interaction within the residence halls as well as intentional relationships with academic affairs. The Duke program, specifically, "seeks to organize faculty involvement in undergraduate lives based on students' perceived needs, rather than administrator's ideas of what is important" (Armstrong, 1999, p. 6). In other words, intentional connections were part of the design of these programs.

Conversational Spaces

Opportunities for dialogue outside the classroom with students can assist faculty in developing a new outlook on the needs of students and how to best connect with them (Chetro-Szvios & Gray, 2004; Day & Lane, 2014; Cook-Sather, 2015). Faculty at Fitchburg State College have used appreciative inquiry and circular questioning to connect with students in the classroom as well as creating conversational spaces for informal Faculty-student interaction outside the classroom (Chetro-Szivos & Gray, 2004). Their use of these methods encouraged student storytelling to help students move from negative talk to appreciative, future-focused stories with the goal of helping them be more successful and learning focused. The use of these tools focused connection between students, between students and faculty, and the

interconnectedness of the stories themselves. Faculty reported that they saw change and growth within their students but also within themselves.

Students as Learners and Teachers (SALT)

A program called Students as Learners and Teachers (SaLT) at Bryn Mawr College, gave faculty the opportunity to have a student consultant work with them one on one on improving their teaching. The faculty who worked with students in this way found "points of connection between their differences of position and perspective from students" (Cook-Sather, 2015, p. 31-32). Particularly, students of color who served as consultants opened up new vulnerabilities and perspectives for faculty and enabled them to make their classrooms more welcoming and affirming to diverse students. Faculty learned to see students as legitimate knowers who had valuable voices (Cook-Sather, 2013).

The Second Year Transformational Experience Program (STEP)

The STEP Program at The Ohio State University has also been successful at creating valuable connections between faculty and students. Initially, the program was created to provide second-year students with the opportunity to interact and engage with faculty in small cohorts, develop self-awareness, and apply for funding of up to $2,000 to experience a high impact practice. The hope was that the culmination of these experiences would provide a transformational experience for the students, but research has also shown that faculty are connecting with students on another level as well. The program has helped humanize the faculty for students and vice versa as well as helped faculty better understand the needs of second-year students. On-going assessment has continued to reveal that students in the program feel more comfortable with and connected to faculty (Pitstick, 2018).

Benefits for Faculty When Connection is Achieved

Although there have been some studies focused on the benefits of Faculty-student connection for the faculty member, most research has focused on why these connections are important for students. There are very few studies that have focused on benefits for faculty when they connect with students outside the classroom and how that impacts their views on their relationships with students overall or their role as faculty members. Einarson and Clarkberg (2004) studied the patterns and correlates of non-classroom Faculty-student interactions from the faculty perspective, but focused on research-based activities and casual, one-time interactions such as coffee meetings, home meals, and attending athletic competitions with students. These interactions would not be considered substantive or characterized as sustained involvement (Cox, 2011). Ellerston and Schuh (2007) also examined faculty perceptions of interactions with students, but the study was solely focused on learning communities and aimed to measure how they impacted a faculty member's renewal, vitality, and development, not their deeper connection with students and how that impacted their views of or interactions with them. Finally, Vianden and Smith (2011) sought to discover what inhibited faculty from participating in outside of the classroom activities through their study, but, again, did not focus on how meaningful interactions or connections had impacted their views on Faculty-student relationships or influenced the faculty member role.

While these studies provide a glimpse into how involvement in out of the classroom programs/initiative can impact Faculty-student relationships, there seems to be a gap in the literature on what Faculty-student connection is, when and how it is achieved, or what it is actually happening when faculty are experiencing it. By using a theoretical framework based on the scholarship of feminist pedagogy, particularly the theory of an ethic of care, and adult

development theory, this study will be guided by research questions related to exploring the phenomenon of Faculty-student connection.

Theoretical Framework

Feminist Pedagogy and An Ethic of Care

Feminist pedagogy is a philosophy that is grounded in the values of feminist theory and research on teaching and learning. It begins with asking about the motivations behind why instructors teach and how students learn. "The implications are that the instructor's fundamental beliefs and values about teaching, learning, and knowledge-making matter" (Vanderbilt University, p.1). It comes from a fundamental place of care where feminist teachers have a sincere concern for their students' well-being, not only as students, but also for their entire being. Ozment (2018) explained,

> American feminist pedagogy evolved from the entanglement of second wave social activism and consciousness-raising groups during the 1960s, and the institutionalization of women's studies as an academic discipline in the 1970s. The women's studies university classroom emerged as a site of refuge for feminists and members of other oppressed groups. . . (p.186).

Although there are many strands of feminist pedagogy informed by various theoretical perspectives, all of them view "gender as a basic organizing principle that profoundly shapes/mediates the concrete conditions of our lives" (Lather, 1992, p. 91) and stress the importance of "connection, relationship, and the role of affectivity in learning" (Tisdell, 1998, p. 140). Webb, Allen & Walker (2002) identified six basic tenets of feminist pedagogy: reformation of the relationship between professor and student: empowerment; building

community; privileging the individual voice as a way of knowing; respect for the diversity of personal experience; and challenging traditional views.

The Tenets of Feminist Pedagogy

The first tenet, reformation of the relationship between professor and student, seeks to maintain equal power between students and students and students and faculty and does not support hierarchical systems that render some peoples powerless and give others ultimate power (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003). One of the most well-known feminist scholars, bell hooks (1994) termed this as "engaged pedagogy. . .where teachers grow and are empowered by the process" (p. 21). This approach also encourages vulnerability while teaching and a willingness to learn and grow with the students. She believed, "for education to become the practice of freedom, the first and foremost step is to deconstruct the authority of the professor and distribute the power and responsibilities to the students as well" (hooks, 1994, p. 8). hooks explained this approach will bring a freedom of practice to teaching that will enhance students' lives as well as the lives of the teachers.

Empowerment is the second tenet and the main goal of feminist pedagogy; empowerment encourages democracy and shared power. Students are encouraged to think critically and creatively about their world instead of taught prescribed rhetoric of the traditional patriarchal model that does not promote empowerment, emotion or experiences (Webb et al., 2002).

> By focusing on empowerment, feminist pedagogy embodies a concept of power as energy, capacity, and potential rather than domination. . . Under conceptions of power as capacity, the goal is to increase the power of all actors, not to limit the power of some (Shrewsbury, 1993, p. 10).

The tenet of building community from a feminist pedagogy perspective involves working towards community in the classroom, but also within the actual community that surrounds a classroom. Collaboration, growth, caring, respect, and trust are all components of building community and require a conscious effort to establish relationships through dialogue. Wallace (1999) referred to the difference in feminist pedagogy to the more traditional pedagogy as a war or love approach. In the war approach of the traditional classroom, "the battlefield metaphor predominates, teachers struggle to win their students' attention and admiration. Students also compete for better grades, more attention, and more voice" (p. 186). When the love approach was dominant, the teacher viewed herself as more of the nurturer and/ or mentor and relinquished the master-knower persona enabling her to encourage her students to build community with one another and with her as opposed to going against one another (Wallace, 1999).

Feminist pedagogy also privileges the individual voice as a way of knowing. Since feminist pedagogy views knowledge as socially constructed and greatly influenced by culture, students are given the opportunity to share views and opinions, encouraged to ask questions, and asked for feedback and then able to see it being incorporated into the curriculum.

The respect for the diversity of personal experience holds true for the students as well as the faculty member in the feminist pedagogy classroom. This stems from a recognition that our position in society, based on gender, race, class, sexual preference, and ethnicity, influences how we experience and understand things, and, therefore, works to resist oppression in any way, shape, or form. Personal experiences are viewed as a central component of learning, so students are continually encouraged to have open minds and open hearts as they learn to respect, understand, and empathize with one another's experiences (Webb et al, 2002). Weiler (1988) asserted that "feminist research is characterized by an emphasis on lived experience and the

significance of everyday life" (p. 580). Faculty participating in acquaintanceship activities, telling their own stories, and exhibiting a willingness to be vulnerable brings another aspect to the idea of respecting the diversity of experience in the classroom and assists with Faculty-student connection. Bearman and Molloy (2017), instructors of health care professionals, advocated for teachers making their own confusion, deficits and mistakes available to students. They asserted that these acts change the power dynamic and can possibly help students have more connection with the instructor and positively affect the dynamics of the classroom. Myers and Braunn (2009) also did a qualitative study of 67 students who expressed that for them to engage in the class, they needed to feel some common ground with the instructor in order to feel he/she cared and could be trusted. If feminist pedagogues share and exhibit their own experiences, they communicate that they trust the students, which in turn can help the students trust them as well.

All of these principles tie into the last tenet of feminist pedagogy, challenging traditional views. Feminist pedagogy strives to illuminate and challenge the white, patriarchal system that permeates our society, including the university classroom. Ng (1995) stated, "the university classroom is not, by definition, a democratic place to be. To pretend it can be is to deny that hierarchy and institutional power exist" (p. 140). Crabtree and Sapp (2003) specifically identified some of the barriers that come with the feminist pedagogical approach to learning. First of all, feminist pedagogues deal with conservative opposition inside and outside the classroom. Many conservative scholars want their colleagues to maintain the status quo and advocate for a return to elite notions that a common knowledge for all people is necessary for society to function and all to get along. Conversely, feminist pedagogy believes knowledge is socially constructed and there is no such thing as a common knowledge that everyone must

ascribe to. Instead, they believe many view society through a gendered lens based on polarizing notions of masculinity or femininity. Secondly, there is a fear of teaching outside institutional norms, particularly for untenured and part-time faculty. Due to lack of job security and uneven power differentials among administrators and faculty, these faculty feel vulnerable and fear if they employ teaching methods they might be viewed as controversial or go outside of the norms of "acceptable" teaching methods, they may end up jobless. Lastly, some feminists and other persons in marginalized populations fear opposition if they practice the tenets of feminist pedagogy because they are just starting to feel acceptance in the university community and do not want that to be impeded.

An Ethic of Care

A particular feminist pedagogical theory, the ethic of care, will be most applicable to this study. In 1982 feminist author, Carol Gilligan, published her ground-breaking study, *In a Different Voice*, that questioned the generalizability of Kohlberg's (1981) theory on moral development and asserted that women are different in their decision making and moral development. Utilizing college students who were faced with a personal and political dilemma of whether or not to abort a pregnancy, she determined that women were not deficient in their moral reasoning as Kohlberg had suggested (Ball, 2010). Kohlberg's (1981) work had studied only white men and their moral decision-making; Gilligan found that women were using a style that had not been captured by his data methods, therefore their voices were not being heard in his study. Based on her data, she developed the ethic of care theory that rejected the male-focused view of "rules, regulations, and abstract thinking" and embraced a more caring perspective that sought "connection and relationships in interactions and decision-making" (Owens & Ennis,

2005, p. 393). As part of this theory she determined that women's morality was focused on care for others. She stated that the women in her study were using a language

> of selflessness and responsibility, which defines the moral problem of one of obligation to exercise care and avoid hurt. The infliction of hurt is considered selfish and immoral in its reflection of unconcern, while the expression of care is seen as the fulfillment of moral responsibility (p. 492).

Gilligan provided a model that illustrated that women's morality is "centered on sustaining relationships and responding caringly to others" (Wood, 1993, p. 138). She did not believe that using an ethic of care was limited to women, but it was more prevalent in her female participants. Gilligan saw her study as a complement to Kohlberg's, not as a replacement (Ball, 2010).

Noddings (1984), an American feminist philosopher, used Gilligan's (1982) work as a foundation and expanded on the theory of the ethic of care. She espoused that caring about students should be at the heart of the educational system. Her theory made a distinction that there is always a "one caring" and the one being "cared for" and that the educator assumed the one caring role and felt a great responsibility in being the person to empower her students (Noddings, 1984). Hawk (2017) made a distinction between the ideas of "caring for" and "caring about" as "caring for" required a concrete action within a relationship and involved all our capabilities while "caring about" was a feeling that did not necessarily involve a concrete action of any kind (p. 672). Educators who practiced an ethic of care felt a need to be proactive with students by being available to them and providing resources for their needs as opposed to being reactive to students and feeling no sense of personal responsibility for their well-being

(Owens & Ennis, 2005). The sole responsibility did not lie with the educator within this theory, the student also needed to be receptive and responsive to the educator's efforts.

There were three distinct characteristics that Noddings (1984) proposed the educator needed to enact; these included engrossment by the one caring (educator) with the one being cared for (student); commitment to the well-being of the student; and a shift of motivation from focus on the educator or self to a focus on the student, the other (Owens & Ennis, 2005; Hawk, 2017). Engrossment referred to the educator's willingness to be open to the student's feelings and also recognized the student's experiences as valid and relevant. Commitment referred to the educator having a sincere desire to be involved in a student's life as opposed to appearing superficial. Commitment also involved the educator's willingness to appreciate all aspects of the students' experiences by being open to her ideas and feelings, seeking understanding, and then accepting the student's views of the subject matter while working with her. The shift of motivation to the student and away from the educator's self enabled the educator to take on the student's perspective to better understand what motivated her and to determine what the student wanted to accomplish and how a particular subject matter might be relevant to her (Owens & Ennis, 2005). Although this shift may sound intensive, Noddings (1984) insisted that it occurred naturally for those educators that embodied an authentic ethic of care.

The caring educator demonstrated specific activities that benefited the student as well (Noddings, 1992). They modeled a caring perspective by caring for all students around them. They did not tell students to care for one another, they demonstrated this in their daily lives. In addition, caring educators showed caring through dialogue as well by "talking and listening, sharing and responding" (Owens & Ennis, 2005, p. 395) which allowed educators and students to understand, empathize with, and appreciate one another more, helping them reach the best

decisions together for the topic under discussion. Through their own actions, caring educators encouraged students to care for others by providing them opportunities to experience the situations of others and encouraging them to adopt different ways of viewing the world as a result of these interactions. Finally, an ethic of care involved confirmation that the educator had the best possible motives at heart for the student. This was achieved by developing a solid relationship with the student and getting to know her well enough to realize what she was ultimately striving to become. Noddings (1992) believed that, even in the most difficult of circumstances, educators who adopted an ethic of care were consistent in their efforts to connect with and develop trust with a student because they were strong believers that every student had potential. It was just a matter of working with and caring for a student in an effort to help her realize all that was possible (Owens & Ennis, 2005).

Delworth and Seeman (1984) stressed the importance of student service departments, such as counseling, career services, residence life, etc., in higher education coming together to treat students with an ethic of care regarding all aspects of their lives. They pointed out, "the 'leading edge' of growth for women and men may be different, but professionals in student services should be careful of stereotyping these modes of thinking as masculine or feminine" to serve students effectively (p. 492). Keeling (2014) also specifically addressed the importance of utilizing an ethic of care in higher education to promote student well-being and success. He advocated for a renewed commitment to an ethic of care for students, especially when

> in many colleges and universities today; limited resources and other priorities…have created negatively reinforcing conditions, such as excessive dependence on contingent faculty and reductions in student support services, which undermine students' ability to form relationships with individual members of the faculty and staff (pp. 142-143).

He pointed out that the definition of success for many institutions has become too mechanistic and equated with high completion or graduation rates instead of success being seen as a commitment to the "development of a whole, integrated person. An institutional ethic of care supports, and indeed is essential to, the achievement of that idea" (p. 144).

Brown's (2010) work on shame and vulnerability also coincided with an ethic of care and the tenets of feminist pedagogy. She advocated for connection and defined it as "the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued" (p. 19). She went on to explain that creating connection involves courage, authenticity, vulnerability, and empathy. Words that are not commonly heard in the academic realm of higher education, but attributes that students seemed to value and that have also been repeatedly discussed in the literature regarding Faculty-student interactions and align with an ethic of care in education.

Utilizing Feminist Pedagogy and An Ethic of Care to Study Faculty-student Connection

Feminist pedagogy and an ethic of care will be used in this study to further uncover what it means when a faculty member experiences connection with a student. There are faculty who ascribe to an ethic of care in higher education and, for some, it is something that is naturally a part of all of their interactions with students within and beyond the classroom. Faculty who exhibit an ethic of care seek connection with students by being available to them, being open to their feelings and experiences, providing resources for their needs, and finding other ways to get involved in their lives. An ethic of care is also exhibited when faculty engage students in dialogue and get to know them well enough to provide with the opportunities that will benefit them the most academically as well as in their future careers; their commitment to students means they will do all they can to ensure the best futures possible for them.

An ethic of care is also a part of feminist pedagogy which indicates that faculty are working to help students make connections between their academic and personal lives and encouraging them to view others as valuable and equal members of society. Feminist pedagogues look to learn with students, empower students, believe in self-reflection along with encouraging reflection in their students, and advocate for an openness of heart and mind in all situations. Faculty members who practice in this way view their mentoring of students "as a personal and professional responsibility that [is] internally motivated rather than institutionally sanctioned" (DeAngelo et al., 2015, p. 325). Analyzing the faculty participants in this study through the ethic of care lens will further assist me in determining the particulars of how they view their experiences of connections with students within the constraints of the university.

Adult Development Theory

Another theory that will further illuminate the essence of faculty experiences with student connection is adult development theory. It is possible that a faculty member's desire to get involved in out of the classroom initiatives and to seek a different level of a relationship with students might be in relation to the stage of life she is experiencing. This study will consider the implications of adult development theory in relation to Faculty-student involvement and relationships to further explore this possibility. Cytrynbaum, Lee, and Wadner (1982) applied adult development theory specifically to professors and their progression through the university, but before I explain their study in more detail, I will give a brief overview of adult development theory as a whole.

Levison (1986) referred to adult development as a life cycle with varying seasons:

> Change goes on within each season, and a transition is required for the shift from one to the next. Every season has its own time, although it is part of and colored by the whole.

> No season is better or more important than any other. Each has its necessary place and contributes its special character to the whole (p. 4).

This definition lays a solid foundation for reviewing the theories of adult development, many which breakdown into stages. Initially, Jung (1954) developed four stages of life he termed the athlete, the warrior, the statement, and the spirit. The athlete stage was a very self-absorbed stage that constituted an obsession with our physical body and appearance. The behavior of teenagers was and is a perfect portrayal of this state. The warrior was characterized by a realization that responsibilities exist in the world that a person must attend to and is the phase where people become more goal oriented. Lots of the struggles that early adulthood brings remain a part of this stage. The biggest transition probably comes in the warrior phase as this was when a person went from focusing on oneself and turned to focusing on others and their well-being. A lot of folks became parents during this stage and began to think about what type of legacy they could leave for not only their children, but for all of the people that were a part of their lives. This phase was about considering what a person had accomplished in life and how she could continue to move forward for the benefit of self and others in life. Finally, for Jung the spirit stage was characterized by a person realizing that accomplishments and material things were not really what mattered in life, but what mattered was that we are all spiritual beings on some type of divine journey that really never begins or ends. Knowing that something better was waiting for us in life was the focus of the spiritual journey. Karpiak (1996) explained that Jung "described the second half of life as a time of astonishing change and personal transformation. . . [and a] time to attain greater integration and balance of personality" (p. 52).

Erikson (1982) expanded on Jung's work by focusing on psychosocial development, and delineated more specific stages, a total of eight, along with an age range, psychosocial crisis - the

issues an individual is grappling with at that age, and a basic virtue - a quality the individual is striving to reach at the particular stage. The following chart illustrates the stages (Kroger, 2004):

Table 1: Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development

Stage	**Psychosocial Crisis**	**Basic Virtue**	**Age Range**
1	Trust vs. mistrust	Hope	Infancy (0 – 1 ½)
2	Autonomy vs. shame	Will	Early Childhood (1 ½ - 3)
3	Initiative vs. guilt	Purpose	Play Age (3 – 5)
4	Industry vs. inferiority	Competency	School Age (5 – 12)
5	Ego identity vs. role confusion	Fidelity	Adolescence (12 – 18)
6	Intimacy vs. isolation	Love	Young Adult (18 – 40)
7	Generativity vs stagnation	Care	Adulthood (40 – 65)
8	Ego identity vs. despair	Wisdom	Maturity (65+)

Karpiak (1996) asserted, in relation to faculty in higher education, that those in mid-life, or adulthood in Erickson's (1982) terms, begin to think about and focus on what they need to "care about, care for, and take care of" (p. 52), which also involved considering how to assist the next generation for their roles in society.

In Levinson's (1986) initial theory of adult development, he studied only men and referred to eras, as opposed to stages, and identified transition periods between and within the eras. His theory was set up not by timing, but by an underlying set of developmental periods and tasks. His first era was Pre-adulthood which spanned from 0 – about age 22 and was characterized by a biological and psychological separation from the mother and a progression towards individuation. This transition period he termed Early Adult Transition, ages 17 – 22, consisted of a continuation of the individuation process where the person completed childhood and began to enter adulthood. Family relationships were reconfigured as the person began to find his own place in the world. The second era, Levinson termed Early Adulthood and lasted

from 22 – 28 with the transition period called the Age 30 Transition from ages 28 - 33. The tasks of this phase were forming a dream and giving it a place in person's life structure; forming mentor relationships; forming an occupation; and forming love with a significant other that, ultimately, ended in marriage and a family (Roberts & Newton, 1987). The Settling Down era, ages 33 – 40, was when marriage and family usually took place. This was a time for great joy, love, energy and abundance but also great contradiction and stress. Levinson stated, "Early adulthood is the season for forming and pursuing youthful aspirations, establishing a niche in society, raising a family, and as the era ends, reaching a more "senior" position in the adult world" (p. 5). Much change went on in this era, some of which was wonderful but some of which was also extremely difficult. Midlife transition, ages 40 – 45, consisted of a person becoming more reflective and compassionate and sure of himself in society whereas external expectations and societal pressures were not as concerning. During this transition a person became much more loving of self and others. The next era was that of Middle Adulthood, 45-50, where the individual maintained a full, satisfying, and valuable life and continued to focus on doing responsible work, but also began to be concerned for the development of the next generation, something Levinson referred to as *mentoring i*n his later works (Karpiak, 1996). The final era, Levinson termed Late Adulthood, 60+. This is a time when individuals became retrospective and either were content with life accomplishments or possibly became depressed due to dissatisfaction with how life had played out. For some, new opportunities sometimes arose as well (Levinson, 1986). It is worth noting that Levinson did another study years later with a focus on the adult development of women. Roberts and Newton (1987) reviewed four dissertations that based their work on Levinson's study with women and found that "although the timing of the periods and the nature of the developmental tasks appeared to be similar, the ways

of working on these tasks as well as the outcomes achieved were different" p. 154. Women's dreams were more complex involving desire for a career but also a desire for love and a family. A lack of mentorship in the workplace also added to the complexity of this balance (Roberts & Newton, 1987).

Adult development theory has been widely discussed in higher education in regard to different populations of students, working with staff, and understanding faculty. Cytrynbaum, Lee, and Wadner (1982) utilized adult development theory as a basis for examining five different faculty groups regarding their personal and professional development. These groups included: Age Thirty Transitional Faculty, Duel Career Couples Faculty, Midlife Faculty, Late Entry Faculty, and Senior Retiring Faculty. For the purposes of this study, the midlife faculty development stage will be further examined. Cytrynbaum et al (1982) defined these faculty as those who are in their late 30's to mid to late 50's and were facing mid-life crises and decisions. These faculty had usually been in academia all of their careers and were re-assessing their personal and professional goals and priorities. They were typically looking for a change of some kind and new challenges. This stage also may have involved facing personal vulnerability and the realities of longevity in their field and in their lives in general. This stage required tremendous energy, emotion, introspection, and a longing for a future that was possibly more fulfilling than the current one. Austin (2010) advocated for institutions to provide nurturing, encouragement, and challenges to these faculty to stay vibrant. She stated that they needed to be provided with resources to help them "stay current and explore new avenues for teaching and learning" (p. 373).

Karpiak (1996) discovered that faculty in mid-life identified some common themes which included: feeling like teaching was an undervalued part of their role; the university had little

interests in their actual interests as administrators are not in touch with the needs and concerns of the faculty; lack of trust in the tenure and promotion process; knowing that research was key, but believing that policies needs to be more flexible and sensitive to accommodate challenges that sometimes come for those who are practicing it; the understanding that the work environment sometimes needed to change when a health crisis occurred; and self-reflection will not happen as often as it needed to and many times only happened as a result of crisis. Her analysis showed the following: mid-career faculty were seeking relationship, communion, and community; they wanted to feel like they mattered and what they did was valued; they wanted to tend to the tasks of guidance and care of the next generation; and the women faculty needed to feel more accepted and a sense of belonging in the academy setting, in other words, they longed for a more humane work environment. Karpiak (1996) also discovered they were seeking characteristics in a work environment that might normally be found in a personal relationship – characteristics such as "communication, support, affirmation, acceptance, acknowledgement, and collegiality." (p. 65-66). They sought these characteristics from colleagues but wished for them as part of their relationships with students as well. According to Austin (2010) this stage is less researched than the early phase when faculty are just entering the academy and working towards tenure and the late career stage when faculty begin to focus on retirement.

Utilizing Adult Development Theory to Study Faculty-student Connection

These aspects of adult development theory will be used to help understand if faculty are seeking more of a connection with students as they enter mid-life. Faculty at this stage begin to focus on the other, as opposed to the self and have a strong desire to assist the next generation in becoming leaders in society and creating meaningful lives, so creating deeper connections with students within and beyond the classroom can provide this type of desired involvement. Since

they are feeling a desire to develop more open, trusting relationships, connecting more with students will allow them to be more vulnerable and authentic in their interactions with students. Deeper, more connected relationships with students can also supply mid-life faculty with a sense of acknowledgement, affirmation, support and acceptance that they are wanting that the often times regimented structures of the university do not supply.

Faculty at this stage in life are also looking for opportunities to connect with students that are different from the standard responsibilities of research and service, or ones that simply involve sitting on university committees or councils. They are looking to revitalize their teaching and learning strategies, so working more closely with a group of students over an extended period of time in a residence hall, freshmen seminar, or other initiative will give them new insights into students and how they best learn. Ellertson and Schuh (2007) found that mid-career faculty who had been involved with a learning community for at least one semester or more had positive experiences with the learning community and felt it added to their vitality. In addition, they felt it was mutually beneficial for themselves and the students, as well as beneficial for their respective departments and the institution as a whole. Mid-life faculty want to find a way to become excited about being with students again, so studying faculty who are in this stage and are consistently engaged in outside the classroom programs or initiatives will provide valuable insight into how to best work with the faculty and provide them with the programs they are most excited about becoming a part of.

Summary of Theoretical Framework

Using a theoretical framework based on the scholarship on feminist pedagogy, an ethic of care, and adult development will prove valuable in gaining a deeper understanding of the faculty that engage in the Personal Interaction level Cox (2011) identified when developing a typology

of Faculty-student interaction. These theories stress faculty exhibiting care when working with students. They also imply that a need to express care for future generations is a naturally occurring part of the personality of some faculty but until they reach a certain stage of life, they do not feel comfortable expressing this way of being due to the institutional norms they have felt pressure to adhere to within the academy. It may also be that for some faculty demonstrating a caring disposition is a desire but due to societal views of gender or status, they have not felt safe to go against the status quo. It is possible that there are faculty who exhibit a caring sense of being throughout their careers, but for others the consequences may feel too risky and arriving at a point in life where they feel safer to be themselves, express emotion and advocate more for the well-being for their students, is a period in life they cannot wait to experience. I look forward to learning more about these mid-career faculty, their perspectives, and their journeys as I keep this theoretical framework at the forefront of my mind throughout my study.

Summary

This chapter provided a review of the literature surrounding the importance of the Faculty-student connection. Highlighted research included: the importance of the Faculty-student relationship; an overview of Faculty-student interactions outside the classroom; reasons for limited Faculty-student interaction outside the classroom and messages about faculty roles at the university; fostering Faculty-student relationships; the current generation and their desire for connection; the value of connection in the Faculty-student relationship; programs outside the classroom that foster connection; and the benefits for faculty when connection is achieved. The theoretical framework that will be used to illuminate additional interpretations of the Faculty-student connection was also discussed. The following chapter will outline my research design, paradigm, and methodology, as well as my research methods, trustworthiness, positionality, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 3

Research Design

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to further explore the phenomenon of Faculty-student connection, particularly from the faculty member perspective. This chapter begins with a statement of the research questions under consideration, then moves to a discussion of the interpretivist epistemology used for the study and an explanation of the rationale for phenomenology as the methodological approach. Details of the design of the study, including descriptions of the methods of sampling, data collection, and data analysis are followed by a discussion of ethical considerations and trustworthiness.

Much research has been published on the value of the Faculty-student relationship for students, but very few studies have focused on the perception of the faculty member and how connections with students affect their perception of the Faculty-student relationship overall as well as how their experiences influence their roles as faculty members in higher education. Two research questions provided the basic framework for the study and the detailed questions selected for use in the initial semi-structured interviews:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): How do faculty who make connections with students experience that connection?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): How does this experience influence or inform their role as a faculty member?

The Interpretivist Paradigm

An understanding of the research design and method utilized in this study begins with an explanation of the paradigmatic assumptions that guided the study and how the research questions proposed align with the paradigm. Paradigm is referred to in many ways throughout

the literature; some refer to it as an "interconnected or related assumptions of beliefs" (Jones et al, 2014, p. 3) but others refer to it as worldview. Paradigms consist of ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological beliefs. The paradigm I used for my phenomenological study was interpretivism. Creswell (2013) used constructivism and interpretivism interchangeably and explained that many times the researcher "positions" herself in the research to acknowledge that her own interpretations of what she finds are based on her "own personal, cultural, and historical perspectives" (p. 25). The ontological perspective of the interpretivist paradigm also assumes that no absolute realities exist, instead multiple realities exist in the world because every individual has a different, unique view on the world. Social groups may share similar views, but the individual still has her own socially constructed reality. Because of this, the researcher and the participant are mutually engaged in the co-construction of knowledge as they strive to find subjective truth in the topic under investigation (Hatch, 2002; Creswell, 2013), which refers to the epistemological belief of the study. This approach is commonly used with phenomenological studies as it relies on the "participant's views of a situation" as they "seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" (Creswell, 2013, pp. 24-25). Utilizing this framework allowed me to use open-ended, general questions that enabled my participants to construct meaning during our discussions. As the researcher I was consciously aware that my own background and experiences would shape my interpretation of the lived experiences my participants shared, so in this way we were co-constructing meaning during the interviews (Creswell, 2013). Given the intention of the study, to describe the particulars of the phenomenon of Faculty-student connection, a qualitative approach using an interpretivist paradigm was best suited to gain a better understanding of the lived experience of faculty and their connections with students.

Methodology: Phenomenology

The interpretivist paradigm aligns well with phenomenology, the methodology I used throughout my study. Simply stated, phenomenology is the "study of the lived experience" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 9); it is seeking to understand life-world experiences at the deepest level possible as they are revealed to our consciousness. van Manen (1990) asserted that it is unique to any other science in that "it attempts to gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world pre-reflectively, without taxonomizing, classifying, or abstracting it" (p. 9). It is a human science, not an analytical science, that requires reflection, strives for particularity as opposed to universality, and meaning and significance as opposed to problem solving.

Edmund Husserl is credited with initiating the phenomenological movement (Finlay, 2009) after starting out as a mathematician. He turned his focus to philosophy as he was not satisfied with the psychological approach to human issues which advocated for applying the methods of natural sciences to gain understanding of the human condition (Laverty, 2003). Husserl's conceptualization of phenomenology is the original form of the approach and is known as transcendental phenomenology. The main premise of Husserl's school of thought was the strong belief that one must transcend an experience to discover reality. His beliefs stemmed from "the idea of reduction that refers to suspending the personal prejudices and attempting to reach to the core or essence through a state of pure consciousness" (Kafle, 2011, p. 186). From the transcendental perspective "all object of knowledge must conform to experience" (Moustakes, 2011, p. 44). The goal of transcendental phenomenology is to examine a phenomena to the core of its internal structures and possible meanings, illuminating them to the conscious to develop an understanding of the essence of the experience (Moustakes, 2011). Moustakes (1994) stated that the interrelationship "direct conscious description of experience

and the underlying dynamics or structures that account for the experience—provides a central meaning and unity that enables one to understand the substance and essence of the experience." (p. 17).

A colleague of Husserl's, Martin Heidegger, was trained by him in phenomenological practices and methods but departed from this work once he succeeded him in professorship. Heidegger was interested in hermeneutic phenomenology, which is also concerned with the lived experience of the human world but differs in the exploration of the lived experience. Husserl focused on understanding beings or phenomenon, while Heidegger focused on "the situated meaning of a human in the world" (Laverty, 2003, p. 7). Heidegger did not believe that consciousness was separate from the world, but that it was a combination of historically lived experience, our background, and cultural experiences. He also believed that understanding was not how we know the world, but instead how we are in the world. Finally, he asserted that we determine what is 'real,' based on our background, even though it might not be possible for us to understand our background completely (Laverty, 2003).

Heidegger also claimed that pre-understandings and prejudices were an important structure for existing in the world and were a natural part of our being; they were not something we can set aside (Laverty, 2003; Kafle, 2011). Laverty (2003) explained that

> pre-understanding is the meanings or organization of a culture that are present before we understand and become part of our historicality of background…Meaning is found as we are constructed by the world while at the same time, we are constructing this world from our background and experiences (p 8).

Interpretation is key to the process of understanding in hermeneutic phenomenology. Heidegger believed that all understandings are connected to existent forestructures in our lives,

including the history of one's background and culture that can never be eradicated. Because of this, it is necessary for a person to become acutely aware and strive to justify these interpretive influences. van Manen (1990) emphasized that the researcher must pay attention to silences, encourage anecdotal stories, and create rich and deep accounts when researching participants to assist them in illuminating these influences. The researcher should also be sure to acknowledge implicit assumptions to make them explicit. Vagle (2018) concurred and stressed that in designing hermeneutical phenomenology, using van Manen's approach, the researcher must remember that it is work that she actively does; is an interpretive act, and something that is never final. The researcher's understanding of the essence or lived experience is continually in process, partial, and emerging based on the details of the experiences from which she is drawing interpretations. The possibility that new meanings or forgotten particulars will become apparent about a phenomenon is always there (Kafle, 2011).

The essential goal of phenomenology is to discover the essence of a phenomena, but Anderson-Nathe (2008) clarifies that hermeneutic phenomenology is not about the essential structure of the phenomenon; "This form of phenomenology attends at once to the experience and to the experiencing of it, emphasizing that the phenomenon is created anew by each person living it" (p. 29). Vagle (2018) referred to this as "in-ness" and explained that the phenomenological question is no longer about consciousness and becomes more about what it means to be in the world in purposeful and intentional ways. He explained, "Phenomenological questions, following this line of thinking, move more sharply away from epistemological (to know) concerns, to ontological (to be) concerns" (p. 42). For example, we find ourselves in many things in the world – in love, in distress, in confusion. This focus on being requires that the

researcher teases out the distinct ways in which the phenomena is lived day to day and moment to moment as opposed to how it is represented or conceptualized.

Lived experiences can also have different components. van Manen (1997) identified four dimensions of lived experience: they included temporal experience (how time is lived), spatial experience (how distance and space are lived), corporeal experience (how physical body is lived), and relational experience (lived experience through relationship). van Manen (2014) also stressed that researchers need to balance the context of the research by considering parts and whole. Exploring the context also takes into consideration where the phenomenon takes place and what is important to the phenomenon (Vagle, 2018).

Another characteristic of phenomenology that is associated with discovering the essence of a phenomena is a concept called bracketing or epoche, "a Greek word meaning to stay away from or abstain" (Moustakes, 1994, p. 85), in which researchers set aside their experiences, assumptions, and previous understandings as much as possible to obtain a fresh perspective on the phenomenon being examined (Creswell, 2013). Heideggar was not a believer in bracketing and felt it was an impossible task since he believed the individual and her experiences were unable to exist without the other (Laverty, 2003). Vagle (2018) advocated for using Dahlberg's (2006) definition of bridling with hermeneutic phenomenology instead. Bridling involves an idea similar to bracketing in that it is necessary to restrain pre-understandings, so that the researcher can assume a reflective, open mindset. Secondly, bridling requires that the researcher continually strives to understand the phenomenon as a whole throughout the entire study. It is a forward-looking process that requires intentional awareness and keeps the researcher from assuming understanding or drawing conclusions too quickly or carelessly. When bridling, it is essential to be "patient and attentive when exploring the relationship" (Vagle, 2018, p. 74).

The hermeneutic phenomenological method was most appropriate for my study as I sought to understand Faculty-student connection based on the faculty member's lived experience, a lived experience I believe was influenced by the faculty member's background and culture and one in which she had various pre-understandings and prejudices. I wanted to understand the "in-ness" of connection – what did it mean for faculty to be "in connection" with a student? How did they interpret that experience? I acknowledged that my understanding of the experience of connection was ever evolving and emerging as I interviewed my participants. Finally, exploring the context when the faculty member is in connection with a student was important to my study as well. Where did faculty experience the phenomenon of being in connection and what was important for the phenomenon to occur?

Also, my professional work had involved many faculty. I had witnessed moments when a faculty member's relationship had changed with a student and they began to see the relationship in an entirely new way – how faculty interpreted that shift to interpersonal connection is what I was striving to discover as well as how it came about for the faculty member. Because of this, I saw bracketing as a difficult task for this study. Although my process of analysis did not include bracketing, it included bridling as I attempted to suspend any pre-understandings that I had and was open to my participants interpretations of being in connection with students.

Research Methods

Research Site

This study took place at a large, public research institution, State University (SU), in the Midwest. Located in an urban environment, State serves close to over 46,000 undergraduates and employs approximately 7,100 faculty including tenured, tenure track, clinical, research, and associated. The campus provides numerous co-curricular opportunities for students through student activities, the student union, the wellness and recreation centers, residence life, the multicultural center, and the office of diversity and inclusion, including the many programs offered for specific populations of students. High impact practice initiatives are also offered to students in the areas of service-learning, undergraduate research, learning communities, first year seminars, internships, capstone courses, and many other intellectual experiences. Faculty are welcomed and encouraged to get involved in all of these initiatives. The campus also provides a specific center for faculty growth and development. Considering State University was a campus that provided such an abundance of opportunities outside the classroom and a large contingent of faculty, it was an ideal site for the purposes of this study.

Sampling Criteria and Strategies

According to Jones et al (2014), there is a difference between sampling criteria and sampling strategies. Sampling criteria refers to the "variables, characteristics, qualities, experiences, and demographics most directly linked to the purpose of the study, and, then, important to the construction of the sample" (p. 110). The most crucial aspect of sampling is to ensure that the criteria are specific to the study and can be backed up with appropriate rationale as the sample can influence all aspects of the research design.

Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling is used in qualitative research, usually with a small sample size to ensure that sites and participants selected can provide information rich cases for in-depth study purposely inform the understanding of the research topic and methods (Patton, 1990; Creswell, 2013). Purposive sampling was a part of my phenomenological study since all of the participants had one or more of the same characteristics and had similar experiences (Creswell, 2013). Seidman (2013) asserted that when doing an in-depth phenomenological study finding "a sample of participants who all experience similar structural and social conditions gives enormous power to the stories of relatively few participants" (p. 59). The general criterion for my study included the following:

- *Faculty in Mid-Career* – faculty who fall within the age range of late 30's to mid-late 50's (Cytrynbaum et al, 1982) and are already tenured. Faculty within this age range are seeking a sense of renewed enthusiasm for education, as well as more interactions with students (Karpiak, 1996; Ellertson & Schuh, 2007). My reasoning for this narrowing criteria rested in the reality that it is assumed that tenured faculty are the faculty who do not get involved in beyond the classroom initiatives due to the demands of research (Chen, 2015). By focusing solely on already tenured faculty, their responses provided more insight into their views on Faculty-student connection and how it influenced their roles. I also strived to get faculty from across academic disciplines as much as possible. Since humanities faculty tended to become more involved in beyond the classroom initiatives than faculty in the natural or social sciences (Cox et al, 2011), it was beneficial to have faculty from as many disciplines as possible in the sample. A general questionnaire was used to gather this information (see Appendix C).

- *Sustained Involvement in Initiatives Outside the Classroom, where faculty have experienced the Personal Interaction level Cox (2007) described. More than likely, these interactions will happen with faculty who have been involved in one or more high impact practices* – these faculty are those who had experienced sustained involvement in initiatives or programs outside the classroom, and/or been involved in one or more of Kuh's (2008) high impact practices such as learning communities, service-learning, study abroad, undergraduate research, capstone projects, or other common intellectual experiences. Also, Cox, McIntosh, Terenzini, Reason, and Quaye (2011) explained that Faculty-student interactions outside the classroom are too infrequent and need to occur more at the substantive level where the highest educational potential exists as opposed to merely the casual level such as meeting for coffee or stopping by office hours.
- *Consenting participants who would be available for no more than two 60 - 90-minute time blocks for interviewing and who are willing to articulate their lived experiences regarding connecting with students* – it is common knowledge that faculty are busy individuals, so I wanted to be sure those faculty who volunteered for the study realized the time commitment to ensure I could obtain information-rich data that would be crucial to my study.

To assist me in finding the ideal participants, I reached out to colleagues involved in initiatives outside the classroom that asked faculty to be involved for an extended period of time, as well as the colleagues who directed offices associated with high impact practices. These colleagues provided me with lists of faculty to contact and recruit for interviewing.

Sample Size

There are no rules for sample size in a qualitative study; the key is having a sample that provides information-rich cases and can provide what the researcher wants to know, reasons for the why of her study, information that is useful, and what the researcher can get done within the limits of time and resources (Patton, 1990). Creswell (1998) recommends "long interviews with up to 10 people" for a phenomenological study (p. 65). I interviewed 15-20 faculty who met my criteria, were recommended by colleagues, and could commit to the time needed to obtain the data/stories I needed for my study. My initial e-mail asking for participants from the lists gathered from colleagues yielded a response from 70 faculty out of 115 for a 60% response rate. Of those 70 faculty, 12 declined for various reasons and the remaining 58 faculty agreed to fill out the general questionnaire I had created to assist me in selecting the best participants for my sample. Of those 58, 46 filled out and returned their questionnaires for an 80% response rate from those who agreed to fill out the questionnaire, and a 50% response rate overall. After screening them based on the criteria outlined in the next session, I identified 21 that I asked to interview, but ended up with a final 17 who followed through and scheduled a specific day and time to be interviewed.

Specific Criteria for Selection of Participants

The specific criteria that was used to determine a final selection of the 17 faculty participants I found was as follows:

- Faculty who had achieved tenure
- Faculty who fell within the age range of the late 30's to mid-late 50's age range, considered mid-life by Cytrynbaum, Lee, & Wadner (1982).

- ❖ Faculty from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds including, but not limited to agriculture, architecture, biological and biomedical sciences, business, education, engineering, health professions, the humanities, the natural sciences, the social sciences, STEM fields, and multidisciplinary studies.
- ❖ Faculty who were of different races and ethnicities including, but not limited to, White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Bi-racial, and International.
- ❖ Faculty who identified as different genders including men, women, and transgender individuals.
- ❖ Faculty who had participated in one or more high impact practices (Kuh, 2008) including: learning communities, service-learning, study abroad, research, capstone projects, or other common intellectual experiences

Data Collection Methods: Episodic Narrative Interviewing

As part of my phenomenological research, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 17 different faculty mentors from various academic disciplines who had been engaged with initiatives, programs, or high impact practices that had lasted at least one semester or longer at State University. This allowed faculty to share their stories of long-term involvement with students through programs that had been a part of; Luttrel (2010) stated that "interviewees are narrators with stories to tell and voices of their own" (p. 218). I conducted a 20 – 50- minute interview with each participant. Seidman (2013) stated that in-depth interviewing "is not designed to test hypothesis, gather answers to questions, or corroborate opinions. Rather it is designed to ask participants to reconstruct their experience and explore their meaning" (p, 94). Semi-structured interviews are a formal way of interviewing and consist of open-ended questions with questions designed to encourage participants to describe "their understanding and

experiences" (Hatch, 2002, p. 102). Vagle (2018) added that for phenomenologist researchers, it is not necessary that all interviews be structured in the exact same way as the main goal of the interview is to glean as much as possible about the phenomenon from each participant. This held true for my interviews as I sometimes asked faculty different questions to gain more clarification and sometimes changed the order of the questions depending on how the interview flowed.

I utilized an interview approach called episodic narrative interviewing, which is "a funneled approach that is employed to encourage research participants to convey bounded stories about their experiences of a particular phenomena" (Mueller, 2018, p. 2). This approach is focused on an experiential aspect of a social concept or issue and uses stories to illuminate multi-layered, difficult to see social phenomena. The episodic narrative interview is derived from three existing methodological strategies used in qualitative research: semi-structured interviews, narrative inquiry, and episodic interview. Semi-structured interviews and narrative inquiry are common approaches in qualitative research. Episodic interviews are meant to elicit knowledge from the participant that is associated with a specific or concrete circumstances (Flick, 2000). The episodic narrative approach provides for an "authentic, participant-driven narratives of personal experience" (Mueller, 2018, p. 4) that allows a researcher to gain insight into a particular phenomenon of interest rather than the big, contextualized stories that narrative inquiry typically provides. In this approach the same phenomenon can be told by a variety of participants from varying perspectives, which was in line with the interpretivist paradigm I employed. The approach is derived from a critical realist approach that assumes a "deep structure to social realities" and acknowledges that all human narratives have meaning, regardless of the scale (Mueller, 2018, p. 5). Finally, this approach utilizes aspects of appreciative inquiry which is a process and philosophy that entails discovering and applying new knowledge to key parts of

life that comes from moments of excellence, exceptional competence, and periods in people's lives when they have felt alive and energized (Annis Hammond, 2013).

There are particular elements to the episodic narrative interviewing approach that differentiates it from semi-structured interviews and narrative inquiry. First, participants are invited to "define, describe, or characterize the phenomenon of interest" which is crucial to assisting the participant to focus on the phenomenon of interest and lays a foundation for her to build upon later in the interview when she is asked to engage in sense-making about the phenomenon (Mueller, 2018, p. 19). Secondly, the participant is asked to relate a story about an episode that illustrates the phenomenon of interest. This episode should be one that stands apart from others in the participant's life. The guiding questions or prompts for this part of the interview need to be open-ended and bound by verbiage that will elicit a rich narrative about the experiences of the phenomenon described by the participant. The last part of this approach asks the participant to tell another story – "this time about [her] experience of the phenomenon within the context of the episode." This "funnels" the interview and encourages the participant to focus the narrative around a "contextualized account of the participant's experience with the phenomenon (Mueller, 2018, p. 21). (See Appendix E for the format that was utilized.) At the conclusion of the interview the researcher can offer the participant the opportunity to add, amend, or change any details of the story that they wish and/or revisit the participant's initial definition of the phenomenon of interest to check that she is still pleased with her original thoughts (Mueller, 2018). I also conducted a pilot interview with a faculty member who met most of my identified, selection criteria in order to ensure my interview questions were appropriate for obtaining the type of stories and information I was seeking before beginning my study utilizing faculty from State University. The pilot interview I conducted was helpful in

clarifying questions and helped me realize that since my questions were going to ask participants to tell a particular story, it would be advantageous for them to see the questions ahead of time. I proceeded to send the interview questions along with the informed consent form with the confirmed time and date of the interview with each participant. This gave them a chance to review both documents before our scheduled interview.

This data collection method was an effective way to discover more about the essence of the phenomenon of Faculty-student connection for a number of reasons. My phenomenon of interest was very focused, and I was seeking a specific time or episode when the relationship potentially changed for the faculty member. In addition, this phenomenon of interest lends itself to be "nested within a series of stories" (Mueller, 2018, p. 24) as faculty stories might have involved episodes in different contexts such as the residence halls, labs, service sites, foreign countries, or other initiatives. Again, this was accurate for my study as faculty told stories that occurred in the lab, in their offices, in dining halls, and in restaurants or cafes. This method also allowed faculty to consider this phenomenon within the social system and reality of the university structure, which sometimes impeded the Faculty-student connection. Since episodic narrative interviewing is not comparative, utilizing this method advocated for a close scrutinization of the data to find common experiences with the phenomenon, in other words finding the essence as much as possible of Faculty-student connection. Finally, I was able to reach a relatively large sample for a qualitative study, 17 participants, utilizing this approach since the questions were more focused and shorter than a completely open-ended interview structure.

Each participant was asked to recall the specific details pertaining to a particular time when they experienced a different type of relationship or connection to a student, and then asked

to convey narratives of their practical experiences with respect to Faculty-student connection in context of that time. When using this type of narrative interview as a phenomenological strategy there are no strict or established research protocols to employ (Kramp, 2004); however, it is necessary to prepare the framework recommended for the interview, so a flow of discourse will occur (Flick, 2000). I did prepare a framework ahead of time and did send it to the participants before the interviews. All interviews were audiotaped using two separate devices and transcribed by the researcher or with the use of a website and then reviewed and corrected by the researcher. I sent the transcript to participants for them to review for accuracy and to make any clarifications or corrections necessary. This served as an avenue for member checking my participants.

Data Analysis

Hatch (2002) described the process of analyzing qualitative data as a way to communicate the meaning of the study to others. He also suggested asking questions of the data throughout the analysis process by

> organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories. It often involves synthesis, evaluation, interpretation, categorization, hypothesizing, comparison, and pattern finding (p. 148).

Analysis involves a structured process that is usually predetermined but heavily influenced by the data. The main goal is to develop an understanding of the phenomena being studied through the creation of an integrated statement about the experience (Laverty, 2003). This being said, hermeneutic phenomenological research does not ascribe to a particular analytic method. It does advocate for use of the hermeneutic cycle of reading, reflective writing, and interpretation

(Laverty, 2013). Laverty (2013) explained that it is not possible to have a limited set of procedures for hermeneutic research as the interpretation is revealed through a combination of the text and its contexts, as well as those of the participants, the researcher and their contexts. On the other hand, Vagle (2018) believed there were some commitments that the researcher needed to consider no matter what phenomenological approach she utilized: the whole-parts-whole process; a focus on intentionality and not subjective experience: a balance between verbatim excerpts, paraphrasing, and the researcher's descriptions or interpretations; and the researcher's understanding that she is creating a text, not just coding, categorizing, assuming and reporting. In other words, the researcher needs to have a strong passion and commitment to the world phenomenon she is studying, and not see it as just another process of creating a piece of research.

van Manen (2014) stated that phenomenological analysis must be guided by an appropriate phenomenological questions and must emerge from experiential material upon which the research can reflect. He also advocated for reflective inquiry that considered the "notions of lived relation, body, space, time, and things" as they "belong to everyone's world – they are universal themes of life" (p. 302). His approach to theme analysis employed, 1) a wholistic reading approach which strives to craft one sentence or phrase that can capture the phenomenological meaning or significance as a whole; 2) the selective reading approach looking for statements or phrases that seem particularly revealing or essential to the text and then highlighting them in some way; and 3) the detailed reading approach that involves carefully reading each sentence or sentence cluster to see what each one reveals about the phenomenon or experience being studied. Particular anecdotes that are exemplary descriptions of the phenomenon are usually pulled form this last approach.

Considering all of these suggestions, my plan for analysis was to use a combination of van Manen's (2014) and Creswell's (2013) suggestion for phenomenological analysis. I typed each interview or used a website to transcribe the interviews and went through them thoroughly to make corrections as I listened to the interviews again. First, I went through the text as whole, working to create one phrase or sentence that captured the phenomenological meaning or essence of Faculty-student connection (van Manen, 2014). Once I finished this process, I went through the transcripts, coding them by hand, and highlighted significant statements, called horizontalization, working to gain "an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon" (Creswell, 2013, p. 82). I then organized my identified, significant statements into larger units or groups of information or meaning units, (Creswell, 2013; van Manen, 2014) utilizing inductive coding to allow the themes to emerge from the data. Finally, I used these meaning units/themes to write a description of the "what" the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon and a description of the "how" the experience happened – the meaning making; and writing a composite description of the phenomenon incorporating the what and the how (Creswell, 2013).

I also continuously analyzed my data throughout the study with the aid of a research journal where I recorded realizations, thoughts about the interviews, made connections as themes emerged, and continually asked questions of myself to help me further explore my purpose for the study. Hatch (2002) stated the research journal "provides a record of the affective experience of doing a study. They provide a place where researchers can openly reflect on what is happening during the research experience and how they feel about it" (p. 87). This is a practice of analysis referred to as memoing and provided me with a way to consider the how and the what of faculty being in connection with students to "expose the structure and the essence" of the lived

experience of connection and helped me arrive at thick, rich descriptions (Jones et al, 2014, p. 90).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a crucial part of qualitative research and serves to certify that a study is of high quality (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, Seidman, 2013; Jones et al, 2014). Jones et al (2014) asserted that it speaks to the notions of credibility and confidence in the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described the goal of credibility as the way to ensure that the topic was accurately identified and described. Seidman (2013) stated that a sense of trustworthiness or validity can be achieved in qualitative research if the researcher allows the participant to make sense and meaning of the experience she is relaying to herself but also to the researcher during the interview process. To ensure trustworthiness and authenticity, I implemented member checking by sending drafts of interviews and analysis to my participants in order to allow them the opportunity to comment on the accuracy and interpretation of my analysis.

Limitations, Positionality, and Ethical Considerations

In the conduct of this study, every effort was made to satisfy the participants' basic protections as outlined by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). These protections include the right to provide and withdraw consent, the expectation of confidentiality, and the right not to be deceived by the researcher.

Also, utilizing a phenomenological framework to study Faculty-student relationships does have potential challenges and limitations. There were possible issues to be considered regarding the participants. Phenomenology is meant to strive for an understanding of experience as lived, not as reflected upon (van Manen, 1997). I needed to ensure that my participants were carefully answering questions with a focus on the experience with Faculty-student connection

that they actually lived, not simply reflecting on thoughts or emotions. I believe my use of episodic narrative interviewing assisted with this. Since I sent the interview framework ahead of time, many of the faculty had already chosen which story they wanted to share and some also told more than one. Another concern that I considered might arise was participants not being able to clearly articulate lived experience. In order to attempt to avoid this, I sent the interview framework ahead of time I and provided a clear description of the Personal Interaction level (Cox, 2011) that I wanted to explore in the initial request that invited faculty to be a part of the study. There was still the possibility that a faculty member would struggle with how to fully explain Faculty-student connection during an interview. This did happen with one or two of the participants, but with more specific questions on my part, I feel I was able to assist my participants in articulating their thoughts more easily and clearly. Anderson-Nathe (2008) suggested that a primary recruitment concern needs to be finding participants that are able to "isolate and describe at least one experience" that illuminates the phenomenon (p. 31).

There were possible challenges on my part as the researcher as well. One of the limitations to using phenomenology pertains to adhering to an ethic of care as a researcher (Noddings, 1984). Costley and Gibbs (2008) cautioned,

> For the actor who possesses the discretionary powers of the researcher, caring requires a form of existential trust that transcends social roles configured through the power of others, where trustors offer up their vulnerability to reveal themselves in their authenticity stripped of the protection of their social roles (p, 94).

They continued to explain that a researcher has a moral obligation to not harm participants as they are investing their trust in a researcher when agreeing to be part of a study. This relates to Heidegger's notion of "aboding in the world of others, questioning our own sense of being and

acting in the world and how we relate to others" (p. 96). Conscious, on-going reflection is necessary as a researcher to ensure motives are pure and coming from a place of care. Brown (2010) advocated for only telling stories to people who have earned the right to hear them. This is another aspect of interviewing that I needed to be conscious of. As a researcher, I may have not earned that right, so I needed to be sure to value and honor every story that was shared with me by a participant.

In concert, researchers also need to be conscious and reflective about staying objective and not getting too involved in the research to the point where they are looking for specific types of relationships or lived experiences. Sandvik and McCormack (2018) referred to this as taking a person-centered approach and asserted that it was crucial when conducting qualitative, research interviews, so that the interview is authentic and reciprocal. They also advised, "Knowing oneself without letting conscious or unconscious values and perceptions overshadow the opportunities that arise in gaining an understanding of the participant's values and perceptions is essential" (p. 1). Even though Heidegger was not an advocate of bracketing (Laverty, 2003), maintaining an objective perspective was crucial to allow the actual understanding of the lived experience to emerge from the data. Finally, another challenge for the researcher of a phenomenological study might be to take the time to do a thorough analysis of the data to provide a clear understanding of the phenomenon being studied. This can be difficult as qualitative studies can produce pages of data to work through and some elements of the lived experience might surface more noticeably, which could result in others being overlooked. This is why on-going continued cycles of interpretation obtained via numerous readings of the text are necessary to continue for the researcher to come to new understandings (Poorman, Mastorovich, &Webb, 2011). I considered all of these possible limitations when creating my research design

and worked to be sure I was eliminating them in as many ways as possible by treating my interviewees with respect, clarifying thoughts and stories, and rereading my transcripts repeatedly throughout the analysis process.

On a personal note, throughout my career in higher education, I have always enjoyed having one foot in student affairs and one foot in academic affairs. Due to this, I have worked with faculty throughout much of my career. In my most recent position, I worked closely with faculty on a daily basis and constantly heard about their successes, frustrations, and musings about a program that required sustained involvement on the part of the faculty members. I began to see changes in how the faculty that were involved in the program were experiencing the Faculty-student relationship; they were developing a deeper connection to the students. Because of this work, there are biases, ethical issues, and an acute awareness of my own identities that I needed to consider on an on-going basis throughout this study. In my practice I had learned so much about faculty and their development that I wanted to delve deeper into the literature and hear more accounts from faculty to further inform my future practice and the practice of other student affairs professional.

I also continually reminded myself to listen for the faculty member's authentic, lived experience. I had a genuine interest in hearing their stories about experiencing Faculty-student connection and how they made meaning of that phenomenon. In addition, I kept the researcher journal throughout the process to record any thoughts, realizations or questions I had in an attempt to continually come from a place of curiosity.

A final ethical consideration was that faculty might share negative thoughts or experiences about the university, so I needed to be sure I gave the faculty the option of using a pseudonym for my study in case any upper administration or faculty would read the study. I did

not want a faculty member's job to be in jeopardy in any way due to this study. Although none of the faculty requested that I use a pseudonym, because many of them did share some less-than-favorable comments about their departments, colleges, or the university as a whole, I chose to assign a pseudonym to all of the faculty participants in an effort to respect their personal thoughts and anonymity.

Summary

This chapter focused on the research design for this study. The study was from an interpretivist epistemological framework and utilized phenomenology as the methodology. The goal of this study was to contribute to the area of research on Faculty-student interactions by exploring a level of connection seldom discussed in previous research. The design of this study incorporated trustworthiness criteria into participant selection, data collection, interpretive analysis, and reporting procedures. The findings will contribute to a greater understanding of the Faculty-student connection and what student affairs professionals can do to continue to strengthen and enhance this connection for the faculty and students they encounter.

Chapter 4: Findings

As discussed in Chapter Three, I spent time bridling my own thoughts on connection in order to gain greater awareness of my own assumptions of the phenomenon of Faculty-student connection before beginning my phenomenological data analysis with data reduction. The seventeen participants in this study engaged in interviews that lasted 20 – 50 minutes. These interviews were a bit shorter than most generated in qualitative interviews, but the shorter time length was in alignment with the data collection methodology of narrative episodic interviewing that I utilized. I transcribed some of the interviews on my own and then used a commercial website to transcribe the rest. After receiving the transcriptions from the website, I listened to each interview while going through the transcripts to ensure accuracy. My process for data analysis consisted of going through the texts numerous time, first holistically and then reviewing for significant statements that were then organized into larger meaning units or groups to thoroughly explore the essence of Faculty-student connection from the faculty member perspective.

This chapter provides a co-constructed description of the experiences of each of the seventeen faculty members as is indicative of phenomenological methodology. In order to provide an appropriate context for the descriptions of the ways in which the study participants experienced Faculty-student connection, there is a brief introduction to each faculty member followed by an analysis of the stories they shared of their lived experience of Faculty-student connection. Their stories revealed that when faculty members experience connection with a student it is expression of who they are as a person; it involves acknowledging humanity and the lived experiences of individuals; there is reciprocity in the relationship; it serves as an

opportunity for growth and development and that there are barriers to connection that exist when trying to create connections with students.

Participant Profiles

The seventeen faculty members that participated in this study were all tenured faculty, associate or full professors, from a research I institution. They came from a variety of colleges and departments and ranged in ages from 36 to 55. All participants were white; eight were men, and nine were women. The number of years the faculty members had been in the profession ranged from 6 to 24, but most of them had been at State University for the majority of their careers as faculty members. All participants were involved in programs or initiatives outside the classroom, many which fell into high impact practice categories; 14 were or had been involved in the second-year program on campus; 13 were involved in undergraduate research with students: seven had participated in service-learning initiatives; 10 had been involved with the honors and scholars program on campus in some capacity; five had led study abroad programs with students; four had been student organization advisors at one time or another; and two had taught freshmen seminar classes. Many of them also mentioned doing one-time programs in the residence halls at one time or another, but none of them had been closely involved with a learning community that involved a year-long commitment. A summary of each participant's involvement is presented in the following table to provide context for the following analysis sections. All participants have been given pseudonyms to protect their anonymity.

Table 2. Demographics and Beyond the Classroom Involvement of Study Participants

Name	Department	Gender	Race	Age Range	Yrs as Fac	Involvement
Alan	Geography	Male	White	51-55	14	Service-learning Second-year Program Undergraduate Research Honors & Scholars Student Org Advisor
Barbie	Libraries	Female	White	46-50	13	Second-year Program
Barry	Plant Pathology	Male	White	55-60	19	Second-year Program Undergraduate Research
Bella	Nursing	Female	White	46-50	9	Undergraduate Research Honors & Scholars
Carrie	Psychology	Female	White	46-50	15	Second-year Program Undergraduate Research Honors & Scholars Student Org Advisor
Charlie	Chemistry	Male	White	41-45	16	Second-year Program Undergraduate Research
Fiona	Public Health	Female	White	46-50	16	Second-year Program Undergraduate Research Honors & Scholars Freshmen Seminar
Frank	Health & Rehabilitation Services	Male	White	36-40	6	Second-year Program Undergraduate Research Honors & Scholars
Gabby	Ed. Studies Admin.	Female	White	50-55	20	Second-year Program Service-learning Study Abroad
Genny	Ed. Studies – Counseling	Female	White	51-55	23	Second-year Program Service-learning
Kelly	Social Work	Female	White	36-40	7	Undergraduate Research Service-learning Honors & Scholars
Ken	Business	Male	White	46-50	20	Second-year Program Study Abroad Honors & Scholars Student Org. Advisor
Matthew	Sociology	Male	White	41-45	15	Second-year Program Undergraduate Research Service-learning Student Org Advisor Honors & Scholars
Molly	Design	Female	White	51-55	20	Second-year Program Study Abroad Service-learning Undergraduate Research Honors & Scholars
Sam	Agriculture, Communication, & Ed Leadership	Male	White	50-55	24	Second-year Program Undergraduate Research Freshmen Seminar
Tessa	Cancer Biology & Genetics	Female	White	51-55	14	Undergraduate Research Honors & Scholars Student Org Advisor
William	Chemical & Biomedical Engineering	Male	White	50-55	20	Second-year Program Undergraduate Research

Alan

"So I've had a couple of students where I've felt that really close intellectual connection where we can geek out a little bit and really learn together because I think that is what happens, why it becomes interesting for me at least is when I can kind of also draw from that connection, and it becomes interesting when I constantly learn something from the relationship or learn something new about the person and what they're doing, what they're thinking in sort of intriguing ways."

Alan is a full professor in Geography who has been at State University for all of the 14 years he has been a faculty member. He has served as an administrator and a faculty member and was recently promoted to be a full-time administrator at State University. He has been involved in numerous beyond the classroom initiatives and feels that connecting with students is "a rare opportunity to have more than just a one-way connection with a student." Throughout his interview it was clear that, for him, connection comes as a result of an intellectual interaction within the academic environment. Many times, he referred to the power dynamics between a professor and a student, a student's desire to succeed academically, the demands on a faculty member's time, and the need for a connection with a student to be an investment worth his time. His hope was that his connection with a student resulted in new or enhanced learning for the student and also himself. Even though his focus was mostly academic, he also stated that the connections he has "is part of why the job is fun and engaging" and he loves it when a student has a "passion to dive in and geek out around something." Alan did feel that his department supported his efforts to engage and connect with students in this way and commented that he felt that had shifted within his department more recently.

When asked to tell a story about a student he had experienced connection with, Alan chose to share about a nontraditional, older student who became involved in doing undergraduate research with him early in his career. He explained that he was hesitant due to the demands on his time during that period of his life, being under the "tenure clock," but once he realized she

had a deeper intellect than had been displayed in his classroom, he was open to the interaction. Eventually, he shared that "I'm clear the relationship shifted in becoming more equal level conversational, more of a collaborative relationship rather than me supervising," and that is when connection occurred. It was the first time that his relationship with a student became one where they could both benefit and learn from each other and because of this, he saw the value in the connection. Because the relationship with that student worked out so well, had such a great outcome for the her, and was rewarding for him both academically and personally, Alan felt he became more open to getting involved in other projects that involved working with undergraduate students.

Since the time of this story, Alan has become more involved in administration and more aware of the reasonable amount of himself he can put into initiatives outside the classroom with students. He feels it is an important part of his new position to continue his interactions and connections with students in order to "be a part of the movement" and "stay in touch with students" in order to understand how changes at the university might impact them. At the end of our interview he described himself as a faculty member who is not socially inept but who is also not one that instantly has amazing connections with students. He felt he falls somewhere in between but he keeps trying new things with the attitude of "I can probably do this," as he continues his efforts to have connections with students.

Barbie

"I was able to demonstrate as the instructor of the class that I cared beyond just the material in the course. I think that's part of what the element of connection is to me. It's showing that I care. . . . we are better at connecting when we intentionally seek to connect. . . And that could happen both in the classroom and outside the classroom. It's really hard though when you're in one session or online."

Barbie describes herself as someone who is "technically a faculty member" but a lot of her teaching "takes place in ways unlike typical faculty members." Barbie is an associate professor in University Libraries at State University. She has been there 13 years and much of her teaching occurs on-line. Although she feels she gets mixed messages about connecting with students from the university, her department wholeheartedly supports connection with students and is continually thinking of ways to show "the real people behind those on-line class computers." This is somewhat of a challenge for Barbie because it is evident by her interview that she thrives on connecting with students and will do most anything to solve a problem for one. This is evident by the story she shared regarding Faculty-student connection.

Her story focused on one of the students who was in an actual class she taught in a classroom on global information. She noticed he was very distracted in class, and one day after class started making small talk with him while walking from the classroom building back to the library. After the next class session, he pulled her aside and told her he was very nervous and anxious about being in that particular classroom building because he had heard there was a radioactive lab in the building. Immediately, Barbie went into problem-solving mode, showed the student where the building coordinator's contact information was, and suggested they both reach out to that person. She followed through and found out that there was a lab in the building but that many safety precautions were taken and there was no need for fear. Barbie forwarded this all to the student. She then shared that there was an immediate change. The student became more engaged in class, passed the class, and continued to keep in touch with her after he graduated. She felt because she took the time to listen and took him seriously, he was able to be successful in class the rest of the semester. Upon further reflection of the story, Barbie shared that her main goal for any student she interacts with is for him to know she cares. She also stated

that she "would help all her students to grow in ways they want to grow." She believes that after that encounter she started to focus on how she could make herself more "intentionally approachable" to students and encourage students to tell her about "stuff that's getting in their way." Barbie felt this desire to connect with as many student as possible is just part of who she is.

She is a firm believer in meeting one-on-one with students and giving students choice about how open they want to be. She shared that she continually reminds herself that "All we can do is kind of plant seeds and see what happens."

Barry

"We're really self-selected as academics and we need to understand that 99% of the population is not like us. So, that helps me put things in perspective and become more patient and more understanding. As I said, if you try to put yourself in the shoes of someone that is not self-selected, like we are, then it's a positive. It makes your interaction with students much more fruitful."

Barry is a full professor in Plant Pathology and has been an academic for 19 years. He is quite self-aware of his role as a faculty member and how it can be interpreted by students. He believes in pushing students to help them grow and develop as much as possible and defines connection as an "interaction that develops knowledge and understanding between the faculty and student." Despite his high expectations of students, his rigorous traditional teaching methods, and his no-nonsense approach to the subject matter, he continually looks for potential in students, practices empathy on a continual basis, and, in his own words, "doesn't give up on people."

He credits a particular student with helping him develop an enhanced sense of empathy, which is the story he chose to share. This student had been enrolled in college, dropped out to spend some time in the Air Force, and then returned to college at State University. Barry

described her as being a bit of a rebel and a little lost but also a student that had a "passion for plants and trees." She had a strong personality and, in reality, her and Barry clashed quite a bit and were somewhat "suspicious" of one another for some time. Barry looked beyond that and kept giving her more responsibility and independence and eventually offered her the opportunity to do a research project in the Rockies. She continued to blossom in the lab, had Barry write her a letter for graduate school, and has become a stellar student in graduate school. She has won a national award and has already been published. She credits Barry for where she is today.

Even though he has always believed in students and has student success at the forefront of his mind, he now works even harder to understand where students are coming from and feels he is "even more sensitive to individual differences and personalities."

Barry has tremendous support from his department for connecting with students. The department has a mentoring system for faculty that spans the tenure track process and is very intentional about making students a priority.

Bella

"I think, to me, experiencing connection means that you have a relationship with a student that extends beyond their academic learning. That includes more of the things that might not be related to a course topic but more to global learning, particularly as it relates to nursing care."

Bella is an Associate Professor in Nursing and has been a faculty member for nine years. Like Alan, her view of experiencing connection resides mostly in the academic aspect of the university. She values getting to know students as well as helping them develop a solid plan for their projects and major, but also strives to know them on "more of a person level rather than that traditional, stand-offish academic level." She also highly values student initiative and if a student does not exhibit passion, a good work ethic, and enthusiasm for the field, she is not as

inclined to invest in them as deeply. Her hope is that students will invest the same amount of energy in their interactions with her as she does with them.

Her story focused around one of the students who had been assigned to her in her role as a full-time honors advisor. She worked with the student to understand what she really was interested in doing for her honors project. Bella felt the student's proposed project was a little beyond her reach, so she spent a great amount of time helping the student see a different perspective around the topic by finding various readings for her to look at and other researchers for her to talk to. She also engaged the student by asking her to be a part of writing two manuscripts with herself and another colleague. The student ended up being a co-author on one of the articles due to her high level of work and also presented her work at a conference. This was a huge accomplishment for the student, especially because she was insecure about her presentation skills due to English being her second language.

Bella shared that mentoring this student and seeing her be so successful has helped her realize how worthwhile it is to take the additional time to invest in a student who has a great amount of enthusiasm and passion, even if they need a little extra guidance. The pride she felt let her know that her efforts were not in vain. She credited her willingness to invest in students to the mentors who were there to support her throughout her academic and professional career. She admitted that her mentors "believed in [her] when others wouldn't," so she tends to look for students who are diamonds in the rough and just need a bit more polishing. Her department is very supportive of her efforts and the time she takes to mentor students. Bella also added that she had pretty extensive training in teaching in her PhD program which she feels has really helped her better connect with students.

Carrie

"Connecting [happens] by being able to talk about things that impact their lives. But really when I think of a one on one connection with them, which would be, can you meet them where they're at and kind of do things that help them get to where they're trying to go? That's kind of how I think about it . . .there are ways to connect with them personally so that you get them as a human being and can help them move along their goal or trajectory."

Carrie is an associate professor in the Psychology department and a self-proclaimed "behaviorist at heart," which guides her interactions with students. She seeks to understand all aspects of her students including who they are, what drives them, what barriers they face, and what validates them. In return she strives to be a "radically genuine" human being with her students, allows them to see her vulnerability and know about her failures, and makes herself available and accessible.

This intentionality was evident in Carrie's story about a student she worked with as part of a mentoring program through the Honors program. The student was interested in Psychology and expressed interest in being a clinician but wondered why Carrie was so interested in research. Carrie explained that she felt that by finding treatments through research, she was able to help multiple people at a time as opposed to just one person during a counseling session. This inspired the student to start doing research in Carrie's lab with her, and the two connected due to their shared understanding of the relationship between research and clinical work. Carrie described it as "a switch flipped for her." The student is now in a PhD program and the two are professionally connected as they write papers together. They are also personally connected and visit one another whenever the opportunity arises. The connection with this student made Carrie realize the importance of meeting with students outside the classroom, and she now purposefully "builds in opportunities to meet with undergrads" as it helps her "connect with them in a different way." She makes them a priority in her schedule and is even more intentional about her

interactions with them. She follows up with students who seem to have a decline in performance or behavior, but she also takes the time to send positive reinforcement messages to those students who do well on tests, which she says can also spark a connection with a student.

Much of Carrie's desire to connect with students is due to her own desire for meaningful work. She does not necessarily get a lot of support from her department. They do not discourage her from connecting with students, but no credit is given to these deeper connections with students on promotion and tenure documents. Aside from this Carrie feels building connections with students is vital as "people are the growth part" of the job for her.

Charlie

"I think it's very important to establish a connection with your students because as I thought about teaching for so long, I think it comes down to only two things that makes a good teacher and makes something work. I think it's rigor and resources. I think I'm the resource. I'm one of the resources that the students need to be successful…[Being the resource is] just time spent interacting with them, talking with them, learning more about them than just the organic chemistry that we're going to discuss."

Charlie is an Associate Professor in Chemistry and has been a faculty member for 16 years. He is very intentional about his interaction with students but cannot really pinpoint what he does that is so effective. He uses his office hours to focus on individual students and clear things up for them. His office door is always open, and students are encouraged to stop by anytime. He walks through his lab sessions on a regular, weekly basis, so he can see and get to know the students in small groups. He shares stories about his kids and brings pictures of his dog to class. He helps with freshmen orientation, participates in the second-year program, does demonstrations and meals in the residence halls as much as he can, and conducts undergraduate research with students. None of this is expected, rewarded or, many times, understood by his colleagues in his hard science department, but in his mind "the time that you invest with students is probably what we are here to do."

Charlie's commitment to investing in students was clear in the story he told about a student who just randomly stopped by his office one day. The young man had heard Charlie was a good teacher, so he decided to stop by and talk with him about changing his major. The student had just finished freshmen Chemistry. The door was open, so he walked right in. They chatted for a while, and, as Charlie told it, for some unknown reason he decided to invite this first-year student to do research with him in the Chemistry lab that summer, something he had never done before. It was a lot of work for the student and for Charlie, but he saw an "amazing transformation" in the student. The student became a top chemistry major, led the chemistry/biochemistry club, was a teaching assistant for Charlie, went to law school, and now has his own patent. He and Charlie stay connected, and Charlie was even in his wedding. The two still talk about that random meeting and the meaningful friendship that resulted from it. Charlie explained that the student's honesty as he talked about his problems and the fact that Charlie was willing to really listen is what developed this sense of trust between them. Charlie also saw the potential in the student and felt he was someone he could help.

When asked about how he made sense of the interaction, Charlie admitted that he is someone who "doesn't want to let anyone down." He also does not want students to give up too easily, so he encourages them to examine their choices and gain all the information about a topic or choice they are making before they make decisions. He views this as a key part of mentoring. He also remembers what is was like when he was a student, so he has a lot of empathy for students. In addition, Charlie shared that he comes from a big family who was always helping one another, so he feels that helping students is just part of his persona. Finally, he had an amazing mentor in his PhD program, so he strives to make time for, listen to, and mentor students in the same way that his advisor did for him.

Fiona

"Connecting with people in general is important to me. That's just the way I am with all of my relationships whether it's friends, family colleagues or students. I want to have more than just a formal relationship with people in general, trying to get to know them as people."

Connecting with people is simply a natural part of Fiona's person. She is a full professor in Public Health and has been a faculty member for 16 years. It would never cross her mind to deny a student in need, no matter what the need. Although she remains cautious about getting off topic, she makes a point to ask her students in her classes how their weeks are going, what they have coming up, or what is stressing them out. When she is meeting with students outside the classroom, she strives to "get to know students as people." She takes note of aspects of their personal lives and is sure to ask about them when she sees them again, in class or out of class. She feels her department is very supportive of connecting with students as it has a very small undergraduate program, and part of the goal is for the students to connect with faculty. She feels the university sends mixed message about supporting students and even though it is espoused, there is not a lot of evidence that it is valued.

Fiona's desire to connect with a student, no matter what the situation, was exhibited in the story she shared about Faculty-student connection. This student had reached out to her because he had severe social anxiety and was concerned about it affecting his participation grade in her class. She told him they would work through it and then began checking on him regularly. This was during a time when her father was ill and failing and as she continued chatting with the student, he revealed that his father had died from cancer as well. He then started inquiring about her father's health as they communicated over e-mail, and they connected over this shared experience. As her story went on, Fiona revealed that this student started having problems with other faculty members and started to be labeled as a difficult student. One time he mistakenly

used a faculty's electronic signature to take an elective when he really did not have permission to do so and ended up getting in a lot of trouble. He became very upset and was also dealing with depression and anxiety. Then in the middle of the night one night, he e-mailed Fiona telling her he was thinking about killing himself. She received the e-mail the next morning, panicked, and contacted the appropriate people in her department for help. The police went to his house, picked him up, and he was admitted to a mental health facility. Fiona and some of her colleagues waited at the hospital until she could see him. At first he was upset with her due to financial burdens that he would have to deal with, but once he was better and came back to school, he ended up thanking her for her help. The student did end up graduating.

When I asked Fiona why she was so willing to get this involved in the situation, she shared that she knew he was smart and felt there were not many faculty giving him a chance. She clearly had a lot of empathy for the student and also stated, "Well, that's just me." As a result of her experience with this student, she says she tries to be much more in tune to student behavior and the signs that a student may be struggling. She told another brief story about a student and talked about how she referred him to counseling and checked on him after he relocated to another city and new job. It seems that for Fiona connecting and helping people is just a way of life.

Frank

"That's really important, that's one of the reasons I came to State University. Most of my career is doing research, so I spend a lot of time in the lab. And a lot of the job offers I got were just to work in the lab, write grants, do science, and not really teach, but here I had the opportunity to teach a couple classes and be part of undergraduate programming where I could actually interact with students, and that was something that was really important to me."

Similar to many of the faculty I interviewed, experiencing connection with students is an important aspect of Frank being a faculty member. As is evidenced by his quote, he feels his

department offers a great amount of support in being connected to undergraduates. The message is a bit different from the College of Medicine who wants him to focus more on grants and do research, but Frank still makes time to be a part of initiatives outside the classroom as they are "a much more fulfilling part of the job." His former boss inspired him to form connections because it is what he did when interacting with students, and Frank found him to be a "cool guy," so wanted to do the same. He strives to do this by having a guitar in his office and talking to "frequent stop-byers" about the latest movies that people are seeing or some other pop culture trend.

The story Frank told about experiencing connecting with a student was about one of the students in his group of second year students. It was a simple story about connecting with one of the students over their love of hockey, and their personalities just clicked. The student shared lots of different things in his life with Frank, and they still keep in touch. The student just finished up his master's program, but they have stayed connected for the past five years. It was a personal connection, with both of them seeing one another as "just people" as opposed to faculty member and student, and the relationship flourished. This student was not a part of Frank's department or in any of his classes, so it did have a different dynamic than most of the stories faculty shared during the study.

Frank shared that this connection reminded him that for many students, they just need someone they can connect with. He reminisced that he was once a 21-year-old student who needed to connect with someone. He did not go home much because his home life was not that great, and he was also at a large university like State University, so he felt he did not have any professors he really connected with. He does not want that to happen to any student at State University. He worries that there are many students he is missing and that "the students who are

not actually seeking it (connection) out might be some of the ones who would benefit from it the most." He hopes he can make a difference in the lives of students just as his PhD advisor did in his.

Gabby

"I am a firm believer that if we don't connect with every single student, then we're not teaching the way we should. You've got to establish rapport with every student and then when you know what's going on, you don't have that ability to step back and judge…You know, students don't come to college to fail. They come here to succeed and if they're not, there's something going on."

Gabby is an associate professor in Educational Studies Administration, and her commitment to education and students is embedded in every part of her being. She has been a faculty member for 20 years and connecting with students has always been a priority. She starts every orientation and class with the message that she is available to each and every student and reiterates this message throughout the semester. Gabby is willing to help any student with any problem at any time. She also supervises a number of graduate students and expects the same of them. In their weekly meetings, they discuss the students they are concerned about and how they can continue to work on connecting with every student.

Gabby has helped a poor student find a way to buy clothes, sat at the hospital with students, and walked students to counseling services. She feels she has access to the support and resources she needs from the university to help students in crisis situations such as these. There is no problem she is not willing to assist with or support she is not willing to give. The story she shared was just another example of her willingness to do whatever it takes to reach a student.

One of the students in her first-year education class was not showing up for his field experience and had missed a few seminars. The graduate teaching assistant, the professional contact in the field, and Gabby herself tried to reach the student by e-mail, but he never

responded. Gabby tried to reach him by cell phone with no luck either. Three days later they received an e-mail from the student advocacy office on campus saying he had been hospitalized. Immediately, Gabby e-mailed him to express her concern, stated that they wanted to support him in his hardship, and to contact her when he was back on his feet. Three weeks later the student set up an appointment with Gabby and explained he had a health condition that he could not get under control. He had never shared this with anyone and felt uncomfortable talking about it. Gabby shared that her husband dealt with the same health issue and referred him to a doctor that helped him get his condition under control. The next semester he contacted disability services, made student advocacy aware of his condition, and re-enrolled in the course. He even friended Gabby on Linked In. She feels her openness and vulnerability about her own life and own experiences enabled her to help the student connect with her. As a result of this situation, Gabby believes she should never give up on a student and now always practices persistence to find out what is happening in a student's life if something seems to be going awry.

Gabby's uses her former experiences as a first-generation student from a rural area and her experiences as a mother to empathize with her students. She is always asking herself, "if this was my child, what would I want somebody to do?" In addition, she uses information from on-going evaluations to help better her interactions with students and continually reminds them that she cares about and is available to them. She said it may be five weeks into the semester before a student needs her, but if they remember that constant message, she hopes they will think to reach out.

Genny

"Look, I think it's about human to human connection. I don't think it's classroom or outside or inside or anything. I think it's about people connecting, and it's about students knowing that you care about them as people. I don't think it's just relationships between the students and faculty. I

think it's relationships among the students as well, and the faculty sets the tone where you help the students understand the importance of that."

As a professor of counseling for 23 years, student connection is of utmost importance to Genny. It is an intrinsic part of her being, and it is difficult for her to fathom why someone might not want to try and connect with every person they encounter, especially faculty on a campus full of students. She believes that there are not a lot of faculty who "overtly don't care" about students; she believes they are just scared of the interpersonal world and that no one has ever taken the time to sit down with them and teach them how to do it.

Genny teaches and works with mostly graduate students, so her story of experiencing connection with a student was about a young man in her small group through the second-year program on campus. He was a young man that rarely said much in their weekly meetings during fall semester. He would share when asked, but that was about it. Then in the spring semester he started coming to Genny's office hours. He came every week. He just sat there and soon it became evident to Genny that "he didn't really need anything." Genny would do her work, and people would come and go, and this student just sat there each week hanging out in her office. Genny had kind of teased him in their group meetings, so she surmised that he had become comfortable and safe with her and enjoyed being around her. Then the student did his second-year experience and went abroad on a trip focusing on World War II. Genny shared that he was like a new person when he returned. He could not stop telling her about the trip and wanted to be sure she saw all of his pictures. She even invited him to her group the next year to share about his experience – this quiet, introverted young man who just used to hang out in her office and say very little had transformed. He even started dating one of the most outgoing girls who had been a part of the group as well. Genny loves this story as she thinks it is a testament to how much a person can change when someone acknowledges and connects with them, doesn't treat

them like a timid, introverted, fragile soul, and gives them the chance to be on their own and do things without being handheld. As she reflected on this story, Genny said she thinks it taught her that even though she worries that there are students she has missed, especially those in the middle, that "you don't know what seeds you plant" and it's really important not to get in a "tizzy and frustrated" and worry too much about that.

Genny's connection with this student and other undergraduates has affected how she works with her graduate students. Her connections with students like the young man in her story have reminded her that she is always better off when she encounters "people as people."

Kelly

"Experiencing connections? For me that means I'm meeting my students where they are. The idea of self-determination and the importance of human relationships and the importance of social justice, which are all those values, that's just, that's who I am as a person. So, bringing that into my relationships with students, I feel like that's something I can offer."

For Kelly, an associate professor in Social Work for 7 years, our interview became a time of self-reflection. Kelly is yet another faculty member who sees her connections with students as a natural part of who she is. She said she and her students share the same reason for going into the field of social work - they want to help people. She is certain that part of her job is to "see that each one of the students in front of [her] has something to offer. . . and to pull that out." Kelly also repeatedly stresses how much she is committed to "showing up" for her students in the classroom and in any situation where she is working with students. She does not feel that her role as a tenured faculty member in her department leaves much room for the level of connection she seeks with students. Her colleagues continue to caution her about getting involved with too many initiatives beyond the classroom and drop by often to ask her if she is keeping up with her writing.

The story she shared was about a student who requested to do research with her. She was a first generation, African American young woman who was struggling with self-esteem and confidence. Kelly agreed to help her even though it was over the summer and she had a lot to do to finish getting tenure. She met with the student and shared "And as soon as I met her, it was just like, that connection was one of, not just a genuine shared interest, but I just felt like I could be of support and help to a person." The two worked together all summer. The student gained some confidence and skills and ended up achieving her goals of being in the undergraduate research forum and winning one of the highest awards in the department. Kelly teared up as she thought about the young woman's success and explained that she hasn't seen the young woman in a while and missed her.

When asked to reflect on how she experienced this connection, Kelly explained that she felt like she had a chance to be a true mentor to this young woman as she was able to help her develop and support her in her own process. She also relayed that this "special relationship" with this woman allowed her to use some of her "untapped gifts" of being genuinely present with a student, intently listening, and giving of her time, resources, and guidance.

Kelly shared that our interview allowed her the time to process her time with this student and realize how important connecting with undergraduates really is to her. She ended the interview unsure of what her next move would be regarding how to best balance this renewed commitment to undergraduates with all the demands that promotion and tenure puts on her. She has even started wondering if it is time for a career change; she is taking sabbatical this year and hopes the answers will become clearer as she continues to reflect.

Ken

"It, I think, over the years it's [student connection] meant more and more and more. I think early in your career you're kind of getting yourself established, building your own reputation. You know, you probably wouldn't have gravitated to being a professor if some connection with students wasn't important."

What excites Ken about connecting with students is talking with them about the numerous opportunities that are available to students at State University and how he can guide them in deciding which ones are best for them. Ken is a full professor in Business and has been a faculty member for 16 years. He is involved with the second-year program on campus and leads a study abroad trip to Germany each year. He told me his time with students is rewarding and makes him happy. He described himself as a "small relationships guy." He feels like his colleagues are a bit confused about why he puts so much time in outside the classroom activities, but he wishes they would also give them a try. He has learned a lot from his experiences by being willing to make himself "uncomfortable" and feels they could benefit from doing the same. He explained that it gives him more empathy for his students as well as for his three sons at home.

He chose to tell a story about a young woman from his small group with the second-year program. He said that each time they went around the group to share something, she was "like a mouse," but after one of the meetings, she came up and started telling him about her background, her goals and some of the things she was dealing with. It ended up that the project she wanted to do for her experience in this program was take a trip to Germany through the history department. She also wanted to be a German high school teacher in the future. Since Ken had been to Germany many times, he was able to bond with her and help her grow from a smart, "introverted, inward-looking student. . .[to a person] who was comfortable in her own skin and excited about challenging herself." Ken was honored to be able to provide that support system

for her and shared that as a result of the experience, he now looks for signs that a student might need help figuring things out. He hopes to continue to be a resource for students but also feels it is important to encourage students to seek out lots of opinions from others before making a decision.

He told me that he has realized he cannot solve everyone's problems, but he can be "available, available, available in a real way." He added that when students from his first year of teaching still reach out to him, "that's pretty special; that's a lot more special to me than some journal article."

Matthew

[Regarding experiencing connection] "I would say for an undergraduate student, if they're expressing interest in the research or the subject matter that I would have a little bit more of an in-depth conversation about what I would think they would need to be successful. It's also meeting with students about what they're thinking about doing after they graduate."

Matthew has been a faculty member in Sociology for 15 years. He experiences connection with students mainly through their common interest in his field, whether they are doing research for him or simply interested in learning more about the subject. He also enjoys helping students figure out what they want to do after undergrad, whether that is seeking a job in the field or going to graduate school. He feels supported in his efforts to connect with students by his department and college and feels the university has gotten much better at creating opportunities for faculty to connect with students outside the classroom.

His story was one about a student in his research methods class who was struggling at the beginning of the semester. As Matthew encouraged him, he became more confident in his skills and by the end of the semester he asked Matthew to be involved in a research project in his lab. Matthew told another story about a young man that became so invested in a newly created service-learning class that he taught, that Matthew became reliant on him to be a leader in the

class and be a key contact with the community partners who Matthew hoped would continue to be partners with the class in the future. Matthew appreciated the student's sincere interest in the class and valued the honest feedback the student gave him. The student continues to keep in touch with Matthew and has told him that some of the concepts he learned in the service-learning class have assisted him in medical school. As a result of this deeper connection with a student, Matthew realized how successful a student can be if he is invested in a class and given the opportunity to take on a leadership role. He also feels he now encourages students more, has more belief in their abilities, and is aware that students interests can evolve when given the opportunity.

Molly

"So, if the question is about the faculty to student connection, I would say that whether it's co-curricular or study abroad or service learning, each kind of provides different scenarios and situations, challenges and even risks that are all opportunities for people to learn from each other. But again, I'm going to take it back to how important it is for the personal development skills to be drawn out and to be encouraged and become even more explicit. They can become more explicit in those arenas; more so than I think they do when you're in the classroom because we're so focused on the discipline specific arena and the topical areas that we don't get to really explore in this other side that we call humanity."

Molly is an associate professor in Design and was deeply thoughtful and introspective during our interview. She has been at State University for over 20 years and been involved with students through service-learning, undergraduate research, honors & scholars, the second-year program, and study abroad. Her connection with students is genuine and heartfelt. She sees herself almost as a catalyst for helping students gain a sense of self as they discover their values and beliefs. She has actually started to imbed mindfulness and reflective thinking into her coursework to assist students in this discovery as she feels this is a way to help them develop lifelong skills to deal with stress and their own "mind chatter." She believes it will help them settle into the peacefulness of a classroom and be more productive in their design work. She

feels her department and college is very supportive of how she connects with students but is unsure about what to say about the university as she has never had those conversations with anyone in upper administration.

Her story focused on a young woman who was in one of her classes. She struggled with this young woman as she felt the young woman really had an attitude about Molly's authority in the classroom. Towards the middle to end of the semester, Molly felt she needed to have one-on-one meetings with her students to let them know how they were performing in the class. When she met with this particular student, she was very up front about telling the student she knew she did not care for her and then suggested they get to know one another a bit more to try and build a better rapport. She explained what happened next, "it's almost as if that time, that taking if that time with her, that was the connection that needed to be made. And she was like a different person." Although she did well in the class, the young woman decided that Design really was not for her, but she made it a point in letting Molly know her reasons why before changing her major. Molly felt that her 'intentional listening" and authentic desire to connect is what changed the very "prickly" situation. When explaining how she experienced the connection, Molly said she just knew she had to address the situation because it was affecting the class and her personally.

Some things that she realized from that student connection were the importance of one on one meetings with students and the importance of making sure her own voice is heard as well as the students when dealing with an uncomfortable situation.

Molly feels her desire to seek harmony comes from her upbringing in Brazil where she learned to have great empathy and a desire to do good in the world. She believes that is why

initiatives such as service-learning and study abroad are so impactful for students; they give them opportunities to develop empathy.

Sam

"I think my caring for students has been since day one. That's why I'm here. But I think it's gotten better. I hope I've gotten better because I've had professional development and on how to do it and how to do it better. I feel like I can always learn. I can always grow, and I continue to try to do that."

Like Barry, Sam works in a department and college that is extremely supportive of making connections with students. Sam is a professor in Agriculture, Communication, and Educational Leadership and has been a faculty member for 24 years. Sam is a faculty member who is continually looking for ways to improve his connections with students. He sees it as an integral part of his job and something that is a natural part of what he does every day. He feels he definitely makes more meaningful connections with students outside the classroom which is why he has been involved in numerous initiatives beyond the classroom. He also takes advantage of any professional development opportunity he can in order to learn how to make better connections with students.

It is Sam's goal to help students with any part of their lives where he can including their needs, concerns, or their decisions about their majors or careers they are considering. The young woman Sam told a story about had Sam's assistance in all of these areas. He characterized his story as "a connection and relationship that was gradual and evolved over time." He stated that there were probably specific touch points or turning points where the relationship grew through academic and research-focused advising visits, attending recognition events with her, helping her network, and then assisting her with getting into graduate school. Their relationship has continued and an article they wrote together just came out. He also just attended a conference where she presented. He shared that he was a "proud advisor" while listening to her

presentation. He noted that he had moved her e-mails out of his advisor file into his friends file. He felt that one of the reasons the connection was so strong was they had "mutual respect" for one another and valued one another.

When asked to reflect on how he made sense of the interaction with this student he commented, that "I guess that's probably how I am." He cares about all his students and finds connecting with students very meaningful. He felt that if he was just doing stuff for himself, it would be short-lived, but by helping and doing stuff for others, "that can be carried on."

Tessa

"The connection piece is important, so despite whatever the priorities in our department and college, for me, personally, I get a lot of out of it when students connect. I feel like they're making progress and meeting these milestones and succeeding beyond where I hoped they would be. So, that for me it is very self-satisfying. For me, it's internally driven. That's what I want to make of my experience here as a faculty member."

Tessa is a 14-year faculty member in the Cancer & Biology Genetics department at State University. Connection with a student is tied to deeper learning in her mind, but she also gains personal satisfaction from the connection she makes with students. She loves seeing the "moment in which students go from being more passive to being more participatory, and they start thinking independently." That is when she knows the training she has provided has enabled them to get to a new point and enhanced learning. Trust, vulnerability, and reciprocity are also key elements for connection for Tessa, and she feels it is much easier to reach higher levels of these elements when her classes are smaller. Like Frank, she is in the College of Medicine, and also feels there is no support for Faculty-student connection; they are much more concerned about their faculty securing grants and writing papers. This does not deter Tessa from continuing to connect with her students. She sees "their successes as her successes," and takes much pride in their accomplishments.

Tessa's story revolved around an eager first-year student who came to her and asked to work in her lab. He was very enthusiastic and even though she had never taken on a first-year student before, she was so impressed with his excitement and the time he had taken to research her work that she decided to take him on. It turned out the student was a first-generation student from a rural area, became desperately homesick the first few weeks of the semester, and started questioning whether he should be at State University or not. Tessa was not aware of this, but one of her teaching assistants shared with her that he was going home every weekend and really struggling. Tessa did not want to overstep, so she did not want to bring this up to the student. After a few months, she could see he was struggling with some of the experiments in the lab, so she suggested they sit down and talk about it. Once they sat down, "the floodgates opened," and he shared with her all that he had been going through. She told him she wanted to help him in any way that she could and if he wanted to take a break from the lab until he figured things out a little more, he was welcome to do that and come back when he felt better and was ready. A few months later he came back to the lab, told her how grateful he was for her understanding, and became one of her star students. Like many of the students in the stories faculty participants shared, he went on to get his PhD and win awards. He still feels like he can call Tessa whenever he is having a problem or just needs to talk, and she loves that. She also now "bounces things off of him" because they are becoming more equal colleagues.

Tessa feels the connection started when they sat down one-on-one to discuss things. She admitted she was cautious at first as she did not want to pry into the student's personal life too much. She took the chance because "I felt he was struggling and floundering, and it wasn't clear to me who else her was helping him with that process." She commented that the connection realty took hold when he returned to her lab. It continued to grow because he was such a

constant figure in her lab, so they worked together a lot. Tessa admits she has an innate desire to help students and surmises that her mothering instinct also plays a part in how she mentors students. As a result of this story, Tessa is more intentional about trying to connect with each student "as a whole person." She is aware that how a student learns and performs in class or in the lab is affected by where he is emotionally, what is going on in his family, and his living situation. She knows that all of this ties into a student's success, so she strives to think of solutions that will help with a student's specific need. She also tries to model this by practicing her own healthy work/life balance.

William

"Getting to connect to students and kind of getting them to sort of broaden their understanding of what their life is and where they're going, that's what the connections mean to me, but they're very career-oriented."

William's view of connecting with students is very specific; he enjoys the connection but finds satisfaction in doing it mainly with the goal of helping a student be successful in finding a job or career path. He is very clear that connecting around personal relationships in a student's life is not of interest to him. He is more concerned about understanding where a student wants to go and helping him get there. He is cautious when a student starts asking for help with personal issues and is hesitant about how soon to trust someone. He said is not that he is not willing to trust people, it just takes a little more. He admits he also "tends not to be relaxed around students, so he doesn't project an aura of approachability," and he is working to balance that more because he does have an authentic desire to work with and help students in areas where he feels comfortable. He will go the extra mile to help students, has former students who are good friends, and has often gone to dinner with a student and his parents.

William is a full professor in Chemical and Biomedical Engineering and feels his department, college, and the university have been fairly indifferent about his efforts to connect

with students in his 20 years as a faculty member. He is a firm believer in the Faculty-student connection, so he tries to be very proactive with his students in making that happen in some way. He describes his lab as a place "where he takes in strays who want to do research," so that any student who wants the opportunity to work in a lab with a professor has that opportunity.

William told a story about an older, non-traditional student that worked with him who had grown up in a rural area where education wasn't valued. The student knew he wanted to get an education, so even though he was close to 40, he made sure he pursued one. The older student ended up being one of the best the department had even seen, so William made sure he connected him with his contacts in the industry. As a result, the student ended up getting an amazing job as a research scientist in Boston. William mentioned a few other stories of students he had that were now doing research elsewhere with his some of his other former students. He loves seeing his students being successful and the fact that some have become "multi-generational."

William feels that his parents have had a major influence on how he connects with students and why he spends a little extra time on the "strays or less fortunate" students. Both of his parents were professors at a university that had a high population of minority, first-generation students. His mother wrote books on how to study in college and ran tutorial services for these students, so he is familiar with some of the challenges students can face first-hand and knows that sometimes all they need is for one person to "sit down and tell them, this is how it's supposed to go." He feels like he offers good advice to the students who need it most and has the skill to help them develop a plan for success. He also has a lot of empathy for students who are kind of lost and don't seem to try that hard because he says that is how he was in college. Luckily, he was able to dig himself out of the hole from his disastrous GPA and become a

professor, so he believes no challenge is too big to overcome. William is clearly a faculty mentor who has overcome challenges, learned from his mistakes, and simply wants to connect with students to help them avoid making the same ones he did. There is no doubt he strives for a deep level of connection with students; it just has a little different twist.

Experiencing Connection with Students from the Faculty Member Perspective

After introducing the study participants' overarching experiences of connection, I now focus on the themes that surfaced through phenomenological analysis of the two research questions. The analysis focused on what faculty members experience when connecting with students, and how their experiences informed or influenced their role as faculty member. The participants were gracious and thoughtful as they reflected on their stories about connecting with students. Many of them felt my study was of great interest and admitted they had never really been asked about how they connected with students. The following section outlines the five themes that surfaced through phenomenological analysis of the transcripts: An Expression of Who I Am; Acknowledging Humanity and Lived Experience; Reciprocity in the Relationship: Growth and Development: and Barriers to Connection. These themes were derived from faculty members' reflections on their experiences with students and from the commonalities found throughout the stories the faculty members chose to tell about experiencing connection with a particular student. The stories the faculty participants shared started in the classroom (5), research lab (7), or from being a part of a particular, co-curricular program (5), but the deeper connection happened when the faculty member started interacting with the student outside of the classroom in their research labs, as an advisor and mentor, or simply through a one-on-one meeting. While no particular participant encountered these experiences in exactly the same way, key themes resonated across their interviews. While the five themes presented in this chapter

emerged as the most prominent, it took several rounds of analysis to settle on these categories. After reading through and listening to the transcripts several times, I highlighted individual statements related to the research questions, followed by a third review in which I coded these statements, or meaning units, relevant to what they conveyed about the phenomenon; this read-through resulted in 21 initial codes. In a fourth round of reducing the data, I grouped these meaning units into clusters to identify higher level categories, resulting in the final, five themes.

An Expression of Who I Am

One of the primary research questions guiding this study was intended to explore how faculty who make connections with students experience that connection. An overwhelming majority of the participants had never really thought about this before and when asked how they made meaning of the connection, articulated at some point during the interview that it was an intrinsic value they held, a natural part of who they were.

An Intrinsic Value: "It's just who I am." (*Kelly)* For many of the faculty participants, seeking connection with students was something that was an extension of their being. The phrase, "it's just who I am" was one I heard numerous times while I was interviewing. Barbie added, "and who I want to be." A number of faculty stated, " that's just me," and Gabby referred to herself as a "reflective educator." Barry chuckled and said, "I don't know what else to say. It's my personality." Some of the faculty simply stated it, while others explained it a little further. Genny could not even fathom that others did not try to connect with students,

> Yeah, I mean I have a desire to connect with everyone, don't you? You asked me about connecting with my students as though it's such an intentional thing. And it just strikes me as odd to have the conversation because I don't know what else you do. I don't know how else you would. This is really an odd conversation.

Genny is a faculty member in a department related to a helping profession, counseling, as is Kelly who is in social work. Connecting with people is something the two of them value so highly, they made it part of their profession and life's work. Kelly talked about this more as she explained her frustration with some of her colleagues who sometimes discourage her from getting so involved with students.

> Because ultimately, you know, I came into the field of social work because I wanted to be a helper and people make fun of me for that all the time. For our students, that's like their number one on the application, like I want to help people, and if I'm going to be in a university rather than an agency or a nonprofit organization, like, who are the people I'm going to maybe be helping?

Mike explained how connecting with students is natural thing for him in yet another way,

> Right now, I teach these big lecture classes and you know, I always tell first day of class, I tell them, you know, I'm a small relationship guy. I graduated 40 some students in my high school class. I went to a small Jesuit college. My class sizes were 20 or 30. Here, right now, I'm teaching a course, which is 240 students in a big tiered room. They come in, I come in, I do my presentation, I get a little bit of interaction. But it's, no, it's not what I really love about teaching.

Although many of them attempted to explain how they experienced connection with students and made meaning of it, it was sometimes difficult for them to expand on the idea or understand how others view it as something outside the norm because is it such an integral part of who they are. These faculty value connecting with students so much that it is something they do as easily as living and breathing.

Part of the faculty role: "That's what I want to make of my experience here as a faculty member." (*Tessa)* Not only is experiencing connection with their students a natural part of their lives, many of the participants also saw it as a part of who they were as a faculty member and how they made meaning of being a faculty member. For a lot of them, the two were inextricably linked. Genny and Mike's quotes above reference this, but Alan and Carrie expressed similar views when they explained what it adds to their role as faculty members:

> *Alan*: I think it's in a way, those types of connections that make, which is part of why the job is fun and engaging - when you have these deeper connections with a few students that really, you know, that are excited about the same things, have, have this passion to dive in and geek out around something. I mean that's really cool.
>
> *Carrie*: Once I have done what I need to do to master that material, which most of us do that in grad school, frankly, you know there has to be some room for growth and the people are the growth part of it. Without opportunities for growth, my job would be really boring and stagnant, and I would've maxed out kind of what I'm doing by you know age 28 or 30 or something like that. So, for me I got my research…but in the other big piece of it is that I interact with all these students, and if I didn't ever connect with them or look for opportunities for me to grow, then there is a big part my job that would just feel like salt mines.

For these participants connecting with students added fun, growth, and meaning to an important part of their role as a faculty member. They felt it was part of their responsibilities as an academic at a university. Sam said it well, "So, well for me, that's why I'm in my job. I'm here because of students."

Related to interest: "There has to be a connection …in terms of area of interest" *(Bella)* Almost all of the faculty participants chose to tell their stories about a student who was related to the discipline where they resided as a faculty member. This made sense since connections are usually forged when two people share a common interest and because faculty tend to see students in their academic department more than other students. A few faculty felt it was a crucial part of the connection. When talking about working with one of the Nursing honors students she had been assigned, Bella stated,

> I decided to spend so much time on this particular student as I was attracted to how much passion and energy that she had. I tend to invest my time, more heavily, to those students who I personally deem aren't just going through the motions to get through.

Interest is also very important to Matthew who mainly works with students in his department of Sociology on continued research or students who are looking to go to graduate school or find a job in Sociology. He enjoys connecting with students around the skills they want to gain in Sociology, but also those who are "generally interested, as a human being, around the subject matter."

Comes from my background: "Oh, I think that is my upbringing." *(Molly)* When asked to make meaning of the connection they described with a student or where that desire comes from, a number of them referenced their family upbringing and/or a strong mentor in their background. Molly was very clear about what has influenced her and her desire to connect with people:

> It's just so my generation, I think, make sure that people like you . . .as a girl of the sixties and seventies. . .make sure people like you…it's just kind of was my upbringing. The

> message from my mom was, if you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all.

The messages from Molly's family have had a definite influence on the way she treats and seeks to interact with people. Charlie seeks to connect with students the way he does due to familial influence as well, "I come from a big family…my relationship with my brothers and sister and parents, if someone needed help, we would help them." Barry's heritage resides in Italy and he shares the same attitude of his parents – one of persistence and never giving up on people. William also discussed the influence of his parents on how he connects with students,

> When I was growing up, my parents were professors at T University, which is, majority, minority-first-in-the-family to go to college – people who didn't get a lot of good advice or were coming from families where they just didn't know what to do. And my mother wrote books on how to study in college and be successful and she ran a study skills and tutorial services and sort of through her, I got to know sort of the challenges that face students who, you know, they have plenty of ability, they just never had anybody sit down and tell them this is how it's supposed to go.

Numerous faculty also shared that they had mentors in their backgrounds who had been very influential in how they connected with students. Frank's PhD advisor and he became so close that his advisor officiated his wedding. Charlie shared a story about his PhD advisor staying up until 1am in the morning while the two of them talked in his office one night. Clearly, due to family influence or time spent with a former mentor, these participants had people in their lives who role modeled how important and valuable it is to make connections with others, including students. These faculty are now passing down the way they were brought up and/or taught to interact with students to the students they work with. Evidently, connection

encouraged, and continues to encourage, further connection for these participants who see experiencing connections with students as an embedded part of who they are.

Acknowledging Humanity and Lived Experience

The importance of acknowledging students as people, persons, or humans was referenced more than any of the other themes when interviewing the faculty participants about how they experience connection with students. Barbie articulated it well: "When we are asking students to learn about who they are and who they want to be …the deep stuff…it works better when there is connection, some human-to-human-yes-I-care-about-you connection."

Carrie also had a comment about being a "radically genuine" human. She told her students she did not get into a PhD program the first time she applied and referred to this as one of her "favorite failures." She added,

> I think that was surprising to them, but that glimpse of you as a human, I think, allows people to connect with you in a way that doesn't take up any more time – it just takes some tolerance for looking stupid.

What's in a name? A sub-theme that was repeatedly mentioned regarding acknowledging a student's humanity was knowing her name. It turns out there is a lot of power in a name. Kelly identified it as a top priority.

> And one of my priorities is learning everyone's names very quickly. I'm in social work, so makes sense. But it's also a way for me to immediately connect that name to the face in the classroom. And having that information is like the first level of connection because oftentimes I learn information that I don't think I would have had I not started there.

Charlie also makes learning students' names a priority to help establish connection.

> The other thing that helps is I try and learn everyone's name that I can. I might have to ask them a few times because there's a thousand going into the database in the first few weeks here, but when they come to office hours, I ask them. I write it down and then while they are asking each other questions, I'm sitting there quizzing myself, so that next time they come in, I can call them by name. I teach my TA's to do the same thing.

Genny showed me the composite pictures she takes of all her students during our interview. She writes their names underneath and then memorizes them while she is sitting in her office before she goes to teach class or hold a small group meeting. The student story she chose to share also illustrated how important she realized names are to connection,

> And I think what became apparent to me that what he needed was just the connection. I was a professor who knew him, knew his name because he was so introverted. I think there weren't any other professors for sure, probably any other adults, maybe not even peers on campus, who really knew him.

No other story about the power of knowing students' names impacted me more than a story Kelly told about a sophomore, honors, business student that took her honors social work class one semester.

> He kind of sat through class and he always did really well, but I thought he hated it or was amused by it or something. And at the end of the semester he said, 'you are the only person in my two years at State University who has ever called me by my name.' It makes me emotional. That meant the world to him. He said, I've been struggling so much with suicidal thoughts and all this stuff. I had no idea. I had no idea that if I hadn't taken the time to get to know his name, I don't know where he would be. I don't know if he would still be in school…

In the minds of the faculty who experience connection with students, learning a student's name is one of the key pieces of starting the connection. It acknowledges a student's humanity and is one that cannot be compromised.

Taking the time. Another aspect of acknowledging humanity when experiencing connection that participants brought up was taking the time for students. Barbie felt that time was essential when getting to know a student and forming a connection with her, especially since much of her teaching is done on-line:

> I really like the chance to do more extended work and spend time with students. They get to know me, I get to know them, and make, what I would call more of a real connection.

Molly believed time was crucial in the change in her student, "It's almost as if that time, that taking of time with her, that was the connection that needed to be made." Bella talked about how she takes time for a student who she has chosen to mentor and invest in:

> I took a lot of time to get to know what the student was really interested in and bring it down to a project she could do on a more reasonable level. There was a lot of mentoring involved, a lot of phone calls, a lot of face to face person, a lot of garnering outside resources like the supporting literature that could show her the value in what we were doing.

For some of the faculty it did not matter how much time a student needed; all that mattered was they were available to respond to the human need. Fiona once sat in a mental hospital for hours waiting for a student in crises to be admitted, so she could check on him after he had e-mailed her in the middle of the night to say he was thinking of taking his life. Gabby shared that she has been to the police station with a student and also sat in the emergency room

with a student until her mother was able to get there. She took her laptop and worked; she just wanted to ensure the student was not alone.

Other faculty also talked about how giving a student time through active listening was important. Molly mentioned how much the student in her story was affected by "my intentionality of listening." Charlie also believed that listening to his student was impactful and resulted in great success for the student. "I think that time I took, 30 minutes to listen to his story because he was struggling…I gave him a chance and it was an amazing transformation." These faculty knew that taking time and listening to students were ways to recognize them and send them the message that they were being seen, heard, and valued.

Giving voice and allowing choice. Acknowledging students' voices and giving them choices was another way that faculty identified experiencing connection. Tessa felt it was extremely important to give her a student a choice when he was having problems adjusting to college. Even though she knew about the situation ahead of time, she waited for him to bring it up. She gave him the option of taking a break from working in her lab and then the agency to choose when he wanted to renew his work in the lab. She told him "Absolutely, you can come back. Just tell when you're ready."

One of the ways Molly changed her interactions with students in class after her connection with a "prickly" student was by incorporating one-on-one's with every one of her students during the semester. "A couple of things that came out of my interactions or my connection with her was how important it is meeting with students one on one for me to hear their voices and for them to hear my voice." Barbie asks the students in her small group, "What's on your mind?" She feels it gives them a voice because "then they get to have the chance to lead."

Empathy, Vulnerability, and Flexibility. Besides references to acknowledging humanity, the ability of faculty to possess empathy when experiencing connection with a student was raised more than any other skill or characteristic. Many times, this was accomplished through a level of vulnerability the faculty were willing to embrace by sharing some of their own lived experiences with students. In particular, Frank talked a lot about his experiences as a student when he was in college:

> Here was this student, a sophomore or a junior at that time thinking about the things that he wanted to do with his career and that he was just another person. I had been in his shoes when I was young thinking about what I wanted to do and trying to find internships and all that kind of stuff. I don't think it was necessarily a thing that I sought out to do or that I was necessarily aware of when it was happening, but it was just, I guess, making that opportunity for connections where it was like OK, you know I am a trusted advisor or somebody that should be a person who can give you advice on your career, but I was also a 21-year-old kid, at some point too, and let's talk like actual human beings instead of professor/student.

Frank also shared that there were many problems at home when he was in college, so he didn't want to go home a lot. He almost transferred schools at one point. Frank remembers these things and feels it helps him relate to all of the different challenges students face today. He concluded this part of the interview with a heartfelt sentiment: "I try to be there, so they know that someone's there that cares about them more than just getting an A or B and moving on in the program." Kelly referred to sharing circumstances with students as well, "Sometimes I've said, I'm having a bad day. I'm sure you've had bad days. It's hard to be here today. I'm very honest

about that." Her vulnerability allows students to see beyond her role as a faculty member and realize that she struggles just as they do sometimes.

William's empathy comes from not doing very well academically when he was in college:

> When I was an undergrad, I was lazy. I mean there's no way around that. And my GPA was not that great. I sort of made up for it by double-majoring. And so, I had a ton of credits by the time I left, but my GPA was a disaster. And then the funny thing is I ended up teaching at P University for eight years. So, as I tell my students, there's no hole so deep that you can't dig out of it. I mean I always am very sort of accepting of students who aren't trying that hard cause I was that.

Gabby's background enables her to relate to students for a few reasons: "I came here an undergraduate student from a rural area. I was a first-generation college goer. I was scared to death. I'd never lived in the city before." Later in the interview, she explained how her ability to empathize also came from her current situation as a mother:

> The other thing I think of is if this was my child, what would I want somebody to do? And I ask myself that question all the time. If I'm working with somebody, if this is my child and my child's having this particular issue, do I want somebody to support that person?

Alan shared how important the empathy he had gain helped him in his new position as an administrator:

> I think, it's critical. I mean, being an administrator, you essentially effect the entire university in some way. Whatever little thing you're poking at, it can affect how students have to take their classes or the types of interactions they will have with an advisor or lots

of things. All the mechanics behind going through college. As an administrator, you have the ability to tweak and change that. So, it's incredibly important to have at least some kind of finger on the pulse of how students would really think about this change. And I think having had these experiences with students over and over again, there's multiple faces and personalities to draw from. It's, I think it feels at least that way that you can more, what would you call it, emphatically, try to understand it from their perspective, if you have had a lot of conversations around what they're doing in college.

Molly discussed how she needed empathy not only for herself, but the need for her students to develop a sense of empathy as well when connecting with them.

And so, putting yourself in another person's shoes, it's like you need to walk their life and you need to learn how to empathize. So that's something that I believe in full, wholeheartedly, and I think it's critically important for particularly, land grant universities to give students opportunities to walk in another person's shoes. We need to broaden our awareness, our own self-awareness, as I would say it builds our capacities for, well, wanting to do good in this world.

Because of their previous struggles and their understanding that students of today go through some very similar situations, a number of the participants mentioned wondering "how many students they had missed" connecting to or how they could better reach the students "in the middle." Charlie was afraid he had "missed millions" and Kelly thinks a lot about "all these sea of tens of thousands that were there for."

The ability to empathize with students has led some faculty to be more flexible with students as they have further developed an understanding of some of the demands and challenges of their lives outside of the classroom. Charlie is one of those faculty:

> I can't tell you how many times, someone comes up to me and something has happened, and they can't take the exam that day. I say, fine, take it tomorrow. They're so appreciative. It's not the end of the world that we're not doing it right now. And usually those people say, my mom was in the hospital because she attempted suicide - something crazy that they didn't want to talk about and then they reveal it to you, and I say there are more important things than this class sometimes; my colleagues don't realize that.

Genny and Frank commented on how their work with graduate students has changed as a result of becoming more connected and empathetic to undergraduate students. Genny appreciates them more, has become more forgiving, and now views messing up as opportunities for learning. She also realized that after doing the serious, driven, life-threatening work she and her graduate students do, "as years have gone by, that part of my personality had gotten too etched." Since she has been reminded how much undergraduates need to explore through her work with the second-year program, she now acknowledges that, sometimes, being "in that space of uncertainty is really powerful." She now runs her graduate class in a different way with less structure and gives the students space and time to think and talk through things. Frank shared that after connecting with undergraduates, he also tends to be more understanding of his graduate students and has been reminded of the great amount of stress all students undergo.

Reciprocity in the Relationship

Although all faculty participants interviewed were open to experiencing connection with any student they interacted with, most of them also expressed the need for some type of reciprocity to exist in the relationship for connection to be achieved. Tessa spoke to the need for trust in the connection between a faculty member and student.

Another area where I feel I really experience connection is when the trust is there from both sides to kind of open up and really attack a problem or provide someone details you might not otherwise give to someone you don't know as well.

Bella alluded to this as well when sharing how she and a student developed a bond over a common experience they discovered they shared. They came to trust when another regarding the particular situation:

I don't remember exactly how it came up, but the student shared that his father also died of cancer, but when he was younger. So then at that point, when he would email me and ask me if something about the class, he would, you know, ask how things are going with my father and my father's health. We would talk about that and the stress of having a parent who's dying of cancer and what that was like.

For Barry and Alan, the reciprocity in the relationship occurred when the student gained something from them, but they also learned something from the student.

Alan: So, there were points where I'd provide information, input, help, direction pointers, but many times she would come back with things that I didn't know, things that helped me understand how she wanted to approach the problem. And I think that was probably one of the first sort of changes in a relationship like that with a student where she then went from being the student that I was going teach, to someone that I worked with and where it was very much a mutual sort of, we. We discovered what she wanted to do and how that aligned with what I could help her do.

Barry: It's really, a two-way street, of course, because a student, hopefully, gains knowledge by interacting with me, but I gain satisfaction in seeing these young people learn and get excited occasionally about the things they do.

Bella and Sam suggested that the connection was also stronger when the student took initiative and was enthusiastic about the topic. It was easier to make the connection when that happened. According to Sam, "I mean some reach out more to me than others, and that usually means for a better connection." Bella was inclined to invest more in the connection with a student if she felt they were really ready:

> I intentionally invest more time in those students that I do see that passion, particularly work ethic - those students who are willing to go beyond and seem to be willing to invest the same amount of time and effort as I have in the process.

The reciprocity also existed due to better communication between the faculty member and student as well. In addition, when trust, enthusiasm and investment were shared between the faculty member and student, the relationships turned into friendships and continued for many of them. Many examples of these lasting relationships were shared throughout the participant profiles.

An Opportunity for Growth and Development

The second research question I explored was how experiencing connection with a student or students informed or influenced a faculty member's role as a faculty member? Experiencing connection with a student or students created opportunities for growth and development, not only for the student but also for the faculty member. Faculty members gained an awareness of students around topics they had never considered before. As a result of this awareness, many of them changed their perspectives and, sometimes, behavior and were also more cognizant of how students experienced college.

Awareness of Student Needs and Issues. As a result of making connections with students in the second-year program, Molly realized the importance of students' developing

personally and developing a sense of self and "interiority." Because of this, she has started to "embed some of those things into her curriculum," including more reflection and mindfulness activities. She has also, due to some of her own personal experiences, become more aware of students with mental health issues and the struggles they are facing. Quite a few of the other participants talked about working with students who were struggling with depression and anxiety as well. This was particularly true for Fiona after developing a connection with a student who ended up being suicidal. She reflected:

> Yeah, I think I am much more aware now of what struggles students might have in that they may be thinking about taking their lives, ending their lives when things get really bad. And, also, I think I'm much more aware too, of the symptoms – what to be looking out for. And also asking those questions before getting an e-mail in the middle of the night.

Ken's awareness of student issues was similar to this. He also has started to look for signs and pointed out that "it's very easy for this to be a job where you go in, you do your job, and you walk out, and you try to leave it." He is strives not to do that. He has also paid more attention to the stress many of his students are under:

> I asked them, give me a couple of words that describe you right now. And stress kept coming up. And I'm like, wow, you hear this in the news, you hear about they're anxious, they're anxious, they're stressed. But almost to a person, they all mentioned it. It was really was eye opening, not only for that group, but then I'm thinking about it when I go teach my big lecture class, and I'm thinking about it when I go home and talk to my own kids.

Barbie talked about becoming more aware of the challenges students with disabilities might face after attending a training to help her connect with and understand students better:

> Recently, I attended a training to learn more about working with students with disabilities and just helping me to be more aware of those things and realizing things that I was doing. So, for example, that strategy of using an image and then we say, let's talk about this. Well, blind person can't see that image, or you might be visually impaired in some way.

Other faculty learned strategies to help them connect with students after experiencing a connection with just one student. Faculty mentioned learning about the value of on-on-one meetings with students and how helpful it can to believe in students' abilities and encourage them more.

Student Success/Faculty Pride. Another area where faculty experienced growth and development as a result of experiencing connection with a student was realizing that when they took a chance on a student, even though they may have been hesitant initially, that student usually exceeded their expectations and achieved great success. Many of them went on to get higher graduate degrees or win awards. Bella and Matthew shared their learning,

> *Bella:* I think it comes back to having the positive experience, knowing that I did a little bit more to help that particular student and, in return, to see all the things that she was able to accomplish. The sense of pride that I took really helped me know that that approach is probably a good one - one that I will probably try again - that it was worth the time and effort that was involved.
>
> *Matthew:* I think now, I'm a little bit more open and optimistic about how well students can do and that they can develop an interest in [the subject], so I try to really emphasize

that. I think from a teaching perspective, it's helped think about strategies for overcoming initial disinterest or this is really hard, and I don't like it.

Barriers to Connection

As faculty reflected upon and shared their thoughts on how experiencing connection with students influenced or informed their roles as faculty members, their frustrations with circumstances that caused barriers to creating connections surfaced as well.

University Structure. The structure of a research institution such as State University was mentioned by many of the faculty participants. Class size was a barrier that was commonly referenced. Fiona commented, "In the classroom I try to get to know everybody's name and again, it's easy to do that when it's a smaller class. When I have 70 students, it's hard." Charlie talked about the challenge of making a "big class feel small" when trying to connect with students. He also commented about the size of the university overall, "They [students] just get lost in the machine of State University." Barbie added, "The size of the institution in the eyes of the student body is, I think, a big challenge."

The reality that faculty give grades as part of a university structure was brought up by quite a few faculty as well. Barbie talked about how this gave faculty members a lot of power and could be a barrier to connection:

> Inside the classroom, as the instructor or faculty member, I have a lot of power. I am very aware of that power dynamic and that it also pervades the co-curricular realms as well. I'm not good at being the one that has the power of the grade.

Alan agreed,

> Well, the classroom is very driven by a certain power dynamic, to use a very fancy word. There is the sense, I think even if I try to be a casual collegial, there's always the sense of

> I will be giving you a grade. Most students I would say will interact in a particular way because they know their grades depend on it.

Alan's explanation implies that connections can be inauthentic with students because, at times, they are just acting a particular way because they think it will help them get a higher grade in a class.

Expectations of Tenured Faculty. A second barrier to experiencing connections with students was found in the expectations and demands placed on faculty members at a research I institution. Some of the participants felt they had the support of their department and/or college to make connections with students, but over half of the participants felt that they received mixed messages from their departments, colleges, and/or the university as a whole. Fiona felt that the university only gave "lip service" to supporting student connection. Tessa and Frank, both from the College of Medicine, agreed that the message writing and being awarded grants was the most important part of their faculty roles, not student connection, repeatedly came through loud and clear. Frank added, "My role is 75% research and 25% teaching or service, but I definitely think that it is more 99% research and 1% teaching and service most of the time." Four of the faculty shared that they had won teaching awards and that the dean of their colleges had come to the presentation, but nothing more had been mentioned about it going forward. The university heralded the accomplishment at the time, but faculty felt that was probably only for the public's sake to boost the university's reputation. Kelly commented, "there's this weird support that's very public," and Barbie commented that she always feels the need to "write about something shiny for the people above" when she is filling out her review for her supervisor. Charlie also commented:

> They're in my annual report, but no one has ever said, like great job with that. No one, no one cares about that. Everyone cares about how many grants did I get and how many papers were published last year, but I also want to make sure that I satisfy some of requirements and keep them happy, so that in the future I can go back to doing the things that I like to do more.

In his mind, connecting with students is the most important aspect of his role, "It is not required in any way, but the time you invest with the students is probably what we are here to do. State University is that it should be 'Students First.'"

Charlie is not the only faculty who referenced the promotion and tenure process being tied to annual reports. Alan talked about how it affected his connection with students in the early part of his process:

> During that time I was under the tenure clock and everything I did needed it to have an output, and I knew the time was so limited and unless I could see that something came out in the other end that I could put my name on, I wouldn't be able to spend too much time on it.

He continued his explanation and commented on why he believes junior faculty need to watch how much they focus on student connection:

> Because they're junior faculty, they need to focus on getting their stride, getting through the tenure process and not being too distracted by these other kinds of things. It sounds horrible, but that's there.

Kelly has received strong messages about what she is supposed to be focusing on as well, and it is not connecting with students:

> It was pretty evident early on when I got here that research is number one, explicitly or implicitly. The tone is sort of like spend the most time on research and the least amount of time on service and then do a good enough job teaching. Don't get involved with service, which would be like heading a student organization or being an advisor. Be careful about independent studies and taking people on unless it's a PhD student and they're going to get publications.

Carrie made the reality of the situation for faculty very clear, "They don't have time and … it's not reinforced. When I turn in my annual information for review, no one says – how many people do you feel like you made their lives better?"

Societal Circumstances. There are also realities of the society we live in today that create barriers for faculty to experience connection. I previously relayed how faculty were aware that mental health issues can get in the way of experiencing connection with students. So many of the stories they shared included comments about how the student they were talking about were depressed, anxious, or both and a few even referenced a student being suicidal.

Another barrier faculty alluded too was their heightened sensitivity to not offend concerning gender issues and/or diversity issues. Sam referred to feeling the need to "keep his door cracked" in case someone might be concerned that he was getting too nosy with a student. Carrie commented that she always felt the need to meet with a student in a public place if they were having lunch because having lunch with just one student might seem like a "no-no." And Tessa was very careful not to bring up anything about a male student struggling with a personal issue until he brought it up to her; she did not want to be viewed as invading his privacy.

Regarding diversity, Barbie learned that putting students who were of the same minority in separate groups in a class was actually the worst thing a faculty member could do to those

students. She shared "My empathy went, oh, I'm so sorry. I have done that." These issues are definitely ones the faculty needed to be aware of, but I got the sense that, at times, it also made them hesitant to interact or connect with students.

Student social media use was another barrier a number of faculty participants implied can affect experiencing connection with students. Ken expressed how difficult technology can make trying to connect, "I think it's harder now. It's just everything. I think social media, everything's filmed, everything's photographed, everything's recorded - the whole relationship…" Frank referred to the challenges social media creates as well as he talked about students dealing with all the "stuff" they have to in today's society

> It's crazy because now I feel like things are even more complicated with social media and everything that's going on. It's just a completely different world. I can't even imagine what most of these college students are going through these days.

Personal Reservations. Lastly, faculty participants shared that they think many of their colleagues do not seek to experience connection with students because they do not feel they have time or are scared. Carrie addressed the time concern in her interview:

> At the same time, I completely understand that people who have other things on their plates and aren't supported for doing these things cannot make time for that. And that people buy out of classes, especially big undergrad classes, it's a lot of work – it's a lot of - it's asking your faculty to give something for nothing, basically, while raises are going down and parking is going up, and other things are happening. So, you're asking them to keep giving. So, I get that, and I just feel stuck in that dialectic.

Genny talked about the fear factor aspect that can be seen as a barrier. She does not believe that some faculty do not get involved with students because they don't care; it is actually out of fear.

> When you sit down and you talk to them …what they mean is, I don't know how to do this and it scares me and, but when you sit down and you talk to them and you give them skills, you find out they really do care about students. A lot of these people are in the science world, they would take their science skills and go someplace and earn more money. And the reason they're at universities is because they care about students and they want to see the next generation become scientists that do care about students. They're afraid of the interpersonal world because no one's ever taken the time to sit down and teach them and it is frightening. Okay, we can do something about that.

Ken understood the fear issue too, but also related it to faculty feeling like they need to be perfect when interacting and connecting with students.

> It is sort of jumping into the water. You've got to be willing to the feel comfortable that, okay, I can do this. It may not be perfect, but if I'm thoughtful about the way I design it and I am thoughtful about my engagement on it, and my intentions are for the right intentions, I can do this.

Barbie also felt that perfection should not be an issue when connecting with students. She would tell fellow faculty:

> It's going to be awkward and that's okay. It's awkward. You're an expert, but you're not an expert here. They're the experts, and it's their experience, so show you want to learn from them too. It's going to make it a lot easier.

Alan shared his own reservations, but also how perseverance has helped him overcome them. Because of this, he has empathy for his colleagues who are hesitant to get more involved with students:

> I sort of see myself somewhere in between the faculty member who has no clue and no social ability at all to understand students and the faculty who has this amazing connection that they almost are mind readers and can immediately relate to students. I'm neither of those. I feel I'm somewhere in between. I mentioned I've been doing service learning. I have done undergrad research; I'm doing study abroad. I've done internship coordination and the second-year program. None of them have felt like I've really hit like the five-stars, slammed-on, this-is-my-thing, this is where I excel. I always feel like a struggling median type of person that tries and tries to be better, but just the constant feel as though I'm not getting through – no, this is not working – it didn't go so well this year. In a way, that's something that I see as a strength for me now because if I try to push faculty to do service learning or do research with students, or going into the second year program, I think I can relate to some of that sort of feeling of, no, I can't do this – this is hard. Yeah, I know it. I've lived it. It's still hard. It doesn't come easy to me. So I think it's, in a way, a strength for me to have some type of leadership over these programs so that they are not exclusionary and actually feels open to even the faculty who feels that this may not be totally their personality, but still feel that, yeah, I can probably do this.

Faculty who experience connection with students seem to have embraced the idea that empathy, vulnerability and expertise can all exist together. Sometimes it seems that faculty do not think that vulnerability and expertise can go hand in hand. This may be particularly true in a university setting and the messages they receive. Very little to no recognition is given for being

vulnerable and connecting with students but much is given for expertise and knowledge in a faculty member's field in the form of grants, tenure, and promotion.

Considering the barriers that exist at a research I institution in regards to size and expectations of faculty; along with the barriers that exist within society as individuals struggle with identity, mental health issues, and the challenges of social media; plus personal reservations a faculty member may have, it is no wonder that many faculty do not choose to pursue deeper connections with students. The faculty participants of this study were well aware of these barriers and articulated them in a variety ways, but their commitment to connecting with students still took priority over these barriers that they faced and continue to face every day.

The Essence of Faculty-student Connection

What is the essence of Faculty-student connection for faculty who experience connection with students? After interviewing and co-constructing meaning with these 17 faculty participants, it is goes beyond casual conversation and is more than just a small part of their roles as faculty members at an academic institution. For these faculty members connection with students is an integral part of who they are due to their values and upbringing, as well as an extension of who has been influential in their own lives. They see connection as a caring, intentional process that involves learning students' names, finding commonalities, and then creating opportunities to actively listen to the students to discover who they are, who they want to be, and how as a faculty member, they might help the students reach their personal and/or professional goals. The process also necessitates vulnerability along with an ability to exercise a great amount of empathy on the part of the faculty member. Ideally, throughout this process, the student reciprocates the connection in some way for that is when the deepest level of connection is achieved and, many times, results in an on-going and meaningful relationship that lasts

between the two of them beyond the student's college experience. The faculty member also benefits in the process and experiences her own growth and development by learning more about student issues and needs, which only adds to their capacity for empathy with students, and discovering the satisfaction that comes with seeing their efforts come to fruition with each student who achieves success in one way or another. The pride they exhibit for their students' is another example of their caring nature and their willingness to connect with and work with students to enable them to reach their highest potential.

The way these faculty members described experiencing connection with students does not necessarily align with many of the priorities or the culture of a research I institution. In fact, the structure of this type of institution was articulated as a barrier to connection by the faculty participants. Despite the frustrations and challenges this barrier and other barriers such as the expectations of a faculty member at a research I institution, societal issues, and a faculty member's own personal reservations bring, for these faculty participants, pursuing connections with students is still the most important aspect of their roles as faculty members and their existence as human beings. All of them would say that overcoming the barriers is continually worth the effort and the outcomes not only for their students, but also for themselves.

Connection with students is how these faculty members thrive and flourish in the academic environment. It is what gives them meaning and purpose and defines a large part of who they are in their roles as faculty members. Faculty members such as the ones I interviewed for this study are what makes a college education valuable. They are the heart and soul of a university. Those of us in academia are better because of faculty like them who, despite the barriers, have the courage to live out who they are as they intentionally make connections with students a priority each and every day.

Summary

In this chapter, I have attempted to capture the most significant aspects of the experiences of seventeen faculty with the phenomenon of how they experience connection with students. With the two primary research questions of this study as a framework, I have explored how faculty who make connections with students experience that connection and how this experience informed or influenced their role as a faculty member. Using a hermeneutical phenomenological approach to the design of the study, data collection, and analysis, I have investigated the participants' experience as it was lived and have provided rich descriptions directly from our conversations. Through listening to interviews numerous times and writing and rewriting, I reduced approximately ten hours of recorded interview data to the five most essential themes that emerged from the faculty stories and reflections: An Expression of Who I Am; Acknowledging Humanity and Lived Experience; Reciprocity in the Relationship; Growth and Development; and Barriers to Connection. As I listened to the recordings, engaged in numerous close readings of the transcripts in parts and in whole, and broke the transcripts apart in search of meaning units, my understanding and realization of the phenomenon only deepened and became more meaningful. As the faculty shared their stories, realizations and reflections about their personal connections with students over the years, my heart shared their emotion and I struggled not to smile too much or cry, especially when they too were struggling with emotions during the interviews.

For many of these faculty, they had never been asked to talk about and reflect on how or why they experienced connection with students and how it impacted their role as a faculty member at the university. The evidence of how they experienced connection was in their stories. I was touched by their sincerity, honored that they entrusted me with their stories, and grateful for the interest and honesty they expressed. These seventeen faculty members not only

reaffirmed for me how valuable Faculty-student connection is on a college campus, but also taught me that connection can happen in a variety of ways and that one form of connection is not necessarily better than another. All that really matters is that the student feels the connection and benefits from it. I have no doubt they will continue seeking connections with students. For most of them, it is not just what they do, it is who they are.

With the essence of Faculty-student connection and the abundance of supporting descriptions from which it was derived presented in this chapter, I will next turn to a concluding chapter that considers the findings in the framework of existing literature and discusses implications for theory and practice.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This study was designed to explore two research questions. First, How faculty who make connections with students experience that connection? And second, How does this experience inform or influence their role as a faculty member? Through a cyclical process of moving through the transcripts, identifying meaning units, and revealing key themes, I was able to craft a description of the essence of how faculty experience connection with students. In this chapter, I will first present a highlighted overview of the key findings examined in Chapter Four. I will then explore how my understanding of the participants' experiences and resulting findings, relate back to the literature and conceptual framework presented in Chapter Two. I will address the way in which the findings align, and occasionally conflict, with those presented in the extant literature on the topic. Considering both my findings, and related research, I will discuss the need for and implications of providing increased efforts to encourage and assist faculty in experiencing connections with students. Specifically, I will offer recommendations for practice to address the concerns and share the successes the participants revealed in their experiences. I will also recommend specific strategies, derived directly from the faculty participants themselves, on how to create and build connections with students. I will then explore several of the questions that emerged while conducting my data analysis that could be future research studies. While the spirit of a phenomenological study requires a sustained focus on the original research questions while moving through the data, these additional questions could inform future research to better understand and sustain Faculty-student connection. Finally, I will address the limitations of the research design of this study.

Summary of Key Findings

The summary of key findings, the discussion, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research outlined in this chapter are based on the findings outlined in Chapter Four. The following provides a summary of the key findings from this study, outlined in alignment with the five themes presented in the previous chapter.

An Expression of Who I Am

The first theme serves to represent the explanation I heard most often throughout the interviews in that many faculty participants found connection with people, specifically with students in the world of academia, as an *intrinsic value* that they held and a *natural part* of who they were as a person. For many of them a shared *common interest* with a student was a key part of this and/or a desire to help students. When asked how they made sense of this connection, participants spoke of *influences from their backgrounds* including *family relations*, having *parents* but also being parents themselves, and having strong, *caring mentors*. Another way they made sense of the desire to connect was that they saw it as an *integral part of their faculty role* at a university.

Acknowledging Humanity and Lived Experience

This second theme is also derived from faculty repeatedly mentioning how experiencing connection with a student was a matter of *valuing them as people or humans* who have needs and their own unique, lived experiences. The first level of connection is being intentional in learning a student's *name*. Following this faculty need to exhibit a sense of *being approachable*, be willing to *take time* with their students, *actively listen* to their students during that time, and allow the student to *share her voice* within that time as well. *Empathy* also plays an enormous role in demonstrating that faculty value students and their experiences. Many faculty spoke of

remembering when they were in college and the different challenges they faced and how those challenges play a crucial role in how they interact with and connect with students today. The willingness to *be authentic and vulnerable* with the students plays a large part in the connection and also helps faculty realize the need to *be flexible* with a student if something concerning is happening outside the classroom.

Reciprocity in the Relationship

In the third theme the need for *reciprocity* in the relationship is revealed. Reciprocity allows for the relationship to be more productive and successful. It is important for *trust, communication, and investment* to be reciprocal. If students are not willing to reciprocate these elements of a relationship, it is much harder for connection to be achieved. When faculty experience connection there is a *commitment* from them to help the student in some way, but faculty also desire and hope for a commitment from the student as well. This might take the form of *interest, passion, and/or work ethic* on the part of the student.

Growth and Development

A fourth theme of growth and development speaks more to how experiencing connection influenced or informed the role of faculty member for the participants. Participants grew by *gaining awareness* of various student issues and circumstances that helped them be better faculty members both in and out of the classroom. Also, they were able to see *success gained* by their students as a result of their efforts, which enabled them to be willing to continue to *take chances* on students and help them grow and development where before they may have hesitated to spend time with a student they were unsure of.

Barriers to Connection

The fifth and final theme also speaks to how experiencing connection with students affects the faculty role**,** but not in a positive way. This theme reveals how many *barriers* there are to Faculty-student connection at a university. Participants shared how the *structure of the university* in its large *size* and demand for the *assigning of grades* provided a barrier to connection. *Expectations of faculty* also discourage connection as many times little support or reward is given to faculty who connect with students. Instead tenured faculty are expected to spend time on activities that boost their reviews for *promotion and tenure* such as writing and publishing papers or obtaining grants. Circumstances in *society* also can serve as a barrier to connection with students such as students experiencing mental health crises, heightened sensitivity to diversity and gender issues, and the prevalence of social media in students' lives. Finally, a faculty member's own *personal reservations* can discourage him from connection with a student. Some faculty feel they do not know how to connect with students, are afraid, or feel they will be inadequate at connecting with students perfectly.

Findings in Light of the Literature

Revisiting Cox's Typology of Faculty-student Interaction

In Chapters One and Two, I explained that I would be utilizing Cox's (2011) Typology of Faculty-student Interaction, specifically his category of Personal Interaction, to explore how faculty who make connections with students experience that connection. I intentionally sought faculty who felt they had experienced personal interaction with a student or students. After interviewing my participants, I would argue that the categories are not quite as definitive as Cox (2011) determined. I think all of the faculty participants felt "a shift" in the relationship with the student they told their story about and it helped them further connect with that student, but just

because the shift happened did not always mean the relationship progressed to more casual, personal conversations as Cox (2011) asserted happens in the Personal Interaction level. I also found disparity in his assertation that undergraduate research projects would be characterized in the Functional Interaction category. On the contrary, seven of the faculty participants in my study shared a story about a student who they had developed a deep connection with that happened as a result of them being in the lab with the faculty member. The other level I would suggest is a little inaccurate, based on my study, is the Mentoring level. I think the description Cox (2011) provided was fairly accurate, but I think I would split the level into Academically Focused Mentoring, Personal Mentoring, and All-In Mentoring and put it on a continuum. There were faculty participants in my study that were mainly interested in mentoring students on academic or career-related issues only, some fluctuated between academic mentoring and personal mentoring, and then some were happy to mentor a student no matter what was needed.

The purpose of my study was not to create a new typology, so I am not going to attempt to identify entirely new levels. I do think Cox's typology provided a nice framework and place to start for my study, but I would assert that when connection begins in a Faculty-student relationship, is it much more fluid process than Cox (2011) implied.

The Value of the Faculty-student Relationship

In Chapter Two I discussed many of the characteristics that students desired for faculty to possess in order for them to experience positive relationships with faculty. My study revealed that many of the same characteristics were mentioned by faculty as well. Gruber, Reppel, & Voss, (2010) discussed the importance of rapport building and how this could positively affect students' behavior in the classroom. Many faculty shared about the importance of rapport building with their students by learning their names, taking time for them, finding a common

interest, giving voice to their concerns, establishing trust, and exhibiting empathy towards their students. A few faculty also specifically mentioned a behavior change in the classroom for the student they focused on and reported that these students were more successful in the classroom after they established connections with them.

Groccia (2018) asserted that faculty engagement with students was multi-dimensional and included learning within and beyond the classroom. Many of the faculty participants shared that their interactions with the student they told a story about started in the classroom but then became deeper once they started interacting outside the classroom. A number of the faculty also implied that the connection with students is much easier outside the classroom because it is not tied to grades or the expectation for the student to perform. This was is in line with Cuseo's (2018) statement that Faculty-student engagement happens more readily outside the classroom when it is less evaluative and can happen more one-on-one. The value of one-on-one meetings in enabling the faculty member to connect more deeply with students was discovered by a number of the participants.

I also referenced the Gallup-Purdue (2014) study in Chapter Two that discussed the value of students having a mentor in order to be successful, not only academically, but also in their overall well-being. The results of my study have certainly shown this to be the case as many faculty shared stories of students they connected with who have gone on to receive graduate degrees and awards and to have successful careers. Many of their stories focused on students who seemed to be struggling at the beginning of their college careers such as first-generation students, students from rural backgrounds, and students of color. These faculty took the time to develop these students and help them thrive.

Regarding students of color, I want to note that in the upcoming limitations section of this study I share that all of the faculty participants I interviewed were white. Even though one faculty participant identified that the student story she shared was about a black student, it could be assumed that many of the stories participants shared about connection with students were with white students. Paying particular attention to building connection between faculty and minoritized students is essential. It is important for an educator to find ways to make a classroom feel comfortable and safe for all students, but this is even more important when the classroom is very diverse (Valerio, 2001). Chavez (2007) revealed that some ethnic-minoritized students find it difficult to learn because the way material is presented in the classroom does not fit with their cultural norms, learning styles or personal perspectives.

A number of the faculty participants in this study valued and mentioned the importance of vulnerability and authenticity when connecting with students, and although the research is limited, positive correlations have been found between teacher self-disclosure/vulnerability and learning when working with multiculturalism and some minority student populations (Cutri & Whiting, 2015; Linder et al, 2015). Linder et al (2015) conducted a study, using a Critical Race Theory framework, that focused on how students of color experienced faculty when discussions focused on race and racism or racial microaggressions occurred in the classroom. The study found that when faculty created inclusive classrooms through authenticity, vulnerability, and validation, students felt more comfortable in the classroom, were more willing to participate and ask questions, and their feelings of marginalization were minimized. This differed from how they had felt in previous classroom experiences. Cook-Sather and Agu (2013) also suggested using students of color as consultants in the classroom to assist faculty in better understanding effective ways to connect with students of color who were a part of their classes.

Barriers to Faculty-student Connection

The barriers listed in the literature in Chapter Two were consistent with the barriers faculty participants discussed as well. Regarding messages about faculty roles and expectations, the views faculty shared regarding mixed messages from the university, their colleges, and departments was in alignment with Arreola's (2003) study that reported many times faculty feel overwhelmed by the number of roles they are asked to fulfill. Faculty in the study also discussed that no rewards are given for Faculty-student connection, which Chory and Offstein (2017) found as well. Finally, Chen (2015) found that research is considered the most important role of a faculty member when on the tenure track at a research I institution and faculty participants affirmed the truth of this through many of the comments they made. Based on the remarks of 3 participants who wondered if they should be at a smaller university, it seems that research I institutions might even make it more challenging for a faculty member who seeks connection with a student to do so. One participant implied that she felt she had to deny or ignore that part of her while working to achieve tenure.

Several faculty participants also mentioned how the role of social media in student's lives can be a barrier to Faculty-student connection. Research reviewed in Chapter Two by Espinoza (2012) reported that students in this generation want faculty to take time to build connections and Turkle (2016) and Twenge (2017) confirmed that social media is getting in the way of allowing faculty to do that. They, along with Rallis (1994), also reiterated the value and need for more empathy in society.

Empathy was a constant theme in this study. Brown (2018) stressed that "empathy is at the heart of connection – it is the circuit board for leaning into the feelings of others, reflecting back a shared experience of the world, and reminding them that they are not alone" (p. 163).

Faculty participants recognized the value empathy played in their connection with students and provided many examples of why they feel it helps them in their relationships with students as they actively listen to their feelings and support them in their challenges. Ideas that are also in alignment with the research (Brown, 2012; Cotton & Wilson, 2006).

The last barrier discussed by faculty participants in Chapter Two, personal reservations, resonated with the literature as well. Einarson and Clarkberg (2004) had found that faculty do not pursue Faculty-student connection because it is not a part of their core beliefs, and they do not possess the interpersonal knowledge and abilities to form connections with students. I am not sure if this is completely accurate, but my study did show that there is some truth to this as many of the participants felt that connecting with students was simply part of who they were, what they valued, and how they lived their lives. Clearly, the faculty in my study sought connection because it was an intrinsic value of theirs. Brown (2012) says that as human beings we are hard-wired for connection. Despite this, there are still many faculty who choose not to pursue connections with students.

Another reason faculty do not seek connection with students might also be due to their lack of knowing how (Einarson & Clarkberg, 2004). This is in concert with the last barrier the faculty participants identified as personal reservations. They felt their colleagues felt unskilled (Golde & Pribbenow, 2000) and/or feared being vulnerable with students (Brown, 2012) even though research has shown that vulnerability can allow for meaningful education and enlightening experiences (Brown, 2009) and helps establish trust (Brown, 2017), which faculty in the study shared as well. Unfortunately, research 1 universities do very little, if anything to encourage these types of skills since the focus is so much on research productivity (Fairweather,

1993; Chen, 2015). This is unfair since there are faculty, like those in my study, who do so much more and should be recognized for it (Gentry & Stokes, 2015).

Finally, the faculty participants in this study were from a variety of colleges and departments which does not coincide with Cox's (2011) assertion that more humanities folks are interested in connecting with students. Granted, this was a small sample, but this, again, supports the research that says faculty get involved based on their core beliefs and interpersonal knowledge and abilities (Einarson & Clarkberg, 2004).

Fostering Faculty-student Connection

Pattison, Hale, and Gowans (2011) developed categories of behaviors as a result of a study with faculty. Three out of the 4 were in line with what the faculty participants in my study shared. Commonalities included affirming students, taking time for them, and the need for good communication. Einarson and Clarkberg (2004) advocated for more specific how to's for getting faculty more connected with students, not just sharing with them the reasons why connection needs to happen. I will provide a list of how to's, derived directly from faculty, in the implications section.

The majority of the faculty in the study made connections with the students in their stories through a high impact practice activity such as undergraduate research (Wolf, 2018) or a common learning experience such as a second year program (Pitstick, 2018), but some also indicated that service-learning experiences (McKay & Estrella, 2008) and study abroad opportunities had helped them experience connection with students. Learning communities in residence halls have also shown to be a high impact practice that encourages Faculty-student connection (Healea & Ribera, 2014) but none of the faculty in the study mentioned involvement in a residence hall beyond doing one-time programs.

Turning Back to the Theoretical Framework

Chapter Two also included a description of the theoretical framework used for this study. The theories of feminist pedagogy, particularly the theory of an ethic of care, and adult development theory provided a theoretical framework that suggested a focus on caring was essential in the Faculty-student relationship.

Four of the six tenets of feminist pedagogy (Webb, Allen, & Walker, 2002) were articulated by the faculty participants in this study: reformation of the relationship between professor and student, empowerment, privileging individual voice, and respect for the diversity of personal experience. A number of the faculty discussed how their connection to the student in the story they shared was different from the interactions they have in the classroom with students. The classroom implies a power dynamic with a student where the faculty member is the authority figure over the student. There is a sense of hierarchy whereas the relationship between the student and faculty member when they experience connection is reformed and consists of sharing power. This might happen when working on research together, when working through a personal problem, or when figuring out a project. Because of this change in the relationship the student is empowered and feels comfortable sharing her individual voice as the faculty member and student are working together. All of this demonstrates that the faculty member respects the student's diversity of personal and lived experience.

Consistent with Noddings (1984) theory of an ethic of care, it was evident that all the faculty in this study cared about the students with which they experienced connection. They saw themselves as the one caring and the student as the one being cared for. Many of the participants reiterated, in their stories about their students and when asked to provide suggestions to faculty

colleagues about how to better connect with students, how important it was to be available to students and find the best way to meet their needs, one of the characteristics of an ethic of care. Faculty participants also commented that it was much better for the relationship when the student reciprocated in some way and was receptive and responsive to their efforts, which also is part of the theory of an ethic of care (Owens & Ennis, 2005). An ethic of care requires three things from an educator 1) engrossment, being open to feelings of the student; 2) commitment, seeking understanding and a sincere desire to be a part of a student's life; and 3) a shift of motivation away from the self and onto the student; a taking on of the student's perspective to better understand her motivation (Owens & Ennis, 2005) in order to provide resources for her future while wanting the best possible future for her. Throughout my interviews with faculty, it was apparent they were committed to listening to students' feelings, practicing empathy and honoring their lived experiences, and doing what they could to help the students figure out who they wanted to be, what they wanted to do, and connecting them to others who could help them achieve their future careers and goals.

In relation to this theoretical framework and its incorporation of adult development theory, the population of faculty that I interviewed were tenured faculty in what Cytrynbaum, Lee, and Wadner (1982) termed mid-life for a faculty member, those who were in their mid-30's to mid-late 50's. This also coincides with Erikson's (1982) theory of psychosocial development in which he deems much of the persons in this age range having a basic virtue of care, which was evident in how the faculty participants spoke of their students. Karpiak's (1996) study of faculty in mid-life also resonated with many of the thoughts and feeling expressed by the faculty participants: feeling like teaching was an undervalued part of their role; the university had little interest in their actual interests as administrators were not in touch with the needs and concerns

of the faculty; and lack of trust in the tenure and promotion process but acknowledging the reality of it. All of these themes were found in my study with mid-life faculty as well. Karpiak also showed that mid-career faculty were seeking relationship. Again, many of the faculty in my study also exemplified this as they shared how important experiencing connection and developing relationships were to them.

This theoretical framework provided a valuable lens to affirm that mid-life, tenured faculty in this study adopt many of the tenets of feminist pedagogy, care about connecting with students, and value the richness it adds to their experience as faculty members. They realize that this is not a part of their role that is required or rewarded but their intrinsic desire to connect and care is what inspires them to continue to practice an ethic of care on a continual basis despite the lack of recognition and reward. I think the words of one of the participants would resonate with many of them, "It is just who I want to be."

Implications and Recommendations for Theory and Practice

I embarked upon this study as a result of the years I spent hearing from faculty who were a part of the program I worked with talk about the new understandings they were gaining about students and how it was influencing how they connected with students in and out of the classroom. The importance of this study is in how its findings can be used to inform intentional practice by professionals in student affairs and academic affairs to best support faculty who are working in the programs and initiatives we coordinate outside the classroom, but also how we can be more purposeful in helping students who are in need of connection find those faculty mentors who are interested in connecting with them and in helping them be successful throughout their college experience and beyond. This study will also provide a specific "how to" list, derived from the faculty participants of this study, for any faculty member who is striving to

find ways to better connect with students. Below, I present several implications and recommendations for practice based on the findings of this study.

Change the Dialogue

The messages that faculty are not interested in working with students or can only be asked to work with students in very minimal ways is often a common conversation among staff who are seeking faculty to be a part of their programs. I think this study illustrates that there are faculty who, even at research I institutions, desire to connect with students in areas beyond the classroom. We need to find more effective ways to attract these faculty through our messaging and by creating programs that faculty deem valuable. For example, we need to create programs that faculty can be a part of that will assist students with personal development and career-related matters. Then we need to be honest about what we are seeking from faculty and work to appeal to their desire to connect with students around personal development and career-related issues. Overall, we need to stop underestimating faculty and their unwillingness to connect with students.

In addition, if connection is an integral part of a faculty member's persona and is something that gives meaning and purpose to the work, faculty members should not be denied the opportunity to interact with students outside the classroom no matter where he or she is in the tenure process. More conversations about how to best meet the needs of individual faculty members need to happen at the college, department, and university levels to show that valuing the humanity of individuals is a priority as opposed to insisting that all tenure track faculty concede to standard practices that may not make sense for everyone.

Intentional Mentoring Programs

Student affairs and academic affairs professionals need to work together to create a mentoring program that identifies students who are in great need for a faculty mentor and connect them to those mentors. Many times, when Faculty-student mentoring programs are created the most enthusiastic students are the ones who participate such as high ability students or students who enjoy getting involved. In reality, first generation, low-income, minority, and lower-achieving students are the ones who need and could benefit from these programs the most. They may have more challenges to work around, but we need to take the time to determine how to overcome these challenges, so they can reap the benefits from the assistance faculty mentors can provide.

Train Departments Chairs

Train department chairs on the importance of monitoring student behaviors and the questions they can be asking at faculty meetings. For example, if a faculty member sees a decline in a student's performance or behavior, they might discuss the best way to support that student in the faculty meeting.

A Call for Connection

A Call for Connection could require faculty to go to various campus trainings or participate in professional development opportunities to make them more aware of student issues and concerns such as suicide prevention, diversity issues, gender issues, different developmental needs and challenges students have based on their population, class rank, socio-economic status, etc., to help faculty understand how to better connect with students. This is needed more than ever in our society where students are losing the capacity for empathy and mental health issues are on the rise.

Reward Faculty for Connecting with Students

Student affairs and academic affairs professionals need to figure out ways to reward faculty who answer the Call for Connection, practice Compassionate Pedagogy, and go above and beyond to assist and connect with students. Many of their efforts take a great amount of time and some even change students' lives for the better. Finding a way to make connections with students matter on promotion and tenure documents would be the ultimate goal.

Compassionate Pedagogy: Faculty How To's for Connecting with Students

In response to Einarson and Clarkberg's (2004) request for more specific How To's for Connecting with Students, I offer the following, suggested by the faculty participants of this study. Another possible title for this list is one that one of my study participants proposed -

Practicing Compassionate Pedagogy

1. Learn Student Names
    - This is the first acknowledgement of a student's humanity
    - Go around the room at the first class and have students share their name and one fun fact about themselves as well
    - Ask them their names numerous times if needed
    - Write names down when students come to office hours
    - Take pictures of your students and write their names under the pictures. Then cover the pictures and quiz yourself
    - Quiz yourself again when students are in small groups on engaged in projects as you walk around the classroom

2. Be Intentional and Purposeful with Office Hours
    - Make it mandatory for students to attend office hours individually or in small groups for 15 – 20 minutes
    - Plan to review basic material and leave time for a few questions
    - Be ready to ask students a few questions that allow you to get to know them a little beyond just being a student sitting in your classroom. Examples: What or who inspired you to become involved in your major? Who has been the biggest influence on your life and why? What are your hobbies?
    - Repeatedly tell your students how much you hope to see them at office hours throughout the semester – not just on the first day of class – and remind them that they can stop by for any reason; their presence at office hours does not have to be only to ask a question about class content or their major

3. Create Opportunities for Students to Connect with You
    - Tell students you will be at a certain dining facility and invite them to join you for a meal
    - Plan to meet with students one-on-one somewhere outside your office, so the discussions are less formal and allow for more open discussion about things beside subject content

4. Build Rapport with Students
    - Have a question of the day that students answer – make sure you answer too
    - Take some time a few times a semester to share favorite failures – it humanizes you for students
    - Share some things about your family, what you did that weekend, your favorite place to shop, or a movie you saw or a book you read – it doesn't have to be anything that is sensitive information, just something that shows you are a real person who does real stuff in life
    - Congratulate them for doing well in class or another accomplishment you might have become aware of

5. Walk in the Student's Shoes
    - Get involved with students beyond the classroom in some way – through undergraduate research, doing programs in the residence halls, or being a resident director for a study abroad trip or alternative spring break trip
    - Attend trainings offered by various departments on campus that will help you stay in touch with students' developmental needs and/or issues students are experiencing. Most likely they are somewhat different from the things you experienced as a student.

6. Remain Curious
    - Watch for changes in students – poor attendance, decline in grades, change in behavior or demeanor
    - Find out about the campus resources available to assist students with various needs and concerns, so you can share them with a student if needed
    - Ask students questions about themselves, their successes and their challenges, and ACTIVELY LISTEN to them, and check in on/follow up with them about whatever they shared with you in a few days or weeks

Suggestions for Future Research

Throughout my data collection and analysis for this study, occasionally I would think of questions that could be explored related to my study. Reminding myself to stay focused on the phenomenological research questions on which my study was based, I would ensure that my ideas were not lost by journaling about those new ideas and planning to propose some of them

for future research. As I reflected on Faculty-student connection and the interviews of my participants, the following questions kept coming to mind.

Institutions of higher education continually share the student/faculty ratios of their campuses on marketing brochures and information sessions attended by students and parents in attempts to send the message that students who attend that institution will receive focused attention by the faculty, particularly if the institution has a small student to faculty ratio. It would be interesting to research and compare these ratios at various universities and see how much they actually impact the student experience and their relationship to faculty on the campuses studied.

Along the same line, many universities tout that they make "Students First" at their institutions. A survey and focused interviews could be done with various groups of students to ascertain if students do feel like they are a university's first priority and how they feel it is exhibited on campus.

Throughout my interviews, many faculty mentioned the demands placed on tenure track faculty. Some of them even commented that they have wondered if they are at the wrong type of institution or if they made the right decision to be a professor at a university due to how committed they were to students and their well-being and success. Considering the particular faculty that participated in my study, faculty who see connecting with students as a key part of their role, I would be interested in doing a longitudinal study to explore how the tenure process affects faculty psychologically and emotionally. How do tenure track faculty, who desire to have deeper relationships with students, negotiate the intrinsic parts of themselves that want to spend more time with students with the challenges of achieving tenure? How does this affect them psychologically and emotionally?

Also, many of the faculty participants stated that connecting with students was an integral part of who they were. Even though I probed a bit to see where faculty participants felt this desire came from, it might be interesting to do a study focusing on the life histories of faculty who have a desire to connect with students and how that desire for connection has manifested throughout their lives.

The ability to practice empathy surfaced as an important skill for faculty to possess when connecting with students in this study. According to Brown (2007), empathy requires four attributes: to be able to see the world as others see it; to be nonjudgmental; to understand another person's feelings; and to communicate your understanding of that person's feelings. Keeping these attributes in mind, it would be interesting to do a study exploring if faculty who struggle to have empathy in their interactions with students could be trained to be more empathic. Would this change their relationships with students and how they are perceived by students? A study such as this would require some pre-assessment of a faculty member's level of empathy, a treatment such as a series of workshops that faculty would need to attend, and then assessment of student perceptions of the faculty members' empathy skills after the training.

A number of the faculty participants revealed that they were cautious about connecting with students at times because they did not want students to misinterpret their intentions or they were concerned that a colleague or someone else at the university might question their interactions with a students. I began contemplating how events such as Me Too, protests regarding racism, campus shootings, and other societal events might affect or influence faculty relationships with students. How do faculty balance these fears or concerns with their desires to connect with students?

Lastly, many faculty told stories that involved students who were first generation. It would be interesting to do a study of first-generation students and faculty mentoring to explore how interaction with a faculty mentor influences a first-generation college students' college experience.

Limitations

Studies that rely on interpretive work with human participants always possess limiting factors that cannot always be controlled to the ideal extent by the researcher. There were limitations in both the site selection and the sampling method employed for this study. The institution where I chose to do my study was somewhat familiar to me. The concerns when focusing on one institution familiar to the researcher is intertwined with ethical considerations and limitations. Even though I do feel my previous interactions with some of the faculty added to the interviews regarding their honesty and forthrightness, I did have a pre-existing relationship with many of the faculty participants I interviewed. A design that incorporated faculty who were from multiple universities would do much to improve the transferability of findings. My decision to focus on an institution I had some familiarity with created other potential limitations, but the possible benefits of hearing from faculty I knew had successful connections with students gave me the confidence to move forward with this site.

Sample size and method might also be considered a limitation of this study. This study was done with a small sample of faculty at a research I institution. Interviewing faculty who participated in high impact practice programs or initiatives at another type of institution might have yielded different results. In addition, even though six to ten participants are within the recommended range for phenomenological studies (Creswell, 2013), and I interviewed seventeen faculty, there still existed the possibility that data collection would not reach the point of

saturation with such a small group of participants. In this case, I do feel that my data collection did reach a point at which sufficient evidence was established for the study, at least for the questions I asked. Time constraints for the participants and for me influenced the number of interviews which I could conduct, but I felt the interviews I did conduct provided a wealth of data for the type of interviewing methodology I utilized and the concept I was striving to explore. I attempted to diminish concerns about the transferability of the findings of the study by ensuring that, despite the small sample size, the participants reflected diversity in a number of important ways: sex, academic college and department, age range within the particular life stage I was focusing on with participants, and the nature of the programs and initiatives they were involved with beyond the classroom. Despite my efforts to include ethnic and racial diversity into my sample, I was not able to interview any faculty who represented ethnic or racial diversity. Research has shown that there are fewer tenured faculty of color at many institutions, so I was not particularly surprised that I struggled to secure a more diverse sample (Diggs, Garrison-Wade & Estrada, 2009). Also, the sampling method did not consider socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, country of origin, or any of several other factors that may have differentiated the results. More complex and specific sampling criteria and a slightly larger sample size could result in an even greater understanding of the specifics of the phenomenon. Finally, I utilized purposive sampling to find faculty who personally identified themselves as faculty who had experienced connection with a student because those are the stories I wanted to hear to gain a greater understanding of the essence of Faculty-student connection. If I had incorporated a more random sample of faculty, the outcomes would have been greatly impacted.

Concluding Thoughts

Connection with students is an intangible construct that is difficult to be measured and quantified which is one of the reasons it is probably not talked about much in the halls of academia or at faculty meetings, but I think this study has illustrated, on a small scale, that it is definitely of high importance to many faculty members. Connection is a basic human need that we all possess and is a crucial part of a student's experience in college. If students do not find the connection they need and crave, they might drop out of school, give up on dreams, or possibly even consider taking their own lives. As educators, it is our responsibility to help students connect to the people on a campus that will listen to them, support them, and guide them through the stress of figuring out who they are and what they want to be. It is not just the responsibility of student affairs professionals; faculty need to be a part of this too and many of them want to be a part of supporting and connecting with student in this way. Brown (2010) asserted that connection involves courage, authenticity, vulnerability, and empathy. The faculty in this study exemplified all of these characteristics in the stories they shared about connection with their students. I believe that faculty such as these are the best kept secrets on college campuses. It would benefit us all to find them, value them, and reward them. There is no doubt they are the epitome of what educators should be, and they are the kind of faculty all campuses should strive to have and do anything to keep.

References

Addy, T. M., Simmons, P., Gardner, G. E., & Albert, J. (2015). A new "class" of undergraduate professors: Examining teaching beliefs and practices of science faculty with education specialties. *Journal of College Science Teaching, 44*(3), 91-99.

Anderson-Nathe, B. (2008). Investigating not-knowing: Research methodology. *Child & Youth Services, 30*(1), 27-42.

Annis Hammond, S. (2013). *The thin book of appreciative inquiry* (3rd ed.). Bend, OR: Thin Book Publishing Co.

Armstrong, M. (1999). Models for Faculty-student interaction outside the classroom: The Duke University faculty associated program. *College Student Affairs Journal, 19*(1), 4-16.

Arreola, R., Theall, M., & Aleamoni, L. M. (2003). Beyond Scholarship: Recognizing the Multiple Roles of the Professoriate. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, April 21-25, 2003).

Astin, Alexander W. 1984. "Student Involvement: A Developmental Theory for Higher Education." *Journal of College Student Development 25*: 297–308.

Austin, A.E. (2010). Supporting faculty members across their careers. In Gillespie, K.J. & Robertson, D.L. (Eds.). *A Guide to Faculty Development,* (2nd ed.). (pp. 363-378). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Ball, L. (2010). Profile of Carol Gilligan. In A. Rutherford (Ed.), *Psychology's Feminist Voices Multimedia Internet Archive.* Retrieved from http://www.feministvoices.com/carol-gilligan/

Bearman, M., & Molloy, E. (2017). Intellectual streaking: The value of teachers exposing minds (and hearts). *Medical Teacher, 39*(12), 1284-1285.

Belenky, M.F., B.M. Clinchy, N.R. Goldberger & J.M. Tarule. (1986). *Women's ways of knowing.* NY: Basic Books.

Benson, T. A., Cohen, A. L., & Buskist, W. (2005). Rapport: Its relation to student attitudes and behaviors toward teachers and classes. *Teaching of Psychology, 32*(4), 237-239.

Bolkan, S., & Goodboy, A. K. (2009). Transformational leadership in the classroom: Fostering student learning, student participation, and teacher credibility. *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 36*(4), 296-306.

Brown, B. (2018). *Dare to lead: Daring greatly and rising strong at work.* New York, NY: Random House.

Brown, B. (2017). *Braving the wilderness: The quest for true belonging and the courage to stand alone.* New York, NY: Random House.

Brown, B. (2012). *Daring greatly: How the courage to be vulnerable transforms the way we live, love, parent, and lead.* New York, NY: Penguin Books.

Brown, B. (2007). *I thought it was just me (but it isn't): Making the journey from 'what will people think to 'i am enough.'* New York, NY: Penguin Random House LLC.

Brown, B. (2010). *The gifts of imperfection: Let go of who you think you are supposed to be and embrace who you are.* Center City, MN: Hazeldon.

Browne, M. N., Headworth, S., & Saum, K. (2009). The rare, but promising, involvement of faculty in residence hall programming. *College Student Journal, 43*(1), 22-30.

Buskist, W., Busler, J.N., & Kirby, L.A.J. (2018). Rules of (student) engagement. *New Directions for Teaching & Learning, 2018*(154), 55–63.

Buskist, W. & Groccia, J.E. (2018). The future of student engagement. *New Directions for Teaching & Learning, 2018*(154), 109–111.

Cayanus, J. L., & Martin, M. M. (2004). An instructor self-disclosure scale. *Communication Research Reports, 21*(3), 252-263.

Chavez, A. (2007). Islands of empowerment: Facilitating multicultural learning communities in college. International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 19(3), 274-288.

Chen, C. Y. (2015). A study showing research has been valued over teaching in higher education. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 15*(3), 15-32.

Chetro-Szivos, J., & Gray, P. (2004). Creating conversational spaces on campus: Connecting students and faculty through appreciative inquiry and circular questioning. *Journal of Student-Centered Learning, 1*(3), 35-42.

Chory, R. M., & Offstein, E. H. (2017). Your professor will know you as a person: Evaluating and rethinking the relational boundaries between faculty and students. *Journal of Management Education, 41*, 9-38.

Ciocchetti, C. A. (2011). Connect and thrive: Perspectives from a newly tenured professor. *Journal of Legal Studies Education, 28*(2), 385-393.

Clark, M.C. & Caferella, R.S. (1999). Theorizing adult development. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 1999*(84), 3-8.

Cook-Sather, A. (2015). Dialogue across differences of position, perspective, and identity: Reflective practice in/on a student-faculty pedagogical partnership program. *Teachers College Record, 117*(2), 1-42.

Cook-Sather, A. & Agu, P. (2013). Student consultants of color and faculty working together toward culturally sustaining pedagogy. *To Improve the Academy (32)*1, 271-285.

Cook-Sather, A. (2011). Teaching and learning together: College faculty and undergraduates cocreate a professional development model. *To Improve the Academy (29)*1, 219 -232.

Costley, C., & Gibbs, P. (2006). Researching others: Care as an ethic for practitioner researchers. *Studies in Higher Education, 31*(1), 89-98.

Cotten, S., & Wilson, B. (2006). Student–faculty interactions: Dynamics and determinants. *Higher Education, 51*(4), 487-519.

Cox, B. (2011). A developmental typology of Faculty-student interaction outside the classroom. *New Directions for Institutional Research, 2011*(nS1), 49-66.

Cox, B., McIntosh, K., Terenzini, P., Reason, R., & Lutovsky Quaye, B. (2010). Pedagogical signals of faculty approachability: Factors shaping Faculty-student interaction outside the classroom. *Research in Higher Education, 51*(8), 767-788.

Cox, B. E., and Orehovec, E. (2007) Faculty-student interaction outside the classroom: A typology from a residential college. *Review of Higher Education, 30*(4), 343–362.

Crabtree, R.D., Licona, A.C., and Sapp, D.A., (2009). Introduction. In Crabtree et al. (Eds.), *Feminist pedagogy: Looking back to move forward.* (pp. 23-26). Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press.

Crabtree, R. D., & Sapp, D. A. (2003). Theoretical, political, and pedagogical challenges in the feminist classroom. *College Teaching, 51*(4), 131-140.

Cranton, P. (2011). A transformative perspective on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, *Higher Education Research & Development, 30 (1),* 75-86.

Cranton, P., & Caruseta, E. (2004). Perspectives on authenticity in teaching. *Adult Education Quarterly, 55*(1), 5-22.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design (3rd ed.).* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cuseo, J. (2018). Student-faculty engagement. *New Directions for Teaching & Learning, 2018*(154), 87-97.

Cutri, R. M., & Whiting, E. F. (2015). The emotional work of discomfort and vulnerability in multicultural teacher education. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 21*(8), 1010-1025.

Cytrynbaum, S., Lee, S., & Wadner, D. (1982). Faculty development through the life course: Application of recent adult development theory and research. *Journal of Instructional Development, 5*(3), 11-22.

Dahlberg, K. (2006). The essence of essences: The search for meaning structures in phenomenological analysis of lifeworld phenomena. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being 1*, 11 – 19.

Dandy, K. L., & Bendersky, K. (2014). Student and faculty beliefs about learning in higher education: Implications for teaching. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 26*(3), 358-380.

Day, D. A., & Lane, T. (2014). Reconstructing faculty roles to align with self-authorship development: The gentle art of stepping back. *Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 5*(1).

DeAngelo, L., Mason, J. & Winters, D. (2016). Faculty engagement in mentoring undergraduate students: How institutional environments regulate and promote extra-role behavior. *Innovative Higher Education, 41*(4), 317-332.

Delworth, U. & Seeman, D. (1984). The ethics of care: Implications of Gilligan for the student services profession. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 6*, 489-492.

Diggs, G.A., Garrison-Wade, D.F., Estrada, D. et al. Urban Rev (2009) 41: 312. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-008-0113-y.

Dobransky, N.D. & Frymier, A.B. (2004). Developing teacher-student relationships through out of class communication. *Communication Quarterly, 52*(3), 211-223.

Einarson, M. K. & Clarkberg, M. E. (2004). Understanding faculty out-of-class interaction with undergraduate students at a research university. (CHERI Working Paper #57). Retrieved [Oct. 1, 2018], from Cornell University, ILR School site: http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cheri/20/

Ellertson, S. & Schuh, J.H. (2007). Faculty development in student learning communities: Exploring the vitality of mid-career faculty participants. *To Improve the Academy, 25*(1), 298-314.

Erikson, E. (1982). *The life cycle completed*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.

Espinoza, C. (2012). Millennial values and boundaries in the classroom. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, (131)*, 29-41.

Ewing, J. C., & Whittington, M. S. (2009). Describing the cognitive level of professor discourse and student cognition in college of agriculture class sessions. *Journal of Agricultural Education, 50*(4), 36-49.

Fairweather, J. S. (1993). Faculty reward structures: Toward institutional and professional homogenization. *Research in Higher Education, 34*(5), 603-623.

Farley-Lucas, B. & Sargent, M.M. (2011). Enhancing out-of-class communication: Student perspectives. *To Improve the Academy (30)*1, 71-84.

Feldman, K. & Paulsen, M.B., (1990). Faculty motivation: The role of a supportive teaching culture. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 1990*(78), 71-78.

Finlay, L. (2009). Debating phenomenological research. *Phenomenology & Practice*, 3(1), 6-25.

Flick, U. (2000). Episodic interviewing. In M. W. Bauer, & G. Gaskell (Eds.), *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound,* (pp. 75-92). London: Sage.

Gentry, R. & Stokes, D. (2013). Strategies for professors who service the university to earn tenure and promotion. *Research in Higher Education Journal, 29*, 1-13.

Gilligan, C. (1982). In a different voice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Giordano, P. J. (2010). Serendipity in teaching and learning: The importance of critical moments. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching, 21*(3), 5-27.

Giorgi, A. J., & Roberts, T. G. (2012). Exploring the teaching beliefs of excellent undergraduate professors. *NACTA Journal, 56*(1), 60-66.

Golde, C. and Pribbenow, D. (2000). Understanding faculty involvement in residential learning communities. *Journal of College Student Development, 41*(1), 27-40.

Groccia, J. E. (2018). What is student engagement? *New Directions for Teaching & Learning, 2018*(154), 11-20.

Groenewald, T. (2004). A phenomenological research design illustrated. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 3(1). Article 4. Retrieved Jan. 26, 2019 from http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/3_1/pdf/groenewald.pdf.

Gruber, T., Reppel, A., & Voss, R. (2010). Understanding the characteristics of effective professors: The student's perspective. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education, 20*(2), 175-190.

Hatch, A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in educational settings*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Hawk, T. F. (2017). Getting to know your students and an educational ethic of care. *Journal of Management Education, 41*(5), 669-686.

Hawk, T. F., & Lyons, P. R. (2008). Please don't give up on me: When faculty fail to care. *Journal of Management Education, 32*, 316-338.

Healea, C. D., & Ribera, R. (2015). Rhett talks: The development, implementation, and assessment of a faculty-in-residence program. *Work: Journal of Prevention, Assessment & Rehabilitation, 52*(3), 491-496.

Heidegger, M. (1975). *Poetry, language, thought*, New York: Harper & Row.

Hickson, H. (2011). Critical reflection: reflection on learning to be reflective. *Reflective Practice. 12*, 829-839.

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Holyoke, L. & Larson, E. (2009). Engaging the adult learner generational mix. *Journal of Adult Education, 38*(1), 11 – 21.

Jones, S. R., Torres, V., & Arminio, J. (2014). *Negotiating the complexities of qualitative research in higher education: Fundamental elements and issues* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Jung, C. G. (1954). The development of personality. In *Collected works: The development of personality*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kafle, N. (2011). Hermeneutic phenomenological research method simplified. *Bodhi: An Interdisciplinary Journal 5,* 181- 200. Kathmandu University, Nepal.

Kansas University Center for Teaching Excellence (n.d.) https://cte.ku.edu/other-teaching-centers.

Karpiak, I. (1996). Ghosts in the wilderness: Problems and priorities of faculty at mid-career and mid-life. *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 26*(3), 49-78.

Keeling, R. P. (2014). An ethic of care in higher education: Well-being and learning. *Journal of College and Character, 15*(3), 141-148.

Kelchtermans, G. (2009). Who I am in how I teach is the message: Self-understanding, vulnerability, and reflection. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 15*(2), 257-272.

Knowles, M. (1968). Andragogy, not pedagogy. *Adult Leadership, 16*(10), 350–352, 386.

Kroger, J. (2004). *Identity in adolescence: The balance between self and other (3rd. ed.).* New York, NY: Routledge.

Kohlberg, L. (1981). *The philosophy of moral development: Moral stages and the idea of justice.* San Francisco: Harper and Row.

Kramp, M. (2004). Exploring life and experience through narrative inquiry. In K. deMarrais, & S.D. Lapan (Eds.), *Foundations for research: Methods of inquiry in education and the social sciences,* (pp. 103-122). Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates.

Kuh, G. D. (20080. Excerpt from high-impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them and why the matter. Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Kuh, G. D. (2009). "The National Survey of Student Engagement: Conceptual and Empirical Foundations." *New Directions for Institutional Research*, No. 141. Wiley Periodicals.

Lather, P. (1992). Critical frames in educational research: Feminist and post-structural perspectives. *Theory into Practice, 31*(2), 87-99.

Laverty, S. M. (2003). Hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenology: A comparison of historical and methodological considerations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 2*(3). Article 3. Retrieved from http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/2_3final/pdf/laverty.pdf.

Levinson, D. J. (1986). A conception of adult development. *American Psychologist, 41*(1), 3-13.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Linder, C., Harris, J. C., Allen, E. L., & Hubain, B. (2015). Building inclusive pedagogy: Recommendations from a national study of students of color in higher education and student affairs graduate programs. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 48*(2), 178-194.

Luttrell, W. (2010). *Qualitative educational research: Readings in reflexive methodology and transformative practice.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Malesic, J. (2016, October 5). The 40-year-old burnout: Why I gave up tenure for a yet-to-be-determined career. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from http://www.chronicle.com/article/The-40-Year-Old-Burnout/237979.

Mazen, A. M., Jones, M. C., & Sergenian, G. K. (2000). Transforming the class into a learning organization. *Management Learning, 31*(2), 147-161.

Matteson, S. M., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2009). Using multiple interviewers in qualitative research studies: The influence of ethic of care behaviors in research interview settings. *Qualitative Inquiry, 15*(4), 659-674.

Mayhew, M. J., Rockenbach, A. N., Bowman, N. A., Seifert, T. A., & Wolniak, G. C. with E. T. Pascarella & P. T. Terenzini (2016). *How college affects students (volume 3): 21st century evidence that higher education works.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mazur, J. P., Murphy, R. E., & Simonds, C. J. (2007). I'll see you on "Facebook": The effects of computer-mediated self-disclosure on student motivation, affective learning, and classroom climate. *Communication Education, 56*(1), 1-17.

McDonald, W. M., Brown, C. E., & Littleton, R. A. (1999). The ernest L. boyer laboratory for learning: A model of effective faculty involvement in residential programming. *College Student Affairs Journal, 19*(1), 35-43.

McKay, V.C. & Estrella, J. (2008). First-generation student success: The role of faculty interaction in service-learning courses. *Communication Education, 57*(3), 356-372.

Merriam, S. B. (2018). Adult learning theory: Evolution and future directions. In Illeris, K. (Ed.), *Contemporary theories of learning* (pp. 83-96). New York, NY: Routledge.

Micari, M., & Pazos, P. (2012). Connecting to the professor: Impact of the student-faculty relationship in a highly challenging course. *College Teaching, 60*(2), 41-47.

Mooney, C. (1990). Three in four department heads are found to stress teaching in faculty hiring. *Chronicle of Higher Education, 36*(21), A15.

Moore, N. (2012). The politics and ethics of naming: Questioning anonymisation in (archival) research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 15*(4), 331-340.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mueller, R. (2018). Episodic narrative interview: Capturing stories of experiences with a methodological fusion. (waiting to be published)

Myers, S. A., & Brann, M. (2009). College students' perceptions of how instructors establish and enhance credibility through self-disclosure. *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication, 10*(1), 9-16.

Myers, S. A., & Bryant, L. E. (2004). College students' perceptions of how instructors convey credibility. *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication, 5*, 22-27.

Ng, Roxana. (1995). Teaching against the grain: Contradictions and possibilities. In R. Ng, P. Staton, and J. Scane, (Eds). *Anti-racism, feminism, and critical approaches to education*. Wesport, CT: Bergin and Garvey.

Nadler, M.K. & Nadler, L.B., (2001). The roles of sex, empathy, and credibility in out-of-class communication between faculty and students. *Women's Studies in Communication, 24*(2), 241-261.

Nielsen, E., & Alderson, K. G. (2014). Lesbian and queer women professors disclosing in the classroom: An act of authenticity. *The Counseling Psychologist, 42*(8), 1084-1107.

Noddings, N. (1984) *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics & moral education*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Noddings, N. & Shore, P. (1984). Awakening the inner eye: Intuition in education. New York: Teachers College Press. Noddings, N. (1992). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Noddings, N. (1996). The cared-for. In S. Gordon, P. Benner, & N. Noddings (Eds.), *Caregiving: Readings in knowledge, practice, ethics, and politics* (pp. 21-39). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Owens, L. M., & Ennis, C. D. (2005). The ethic of care in teaching: An overview of supportive literature. *Quest, 57*(4), 392-425.

Ozment, E. W. (2018). Embracing vulnerability and risk in the classroom: The four-folder approach to discussion-based community learning. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning, 18*(2), 136-157.

Palmer, P. (1998). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life.* New York, NY: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Pascarella, E.T. & Terenzini, P.T. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pattison, P., Hale, J. R., & Gowens, P. (2011). Mind and soul: Connecting with students. *Journal of Legal Studies Education, 28*(1), 39-66.

Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Perry, W. G. (1970). *Forms of intellectual and ethical development in the college years*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Pitstick, V. (2018). The Ohio State University's second year transformational experience program. *New Directions for Higher Education, 2018*(183), 97-107.

Pizzolato, J. E. (2005). Creating crossroads for self-authorship: Investigating the provocative moment. *Journal of College Student Development, 46*(6), 624-641.

Poorman, S. G., Mastorovich, M. L., & Webb, C. A. (2011). Helping Students who struggle academically: Finding the right level of involvement and living with our judgments. *Nursing Education Perspectives, 32*(6), 369-374.

Rallis, H. (1994). Creating teaching and learning partnerships with students: Helping faculty listen to student voices. *To Improve the Academy, 13*(1), 255-268.

Ray, J. & Marken, S. (2014). Life in college matters for life after college. Economy. Retrieved from http://www.gallup.com/poll/168848/life-college-matters-life-college.aspx.

Reeves, D.W., Hinson, R.A., & Marchant, M.A. (2010). Benefits and Costs of Faculty Participation in Extra- and Co-curricular Activities. *North American Colleges & Teachers of Agriculture Journal, 3,* 64-60.

Riessman, C.K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Riggers-Piehl, T., & Sax, L. J. (2018). Encouraging the spirit: The role of student-faculty interactions in college students' meaning-making and spiritual quest. *Journal of College and Character, 19*(2), 101-119.

Roberts, P., & Newton, P. M. (1987). Levinsonian studies of women's adult development. *Psychology and Aging, 2*(2), 154-163.

Rowe, M. (2016). Beyond the lecture: Teaching for professional development. *African Journal of Health Professions Education, 8*(2), 208-210.

Saldana, J. (2015). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers, 3rd edition.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Sandvik, B. M., & McCormack, B. (2018). Being person-centered in qualitative interviews: Reflections on a process. *International Practice Development Journal, 8*(2), 1-8.

Schreiner, L. A., Louis, M. C., Nelson, D. D., & National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students,in Transition. (2012). *Thriving in transitions: A research-based approach to college student success* National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.

Schrodt, P. (2013). Content relevance and students' comfort with disclosure as moderators of instructor disclosures and credibility in the college classroom. *Communication Education*, *62*(4), 352-375.

Schumann, D. W., Peters, J., & Olsen, T. (2013). Cocreating value in teaching and learning centers. *New Directions for Teaching & Learning, (133)*, 21-32.

Schunk, D. H., Meece, J. R., & Pintrich, P. R. (2014). *Motivation in education: Theory, research, and applications* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Sherman, B. R., & Blackburn, R. T. (1975). Personal characteristics and teaching effectiveness of college faculty. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 67*(1), 124-131.

Shrewsbury, C.M. (1993). What is feminist pedagogy? *Women's Studies Quarterly, 21*(3&4), 8-15.

Soldner, L. B., Lee, Y. R., & Duby, P. B. (2004). Impacts of internal motivators and external rewards on the persistence of first-year experience faculty. *Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition, 16*(2), 19-37.

Stevens, P. M., & Crase, D. R. (2003). Retaining FCS majors: A faculty-peer mentor approach. *Journal of Family & Consumer Sciences, 95*(2), 52-53.

Thompson, M. D. (2001). Informal student-faculty interaction: Its relationship to educational gains in science and mathematics among community college students. *Community College Review, 29*(1), 35.

Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Tisdell, E.J. (1998). Post structural feminist pedagogies: The possibilities and limitations of feminist emancipatory adult learning theory and practice. *Adult Education Quarterly. 48*(3), 139-156.

Turkle. S, (2016). *Reclaiming conversation: The power of talk in a digital age.* New York, NY: Penguin Books.

Twenge, J.M. (2017). *iGen: Why today's super-connected kids are growing up less rebellious, more tolerant, less happy – and completely unprepared for adulthood.* New York, NY: Atria Paperback.

Valerio, N. (2001). Creating safety to address controversial issues: Strategies for the classroom. Multicultural Education, 8(3), 24-28.

Vanderbilt University. (2015, March). A guide to feminist pedagogy. Retrieved April 13, 2019, from https://my.vanderbilt.edu/femped/

van Manen, M. (2014). *Phenomenology of practice: Meaning-giving methods in phenomenological research and writing.* Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, Inc.

van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy.* London, Ontario: The Althouse Press.

van Manen, M. (1997). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy (2nd ed.).* London, Ontario: The Althouse Press.

Vagle, M. D., (2018). *Crafting Phenomenological Research (2nd ed.).* New York: Taylor & Francis.

Vianden, J. (2014). Minding the gap: Understanding and overcoming cultural differences in the housing-faculty partnership. *Talking Stick, 32*(1), 32-40 & 60-61.

Vianden, J. &Smith, K.A. (2011). Unfamiliar territory: Faculty discomfort with interactions with students outside of class during out-of- academic initiatives. *Journal of Student Affairs (11)*2, 27-46.

Wallace, M. L. (1999). Beyond love and battle: Practicing feminist pedagogy. *Feminist Teacher, 12*(3), 184-97.

Wanca-Thibault, M., Shepherd, M., & Staley, C. (2002). Personal, professional, and political effects of teaching a first-year seminar: A faculty census. *Journal of the First-Year Experience, 14*(1), 23-3.

Webb, L.M., Allen, M.W, & Walker, K.L. (2002). Feminist pedagogy: Identifying basic principles. *Academic Exchange Quarterly 6*(1), 67-72.

Webb, N. G., & Barrett, L. O. (2014). Student views of instructor-student rapport in the college classroom. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 14*(2), 15-28.

Weiler, K. (1988). *Women teaching for change.* New York: Bergin & Garvey.

Wolf, L.W. (2018). Undergraduate research as engaged student learning. *New Directions for Teaching & Learning, 2018*(154), 75-85.

Wood, J.T. (1993). Bringing different voices into the classroom. In R.D. Crabtree, D.A. Sapp, & A.C. Licona (Eds.), *Feminist pedagogy: Looking back to move forward.* Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press.

Appendix A: Request for Gatekeepers to Recommend Participants

[Date]

Dear [Insert Name]:

I hope this letter finds you well! I am reaching out to you as a trusted colleague on campus who works closely with faculty involved in co-curricular experiences in the hopes that you can assist me with identifying potential study participants for my doctoral research. My research project is a qualitative study in which I am exploring the phenomenon of "Faculty-student connection" with faculty members.

Despite the extensive research on the benefits of Faculty-student interactions beyond the classroom, it continues to be a struggle to involve faculty in programs and initiatives that request their participation. Also, most of the research explores this interaction from the student perspective as opposed to the faculty perspective. I am exploring this phenomenon so that we can better understand how faculty connect with students, what contexts foster connection, and how those connections inform or influence their roles as faculty members.

The sampling methods used for the study rely on recommendations from staff members who have worked with already tenured faculty who have participated in a program or initiative that involved sustained involvement with students beyond the classroom. For this study, I am defining sustained involvement as being involved in programs or initiatives that last for at least one or more semesters and ask faculty to meet with the students at least ten or more times throughout a 15-week semester.

Would you be able and willing to share your lists of already tenured faculty who may be good candidates for this study by sending me a list of those you would recommend? Your nominations do not in any way obligate the faculty member to participate. Once I have collected names of potential participants, I will reach out to them to describe the study, gauge their interest, and explain that their participation is completely voluntary. If they are interested, I will then ask them to complete a brief questionnaire to ensure they have experienced the phenomenon I am researching.

This research depends heavily on participants having experienced Faculty-student connection through sustained involvement in initiatives outside the classroom, so that they can describe the phenomenon in detail. Identifying qualified potential study participants is a crucial step in the research process, and I would be most grateful for your assistance with this important task.

If I can answer any questions about the study, please call me at (614)403-4723 or e-mail me at pitstick.10@osu.edu. I cannot thank you enough for your consideration!

Sincerely yours,

Vicki K. Pitstick
Doctoral Candidate
Higher Education & Student Affairs College of Education and Human Ecology
The Ohio State University

Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Message

Dear [Insert Name]:

I hope this message finds you well! My name is Vicki Pitstick, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education and Student Affairs program working with my advisor Dr. Tatiana Suspitsyna in Ohio State's College of Education and Human Ecology. I am contacting you because I am conducting interviews as part of my dissertation research, and you have been nominated by a colleague as a faculty member who may be a qualified participant in this research project.

My research project is a qualitative study in which I am exploring the phenomenon of "Faculty-student connection" with faculty members. I am defining Faculty-student connection based on a typology created by Cox (2007) in which he identified five levels of Faculty-student connection. The fourth level, he termed Personal Interaction, and stated that this is the level where interactions became intentional and a "fundamental shift" happened in the relationship (Cox, 2011, p. 52).

You have been nominated because a colleague was familiar with your sustained involvement with students in programs or initiatives beyond the classroom. If you feel you have experienced this level of a relationship with a student or students through your sustained involvement, and you would be interested in participating in no more than two 60-90-minute interviews as a participant in this project, I would be most grateful to hear your story!

If you agree to participate, your involvement in the study will be completely voluntary, and you can end your participation at any time. Your identity will be kept confidential through every part of the data collection, analysis, and reporting process.

I would be more than happy to discuss the purpose of this study and the details of the research design with you if you would like to talk through any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to participate. We can discuss those details via e-mail, over the phone, or in person, whichever is most preferable to you. If you are interested in participating, the next step in the process will be for you to complete a very brief demographic questionnaire. Once I have collected responses from all potential study participants, I will select a final group of participants and schedule the interviews, which will all take place within the next 2-3 months.

So that I may know whether or not you would be willing to be interviewed, could you please respond to me via e-mail at pitstick.10@osu.edu by [due date] to let me know one way or the other? I cannot thank you enough for considering participation in this project!

Sincerely yours,

Vicki K. Pitstick
Ph.D. Doctoral Candidate
College of Education & Human Ecology
The Ohio State University

Tatiana Suspitsyna
Associate Professor
Higher Education & Student Affairs
College of Education & Human Ecology
The Ohio State University

Appendix C: Participant Screening Questionnaire

Name: _____

Pseudonym Name (if desired): _____

Preferred Pronouns: _____

Directions: Please answer the following questions. Feel free to skip any questions you do not feel comfortable answering.

1. What is your age range? (Circle one)

25 – 30 31 – 35 36 – 40 41 – 45 46 – 50 51 – 55 56 - 60 60+

2. What is your race/ethnicity?

3. How long have you been a faculty member?

4. How long have you been a faculty member at [redacted]?

5. What department are you a part of and what courses are you currently teaching?

6. Please mark any and all experiences, programs or initiatives where you have been involved with a student(s) outside of the classroom and how long you have been involved with that experience, program or initiative since you have been a faculty member at [redacted]?

_____ Service Learning – No. of Years _____
_____ Undergraduate Research – No. of Years _____
_____ Study Abroad – No. of Years _____
_____ Freshmen Seminar – No. of Years _____
_____ Residence Life Learning Community – No. of Years _____
_____ 2nd Year Program – No. of Years _____
_____ Honors/Scholars Involvement – No. of Years _____
_____ Other _____ – No. of Years _____
_____ Other _____ – No. of Years _____

Return to Vicki Pitstick at pitstick.10@osu.edu

Appendix D: Participant Confirmation Messages

[For those selected to participate in the study]

Dear [Name]:

Thank you for your interest in participating in my doctoral research project on Faculty-student connection from the perspective of a faculty member. I have completed my review of all the questionnaire responses from potential participants, and I am pleased to invite you to be interviewed for my study.

As a reminder, participation in this project consists of no more than two 60-90-minute interviews, which we will schedule for times and locations that are mutually convenient over the course of the next 2 – 3 months. With your permission, I will record our interviews with a digital audio recorder and transcribe the interviews for data analysis.

Your involvement in the study will be completely voluntary, and you can end your participation at any time. Your identity will be kept confidential through every part of the data collection, analysis, and reporting process.

Could you please respond to me via e-mail at pitstick.10@osu.edu by [due date] to confirm your participation? If you are no longer interested in participating, it would also be helpful to know that by [due date], so that I may plan accordingly.

I look forward to hearing back from you and spending some time with you to hear about your experiences. Thank you so much for your consideration!

Sincerely yours,

Vicki K. Pitstick
Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education & Student Affairs
College of Education and Human Ecology
The Ohio State University

[For those not selected to participate in the study, if necessary]

Dear [Name]:

Thank you for your interest in participating in my doctoral research project on Faculty-student connection. I have completed my review of all the questionnaire responses from potential participants, and I have selected a final group of faculty to interview. I was overwhelmed with a terrific response from the faculty I contacted.

Because the sample size for this project is so small, I was not able to involve everyone who indicated an interest. That said, I have extended invitations to interview other faculty and will not require your participation. However, I am incredibly grateful not only for your willingness to participate in this research but also for the commitment you have made to [redacted] through your beyond the classroom involvement with students.

Thank you again for being willing to help with this research! Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely yours,

Vicki Pitstick
Doctoral Candidate
Higher Education & Student Affairs
College of Education & Human Ecology
The Ohio State University

Appendix E: Episodic Narrative Interview for Study

Requesting Stories

Prompt 1 – As a faculty member, what does experiencing connection with a student mean to you? How is this type of experience with a student supported or not supported by your program, department, or college at this university?

Prompt 2 – Please tell me a story about a time when you felt a change in a relationship with a student or level of connection with a student. Include as much detail as possible, including information about the environment and program, the people involved and their responses, the actual change that occurred, what happened, and the actual results of the change.

Prompt 3 – Now, could you tell me how you experienced connection with the student in the context of the story you just shared? When and/or how was the connection happening? How did you make sense of the connection with the student during this situation? What was the nature or quality of the connection that you experienced with the student that was different from interactions you had had with students before? How was it enacted, and how did you perceive it? How did you feel after the change? How did the context of the time you are describing contribute to or detract from the experience?

Prompt 4 - How has this experience of being in connection with a student(s) informed or influenced your practice as a faculty member? In what ways will it inform or influence how you engage in your role as a faculty member going forward as you continue to work with students?

Prompt 5 – As a result of experiencing this type of connection with a student, what would you suggest or recommend to a faculty colleague who is seeking a different level of connection with students?

Concluding Question – Are there any other details you would like to add or edit regarding what you have shared with me today regarding your story about connecting with a student or students?

Appendix F – Informed Consent Form

[redacted] **Consent to Participate in Research**

Study Title: A Phenomenological Study of Faculty-student Connection

Researcher: Dr. Tatiana Suspitsyna and Vicki Pitstick

Sponsor:

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate.

Your participation is voluntary. Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

Purpose: This research study seeks to interpret the phenomenon of Faculty-student connection experienced by faculty who have sustained involvement with students within programs or initiatives beyond the classroom. Under the guidance of Dr. Tatiana Suspitsyna, Vicki Pitstick, a doctoral candidate in Higher Education and Student Affairs (HESA), will facilitate this project and work to answer the following research questions:
1) How do faculty who make connections with students experience that connection?
2) How does this experience inform or influence their role as a faculty member?

Procedures/Tasks: Participation for faculty involves:

- Completion of a brief demographic survey used by the researchers to help make decisions about participant selection
- Participating in no more than 2 one-on-one interviews, during which questions will be asked about your Faculty-student connections
- Each interview will be conversational in nature and will last approximately 60-90 minutes. The researchers will audio record and transcribe each interview.
- Interview #1 will take place at a mutually agreeable time and location during the Summer 2019 Semester.
- Optional opportunity to participate in a 30-60-minute review of the interview transcripts and themes from data analysis to ensure their accuracy. You would be contacted via e-mail and invited to review the documents on your own time.

Safeguards for ensuring the privacy, confidentiality, and proper use of data are summarized below.

Duration: The research project will begin in the Summer 2019 Semester and conclude during the Autumn 2019 Semester. The time commitment for your participation will be a total of approximately 1 hours and 45 minutes spread across two research activities. This includes 15 minutes for the demographic survey and one interview of a maximum of 90 minutes. You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with [redacted].

Risks and Benefits: By participating in this study, you will have the opportunity to reflect on your experiences with students through sustained involvement in programs and initiatives beyond the classroom. Such reflection can help you gain greater self-awareness and deepen your understanding of your experience. Moreover, this project can enhance educators' understanding of the unique experiences of faculty who choose to be involved in programs or initiatives beyond the classroom and their connections with students in those programs or initiatives.

Confidentiality: Efforts will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. Also, your records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the research):

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies
- [redacted] Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices;
- The sponsor, if any, or agency (including the Food and Drug Administration for FDA-regulated research) supporting the study.

All information used in publications and other public forums will be kept anonymous to protect your privacy. Each participant will select a pseudonym for researchers to use for material prepared for all publications and other public forums. The researchers will be the only individuals with access to data containing personally identifiable information and will keep such information in locked file cabinets or on password-protected computers.

To ensure accuracy of the researchers' interpretation of the information you provide, the researchers may ask you to review summaries of interview transcripts and/or observational notes.

Participant Rights: You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. Likewise, you may decline to answer any survey or interview questions with which you are uncomfortable. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

This study has been determined exempt from IRB review.

Contacts and Questions: For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, or you feel you have been harmed as a result of study participation, you may contact Dr. Tatiana Suspitsyna (Suspitsyna.1@osu.edu or 614-558-5978) or Vicki Pitstick (pitstick.10@osu.edu or 614-403-4723).

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study related concerns or complaints with someone who is not a part of the research team, you may contact [redacted].

Signing the consent form:

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form, and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

_____	_____
Printed name of subject	Signature of subject
	_____ AM/PM
	Date and time
_____	_____
Printed name of person authorized to consent for subject (when applicable)	Signature of person authorized to consent for subject (when applicable)
_____	_____ AM/PM
Relationship to the subject	Date and time

Investigator/Research Staff

I have explained the research to the participant or his/her representative before requesting the signature(s) above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

_____	_____
Printed name of person obtaining consent	Signature of person obtaining consent
	_____ AM/PM
	Date and time

Appendix G: Compassionate Pedagogy

Practicing Compassionate Pedagogy: Faculty How-to's for Connecting with Students

1. Learn Student Names

- This is the first acknowledgement of a student's humanity
- Go around the room at the first class and have students share their name and one fun fact about themselves as well
- Ask them their names numerous times if needed
- Write names down when students come to office hours
- Take pictures of your students and write their names under the pictures. Then cover the pictures and quiz yourself
- Quiz yourself again when students are in small groups on engaged in projects as you walk around the classroom

2. Be Intentional and Purposeful with Office Hours

- Make it mandatory for students to attend office hours individually or in small groups for 15 – 20 minutes
- Plan to review basic material and leave time for a few questions
- Be ready to ask students a few questions that allow you to get to know them a little beyond just being a student sitting in your classroom. Examples: What or who inspired you to become involved in your major? Who has been the biggest influence on your life and why? What are your hobbies?
- Repeatedly tell your students how much you hope to see them at office hours throughout the semester – not just on the first day of class – and remind them that they can stop by for any reason; their presence at office hours does not have to be only to ask a question about class content or their major

3. Create Opportunities for Students to Connect with You

- Tell students you will be at a certain dining facility and invite them to join you for a meal
- Plan to meet with students one-on-one somewhere outside your office, so the discussions are less formal and allow for more open discussion about things beside subject content

4. Build Rapport with Students

- Have a question of the day that students answer – make sure you answer too
- Take some time a few times a semester to share favorite failures – it humanizes you for students
- Share some things about your family, what you did that weekend, your favorite place to shop, or a movie you saw or a book you read – it doesn't have to be anything that is sensitive information, just something that shows you are a real person who does real stuff in life
- Congratulate them for doing well in class or another accomplishment you might have become aware of

5. Walk in the Student's Shoes

- Get involved with students beyond the classroom in some way – through undergraduate research, doing programs in the residence halls, or being a resident director for a study abroad trip or alternative spring break trip
- Attend trainings offered by various departments on campus that will help you stay in touch with students' developmental needs and/or issues students are experiencing. Most likely they are somewhat different from the things you experienced as a student.

6. Remain Curious

- Watch for changes in students – poor attendance, decline in grades, change in behavior or demeanor
- Find out about the campus resources available to assist students with various needs and concerns, so you can share them with a student if needed
- Ask students questions about themselves, their successes and their challenges, and ACTIVELY LISTEN to them, and check in on/follow up with them about whatever they shared with you in a few days or weeks