Feeling-Function Centered Pedagogy: Using Student-Centered Curriculum and Friendly

Student-Teacher Relationships to Heal Educational Alienation, Loneliness, and

Meaninglessness

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**Abstract**

This paper is set within the context of my academic journey through my Master of Education program. I became interested in the subjects of alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness during my final year of undergraduate school. I have worked with classmates from Canada, the United States, and Switzerland. The study of alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness is important since a lack of inclusion, belonging, and meaningful learning in the lives of students leads to increased incidences of estrangement, isolation, and purposelessness. Supporting learners through their personal quests for meaning is therefore an essential aspect of holistic education. Feeling-function centered pedagogy is cultivated through attentive, creative, imaginative, and friendly classroom instruction. The presence of warm and friendly student-teacher relationships is essential to learner inclusion, belonging, and meaningful learning. I argue that student-centered curriculum and friendly student-teacher relationships are central to the care of post-secondary students. Jung (1933, 1989), de Troyes and Cline (1985), and Frankl's (1986, 2006) psychoanalytic, mythological, and existential perspectives reveal how it is the wounding of a student's feeling-function which exacerbates their feelings of loneliness, alienation, and meaninglessness. As my graduate program became imbued with feelings of relatedness, I healed from my own experiences of loneliness and meaninglessness. If educators desire to decrease academic loneliness, alienation, and meaninglessness, they will practice student-centered curriculum and friendly student-teacher relationships with their students.

*Keywords: feeling-function, student-centered learning, student-teacher relationships, alienation, loneliness, meaninglessness*

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**My Academic Journey**

The youth rode off, but looked around a stone's throw off, and on the ground in the short

time that had elapsed, he saw his mother had collapsed beside the drawbridge, where she

lay unconscious, and in such a way it seemed to him that she had slipped and fallen dead

(de Troyes & Cline, 1985, p. 20).

In 2018, following the end of careers in business, tourism, and heavy equipment

operations, I went on my first journey to a college where I explored the creation of new

beginnings. The day that I stood in the admissions department of Northern Lakes College, I felt

that I was standing on an alien planet to which I did not belong. I felt that I was an outsider and a

lonely traveler without a companion. All of my insecurities, fears, and self-doubts emerged and

spoke to me through their own heinous tongues. Yet, through all my fright, I stood, signed, and

left the admissions department with a hopeful expectation of enrollment. A week later I received

an acceptance letter from Northern Lakes College and I felt the excitement, fear, and challenge

of leaving my past behind to create a new future. I did not know where I was going to end up but

I did know that every book, teacher, and classmate represented a fresh opportunity to learn

something new.

As Perceval drove his "hunter's croup with his small switch", I too plunged myself into

the unknown as I drove my car to my first college lecture (de Troyes & Cline, 1985, p. 20). I

chose to carry my anxiety, panic, and fear through hallways of higher learning and as I came to

learn about my classmates and professors, I began to learn more about the world and the people

who chose to share their life experiences with me. Northern Lakes College's university studies

program offered me the opportunity to be the young man driven "into the forest dark and grim"

(p. 20) where I could no longer lean upon the protective guise of home. I was challenged by

darkness within and without. As I shifted from that which I knew towards that which was

unknown to me regarding university, I learned to diligently study through my fear "until the day

dawned clear and bright" (p. 20) in my mind and heart.

When I received my university studies certificate from Northern Lakes College, I

immediately continued my full-time studies with Thompson Rivers University. Choosing to

major in psychology allowed me to sharpen my un-yet honed passions. However, the completion

of my final year of undergraduate school left me with a drought of feeling where I felt that I was

no longer exploring issues and questions that I loved. I completed assignments with a mechanical

force that removed the beauty from my world much akin to the foolish Perceval who while

having strong arms nonetheless ignorantly "crushed the maid in his embrace, not knowing how

to act with grace" (de Troyes & Cline, 1985, p. 22). While I had the diligence to provide my

professors with the answers they expected of me, I was left with the violent memories of

subjecting my assignments, classmates, and my own heart to an absence of attention, creativity,

imagination, and warmth (McCracken, 1999, p. 166).

With receipt of my undergraduate degree during the fall of 2021, I immediately entered

Thompson Rivers University's M.Ed. program. For all of the personal and academic

accomplishments that I had accrued during undergraduate school, I yet desired a more

meaningful life than the one I had built. Always a high achiever, I was also much like Perceval

who "did not care a chive for anything the king related, and in no way commiserated with his

wife, shame, or suffering" (de Troyes & Cline, 1985, p. 31). My overdependence on rational

knowledge created a void of feeling in my heart which led me to dedicate myself to my full-time studies within my M.Ed. program with the intention of re-humanizing my own capacity for empathy, valuing, and feeling in order that I might help others in the future.

My collegial experiences of confronting my fears, facing the unknown, and challenging the coolness of rationality within my M.Ed. program permitted me the deeper opportunity to develop my own pedagogical approaches inclusive to feeling-function development. When I enrolled in my M.Ed. program I began to ask myself questions like "what did I dislike about my undergraduate experience?," "which of my professors helped me to feel valued?," and "how can I become the educator I wish I had?" Much like Perceval who had been "trained so ill by a rough master" (de Troyes & Cline, 1985, p. 32), I knew I wanted to become a refined educator who provides attentive, inventive, and imaginative curricula to students. My own experience of academic coercion during undergraduate school and my experience of re-humanization during my M.Ed. program led to my increased interest in healing students of their alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness. Continuing to study how educators and universities may create curricula and pedagogical approaches to help heal their oft neglected students is of widespread importance across Western post-secondary settings and beyond.

### My Interests: Alienation, Loneliness, and Meaninglessness in Academia

The experience of learning how to collaborate with my peers within my M.Ed. program helped me to develop my interest in studying alienation. My interest in healing feelings of alienation occurred through my receipt of encouragement from my peers as they helped me to experience feelings of inclusivity. My participation in a course of curriculum, teaching, and learning allowed me the opportunity to share my educational interests with other students which offered the chance to include my passions within the classroom. As my peers and I shared our interests with one another, we learned to welcome one another's visions, beliefs, and

speculations rather than worrying about whether we succeeded or failed. As my classmates and I learned to collaborate with one another through written formats we learned the value of inclusivity within an academic environment. By reinforcing the notions of service, compassion, and love, I experienced personal transformation as my courses in diversity and curriculum development helped to transition me from depressive alienation to an attitude of companionate inclusivity from my classmates as they listened to my journey from a primarily Christian worldview towards one which also included various Buddhist practices. In choosing to receive understanding, grace, and compassion from my classmates, I learned how to take ownership of my beliefs which led me to perceive that changing, adapting, and transforming as students and educators involves learning to guide ourselves and others away from alienation into inclusivity by listening, understanding, and including those we are most prone towards discriminating against (A. Desbiens & L. Sears, personal communication, January 21-29, 2022).

Learning the value of human differences in my M.Ed. program helped me to better understand loneliness. As my classmates and I mindfully considered one another's interests we came to share reciprocal visions of mutual compassion which helped us to accept our differences as unique opportunities to nurture one another's needs. My classmates and I learned how to validate, respect, and accommodate one another which helped to create a sense of belongingness which reduced our experiences of loneliness (Guo, 2012, p. 9). My study of social realities helped me to gain a new perspective involving my acceptance of the concept that when educators accept differences in their students, both student and educator become more engrossed in one another's lives which helps to increase companionship and decrease isolation and consequent loneliness (Noddings, 2005, p. 67). My study of diversity and social realities allowed me to experience personal transformation as I shifted from a state of undergraduate loneliness to a state

of companionship within my M.Ed. program. Dr. Cope Watson offered me her expertise while also offering her mentorship. She first provided me with relational warmth and tenderness when she knew I was suffering from depression. She especially chose to honor my wounded capacity for creativity. On one particular occasion, she also mailed me a book from one of my favorite Indigenous authors. What impacted me the most was how Dr. Cope-Watson provided me with a handwritten note expressing her gift-giving kindness and thoughtfulness towards my continued wellbeing (personal communication, April 14, 2022). I transformed from a man who was bewitched by the rationalism of my undergraduate education to a man engrossed in the positive valuing of an Other who helped me to value, protect, and nurture fragility within myself and others. Dr. Cope-Watson helped me to feel the human breath of creativity, compassion, and the warmth of heartfelt pedagogy (Noddings, 2016).

Learning to include my own lived experiences within my study of course design helped me to develop my interest in meaninglessness. As I learned how to connect my life experiences to my learning tasks, I began to acknowledge how assignments and assessments applied to my life in a highly meaningful way. I learned how to challenge my old patterns of thinking, feeling, and living once I was able to take responsibility for how my daily choices offered me the opportunity for adaptation, change, and re-organization (Greene, 2017, p. 152). My study of the philosophy and history of education also helped me to gain a new perspective that meaningless learning is a near impossibility insofar as learner and educator develop and pursue their own interests rather than either party feeling forced to study academic subjects against their will (Gutek, 2015, p. 117-120). My combined exploration of course design and the philosophy and history of education helped me to discover my own interests and values that I wanted to live by. My participation in a course of counselling theories helped me to experience my transformation

from a life of meaninglessness to a life of meaning. I learned that the human ego can be

effectively re-centered away from itself towards something greater than itself and thereby

manifest meaningful experiences (Corey, 2021, section 5-2d). The more that I learned to assist

my classmates and educators with their tasks and self-explorations, the more I felt that I had

contributed to something greater than myself which left me with lasting feelings of satisfaction

and purpose (Balyer, 2012, p. 587). Rather than seeking to exclusively sate my own greed for

more, I sought to respond to the needs of others to help alleviate their confusion and suffering

(Harris, 2003, p. 20). The more I realized that my life was meaningful because it could be used to

serve something greater than itself, the less I worried about satisfying my own pursuits of

"maidens, dragons, and noble deeds" (Johnson, 1993, p. 55) and instead came to value who I was

and who my classmates and professors were for their own encouragement and development

(Boerema, 2011, p. 558; Corey, 2021; Spillane et al., 2004; Wright, 2008, p. 21).

### *The Significance of Alienation, Loneliness, and Meaninglessness*

The study of alienation, loneliness, and meaningless is significant since the over-

representation of thinking-function focused curriculum and cold student-teacher relationships

within academia results in the proliferation of alienated, lonely, and purposeless students

(Dewey, 1897, 1963, as cited in Noddings, 2005; Eisner, 1983, Glowacki-Dudka, 2018;

Noddings, 2005). If educators cannot show their students how their lives mean more than the

lowest satisfaction of their biological or rational pursuits then it will be an impossible task to

imbue the field of academia with meaning (Boerema, 2011, p. 558; Harris, 2003, p. 20; Spillane

et al., 2004; Wright, 2008, p. 21). Besides university and college students, it is also possible for

educators to experience alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness within collegial circles

absent of caring collaborative experiences (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008, p. 60-61). According to

Shuffelton (2012), students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual, and queer also

tend to experience greater incidences of alienation and that friendly student-teacher relationships

can help to reduce such experiences of alienation (p. 222). Attempts at healing alienation,

loneliness, and meaninglessness within academia will not occur so long as students and

educators are only fed a diet of rationality in absentia of their existential concerns, interrogations

of the meaning of life, and creative dreams (De Troyes & Cline, 1985; Frankl, 2006; Hyytinen et

al., 2022; Johnson, 1993, 1989; Jung, 1933, 1989; Matthews, 2009; von Franz, 2008).

**Argument: Student-Centered Curricula and Warm Student-Teacher Relationships are Central to the Care of Post-Secondary Students**

      I claim that shifting alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness into inclusivity,

companionship, and meaningfulness requires the application of attentive, inventive, and

imaginative student-centered curricula alongside friendly student-teacher relationships. My claim

is based on the findings that negligence of learner needs and interests decreases mutual

authenticity, compassion, understanding, creativity, and respect (Noddings, 2005). The discovery

of meaning and companionship in the lives of university students is also dependent upon the

presence of warm and friendly student-teacher relationships since exposure to cold, inattentive,

and unimaginative relationships leads to higher incidences of unproductivity, loneliness,

alienation, and meaninglessness (Noddings, 2005; Johnson, 1993, 1989). The connection

between student-centered curricula and greater expressions of creativity and meaning is based

upon research linking the lived experiences of students to pedagogy by authors such as Eisner

(1983), Dewey (1897, 1963, as cited in Noddings, 2005), Glowacki-Dudka (2018), and Noddings

(2005). The link between the experience of warm human relationships and increased

productivity, companionship, and meaningful existence is based on research connecting the

existential needs of humans to student-teacher relationships by authors such as Johnson (1993,

1989), Jung (1933, 1989), Frankl (2006, 1986), de Troyes and Cline (1985), Hyytinen et al.,

(2022), von Franz (2008), and Matthews (2009).

**The Path Ahead**

> …go straight on through this forest thick, and watch for every branch and stick which we
>
> have knotted, which we bent with our own hands, because we meant each knotted branch
>
> to show the way, so nobody would go astray (de Troyes & Cline, 1985, p. 171).

Chapter one primarily concerned the explicit description of my academic journey through

undergraduate and graduate school. Chapter one also communicated my significant interests

within the realm of academia and how my argument and significance lead into my literature

review's description of alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness due to a lack of

responsiveness from my professors to my personal stressors and psychological concerns

alongside a lack of curriculum which connected to my lived experiences. My intention

throughout chapter one was to ensure that my reader was cognizant of my personal experiences

of alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness. By displaying my interpersonal relationships with

my colleagues and educators, I hope my reader has recognized my desire to continue researching

potential methods of increasing classroom inclusivity, belonging, and meaningfulness.

Chapter two begins with an introduction, a research question, and a list of objectives and

intentions for the reader to follow. The literature review then provides a description of the history

of wounded feeling-function within Western academia and contains a survey of the limits of

rationality. Chapter two then proceeds through respective descriptions of how to best support

student-centered curriculum, friendly student-teacher relationships, and an engrossing classroom

environment. Context is provided for potential risks and concerns against the use of student-

centered curriculum, friendly student-teacher relationships, and mutually engrossing classroom

environments in order to provide academic balance. Brief explanation of feeling-function

focused qualities is provided in order to provide readers with better knowledge of the importance of attentiveness, creativity, imagination, and friendship within post-secondary settings. Exploring the qualities of attentiveness, inventiveness, imaginativeness, warmth, and tenderness allow for better understanding of how educators can foster nurturing relationships with their students.

Chapter three concerns an exploration of practical applications of student-centered curriculum. Exploring practical applications of student-centered curriculum and friendly student-teacher relationships within chapter three will better allow the reader to perceive how educational theory can be effectively applied to help increase the aforementioned possibility of mutually engrossing classroom environments. Chapter three does not include practical suggestions for re-designing classroom environments since my paper focuses on how curriculum and pedagogy create engrossing classroom environments themselves. Future directives are provided in chapter four as to areas of research where educators may seek to influence their classroom environments to best benefit their students. Exploring how life contexts and classroom contexts influence the application of practical strategies to increase the success of student-centered curriculum and friendly student-teacher relationships allows the reader to identify the high levels of attunement that educators must practice each and every day. Chapter three includes descriptions of simplistic means of attaching curriculum to learner lived experiences and how best to help students to experience rapport and encouragement from their teachers.

Chapter four primarily concerns a discussion of how meaningful learning can occur in the context of understanding personal experiences, research, and practical applications. Chapter four provides a recap of the Arthurian romance story *Perceval, or, The Story of the Grail* (de Troye & Cline, 1985) alongside a recap and reaffirmation of my argument. Providing connections between chapter one, two, and three provides the reader with a more identifiable means of

witnessing the success of my argument while also taking into consideration the limitations and research suggestions for the future. Chapter four concludes with my own personal contemplations about my education journey and my research with an ultimate statement of encouragement for future post-secondary learners and educators.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### Introduction

Alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness are expressions of wounded feeling-function and are under studied within the discipline of education. Educational institutions have largely failed to attune to the lived experiences of university students (Farrell, 2020, p. 1). Rather than alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness occurring on account of a lack of rational information, such phenomena occur due to the absence of ontological teaching (pp. 2-3). A renewed effort is needed on behalf of universities to attune to the narratives of learners inside and outside of the classroom in order to determine how their lived experiences connect to their curriculum (Critchley, 2009, as cited in Farrell, 2020, p. 4). Teacher-centered approaches unfairly neglect the interests, desires, needs, and quests for meaning which students so often strive to discover which therefore provides impetus for the implementation of both student-centered curriculum and friendly student-teacher relationships (Brophy, 2006, as cited in Mpho, 2018, p. 12; Tabulawa, 2006, as cited in Mpho, 2018, p. 12; Cristillo, 2010, as cited in Mpho, 2018; Noddings, 2005, p. 64; Dewey, 1963, as cited in Noddings, 2005, p. 166).

### Objectives

This literature review is guided by the following research question: What are the benefits and risks to university students if educators shift from an attitude of disinterest, inattention, and cold-heartedness into an attitude of interest, attention, and warm-heartedness where university student experiences of alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness are accepted, acknowledged,

and honored? This review seeks to explore studies that have employed student-centered approaches of instruction along with a further discussion of the resulting impacts of providing warmth and friendship to students. I will begin with a historical examination of wounded feeling-function within the framework of pedagogy. I will then shift into a greater exploration of how student-centered curriculum alongside warm and friendly student-teacher relationships assist students in transitioning from feelings of alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness towards inclusion, companionship, and meaningful learning. By reviewing representative qualities of student-centered curriculum and friendly student-teacher relationships, we will be able to effectively insight what we currently understand about pedagogy versus what we would like to begin practicing pedagogically for the benefit of students.

**Understanding the Wounded Feeling-Function of the West**

With the desire to determine the benefits and risks of student-centered curriculum and friendly student-teacher relationships with educational systems, a historical understanding of the concept of wounded feeling-function is essential. While feeling is defined as "the capacity to value or to give worth to something" (Johnson, 1993, p. 15), feeling-function is the expression of feeling in practical life and the health of an individual's feeling-function is witnessed in proportion to the degree that the individual feels relationally attuned and warmed with others (p. 15). The study of feeling-function within academia is of significance since the more a student attains proficiency in thought for the sake of achievement, the more likely it is that they will experience alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness on account of their feelings being subjugated (Johnson, 1989, p. 28).

Preference for instructional methods conducive to the rational transmission of knowledge has resulted in the collective and individual wounding of feeling-function within 20th and 21st century (Johnson, 1993, p. 12, 18, 21; Puk, 1996, p. 120). While preference for rational learning,

discourse, and social development is effective in producing "most of the high value of our life"

and exists as "that cool faculty which brings clarity and objectivity" (Johnson, 1993, p. 15), we

lose all grace, good feeling, valuing, worth, and capacity for supplying our own value

judgements to the world (Johnson, 1993, p. 15; von Franz, 2008, p. 12). A lack of feeling and

friendly relationship with university students is also implicated as a source of mass departure of

educators from the teaching profession within the last 50 years (Manuel, 2003, as cited in

Matthews, 2009, p. 103).

While Jung (1933) promoted a holistic approach to psychological development, Husserl

(1998) promoted a dualistic approach to human development (as cited in Farrell, 2020, p. 2)

which primarily focused on what humans "know about the world" rather than focusing on "what

it means to be in the world" (p. 2). Focusing on knowing about the world rather than helping

students to understand the meaning of their existence in the world thereby contributed to the 21$^{st}$

century preference for dualistic thinking which tends to dissociate meaning from learning

experience (p. 2). The notion that academia's preference for dualistic thinking tends to dissociate

meaning away from learning experiences (Husserl, 1998, as cited in Farrell, 2020, p. 2) is further

supported by von Franz (2008) who argues that it is the excessive historical application of

rational thought and objectivity which effectively creates conditions necessary for the removal of

feeling, personal inclusion, companionship, and valuing within interpersonal dynamics (p. 10-

11). While traditional teacher-centered approaches to teaching and instruction adhere to the

belief "that learning involves rational processes to the exclusion of all else" (Miller & Seller,

1990, as cited in Puk, 1996, p. 120), such employment of rationality as the sole source of

academic profit will only lead to the progressive disrespect for students as human beings with

their own unique sets of values (von Franz, 2008, p. 11). Unless universities and educators begin

to create opportunities for honoring learner needs for inclusion, companionship, and meaning, students will continue to feel alienated, lonely, and meaningless (p. 11). Educators and universities are consequently misguided in their attempts at providing students with rational solutions to existential issues which require an entirely novel way of studying and navigating the world since rationality alone does not have the authority to holistically guide students into meaningful existence, caring, and inclusivity (von Franz, 2008, p. 14; Farrell, 2020, p. 2-3). Jung (1973a) hereby suggests that Western academia has become "too lopsidedly intellectual and rational" and that educators have "forgotten that there are factors that cannot be influenced by a one-track intellect" (as cited in von Franz, 2008, p. 14).

What has been so often forgotten in the history of education is it has always been "an understanding heart [that] is everything in a teacher, and cannot be esteemed highly enough" (Jung, 1943, 1954, as cited in Matthews, 2009, p. 105). While students and educators alike look "back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers" they ultimately look back "with gratitude to those who touched [their] human feelings" (Jung, 1943, 1954, as cited in Matthews, 2009, p. 105). Where education has too singularly adhered to rational discourses of objectivity, perhaps educators in the latter half of the 21$^{st}$ century and beyond will begin to pay attention to the nurturance of the hearts and minds of students. Through such nurturance both student and educator will learn something not only of one another but of the fact that they both matter (von Franz, 2008, p. 12; Matthews, 2009, p. 104).

***Summary***

To better represent a holistic approach to education which promotes the well-being of students requires educators attend to the "creative spiritual, non-materialistic view of reality as a whole" (von Franz, 2008, p. 14). In this view, von Franz (2008) argues that students are not only respected based on their rational assessment of achievement but also for their attunement of

feeling with one another, their teachers, and their world (p. 14). A greater provision of teacher-centered curriculum and friendly student-teacher relationships is therefore the beginning point of helping students to see reality for what it truly is. When students learn to feel embodied within the world and learn to differentiate their feelings from mental abstractions they will then avoid feeling alienated, isolated, and split from meaningful experiences (p. 10-11).

So long as rationalism dominates discourse and pedagogy, and so long as the existential questions of students are ignored, the eradication of feeling within the West will continue to destroy the meaningfulness of everyday life (von Franz, 2008, p. 14). It is each student's pre-existing orientation within the world, their interpretation of the world, and their contextual histories which not only color their classroom experiences but also provides them with unique meanings for them to realize (Heidegger, 1928, 1999, as cited in Farrell, 2020, p. 3). It is through inclusive, companionate, and meaningful student-centered pedagogy and student-teacher relationships where students are nurtured into focusing on their experiences. Students come to accept that dishonest forms of education are those which abstract ideas away from lived experiences and that meaningful, genuine, and holistic education concerns their capacity to live completely as individual and collective beings who live in the world and who therefore learn through attaching their curriculum to their life contexts and experiences (Farrell, 2020, p. 4; von Franz, 2008, p. 15).

**Supporting Student-Centered Curriculum Within Education**

Educators and universities who provide curriculum attuned to the needs, interests, and lived experiences of their students produce more consistently skilled, creative, and productive students (Eisner, 1983, p. 130-131). Through the alignment of curriculum with student needs and life experiences, educators will begin to heal any presence of wounded feeling-function as they

come to validate student effort in accordance with value judgements (p. 132). Reinforcing each student's unique aesthetic and narrative preferences consequently helps to nurture their need for creativity and free expression (p. 132). In comparison, teacher-centered curriculum conveys the rote memorization of course content without inclusion of student concerns which cannot satisfy student needs to feel a companionate sense of inclusion within learning processes (p. 133).

When educators pay attention and include the life contexts of students within the classroom, students are better provided with the freedom to make their own decisions as to what they feel is involved within a meaningful existence (Eisner, 1983, p. 132; Heidegger, n.d., as cited in Farrell, 2020, p. 3). When students feel that they have the freedom to make their own decisions, they live with the burden of their responsibility and how their choices influence their life outcomes (Eisner, 1983, p. 132). Students end up feeling that their learning is more meaningful as they discover how the events in their lives have shaped their past and present (p. 132). The more that educators provide student-centered curriculum, which is inventive and linked to student experience, the more that educators will be able to help their students to see the metaphoric and poetic beauty of their histories (p. 132).

When educators choose to practice attunement, students become more interested in the content they are learning since they feel that they are seen and heard (Matthews, 2009, p. 107). Student-centered curriculum decreases meaninglessness when educators choose to act as mediators between curriculum and learners since learners learn to connect even traumatic life events to their learning journey which grants them with a sense of purpose. When university educators are in touch with their own feelings, they end up expressing love for their scholarly disciplines which helps to inspire students to also feel passion for their interests (Dewey, 1897, p.

37).  It is therefore important to realize that student needs, interests, and life experiences are the

points at which the student is directed towards a life purpose greater than themselves.

Paradoxically, attunement to student needs and interests through the provision of student-

centered curriculum is intentional towards the discovery of where each student feels inspired to

lead, learn, and create. In determining the interests of a student, the educator may further guide

the student to direct their passion beyond their own egoic desires. It is when the student is

directed towards a curious exploration of their own beautiful truths where they discover their

belongingness and meaningfulness within the world (Shuffelton, 2012, p. 218). The more that

students feel that they are active participants within the world and their curriculum, the more that

they feel that they are recognized, engaged, connected, and valued as persons which ultimately

results in greater accounts of felt inclusion, belonging, and meaning (Eisner, 1983; Farrell, 2020,

p. 3; Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2017, as cited in Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2018, p. 64; Heidegger,

n.d., as cited in Farrell, 2020, p. 3; Noddings, 2012b, as cited in Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2018, p.

64).

### *Scholarly Resistance to Student-Centered Curriculum*

Koenig and Marshall (n.d.) argue that student-centered curriculum cannot be effectively

applied due to Western academia's propensity for applying performance-based educational

models and grade scores as metrics "for student success" (as cited in Rangachari & Johnson,

2020, p. 14, 16). Boughey (2012) argues that student-centered curriculum should be resisted by

educators since it is biased towards the quantitative assessment of individual students as though

they were objects to be measured rather than seeking to determine subjective social factors which

may be impinging on their psycho-educational development (as cited in McKenna, 2013, p. 2).

Gee (2000) argues that student-centered curriculum should not be used within university settings

since higher education is already biased towards researching the "attributes of students" (as cited

in McKenna, 2014, p. 3) with neglect for the study of social contexts, institutional contexts, and

subject matter themselves (as cited in McKenna, 2013, p. 3). Not only is it argued that student-

centered curriculum has a tendency to ignore social and institutional impingements to learning,

but it also has a tendency to neglect the study of subjects, topics, themes, and disciplines for their

own sake (Gee, 2000, as cited in McKenna, 2013, p. 3; Maton, 2000a, 2000b, as cited in

McKenna, 2013, p. 2).

**Supporting Friendly Student-Teacher Relationships Within Education**

The provision of friendly student-teacher relationships is an essential aspect of caring for

the well-being of university students. The absence of interpersonal warmth between students and

teachers results in greater incidences of misunderstanding, disrespect, and lack of appreciation

(Shuffelton, 2012, p. 212). The formation of friendly student-teacher relationships allows for

students to absorb course content through a lens of care which metaphorically warms the

transmission of knowledge between student and teacher. When students feel warmth of

relationship and are simultaneously provided novel information, they are more likely to retain the

meaning of their course content and experience psychic growth (Dewey, 1897, p. 37). If course

content is communicated in the absence of feelings of warmth and friendship, the student is more

likely to feel that their learning endeavors are inherently meaningless (p. 37).

In assessing student-teacher relationships, it is important to ask the following question:

What does a friendly student-teacher relationship feel like? It is expected that friendly student-

teacher relationships involve the sharing of passion, joy, activity, creativity, and cooperation

where the student and their teacher live with purpose towards the betterment of their mutual

pursuit of knowledge and friendship (Shuffelton, 2012, p. 214). A further question: What is a

mutually informed relationship? (p. 214). The answer is found in determining that insofar as educators are capable of forming alliances with their students, such students will become intrinsically motivated to pursue a shared vision alongside their teacher. The more that both parties learn how to manage democratic interactions with one another, the more they will learn the valuable lessons of "with whom friendship is possible, and what friendship entails, and how to carry it off" (p. 212).

As students learn how to manage friendly alliances with their teachers they learn about companionship and how academic friendships can be used to increase accountability, responsibility, and the sharing of burdens. With the student's discovery that they are responsible for something or someone greater than themselves, they not only experience less alienation but also experience how the bond of friendship provides meaning within a no longer isolated existence (Johnson, 1993, p. 57-58; Shuffelton, 2012, p. 212). It is not the educational gaze between student and teacher which is the end in itself, rather, the goal is for the student and teacher to recognize one another and come to see the world through one another's inquisitive eyes in the hopes of discovering something new (Hawkins, 2002, as cited in Shuffelton, 2012, p. 221).

A major goal of student-centered curriculum and warm student-teacher relationships is to ensure that the educator learns where each student's interests are directing them to strive, work, and live towards a purpose beyond where they currently are. Educators therefore have the opportunity to help their students to interrogate how their interests and relationships are directing them to even greater meanings and purposes than just the development of knowledge and friendship (Hawkins, 2002, as cited in Shuffelton, 2012, p. 221). When students know that their teachers care about their well-being they are more likely to persist through difficult moments of

learning since the relationship itself represents a unified point of strength from which the student

can anchor themselves and ask for help (Dewey, 1963, as cited in Noddings, 2005, p. 166;

Noddings, 2005, p. 64). Not only does the presence of a friendly and relationally warm student-

teacher connection therefore increase the experiences of inclusion and belonging, but it also

allows for the student to meaningfully persist and face challenges. It is the presence of warm

friendships which introduce both student and teacher to what life feels like. It is warmth and the

bond of friendship which grants students meaning in the face of their trials as they learn to live

for something, even if it is only the bond of friendship which they believe is worth fighting for

(Shuffelton, 2012, p. 221).

### *Scholarly Resistance to Friendly Student-Teacher Relationships*

Since an educator has a natural propensity for intellectual authority they are often placed

in optimal positions for exerting authority over their students which would destroy the potential

for bonds to form (Shuffelton, 2011, p. 85). It is also argued that friendly student-teacher

relationships should not be used within classrooms since it is argued that teachers who maintain

friendships with their students will naturally develop partiality which would ruin academic rigor

and equitable assessment (p. 85). Shuffelton (2012) also contends that friendly student-teacher

relationships should not be used within academic settings since it is argued that striving to

maintain friendships distracts from the pursuit of learning goals (p. 215). It is suggested by

Shuffelton (2012) that when students focus on their teachers as their primary sources of

inspiration may lead to a failure of education since students may become obsessed with their

teacher as their sole source of inspiration and thereby forget to search for their own pathways,

insights, and inspirations (p. 219).

**Supporting Mutually Engrossing Classroom Climates Within Education**

Not only does modern academia have a propensity towards neglecting student-centered learning and relationships but it also neglects the formation of engrossing classroom climates. The absence of classrooms inclusive of caring, curiosity, and engagement only furthers the destruction of learning opportunities for university students (Miller & Seller, 1990, as cited in Puk, 1996, p. 120; Dewey, 1897, p. 35; Arpianinen et al., 2013, as cited in Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2018, p. 63). In assessing the health of classroom environments, it is important we ask ourselves the following question: What would an engrossing classroom feel like? Matthews (2009) states that mutually engrossing classrooms are those classrooms which are imbued with feelings of warmth (p. 108). Engrossing classrooms are those which contain open dialogical spaces where students feel free to express themselves to their teachers. It is therefore suggested that educators encourage their students to express themselves in the bond of the friendly student-teacher relationship. Both student-centered curriculum and friendly  student-teacher relationships are exposed to dialogic paths which help to increase collaboration and decrease conflict (p. 110).

Research conducted by Trickey and Moos (1974) discovered that classrooms which were highly representative of mutual engrossment between teachers and students resulted in significantly higher feelings of interdependent security and safety (as cited in Goetz et al., 2021, p. 3). The more that students feel that their classrooms represent safety and security, the more they will communicate their desires to their teachers which will help to increase the degree to which teachers can respond with inclusivity, acceptance, and respect (Glowacki-Dudka, et al., 2018, p. 65; Brookfield, 2011, as cited in Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2018, p. 65; Imel, 1999, as cited in Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2018, p. 65).

Mutually engrossing classrooms are those which contain educators who are fully inspired by their subjects and who model investigative passion to their students. When students witness their teachers and peers passion for their interests and relationships, it is more likely that such students will behave with curiosity, invention, and imagination (Matthews, 2009, p. 108). The consequent outcome of providing students with student-centered curriculum and friendly student-teacher relationships is that entire university classrooms experience greater inclusivity, belonging, companionship, and meaningfulness alongside decreased incidences of destructive classroom behavior (Jung, 1964, as cited in Matthews, 2009, p. 107-108).

***Scholarly Resistance to Mutually Engrossing Classroom Environments***

Resistance to the creation and maintenance of engrossing classroom climates involves the argument that Noddings (2005) concept of engrossment with its inclination towards non-judgement and "non-selective receptivity" is both discriminatory and dehumanizing (p. 67; Lorde, 1982, 1984, as cited in Hoagland, 1990, p. 111). The argument that engrossment represents the fullness of interrelationship is countered through the contention that it is only through a student having the capacity for separation and re-connection which allows them the freedom to explore and return to their teacher with newfound courage and trust (Lorde, 1982, 1984, as cited in Hoagland, 1990, p. 111). Rather than attempting to keep learners entirely engrossed all of the time through the attention and friendship within student-centered curriculum and student-teacher relationships, learner development requires that students have the freedom to separate since the qualities and actions of withdrawal, dignity, decency, and propriety create the distance necessary for the student to realize how their own Otherness as well as the Otherness of peers and teachers (Lorde, 1982, 1984, as cited in Hoagland, 1990, p. 111; Han, 2017, p. 29).

***Summary of Support & Counterarguments to Student-Centered Curriculum, Friendly***
***Student-Teacher Relationships, and Mutually Engrossing Classroom Environments***

In Glowacki-Dudka et al. (2017), attention, invention, and imagination within university

classrooms promote inclusivity, belonging, and meaningful learning (as cited in Glowacki-

Dudka et al., 2018, p. 64); in Noddings (2012b), attention, listening, and receptivity to student

needs helps students to feel valued (as cited in Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2018, p. 64; Glowacki-

Dudka, et al., 2017); and in Heidegger (n.d.), the more that university student lived experiences

were tied to course content, the more students believed that their lives were meaningful (as cited

in Farrell, 2020, p. 3).

In Shuffelton (2012), friendly student-teacher relationships create a greater sense of

meaning in the lives of university students as they feel that they have a greater purpose through

the bond of friendship (p. 214); in Johnson (1993), friendly student-teacher relationships create

meaning in the lives of university students as relationships represent a purpose greater than

themselves (p. 57-58); and in Noddings (2005), Johnson (1993), Dewey (1963), and Shuffelton

(2012), friendly student-teacher relationships decrease alienation and loneliness as students learn

to anchor themselves, depend upon one another, and ask for help from their educators while also

maintaining bonds of friendship (p. 64; p. 57-58; as cited in Noddings, 2005, p. 166; p. 221).

In Matthews (2009), engrossing classroom environments create a greater sense of

interpersonal warmth which decreases alienation and loneliness through the bi-directional

exchange of care (p. 108-110); in Trickett and Moos (1974), Glowacki-Dudka, et al. (2018),

Brookfield (2011), Imel (1999), and Guzzardo et al. (2020) engrossing classroom environments

create experiences of dialogical safety which help to increase learner experiences of support and

validation for their lived experiences which assists students in accepting their educators beliefs

that their lives as students are meaningful, worthy, and valuable of receiving care, attention,

respect, and investment (as cited in Goetz et al., 2021, p. 3; p. 65; as cited in Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2018, p. 65; as cited in Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2018, p. 65; p. 49; Henriksen, 2010, as cited in Abbasi & Hadabi, 2014, p. 6).

Koenig and Marshall (n.d.) argue that student-centered curriculum cannot be authentically applied within the Western academic world which is firmly bound to standards-based assessments practices (as cited in Rangachari & Johnson, 2020). Boughey (2012) and Gee (2000) argue that student-centered curriculum dangerously supports meritocracy and systems of inequity within universities while neglecting social factors which may be negatively contributing to the experiences of alienation, loneliness, and meaningless in the lives of university students (as cited in Mckenna, 2013, p. 2-3). Maton (2000a, 2000b) also argues that warm student-centered pedagogies neglect the support of academic disciplines for the sake of supporting individual students which leads to a neglect of knowledge creation for its own sake (as cited in McKenna, 2013, p. 2). Shuffelton (2011, 2012) argues that teacher-student relationships are dangerous due to the potential emergence of careless educators who exert power over their students, who create impartiality within their classrooms, and who value the development of friendship above learning process (p. 84; p. 215).

**Feeling-Function Focused Pedagogy and Qualities in Education**

Thus far, one of the primary intents of this literature review has been recognizing the academic neglect of student interest, need, and meaningful experience while also seeking to better establish how the benefits and risks of student-centered curriculum and warm student-teacher relationships influence learning environments (Eisner, 1983, pp. 130-131; Gee, 2000, as cited in McKenna, 2013, p. 3; Han, 2017, p. 29; Hawkins, 2002, as cited in Shuffelton, 2012, p. 221; Jung, 1964, as cited in Matthews, 2009, p. 107-108; Lorde, 1982, 1984, as cited in

Hoagland, 1990, p. 111; Maton, 2000a, 2000b, as cited in McKenna, 2013, p. 2; Shuffelton, 2011, p. 85). The further determination that a "too lopsidedly intellectual and rational" approach to education fundamentally predisposes university students toward experiences of alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness (Jung, n.d., as cited in von Franz, 2008, p. 14) further demands that educators no longer exclude the life of experiences of students from curriculum (Farrell, 2020, p. 2). Learning to no longer dissociate meaning from learning experience (p. 2) is therefore of penultimate importance for university educators. Examining the qualities of attentiveness, creativity, imagination, and relational warmth will provide further understanding as to how student-centered curriculum and warm student-teacher relationships reduce learner experiences of alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness.

*Attentiveness*

Attentiveness is described as the specific direction of attention "between a student, the evidence they produce, and the teacher" (Mo, et al., 2021, p. 11). Attentiveness may be demonstrated by educators who choose to help students to connect their lived experiences to their course content through think-pair-share activities or self-reflective activities (Keller, et al., 2020, p. 2). The greater extent to which learner life contexts are attached to course content, the more course content becomes meaningfully internalized (p. 3). The quality of attentiveness is especially important within student-centered curriculum since students can gain "meaningful academic knowledge" as they feel responded to which decreases their experiences of alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness while simultaneously experiencing greater accounts of "trust, respect, compassion, [and] relations of reciprocity" (del Carmen Salazar, 2013, as cited in Tan, 2022, p. 2, 4).

*Creativity*

Creativity is defined as any behavior or outcome that is both "novel" and "appropriate" (Miller, 2018, as cited in Brown, 1989; Runco & Jaeger, 2012, p. 88). Creativity is an important quality of student-centered curriculum since it is course designers and instructors who in their curricular designs and presentations can shape the creative output of their students (Miller, 2018, p. 89). Allowing students to respond to curriculum with their own interests, lived experiences, and creative expressions allows for students to reduce their experiences of alienation, loneliness, and meaningless as they share their stories and ultimately "ease the suffering they feel" (Dewey, 1897, p. 36; Kellman, 2008, p. 114). Increasing the creative freedom of students therefore allows students to avoid feeling alienated from themselves and others as they share their passions and receive validation from their peers (Eisner, 1983, p. 133). The more that university students are granted the freedom to share their creativity with one another, the more they will come to appreciate themselves and their creative works which allows them to avoid coercion and discover their own unique answers to what provides their lives with wholeness and meaning (Noddings, 2005, p. 67, 74-76).

*Imagination*

Imagination is defined as the "capacity to conceive of what is not – something that, as far as we know, does not exist; or something that may exist but we simply cannot perceive. It is the ability to conjure new realities and possibilities" (Liu & Noppe-Brandon, 2009, p. 19). The application of imagination in both the creation of student-centered curriculum and the expectancy for students to respond to their curriculum with imagination is of utmost importance since imagination itself allows students to both consider new realities while also creating anew (p. 19). In the absence of imagination, neither students nor educators are capable of considering

new possibilities, new ideas, or actions. In the same way that students are capable of imagining themselves in alienated, lonely, and meaningless forms of existence, it is also possible for students to imagine themselves in situations where they may be included, welcomed, and where they may support a purpose, meaning, or vision beyond themselves (Enlow & Popa, 2008, p. 24, as cited in Odom, et al., 2015, p. 131; Wenger, 1998, p. 178, as cited in Odom, et al., p. 131).

***Warmth & Friendship***

 Relational warmth and friendship within student-teacher relationships occurs through a shared experience of openness by way of mutual attention, understanding, and self-giving (Bordin, 1968, as cited in Bayes, 1972, p. 333; Krasner, 1955, as cited in Bayes, 1972, p. 333; Raush & Bordin, 1957, as cited in Bayes, 1972, p. 333; Truax & Carkhuff, 1967, as cited in Bayes, 1972, p. 333; Johnson, 1993, p. 18, 57, 58; Shuffelton, 2012, p. 212). Jung (n.d.) argues that while "the curriculum is so much necessary raw material" (as cited in Matthews, 2009, p. 105) it is relational warmth that "is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child" (p. 105). Since the occurrence of warm and friendly student-teacher relationships tend to decline within post-secondary academic environments (Eccles & Midgley, 1989, as cited in Freeman, et al., 2007, p. 206; Feldlaufer, Midgley, & Eccles, 1988, as cited in Freeman, et al., 2007, p. 206; Gheen, Hruda, Middleton, & Midgley, 2000, as cited in Freeman, et al., 2007, p. 206; Midgley et al., 2002, as cited in Freeman, et al., 2007, p. 206), the inclusion of warmth and friendship within student-teacher relationships is necessary since the more that students experience feelings of warmth and support, the less they will experience alienation and loneliness (Solomon, et al., 1997, as cited in Freeman, et al., 2007, p. 205).

**Summary**

Educators who are capable of providing attention, creativity, and freedom of imagination to their students will necessarily promote inclusivity, belonging, and meaningful learning as student interests, personalities, and lived experiences are given value by themselves and their teachers (Keller, et al., 2020, p. 2-3; del Carmen Salazar, 2013, as cited in Tan, 2022, p. 2, 4; Enlow & Popa, 2008, p. 24, as cited in Odom, et al., 2015, p. 131; Wenger, 1998, p. 178, as cited in Odom, et al., 2015, p. 131). Bonds of friendship within academia provides students with security, resilience, and encouragement to express their passions and to overcome the daily challenges of life alongside their peers and teachers (Johnson, 1993, p. 57-58; Shuffelton, 2012, p. 212; Noddings, 2005, p. 64; Dewey, 1963, as cited in Noddings, 2005, p. 166). Helping university students towards the self-realization that their interests and relationships are guiding them towards a purpose or meaning greater than themselves better allows them to perceive how their lives can be necessarily meaningful through the practices of self-giving, self-sacrifice, attention, and care which their educators had modelled to them (Matthews, 2009, p. 107-108).

I am reminded of Saint Francis of Assisi whose petition was that "where there is hatred, let [us] sow love" and as educators my hope is that "may [we] not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love" for "it is in giving that we receive" (Allen, 2022, p. 12). My hope is that in the same way that Saint Francis focused on the Other that university educators will learn to help, care, and nurture their students towards the acceptance of themselves and others as they pursue their passions and live in the hope of becoming the educators they wish they had.

**Chapter Three: Application**

**Aims**

Responsive teaching strategies receptive to post-secondary experiences of alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness are important since it is understood that if a teacher can form a "healthy pedagogic relationship to their students" their students will be less likely to believe that their studies are superficial while maintaining a depth of trustful learning (Matthews, 2009, p. 105). Evaluating how individual life contexts and collective classroom contexts shape the intended implementation of student-centered curriculum and friendly student-teacher relationships allows for a better consideration of simple teaching strategies which help to reduce alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness (Farrell, 2020, p. 1). Holistic education cannot thrive without the inclusion of attention, creativity, imagination, meaningfulness, and relational warmth within student-centered curriculum and student-teacher relationships (Miller, 2021, p. 16). Since human differences are inescapable, it is the university educator's responsibility to utilize particularities as opportunities for tailoring curriculum and student-teacher dynamics to students (Frankl, 1986, p. 71).

This application chapter is divided into two main parts. The first half of the application chapter covers required considerations of student-centered curriculum, how to attune to students through student-centered curriculum, identifying life contexts which influence the success of student-centered curriculum, and summary statements of how student-centered curriculum helps to heal alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness. The second half of the chapter covers required considerations of friendly student-teacher relationships, how to attune to students through friendship, identifying life contexts which influence the formation of friendly student-

teacher relationships and summary statements of how friendly student-teacher relationships help to heal alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness.

**Considerations for Student-Centered Curriculum**

Supportive curriculum allows educators to increase their dynamic, flexible, and adaptive responses to students' cultures, religions, social dynamics, and family contexts (Critchley, 2009, as cited in Farrell, 2020, p. 4). When due consideration is given to students' life contexts, it is more likely that educators will be perceptive of how to apply teaching strategies which focus on their students' individual needs and interests (Emes & Cleveland-Innes, 2003, p. 60). Working to identify each individual student's unique background helps educators to also understand how student-centered curriculum shapes the aforementioned creation of an engrossing classroom environment and how such curriculum within classrooms influences student's learning since a student's interpretation of the classroom can affect the degree to which they are motivated to collaborate with their peers (Mead, 1934, as cited in Emes & Cleveland-Innes, 2003, p. 51; Glowacki-Dudka, et al., 2018, p. 65; Brookfield, 2011, as cited in Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2018, p. 65; Imel, 1999, as cited in Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2018, p. 65). Exploring how unique student life contexts and university classroom environments can affect the implementation of student-centered curriculum is essential since it is assumed that one form of student-centered curriculum is not universal to all student populations (Emes & Cleveland-Innes, 2003, p. 63).

*Attunement, Life Contexts, and Increasing the Success of Student-Centered Curriculum*

The process of developing individualized plans for how student-centered curriculum can be applied within university contexts begins with attuning to the life contexts of university students. It is important to maintain an attitude of adaptation to student diversity and interest within equally diverse forms of curriculum design since the "heart of the teaching-learning

process" is attuning to the needs and interests of students (Pelech, 2021, p. 10; Hunt, 1976, p. 168, as cited in Pelech, 2021, p. 10). One of the best methods of increasing student-teacher attunement to the life contexts of students is to employ the use of self-reflection and summarization of course content which helps to "facilitate comprehension and knowledge" (Dobbins, 1996, as cited Pelech, 2021, p. 24; Martin & Ertzberger, 2016, as cited in Pelech, 2021, p. 26; Dean et al., 2012, as cited in Pelech, p. 63; Fiorella & Mayer, 2015, as cited Pelech, 2021, p. 63). While a detailed discussion of self-reflective journalling is provided in a following section, self-reflective activities help students to connect their interests to their coursework which helps to increase intrinsic motivation as they become more motivated to direct their energies towards the accomplishment of their own missions and goals (Ambrose et al., 2010, p. 83). When university students know how their learning activities and introductory courses provide them with the opportunity to interdependently discover the knowledge necessary to complete advanced coursework, they will ultimately attain the awareness of the overall relevance of their learning tasks and how they are headed towards a life-long mission of learning (p. 84; Frankl, 1986, p. 54).

### *Attuning to Classroom Environments to Utilize Student-Centered Curriculum*

While attunement is a necessary quality of student-centered curriculum there is an undoubted neglect of how school environments also shape the accountability and responsibility of students (Van Acker & Wehby, 2000, para. 3). The most successful students are most often those who learn to use nurturing classroom environments to their advantage rather than using grace from an instructor as an excuse to avoid responsibility and hard work (Wang et al., 1993, as cited in Van Acker & Wehby, 2000, para. 8; Epstein et al., 1989, as cited Van Acker & Wehby, 2000, para. 8; Kauffman, 1997, as cited in Van Acker & Wehby, 2000, para. 8; Loeber,

1990, as cited in Van Acker & Wehby, 2000, para. 8). Since classroom environments change

with demographic dynamics, it is important for university educators to direct the particularities

of curriculum to "the specific context of a specific class" without generalization or stereotype

(Ball & Cohen, 1999, as cited in Pelech, 2021, p. 10; Efron & Ravid, 2013, as cited Pelech,

2021, p. 10). Aligning the classroom culture to current events outside of the classroom can be

one means of showing students how classroom composition affects their learning and how their

learning within the classroom has real-world implications as they learn how that which they learn

within the classroom also applies without (Ambrose, 2010, p. 83).

### Strategies to Implement Student-Centered Curriculum

Self-reflective journaling activities are shown to produce higher academic achievement

during assessments, better problem-solving, and greater self-understanding of personal feelings

for university students (Mo et al., 2021, p. 11; Keller et al., 2020, p. 2; Dobbins, 1996, as cited in

Pelech, 2021, p. 24; Martin & Ertzberger, 2016, as cited in Pelech, 2021, p. 26). During my

M.Ed. program I was required to complete weekly Currere activities which were specifically

designed to allow me to use my past experiences and my journals as a means of understanding

the influence of my past and present experiences on the creation of a better future (Pinar, 1994,

p. 19, 21, 24-26). The beautiful thing about my participation in my Currere activities within my

course in curriculum, teaching, and learning was how Dr. Karen Densky taught me that there is

no right or wrong only a deep practice of phenomenological, regressive, progressive, analytic,

and synthetic thinking (Pinar, 1994, p. 21-26). Self-reflective journaling activities help university

students to discover solutions to their own problems while also helping them to negotiate their

"values and instincts to understand [their] positions with respect to the world around

[themselves]" which "includes understanding such questions as the significance and meaning of

life" (Armstrong, 2018, as cited in Pelech, 2021, p. 52). Self-reflective journaling activities

therefore assist students with experiencing less alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness since

their combined exposure to individualized problem-solving and values formation allows them to

interrogate their own forms of mission, purpose, and companionship (Johnson, 1993, p. 12; Puk,

1996, p. 120; Armstrong, 2018, as cited in Pelech, 2021, p. 52).

Completed self-reflective activities can be rewarded through qualitative assessments that

align with course objectives (Ambrose, 2010, p. 84; Enlow & Popa, 2008, p. 24, as cited in

Odom et al., 2015, p. 131; Wenger, 1998, p. 178, as cited in Odom, et al., 2015, p. 131). If a

university educator values the collaborative dialogue of members within group projects, the

educator may consider including the qualities of clear communication, conflict resolution, and

inclusion of all team-member perspectives within a grading rubric so that appropriate evaluations

can be provided to students (Ambrose, 2010, p. 85). The completion of such attuned and creative

self-reflective activities allows for students to share their interests and existential concerns with

their classmates and teachers which ultimately helps to reduce alienation, loneliness, and

meaningless through the sharing of their autobiographical life narratives (Dewey, 1897, p. 36;

Eisner, 1983, p. 133; Kellman, 2008, p. 114; Noddings, 2005, p. 67, 74-76).

*Summary*

My own experiences of alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness throughout my

undergraduate studies inspired me to explore means of increasing inclusivity, companionship,

and meaningful learning during my M.Ed. journey. Researching the wounded feeling-function of

the West allows for educators to notice the importance of attention, creativity, invention, and

friendliness within student-centered curriculum and student-teacher relationships while also

granting such qualities the significance they deserve as healing elixirs to the university

experiences of alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness (Johnson, 1993, p. 12, 15, 18; Puk, 1996, p. 120; von Franz, 2008, p. 12). Identifying that decreased attention, creativity, and imagination within curriculum results in greater accounts of misunderstanding, disrespect, and hopelessness within university classrooms need encourage university educators to accept the importance of self-reflective activities since the writing of intrapersonal narratives and the interpersonal sharing of joys, struggles, and goals decreases alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness (von Franz, 2008, p. 11; Keller et al., 2020, p. 2; Mo et al., 2021, p. 11; Armstrong, 2018, as cited in Pelech, 2021, p. 52; Dewey, 1897, p. 36; Eisner, 1983, p. 133; Kellman, 2008, p. 114; Noddings, 2005, p. 67, 74-76). The application of autobiography with curriculum therefore allows university students to consider alternative possibilities which are hopeful, companionate, and purposive rather than remaining trapped within downwardly spiraling rationales which are alienated, lonely, or nihilistic (Liu & Noppe-Brandon, 2009, p. 19; Ji et al., 2022, p. 618; Dunn, 2012, as cited in Ji et al., 2022, p. 623; LeMoult & Gotlib, 2019, as cited in Ji et al., 2022, p. 623; Winer & Salem, 2016, as cited in Ji et al., 2022, p. 623). In the same way that universal forms of student-centered curriculum do not exist (Emes & Cleveland-Innes, 2003, p. 63), the formation of friendly and warm student-teacher relationships requires that university educators pay attention to how each of their bonds to their students carries a demand for the uniquely tailored application of grace, good feeling, value, and worth to each student with their respective idiosyncrasies (Johnson, 1993, p. 15; von Franz, 2008, p. 12). As a consequence, the next section of the application chapter concerns the exploration of friendly student-teacher relationships, how to develop them, and how various life contexts influence their development.

**Considerations for Friendly Student-Teacher Relationships**

As I was able to demonstrate in my literature review, strategies which support friendly student-teacher relationships must begin with the identification that it is friendliness, warmth, empathy, and trust within student-teacher relationships which must increase to help students better internalize course content (Cornelius-White, 2007, as cited in Pelech, 2021, p. 86; Johnson, 1993, p. 15). Since students have their own pre-conceptions of how classroom experiences should unfold, determining means of questioning students' stereotypic beliefs of classrooms as cold and abjectly rational requires an exposure of each student to as much warmth and friendship as possible so that student-teacher rapport forms (Pelech, 2021, p. 91). Since learning "doesn't happen in a vacuum" but occurs in unique coursework and classroom contexts, remembering the individual needs of each student helps learners to feel that they are included, that they belong, and that they are in themselves of necessary value within the learning environment (Ambrose, 2010, p. 180). Since the personal insights and experiences of students can only be drawn out if educators are capable of forming bonds of warmth and trust with their students, it is essential to explore practical means of increasing the bond of friendship, relatedness, belonging, and warmth between university educators and their students (Toshalis, 2016, as cited in Pelech, 2021, p. 85; Marzano, 2017, as cited in Pelech, 2021, p. 85; Cornelius-White, 2007, as cited in Pelech, 2021, p. 86).

***Attunement, Life Contexts, and Increasing the Success of Friendly Student-Teacher Relationships***

Social contexts influence the behavioral responsiveness of students towards their curriculum (Fagan & Wilkinson, 1998, as cited in Van Acker & Wehby, 2000, para. 1). It is necessary for curriculum to be adapted to both the lived experience of students and their classroom contexts since the "amygdala directs [information] to the reflecting, thinking brain"

when learners feel relaxed and safe in their classrooms (Pelech, 2021, p. 55; Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2017, as cited in Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2018, p. 64; Noddings, 2012b, as cited in Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2018, p. 64; Eisner, 1983; Heidegger, n.d., as cited in Farrell, 2020, p. 3). The more that post-secondary students maintain friendly student-teacher relationships, the more they come to attain their own resilient work ethics and creative expressions for their interests (Siegle et al., 2014, as cited in Pelech, 2021, p. 8). It is essential for university educators to pay attention to the finer details of students' experiences since it is the irreplaceable "moment-to-moment" (Claessens et al., 2017, p. 478) interactions which cannot be re-created that build the student-teacher relationships towards friendliness and warmth.

  If an educator truly sees and hears the student, the educator will notice the stressors and environmental challenges that their students are facing. Once an educator sees and hears their students it is possible for them to provide compassion to their students so that they experience more affiliation, friendliness, and communion with less alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness (Newman, 2000, as cited in Claessens et al., 2017, p. 479; Gurtman, 2009, as cited in Claessens et al., 2017, p. 479; Andersen, 1998, as cited in Claessens et al., 2017, p. 479; Jung, 1943, 1954, as cited in Matthews, 2009, p. 105; von Franz, 2008, p. 12; Matthews, 2009, p. 104). Student-teacher relationships consequently become more reciprocally warm and friendly when an educator pays attention to their students' interests and needs so that they invite their students to receive compassion and warmth which encourages students to also express their own encouragement towards their teachers (Claessens et al., 2017, p. 480). By attending to university students' needs to feel heard and seen, the student becomes more inclined towards "supporting and collaborating in class" (p. 483) which aids in the internalization of course content (Dewey, 1897, p. 37).

***Attuning to Classroom Environments to Build Friendly Student-Teacher Relationships***

The coloring of classroom experiences may be shaped pessimistically by students if their pre-existing orientations within the world, their interpretation of the world, and their contextual histories are already cynical, doubtful, and coldhearted (Heidegger, 1928, 1999, as cited Farrell, 2020, p. 3). While I was attending undergraduate school I was enrolled in a course of resilience where my professor was unwilling to offer me redemptive opportunities for academic re-writes during a period of my life where I was experiencing a relational breakup and severe depression. Since my life was colored with a lens of perpetual sadness and hopelessness I was asking my professor for grace to offer me forgiveness and understanding in the hopes of re-writing an essay which I had completed very poorly. However, rather than receiving grace and an attitude of second chances, I was told that I would not be given another opportunity and that I would have to re-take the course if I wanted a chance at redemption. I therefore experienced worsening alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness since I felt that my professor did not care about my personal well-being as a human being seeking to feel heard and seen.

It is therefore suggested that if post-secondary educators determine that some of their students view themselves, their professors, and their environments in a pessimistic light, it is possible to increase hopefulness and decrease alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness by listening and responding to each student's concerns with attention, care, or by offering their students compassion and understanding through the offering of academic re-writes and second chances (Ambrose et al., 2010, p. 81; Eisner, 1983; Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2017, as cited in Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2018, p. 64; Heidegger, n.d., as cited in Farrell, 2020, p. 3; Noddings, 2012b, as cited in Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2018, p. 64). Considering how each university classroom contains diverse student populations, it is necessary to further consider how

"unanticipated social and emotional dynamics" will occur and how university educators may

consider such divergencies as opportunities for friendly classroom unification (Ambrose, 2010,

p. 155).

Student dissatisfaction within the classroom is largely due to the presence of an educator

whose ignorance of learner opinions and feelings not only produces hurt feelings but academic

disengagement (Ambrose, 2010, p. 155-156). When undergraduate students experience a lack of

relational warmth within the classroom, learners are more likely to self-report how their writing,

thinking and overall comprehension of curriculum worsened (p. 173). Rather than consequently

expecting university students to "check their emotions at the door" (p. 155), it is expected that

educators need to provide their students with an emotionally inclusive classroom environment

which welcomes and cooperates with the human presence of their students. Ensuring that

classroom contexts are relationally warm and friendly involves universities and educators

validating different viewpoints, debatable positionalities, and using course examples which

"speak to both sexes" which "work across cultures, and relate to people from various

socioeconomic statuses" (p. 180-181, 193). The development of a classroom climate which is

necessarily democratic therefore helps to provide a shared vision for the classroom where all

students learn to share their experiences at both the intrapersonal and interpersonal level

ultimately helping to decrease isolation and alienation while increasing companionate

collaboration and meaningful connections between experiences and tasks (Shuffelton, 2012, p.

212; Johnson, 1993, p. 57-58).

### *Strategies to Implement Friendly Student-Teacher Relationships*

It is necessary for student-teacher relationships to be adapted to the relationally safe

needs of students since there is a connection between learning and experiences of safety (Eisner,

1983; Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2017, as cited in Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2018, p. 64; Noddings,

2012b, as cited in Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2018, p. 64). Recognizing that the absence of

relational warmth and friendliness between students and teachers produces greater incidences of

misunderstanding, disrespect, and lack of appreciation (Shuffelton, 2012, p. 212), one strategy to

create friendly student-teacher relationships is for educators to greet their students by their first

names or by having short discussions throughout the day (Pelech, 2021, p. 86). The greater the

appreciated receipt of verbal affirmation from educator to student, the more university students

will experience feelings of relational warmth and support which help to decrease their

experiences of alienation and loneliness (Solomon et al., 1997, as cited in Freeman et al,. 2007,

p. 205).

Apart from verbal and intellectual gestures of care, it is also possible to foster relationally

warm and friendly student-teacher relationships through physically friendly behaviors such as

providing post-secondary students with high-fives, smiles, or thumbs-up for their

accomplishments and collaborative activities (Marzano, 2017, as cited in Pelech, 2021, p. 86;

Woodside et al., 1999, as cited in Pelech, 2021, p. 86). It is also possible for post-secondary

educators to increase relational warmth and friendship through a greater practice of one-to-one

interactions where teachers make greater time for their students in-school through the application

of the flipped classroom (p. 91). The flipped-classroom model allows for students to "spend the

classroom time" on "discussing the material, debating issues, or collaborating on a project" (p.

91) which ultimately allows for university students to feel that they are free to develop their own

opinions since the bond of friendship does not enforce feelings of forced coercion which

ultimately helps both parties to view one another as unique persons (p. 91).

*Summary*

Academic misunderstanding, disrespect, and lack of appreciation between educators and students occurs when there is lack of relational warmth and friendship within classroom environments; however, student-teacher relationships can be reinforced through shared passion, joy, creativity, and collaboration which help to lessen alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness (Ambrose et al., 2010, p. 81; Shuffelton, 2012, p. 212, 214). The more that students feel that they are heard and seen within "moment-to-moment" (Claessens et al., 2017, p. 478) interactions, the more they learn to experience affiliation, friendliness, and communion thereby decreasing alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness (Claessens et al., 2017, p. 483; Newman, 2000, as cited in Claessens et al., 2017, p. 479; Gurtman, 2009, as cited in Claessens et al., 2017, p. 479; Andersen, 1998, as cited in Claessens et al., 2017, p. 479; Jung, 1943, 1954, as cited in Matthews, 2009, p. 105; von Franz, 2008, p. 12; Matthews, 2009, p. 104). Strategies such as greeting students by their first names, smiling at students, high-fiving students, or having short discussions with students throughout the school-day can help to increase the friendliness of student-teacher relationships while decreasing alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness (Pelech, 2021, p. 86; Marzano, 2017, as cited in Pelech, 2021, p. 86; Woodside et al., 1999, as cited in Pelech, 2021, p. 86). Verbally, intellectually, and physically encouraging student-teacher relationships and classroom interactions therefore helps students to persist in the face of intellectual challenges while learning how the bonds of friendship and purposes beyond themselves are worth fighting for (Pelech, 2021, p. 86, 91; Marzano, 2017, as cited in Pelech, 2021, p. 86; Woodside et al., 1999, as cited in Pelech, 2021, p. 86; Shuffelton, 2012, p. 221).

The next section of my capstone paper is my conclusion which covers my re-communication of the Arthurian romance story *Perceval, or, The Story of the Grail* (de Troyes &

Cline, 1985) alongside my recap and reaffirmation of my argument that alienation, loneliness,

and meaninglessness can be healed through the application of attentiveness, creative expression,

imagination, and friendship within student-centered curriculum and student-teacher relationships.

My conclusion not only shows the connections between my introduction, literature review, and

application chapters but also provides my statements of successful argumentation, limitations of

my research, and potential consequences to the successful application of student-centered

curriculum and friendly student-teacher relationships. I also include directives for future research

within and beyond the field of education with my personal contemplations as an educational

researcher.

### Chapter Four: Conclusion

The Arthurian romance story *Perceval, or, The Story of the Grail*, written by Chretien De

Troyes somewhere between 1178 and 1191 has the power to spark debate concerning the

symbolic and archetypal meanings of attaining or fighting through achievements, noble deeds,

and the meaning of life (de Troyes & Cline, 1985, p. 22, 32, 209; Johnson, 1993, p. 55).

Throughout his journey Perceval was required to leave his mother and the lessons of home

behind (p. 20), speak ignorantly with maidens (p. 22), fight many battles (p. 35, 58, 68), learn

new skills (p. 43, 49), and determine the meaning of life (p. 89-91). Not only was Perceval

required to accept the death of his father, mother, and brothers early in his story but he was also

forced to stumble ignorantly through life while learning who he was and where he wanted to

journey (p. 14, 16, 20). For all of Perceval's strengths and courageous endeavors his mistake on

his journey was that he failed to ask the question, "whom does the Grail serve?" (Johnson, 1993,

p. 57). One theory proposed by Johnson (1993) is that the Arthurian romance story *Perceval, or,

the Story of the Grail* describes Perceval's discovery that relational experiences of inclusion,

belonging, and the meaning of life are not found in the attainment of one's own power but "in the service of that which is greater than one's self" (Johnson, 1993, p. 57; De Troyes & Cline, 1985, p. 174). The great lesson of the Arthurian romance story *Perceval, or, The Story of the Grail*, is that life serves the psychological conceptions of the Self or a divine conception of God or gods; the something or someone greater than us (de Troyes & Cline, p. 91, 173-174; Johnson, 1993, p. 57-58).

**Recapping and Reaffirming my Argument**

My capstone paper represents a clear synthesis of my personal experiences of alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness throughout my educational journey alongside a sharing of my research interests in the fields of education, psychology, phenomenology, and existentialism. Exploring practical applications of student-centered curriculum and friendly student-teacher relationships has allowed me to better express the interpersonal process of relatedness and inquisitive freedom taught to me by Dr. Cope-Watson and Dr. Karen Densky where they both displayed to me how they chose to serve an ideal beyond themselves in seeking to listen and respond to both my faltering humanity and my need to make decisions without condemnation rather than merely expecting me to behave as an automaton without feelings. Being able to effectively self-reflect and re-negotiate my past experiences throughout my undergraduate and graduate career has afforded me a depth of analysis where I have learned of my own and others propensity towards experiencing alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness when the so-called meaning of educational life is only viewed through the attainment of one's own power rather than seeking to re-orient the human ego towards something enduring beyond our short-lived lives (de Troyes & Cline, 1985, p. 174; Johnson, 1993, p. 57). The concluding sections of my capstone paper therefore equally represent my literal and symbolic passage through many life

transitions and thresholds of development where I have learned to become a thoroughly guiding, caring, and insightful educator.

As I have shown in my literature review, the application of attuned, creative, and imaginative student-centered curriculum alongside friendly student-teacher relationships allows for post-secondary educators to help their students transition from experiences of alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness into experiences of shared inclusivity, belonging, and purpose (Noddings, 2005). The study of the post-secondary student's search for meaning and their struggle for feelings of inclusion, belonging, and purpose is highly significant since the absence of attunement, creative expression, imaginative thinking, and relational warmth within academic settings leads to higher incidences of alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness (Johnson, 1989, p. 28; Jung, n.d., as cited in von Franz, 2008, p. 14). Since holistic learning is as much about attaining wholeness of being (Johnson, 1983, p. 20; Farrell, 2020, p. 1) as it is about remaining open to the beliefs of others it is subsequently necessary for the subject of academic meaninglessness to be considered of great importance lest educators and universities seek to regard their students as though their lives were without ontic potential (Farrell, 2020, p. 1-3; Heidegger, n.d., as cited in Farrell, 2020, p. 3).

***Summary and Connections: Introduction, Review, Application***

My introduction chapter included an incorporation of de Troyes & Cline's (1985) Grail narrative which provided an instructive means of expressing how my personal experiences of alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness during my undergraduate and graduate journey inspired me to further research the human search for meaning and how to apply teaching strategies to increase inclusivity, belonging, and meaningful learning (Dewey, 1963, as cited in Noddings, 2005, p. 166; Frankl, 2006, 1986; Hyytinen et al., 2022; Johnson, 1993, 1989; Jung,

1933, 1989; Matthews, 2009; Mpho, 2018; von Franz, 2008). My literature review and introduction chapter are connected to one another since they communicate the personal and historical emergence of what is known psychoanalytically as the wounded feeling-function of the West and how undue preference for rational approaches to learning tend to decrease learner capacity for positive valuations of human experience (Heidegger, 1928, 1999, as cited in Farrell, 2020, p. 3; Johnson, 1993, p. 15; Johnson, 1989, p. 28; Jung, 1933; Jung, 1943, 1954, as cited in Matthews, 2009, p. 105; Matthews, 2009, p. 103; Puk, 1996, p. 120; von Franz, 2008, p. 12). My literature review provided cogent evidence that post-secondary students are at-risk for experiencing alienation, loneliness, and meaningless within classrooms which overtly emphasize rational learning at the expense of their feelings (Dewey, 1897, p. 37; Eisner, 1983, p. 130-133; Farrell, 2020, p. 4; Shuffelton, 2012, p. 212; von Franz, 2008, p. 14). My application chapter provides best approaches to help educators transfer their knowledge of alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness into affirmative action. My introduction, literature review, and application chapters are connected to one another since my personal experiences of suffering and my research of alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness demand that holistic approaches to education become more inclusive. Throughout these chapters, I have explored how student-centered curriculum and friendly student-teacher relationships help heal alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness by including every student's need to self-reflect upon their existence, share their experiences, and ultimately feel heard and seen by their teachers and peers.

### *The Success of my Paper*

The emergence and study of alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness began with a preliminary assessment of de Troyes and Cline (1985), Johnson (1993), McCracken (1999), Guo (2012), and Noddings (2005). A deeper analysis of wounded feeling-function and a study of the

benefits and risks of student-centered curriculum and friendly student-teacher relationships

revealed attentiveness, creativity, imagination, and relational warmth as essential qualities of

feeling-function focused pedagogy (Bayes, 1972; Dewey, 1897; Eisner, 1983; Freeman et al.,

2007; Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2018; Goetz et al., 2021; Han, 2017; Hoagland, 1990; Johnson,

1993; Jung, 1933; Keller et al., 2020; Kellman, 2008; Lui & Noppe-Brandon, 2009; Matthews,

2009; McKenna, 2013; Miller, 2018; Mo et al., 2021; Odom et al., 2015; Puk, 1996; Shuffelton,

2012; von Franz, 2008). Exploring simplistic means of including attentiveness, creativity,

imagination, and relational warmth within curriculum and classroom interactions resulted in the

discovery that alienation, loneliness, and meaningless can be effectively converted into

inclusivity, belongingness, and meaningfulness insofar as post-secondary educators are willing to

attune to the needs of their students while providing "moment-to-moment" (Claessens et al.,

2017, p. 478) responses which are specifically tailored to each student's motivations, goals,

passions, and goals (Ambrose et al., 2010; Dewey, 1897; Eisner, 1983; Emes & Cleveland-Innes,

2003; Farrell, 2020; Freeman et al., 2007; Johnson, 1993; Keller et al., 2020; Kellman; 2008; Mo

et al., 2021; Noddings, 2005; Odom et al., 2015; Pelech, 2021; Puk, 1996; Van Acker & Wehby,

2000; von Franz, 2008).

### *Implications, Consequences, Solutions, and Future Research Within Education*

My argument that there has been a historical wounding of the feeling-function of post-

secondary students through a negligence of relationality within academia is highly relevant to the

study of alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness within post-secondary institutions since such

phenomena are in themselves major manifestations of wounded feeling-function (Farrell, 2020;

Heidegger, 1928, 1999, as cited in Farrell, 2020, p. 3 Johnson, 1989, 1993; Matthews, 2009; von

Franz, 2008). Exploring literature which speaks to the manifestations of alienation, loneliness,

and meaninglessness within academia further implicated the need for researching how educators

and universities are responsible for providing a holistic education to their students in the hopes of

reducing their exposure to experiences of alienated, lonely, and meaningless life conditions

(Miller, 2021; Dewey; 1897; Eisner, 1983; Kellman, 2008; Noddings, 2005; Glowacki-Dudka et

al., 2017; Shuffelton, 2012; Pelech, 2021; Freeman et al., 2007; Ambrose, 2010).

The successful argumentation that wounded feeling-function within post-secondary

institutions produces greater accounts of personal and collective alienation, loneliness, and

meaninglessness results in the implication that if Western universities and educators are

unwilling to collaborate and problem-solve towards pedagogical solutions which include learner

need for feeling seen, heard, and related to as persons, then students will continue to suffer alone

with their existential problems without a guide or support to help. Since those who are lonely,

alienated, and experiencing meaninglessness within secondary and post-secondary settings

"cannot ask anyone to love [them]" (Johnson, 2016, p. 36) but have to wait for someone to help,

educators have the responsibility of not neglecting their students' needs to feel seen, heard, and

honored as unique individuals in order to help decrease learner exposure to depressive and

suicidal symptoms (Johnson, 1983, p. 44, 48, 130; Johnson, 1993, p. 41). The solution to post-

secondary experiences of alienation, loneliness, and meaningless is for educators to sense the

existential dilemmas of their students and to offer them support by helping them to ground

themselves in the "lower parts of themselves" where they can safely self-reflect and discover

their humanity in the relatedness within student-centered curriculum and friendly student-teacher

relationships (Johnson, 2016, p. 36-37).

Since my research primarily focused on in-person educational contexts, future research

within the field of education is required to study how to practically implement the qualities of

attentiveness, creative expression, imagination, and relational warmth within online instructional

sessions (Bordin, 1968, as cited in Bayes, 1972, p. 333; Johnson, 1993, p. 18; Krasner, 1955, as

cited in Bayes, 1972, p. 333; Liu & Noppe-Brandon, 2009, p. 19; Miller, 2018, p. 89; Mo et al.,

2021, p. 11; Raush & Bordin, 1957, as cited in Bayes, 1972, p. 333; Truax & Carkhuff, 1967, as

cited in Bayes, 1972, p. 333). While understanding the historical wounding of the feeling-

function in the West provides much of the foundation for researching the benefits and risks of

student-centered curriculum and friendly student-teacher relationships, it is nonetheless expected

that educational researchers and practitioners seek their own respective solutions to their

students' experiences of alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness. In the same way that I have

demonstrated that there is no universal form of student-centered curriculum or student-teacher

relationship, educators need to maintain a "moment-to-moment" (Claessens et al., 2017, p. 478)

perspective of psychological development based on their own and their students demographics,

social contexts, life contexts, and classroom contexts to which they interact, share, and create

knowledge (Ambrose, 2010, p. 155; Claessens et al., 2017, p. 483; Critchley, 2009, as cited in

Farrell, 2020, p. 4; Emes & Cleveland-Innes, 2003, p. 63; Johnson, 1993, p. 15; von Franz, 2008,

p. 12).

***Implications, Consequences, Solutions, and Future Research Beyond Education***

Future research within the field of existentialism and phenomenology is required to

explore how student-teacher relationships and student-centered curriculum operate as bi-

directional exchanges of Eros where students "take a substantial step in [their] thinking" each

time they venture onto untrodden paths (Freire, 2021, p. 103; Han, 2017, p. 40; Heidegger, 2008,

as cited in Han, 2017, p. 63). It is therefore predicted that the problems of depression, loneliness,

disloyalty, and conflict within careers outside of education such as skilled trades and nursing

may be resolved through greater consideration of notions of care and how various forms of love

such as Philia, Eros, Storge, and Agape may be used to increase the loyalty and integrity of

human relationships outside of educational environments (Han, 2017, p. 40; Heidegger, 2008, p.

339; Knutsson et al., 2022; Lewis, 2017, p. 26, 48, 68, 93; Noddings, 2005, p. 67; 74-76, 195;

Roche et al., 2016). In the same way that post-secondary students are expected to make

tremendous leaps in their thinking and feeling as they seek to negotiate and build relationships

with their peers and teachers, it is also a healthy psychological perspective to believe in the

power of attunement and relational warmth to help those working in male-dominated industries

or nursing to better perceive how their relationships with their clients and patients can increase in

mutual beneficence, respect, and attention (Knutsson et al., 2022; Roche et al., 2016).

### *Limitations of my Argument and Evidence*

My argument that the inclusion of student-centered curriculum and friendly student-

teacher relationships remedies felt experiences of alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness

within academia is limited since I focused explicitly on how to shape curriculum and

relationships to build rapport and relatedness between students and teachers within in-person

classroom settings while excluding explicit guidance for virtual classroom environments or how

to engage in the process of interior design so that physical classrooms can be used as educative

ecosystems of safety, security, and relatedness (Cheryan et al., 2014; Martin, 2019; Rands &

Gansemer-Topf, 2017). My evidence that the inclusion of attentiveness, creativity, imagination,

and relational warmth within student-centered curriculum and friendly student-teacher

relationships is limited since I mainly focus on "moment-to-moment" (Claessens et al., 2017, p.

478) interactions between students and educators but fail to include evidence which would

suggest that it is the interactions between students and their peers which exists as a protective

factor against experiences of alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness (King et al., 2016).

While there is much psychological crossover in terms of all genders being capable of

experiencing wounded feeling-function as masculine lost purpose or alienation, loneliness, and

meaninglessness, I nonetheless suggest that further research be done in the realm of healing

wounded-feeling function through the more directly feminine conceptions as described within

the myth of *The Handless Maiden* (Johnson, 1993, p. 63) which better enunciates how male

chauvinistic attitudes can oppress some women into crying out "What can I do? I feel so useless

or second-rate and inferior in this world that puts its women on the rubbish heap when they are

through with courtship and childbearing!" (p. 67).

**Contemplations**

As I self-reflect upon my undergraduate and graduate experiences, I am assured that the

strictly non-relational qualities of rationality, objectivity, and intellectualization need to be re-

evaluated and dwelt upon to better consider whether the inclusion of such qualities are truly of

the greatest benefit to the nurturance of students' psycho-educational development within post-

secondary settings. By choosing to live for something or someone greater than their ego,

educators become capable of acknowledging the presence of alienation, loneliness, and

meaninglessness in the lives of their students while students are becoming more capable of

experiencing inclusion, belonging, purpose, and meaning as they receive attention, express

themselves, and seek to maintain bonds of service (Boerema, 2011, p. 558; De Troyes & Cline,

1985, p. 173-174; Dewey, 1897, 1963, as cited in Noddings, 2005; Eisner, 1983, p. 130-133;

Farrell, 2020, p. 1-4; Frankl, 1986, 1996; Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2018; Harris, 2003, p. 20;

Johnson, 1989, p. 28; Johnson, 1993, p. 15, 57; Jung, 1933, 1989; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008, p.

60-61; Matthews, 2009; Miller & Seller, 1990, as cited in Puk, 1996, p. 120; Noddings, 2005;

Puk, 1996, p. 120; Shuffelton, 2012, p. 222; Spillane et al., 2004; Wright, 2008, p. 21; von Franz, 2008, p. 12). Considering a greater promotion of student-centered curriculum and friendly student-teacher relationships within post-secondary settings is significant since feeling-function focused pedagogy should no longer be relegated to an inferior position in the world of academia. Post-secondary administrators, course designers, program designers, and course instructors may openly and intentionally collaborate towards the development of student-centered learning, friendly classroom contexts, and friendly student-teacher interactions which would best balance the qualities of attention, creativity, imagination, and friendliness while also maintaining high passion for self-discovery and knowledge attainment.

Iterating the meaning of my personal and professional experiences, research, and practical explorations has been a challenge as I have sought to write with veracity, honesty, and heart-felt remembrance for all which has been poignant, painful, and healing throughout my life. In the empty space of the 'not-yet' I wonder what the future of education will look like and where feeling-function focused pedagogy will be taught, who it will be taught by, and whether learners will learn of the meaning of their lives earlier than I had. I often sense that it has been in my misgivings, my mistakes, my failures, and my fear of asking my most desirous questions which ultimately led me home to the truth of my existence, my hopes, and my dreams. With so much of academia indwelt with the valuation of human life in terms of performance and with all of the complexity of human life, I wonder whether it has always been the simple pleasures of the sun on my skin, a love to hold, and a book to read which brought me back to those loves which kept me breathing through my darkest nights.

My encouragement to you is that for all of the alienation, loneliness, and meaninglessness which I did not want to experience in my life, I have also learned of their complementary

opposites throughout my M.Ed. program and have attained a balance of opposites where I have

learned to live in the paradoxes and the unanswered questions which so used to burden me with

dread. Now, while I will continue to search for research opportunities to serve others in the

realms of inclusivity, belonging, and meaningful learning, I also wonder whether you too have

learned of researching inclusivity, belonging, and meaningfulness and of the value of student-

centered curriculum and friendly student-teacher relationships. And yet, with all the loftiness of

my own future hopes and research directives, my ultimate joy would be for me to feel that I have

helped you remember the simple things, the quiet songs of your heart, and the humming to pupils

of the songs in their hearts which they have long forgotten (Garborg, n.d., as cited in Brach,

2020, p. 197). My hope is that you would always remember the grounded things which keep

your toes in the sand, close to your friends, and even closer to your own unspoken words which

dance between your mind, heart, and your ever-so human hands.

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