

# The Power of Presence: One-Shots, Relational Teaching, and Instruction Librarianship

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## Introduction

In *Connected Teaching: Relationship, Power, and Mattering in Higher Education*, Harriet L. Schwartz presents “relationship as a site and source for learning.”<sup>1</sup> It is both *where* the learning takes place and the mechanism *through which* we teach and learn, making it the “essential driver of teaching and learning.”<sup>2</sup> Application of relationship and relational thinking to academic librarians’ work as educators has gained traction in recent years, yet the concept of teaching and learning as a relationship remains one that we idealize in librarianship as occurring only through longer-term experiences like teaching credit-bearing courses or becoming embedded in classes for the duration of a semester or quarter.<sup>3</sup> The one-shot—a one-time-only information literacy or research workshop that takes place within the context of faculty-led courses—is seen as a consolation prize: ineffective, exhausting, tacked on, and demoralizing.<sup>4</sup> However, there are one-shot classes or workshops that leave us, as librarians, feeling connected to students and faculty, deeply moved by the learning that has happened in the last hour or two (and in the hours of planning before the class even occurs). Conversely, we may have taught semester-long courses that leave us drained, questioning the purpose of the hours spent in the classroom. So what, then, is the difference? What is the quality that makes some teaching experiences fulfilling and others exhausting for librarians?

We contend that the difference is a feeling of connection through growth-fostering teaching and learning relationships, where we have changed or been changed by others, whether they be students, instructors, or both. To explore this concept, we apply Schwartz’s model of relational or Connected Teaching to librarian teaching practices. Through analysis of the relational practices present in Connected Teaching, we argue that duration of teaching interactions is less vital to Connected Teaching than *quality of presence*, which is a commitment to openness, mutual respect, and a willingness to change and grow through the educational interaction.<sup>5</sup> When applied to the discourse around one-shot library instruction, we believe that a focus on Connected Teaching, rather than time spent teaching (one-shot, multiple workshops, courses, and the like), can help us become unstuck from ineffective teaching structures, methods, and approaches. This is not an *in-defense-of-the-one-shot* article. Instead, it is our attempt to separate temporal pressures from the capacity of librarians to teach through and toward relationship.

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## What Is Connected Teaching?

Schwartz has written the most comprehensive text on Connected Teaching, describing it as an approach, “stance,” or “way of being” in an educational encounter “rather than a set of steps” or checklist.<sup>6</sup> This can seem nebulous when practical application feels imperative, but it is an intention that sets a foundation for meaningful educational practice.<sup>7</sup> The foundation for Connected Teaching rests on three elements: “relationship, identity, and emotion,” where relationship is the core of the educational experience, shaped by the acknowledgment (or lack thereof) of the limitations of our identities and our ability to know ourselves and our emotions.<sup>8</sup> It is rooted in Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT), a feminist model of psychological development that “posits that connection is at the core of human growth and development.”<sup>9</sup> RCT was developed in the 1970s and 1980s as a response to commonly accepted Western psychological models that valorized the separation of self and pathologized individuals who did not conform to the cis, white, heterosexual, autonomous, self-sufficient ideal man.<sup>10</sup> The originators of RCT, Jean Baker Miller, Judith V. Jordan, Irene P. Stiver, Janet L. Surrey, and Alexandra Kaplan, all practicing therapists at Wellesley College and educators themselves, witnessed and experienced the negative impact of separation-as-ideal in their professional practice. Together, their scholarship emphasized that humans “grow through and toward relationship,” naming their theory self-in-relation and later relational theory.<sup>11</sup> As their circle grew to include additional theorists such as Maureen Walker and Joyce Fletcher, the importance of culture in dis/connection and the experiences of marginalized people transformed relational theory to RCT.<sup>12</sup>

Application of RCT has expanded beyond a therapeutic context into social work, education, and librarianship.<sup>13</sup> Within each of these disciplines and practices, relationships are sites for “personal growth and intellectual development.”<sup>14</sup> They are the mode and method through which we learn, and Connected Teaching is an expansion of this idea. Schwartz states that Connected Teaching can happen in both “single meaningful interactions and longer term teaching relationships,” making it an ideal framework through which to view the practice of teaching librarianship in all of its forms and iterations.<sup>15</sup> The emphasis is not on time spent with students or the duration of an educational experience, but rather on the openness to relationship and connection on the part of both teacher and learner. Within this state of being, Schwartz believes that the qualities outlined as essential for growth-fostering relationships are both present and created: “energy, knowledge, sense of worth, action, and a desire for more connection.”<sup>16</sup> As librarians who were taught that our time with students in one-shots, research consultations, or reference interactions is fleeting, the idea of all of the above-mentioned qualities being present in a brief interaction or short class can seem unlikely. However, if we reflect on instances of teaching that left us feeling fulfilled, we may find traces of each of the aforementioned elements in our own experiences as well as those of our students.

## Brief Encounters

As we think about moments of connection in our work as teaching librarians, we may have entire courses, one-shot classes, or even discrete interactions during class time that come to mind. Through her Connected Teaching approach, Schwartz writes that even brief encounters have the potential to be high-quality connections.<sup>17</sup> There is just as much opportunity for disconnection with learners during a semester-long course as there is the ability to connect with them during a one-time class. It is not guaranteed that either of these interactions will

be meaningful, but that is not a reason to write off brief encounters as unworthy. Instead of expending energy focusing on the little amount of time we find ourselves with in traditional one-shot instruction, we can ask ourselves, “What can make even brief encounters meaningful?”

There is no way to cover the amount of content we might want to introduce and discuss with students in just an hour-long session, so we often oscillate between two extremes: 1) I just want students to remember my name and know that the library is available to them; or 2) I will cram as much content as possible into this session (and accompanying libguide) so that they will have something to turn to later. Yet neither one of these solutions leaves us feeling fulfilled because they assume a deficit that may or may not exist. We may assume that students will never learn what they need to learn from us, or that the class itself is ineffective (it might be), or that there is not a shared interest in learning. We put so much pressure on the brief encounter of the one-shot because of its precarity that we end up centering everything but the time spent together and assume (for better or worse) that this is the only time we will be together with the people in the room. Yet there is potential for all encounters to be a place for connection if we put aside *assumed needs*—what we assume students, faculty, and the institution need—and instead focus on the learning experience at hand. We can then focus on the *expressed needs* of those in the teaching and learning encounter and begin to view them through the lens of relationship.<sup>18</sup> We recognize that this can be complicated by the expressed needs of an institution for accountability, metrics, assessments, or, more broadly, proof of value, but, through connection, we aim to shift the answer to these demands in a way that is not done at the expense of the expressed needs of learners. In focusing on learners, we believe that we can still meet institutional needs through compelling stories of learning through connected teaching.

Most teaching librarians have likely had the unfortunate experience of walking into an instruction session planned for in collaboration with the instructor, with a certain lesson plan, outcomes, or ideas in mind, only to learn that the students were not at the assumed stage of their assignment progress. As librarians, we rely on the input of the instructor, a natural occurrence given the nature of a one-shot instruction session, and assume they know their students’ needs. The instructor may have just assumed from spending the past few weeks in the classroom with students that what they needed from a library instruction session was an intensive guide to literature searching using academic resources. Yet as we begin a dialogue with students, it becomes clear that the students don’t really understand the purpose of a literature review and need some time to understand how to structure and direct their research. This moment may seem scary—suddenly, the brief time we have with the students isn’t what we thought it would be; however, taking a few moments at the start of class to establish a connection and conversation creates an opportunity for a meaningful interaction that could potentially extend beyond the classroom.

Seeking moments like these that have the potential for facilitating real connection does not automatically equate with adding in more time with students.<sup>19</sup> We can take the time we have to tackle assumptions and uncover needs. As Nel Noddings states, “time spent on building a relation of care and trust is not time wasted,” so whatever time we have, however brief, is best used in relational connection.<sup>20</sup> Joan Piorkowski and Erika Scheurer’s article on developmental writing students highlighted how brief interactions with professors can be “caring encounters that spur motivation” and note that these demonstrations of care do not need to

be elaborate.<sup>21</sup> Rather, the professor or instructor shows that they are relationally available to students and establishes a foundation of care through their small actions or suggestions. These positive connections make the students more willing to seek out help in the future and increase their sense of agency, which is an example of growth-in-relationship.<sup>22</sup>

Discourse around one-shots can and should shift toward being open to the possibility of relationship, what Noddings calls “a caring occasion,” rather than coverage of content.<sup>23</sup> In doing so, we are also laying a foundation for John Dewey’s concept of “continuity of education.”<sup>24</sup> This is often applied to multiyear classrooms with the same teacher where students can form strong relationships with peers and the teacher; but, for our purposes, in libraries, we can apply this idea to the way that we interact with learners at all stages of their educational journey (as first years, thesis writers, new researchers, and so on). We may or may not see the students in our one-shot classroom again, but that doesn’t mean they won’t be interacting with our colleagues. Through a Connected approach to teaching, we are setting a foundation for learners and the library colleagues who may have occasion to interact with one another. Each of them can come to expect a level of receptivity and at least a willingness to be open to high-quality connection when it is needed or desired.

### High-Quality Connection

In pursuing Connected Teaching, our goal as librarians is to foster high-quality connection through educational experiences, whether they be brief or lengthy. To understand high-quality connection, we must look to both RCT and feminist ethics of care. It is through the lens of these relational theories that we are able to articulate what a high-quality connection feels, sounds, and/or looks like to everyone involved in the teaching and learning relationship. The following relational practices are ones that we believe can be incorporated into the practice of teaching librarianship regardless of the duration of instruction, creating educational experiences that foster connection, validation, and the kinds of work that leave both librarian and learner feeling attuned to one other, reinvigorated, and fulfilled.

### Care

The concept of care in education appears simultaneously in work by Nel Noddings, Carol Gilligan, and Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule in the 1980s.<sup>25</sup> All center the relationships inherent in learning situations, but Noddings’ definition of the caring relationship places it squarely within an educational context. In Noddings’ work there is a *carer* and *cared-for*, with both parties playing their own role.<sup>26</sup> She acknowledges that in education this relationship is unequal, with the carer holding more power than the cared-for; however, “both parties contribute to the establishment and maintenance of caring.”<sup>27</sup> The carer is attentive, “interested in the expressed needs of the cared-for,” and demonstrates that the cared-for has been heard, even if the carer cannot meet those needs. The cared-for “shows somehow that the caring has been received.”<sup>28</sup> It’s important to note here that this is not about gratitude. The cared-for does not need to give thanks, but, rather, offer some acknowledgment that the caring has been received. This could be as simple as a student revising a literature search approach after an in-class discussion with a librarian who offered a new way of thinking about their topic. It is a small, powerful moment that demonstrates the impact the librarian (carer) has on the students (cared-for).

In establishing a climate of care, we also acknowledge that there are times when we cannot, as carers, meet the needs of the cared-for.<sup>29</sup> It may be because of limitations in resources

or ability or because the needs of the cared-for are beyond the scope of our role as teaching librarians. Instead of struggling to meet the needs of the cared-for that we know cannot be met, we can instead focus on “maintaining the caring relation.”<sup>30</sup> A student may need far more intensive help in class than we are able to offer in the time that we spend with them. They may need time to think through options for their research topics or consider new avenues to pursue their ideas and would benefit from extended discussion with their instructor. Then, later, if we have maintained an open relationship, they know that we are available to help with their exploratory research, when they’re ready.

We acknowledge that the concept of the caring relationship can seem problematic in a feminized profession like librarianship, where feminine-coded behaviors and soft skills are routinely assumed but not valued in the workplace.<sup>31</sup> There can be hesitation in adopting the language of caring in our work out of fear of taking on the role of a “mommy librarian”; however, care, as expressed in feminist theory, is not about mothering.<sup>32</sup> As Nodding states, “the behaviors...that mark the mother-child relation are rarely appropriate for other relations.”<sup>33</sup> Nor is this caring about emotional labor, which is an oft misunderstood concept. As introduced and defined by Arlie Hochschild, emotional labor “is the work, for which you’re paid, which centrally involves trying to feel the right feeling for the job. This involves evoking and suppressing feelings.”<sup>34</sup> The kind of care we are advocating for in this particular framework within the context of librarianship is an opportunity to foster growth in others and ourselves through a learning relationship, marked by clear relational roles, boundaries, needs, and expectations on the part of both parties. In practicing care and connection through a relational lens, the burden of emotional labor is lessened because the librarian is present, remains relationally aware, and has enacted boundaries that allow them to function. This care is not about manufacturing false or suppressing existing feelings “to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others.”<sup>35</sup> Rather, it is about honoring who we are and the moment we are in with others.

### *Relational Authenticity*

Relational authenticity is essential to a caring and therefore Connected Teaching relationship. It “is not the same thing as total honesty” on the part of the teacher or learner, nor does it mean placing the needs of the teacher above those of the learner.<sup>36</sup> Rather, it is about maintaining a sense of relational clarity — what our roles are in the relationship — and, within those boundaries, demonstrating to the other that we are impacted by them.<sup>37</sup> The feeling of having impacted, moved, or, more broadly, *mattered* to another person is extremely powerful. As Schwartz states, “some of my most memorable and motivating experiences as a teacher have been when I felt I mattered in the lives of students, I brought something important to their growth.”<sup>38</sup> Conversely, students feel the same impact of intellectual and personal mattering from us, describing “interactions as important not only when a professor complimented their work but also when they sensed their ideas or work were important to the professor.”<sup>39</sup> Schwartz calls this phenomena “intellectual mattering” and emphasizes its importance in growth and self-worth on the part of learners and the fulfillment of teachers.<sup>40</sup>

Without relational authenticity, there can be no *mattering*. By being relationally authentic, we show students the impact they have on us, which is an essential piece of the learning relationship. We also foster the ability for students to tell us what matters to them and how they are impacted by our words and actions in the classroom. Responsiveness is key. We

have likely all been in classrooms (online or in person) where we are met with blank stares or silence from learners; as students, we may have been ignored or overlooked by teachers ourselves. This kind of nonresponsiveness causes disconnection and may even signal a “kind of danger” to learners who have previously been negatively impacted by unresponsive individuals in their lives.<sup>41</sup>

It is important to note that the relational authenticity and responsiveness that fosters connection is rooted in boundaries, which RCT encourages us to consider as “a place of meeting.”<sup>42</sup> Roles are clear but can shift and change depending on the needs of the learner; at times the student may become the teacher, sharing with us content knowledge or experience that enriches our understanding of a concept or idea. This “authenticity in movement” thrives on the “respect, clarity, and responsibility” that boundaries bring.<sup>43</sup> Instead of reacting instantaneously to a student comment, question, or action based on what we think our role dictates we should say or do, we can take a moment to pause and speak/act with intention.<sup>44</sup> In doing so, we are deliberately setting or reinforcing boundaries, sharing with students how we are affected by them and noticing how we affect them in turn.

### *Being Present and Open*

It would be disingenuous to say that all classes and instructional experiences will necessarily turn into high-quality connections.<sup>45</sup> However, if we are not *open* to moments of connection and care, then they will surely not occur. But what does it mean to be open? Both Schwartz and Jordan emphasize the importance of *quality of presence* in connection. Rather than “spend more time with students” or extend ourselves beyond healthy boundaries, we can instead focus on what Schwartz describes as “making small moments bigger.”<sup>46</sup> To be truly *present* with students in the classroom is to be engaged “in a momentary commitment to be with the other.”<sup>47</sup> It is not just about showing up, the kind of “presenteeism” that is marked by simply existing in a space and/or performing the actions that we believe students and teachers should exhibit.<sup>48</sup> Our time in the classroom may be brief, but within that time, we are committed to being changed and moved by our students. We are committed to truly listening to understand, not just react.

We may have encountered students in our classroom who on the surface express frustration over evaluating information sources they’ve found via their usual research methods for inclusion in a research paper. Yet, as we *listen* and *engage* with the student, we learn that their real confusion stems from not understanding the discourse that takes place in academic research papers. They aren’t necessarily confused by the act of evaluating sources but by the purpose and point they serve in their writing. A brief interaction in the classroom that begins with a student asking, “Is this a good source for my paper?” is really a bigger discussion about college writing, the students’ previous academic experience, and how they get the help they need. Through dialogue we can begin to uncover students’ needs and cultivate their trust in their own learning process.

In this example we’ve made a brief but total connection. We’ve moved beyond our assumed needs of the student to those they actively expressed. In doing so, we’ve avoided the trap of “virtue caring” where we assume we know what students need and completely bypass the listening and dialogue present in a growthful relationship. These are the caring efforts that “often misfire, and the students who most need to be part of a caring relation suffer most.”<sup>49</sup> In contrast, “relational caring” occurs when we set a foundation of relationship through at-

tentiveness, relational authenticity, and presence.<sup>50</sup> We are creating a potential opportunity for our students to connect with us and us to connect with them in turn. This is the *openness* that leads to exchange and what Elbow calls “the yoghurt classroom,” one that “provides a culture for growth.”<sup>51</sup>

### *Empathy*

As central as empathy is to caring and connected teaching, it’s a concept that is often misunderstood and maligned. Popular understanding of empathy characterizes it as an emotional reaction, one that is unconscious, innate, and automatic. Yet when viewed through a relational lens, empathy is a “complex cognitive and emotional state... one that requires work towards developing a well-differentiated sense of self as well as an awareness of and appreciation for another’s subjectivity,” or personhood.<sup>52</sup> The practice of empathy is an intentional process that embodies a high degree of cognitive and affective labor to ensure that we are practicing *empathic accuracy*.<sup>53</sup> We are not “attributing to the other feelings that we would have under similar conditions.”<sup>54</sup> We are understanding our reaction, differentiating it from their own, and attending to their state in the learning process. This is best illustrated via the following example:

A student in a psychology course shares a loosely formed research topic idea they’ve been considering with you and their classmates. They are interested in learning more about the relationship between anxiety, sleep, and academic performance, contextualizing their interest by stating that they aren’t getting the kind of sleep they need because they’ve been feeling so stressed out lately. As a teaching librarian, our initial impulses might be to focus on the topic at hand, ignoring the personal anecdote, or to address the personal context with expressions of sympathy and relatability. “I know just how you feel. Work has been crazy and my own sleep has been awful. Don’t worry about figuring out your research right now. Just focus on yourself.” In pursuing the former approach we disregard a critical piece of information and moment of connection the student has shared with us; and in responding with the latter statements we focus on how *we* would want to be talked to in that moment rather than on what the student needs and wants.

To facilitate the empathy needed in Connected Teaching, we need to practice reflection, consider where our feelings begin and where those of the student end, and respond in a way that leaves the connection open to further dialogue. There is a mutuality present in empathy that can seem at odds with the inherent power differential of the classroom. Is a student responsible for showing empathy to a teacher, who has the power to assign grades and structure the learning experience? As librarians we exist outside this traditional teacher-student power dynamic, but we are not without our own power in the classroom. We don’t necessarily give up our power in empathetic, connected teaching experiences. Rather, we ideally facilitate a sense of *power with* students, showing them that we are here to help them learn and grow into their own power as we are empowered to be our best teaching self in the classroom.<sup>55</sup> Empathy is not the act of giving of oneself until there is nothing left. Instead, it gives those engaged in this deliberate practice the opportunity to set boundaries, express vulnerability without fear of repercussion, and seek help in supportive environments.<sup>56</sup> We are then able to “share in both the empowerment and the vulnerability that enables risk taking in teaching and learning, and in doing such, we can all find both joy and security in the work.”<sup>57</sup>

## **Disconnection/Reconnection**

In better understanding the foundations for high-quality connection, it becomes abundantly clear that Connected Teaching is a way of being in our work as educators, not a checklist of activities.

We cannot ever guarantee the kind of high-quality connection that we want to facilitate in our classrooms, be they one-shot or not, but, as previously mentioned, adopting a relational mindset and practice opens us to the possibility of connection. There are, however, times when connection never materializes or breaks down altogether. While we cannot do much about the former—connection and relationship, are, after all, dependent on more than one person—we can focus on the latter. If our time with students in one-shots is brief, it's important to address moments of disconnection in a reparative manner, and be prepared to let go of situations and individuals for whom connection remains elusive.

### *Asymmetrical Primacy*

One way that disconnection can take root is by failing to acknowledge the asymmetrical primacy inherent in many educational relationships. Schwartz describes asymmetrical primacy as an uneven perception of the significance of interactions, with the patient-doctor relationship being a prime example.<sup>58</sup> The patient views a visit to the doctor as very important, and has their own needs and questions at the forefront of their mind; however, to the doctor, they are one of many patients they will see that day. Viewing our work as teaching librarians through this lens, we know that professors and students do not place the same importance on one-shot instruction sessions as teaching librarians. Within the teaching librarian-faculty dynamic, the instruction session holds greater weight for the teaching librarian because this is their primary (many times, only) interaction with this class. But for the faculty member, it is one class in a series of many during the semester, a part of what might be a very taxing teaching load. Conversely, within the teaching librarian-student dynamic, a one-shot instruction session for an English composition class might be one of many a librarian facilitates throughout the semester. But to the new college student, this is their first time meeting and learning from an academic librarian.

Considering the asymmetrical primacy inherent in one-shot adjacent teaching relationships is critical to empathic accuracy and understanding the perspectives of our colleagues and students. As an example, consider the following:

In chatting with one adjunct instructor before the start of a one-shot class for English composition, a librarian learned that he was teaching 6 courses across 2 universities to make ends meet. He wanted to do the best for his students, and in his mind that meant a library instruction session before a research paper, but he did not have the downtime that semester to reconsider his assignment or approach to teaching students about research. In learning this, the librarian was able to resolve feelings of disconnection with the instructor, and refocus on the opportunity to establish a longer-term relationship where they could re-examine a research assignment over the summer months. Conversely, the instructor learned from the librarian just how time-consuming and stressful it was to coordinate one-shots for multiple sections across English composition and understood how valuable their time was throughout the semester. A short but powerful conversation is just one way to understand the disconnection of asymmetrical primacy.

### *Sharing Power/Power Dynamics*

In our most fulfilling librarian-faculty educational relationships, there is a sense of mutuality and active collaboration. The plans that we make for library instruction (in a one-shot or more)



involve giving each other space to teach according to our own expertise and complementing one-another's knowledge. We are, in essence, modeling collaboration and a healthy, growthful relationship for students. When we co-teach, we are open to being changed by one another, which is recognizable to the other people in the room. We are sharing power with each other as well as the students, because the instructor has taken the time to build relationships with their students before working with the librarian. A climate of care has been established in the course and continues into the one-shot session. We can feel the "good vibes" in the room and the students engaged in learning expect to be heard.

In contrast, our most troublesome librarian-faculty relationships are often marked by misunderstanding and power struggles, or what Rector-Aranda refers to as *hierarchical disconnection*.<sup>59</sup> We have not been able to collaborate in a way that demonstrates mutual respect or a *power with* dynamic, in which power is shared and each party in the relationship feels empowered to do their best work. Here is one example:

After several semesters of trying to work together with an instructor without a satisfactory result, the librarian and the instructor agreed to work with the students separately. The librarian works with the students in this class without the instructor present, allowing librarian and students to connect more easily. This may be due to an existing disconnection between the professor and the students, or a lack of a caring classroom climate; however, it may be friction caused by a power imbalance between the two people leading the session (the instructor and librarian). In this case, repairing the connection between librarian and instructor may no longer be possible, but creating a connection between librarian and students can still occur.

### ***Self-Protection***

As demonstrated in the previous scenario, not all disconnection is necessarily a bad thing. Sometimes educational relationships need to end or be remade into something new. Sometimes resistance simply cannot be overcome. In *Caring Professors: A Model*, Barbara Thayer-Bacon and Charles Bacon recognize that not all students want to be a part of a caring, connected relationship in the classroom.<sup>60</sup> They may be used to a more traditional style of learning and view connection as a waste of time. They may feel uncomfortable with connectedness after multiple attempts at developing connections with instructors have failed over the years.<sup>61</sup> If students are from a marginalized group, they may automatically adopt a stance of relational inauthenticity as a protective measure in the classroom.<sup>62</sup> All of these potentials for disconnection on the part of students are also seen in the teacher librarian or instructor as their own self-protective methods. Teaching is hard. Caring is hard. To engage in relationship in an educational context asks a lot of everyone involved. To connect, we must sort through power dynamics, remain open to relationship despite past failure or trauma, and engage in challenging conversations around identity and what/how we learn. The kind of disconnection that occurs from self-protection is not often or easily repaired, but we can take the opportunity to reflect and learn from it.<sup>63</sup> From that activity, we make ourselves more open to connected teaching relationships in the future.

### **Conclusion**

Noddings reminds us that "a climate in which caring relations flourish"<sup>64</sup> should be a goal for all educators; for some teaching librarians, that notion feels counterintuitive to the circumstances in which we most often teach. A single class session (or less) while working with a professor with whom you may or may not have an established relationship does not seem

ideal for developing trusting relationships with students. Yet we have experienced these moments in time as powerful sites of connection, regardless of time limitations. When we are open to the possibility of high-quality connection in one-shot instruction sessions, we are offering the possibility of establishing and maintaining a climate of care. When we create opportunities for receptive listening<sup>65</sup> and reflection in these brief classes, we demonstrate mattering to the students and to their instructors, opening the possibility for movement and change. The quality of our presence in the classroom becomes greater than the duration of the encounter.

The structures and demands present in academia often prevent us from concentrating on quality versus quantity, making it more important that we move toward those moments of connection. By cultivating care with empathy and authenticity, we communicate to others that we see them as vital participants in the learning process. We can refocus on responding to expressed needs as carers, during which we may need to “put aside temporarily the demands of the institution.”<sup>66</sup> And when moments of disconnection occur, it is okay to view them as a type of real injury<sup>67</sup> from which we need to heal, through reflection and regrouping for our future interactions. We currently are working and learning in a time of tremendous fatigue; it is both more difficult for us to maintain enthusiasm for teaching and for the students to reciprocate as part of a mutual relationship.<sup>68</sup> Mending these injuries and disconnections may not be within our reach, and recognizing when to let go and seek alternatives is an important part of this process, as well as honoring where everyone is in this moment. This intentional cultivation of care and connection requires that we also nourish ourselves through self-care and care from encouraging colleagues; seeking out those who support us through mutual respect and empathy will help us further our own climate of care.

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## Notes

1. Harriet L. Schwartz, *Connected Teaching: Relationship, Power, and Mattering in Higher Education* (Herndon, VA: Stylus Publishing LLC, 2019), 13.
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