

Relationships Matter

Moving Relationship-Rich Experiences from the Periphery to the Center of Higher Education Learning and Teaching

Peter Felten

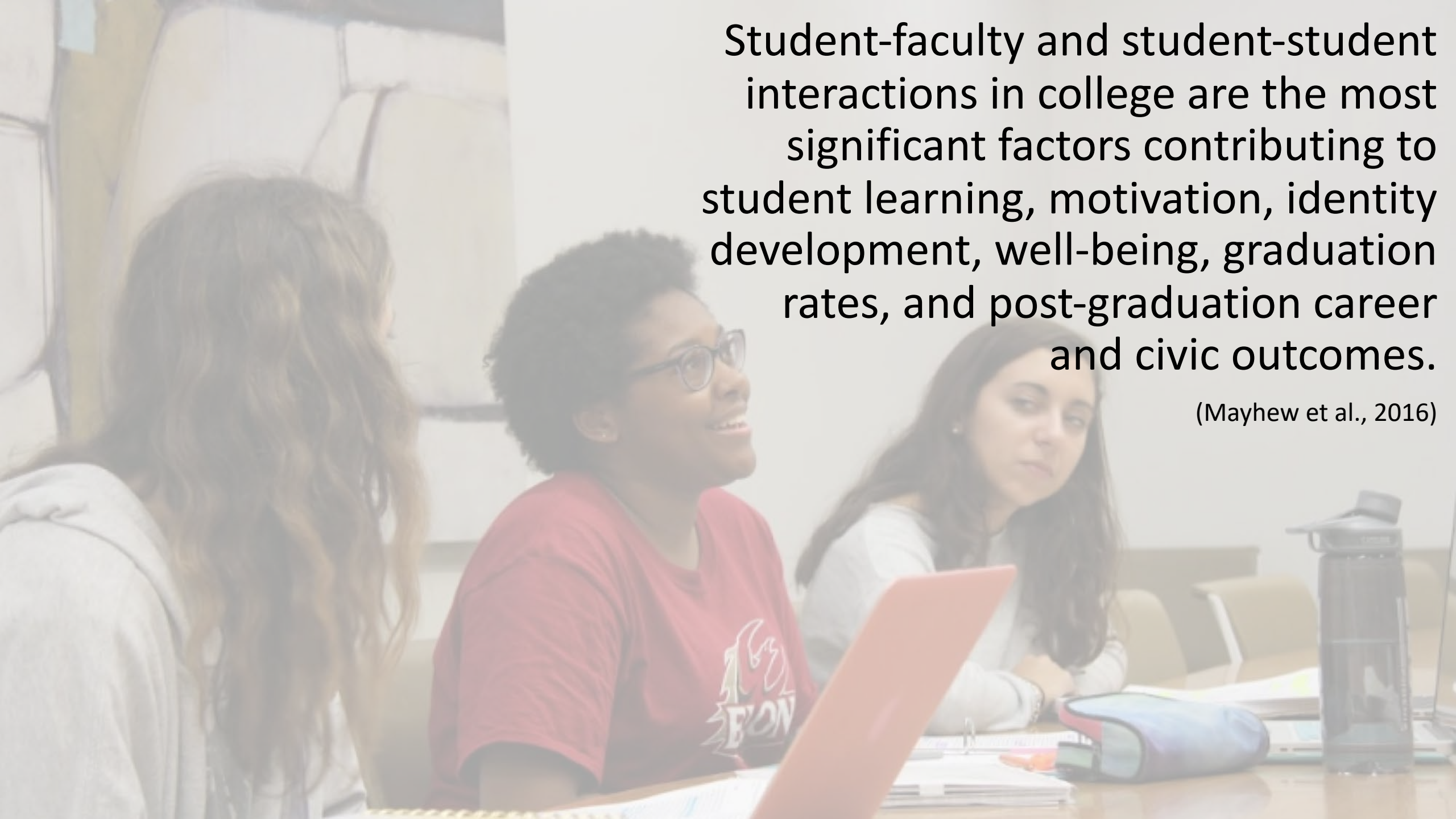
Center for Engaged Learning
Elon University



“Location, even if unintentionally, seems to have been theorized into the dominant discourse where the Western location is unconsciously amalgamated with the universal and treated as default ‘common sense’ and other locations are theorized out of the picture totally.”

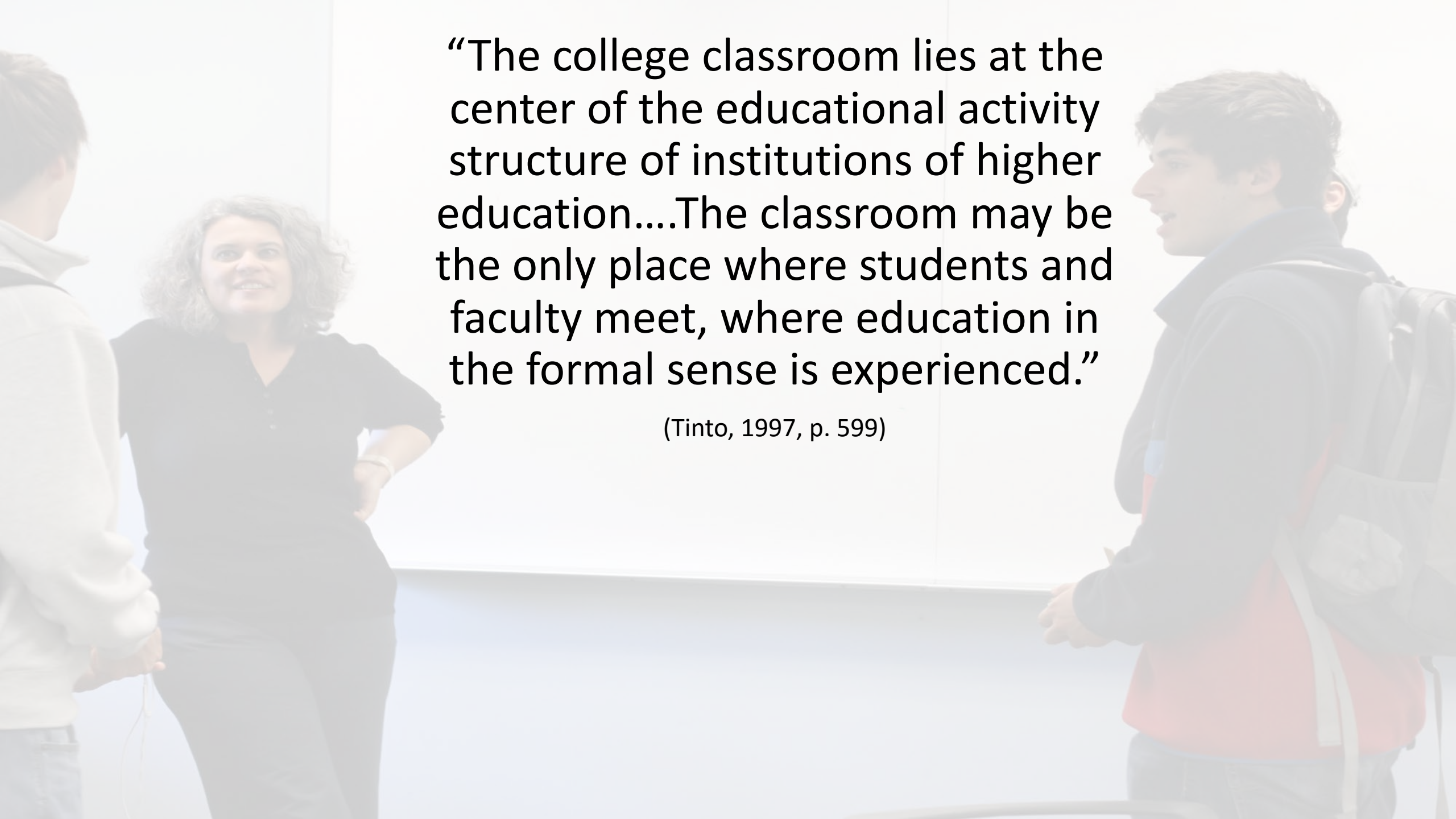
(Chng & Looker, 2013, p. 139)



A photograph of three young women sitting at a table in a classroom or study area. The woman in the center is wearing a red t-shirt with the letters 'FON' on it and glasses, looking towards the left. The woman on the right is looking down at a laptop. The woman on the left has long brown hair and is looking towards the center. There are papers, a blue folder, and a black water bottle on the table. The background shows a whiteboard and a window.

Student-faculty and student-student interactions in college are the most significant factors contributing to student learning, motivation, identity development, well-being, graduation rates, and post-graduation career and civic outcomes.

(Mayhew et al., 2016)

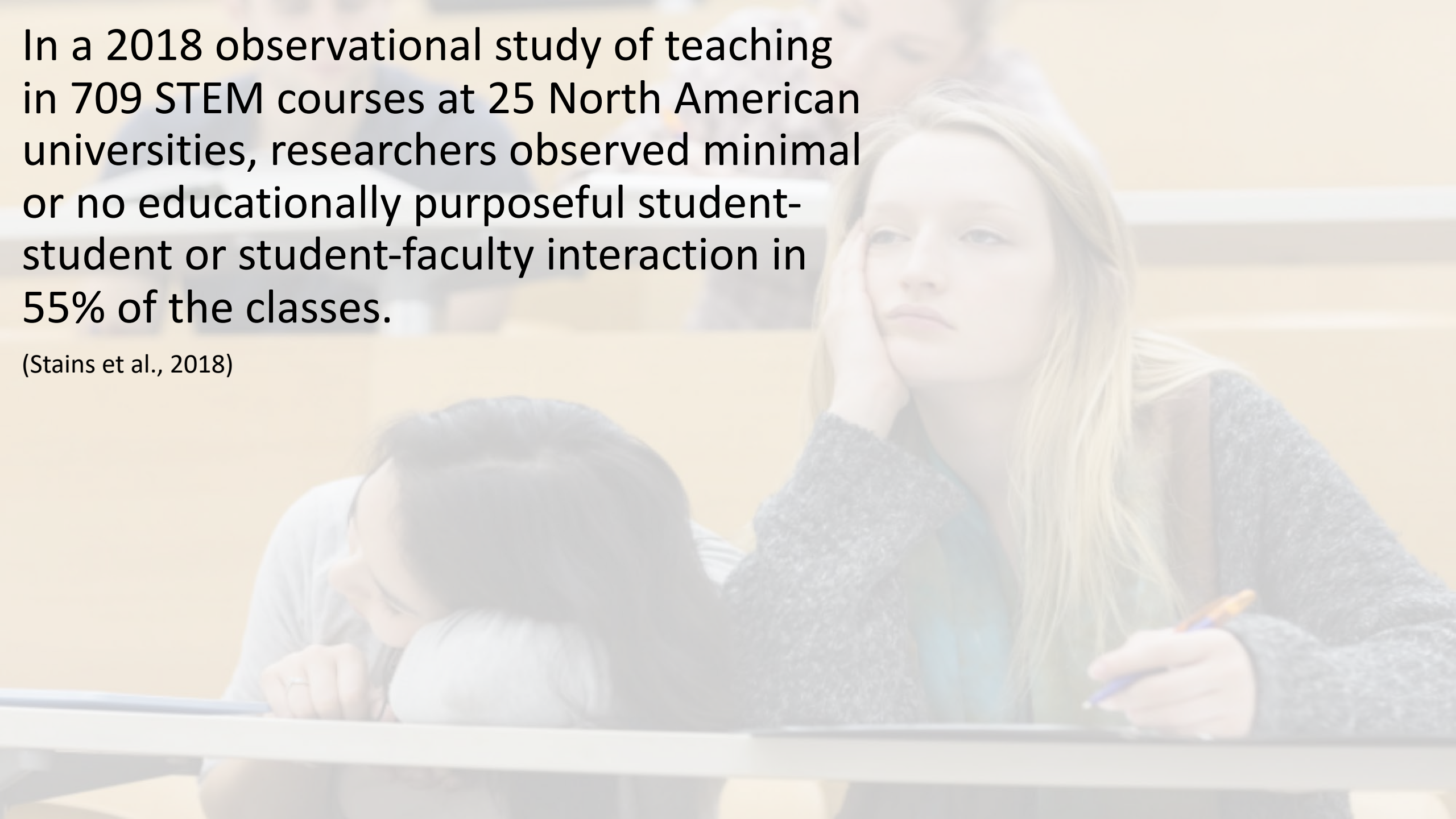


“The college classroom lies at the center of the educational activity structure of institutions of higher education....The classroom may be the only place where students and faculty meet, where education in the formal sense is experienced.”

(Tinto, 1997, p. 599)

In a 2018 observational study of teaching in 709 STEM courses at 25 North American universities, researchers observed minimal or no educationally purposeful student-student or student-faculty interaction in 55% of the classes.

(Stains et al., 2018)



Teaching practices in U.S. higher education often do not reflect the centrality of relationships for student learning.



Teacher–student relationship at university: an important yet under-researched field

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Teachers interacting with students: an important (and potentially overlooked) domain for academic development during times of impact

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35% of research articles focus on educational relationships

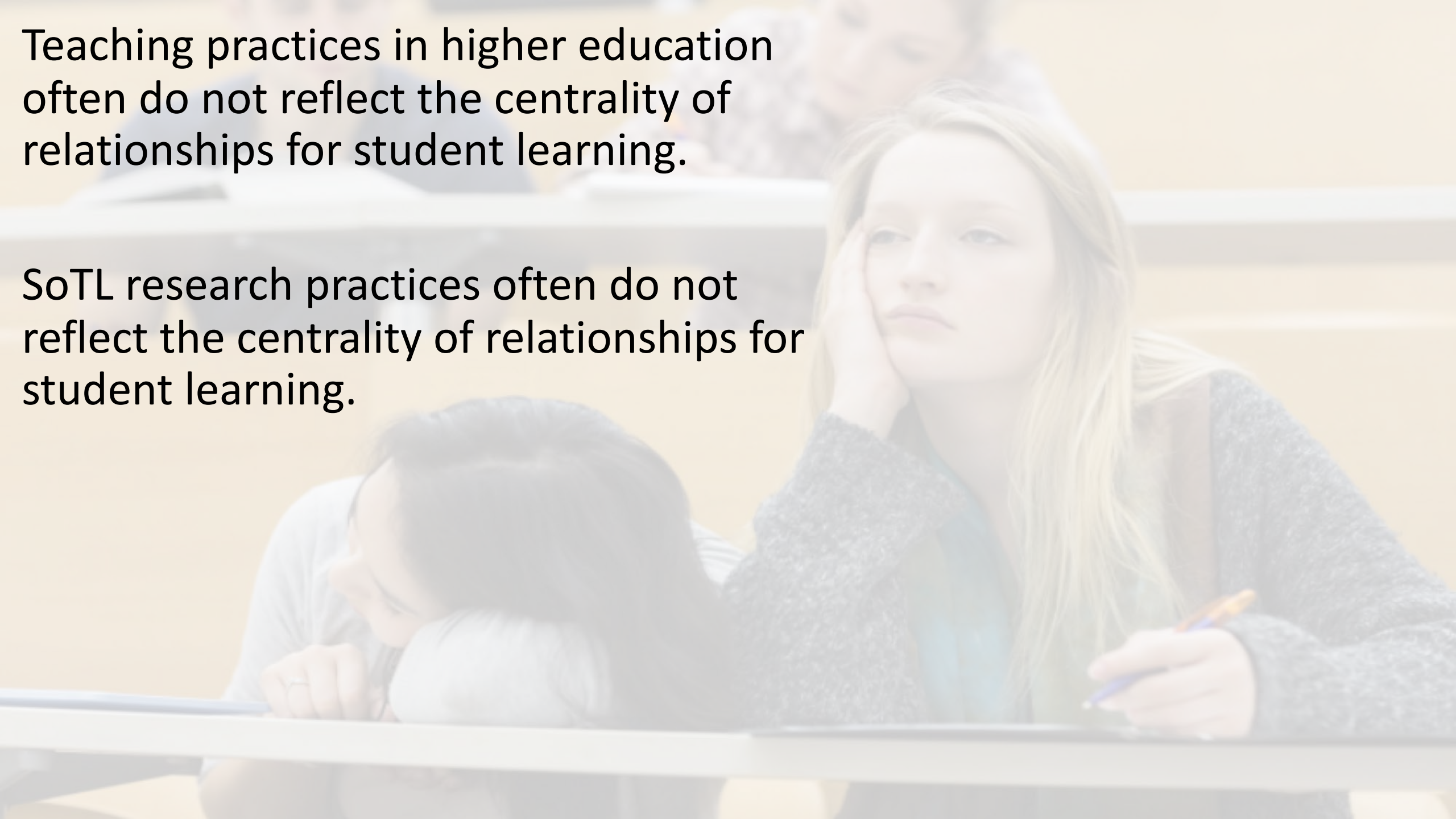


45% on faculty-faculty relationships
35% on student-faculty partnerships

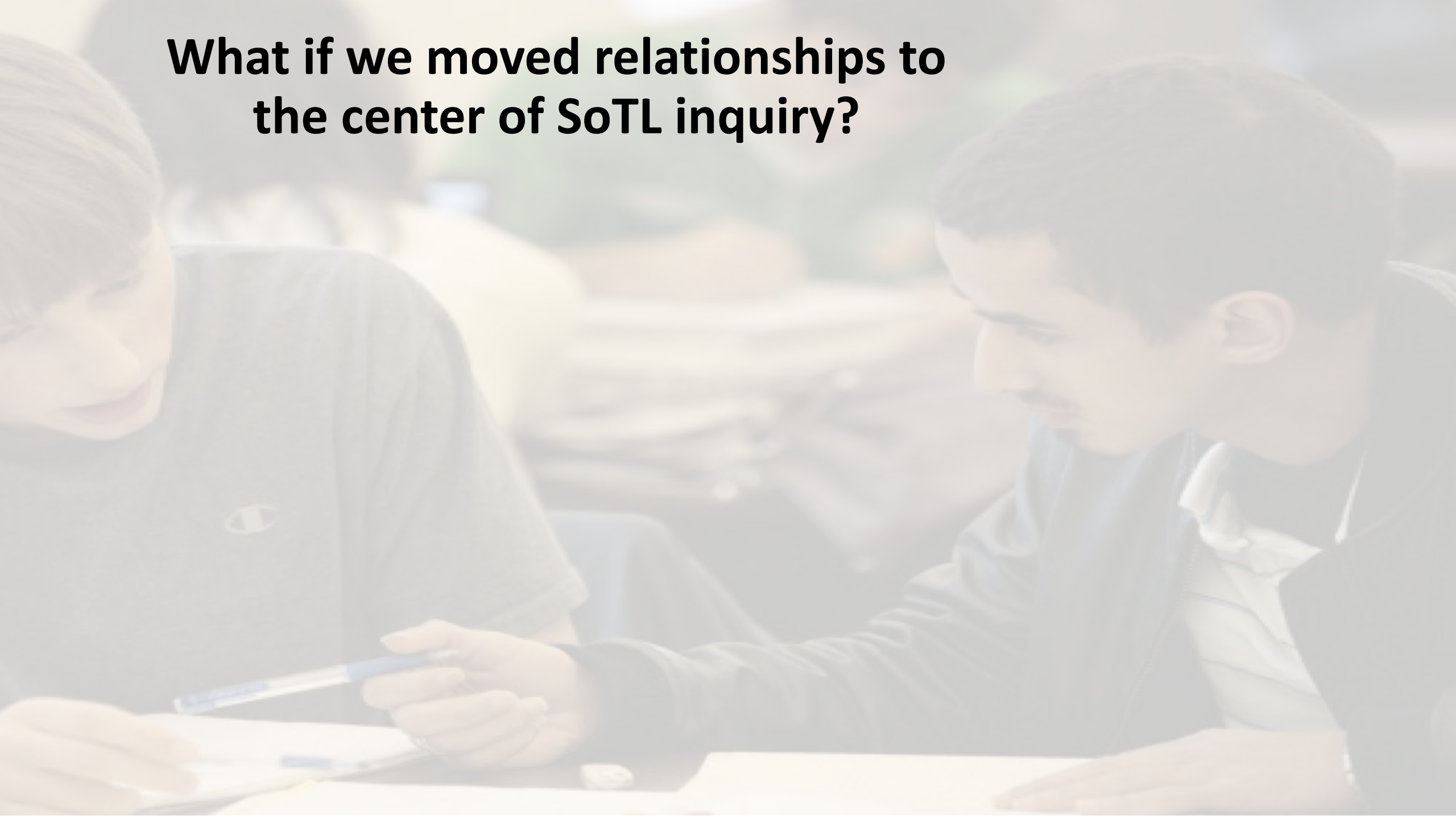
13% on student-student interactions
7% on student-faculty* interactions

Teaching practices in higher education often do not reflect the centrality of relationships for student learning.

SoTL research practices often do not reflect the centrality of relationships for student learning.



**What if we moved relationships to
the center of SoTL inquiry?**



A Taxonomy of SoTL Questions

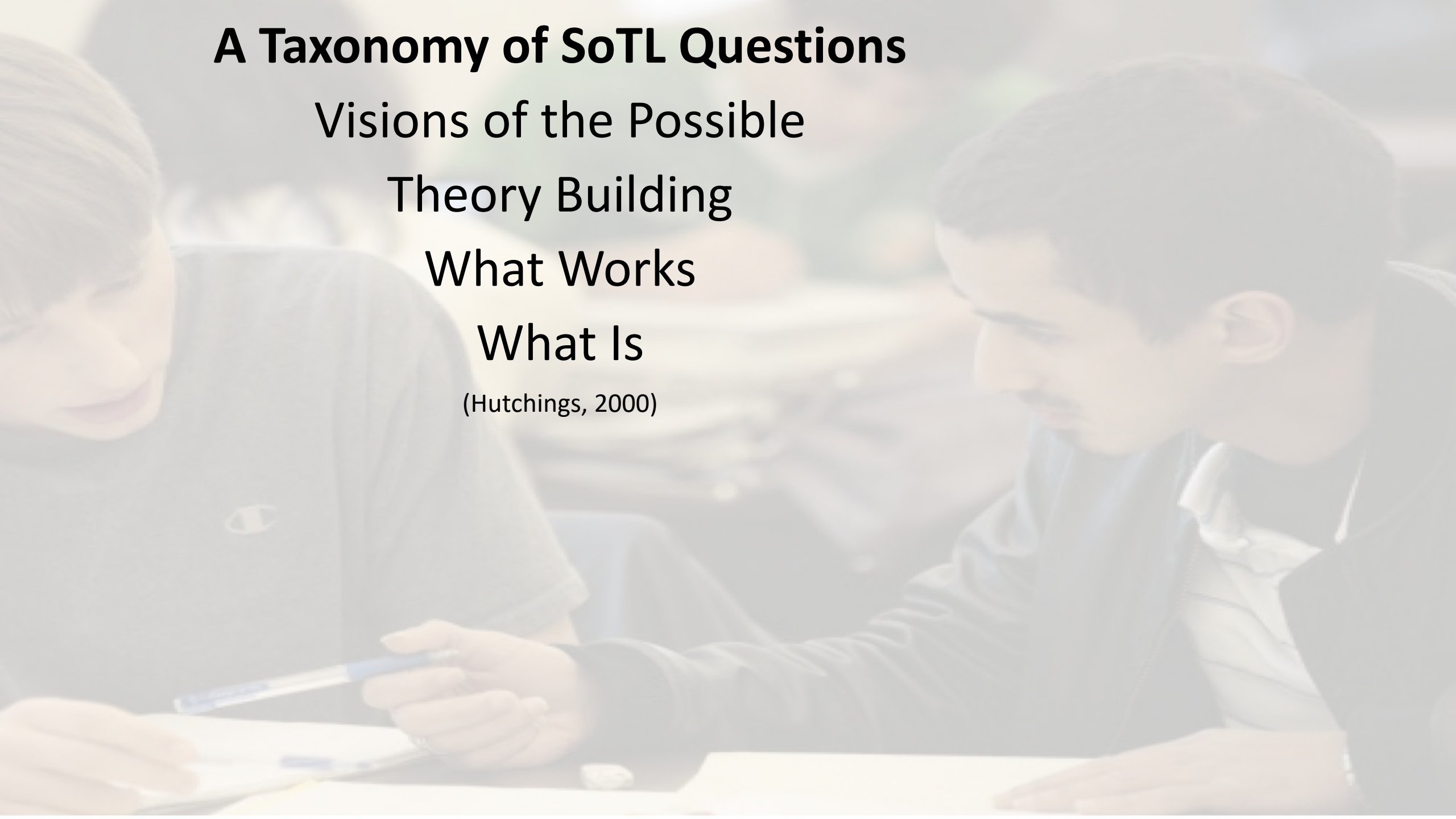
Visions of the Possible

Theory Building

What Works

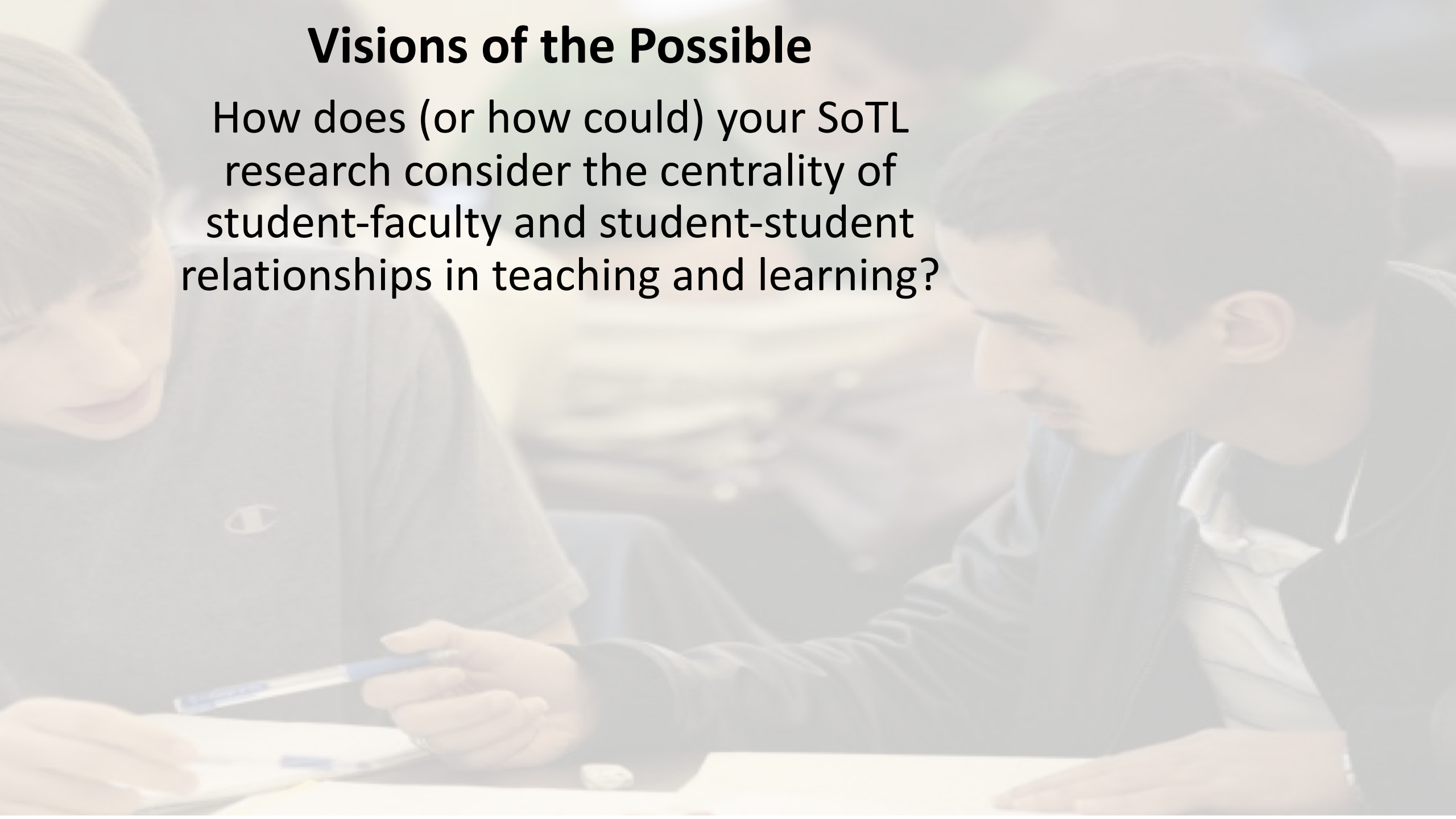
What Is

(Hutchings, 2000)



Visions of the Possible

How does (or how could) your SoTL research consider the centrality of student-faculty and student-student relationships in teaching and learning?



“What Works” SoTL


What’s in a Name? The Importance of Students Perceiving That an Instructor Knows Their Names in a High-Enrollment Biology Classroom

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 Free Access

Closing the Achievement Gap in a Large Introductory Course by Balancing Reduced In-Person Contact with Increased Course Structure

Sat Gavassa  Rocio Benabentos, Marcy Kravec, Timothy Collins, and Sarah Eddy

How universities can enhance student mental wellbeing: the student perspective

Chi Baik, Wendy Larcombe & Abi Brooker

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“What Is” SoTL – Student Learning in Calculus

“Early in Calculus 2, we started getting into really difficult things and I suddenly began having these feelings like I didn't belong in this class -- that my education, what I was trying to achieve, wasn't possible and my goals were just obscenely farther away than I thought they were.

I went to Professor Arco to say that I might have to drop out. He told me, “Joshua, I don't want you to do the homework tonight. I want you to look up imposter syndrome and read about it. Then come and talk to me.” I did that, and I learned that it is extraordinarily common among students.

That interaction bolstered my confidence to realize that I'm not alone in this, that everyone has these feelings. I went from contemplating dropping out and not pursuing my degree to getting tutoring help. In the end, I got an A in the class and it was entirely because of that one simple interaction.”

(Joshua Rodriguez, Oakton Community College)

“What Is” SoTL – Student Performance in Group Work

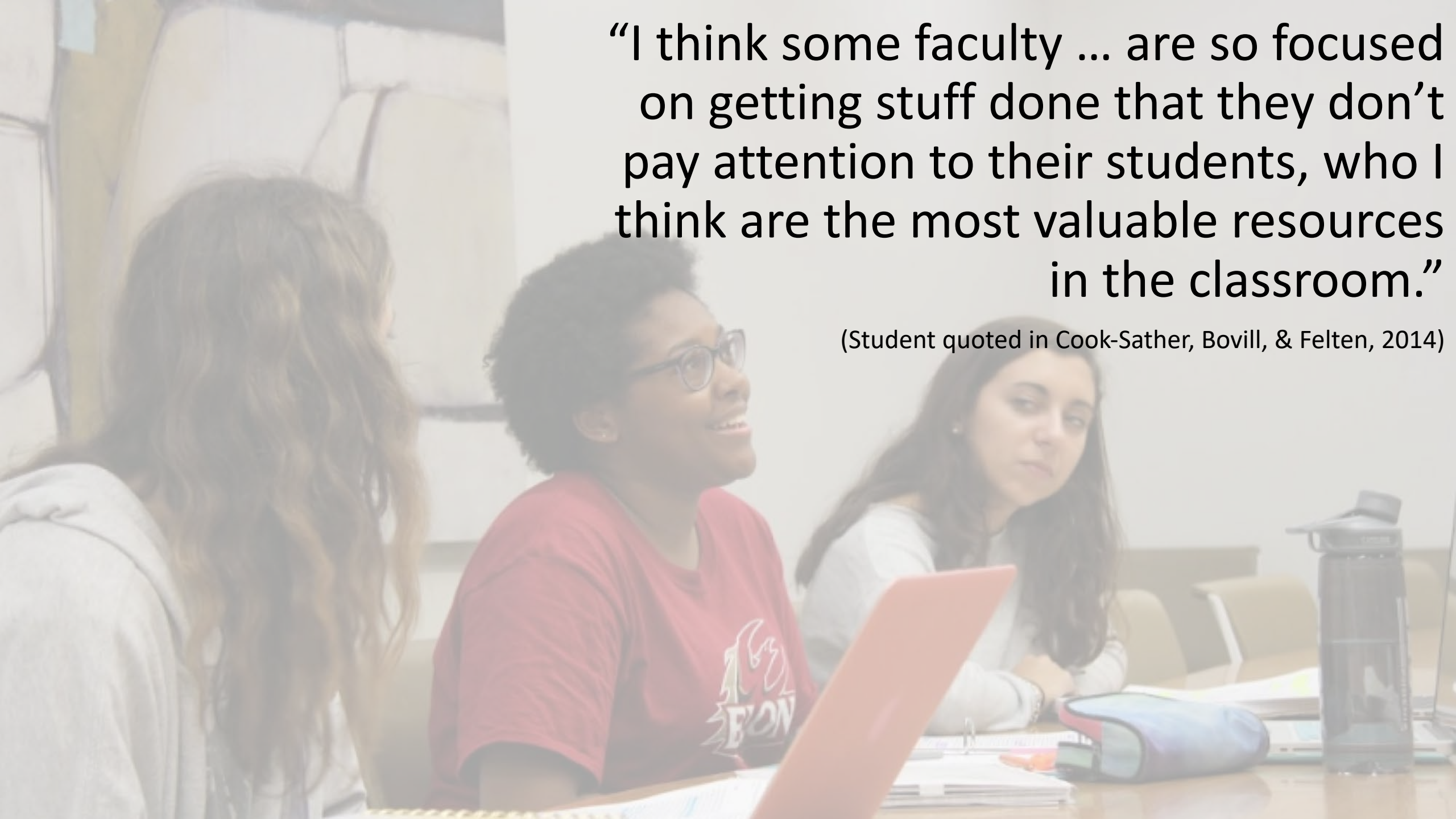
“Our data raise the possibility that perhaps instead of students being lazy or unmotivated, students face barriers such as anxiety about group work, low perceived value of peer discussion for their learning, or contending with other students in the group who are dominating. Reframing inequities in participation in this way puts the onus on the instructor to structure the interactions in peer discussions to promote equal opportunities for allowing students to participate in the learning activity.”

(Eddy et al., 2015, p. 15)

Theory Building

We can and should move student-faculty and student-student relationships into the center of SoTL inquiry – and classroom teaching practices.

Affect
Context
Variation
Equity

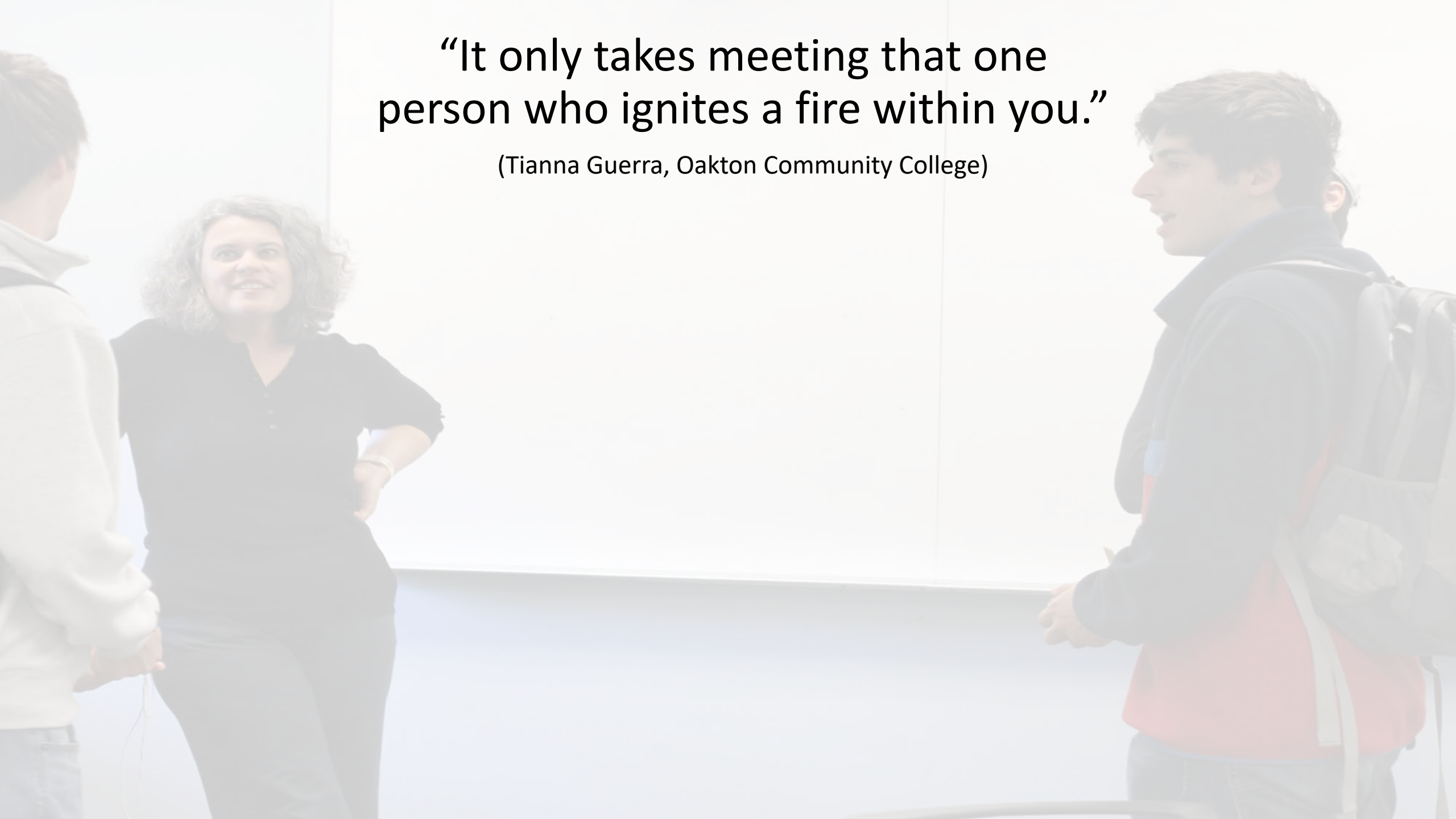
A photograph of three students sitting at a table in a classroom or study area. The student on the left has long, wavy brown hair and is wearing a light-colored hoodie. The student in the middle is a Black woman with short, curly hair, wearing glasses and a red t-shirt with a white graphic that says "FON". She is smiling and looking towards the student on the left. The student on the right has long dark hair and is wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt, looking down at a laptop. On the table in front of them are various items including a blue folder, a black water bottle, and some papers. The background shows a whiteboard and a window with blinds.

“I think some faculty ... are so focused on getting stuff done that they don’t pay attention to their students, who I think are the most valuable resources in the classroom.”

(Student quoted in Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014)

**“It only takes meeting that one
person who ignites a fire within you.”**

(Tianna Guerra, Oakton Community College)



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EuroSoTL 2021



Manchester Metropolitan University is pleased to be hosting EuroSoTL 2021, the European Conference of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning on 17 and 18 June (with an evening reception on 16 June).

With a history dating back 150 years, we have a combination of the traditional and the contemporary that sets us apart and gives us our distinct character. Located in the heart of Manchester, one of Europe's most vibrant cities, we pride ourselves on both our excellent education and community engagement.

Welcome

Conference Theme

Call for Papers

Venue

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nWBHsguWWw>