The Meanings of Faculty-student Interaction Outside the Classroom: A Phenomenological Study in the Chinese Context

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ABSTRACT

Using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, this study sought to understand the meanings of faculty-student interaction outside the classroom in the Chinese context by describing and interpreting students' lived experiences. The study gathered data by interviewing 28 participants from a research university and asking them to write notes. The data were analyzed regarding the three existential of lived time, lived space, and lived relationships to others. The findings revealed that compensation and creation are the meanings of faculty-student interaction outside the classroom for students. Furthermore, this study suggested that (1) emotional interaction is a significant type, (2) students are the drivers and constructors of their interactions with faculty, and (3) the meanings of faculty-student interaction are rooted in students' previous educational experience and the cultural context in which they live. Overall, the study extended the understanding of faculty-student interaction outside the classroom. The limitations of this study and some implications for future studies are discussed.

1. Introduction

Faculty-student interaction is an important issue in the quality of higher education and the development of college students. The positive effect and significance of faculty-student interaction have been suggested by a large number of studies (Endo and Harpel 1982; Kim and Lundberg 2014; Kim and Sax 2014; Kuh and Hu 2001). In particular, there is growing concern about out-of-classroom interaction between faculty and students. Previous studies have identified the nature and types (Astin 1993; Cox 2007;2011) and discussed the quantity and quality (Cox 2010; Fuentes 2014; Olson 1998; Pascarella and Terenzini 2005; Sax 2005; Sax et al. 2005) of faculty-student interaction outside the classroom using quantitative and qualitative methods. However, few studies have focused on students' lived experiences (van Manen 1997) and the meanings for students to interact with faculty outside

the classroom. In order to understand the lived experiences and meanings of interaction, a hermeneutic phenomenological approach (van Manen 1997) was used in this study.

In addition, few studies have been conducted in contexts other the Western context. However, faculty-student interaction is complex and context-dependent (Hagenauer and Volet 2014). Therefore, it is essential to understand the different meanings of faculty-student interaction in multiple contexts. In Chinese universities, a number of systems have been implemented to promote faculty-student interaction outside the classroom, such as undergraduate research and tutorial systems. There are relatively rich interaction experiences in this institutional environment, although faculty-student interaction needs to be further improved for Chinese universities (Lu 2013; Shi 2016). Therefore, this study understood faculty-student interaction in the Chinese context to enrich the literature.

Using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, this study explored the following research questions: (1) What students' lived experiences exist in their interaction with faculty outside the classroom? (2) What are the meanings of faculty-student interaction outside the classroom for students in the Chinese context? The study explores another possibility and seeks a deeper understanding of faculty-student interaction outside the classroom.

2. Literature Review

At present, previous studies largely focus on the frequency, quality, nature, and positive impact of faculty-student interaction (Cox 2010). Furthermore, out-of-classroom interaction between faculty and students has attracted increasingly more attention. Frequent faculty-student interaction outside the classroom has positive impacts on student outcomes, intellectual development, and persistence (Kuh and Hu 2001; Tinto 1993; Wilson and Gaff 1975). The contact frequency between faculty and students was the variable used to understand the interaction in most studies. However, it is not that more frequent contact with faculty will definitely have positive impacts on students (Olson 1998; Pascarella and Terenzini 2005; Sax 2005). In other words, a greater quantity does not mean higher quality.

Recent studies have suggested the significance of the quality of faculty-student interaction (Alderman 2008; Fuentes 2014; Sax et al. 2005). Furthermore, Fuentes (2014) suggested four characteristics of high-quality interaction with faculty outside of the classroom in students' eyes. The findings were consistent with a previous study that assessed the driving force of teachers' psychosocial approachability in out-of-classroom interaction (Wilson et al. 1974;1975). However, some studies argued that teachers play a lesser role in the interaction. In fact, students are the ones who drive the quality and type of out-of-classroom interaction (Cox 2010). Similarly, a study in the South Korean context suggested that students play a vital role from the angle of the barriers to faculty-student interaction (Choi and Kim 2020). In contrast, from a more comprehensive point of view, students, departments and the campus environment are also factors of high-quality interaction (Cotten and Wilson 2006).

Then, what is faculty-student interaction outside the classroom? When previous studies addressed faculty-student interaction outside the classroom, what exactly did they mean? Alderman (2008) suggested that faculty-student interaction outside the classroom refers to the time spent by faculty and students outside the classroom, and this kind of interaction is more personal. In terms of extensions, there are studies that classified the types of faculty-student interaction outside the classroom, such as Astin's four types (1993), Alderman's six types (2008), and Cox's five types (2007;2011).

However, previous studies focused on the extension of faculty-student interaction outside the classroom rather than its connotation and meaning. These studies ignored the exploration of what the interaction means to students. Furthermore, few studies have paid attention to students' lived experiences (van Manen 1997), which means that faculty-student interaction outside the classroom has not been understood more deeply from multiple dimensions. It is valuable to explore students' lived experiences and interaction meanings because they are the premise for faculty and higher education institutions to understand their students deeply and interact with students effectively. However, most studies understand faculty-student interaction outside the classroom within ready-made theoretical frameworks, such as undergraduate socialization (Weidman 1989), student involvement (Astin 1984), social exchange theory (Johnson et al. 2020), and the symbolic interactionist framework (Becker et al. 1968; Smith 2016), rather than from students' lived experiences. There have been bottom-up studies based on students' standpoint (Alderman 2008; Grantham et al. 2015; Soltani 2020). There has also been a study focused on students' experience and the generation of interaction meanings. However, these studies

investigated students' experiences (reflective or recapitulative) rather than lived experiences (sensible or embodied).

On the whole, previous studies attempted to conceptualize faculty-student interaction outside the classroom with an epistemological attitude. The gap in the literature is due to the lack of an embodied description and interpretation of students' lived experiences in the interaction with the doctrine of Being (Heidegger 1962). In addition, most studies are in the Western context. Although studies in other cultural contexts have recently been published (Choi and Kim 2020; Soltani 2020), they are still in the minority and not diverse enough.

It is difficult to exactly define faculty-student interaction outside the classroom. That is, the interaction should be understood in multiple dimensions. Hence, this study intended to explore other possibilities of the interaction with the doctrine of Being. In other words, this study aims to understand the meanings of faculty-student interaction outside the classroom in the Chinese context by describing and interpreting students' lived experiences.

3. Methodology

3.1. Hermeneutic phenomenology

This study followed van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenology (1997), which is a methodology focusing on meaning-giving (van Manen 2016). In the term hermeneutic phenomenology, phenomenology means a descriptive study on lived experiences, and hermeneutic means an interpretive study of the expressions or texts of lived experiences to understand the meanings embedded in them. The main task of hermeneutic phenomenology is to understand the lived experiences and the meaning world of human beings so as to explore what a phenomenon means to human beings. From the perspective of hermeneutic phenomenology, we are required to go back to lived experiences if we intend to understand the meanings of a phenomenon because meanings are generated from the blend between human beings and the world. The world is comprehensible, and its meanings are given by human beings. The meanings are embedded in the sensible, pre-reflective, and predictive lived experiences (van Manen 2016; Merleau-Ponty 1968).

It should be noted that the purpose of hermeneutic phenomenological studies is to discover the possible understandings of a phenomenon. How else could we understand a phenomenon other than to construct a theoretical framework, test hypotheses and/or seek a repeatable model? The mission of hermeneutic phenomenology is to show the possibilities of a phenomenon that may be covered by ready-made theories.

3.2. Settings

The participants of this study were from a research university in China. There have been a variety of types of undergraduate research, and they have been widely implemented in universities. The campus environment has provided more opportunities for faculty-student interaction outside the classroom. For example, all of the associate professors and full professors are required to be mentors of the Undergraduate Innovation and Entrepreneurship Training Program, which is one of the main forms of undergraduate research in China. There are also some teachers who will allow students to engage in elementary work as apprentices in their research projects or laboratories. Besides, students need to finish their graduation theses in the fourth year with the guidance of their mentors. In addition, a tutorial system has been implemented in most disciplines of the university to encourage faculty-student interaction outside the classroom.

3.3. Participants

This study used the purposive sampling strategy to select participants with diverse experience in faculty-student interaction outside the classroom. The study selected participants through the university news, teachers' recommendations, and the researchers' purposeful observations and acquaintances in learning areas such as the library or cafes. Finally, 28 participants were identified in this study. The participants included 15 males and 13 females from 15 majors. All participants engaged in undergraduate research, which provided information-rich cases for studying faculty-student interaction outside the classroom.

3.4. Data collection

The participants' lived experiences were gathered through three steps: (1) in-depth interviews with participants were held for 30-90 minutes, (2) participants wrote 300–1000-word notes, and (3) a second round of interviews was conducted according to the data collected in the first two steps. The order of the first two steps was flexible, and the researchers planned which step was the first based on the features of participants since some participants were good at oral expression and others preferred to write when describing lived experiences.

The interviews and note writing were centered on the following questions:

（1）　What were the impressive events or moments in your interaction with faculty outside the classroom? Please recall these events or moments and describe them in as much detail as possible. (You can recall them according to your personal feelings. There is no need to think deeply.)

（2）　What were the surrounding environments like in those events or moments? What did you see (colors, shapes, motions, expressions, appearances, etc.)? What did you hear (words, voice, breaths, etc.)? What did you touch (the sweat on your hands, your skirt, a pen on a desk, laboratory equipment, etc.)?

（3）　How did you feel in those events or moments (how you felt at that time, not how you feel now after thinking deeply)? For example, what happened to your heart rate and breathing? How did your skin feel? How did you feel about the atmosphere around you? How did you feel about the faculty, other people or things?

It should be noted that participants should describe the pre-reflective and predictive lived experiences rather than the reflection, generalization or summary of their interaction with faculty outside the classroom. However, participants inevitably described their own reflection, generalization or summary. Therefore, the researchers needed to delete the inappropriate descriptions and have more detailed conversations in the second round of interviews to supplement the data.

In addition, the researchers did not preset the border of faculty-student interaction outside the classroom in the process of gathering data. In other words, participants were not told what the interaction refers to or what behaviors could be regarded as the interaction since the purpose of this study was to explore the interaction from students' views.

3.5. Data analysis

Bracketing is the fundamental aspect of data analysis by hermeneutic phenomenology. *Bracketing* means liberating phenomena from hypotheses (van Manen 2016). That is, the researchers need to put aside the ready-made theory frameworks and go back to things themselves.

Existentials (van Manen 1997) are one of the data analysis methods in hermeneutic phenomenology. They refer to describing and interpreting lived experiences from the dimensions of lived time, lived space, lived body, and lived relationship to others so as to show the rich meanings embedded in it. Because the lived bodies and lived relationships of students in their interaction with faculty could not be separated, this study described and interpreted the lived experiences using three existentials: students' lived time, students' lived space, and students' lived relationships between their lived bodies and others.

4. Results

4.1. Lived time

4.1.1. The past cannot be forgotten

This part describes the lived experiences of Zhao, Qian and Sun. They attach great importance to teachers marking their own papers. The *red markings* have held a special significance for them from childhood. The *red pen* represented the impression, attention, response and expectation of the teacher-student interaction in childhood. However, now, the *red pen* has become a mouse; the homework book has become Microsoft Word, e-mail, or WeChat; primary school students have become college students; and the teachers who they are with every day now require an appointment to see them.

Students are very nervous and think that the papers must be bad when they send their papers to their teachers. Meanwhile, they are looking forward to feedback from teachers and want to know how their papers are evaluated.

The first time I handed in the paper to my mentor, I was afraid that my poor paper would surely be thrown into the bucket of academic garbage. (Zhao)

My paper must be bad! I roll the mouse back and forth. I am afraid to speak while I open WeChat because it's not good to disturb him on vacation. But it's maybe not so bad, so let my mentor make a judgment! I'm finished but have no one to read it. Is this not more depressing? I just want to show it. (Qian)

The teacher replies quickly.

My mentor replies! He stops what he is doing and gives me a reply! (Qian)

In Qian's eyes, teachers are busy, and those things are more important than helping students correct their papers. However, at that time, he feels that he is focused. Seeing that the whole page is marked in red (too many mistakes), he feels more motivation than shame.

On the same day, the revised draft is sent back. I am breathless and don't know what is the comment. The whole page is marked in red, even the small grammar mistakes. I see my mentor dragging his glasses and narrowing his eyes as if.... What a surprise! He is not angry, so I'll try my best to work hard. (Zhao)

Regarding the *red markings*, students think of the experience of the *red pen* in primary school. Teachers usually use red pens to mark homework. In the eyes of students, *red pens* seem to be exclusively used by teachers. Sun said,

I like the red pen. Sometimes as homework is sent out, I'm disappointed to see that it's marked with black pen. That black shouldn't be here.

He and his classmates are looking forward to the teacher's comments.

As soon as the books are sent out, my classmates are eager to turn to the page of comments. The elegant handwriting is enough for me to see for a while. It's not enough to see my own. I have to look at others. Sometimes there is no comment, just a MarkRead, and all expectations disappear in an instant. (Sun)

4.1.2. Happy ending

This part describes the lived experiences of Li, Zhou and Wu on *happy endings*. They feel satisfied in the *happy ending* at the moment when a research experience is about to end. Students feel that they have lived up to the teachers' painstaking efforts and have been recognized. Their value can be realized, and growth can be proved only in this way.

Li has been conducting undergraduate research with his mentor since he was a freshman. When he was a senior student, he received an offer to study for a master's degree following the same mentor. He felt satisfied. The result was the positive recognition of his research experience. His time was not wasted, and so it was a happy ending.

I couldn't help being excited and run to tell my mentor. The sun is sunny, the windows are bright, and the room is transparent. I remembered the situation when he had just been assigned to be my mentor. I immediately went to the website to check the introduction because I really wanted to know who was so predestined with me. Anyway, it looks great! Time flies. I'm going to be his graduate student. (Li)

Zhou and Wu, by contrast, did not value the research experience much at first. Zhou said,

I had already got an internship before my defense. I didn't want to do research in the future, so I just diddle-daddled.

Wu said,

My mentor asked us to take part in a competition. We didn't want to go. We couldn't win the prize anyway.

However, they finally took it seriously under the persuasion and request. They did not want the teacher to be disappointed and felt apologetic.

But the thought of my mentor makes my conscience tingle. He told me to wear a suit for my defense. My body seems to be stuck when I stand in front of teachers. The suit frames my whole body, like a gypsum. It forces me to stand up straight. I think of his words and take it seriously that I will have a perfect ending. (Zhou)

She had a meeting with us and let us know how we can have more benefits. I was so distressed that could only swallow my tongue back because she remonstrated earnestly and kindly. (Wu)

Although Wu was reluctant to participate in the competition, when the competition had a satisfactory ending, he was happy but also has the feeling of regret and shame.

Unexpectedly, we win the prize! I didn't want to attend the meeting originally! At the moment of receiving the award, I see my mentor's smile. The award music seems to remind me, you didn't want to come at the beginning. I remember that I didn't want to participate in the piano competition and was pushed to the stage by my mother when I was a child. (Wu)

4.2. Lived space

4.2.1. Learning space: laboratory and conference room

When students first come to the laboratory or conference room, they are worried and afraid. They are surrounded by space, experimental equipment, tables, chairs, senior brothers and sisters, the mentor and PowerPoint. Zheng and Wang felt that they lacked a sense of control and ownership of the people and objects in this space. People and objects are seemingly so close to them, but they are also so far away in their lived experiences.

My mind was blank the first time I entered the laboratory. I didn't know how to stand or sit. I didn't know how to use all kinds of experimental equipment. (Zheng)

The first time I attended the group meeting, I pushed the door and looked around. I didn't know anyone so I found a corner and sat down. My heart was full of confusion. The meeting lasted a long time, but I didn't feel tired. I kept absorbing the knowledge. The teacher said a lot, but I didn't know anything. I felt like I was in a sauna where I couldn't breathe. There was a lot of stuff on the top of my head. (Wang)

Slowly, their sense of control of the space began to strengthen, and they also became a part of the space; at least the uncomfortable feeling was considerably decreased.

I start to debug and test slowly, finding that it is very interesting. My mentor is around us. I feel that he is waiting for us to make mistakes so that he can point them out in time. Later, I am able to shuttle freely in the laboratory. I also have my own world. (Zheng)

The meeting lasted a long time, but I don't feel tired. I don't know how to check the data, how to write a thesis, how to write a cover letter, so I go to ask my mentor...His voice is gentle, and speaks with passion. Whenever I am tortured crazy by papers, it is much more comfortable to talk to him. (Wang)

4.2.2. Body space: I look at his/her back or face

Sometimes, the teachers walk in front of the students, and the students look at the teachers' backs. In addition, the students are full of reverence for the teachers.

One day, our mentor asks us to revise papers in his office. He walks in front of us. He is tall, wearing a black windbreaker. When he is passing by the window of the corridor, the windbreaker blows with the wind. He occupies the whole corridor himself. He is really like a boss on TV such that I really want to match him with sunglasses. (Feng)

Teachers and students sometimes interact face-to-face. The teacher sits in front of students, students look at the teacher's face with expectations and encouragement, and the students feel supported but more pressure.

My teammates and I are preparing on the day of the meeting. At this time, a familiar, tall and thin figure walked to us. This is our mentor! I am nervous and flattered. I am very afraid that my poor performance will let her come in vain. I dare not look at her and

think of the results. I do not remember what I said in confusion. (Wu)

4.2.3. Too close: Companionship and uneasiness

Being close to the teachers does not bring positive lived experience to students all the time. Some students will appreciate the teacher for their company and help and feel that they grow up together with the teacher. However, some students feel out of breath, the teacher is too enthusiastic, and some help is unnecessary.

Chen and his classmates will take part in a competition under the guidance of their mentor. They spent all day in the laboratory during their summer vacation. They encounter a problem, that is, the laboratory is too hot with no air conditioning.

It's hot and the cicadae are noisy. I have to do the experiment again. I'm more agitated when closing the window and the curtain. I have to do my best and stay here all day. But the mentality is like the wind, which is blocked by the window. I'm going to get moldy and stinky in this stuffy room. (Chen)

Later, the mentor rescued them by turning on the air conditioning for them.

Successful application for air conditioning! I am so excited since I don't expect this treatment. My whole body's cells have revived again, urging me to do the experiment quickly. The idea is clearer, the efficiency is higher and it seems that not so hard for me. (Chen)

Their mentor stayed with them in the laboratory every day to prepare for the competition. It is reassuring and motivating.

He stays with us in the laboratory until the teaching building closed at 10 o'clock every night. The outdoor has been quieted down the moment the door opened, as if there is a new me. The cool evening wind blown over me, brushing the trees and leaves, across every corner of the teaching building. (Chen)

However, Chu and Wei are not. Facing teachers' attention and help, they feel forced, embarrassed and out of breath. Chu's mentor appoints him as the group leader, but he does not feel that this is an accolade; he has doubts about his mentor. He does not want to be the leader, but he does not dare to say this.

In that long Excel spreadsheet with over a hundred projects, I was immediately attracted to this one. So I contact the mentor immediately. I am the first to find her, and she asks me to be the team leader. What?

It's too casual, how can a person who has no research experience take charge of her own project? Is this project unpopular? She doesn't even see me, so how does she decide? I am a little bit flustered; I edit it several times and delete. Does she appreciate me? Is it congenial, a show of kindness? If I refuse her, will I leave a bad impression? Full of pressure, I can only accept silently. (Chu)

Wei's mentor accompanies him to hand in the materials out of enthusiasm. In Wei's eyes, it is such a small thing that he does not need to be accompanied. He feels that the faculty was overzealous and he can complete such a simple thing by himself.

One day, I need to hand in the materials and couldn't find the place. So she wants to take me to there. I'm shy and a little worried. I can ask the way by myself, but she still insists on taking me. It is so embarrassing. On the road, I can't walk too close to her, but I can't hear what she says when I'm a little far away. I feel suffocated. What should I say? (Wei)

4.3. Lived relationship between lived body and others

4.3.1. The relationship between academic leaders and green hands

This part describes the lived experience of Jiang, Shen and Han on the powerful-powerless relationship between faculty and students. Students think that they cannot do anything, but the faculty knows everything. The relationship between academic leaders and green hands is formed. In this kind of relationship, students will revere the teachers, agree with the teachers' negation, and do some things reluctantly in order to obey the teachers. They experience a weak and poor lived body, which is not very important to the teachers.

In this relationship, some students revere the faculty.

I'm very nervous and honored to meet him. I don't know anything. Last time he demonstrated an amazing magic face recognition program on the spot. I was so stunned that I got goose bumps all over my body. I was attracted, and it seemed that there was a huge whirlpool in front of me that I plunged into. (Jiang)

In the face of teachers' negation, some students are speechless. They agree with the teachers and feel that they are truly bad.

He says, what can undergraduates achieve? I don't think it's possible!

I nod hard, trying to let him see my conviction. Yes, I am a green hand. What can I do?

But this time is very important for you. You need to understand the process of the experiment and have an understanding of the research.

I nod wildly again, his eyes tell me, your feeling doesn't matter, mine matters. I didn't know what to say except I know. I was shocked by his words. (Shen)

In the face of the teachers' persuasion and questioning, some students will sacrifice their original ideas and obey the teachers' ideas. For example, Han does not want to participate in underground research anymore, but her mentor persuades her patiently. Her mentor asks her how she feels about research, but she does not dare tell her mentor her real ideas completely. She will try to determine what her faculty means and answer after careful consideration. Han finally agreed to stay and continue to do underground research.

I won't sign up! I finally said. I don't want to apply for projects anymore. My mentor moves a chair and plans to have a long talk with me instead of getting angry. Questions are thrown at me: What are you going to do? What do you enjoy? What don't you like to do? What do or don't you like about scientific research? I guess what her meaning is with trepidation and glance at the clock on the wall. It was ten o'clock in the evening. The defense line in my heart has already collapsed. I can't get out if don't promise her! (Han)

4.3.2. The relationship is filled with the breath of life

This section describes the relationship between the breath of life and students' experience. They see the characteristics of teachers' lives outside academia. Students experience approachable, intelligible, and living teachers who are no longer the traditional image of academic leaders. Students also experience a more open, free and positive lived body. At this time, students will not feel *I am poor* or *I am weak*.

For example, Yang invites his mentor to revise his paper, but he was a half an hour late. When he rushes to the office, he sees his mentor is dozing off. His mentor does not blame him and the sleepy look impressed him deeply.

When I run to the door of office, I see he is dozing off. I quickly adjusted my breath and knocked on the door.

Sorry, I'm late.

Oh ..It's OK...sit...here.

He doesn't seem to wake up and speak vaguely. He looks at the paper and seems to be thinking, but I always feel that he is in a daze. I doubt if his eyes are open. (Yang)

Zhu is talking about eating beef noodles with his mentor. One day, he met his mentor while eating beef noodles, so they sat together and chatted. He said that he had an idea recently, and his mentor thought it was good. He gave him advice on how to do it. In addition, the idea came true.

One day, I am eating beef noodles. I look up, this is my mentor! I have to drum up the cheek, staring round eyes, trying to let him see I am saying hello. We eat and talk. Eh? Why can't I finish eating this bowl of beef noodles? I only eat a bowl as usual... (Zhu)

Before Qin met his mentor, Qin thought she would be a serious old professor. After meeting, he felt that the teacher was very kind, similar to his sister.

I walk leisurely along the spacious road of the campus. I still remember that it was a sunny afternoon, and a breeze was blowing. Breathing the cool air, I have become fresh. The front is her office building. She must be a serious old professor that her desk is full of documents and busy all the time.

I see my mentor! She has a beautiful ponytail and is wearing box glasses. She is smiling at me. This is probably my sister. I didn't like this project before and just wanted to make a fool of it. I'm so stupid. (Qin)

4.3.3. Deep-rooted: faculty-student relationships, parent-child relationships and social relationships

Xu and Zhang have two special descriptions. When they talk about the experience of faculty-student interaction, they associate it with other social relationships and their relationships with their parents. Xu is an intern in a company. The manager will not teach him like his mentor when he makes mistakes. He thinks from the manager to his mentor. He regards his mentor as a guide and himself as a lucky lived body in the relationship.

This is wrong. Do it again. Send it to the director before 8:00 tomorrow morning.

This sentence is a nightmare for me. I recall that my mentor helped me to modify my paper, including the format, punctuation, and typography. I think he is so good at this moment. I just came to the company for

an internship and I don't know anything. No one believes I am important. I can only hear the clattering of keyboards, the rustling of the paper, and the clattering of colleagues moving rapidly. These tiny sounds make me extremely tense. I am like a little ant. I dare not ask for help when I encounter problems.

No one gives me directions. As long as students are willing to learn, we will not be unwilling to teach.

I thought of this sentence.（Xu）

Zhang compared faculty-student relationships with parent-child relationships. He could not do the most basic things when he first arrived in the laboratory. His mentor taught him to do the experiment hand in hand. If he met any difficulty, he would ask the faculty, and the faculty would answer the question patiently.

In front of him, I forget that I am a college student and feel like a giant baby. When he taught me to do the experiment, I think of how my parents taught me to hold chopsticks when I was a child. (Zhang)

Zhang talked about the feeling of talking with his mother on the phone. He felt that there was no common topic with his mother. What they talked about were trivial matters of life. He was not excited and expected to talk. However, his mentor is different. He can tell him many advanced things, and he can get profound knowledge from his mentor. Every time after chatting, he experiences growth, a new lived body, and a powerful but approachable teacher.

On the way to the gym, I keep thinking about the code and want to go back earlier. At this time, my mother calls.

What did you eat in the evening? Did you wear autumn pants? Study hard. Don't just play.

I wanted to tell her that I don't want to talk to you.

Every time my mother calls, she says these things all the time. My ears are going to be calloused. She doesn't understand what I'm doing and I don't want to tell her.

Mom, you should pay attention to your body.

This is the end of every call.I look at my mom and mentor next to each other on the call record. They are two wonderful people.(Zhang)

4.4. What does faculty-student interaction outside

the classroom mean to students?

Based on the above description and interpretation of lived time, lived space, and lived relationships, we found that faculty-student interaction outside the classroom has the following two meanings for students:

4.4.1. *Faculty-student interaction outside the classroom means compensation*

Specifically, it includes compensation for the teacher-student interaction in previous education. The parent-child interaction has become gradually weaker, and meeting wise teachers in social interaction has been difficult. In other words, students' understanding of the interaction with faculty is generated in their previous education experiences. As students enter college, the role of their teachers has also changed, that is, from *loco parentis* (van Manen 1991) to complementary parents. Higher education is also the transition period for students (especially for senior students) to realize a role change, that is, from the campus person to the social person; and faculty-student interaction is more precious for them.

4.4.2. *Faculty-student interaction outside the classroom means creation*

Specifically, this includes the creation of the faculty's image, the students' own image and the relationships. In other words, students have subjectivity and creativity in the interaction. Every faculty-student interaction is unique. It contains the student's personality and generates in lived experience at the living moment. Each pair of teachers and students may generate a different kind of interaction. To a large extent, faculty-student interaction is constructed by students themselves.

Furthermore, it should be noted that regardless of the perspective of compensation or creation, the following characteristics exist: (1) Emotional interaction is particularly valuable in students' lived experience, which is a significant type of faculty-student interaction outside the classroom; (2) Students are the driver and constructor of faculty-student interaction outside the classroom, and they master the quality of interaction; and (3) The meanings of the faculty-student interaction are generated in students' previous education experience.

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5. Discussion

This study used a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to seek meanings and explore other possibilities of faculty-student interaction outside the classroom by describing and interpreting students' lived experiences in the Chinese context. First, this is the first study to suggest the two meanings - compensation and imagination - of the interaction. Furthermore, this study suggested that emotional interaction, an essential component of faculty-student interaction, could not be ignored, which was consistent with the study of Grantham et al. (2015). There have been studies that considered emotional factors, such as Cox (2007; 2011) and Alderman (2008), when identifying the types of faculty-student interaction. However, these studies have not specifically discussed emotional interactions. In other words, previous studies did not usually treat emotional interaction as a single type of faculty-student interaction. This is likely because emotional interaction may exist in any kind of faculty-student interaction, that is, it may overlap with other types. However, this study suggested that emotional interaction is precious for students from the compensatory and creative angles.

Second, this study believed that students are creating or constructing their interaction with faculty, and they are the drivers of the high-quality interaction. In previous studies, there were two standpoints on who is the driver of faculty-student interaction: faculty members are the drivers (Fuentes 2014; Wilson et al. 1975), and students are the drivers (Cox 2010; Choi and Kim 2020). This study was consistent with the latter. According to the findings, even if the teachers sent the signal of psychosocial approachability (Wilson et al. 1974; 1975), not all students were willing to accept it and to contact the teachers in close quarters. The reason may be that, as Johnson et al. (2020) argued, students' intention to interact with the faculty is influenced by their cognition of the costs and benefits in the interaction. It may also be that, as Cotton and Wilson (2006) suggested, students are not willing to work hard passively or disappoint the teachers once they fail. Besides, students' prior education experiences and the cultural context, which will be mentioned below, may also be reasons.

Third, this study suggested that the meanings of faculty-student interaction were rooted in students' prior education experience at school and home and the cultural context. In terms of school education experience, exam-oriented education as a *baton* has

played a guiding role during primary education, secondary education and even preschool education in the Chinese education system (Gong and Lyu; 2012). Teachers have great authority in this educational context. Teachers are the powerful side and students are the powerless side in teacher-student relationships. In other words, teachers are the spokesmen of knowledge, and students follow their teachers. Furthermore, there has been a tradition of the *dignity of the teaching profession* in China, and *being a tractable kid* is the rule that Chinese children are required to follow.

In terms of family education experience, parents have great ambitions for their children's learning, and there is a phenomenon of education anxiety in China. Parents regard the National College Entrance Examination as the decisive affair of children's lives. They attach great importance to their children's learning, but due to their limited abilities, they put their hopes on the school and teachers. This brings us back to the abovementioned point that teachers are authoritative as professionals in the eyes of parents and students. Besides, children's learning is handed over to the school and teachers while parents assume the responsibility of taking care of children's daily life. In daily life, children also play a powerless and tractable role.

For these reasons, first, students still regard teachers as powerful and themselves as powerless in the interaction, even though they have been in the university. They recognize and obey the teachers' authority. Once they catch sight of approachable, intelligible, and living teachers, they will find it novel and interesting because it is a relatively rare face of teachers. Second, as college students, their views on parent-child relationships and teacher-student relationships have changed. They see faculty as compensating parents and not in loco parentis. They can get specialized knowledge or career development from faculty, and they are no longer satisfied with the care of their parents in daily life.

This study attempted to understand faculty-student interaction from the perspective of students' prior education experience at school and home. Similarly, Weidman (1989) and Fuentes et al. (2014) suggested the significance of the parent-child relationship. These studies believed that students were not the *tabula rasa* when they entered universities, and the early family experience influenced their socialization and interaction with teachers. However, the studies focused more on the parent-child relationship and ignored students' education experience before they entered universities.

This study tended to emphasize that students' prior experiences of family education and school education concurrently influence their interaction with faculty in universities.

Finally, in terms of the cultural context, Hagenauer and Volet (2014) suggested that faculty-student interaction is complex and context-dependent. There have also been studies conducted in non-Western contexts. For example, Choi and Kim (2020) considered the impact of a collectivistic culture on faculty-student interaction, and Soltani et al. (2020) argued that faculty's political orientation is an essential factor in faculty-student interaction. For this study, we assessed faculty-student interaction in the Chinese context. In an ethics-based society, altruism is treated as the moral code. This is reflected in faculty-student interaction in which students may give up their own ideas in order to meet their teachers' expectations and needs. This occurs because they usually do not want to disappoint teachers with the concept of *being responsible for others*.

6. Conclusion

This study described and interpreted students' lived experiences in their out-of-classroom interaction with faculty regarding lived time, lived space, and lived relationships using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach. The study illustrated the vivid scenes and discovered other possibilities of the interaction with the doctrine of Being. We suggest that faculty-student interaction outside the classroom means compensation and creation for students. Furthermore, this study argued the following: emotional interaction is a valued component for students in their interaction with faculty; students are the drivers and constructors of the interaction; and the meanings of faculty-student interaction are generated in the context of exam-oriented education, parents' educational anxiety, and the altruism culture in China. The above feelings and understanding we illustrated may contribute to generating thoughtfulness and tact (van Manen 1991) so that faculty and universities could be more sharp-witted and considerate in the face of complex and changing situations.

The limitation of this study is that the participants of this study came from a research university with a tutorial system, and all of them had participated in undergraduate research. Most of their lived experiences in the interaction arose from or revolved around the research. Future research could still further focus on the emotional interaction between faculty and students. In addition, more detailed studies could be conducted in various cultures or campus contexts. More possibilities

for faculty-student interaction outside the classroom may be waiting to be understood.

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