People have the desire to be known, understood, and appreciated. Humans crave the company of others, and want to be validated, cared for, and feel close to one another. People all over the world share similar desires and ideas of intimacy. Does that mean people attain desires autonomously from their upbringing? Does upbringing define desires, and does it shape the way humans express themselves? What are the reasons to express and perceive intimacy differently? Does everyone seek connection? What are the reasons to deny connection? Is the desire to be connected a basic human need? Is intimacy a basic need? The craving for human connection is a basic need, but jewellery is not. Jewelry is something that is chosen to put upon the body in an attempt to express parts of people’s personality. Jewelry is a close connection because it literally connects to the body. The objects chosen to place upon the body as jewelry is a materialized attempt at connecting not only with individual thoughts, but also with others, in hopes of expressing through that jewelry. Jewelry is a universal platform for connection, a basic human need. What does it look like when these two instances - the aspect of physical connection of jewelry to the body and human connection - are taken and amplified? These questions will be explored by focusing on psychoanalysis and human interactions: the use of body language, gestures and the signs used to communicate.

There is a fine line between human want and need. There are needs that are fundamental, such as food or shelter. Every human being, independent of their upbringing or culture, needs these things in order to survive. It is important to distinguish between needs and satisfiers. Max-Neef, an economist and environmentalist known for his human development model based on
fundamental human needs, explains this saying, a satisfier is an attempt at fulfilling one of these fundamental human needs. Many satisfiers actually only serve as a substitute for the actual need, or futile attempt to fulfil that need. (Max-Neef 17). Success, as an example, can be the satisfier for a need that lies deeper such as the need to be appreciated and valued. The psychologist and author Abraham Maslow has created a pyramid to classify the most important basic needs. He cites six basic needs, with love and belonging as number three (Maslow 2). He claims that this need is especially strong in childhood, and can override other needs, particularly in such cases as an abusive childhood, growing up with feelings of neglect, or lack of affection. Following that logic, what happens during childhood affects the ability to engage with others and experience intimacy. Furthermore, Maslow argues that it is important for humans of all ages to feel loved, to feel a sense of belonging, and to engage with others socially. Even though intimacy is expressed and perceived differently, it is important that people experience it to some degree. “We think of ourselves as isolated individuals sometimes, but every self is socially constituted. We make no sense without our audiences, and the social animal needs others in order to live well. For human beings that feeling of being known, that shared and forgiving sense of frailty, is redemptive in a way that nothing else can be,” (Marar 3)

In order to feel connected to somebody else, it is crucial to open up and be vulnerable. Brene Brown defines connection as “the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship.” (Brown, „The gifts of Imperfection“ 19)

Even though people seek connection and intimacy, the fact that opening up makes one feel vulnerable can cause people to reject connecting with other people. In some cases it’s the
fear of not being accepted or worthy of love and connection. Vulnerability is mostly seen as something uncomfortable, but it is also the key to a deep connection as well as strength. It shows someone has enough courage and confidence to allow somebody else to attempt to know and understand him or her, with all their positive and negative traits. Brene Brown states that vulnerability “sounds like truth and feels like courage. Truth and courage aren't always comfortable, but they're never weakness,” (Brown, “Daring Greatly” 37). Vulnerability allows acceptance of flaws and imperfections and sees them as simply a part of oneself, rather than letting value be a reflection of the judgment of others.

This work explores feelings of intimacy and vulnerability through device-like objects that explore varying degrees of intense physical contact. With the act of contact comes the risk of collision, and with collision comes the risk of damage. Utilizing porcelain, whose physical presence is one of fragility, the fear of their breakability is evoked. While not necessarily precious, porcelain is a material associated with the fine domestic space. Whether it be in the form of a shattered vase, or a chipped tea cup, the fragility of porcelain is a base characteristic of the material. When a ceramic object is broken, it becomes evident to everyone around as it shatters, and makes a scene. Sometimes it is just a chip, or a small crack, only seen by the breaker. Similarly, when two people grow to have a close connection, one might notice small changes in one another that are not evident to other people. The porcelain suites this body of work due to its function on the body with the action of two people being physically close to one another. Unlike conventional jewelry, the work cannot be secured onto the body or clothing. If one wearer steps away, the suddenly unsupported work will fall down and break. Connect 1 (fig 1) is held on the body by pressing two noses tip to tip. Connect 2 (fig 2) supports itself in the
space between two people standing side by side. *Connect 3* (fig 3) slides onto two peoples’ pinky fingers and connects their hands in this way. All these pieces rely on body contact between two people to avoid being shattered.
Connect 4 (fig 4) deals with the gestures used to communicate and experience physical intimacy with another person. Neurological studies indicate that brains are naturally wired to connect socially. Gestures and interactions with one another play an important role in the capacity to negotiate social relationships. The psychologist and author Daniel Goleman explains: “Take, for example, empathy, the sensing of another person’s feelings that allows rapport. Empathy is an individual ability, one that resides inside the person. But rapport only arises between people, as a property that emerges from their interaction. Here the spotlight shifts to those ephemeral moments that emerge as we interact. These take on deep consequence as we realize how, through their sum total, we create one another” (Goleman 4-5). A hug, a handshake, or a kiss on the cheek, are all common gestures used to approach and communicate with another person. However, these gestures are not all necessarily intimate. Most can be seen as a polite interaction shared in everyday life, even with strangers. Back Hug was created in search of a gesture that implies deep physical intimacy between two people. Hugging a person from behind is a gesture usually reserved for parents showing children love or protection, partners, or close friends. If a stranger were to do the same, the experience could be perceived as uncomfortable, intrusive, even abusive, or violent. This piece suggests closeness and comfort rather than the intruding aspect that gesture can have. This dress was sewn in a soft, white and transparent fabric. It embraces the wearer’s body in a warm, light, and intimate way. The dress has four sleeves attached to it to invite another person to slip in and complete the hug.
Gijs Bakker also experimented with creating a hug in form of jewelry. In his piece he has photographed a man from above with an arms in a hugging position and used the photograph to create a necklace (Fig5). In *Connect 4* it was important to not only represent a hug but actually create a piece that physically engages two people in the act.
Sun Kyoung Kim is another artist who explores interpersonal relationships through jewelry objects. She has created a series of pieces called Interconnection that physically connects two or more people. Kim explored this topic by building metal structures that can be worn by more than one wearer, suggesting and often forcing the wearers bodies to touch (fig6). Jewelry, in itself, is already an intimate object, in that it connects to the body, and often shares a message with the viewer and the wearer. By bringing together multiple individuals within the medium of jewelry, Kim forces the wearers to engage with each other, thus sharing the experience that one experiences individually through the object. This piece in particular differs from the body of work *Connect* in that it includes three people, whereas these pieces focus on the intimate relationship and connectivity between only two individuals. Connecting two individuals, as opposed to three, suggests a particular kind of relationship in which is intending to evoke within the viewer - a mother and child, a pair of lovers, two life-long friends. In addition to requiring touch between wearers, *Connect* attempts to arouse feelings not only through form and function, but also through the use of material. Characteristics of the materials express aspects of the ideas presented and work in contrast to one another. For example, while Kim’s piece brings together the index fingers of three people, the device is created from cold metal. Metal against skin conjures up quite different feelings than a piece of cotton would.
Otto Kuenzli also explores the realms of human relationships and interactions. Kuenzli’s piece 48 Worn Wedding Rings, consisting of just that - 48 used wedding rings. (fig 7) It is it very interesting, and ironic, that Kuenzli chose to use objects of connection and possible disconnection to fabricate a physical connection. While the piece is simple, it is powerful in that once the viewer is aware of the what the necklace is made of, incredible emotions are provoked. What does it mean to wear a necklace created entirely out of objects which represent marriages that are no longer? Whether the breaking of those connections was due to divorce or death, the marriage has dissolved, and the connection is broken. It is important to note that while there is no actual physical connection occurring between two individuals, the objects (the rings) once were the objects that represented a physical, emotional, and legal bond between two individuals.

Inevitably there is a reaction to understanding the history of the material of this necklace. While this necklace differs from Connect in many ways, they are connected by some core ideas. One comes to discover that through finding and understanding connection, one must also accept that disconnect is just as much of a reality. The two go hand in hand, and Kuenzli embodies that idea perfectly in this piece. Distance is trying to express a similar feeling. While human connection is
yearned for, fear of loss is always present. Where connection exists, disconnection also exists. In her TED Talk “The Power of Vulnerability” Brene Brown says, “when you ask people about love they will tell you about heartbreak, if you ask people about belonging they’ll tell you their most excruciating experience of being excluded and when you ask people about connection, the stories they told me where about disconnection.”

True intimacy is a concept that is difficult to understand. What is it that connects two people so deeply that it feels as if it surpasses the senses? Sometimes words and vision, are not enough to express what connects two individuals. A sense of feeling heard, listening, being understood, and understanding is a core element of genuine and meaningful human connection. Connect 5 (fig8) connects the ears of two people, not the mouth of one to the ear of the other. In this way, the importance of saying is acknowledged, but is at the forefront of importance. Instead, understanding is the real focus. This piece also implies a mutual understanding. Visually, the piece evokes a sense of calmness. The wearers stand side by side in serenity, communicating without the necessity of words. Hypothetically, had this piece been crafted mouth-to-ear, as one might typically expect, it would visually create an imbalance between the individuals. One is the
listener, and one is the speaker. *Connect 5* is far more intimate, metaphorical, and unique, suggesting to the viewer the depth of intimacy contained in the simple act of listening.

![Image of Connect 5](image1)

*fig 8*

The body is a universal condition to each person, and so, a unifier. Therefore formal decisions are made, based on the body itself. Using objects that are generally associated with something commonplace, such as eyeglasses to represent looking, or the shape of a musical instrument to represent sound and listening.

*Connect 6* (fig 9) is a pair of eyeglasses with temples and earpieces on both sides of the frame. This allows them to be worn by two people at the same time. When worn, the work leaves no space between the wearers’ faces. The wearers must uncomfortably press their faces together, forcing acute physical contact upon the wearers.
However, intimacy is not only experienced within the realm of close physical proximity. It can also be experienced being close to someone emotionally, while still at a physical distance. Throughout a person’s live they meet many people. With some, they connect for a moment; with others they stay connected over time. No matter how far away in space they might be there is a deep, long lasting bond, independent of space. They are known at their core, and are able to connect with one another at any given time. Connect 7 (fig 10) is a fabric strip 20 yards long cut in the shape of perspectival distance, connecting a small pillow pin on one end, and a large pillow neckpiece on the other end. When it comes to human connectivity and intimacy, comfort is highly sought after. Safety, the ultimate form of comfort, is ranked number two on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs scale (Taormina 155). The pillow, while often overlooked, is a very present object in the personal life of individuals. It represents comfort literally, but it also conjures images of deeper, perhaps physical, intimacy. When two people are having a close conversation on the phone, while physically experiencing distance, it is not uncommon to be reclining on a pillow, or lying in bed. When missing a loved one, one might hug or clutch onto their pillow,
sleep holding onto one, or even cry into one. While such an intimate object does not necessarily connect two people, it is often present as a proxy for the loved one not present. Like the perspectival triangle, the pillow too can symbolize distance and disconnect.

The work consists of objects that seek to connect people. The function as well as the forms of each piece suggest intimacy. The physical discomfort represented by the work embodies fear of connection. The intimate connection with another human being usually causes a level of vulnerability. Some find the feeling of vulnerability to be unpleasant. By applying this vulnerability to the function of the pieces of Connect, their use can be a bonding experience. The pieces only function by the effort of two people wearing the piece at the same time. The history
and relationship of the two wearers will radically change the experience of each piece, forcing each person to not only become intimate with others but themselves as well.
Works Cited

Brown, Brene. Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live,


