1 Weverton: Okay, So, Rachel to start with, I would like to know what motivated you to pursue a PhD.

2 Heather: Okay, Um, well, I was an undergrad and I was a math and Actuarial Science double major, because I liked math, but I wanted to get a job. And I thought those were basically the only options. And so I did an RU, a research experience for undergraduates after my second year of undergrad at Valparaiso. And I thought it was really fun, I got to hang out with a lot of people do some research. Ultimately, we didn't quite accomplish what we wanted to, but it was a good summer. And then the next summer, I had an actuarial internship in Chicago. And I realized that that wasn't exactly what I wanted to do, it was a lot more data manipulation. And I was more interested in being able to approach problems and try to figure them out. So after, after those two summers, I kind of realized that I was leaning more towards grad school and continue my education. And then I Also, during that same time, was TAing for various classes. And I realized that I really enjoyed teaching. Even though I had sworn in high school that I was not going to go into math education, right? Because I did not want to teach. But I realized that I thought I would enjoy teaching at the college level. So it was a combination of those two.

3 Weverton: All right, So Tell me more about this trajectory, like how did that happen? Like from high school to college, college to grad school? Like, how was the whole trajectory happening?
4 Heather: Can you really ask the question?
5 Weverton: Yes. So you were in high school and you're like, I don't want to teach math.
6 Heather: Right. Yeah.
7 Weverton: So like, How did it happen that you ended up doing a bachelor's degree and did you do the bachelor's degree math, is that right?
8 Heather: Yeah, in math and actuarial science. Um, so I went from high school to college, knowing that I wanted to pursue math, because I thought it was fun. I thought it was challenging. But I didn't want to teach it. And then throughout undergrad, I had just a bunch of different experiences, where I got to lead a review session for a few different classes, I got to talk to other people who were studying math at a younger level, in what they call the help rooms. So just helping them with homework. And then I was also involved in marching band. And so I had a leadership role there where it was also involved in teaching. And so I just realized throughout all of that, that I actually enjoyed teaching people things. So…

9 Weverton: nice. Can you tell me about the strongest feeling you have experienced as a mathematics student?
10 Heather: The strongest feeling.

11 Weverton: I would like to hear about this feeling, what was going on when he happened?

12 Heather: Huh, Give me a second to think. [student think for a long while] I guess it was probably after we proved our first really small results. And it was basically combinatorial so we mostly played around with numbers, and then realized that we had the result, but it was just very, very exciting. So that was probably my strongest feeling.

13 Weverton: when did that happened?

14 heather: It was, probably a year and a half or two years ago, something like that.

15 Weverton: So were you in grad school?
16 Heather: Yeah, I was in grad school.

17 Weverton: And can you recall the last time you talked to someone about being a PhD student in mathematics?

18 Heather: Outside of the other PhD students in mathematics, or?

19 Weverton: Oh, you could be, it could be anyone…

20 Heather: okay, well, then like, two days ago.[laugh] We had. So I'm involved in AWM, which is the Association for women in mathematics. And so they have a mentoring program for incoming grad students to the department. And so we had a mentor mentee dinner on Tuesday. And so I got to talk to my mentee and ask her out. So she just started here, and ask her how it's going so far and talk to her about my experiences and all of those things.

21 Weverton: Can you recall exactly what you said about your experiences?

22 Heather: I don't remember exactly what I said then. But we've talked about various things throughout the time that she's been my mentee. So just like, it's okay to not get things right away, and just keep going. We talked some about the specific courses that she's taking, and the professors that she's taking them with just saying, like, everyone feels that way in this course, like it's a lot of work. What else? Yeah, talking about the trajectory of grad school, how you start off with a lot of homework and a lot of classes and a lot of exams, and then gradually, you start not taking exams, and then gradually, you start not having homework, and then you stop taking classes, and then you're just doing research. So talking about just the general trajectory, talking a little bit about qualifying exams and advice there. That's probably most of it.

23 Weverton: You mentioned about the association. So can you tell me more about this association?
24 Heather: Yeah, so it's a national organization. But Frank University has its own chapter. And so we organize events. And I don't know if you're talking to any of the other cabinet members or not. But there's probably like five ish of us that are on the cabinet. And so we organize monthly events, with women in math that come to visit the department. That's The big thing. And then we also have some social events. We have the mentoring program that we run every spring, through the fall, and we have this dinner. That's probably most of the things we do. But I might be forgetting something. Oh, last year, we did brown bag lunches, where we just had female students come and have lunch and hang out.

25 Weverton: Is there any particular reason why you guys have this specific Association?

26 Heather: So it started, I think, six or seven years ago, something like that. And there were a group of probably four or five female grad students who just really wanted to have some kind of official organization to support women. And so they created the chapter, and then we've kept it running since then. I mean, Originally, it was because there were very few female grad students from the department. And so they really needed that support structure. I think recently, we've gotten to probably around 30% women in the department. So there was definitely some people that just get better interaction just by hanging out with their office mates or whatever. And so not everyone comes to the events, but I think they're helpful for the people who do.

27 Weverton: So If you meet with a student, who is thinking about taking a PhD in mathematics, what advice or experience could you share to help them make up their mind?

28 Heather: Like a senior or…?

29 Weverton: it could be like high school students or it could be anything?
30 Heather: Okay. Okay, sure. So I guess, assuming they still have time to think about it, My biggest advice would be for them to try out a research experience for undergrads, or internships or anything like that to get more exposure. And then just to take all of the random classes that you can take. So I went to a small undergrad. And so I took all of the classes that were offered, and then I ran out of classes, right? So I stopped taking classes. And then once I got to grad school, I was like, Oh, why didn't I have another real analysis class? Why didn't I have another abstract algebra class. And it was because I didn't ask the professors to do independent studies with me. So that would be a big thing that I would encourage as well. It's like, talk to the people in your life, who are involved in math and like, ask them to actually do extra things with you so that you're

better prepared. And so you get a better idea of like, what things grad school would look like.

31 Weverton: Cool. So so far, What has been the most memorable aspect of your time in the PhD program?

32 Heather: Honestly, the social events are what I remember the most. So we have picnics, sandwich social, and things like in the department. And those are, those are the most like my real memories coming from.

33 Weverton: So are those events, like the ones from the association, or…
34 Heather: No, those ones are just general grad student, or even just Math Department events.

35 Weverton: Can you tell me about a specific event? Like why happens in the even? Like how is it structure like? What kind of people go to the event?

36 Heather: Yeah, depends a lot on which thing it is, obviously. But For instance, The crab grabs, organize a picnic, every fall for the entire department. So grad students, faculty, staff, all of that. And So the last several years, we've had it at Columbia and Park, closest a park in the area, there's like a little zoo. And there's a bunch of, how do they call it? shelters. And so they'll reserve a few of the shelters, and everyone will bring in food, and the department will get some food and then all hang out. And a lot of people go play frisbee or play soccer. And then usually, grad students will go run through the zoo, not run through the zoo, but you know, walk calmly, um,
37 See all the animals all of those things.

38 Weverton: Nice. And Let's try to think about a class you took during your PhD. Can you tell me about one specific class you took? And maybe I just want to hear like the basic description of course, like what was the class like, what did you do to prepare?

39 Heather: Yes, so, um, my advisor teaches the course while he teaches the sequence of courses. So I'll just talk about one of those. So he teaches a three semester sequence of commutative algebra. And So this sequence, He lectures in class, And then he also assigns more less weekly homework assignments. There aren't any exams in the class, but everyone works together pretty well. It depends who you are. For me, everyone works together on the assignments. So we would all get together and say, Yeah, I figured out this part, but I'm stuck here. And I'm, we're all still trying to work on this thing. So we would work on those outside of class, and then we would go to his office hours as well. That was most of the preparation outside of class was going and running through his notes again, and then trying to work on the homework and see what we understood and didn't understand.

40 Weverton: so did you work with a group?

41 Heather: Yes, there was a group of us that would try to get together and talk about it.
42 Weverton: Can you tell me a little bit more about that group?

43 Heather: Sure. There was probably like five or six of us? I think it's been a while.

44 Weverton: It's okay.

45 Heather: So it was, I think four people who would had taken the sequence with a different professor, and we're retaking it. And then I feel like there should have been more people that didn't take the course. Well, at least there was me You haven't taken the course before. And then there were a few other people that would come sporadically. So they would sometimes come hang out with us, and sometimes not. And Usually, we just meet in the library lounge and talk about whatever we weren't sure about. I guess it's probably more guys, so probably like, about the setup of the department like ish.

46 Weverton: Cool, and let me think about it.

47 Unknown Speaker
48 So You said some people, they haven't taken the sequence before. Does that like, or some of them did, does that mean like they

49 Heather: yeah, some of them took it just with a different professor. And then because it's a sequence of topics, courses, you're allowed to retake those courses. So different professors teach it differently. So theoretically, they've covered similar material, and they had covered similar material. But they weren't taking this course with a different Professor, because they were interested in working with him. And so they knew that they needed the exact background that he had in the course.

50 Weverton: And talking about these sequence classes. Do you think like, the one specifically, you're talking about do you think it was a particularly good class? Bad class, average class cleanse? How was it?
51 Heather: I thought it was good? Yeah. One of the reasons when I'm working with my professor is because I think he does a pretty good job of laying things out very clearly. So he, he definitely does that in the classes, notes are very organized. He tries to make sure you know, we have a good idea of where to reference things. So they'll say specifically by theorem 2.7, or something, we have this thing instead of just Oh, yeah, you know, that thing? in class, the other day.

52 Weverton: Awesome, and was there any moment that you felt like you did not belong to the program?

53 Heather: Oh, yeah.
54 Weverton: Can you talk about it?
55 Heather: I mean, there have been, you know, lots. I mean, imposter syndrome, it's like, very much a real issue. So there have been multiple occasions where I've wondered about it. I don't know if any particular moment is coming to mind. But it was usually something like I'd be working on the homework and not getting it and just be like, Well, clearly, I don't understand this. And then I would go talk to someone else. And they would be like, yeah, I did this. Well, of course, why didn't I think of that? And then they'd be like, maybe I just shouldn't be here. Like, clearly, I'm not getting this.

56 Weverton: And it was a moment that it gets really, really like escalated that you felt like I might just leave these or no, ir was pretty well..

57 Heather: I'm definitely thought about it. I'm pretty stubborn. So, I think a lot of times, it helps me too, to have talked to other students female and not know who I felt the exact same way. Because I think it happens to almost everyone at some point where they're like, I don't understand this. Clearly, I'm not cut out for this, maybe I'll just go work in McDonald's or whatever. So I've talked to lots of people about this, like, at their various times in the journey, mostly I talked to people who are older than me, and were like, I don't know if I'm going to make it. And so then when I saw that they made it and reach the same point. I was like, okay, they made it. Probably I can make it to at the very least I'm going to stick it out and see what happens.

58 Weverton: Nice. And, so you said you think it happens to every student? Like and you mentioned about the male female? Like, do you think there is like differences in the way this happened to these two groups? Is there any particular reason why you're?

59 Heather: Yeah, I don't know.

60 Weverton: I am curious.

61 Heather: I know that it happens a lot for women. Because I know that we are a minority here. And so I think just in general, for minorities, it's harder to see yourself in a place when you can't see yourself represented. So Yeah, I pointed out male and female because I've talked to both. So I don't feel like it's necessarily just something that's happening to women, which is something that I thought maybe would be the case at some point. But I definitely talked to plenty of guys in the department, you have also said, You know, I don't know.

62 Weverton: I see. And What are you thinking about doing after the program?
63 Heather: Yeah, so I'd really like to work at a liberal arts college and focus more on teaching. Yeah.
64 Weverton: life changing.

65 Heather: Yeah. I mean, I'd be perfectly happy to do like undergrad level research. But I don't want to be at a big research institution, or we're focusing entirely on research and like 5% of, you know, tenure track and based on teaching or something like that.

66 Weverton: So what exactly attracts you to that job?

67 Heather: I really enjoy, being able to tell people what I'm passionate about. And I like being able to see them, get it, and progress through things. And I guess I just feel like at the undergrad level, it's a little easier to do that than at the grad level.

68 Weverton: Do you believe that you're searching students who cannot just get it? Like, let's talk about math? So there is this idea of people who can do math people who cannot do math , do you belive in that, how do you see that? don't have the ability that like how you see that?

69 Heather: I mean, I very much believe in the growth mindset. Yeah, so I'm teaching math for elementary teachers this semester, which is weird, because I have never taught in elementary school. But Yeah, I keep encouraging. Like, you guys can all do this. And for the most part they do, and the people who haven't been doing it, like I've noticed, it's because they haven't put in the time or have gotten really frustrated and have just decided not to look at it or something like that. So I definitely believe that everyone can do it. For some people, I think it's a lot harder. But I think everyone hits that point, You know, where it becomes really hard. And then if you want to make it past that point, then you have to put in a lot of work.

70 Weverton: Nice. And, can you tell me what is a typical day, in the life of a strong student in your program?

71 Heather: In the PhD program?
72 Weverton: uhum, How would that be like?

73 Heather: um, I guess, The really strong students kind of live, eat, breathe, Math. So they're working on it constantly there. They wake up and they start working on things, maybe they check the archive, it's a bunch of papers, to see what new mathematics has come out, and then work on their research throughout the day, and maybe some other things as well as problems that they're interested in. And then I guess, if you really want to be strong, and you're supposed to keep working, right? Like you're supposed to work After dinner as well, and just be like, okay, here's some other fun stuff that interests me, I don't do that.
74 Weverton: You don’t do that?
75 Heather: No, I very much ascribe to be like, I need some kind of work life balance here. So I'm more willing to be like, I've put in my time for today, I'm gonna go home. And if I need to grade fine, but like, I'm willing to take some days off.

76 Weverton: Interesting. And can you tell me about a mathematician, you know, in our department that you admire?

77 Heather: Like faculty member or?

78 Weverton: It could be. [inaudible sentence]

79 Heather: Okay, I'm Sure. So there's a grad student who's one year older than me. And I just really admire the way that he tries to help other people. So he's very passionate about it, when he find something funny. He wants to tell other people and so he'll just like, have you heard about this cool thing? or whatever? Or if he's working with younger grad students, and they're talking about a specific topic, I don't know, I can't think of anything specific right now. But if they're talking about a specific topic, they'll be like, Oh, that's related to this other thing. And that's really cool, too, and things like that. So I just really admire that.

80 Weverton: Nice. And what about a professor?

81 Heather: Sure. Which professor should I talk about? So I guess one that stands out for me a lot is the person who helps with AWM, which is the association for women in mathematics. So she also organizes a woman in math day, every year. We will also invite a female mathematical speaker, from somewhere else, and then have a lunch with them and have dinner with them and chat with them. And so she really works hard to make sure that women are represented in this department.

82 Weverton: So It's the reason you admire her related to the work she does in the association?

83 Heather: Yeah. So I don't even do the same work as her. So I don't really know much about her mathematical work. But I really admire that she's worked so hard to make sure that women are represented in the department.

84 Weverton: Nice. And can you tell me now about another professor who you admire because of the mathematical work?

85 Heather: Sure, yeah. So that's probably my professor. He is one of the people that math is his life. So he works very hard on it works constantly on it. But He also takes the time to make sure that he really puts in the effort when he's teaching classes, that the classes makes sense that he's referencing these other things. Right, so he's not just leaving his students in the dark about what theorem he might have been referring to. But he's very explicit about it. So he really puts in a lot of care there. And also in his papers, and in his work, he's very careful to make sure that he's actually saying things that are true and all of those things, yeah.

86 Weverton: nice and changing the subject. Why do you think the average PhD student decide to pursue a PhD?

87 Heather: I think there's a lot of reasons I think for a lot of us, it's, we thought it was fun, or interesting or challenging, one of those things. And so then we just kept going with it. So we reached a point in undergrad where it was like, Well, what do I do from here, right? And it was like, I guess I could get a job. Or I could keep learning things. And so we veered towards. But I want to keep learning more about this path.

88 Weverton: Nice. And if you were accepting a student to mentor in math? What qualities would that student have?

89 Heather: Um, I guess they just need to be persistent is my biggest thing. They need to be willing to put in hard work. But also understand that it's okay, if it doesn't make sense right away? Well, I guess that's more something I would tell them. So that's not the quality they would have to have. Yeah, persistance is the big thing.

90 Weverton: And what what is your impression? What are your impressions of the professors in the math department?

91 Heather: Oh, as a whole? I mean, they're all very intelligent.

92 Weverton: Very intelligent?

93 Heather: Yeah. A lot of them are quirky. It's just I think a math thing. But for the most part, they're very friendly. They're open to people coming to talk to them about math, and they want to share about it with other people.

94 Weverton: Was there any experience where you met an unfriendly professor her or no?
95 Heather: hum [thinkling]. I feel like for the most part, those professors like don't teach classes. [laughs] So I don't run into them as much. I know they exist. Um, I guess I took one class with a professor who seemed a little more standoffish, but didn't interact wiht him much outside of class.
96 Weverton: So was it just like the feeling you has or was there particular things that happened during the class that made you feel that way.

97 Heather: I don't think so, no, I think it was just more he seemed a little distant. I think I went to office hours with another student once. And he maybe just wasn't that helpful. So maybe it wasn't even that he was necessarily trying to be standoffish. It just didn't seem helpful. and so made me not to go back?
98 Weverton: Nice. So How do you think we could encourage my students to pursue a PhD in mathematics?

99 Heather: I think it's not really represented as an option for a lot of people. So I didn't even realize it was an option until I did this REU in undergrad, and the only reason I did that REU was because I was just looking for something to do that summer, right? So I think if we want more people to pursue a PhD, then we need to tell people earlier that that's an option that if you get an undergrad degree in math, your only options are not to become an actuary, or to become a math teacher. But there's a whole lot more job opportunities out there.

100 Do you have any idea about when specifically should one start thinking about this situation?

101 Heather: I don't think it would hurt to talk about it in high school. A lot of high schoolers already thinking about what they want to do right when they go to college. So I think if you want more PhDs in math, you have to talk to them before they even think about undergrad. Say, Hey, if you're interested in math, like you could pursue an undergrad, you could pursue that in grad school to there are lots of opportunities for you.

102 Weverton: Nice. What changes should be made in the Ph.D. program in mathematics?

103 Heather: Here specifically?

104 Weverton: You can talk about here, and maybe if you want to expand like, for a general idea, it's okay.

105 Heather: [thinking] I guess here specifically, so I am in my seventh year, I'm about to go to my eighth year. So there needs to be, I think, more support for grad students more encouragement for them to finish sooner. More of I guess a roadmap of like, here are the things that we think you should be doing at these times. Because I think I just got a little lost along the way when I was looking for my advisor. And if they'd said, you know, you really need to have an advisor already, Then I probably would have spent less time doing that. But I don't necessarily regret that either. because it gave me a little time to figure out what I wanted. I mean, the biggest thing is, there's not necessarily an equal representation, but I don't know if our grad school specifically can do anything about that. I think that we're trying to recruit more women and just haven't necessarily been succeeding. Which is it's hard when there's only a certain percentage of people that are applying the programs as well. But not necessarily just women, just more representation in general.

106 Weverton: Nice. Okay. So let me think, um, I think my last question ties back to what you're

talking about. So Why do you think students give up obtaining a PhD in mathematics?

107 Heather: I think it's really hard. And I think a lot of times along the way, It's not clear that it's going to happen, right? Like, you can't tell if you'll actually succeed. And so if you're not sure you're going to succeed, Then Why would you put six or eight years into something? If you could do something else. Right, Like, that's a lot of time to invest in something. I know some people as well who stopped the program, because they decided it wasn't the right fit for them. They just decided that wasn't what they were passionate about. So they weren't willing to, again, invest that much time into something that they didn't necessarily want to do with their lives. And then I know, yeah, I mean, I guess this is basically the same thing. I know a few people who wanted to industry. And so they decided that they could do that with the masters. And so they didn't need to spend it again, 6-8 years on a PhD if they could take two years and then go into industry.

108 Weverton: So You said you you kind felt lost when you're trying to find your advisor?

109 Heather:Yeah.

110 Weverton: And It feels like maybe there was no like, support, or like, it was, like, you know, like, Can you try to go back and tell me like, exactly why happened? Like, what, what caused that?

111 Heather: Yeah, so the way the program works here, is that you have, I think, two and a half years to pass your qualifying exams. And then I think a year and a half after that, you're supposed to pass your advanced topics exam. And that's supposed to be with your advisor over the material that you'll be doing research on. And so for those two and a half years, or whatever the case, may be, you have pretty clear direction, right? You're trying to pass your qualifying exam. So you're taking the classes that are required for that, and you're passing those exams. And then after you finish that, it's a lot more ambiguous, right? So you basically get a letter that says, congratulations, Okay, now you and your advisor need to talk about like, passing the advanced topics. But I didn't have an advisor at that point, I passed my exams in one and a half years. And so I didn't have any idea what I was doing at that point, right? Like I finished the exams, that was what I was supposed to be doing. And all of a sudden, it was just like, oh, what am I supposed to be doing now? I don't know. So I didn't really spend enough time while I was passing qualifying exams, figuring out what subjects I was interested in. And so then, when I finished those exams, I was just wondering, like, maybe I'm interested in this thing, maybe I'm interested in that thing. So I just took a bunch of classes to try to figure out what I was interested in.

112 Weverton: So is it commom for students to pass the quals, like in one and a half years.

113 Heather: Yeah, it's not that uncommon. There are some people that pass it earlier, there are definitely some people that take the two and a half years. So It just depends on the student. And I think which exams they take as well. I took the probability because I'd had a lot of probability background. And so that one was very easy for me to pass, things like that.

114 Weverton: Nice. So You talk a lot about these lack of representation, geder inequality or maybe like, unequal distribution. So let's talk a little bit about that. So I'm wondering like, the first time we talked about it, you talked about support, Like and you were talking about the association?

115 Heather: Yeah.

116 Weverton: And then maybe that the association was created, because there was this need of support?Why Do you think there is a need for support is like, what do you think about, essentially, for this needs?

117 Heather: Yeah, so I think the department works really hard at this point to make sure that it supports women. So they put, They don't put a woman in an office by themselves and make sure there's at least two women in the office, and they I think, send out at least equal numbers of offers to women, If they can. And they. And I think this is the big thing that they do currently is they invest money in AWM, so they'll give us money to put on events to support women. So the

department is definitely trying. But I think there's still some kinds of implicit
118 biases that might I don't want to say counter act, the explicit support, But cause the need for that explicit support to be there.
119 Weverton: Can you talk more about this implicit bias?

120 Heather: Yeah. I don't, it's hard to talk about right. Because, sometimes it's hard to tell why things happen. But I think it's more of not telling someone that you think that they would do a great job in a PhD program or not saying, Hey, I'd like to take you as my student or, you know, something like that. And I haven't necessarily had those experiences. But I think it's, I think it's much less common for women to receive the encouragement, that, hey, you can do this. And I'd really like to see you succeed. And I know that you can. I think that's the main thing.
121 Weverton: And I know it's a hard thing to talk about. But, do you see this encouragement happening to man, like? Do you think they are more encouraged?

122 Heather: So My husband has a master's in math, he came here as well. And again, it's hard to tell because these are just two experiences. But he specifically had a professor come up to him and say, Hey, like you're doing a really great job in this class, like, Who are you going to work with for your PhD, and at that point, he was planning to just get his master's, he was like, I am not, I'm not out of here.[laughs] But, like, I've never had anyone say, hey, you're doing a really great job, you know, like, Who are you working with? And my advisor did say, like, Oh, you can just work with me, You're already meeting with me, right? But so just from those two examples, right? Like, no, there's maybe a little more encouragement, sometimes. If you, if you're looking for someone to do well, in a PhD program, right, and you expect these people to do well on a PhD program, then those might be the people that you single out as the people that you should be encouraging to do it.

123 Weverton: So, you said about all like all these, these ways that the department is trying to make things differently, putting women together like the do you see the impact do you think like that really help women like, how do you see those innitiatives?

124 Heather: yeah, I mean, it helped me at least. And again, I can only speak from my personal experience. But my current officemate, and I were paired together as two women in an office, our first year, And so we're still working and collaborating together, we have the same advisor. And she's kind of the reason that I started working with my advisor, specifically as well. So at least for me, it was very helpful. AWM also, I think, so the money that they put into there has been helpful for me just to talk to other women in math, whether it's older grad students or professors from different departments who have come to visit, just to get a better perspective.
125 Weverton: So, all the women in the department are involved with AWM?

126 Heather: Not all of them no. Yeah, it's not required. They're all on the email list. So they all get notification about the various events. But definitely not everyone comes to events.
127 Weverton: Do you, can you think a reason why someone, like a woman would not participate in the event or get
128 Heather: Yeah, I think some people are busy and just don't want extra things on top of that. I know that's the case for some people. So some of them just don't go to like any events. I think that's a lot of times the reasoning. I think for some people, maybe they don't want to worry about the fact that there are women in math as well. I'm not sure.

129 Weverton: Interesting, so What is the most memorable aspect of working for AWM?

130 Heather: um, I'd definitely say it's the relationships and the friendships that I've built through that.

131 Weverton: Can you pick something specifically or someone specifically that you have a very good connection? Or some project you developed?
132 Heather: Yeah, Oh, we haven't done anything mathematical. But I think that's okay. Yeah, but I definitely. So for instance, there's one other AWM Cabinet member who constantly gets confused

for me. That's not actually true. But people will like accidentally say her name instead of my name, or my name. And so her name was are talking to different people. So we just had this running joke. And our were like, text, people text each other whenever it happens, like, Oh, this person said your name.

133 Weverton: Is she also called Heather?

134 Heather: No, a different name, her name is Amy. So I've been called Amy, like multiple times when she's been called Heather multiple times by people that like definitely know us. So it's not necessarily a case of mistaken identity. It's just this weird like, Oh, yeah, Heather. Wait. You're not Heather.

135 Weverton: So, Do you think that AWM plays a major? Like it has like, a stronger focus on making sure that women feels good in the like in these spaces, like math departments? Or do you think it's more like to help women to develop strongly mathematics like, how do you see like, I am trying to understand

136 Heather: So here, at least, it's mostly a support system in terms of relationships and connections with other people. It's not necessarily having like an extra seminar or anything like that. I don't know about nationwide. I know that nationwide, they send out a lot of like, oh, here's an interesting internship opportunity, or here's an interesting postdoc opportunity and things like that. So maybe that counts is trying to advance women mathematically.

137 Weverton: Nice. Let me think about something interesting that I want to ask you. I had it, what is the question? so you are taking care about someone stpecifically in that group right, in the Association you are taking care of mentee right, so is it a student that you are advising.

138 Heather: Not advising, so yeah

139 Weverton: Just, so it's more like an informal friendship, or..

140 Heather: Yes, so it's start before they come here, so they can apply to be a mentee. Yes, we accept everyone who wants to be a mentee. But they can say they want to be a mentee, and have a mentor. And so they can say that once they have been accepted here. And so that's is in the early spring usually. So before they come here in the fall. And so then throught that time, their mentor that they are paied with will email them and just say, hey how are you doing? Like, what questions do you have, let me just talk to you a little bit about like my experience in grad school, and usually ask them some questions, like, what are you interested in? What drill you to Frank University? What other schools are you looking at? Things like that. And then, if they decide to come here, so my current mentee decided to come here, then we will keep emailing them throughout the summer after the deadline, to except, and to say how is the house hunt going, can I do anything for that? What other questions do you have? Now they are actually coming here things like that. And then they are definetly welcomed to keep talking to their mentor. After they come here. And so my mentee has been, but usually is just email. And frequently when I see her I will just ask how is she doing, So it's not at this point like a formal weekly meeting or anything like that. It's just a grad student that they can talk to if they want to.

141 Weverton: I see. So, about the interaction with your peers. You mentioned that in one of the classes you took in the sequence you had a group and there was more guys, like, Is it hard to interact with like guys in the math department or like, how do you see this interaction it's just like,

142 Heather: Yeah, I don't have a problem with it.

143 Weverton: Do you think it

144 Heather: It feels pretty normal to me. Yeah.

145 Weverton: Is there a particular reason why you feels it feels pretty normal.

146 Heather: I guess I've just always hung out with a lot of guys. So that's not really a change for me,

147 Weverton: and is it because you were always like, mathematically driven and, or how you see that?

148 Heather: no, I don't think like even at an elementary school I hung out with a, like a big group of guys with a few girls. So…

149 Weverton: Do you see other girls is struggling with it like needing to interact more with guys because there's just more guys here or

150 Heather: not that I've noticed,but I think we also try as women to hang out with each other as well.

151 Weveerton All right, I think that's okay today. [there are another 3 minutes of audio but with unrelated conversation]