Exploring the Teacher-Student Relationship in a High School Advanced
Placement Classroom: A Hermeneutic Phenomenology Inquiry

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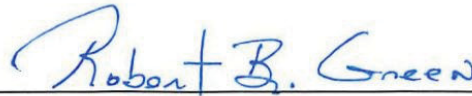B.Ed., University of Georgia, 2000

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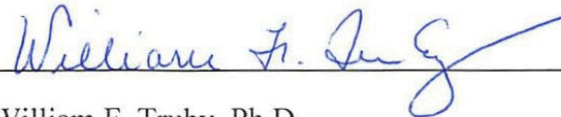**Dissertation Committee Chair/Research Member**

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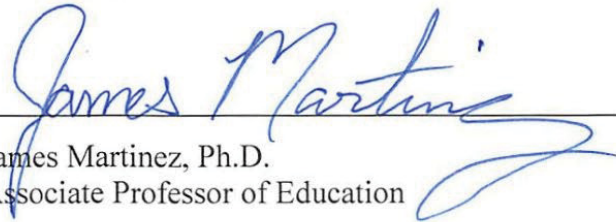
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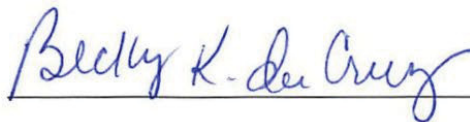Professor of Curriculum, Leadership & Technology

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the characteristics and specific interactions of the teacher-student relationship in the context of an identified, effective Advanced Placement classroom taught by a highly effective teacher with a pass rate at or above 85% over the past decade. Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenological research design (Kafle, 2011) was used to examine the subject AP classroom teaching and learning dynamics. Data were collected through the use of detailed observation notes gathered from immersion in the AP classroom, teacher interviews, classroom artifacts, and researcher memos. The researcher engaged in Van Manen's (2014) hermeneutic cycle process and applied the principles of the holistic and selective reading process to the data to identify and solidify themes from the data. The researcher cross-checked the emergent themes across the all the data collection forms. Observation, participant interviews, and audio evidence served as multiple points of data which were analyzed for accuracy. The characteristics which emerged in the findings included: comforting, ego support, narrative, caring, empathy, and morally motivated. These characteristics above all others seemed to resonate from the data, and a strong connection was found both in the teacher's interview and the observational notes. Of all characteristics, the narrative skill (Storytelling) the Professor displayed was identified as the most powerful tool in his teacher-student interactions. The Professor was an avid storyteller who wove the talking point from the daily lessons into the narratives of his stories. The overall teacher-student interactions remained positive in nature.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2013, 2014), state and federal

taxpayers have expended more than $400 million in the last 20 twenty years on the

Advanced Placement program. Last year, more than 2.5 million students took Advanced

Placement exams (College Board, 2016a). Regardless of the human, financial, and time

investment in the program, statistics show an average failure rate persists at 37% or

higher (College Board, 2016a). The Advanced Placement program offers support and

training for teachers; however, the majority of the instruction seeks to develop the

information base and delivery skill set of the instructor.

The teacher-student relationship continues to be one of the strongest indicators of

student achievement (Klem & Connell, 2004). Teacher-student relationships within the

context of socioemotional well-being have been found to be critical to school success

(Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Choi & Doobs-Oates, 2016; Liberante, 2012). Healthy teacher-

student relationships or connections can lead to higher student engagement in the

coursework. Guvenc (2015), Ryan & Deci (2000), and Basaran (1982) linked

engagement to motivation and further explained an increase in engagement as a product

of the growth of motivation.

More evidence relating to the importance of the teacher-student relationship is

demonstrated by research performed by Rimm-Kaufman, Baroody, Larsen, Curby, &

Abry (2014). Within their research, Rimm-Kaufman et al. (2014) found some of the

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essential indicators of positive teacher-student relationships were to be found in an environment that is safe, warm, and caring. Baker, Grant, and Morlock (2008) determined positive relationships are not only indicative of, but essential to, the safe and secure environment required for students to learn. According to Skinner and Belmont (1993) and Ryan and Patrick (2001), teacher-student connectedness and interpersonal relationships are the most significant indicators of safe and successful school settings. Both research teams demonstrated a net positive effect on the educational field as a whole when schools focus on the creation of safe, welcoming learning environments are directly connected to and created by positive teacher-student relationships. Furthermore, teachers who are unable to nurture these positive relationships do so at the peril of their students' educational future (Hawk, Cowley, Hill, & Sutherland, 2002).

With research supporting the connection between teacher-student relationships and academic success well documented, further study into positive teacher-student relationships within the AP classroom will be extremely valuable to the field of education. Currently, there is a need for research which directly investigates the teacher-student relationship within the AP classroom. This educational setting is unique within the confines of the high school environment in that the high school-aged student is engaging in college level coursework. The demands of the program require students to transcend beyond the high school classroom model and embrace concepts, skills, and rigor atypical to the age-appropriate classroom content of their peers (Nation Governor's Association, 2009). The dichotomy of the AP classroom also places increased demand on the high school teachers, as they must modify and adjust the interactions, delivery, and rigor demands of their classrooms to allow their high school-aged students to meet the

demands of college level coursework. (Hertberg-Davis & Callahan, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

Over the past decade, high schools and colleges have implemented and accepted college credit from high school students participating in Advanced Placement courses at great costs to high schools and colleges in terms of human, financial, and time resources with a course failure rate of more than 37% (College Board, 2016a). There is no lack of research into the importance of the teacher-student relationship, and many theories have been developed around the concept. However, there has been little to no exploration into the teacher-student relationship in the confines of the high school advanced placement classroom. Due to the continued effort to improve high school student AP scores, an investigation into the teacher-student relationships in an academically successful classroom will be valuable to the educational field.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to explore the characteristics and specific interactions of the teacher-student relationship in the context of an identified, effective Advance Placement classroom taught by a highly effective teacher with a pass rate at or above 85% over the past decade.

Research Questions

RQ 1: What are the life and career experiences of a highly effective teacher in an identified Advanced Placement classroom with a pass rate at or above 85% over the past decade?

RQ 2: What are the characteristics of teacher-student relationships in an identified Advanced Placement classroom with a pass rate at or above 85% over the past decade?

Significance of Study

Advanced Placement course failure rates persist in the 30 to 40% range, despite efforts to improve students' abilities to meet the mandated standards (College Board, 2016a). With the amount of time, effort, and public/private funds invested into the Advanced Placement program in public schools and colleges in America, it behooves the educational field to invest equal effort into further understanding the significance of the teacher-student relationship in all areas of the public-school system. The researcher seeks to examine the life and career experiences of a highly effective Advanced Placement teacher and the characteristics of the teacher-student relationship in said classroom. Due to the continued effort to improve AP scores, an investigation into the teacher-student relationships in an academically successful classroom will be valuable to the educational field. The information gathered from this research adds to the body of knowledge on the positive teacher-student relationship and the teacher-student relationship within the context of a highly successful Advanced Placement classroom.

Assumptions

The participants in the study consisted of high school students who elected to enter a highly rigorous Advanced Placement course (Handwerk, Tognatta, Coley, & Gitomer, 2008). The high school students varied in age from 15 to 18 years old. They were students who are predisposed to seek academic high marks, and some were functioning at the honors or gifted levels. The subject teacher in the stated classroom was highly esteemed among his peers and had an AP student pass rate of 85% or higher for the past 10 years. He was a tenured teacher who had a vested interest in the advancement of his students, his department, and the entire school.

The research was conducted with the expectation that the subject teacher and the class studied would present relevant data by offering an authentic in-class experience. The researcher also expected full participation from all participants in relation to completing the prescribed interviews.

Theoretical Framework

Three main concepts were used to frame this study. These included Erikson's (1950, 1963) Psychosocial Stages and Socioemotional Competency Theory, Vygotsky's (1930-1934/1978) Sociocultural Theory, and Deci and Ryan's (2002) Self Determination Theory (SDT). These concepts and theories helped to scaffold the study. They also served as a lens through which the research was examined and evaluated.

Psychosocial Stages & Socioemotional Competency Theory

Erik Erikson (1950, 1963) developed the idea of psychosocial stages. These psychosocial stages grew from the ideas put forth by Sigmund Freud (1923) in his theories on the developing personality. Erickson's theory extends beyond the early developmental stages Freud introduced and expands the idea of personal development to the entire lifespan of an individual. Erickson's (1963) theory is composed of eight distinct stages related to a crisis of psychosocial nature. As McLeod (2008) stated, these stages involve a conflict of the individual's needs (psycho) and the needs of society (social). The completion of these stages, according to Erickson (1963), leads to a healthy personality with basic virtues.

Table 1

Erickson's Stages of Psychosocial Development (McLeod, 2008).

Stage	Psychosocial Crisis	Basic Virtue	Age
1	Trust vs. Mistrust	Hope	Infancy (0 to 1 ½)
2	Autonomy vs. Shame	Will	Early Childhood (1 ½ to 3)
3	Initiative vs. Guilt	Purpose	Play Age (3 to 5)
4	Industry vs. Inferiority	Competency	School Age (5 to 12)
5	Ego Identity vs. Role Confusion	Fidelity	Adolescence (12 to 18)
6	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Love	Young Adult (18 to 40)
7	Generativity vs. Stagnation	Care	Adulthood (40 to 65)
8	Ego Integrity vs. Despair	Wisdom	Maturity (65+)

Erickson's stages are directly associated with the socioemotional competency level of an individual and influence one's ability to interact with the world in a successful manner. For a beneficial exchange of information to take place in a healthy teacher-student relationship, the student must be socioemotionally competent. The researcher used Erickson's research and theories to frame the student-teacher relationships gleaned over the course of the observational periods.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

To understand the characteristics and specific interactions of the teacher-student relationship in an Advanced Placement classroom, the researcher examined the problem through the lenses of sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1930-1934/1978), and Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002) respectively. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory describes the human learning phenomena as a social process. The development of mental cognition is a direct result of the social interactions humans take part in. For the young developing child, these interactions are derived from the adults (parents and teachers) and the children around them (Vygotsky, 1930-1934/1978). Vygotsky's (1930-1934/1978)

sociocultural theory was also used to frame this study. Vygotsky contends every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; second, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals. Vygotsky's theory was further developed and applied to understanding the teacher-student relationship. The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is the developmental area in which the student is cognitively prepared to explore but requires the help of someone else through social interaction to fully develop.

Self Determination Theory – Relatedness

Deci and Ryan's (2002) Self-Determination Theory (SDT) places motivational issues in the context of physical activities, such as sport and exercise. This theory assumes all humans are predisposed to seek growth and interactions with the social world around them. These social interactions interface with a person's tendencies to develop motivation and promotes the person's sense of self and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Central to Deci and Ryan's SDT is a meta-theory described as the Basic Psychological Needs Theory (BPMT). BPNT is comprised of three components. These components are: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. While all three are central to themes of motivation, the relatedness component directly ties to relationships. Relatedness concerns establishing and sustaining connections that are meaningful with others in a person's social milieu (Wilson & Bongoechea, 2010). The relatedness component of Deci and Ryan's theory holds the most relevance to the teacher-student relationship.

Methodology

The researcher in this study focused on the characteristics and specific interactions of an Advanced Placement teacher and his students within a high school classroom. To understand the essence of their shared experiences, the researcher utilized Martin Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenological research design (Kafle, 2011). This approach focuses on capturing the essence of an experience or phenomenon, while acknowledging the researcher's background and biases as being essential to the observation. The researcher was embedded in an academically successful classroom to observe and experience being within the teacher-student relationship. Four sources were used to collect data. These included Seidman's (2013) three-series interviews, classroom observations, review of documents, and memoing. For data analysis, the researcher utilized a combination of memos, categorizing, and connecting strategies to identify emergent themes within the data (Maxwell, 2013). However, because of the use of hermeneutical phenomenological study, categorizing strategies through the use of coding for data analysis was also used (Husserl & Cairns, 1931; Moustakas, 1994).

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the characteristics and specific interactions of the teacher-student relationship in the context of an identified, effective Advanced Placement classroom taught by a highly effective teacher with a pass rate at or above 85% over the past decade. Vygotsky's, (1930-1934/1978), sociocultural theory and Deci and Ryan' (2002) Self-Determination Theory was used to understand and describe factors associated with students' and teachers' classroom relationship. Martin Heidegger's (1988) hermeneutic phenomenological research design was used to guide

understanding of the AP classroom teaching and learning dynamics (Kafle, 2011). The results in this study add to the body of knowledge on the positive teacher-student relationship and the teacher-student relationship within the context of a highly successful, Advanced Placement classroom.

Definition of Key Terms

Connectedness. A feeling or experience of being a part of a group, derived from supportive and caring relationships (McNeely & Falci, 2004).

Disaffection. A lack of support or engagement due to dissatisfaction (Guvenc, 2015).

Educational Best Practices. Wide range of individual activities polices and programmatic approaches to achieve positive changes in student attitudes and/or behaviors (Arendale, 2016).

Hermeneutic Phenomenology. Developed by Martin Heidegger, a disciple of Edmund Husserl. Heidegger believed researchers cannot suspend their biases and achieve full separation from the phenomena being observed. Hermeneutic phenomenology allows for researchers to acknowledge their biases and work through them as a   natural part of the interpretive process (Kafle, 2011).

Interpsychological. A function of cultural development of a child which takes place on the social level between two or more people (Vygotsky, 1930-1934/1978).

Intrapsychological. A function of cultural development of a child which takes place on the individual level, within the child (Vygotsky, 1930-1934/1978).

Phenomenology. An umbrella term encompassing both a philosophical movement and a range of research approaches and studies the consciousness and experience of

being. The research methods grew from the philosophical basis established by Edmund

Husserl (Finlay, 2009).

Scaffolding. A temporary framework used to support the access to meaning and

can be removed as needed once a child achieves a level of successful control with a given

task. Scaffolding is a critical part of instruction within Vygotsky's ZPD (Vygotsky, 1930-

1934/1978).

Seidman's Interview Protocol. A phenomenological approach to the interview

process composed of three phases or stages: "Focused Life History, The Details of

Experience, and Reflection on the Meaning." Seidman's protocol also defines the

number of interviews and approximate time in which to perform them (Seidman, 2013).

Socioemotional Competency. This is an efficacy of interaction developed through

the successful progression of trial and error or crisis and resolution navigation (Erickson,

1963).

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Recent Advanced Placement failure rates persist at an unsatisfactory level. Improvement of the courses' success rate is an expectation of policy makers and program directors. The purpose of this research was to explore the characteristics and specific interactions of the teacher-student relationship in the context of an identified Advanced Placement classroom taught by a highly effective teacher with a pass rate at or above 85% over the past decade. To better understand the field of education, the teacher-student relationship, and the Advanced Placement program, the researcher analyzed a significant amount of research. This literature review was constructed by examining literature from articles and empirical research on school improvement and teacher-student best practices established and performed in the last 20 years. The chapter includes a brief examination of the most recent national and regional school betterment programs, such as No Child Left Behind, have sought to improve overall academic success and increase student graduation rates. The results of these programs on the field of education are also examined (Jorgenson, 2012; Wilson & Christian, 2006).

Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs was discussed and applied to the classroom model. By gaining a better understanding of the needs referenced in his theory, it is easier to understand student motivation. Various theoretical frameworks were addressed, as they apply to teacher-student relationships and motivation. A discussion of successful

teacher-student relationships and the communication skills attributable to people who were considered highly effective at building interpersonal relationships is explored (Frymier & Houser, 2000). Interpersonal relationship identifiers were also reviewed as they apply to successful teacher-student relationships drive academic achievement, followed by a brief description of the Advanced Placement program's current state (Hayes, Mills, Christie, & Lingard, 2006). Finally, an examination of the phenomenological process was briefly explained as it serves as the method by which the study was conducted.

Research Questions

RQ 1: What are the life and career experiences of a highly effective teacher in an identified Advanced Placement classroom with a pass rate at or above 85% over the past decade?

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Previous Programs and Policies in U.S. Schools

Under various Presidents and governmental leadership, U.S. schools have undergone numerous improvement programs. Lyndon B. Johnson was one of the first to push schools toward equal access and quality of programs. In 1965, President Johnson introduced one of the most far reaching pieces of federal legislation to ever affect U.S. schools (Gamson, McDermott, & Reed, 2015). As part of his "War on Poverty" Johnson sought to close the gap between low-income rural and urban children and those born to middle class families. As noted by the United States Department of Education (1999) children born to low-income families are three times as likely to be low achievers if they

attend high-poverty schools as compared to low-poverty schools. The program known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) provided federal funding to both primary and secondary educational programs and focused on providing each child with equal opportunities to quality education. The act also included funding for classroom materials, educational support resources, professional development and parental involvement programs.

While the name has changed over the years and administrations have taken power, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act has been reauthorized every five years since its original enactment. The program contains a provision referred to as Title 1. This provision puts forth the requirements for application and funding. Specifically, a school system must contain a student population of at least forty-percent low-income household students. Once the 40% threshold is met, federal funding is provided to the state educational agencies. These state agencies are then able to disperse funds to the local educational agencies. The desired result of Title 1 funding is to use federal funds to close the educational gaps exhibited in predominately low-income communities.

The reauthorization of ESEA under the Regan administration was repackaged and reorganized as a component of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA) in 1981. ECIA was implemented with the expressed purpose of shifting the control of Title 1 funds from the federal level to the state level. Regardless of disbursement methods and federal or state level control, increasing student achievement has been the desired outcome throughout all the various alterations. The last major shift effecting the Title 1 program was conducted under the Clinton administration (Wong & Sunderman, 2007). The Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) was the most recent

alteration to the program prior to the implementation of No Child Left Behind. IASA was authorized with the stated purpose of making three significant changes to Title 1 requirements. These changes allowed for the inclusion of math and reading/language arts standards to assess student progress and provide accountability, lowered the threshold for school implementation from seventy-five percent to fifty percent poverty rating, and increased local control of improvement programs.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB), authorized under President Bush, was the most recent significant alteration to ESEA/Title 1. NCLB mandated yearly standardized testing as a means of increasing teacher accountability (Paone & Lepkowski, 2007). NCLB was signed into law on January 8, 2002, by President George Bush (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). According to Joftus and Maddox-Dolan and Alliance for Excellent Education (2003), No Child Left Behind (NCLB) focused on five specific areas of improvement to encourage changes in the levels of academic achievement. The five areas are:

1. Employ only "highly qualified" teachers in core academic subjects by the end of the school year 2005-2006;

2. End the practice of counting alternative certificates; the General Education Development program (GED) should not be considered comparable to graduating from high school;

3. Graduation rates should be defined in a rigorous and standardized way;

4. Testing annually the subjects of reading, math, and science for all students in at least one of grades 10 through 12;

5. Improve test scores and graduation rates in order to reach the mandated 100% proficiency rating for all students by the deadline of spring 2014.

While the effects of NCLB have created gains in standardized test scores, little improvement has been seen in achievement gaps (Darling-Hammond, 2015). Reardon, Greenberg, Kalogrides, Shores, and Valentino (2012) conducted an analysis of data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), as well as state accountability scores for all 50 states. The data were composed of NAEP test scores for fourth through eighth graders in the years 1990 through 2009 and state-level categorical proficiency data for students in grades three through eight in the years 2001 through 2010. The data used were provided to the researchers by the U.S. Department of Education. Reardon et al. (2012) contended that while some gaps such as the African American-European American achievement gap and the Hispanic American-European American achievement gap have narrowed, male-female gaps have remained largely unchanged. Furthermore, Reardon et al. contended the data patterns evident by the time in which the research was performed did not suggest a strong effect of NCLB on the achievement gaps. Craig A. Hammond (2010) specifically investigated the effectiveness of NCLB within the urban school environment. The researcher obtained seven years of American College Test (ACT) scores from a diverse public school system and a private school within the same city. The analysis of the data revealed senior test scores improved significantly over the seven-year period. The data were also used to identify gains in all sub-groups, including African-American, Hispanic, and the economically disadvantaged (Hammond, 2010). While the gains were observed across all groups, Hammond (2010) noted the academic achievement gaps between groups had demonstrated little to no gain.

The Center on Educational Policy (2007), an independent nonprofit organization, performed a study in 2007 with the intent to answer two questions:

(1) Has student achievement in Math and Science increased since the introduction of the No Child Left Behind Act?

(2) Has there been a narrowing of achievement gaps between the subgroups of students since NCLB was enacted?

The study was conducted just prior to Congress's reauthorization of the NCLB act. Five nationally known experts on educational testing and educational policy oversaw the process, and technical support was provided by the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO). The Center on Educational Policy (2007) analyzed the data and drew the following five conclusions:

(a) In most states with three or more years of comparable test data, student achievement in reading and math has gone up since 2002, the year that NCLB was enacted.

(b) Since 2002, there is more evidence of achievement gaps between groups of students narrowing than of widening. Still, the magnitude of gaps is still substantial.

(c) In nine of the 13 states with sufficient data to determine pre- and post-NCLB trends, average yearly gains in test scores were greater after NCLB took effect than before.

(d) It is very difficult, if not impossible, to determine the extent to which these trends in test results have occurred *because* of NCLB. Since 2002, states,

school districts, and schools have simultaneously implemented many different but interconnected policies to raise achievement.

(e) Although NCLB emphasizes public reporting of the state test data, the data necessary to reach definitive conclusions about achievement were sometimes hard to find or unavailable, or had holes or discrepancies. More attention should be given to issues of quality and transparency of the state test data (p. 7).

In summary, the Center on Educational Policy's findings demonstrated a continued, although narrowing, gap between subgroups is very difficult to substantiate as being related to the enactment of the NCLB act.

In 2009, President Barack Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Provisions within this act sought to address the American education system by creating some key educational initiatives including Race to the Top (Boser, 2012). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2015), "the intent of Race to the Top (RTT) was to invite state leaders to put forward plans to improve not one or two isolated elements of their schools, but to develop and implement comprehensive statewide plans to improve entire systems" (p. 6). Through two phases of competition in 2010, 11 states and the District of Columbia received rewards in funding ranging from $75 million to more than $700 million (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). RTT required funded states to meet the mandated guidelines of (a) linking student achievement and student growth data to teachers, (b) tying data to state teacher programs, (c) publicly reporting data on program effectiveness for each preparation program in the state, and (d) expanding teacher education programs and teacher credentialing options that are

successful at producing graduates (Crowe, 2011).

RTT, at the time of this study, has only been in place for approximately ten years and the program's success in closing academic gaps is still under scrutiny. However, some educators, such as Professor Joe Onosko of the University of New Hampshire, are quick to cite some flaws. Many of the high-stake testing mandates created under NCLB and considered trademarks of the program are being amplified under RTT. According to Onosko (2011), "the draconian school practices that escalated during NCLB will only increase under Race to the Top." Onosko references the increase in out-of-school suspension rates for certain races that were examined by The Advancement Project, a multi-race, civil rights organization which seeks to promote inclusivity and just democracy (Advancement Project, 2011).

The Advancement Project organization examined the U.S. Department of Education's data reported between the implementation of No Child Left Behind from 2002 through 2007. Out-of-school-suspension rates disproportionately increased 8% for African Americans and 14% for Hispanic Americans while European Americans saw a decrease of 3%. Another statistic of significance gleaned from the U.S. Department of Education data was the graduation rates leading up to and after NCLB implementation. In the six years prior to NCLB (1996 to 2002), 63% of the 100 largest school districts in America saw an increase in graduation, but 73% of the nation's 100 largest districts saw a decrease in student graduation rates from 2002 through 2006 (Advancement Project, 2011).

Onosko (2011) stated the downfall of both programs is most likely due to the fact that there is little attention focused on human connection and teacher-student rapport. As

noted in previous research, care for students, identifying students as individuals, and teacher enthusiasm are essential for student motivation and high achievement to occur in the classroom (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). NCLB and RTT make little to no accommodations for the element of human interaction and teacher-student relationship building (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and the Classroom as Foundation

For all the funding and time expended on countless programs, educators seem to be neglecting the widely-accepted theory put forth by Abraham Maslow in 1943 (Kunc, 1992). Maslow's hierarchy of needs is based in humanistic psychology and seeks to explain the existence of a general pattern of needs recognition and satisfaction that people must attain or achieve prior to progressing to a higher level of learning toward self-actualization (Gawel and ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation, 1997). This theory created the basis of knowledge on which the lens of research took shape. As can be seen in Figure 1 by Guditus (2013), Maslow's hierarchy can be visually represented as a triangle or pyramid.
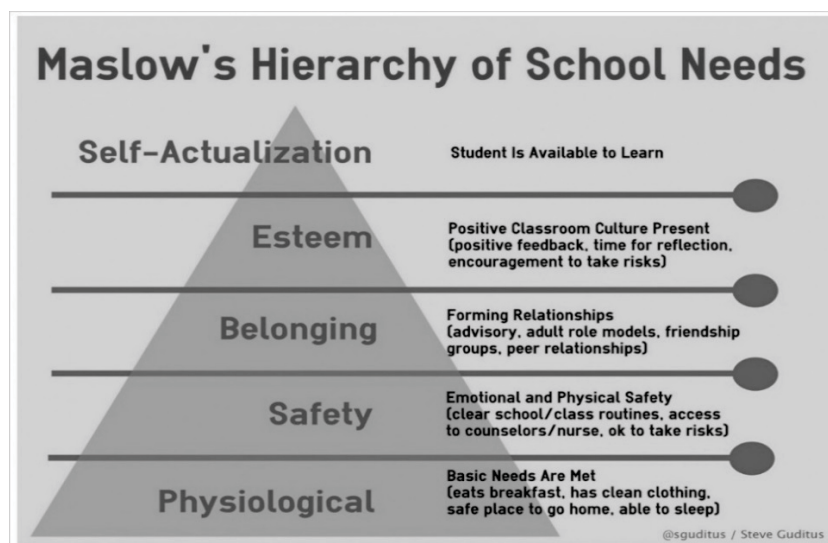
Figure 1: Maslow's Hierarchy of School Needs, Guditus (2013).

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Many students enter the classroom atmosphere having only their most basic physiological needs met. According to Maslow, students must have their essential needs met; this means being fed, being clean, and being well rested. Yet these are needs which are not completely within the control of schools. The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) seeks to fill some of the gaps in nutrition which may be experienced in the home. The NSLP is a federally assisted meal program that currently operates in over 101,000 public and non-profit private schools and residential child care institutions. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (2013) provided nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to more than 31 million children each school day in 2012. American public schools also work with many nonprofit and other federally and state funded/subsidized organizations to address cleanliness issues and lack of clothing.

Safety, the next progression toward self-actualization and another stage on the way toward higher thinking, is well within the purview of the school and the classroom teacher. Maslow's Safety stage is the transitional phase from the physiological into the emotional realm. The emotional feeling of safety is drawn from the physical environment or an effect of being within a safe environment. Teachers and administrators help create an environment of safety. By the implementation of class/school routines and providing access to school counselors and nurses/health staff, a school can promote school safety, thereby allowing students to progress to stage three in the hierarchical scale (Benes & Alperin, 2016).

Social Affiliation or belonging is the third level in the hierarchy scale. In this stage, students develop a sense of belonging through the development of relationships (Maslow, 1943). These relationships can be peer-based friendships or advisory-based

(teacher-student), or with other adult role models. To avoid feelings of isolation and the

feeling of being alone, people must develop relationships that are reciprocal in nature;

this equally applies to students in the classroom (Crump, 1995). This relationship can be

fostered by teachers who create social interactions that promote group mindset and

belonging. Johnson, Johnson, and Scott (1978) presented the theory that affection for

teachers and classmates affects the instructional climate of the classroom and thereby

affects student motivation.

Self-esteem, stage four of Maslow's Hierarchy, is created from and contributed to

by the combined interactions and experiences of life. Raffini (1993) stated esteem is

developed through experiences with significant others whose actions and reactions teach

individuals who they are and whether they are valued human beings. In the classroom,

teachers can boost self-esteem through the creation of a positive environment that

promotes student success. As Gibson and Dembo (1984) suggested, teachers who

personally acknowledge student contributions through positive praise tend to be more

successful in producing greater student learning gains. Brophy (1986) stated classrooms

are public settings in which success and failure are witnessed by peers. Failure in this

setting has the dual effect of personal disappointment and public embarrassment (Brophy,

1986). Teachers should seek to create learning atmospheres which reduce fear of failure

and minimize potential for public embarrassment. By promoting positive interactions

with students, according to Maslow (1943), the social conditions become more likely to

produce a greater sense of student self-esteem and academic performance as a result.

Maslow's (1943) final stage and the desired outcome for all humans is Self-

Actualization. From the perspective of the hierarchy of life, this is the stage in which the

individual has had all prior needs, such as physiological, safety, love, and esteem,

satisfied. Maslow (1943) referred to people who reach this stage as basically satisfied.

Because of their experienced satisfaction, individuals are able to reach their highest levels

of creativity. Self-actualized individuals are freed, by having all basic needs met, to

create and fully produce all they are capable of. However, Maslow (1943) stated these

individuals are few as they are the exception in contemporary society. This is almost

equally reflected in the classroom. The self-actualization stage student tends to be the

exception in the classroom. Most students exist in various stages along the hierarchal

pyramid. However, Maslow encourages teachers to help students in their struggles to

reach this stage. With Maslow's (1943) theory, teachers are to believe humans/students

are endowed with an intrinsic drive to meet their fullest potentials. By pushing students

to achieve and meeting the essential basic needs as much as possible in the classroom, the

teacher provides scaffolding for students to build upon in their journeys toward

fulfillment of self-actualization. Should students reach this level, teachers can capitalize

on the associated sense of curiosity and the need to achieve mental growth to enable

learning and information retention (Crump, 1995; Raffini, 1993).

Maslow (1943) was one of the first to formalize the needs associated with

development. With his hierarchy forming the basis of their understanding, many theorists

and researchers have applied this knowledge to the field of education to understand the

nature of the teacher-student relationship (Benes & Alperin, 2016; Brophy, 1986; Crump,

1995; Gawel & ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation, 1997; Gibson &

Dembo, 1984; Guditus, 2013; Johnson, Johnson, & Scott, 1978; Raffini, 1993). Further

insight into the teacher-student relationship can be found through the examination of

Erickson's (1963) Psychosocial Stages, Vygotsky's (1930-1934/1978) Sociocultural

Theory, and Deci and Ryan's (2002) Self-Determination Theory.

The Role of Teacher-Student Relationships/Connectedness in the Classroom

Recent research in the field of education has produced a list of the most needed

conditions and attributes of effective educational programs (Choi & Dobbs-Oates, 2016;

Klem & Connell, 2004). Support from teachers, engagement in school, and engagement

in academic success (Klem & Connell, 2004) are all found to be essential. All three

identifiers are directly related in some form or fashion to teacher-student relationships.

Teacher-student relationships have been noted by many as being one of the most

powerful elements within the learning environment (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Choi &

Dobbs-Oates, 2016; Liberante, 2012; Malecki & Demaray, 2003; McNeely & Falci,

2004). Research conducted by Bergin and Bergin (2009), defined the teacher-student

relationship in the context of socioemotional well-being and states that this relationship is

not only important; it is critical to school success. Indeed, so critical to success are these

teacher-student relationships that the National Association for the Education of Young

Children (NAEYC) has identified positive teacher-student relationships as one part of the

"relationships" category in the list of required attributes for accreditation (NAEYC,

2012). Recent research labels the teacher-student relationship in terms of "closeness"

(Choi & Dobbs-Oates, 2016). Choi and Dobbs-Oates (2016) explored the possible

moderation effect of teacher education on the associations between teacher-child

relationships and child gender or teacher-child ethnic match. They defined closeness as

"positive interactions, open communication, and warm feelings between children and

teachers" (p. 2).

Other research defines the teacher-student relationship or connectedness as social support. Tardy (1985) defines this social support in terms of emotional support. This concept is connected to perception of the student and its relation to the act of feeling safe in share ideas. This perceived act of caring is interpreted by the student as a relational exchange which scaffolds emotional support and wellbeing. Malecki and Demaray (2003) identified this teacher-student emotional support as a predictor of academic success.

Teacher-Student Relationships and Engagement

According to Guvenc (2015), the emotional dimension of engagement reflects positive emotions. These emotions are most closely associated to enthusiasm, interest, and enjoyment in the learning environment. In his study of teacher motivational support and engagement, Guvenc (2015) presented the terminology to describe the lack of engagement as being "disaffection." Engagement is always preferred in the classroom, and "disaffection" is to be avoided. Guvenc (2015) indicated engagement is a strong predictor of success and behavior. Furthermore, researchers have also found engagement in the learning serves to protect students from engaging in other risk-involving behavior in the classroom (Skinner, Furrer, Marchand, & Kindermann, 2008). Basaran (1982) linked engagement to motivation and established that engagement develops as a product of motivation. Motivation is experienced in different ways by different individuals. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), humans are motivated at different levels and in different ways. Motivation for students in the classroom can be internal, external, or introjected (Guvenc, 2015). Some students seek to complete tasks to avoid punishment or gain a reward via approval, grades, or prize; this action is externally motivated. A

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student who completes tasks to avoid external shaming, guilt, or anxiety is experiencing introjected motivation, which is derived when the stimuli driving the action is externally projected on the subject, and the response is reactionary to the stimulus. If a student is motivated to complete a task for the pure enjoyment of doing so, or takes an inherent joy in the act of learning itself, that motivation is considered intrinsic (Vansteenkiste, Sierens, Soenens, Luyckx, & Lens, 2009). It is essential to understand all means of student motivation as it affects classroom engagement. By doing so, the educator can address the potential shortfalls of disconnected and poorly motivated students.

Regardless of students' motivational models, teacher-student relationships and connectedness are consistently found to be directly linked to engagement in school and the academic environment (Ladd & Burgess, 2001). Wentzel (1998) performed a study on middle school students and relationships with teachers. He found that students who perceived higher levels of teacher support, both social and academic, displayed significantly more interest in school and responsibility for their learning (Wentzel, 1998). Research by Skinner and Belmont (1993) also supports the relationship between teacher-student relationships and student engagement.

Rimm-Kaufman et al. (2014) conducted a study focused on students in a fifth-grade math classroom. They selected 387 student participants from a single school district. The researchers made accommodations to ensure an equal sample of male and female students representative of the school's demographics. Regardless of race or ethnicity, the researchers identified that students consistently reported a higher desire to engage in learning environments where their teacher displayed traits associated with rewarding teacher-student relationships. Descriptive language used by students included

an environment that is warm, caring, and responsive to the individual (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2014). As an interesting side note, the researchers revealed that although both male and female participants reported teacher-student relationships had an effect on engagement, more male students reported a higher level of desire to engage in class content as an effect of the classroom conditions (emotional and organizational support from teacher) than reported by female participants (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2014).

Teacher-Student Relationships and Safe Learning Environments

Teachers are tasked with the development of safe and satisfactory learning environments (Djigic & Stojiljkovic, 2011). These safe classroom environments are essential for learning and are the product of teacher best practices and positive interactions with students (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Other researchers in the field of classroom environments have supported this claim. Specifically, Bergin and Bergin (2009) found attachment is fostered by positive teacher-student interactions that create a sense of security within the classroom. Those positive interactions and relationships are said to have the greatest effect on student achievement (Hayes et al., 2006). Throughout the examination of the data, teacher-student connectedness and interpersonal relationships are consistently referenced as being one of the most significant indicators of safe and satisfactory school settings (Ryan & Patrick, 2001).

Main and Cassidy (1988) put forth the idea that positive interactions such as those promoted within the safe learning environment encourage students/children to engage in exploration. Furthermore, after extensive study of the subject, many researchers have determined positive teacher-student relationships are not only indicative of, but essential to, the safe and secure environments, and without them, learning cannot occur (Baker,

Grant, & Morlock, 2008; Silver, Measelle, Armstrong, & Essex, 2005). Should a safe learning environment not be created and fostered by teachers, students are likely to be unsuccessful and more apt to dropout (Strand & Granlund, 2014). According to Strand and Granlund (2014) and Lamote, Speybroeck, Van Den Noortgate, and Van Damme (2013), students' trust in teachers, school environment, and teachers/staff decreases absenteeism while the converse promotes stress in the school setting, which may lead to student disengagement and school dropouts. Research conducted by Sahin, Arseven, and Kiliç (2016) suggests some means by which schools can curb both absenteeism and potential increases in dropout rates by addressing the learning environment. Sahin et al. (2016) recommended teachers and administrators seek to create positive, safe school environments, as these enhance students' commitments to school and learning. Sahin et al. went so far as to recommend in-service training programs to help teachers promote positive learning environments through teacher-student relationships.

Teacher-Student Relationships and Academic Performance

Klem and Connell (2004) indicated students perform better academically in environments where they report a sense of supportive interpersonal relationships. They argued teachers who exhibit positive, encouraging behavior are key to the creation of supportive interpersonal relationships students require in the classroom. Along the same vein, Corpus, McClintic-Glibert, and Hayenga (2009) demonstrated that the encouragement provided by teachers within the teacher-student relationship is clearly linked to students' approaches and desires to achieve academic success.

While some researchers (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2014) presented data as evidence of teacher-student relationships holding more influence over males than females in

classroom engagement, there is contrary evidence related to males and females benefiting

academically from said relationships. Baker (2006) presented preliminary evidence for a

differential effect of teacher-student relationship quality on achievement for males and

females. Baker found females experienced the greatest gains and academic outcomes

from positive teacher-student relationships. McCormick and O'Connor (2015) postulated

this differential may be traced back to gender socialization theory. According to Koch

(2003), this theory suggests the different treatment of males and females reinforces

behaviors that reflect the traditional gender-specific relational styles. In short, Koch

(2003) suggests a societal expectation that male students will be more likely to behave in

a manner which creates a conflict within the teacher-student relationship. It has become

somewhat of a social norm for male students to be less emotionally invested in teacher-

student relationships. Due to female gender roles, it is often assumed females will be

more compliant while the male counterparts can be regarded as non-masculine for

exhibiting the same compliant behavior (Morris, 2011). Thus, the consequences for

males are less than females exhibiting the same conflictual behavior within the

classroom. Furthermore, the same said conflicts within teacher-student relationships for

each gender manifest a differential in academic consequences. Ewing and Taylor (2009)

investigated teacher-student relational qualities in a Head Start program and found

stronger effects of teacher-student relationships were evidenced in academic achievement

in females than males.

Although the potential of differing benefits for males and females within the

confines of the teacher-student relationship exists, male students have the most to benefit

overall academically from high-quality teacher-student relationships/connectedness

(McCormick & O'Connor, 2015). Based on statistics, boys are more likely to experience behavioral problems upon entering school programs and are also statistically more likely to receive disciplinary action and require special education services (Cooper & Farran, 1988). Strong teacher-student relationships may help scaffold and support boys in the learning environment and increase their chances of achieving academic success.

Regardless of gender and social-relational issues that may be evidenced within the research, there is overwhelming justification for the inclusion of positive teacher-student relationships within the training required for educators. Researchers clearly demonstrate a net positive effect on the educational field when schools focus on the creation of safe, welcoming learning environments created by positive teacher-student relationships (Hayes et al., 2006; Malecki & Demaray, 2003; Ryan & Patrick, 2001; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Furthermore, teachers who are unable to nurture these positive relationships do so at the peril of their students' educational futures (Hawk et al., 2002).

Characteristics and Attributes of Positive Teacher-Student Relationships

Some of the descriptive language attributed to teachers deemed as having positive teacher-student connections are warm, positive, caring, motivational, supportive, trustworthy, encouraging tenacity, and high expectations (Daniels & Araposthasis, 2005; Montalvo, Mansfield, & Miller, 2007; Muller, Katz, & Dance, 1999; Murray & Malmgren, 2005; Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012; Wentzel, 2003). However, to further properly address the characteristics identified for positive teacher-student relationships, it may be wise to examine a leading study in the field of relational communication skills and the values within the confines of a defined "friendship."

The researcher would be remiss to seek to understand and study these

characteristics of positive relationships as they apply to teaching without examining and understanding the findings of the classical study by Burleson and Samter (1990) who conducted research which focused on two main objectives. The primary objective was to assess individual differences in the value that college age students placed upon communication skills within the context of same-sex peer friendships. Burleson and Samter (1990) established what has been referred to as the "Big Eight" skills. These include conflict management, comforting, referential ability, conversational skill, regulative skill, persuasive skill, narrative skill, and ego support. At the time of Burleson and Samter's (1990) study, the researchers stated that "limited study of research suggests that communication skills are determinants of peer acceptance" (p.166). Most of the researchers investigating interpersonal relationships/friendships conducted prior to this time focused on children. Burleson and Samter (1990) focused on college age adults since the friendship dynamic is readily changing in childhood and adolescence. The second objective of Burleson and Samter's (1990) study was to determine if the evaluations of the communication skills "varied as a function of interpersonal cognitive complexity" (p. 167).

Burleson and Samter's (1990) study consisted of 410 college student participants. Of that group, 176 were males, and 234 were females. All participants were enrolled in a communications course at a large university in the Midwest. Participants were exposed to two rounds of experimental sessions approximately two weeks apart. The first session exposed them to the Communicative Functions Questionnaire (CFQ). This instrument was created by the researchers to test the perceived importance of different communication skills within friendships. The second session had 390 participants as 20

subjects did not complete the instrument. Participants were exposed to the Role Category

Questionnaire (RCQ). The RCQ was created by Walter H. Crockett in 1965 and is

considered a vetted and reliable measure of interpersonal cognitive complexity (Meyer,

1996; Sypher, Witt & Sypher, 1986).

Burleson and Samter's (1990) CFQ data were assessed through a 4-by-8

multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). Cognitive complexity was used as the

between groups factor, and communication skill was used for the within subject factor.

The dependent measure in the analysis was the mean importance of the skill. While the

researchers did not find a significant result for cognitive complexity, the results of the

multivariate analysis of variance produced a highly significant ($p < .05$) effect for type of

communication skill.

Big Eight

Burleson and Sumter (1990) loosely classified the "Big Eight" according to the

extent in which their primary focus was on the management of behavior and activities or

the management of feelings. These skills include conflict management, comforting,

referential ability, conversational skill, regulative skill, persuasive skill, narrative skill,

and ego support. Skills that were identified as being focused on management of behavior

or activity of others were conversational skill (the ability to initiate, and maintain and

terminate conversations with others), referential skill (the ability to clearly communicate

information), and narrative skill (the ability to communicate through stories, comical

stories, and gossip). Skills identified as being focused on management of feelings

included ego support (the ability to make others feel good about themselves), comforting

skill (the ability to make sad or depressed people feel better while they are sad or upset),

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and persuasion (ability to change another person's thoughts on something). Beyond the two major classifications, there are two skills Burleson and Samter discuss as being somewhere between the poles of management of activity and feeling management. The first of the two is regulation and deals with the ability to help someone fix their mistakes. The second, and last of the "Big Eight," is conflict management (the ability to reach an equally satisfying outcome of a conflict situation).

Conflict Management - This skill was addressed by Burleson and Samter (1990) via a skill rating test known as the Communicative Function Questionnaire (CFQ) and the descriptors of the behavior included: makes me believe our relationship is strong enough to withstand any conflict or disagreement, makes believe it is possible to resolve conflicts without embarrassment, makes me feel like I can be honest about our relationship, makes me see relationships can have disagreement and still be great, and makes me realize that it is better to deal with conflict we have instead of bottling it up.

Comforting - This skill was addressed in the skill ranking CFQ. This skill set questions dealt with a person's ability to make another person feel better about their situation. Some of the descriptors included: helps me understand why some things hurt my feelings, almost always makes me feel better, can cheer me up, and helps me work through my emotions when I am feeling upset about something.

Referential ability - This skill is directly related with someone's ability to communicate clearly and concisely. The descriptors included: Explains things very well, makes you understand what he/she is referring to, explains things like instructions that they are easy for one to follow.

Conversational skill - This skill was related to one's ability to engage in

conversation and communication. The verbal communication could be purposeful with the directive to communicate essential information, but could also include casual social discussions, or "shooting the breeze." The descriptors included: able to make effortless conversation, the ability to start a conversation effortlessly, makes conversations easy and fun, and conversing for hours on end.

Regulative skill - This skill dealt with a person's ability to help another person fix their mistakes by working through them. The CFQ addressed this skill via the following indicators: Makes me feel I can learn something from my mistakes, makes me want to fix my mistakes, empowers me to fix the mistakes I have made.

Persuasive skill - This skill related to a person's ability to make another person conform to their will. More precisely, the skill was directly connected with convincing someone to do something they usually would not do or something that is not originally their desire. Descriptors include: Coming up with really good reasons for getting people to do what they want, and getting people to do just about anything through verbal coercion.

Narrative skill - This skill relates to storytelling in various functions. The communication via storytelling could include stories of frivolity or joke, mythological, historical or allegorical. Any story could be communicated, but the skill of communication via storytelling would be considered a narrative skill. The descriptors identified via Burleson and Samter's instrument included: He/she is good at telling jokes, always telling interesting stories, he/she tells stories that makes one hang on to each word, and always puts be in an up mood due to their story telling.

Ego support - This skill set is related to a person's ability to make another person

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feel better about his or herself. The Communicative Function Questionnaire attributes associated with ego support were: makes me strive to be my very best, makes me believe in myself, makes me feel like I can achieve my personal goals, and makes me feel like my ideas are interesting and worthwhile.

According to Burleson and Samter's (1990), amongst the most important communication skills for same-sex peers to possess within a friendship, ego support ranked the highest with comforting skill, referential skill, conflict management, conversational skill, regulative skill, narrative skill, and persuasive skill ranked respectively.

The second part of Burleson and Samter's (1990) study used the data collected via the RCQ. Again, the researchers used multivariate analysis of variance to analyze the data but used a 4-by-2 MANOVA format. This analysis examined scores on "two second-order factors (i.e., scores for the affectively oriented and non-affectively oriented communication indices) (p. 174). Cognitive complexity was used for the between group factor, and type of communication skill was used for the within group factor. The results of the MANOVA analysis indicated the main effect for cognitive complexity was not significant ($p > .90$). However, there was a highly significant ($p < .001$) main effect for type of communication skill. Non-affectively oriented communication skills indicated a rating significantly less important than affectively oriented skills (p.174).

Overall, Burleson and Samter (1990) revealed the participants in their study valued affectively oriented communication skills of their friends more than non-affectively oriented skills. These affectively oriented skills such as comforting, ego support, and conflict management were held in high regard while persuasion skills,

referential ability, and narrative ability held less importance or value to those studied. An interesting pattern emerged from the data in relation to differences in value placed upon affectively oriented communication skills versus non-affectively centered skills. The differences seemed to become evident through the observation of cognitive complexity. Participants with high complexity ratings tended to more highly value ego support over referential skills while participants with low complexity ratings valued referential ability higher than ego support. Burleson and Samter (1990) attributed these differences to the complexities of the social interactions desired by those of various cognitive complexities.

Delia and O'Keefe's (1982) theory of constructivism can be used to explain Burleson and Samter's (1990) findings. Delia and O'Keefe's (1982) theorized that cognitively complex individuals tend to view their interactions in terms of social and affective properties with interest in motivational aspects of social interaction. Simply put, people who are more cognitively complex tend to engage in and enjoy relational interactions in which they can share and disclose thoughts, feelings, and internal motives with their friends/partners. People with lower cognitive complexity ratings tend to view communication in a more concrete manner, useful solely to convey the expression of thoughts and as a means of changing behavior.

The findings of Burleson and Samter's (1990) study hold significance for the study of interactions within the shared scheme of a friendship, but the complexities and characteristics of those interactions can be placed in the context of all relational interactions and applied to the social interactions of the teacher-student relationship. Further significance of this study is evident in the creation of the Communicative Functions Questionnaire that continues to be a continuously referenced and implemented

data collection tool in the field of relational studies.

An analysis conducted by Hawk et al. (2002) gathered from three separate research projects was performed to further understand the teacher/student relationship. As the data were examined, the dominant theme from the separate research projects again revealed the importance of the relationship. All three research studies used by Hawk et al. (2002; Hawk & Hill, 1996) were conducted from 1999 to 2000, took place in different sectors, and were independent of each other. Two of the three studies were performed in what is considered low socio-economic areas. Also, all three studies took place in Maori and Pasifika schools. While these schools differ in many ways from American schools, many of the positive teacher/student characteristics identified by children within these schools are identified in American school-based research (Burleson & Samter, 1990; Frymier & Houser, 2000). The first of the studies focused on three highly successful primary school teachers. The data were collected via lengthy face-to-face interviews conducted with the teachers and people who had extensive knowledge of their practices, beliefs, and attitudes (Hawk et al., 2002). The second longitudinal study took place in 1999. Data were collected through classroom observation. In addition, more than 100 full-lesson classroom observations of 89 highly effective teachers were performed (Hawk et al., 2002). The researchers also conducted individual, face-to-face interviews with each of the instructors and administered 100 group discussions with the students (N = 600) who participated (Hawk et al., 2002). The third study was a three-phase project performed at a major university and focused primarily on why Pasifika students tended to perform lower academically than Palagi and Asian students. Phase one of the study involved previous students and those current at the time of the study. Interviews were

performed, and themes emerged from the examination of the data. Those themes were incorporated into a questionnaire that was administered to generate quantitative data for analysis. Additional data were collected in a third phase in which data were generated through student descriptions of their lifetime learning experiences (Hawk et al., 2002).

Hawk et al. (2002) found no correlation between ethnicity, age, teacher training, experience (years), subject area, gender, and effective teaching. However, many characteristics of effective teacher relationships were identified within the studies performed by Hawk et al. (2002), and they echo those found in studies performed previously. The first of the characteristics found across all three studies was empathy. Empathy was identified by students as teachers' caring to get to know students and their worlds/cultures. Caring was also identified across all the studies. Students stated some teachers told them they "loved" them and showed them love as a family member might do (Hawk et al., 2002). Others associated caring with friendliness and the teacher's displaying a desire to help the student. Respect was another characteristic identified by Hawk et al. (2002). This attribute is not to be confused with "like" as Hawk et al. (2002) stated. "Some teachers did not set out to be 'liked,' but they did build a special relationship that commanded respect" (p. 7). Respect was identified more readily among the secondary and tertiary level students involved in the study but was still found in the primary levels as well.

Hawk et al. (2002) found "going the extra mile" was also stated to be an important identifier of an effective teacher/student relationship. Students referenced positive interactions in which teachers gave their time, additional praise, and their money to purchase rewards. Teachers even loaned out or gave away their own resources or

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equipment to students to motivate them to achieve. Yet another identifier was passion. Students across all three studies stated passion displayed by the teacher was extremely important to their ability to be motivated in the classroom. Teachers' passions for their work helped create an atmosphere that "enabled students to be free of tension and engage more actively in their learning" (p.12). Teachers who displayed patience were also identified as being critical as students desired to see that their teacher was not willing to give up on them. Finally, Hawk et al. (2002) identified "belief in their ability" as the last characteristic found across all the areas of data. As stated in a previous study performed by Hawk and Hill (1996), "the feedback from both teachers and students suggested that a teacher's ability to believe in the students and to make them feel special and important has an important impact on the way they feel about the teacher, the subject and their performance in that subject" (p. 214).

Eryilmaz (2014) investigated the descriptive teacher types (disliked, neutral, and liked) and the relationship of those various teachers to the academic achievement of students within the various classes. This mixed methods study reported using a range of personality inventories including the Big-Five Personality Model, Positive and Negative Affect scales, and a qualitative survey. A participant group of 187 students ages 14 to 16 was selected for the quantitative study. Of those selected, 83 were females, and 104 were males. A one-way ANOVA statistical instrument used for gathering data and content analysis methods was used (Eryilmaz, 2014). The qualitative portion of the research focused on a participant group of 60 adolescents which was equally split between males and females. Some characteristics from the data associated the "disliked" teachers with traits/characteristics such as emotional instability, antagonism, introversion, carelessness,

suspicious natures, and cautiousness. The "liked" teachers were associated with traits/characteristics such as conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness, and emotionally stability (Eryilmaz, 2014).

Another study conducted by Frymier and Houser (2000) offers more insight into desired teacher attributes/traits. Frymier and Houser's research addressed three questions with regard to effective teaching: (a) what are students' perceptions of the importance of communication skills and immediacy behaviors? (b) what is the relationship between students' perceptions of teachers' use of communication skills, immediacy behaviors, motivation, and learning? (c) do male and female students differ in their perceptions of communication skills and immediacy behaviors as they relate to importance, motivation, and learning? The research was comprised of two separate studies that examined teacher-student relationships using the previously discussed CFQ. With that tool, Frymier and Houser (2000) generated the needed data for both parts of the study. For study one, the researchers used a participant pool of 93 people (32 males and 61 females). The CFQ consisted of 31 items used to assess the importance of the eight different skills as they applied to teaching and used an additional instrument to determine Immediacy (verbal and nonverbal). Study two also used the CFQ with a second group of participants (N = 257; 79 males, 177 females, and one unidentified). Participants were asked to complete the CFQ with reference to an instructor they had recently taken a course with. Of those referenced, 168 were males, 88 were females, and one unidentified. While the questionnaire was the same as used in study one, the second study asked students to not only indicate the importance of the skills, but also to report the extent to which their teachers used the skills in the classroom. This was measured on a 7-point Likert scale.

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Frymier and Houser (2000) supported the previously discussed research by Burleson and Samter (1990) on teacher-student relationships. Data collected from the first study indicated students believed Burleson and Samter's (1990) communication skills were important to good teaching. The skills most highly ranked by the participants were referential skills (ability to explain ideas), ego support (offers encouragement of students), and conflict management (trust in relationship). Researchers in study two revealed the two greatest predictors of learning and motivation were referential skills (ability to explain ideas) and ego support (offers encouragement of students). In summary, Burleson and Samter's communication skills hold value and importance beyond the realm of friendship and can be applied and connected to student-teacher communication (Frymier & Houser, 2000).

The Advanced Placement Program

The Advanced Placement (AP) Program is owned and managed by The College Board, a not-for-profit membership program whose stated mission is a commitment to "excellence and equity in education" (College Board, 2013). Currently, the AP program offers more than 35 Advanced Placement courses in subjects ranging from Art History to Physics. The program has gained popularity since its inception in 1952. More than one million U.S. public high school graduates took at least one AP course in 2013 (College Board, 2013).

The Advanced Placement program grew from the need to reverse the ever-growing gap was taking hold between secondary and post-secondary education levels. According to a report created by The College Board (2003), Americans post-World War II recognized the need to reverse the trend. During this time, two studies funded by the

Ford Foundation for the Advancement of Education reached the unified conclusion that secondary schools and colleges should work together to "allow motivated students to work at the height of their capabilities and advance as quickly as possible" (College Board, 2003). The first of the two studies was conducted by three elite prep schools of the time, and the second was conducted by three prestigious colleges. The prep schools were Exeter, Andover, and Lawrenceville; Harvard, Princeton, and Yale made up the college component. Researchers concluded schools and colleges should "see themselves as two halves of a common enterprise" (College Board, 2003). Since the mid-2000s, there has been a push to have open enrollment for all Advanced Placement courses. Winebrenner (2006) stated that the desired effect of this trend was to provide students from minority groups and those at the poverty level with better access to courses enable higher success rates at the postsecondary level. Skinner (2005) noted that some teachers complained this idea was "driving too many subpar students into AP courses, taking time and attention away from the students who are actually prepared to do college-level work" (p. 2).

Researchers have shown the positive impact of taking AP courses on graduation and college success rates (Duffy, 2010; Hargrove, Godin & Dodd, 2008; Kelly-Kemple, Proger, Roderick, 2011; Keng & Dodd, 2008; Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2006; Morgan & Klaric, 2007; Speroni & National Center for Postsecondary Research, 2011). But are all areas of the population experiencing the same gain? Could this success rate for students of all demographics be improved through stronger teacher-student relationships? Park, Caine, and Wimmer (2014) suggested that improved teacher-student relationships could greatly impact the AP success rate. They identified teacher-student relationships as being

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one of five themes that emerged upon their examination of the Advanced Placement program.

Park et al. (2014) performed a qualitative systemic review (or qualitative evidence synthesis) comparing findings from 20 qualitative Advanced Placement related studies. Park et al. (2014) focused on themes and constructs that were found to be a commonality across the various studies. From the 20 studies used in the research, 15 specifically identified the "impact of teacher perception" as highly important. Students identified that teacher perception created a sense of "positive pressure" that reinforced students' desires to perform (Park et al., 2014, p. 145). Adult-like mentorship was also highly ranked as students stated they perceived a greater desire on teachers' behalves to invest time and effort in their success in the classroom. "Specific conception of teacher" was the final relational indicator students linked to their AP performances. Students who felt their teachers were prepared to present the content attributed higher chances of success to improved teacher-student relationships. Conversely, students who perceived their teachers lacked the "mentor" relational techniques reported their experience in a negative manner (Park et al., 2014, p. 145).

Significant research supporting the connection between AP courses and students' post-secondary success is available and well documented (Duffy, 2010; Keng & Dodd, 2008; Morgan & Kalric, 2007). There are also considerable data gathered on the connection of positive teacher-student relationships to success in school (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Choi & Dobbs-Oates, 2016; Liberante, 2012; Malecki & Demaray, 2003). With both well documented and understood, further study into the specifics of positive teacher-student relationships in the AP classroom will be extremely valuable to the field

of education. My research adds to this body of knowledge and could have future impact on the best practices of teacher-student relationships within the AP classroom.

Advanced Placement Conditions Update

Since the data was collected for this research, additional AP testing has occurred. The results of the most recent reports gathered from the College Board program reflects continuous growth in the number of tests taken as well as the number of students entering the AP programs. In 2017-2018, AP reports over 2,808,990 students took part in the program and over 5,090,324 tests were taken (College Board, 2018).

Summary

The review of the literature provided a comprehensive understanding of the recent state of the education field as it relates to AP. An historical examination of how previous programs such as Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA), Improvement of American Schools Act (IASA) to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Race to the Top (RTT) have set the pace and policy for the Department of Education (Boser, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2015; Joftus et al., 2003; Onosko, 2011; Paone & Lepkowski, 2007). The researcher also examined the Hierarchy of Needs put forth by Maslow, as this foundation has implications for students in the classroom (Benes & Alperin, 2016; Brophy, 1986; Crump, 1995; Gawel & ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation, 1997; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Guditus, 2013; Johnson et al., 1978; Kunc, 1992; Maslow, 1943; Raffini, 1993). Choi and Dobbs-Oates (2016) and Klem and Connell (2004) provided insight into the most needed conditions and attributes of effective educational programs as they relate to the role of the teacher-student relationship. Bergin and Bergin (2009)

defined the teacher-student relationship in the context of socioemotional well-being and contend that the teacher-student relationship is critical to school success. Malecki and Demaray (2003) further identified emotional support within the teacher-student relationship as a predictor of academic success.

Guvenc (2015), Ladd and Burgess (2001), Skinner et al., (2008), Vansteenkiste et al. (2009), and Wentzel (1998) explored the link between the teacher-student relationship and classroom engagement. This engagement has been established as necessary for motivation within the classroom (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Further examination of the literature as it relates to teacher-student relationships introduced the necessity of teachers' establishing safe and nurturing environments for students to learn (Baker et al., 2008; Lamote et al., 2013; Silver et al., 2005; Strand & Granlund, 2014). A review of academic performance and the teacher-student relationship also revealed evidence of a separation in the way in which males and females are sometimes treated within a given classroom and the ways in which the academic outcomes may differ as a result of that treatment (Baker, 2006; Ewing & Taylor, 2009; Koch, 2003; McCormick & O'Connor, 2015; Morris, 2011; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2014). Regardless of the potential disparity between the overall treatment of males and females within the classroom, the data collected by researchers in this field of study have clearly demonstrated a net positive effect on the educational field when schools focus on the creation of safe, welcoming learning environments through positive teacher-student relationships (Hayes et al., 2006; Malecki & Demaray, 2003; Ryan & Patrick, 2001; Skinner & Belmont, 1993).

The literature review also included a robust examination of the characteristics with positive teacher-student relationships. These identifiers hold great value as the

specifics of these characteristics inform my research design and help to paint the lens of my observations. Numerous research studies address the descriptive language attributed to teachers deemed as having positive teacher-student connections. A list was generated using the combined research studies (Daniels & Araposthasis, 2005; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Montalvo et al., 2007; Muller, Katz, & Dance, 1999; Murray & Malmgren, 2005; Wentzel, 2003) examined and included characteristics language such as warm, positive, caring, motivational, supportive, trustworthy, encouraging tenacity, and having high expectations.

Finally, the literature review included an examination of the recent state of the Advanced Placement program and the stated link to academic performance. Studies have shown the positive impact of taking AP courses on graduation rates and college success rates (Duffy, 2010; Hargrove et al., 2008; Kelly-Kemple et al., 2011; Keng & Dodd, 2008; Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2006; Morgan & Klaric, 2007; Speroni & National Center for Postsecondary Research, 2011). Regardless of this evident link between AP courses and post-secondary academic success, there persists the stated high rate of failure within the program. Despite the obvious increase in student participation (College Board, 2016b) and the Department of Education's stated dedication to improving student success, the failure rate continues to hover in the 35% range (College Board, 2016a).

Evident in the investigation into and the examination of the AP program and best practices of teacher-student relationships were a lack of research into positive teacher-student relationships within the AP classroom. With the vast amount of effort put into the AP program nationally, there exists little information and research into what positive teacher-student relationships within the AP classroom should be and the ways in which

these relationships could be leveraged to increase student AP academic performance. The

researcher in the current study may help identify some of these characteristics and inform

teachers, administrators, and policy makers on how to proceed as they seek to improve

the AP program.

Chapter III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Regardless of great expenditures of time, human resources, and finances,

Advanced Placement courses continue to function with a failure rate of approximately

35% (College Board, 2016b). The purpose of this study is to examine the characteristics

and specific interactions of students and teachers in a successful Advanced Placement

classroom.

There are eight sections found within this chapter. Following this introduction,

the qualitative research design of qualitative phenomenology and rationale are described

based upon the guiding research questions. Following the justification of the selected

methods, the criteria of the setting are explained to clarify relevance of the chosen means

of sample selection. After addressing the research setting, establishing the role of the

researcher is included to discuss the researcher's relationship to the problem, reveal

biases, and identify methods to monitor subjectivity issues. The next section describes

the criterion for the selection of participants, including attributes of the selected teacher

and students. The primary instrumentation for data collection is an observation tool and

interview protocol, which is explained following the participant selection. After details

of data collection are provided, data management and analysis are explained. This

includes coding strategies, transcription services, and computer software for storing and

organizing findings of the study. The researcher addresses strategies to ensure the

validity and reliability of the data to establish quality of the research. Finally, ethical considerations are discussed related to the collection of data from human participants and the dissemination of findings throughout the process. Clearly describing and justifying these factors is key to understanding the relationships among the problem, research questions, and methods to support the quality of findings proposed by this study.

This study was developed with the intent to examine the characteristics and specific interactions of students and teachers in a successful Advanced Placement classroom. The researcher presents an in-depth analysis of their experiences in the context of the teacher-student relationship. The qualitative method was the most appropriate method, as the depth of experience could only be obtained through this method. Maxwell (2013) describes the strengths of qualitative research as a product of the process. Qualitative research has a process orientation to the world and an inductive approach specific to a situation or people. It also relies on the emphasis of description rather than the numbers (Maxwell, 2013). These strengths made the qualitative model the most appropriate for the focus of this research. Maxwell (2013) further elaborated on the strengths by assigning the five goals of the qualitative model:

1. Understanding the meaning, for participants in the study, of the events, situations, experiences, and actions they are involved with or engaged in.

2. Understanding the context within which the participants act.

3. Understanding the process by which events and actions take place.

4. Identifying unanticipated phenomena and influences and generating new theories about the latter.

5. Developing causal explanations. (pp. 30-31)

With the qualitative method chosen, the methodology within that form of research was selected. Reflection upon the research questions served to guide the final stage of methodology selection.

RQ 1: What are the life and career experiences of a highly effective teacher in an identified, Advanced Placement classroom with a pass rate at or above 85% over the past decade?

RQ 2: What are the characteristics of teacher-student relationships in an identified, Advanced Placement classroom with a pass rate at or above 85% over the past decade?

For the information that the researcher seeks to extract from the research, the rich characteristics and specific interactions that are the focus of examination in the phenomenological method became the logical choice.
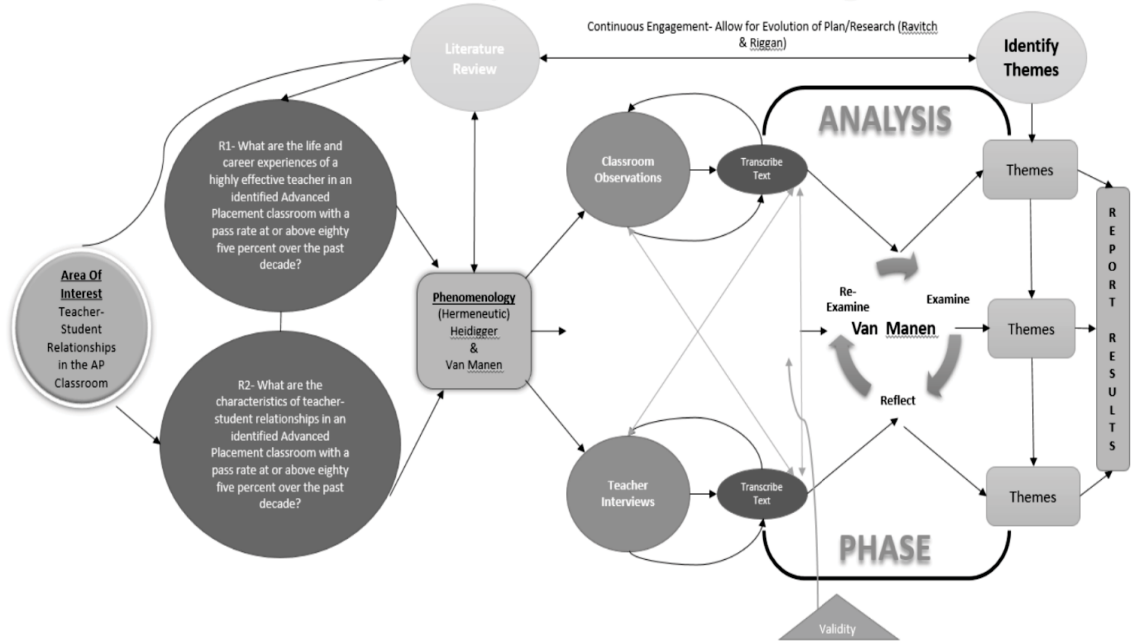
Figure 2. Concept Map of Research Design, Day (2016).

The hermeneutic phenomenology research method was used for this study. Finlay (2009) describes phenomenology as an umbrella term encompassing both a philosophical movement and a range of research approaches. The research methods that grew from the philosophical basis established by Husserl are classified as transcendental phenomenology, existential phenomenology, and hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology was developed by Martin Heidegger, a disciple of Husserl (Kafle, 2011). Heidegger (1988) parted ways with Husserl on the idea that the researcher can suspend personal bias and achieve full separation from the phenomena being observed. Husserl believed observers could acknowledge their biases and "bracket" them out, thereby allowing themselves to observe and experience a phenomenon completely separated from it. Heidegger (1988) believed it was impossible to truly separate oneself from personal bias. Heidegger encouraged observers to acknowledge their biases and

enter the observation without reservation, seeking to understand and interpret the phenomena the way in which only they could as an individual.

The hermeneutic phenomenology school is based on the concept that interpretations are all observers have, and descriptions of what they observe are part of the interpretive process (Kafle, 2011). Van Manen (1990) stated hermeneutic phenomenology attends to both sides of its methodology and . . .

it is descriptive (phenomenological) methodology because it wants to be attentive to how things appear, it wants to let things speak for themselves: it is an interpretive (hermeneutic) methodology because it claims there are no such things as uninterpreted phenomena. (p. 180)

As a result, the process is a subjective experience which seeks to develop understanding of individuals and groups by intensive examination of the stories of their lives in a space and time. As Van Manen (1990) expressed it, the researchers become a part of the "lived experience" as they attune themselves toward the ontological nature of the phenomenon while learning to see pre-reflective, taken-for-granted understandings through their own lens that is tinted with prejudices and prior knowledge.

Van Manen's (2014) phenomenological process is used to examine, reflect, and re-examine the text gathered from the research. In this study, the researcher used Van Manen's (2014) approach and allowed six guidelines to drive the research. The guidelines suggested for this process of examination included commitment to an abiding concern, questioning that was oriented and purposeful, investigations of the "lived experience," a description of the phenomenon via writing and rewriting, and examination of the parts and the whole of the phenomenon (Kafle, 2011). Engagement in the writing

of the phenomenological approach was paramount to the success of the research. As Van

Manen (2014) stated, "Phenomenological inquiry cannot be separated from the practice

of writing" (p. 365). As Figure 3 demonstrates, the hermeneutic process is grounded in

the experience of the phenomenon. As one engages in the experience, there is a constant

cycle that takes place between the defining of the arts as they relate to the whole

experience. The illumination of the whole then leads to a better understanding of the

parts.
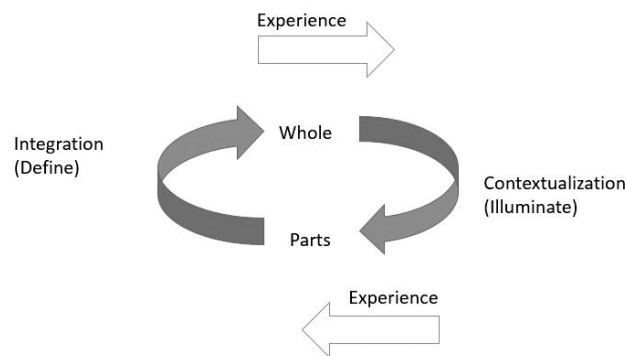
Figure 3. Basic Form of the Hermeneutic Circle, Bontekoe (1996).

Site and Participant Selection/Sampling

The premise of this study is not generalizable to large audiences. However, it is

hoped the results may inform the educational practice as it relates to AP courses. The

researcher undertook an in-depth study of a high-functioning AP classroom, and thus a

purposeful site selection was made. Maxwell (2013) defined purposeful sampling in

qualitative research as a strategy in which "particular settings, persons, or activities are

selected deliberately to provide information that is particularly relevant to your questions

and goals, and that can't be gotten as well from other choices" (p. 97).

School - The researcher chose an accredited, rural, Title 1 high school in

Southeast Georgia. As a Title 1 school, approximately 45% of students receive free or reduced lunch. The median household income was approximately $48,000 for the area, and the school system was the second largest employer in the county. The institution was a public school which had more than 2,500 students enrolled and a senior class of 582 students. The school employed 165 teachers with a 15-to-1 teacher-to-student ratio. The student body was a diverse population with approximately 61% White students, 26% African American, and 6% Hispanic. Most important to the research, the school had been ranked nationally on *U.S. News & World Report*'s "Best High Schools" for the 2016 and 2017 school years. In 2016, the school reported 430 students taking Advanced Placement courses, and 688 AP exams were conducted. Among those students, the school boasts one AP National Scholar, 19 AP Scholars with Distinction, 18 AP Scholars with Honors, and 57 AP Scholars. School data from the 2015-2016 school year reflect SAT scores in all three sections (Verbal, Math, and Writing) well above Georgia's state mean scores.

Classroom/Students - An Advanced Placement Micro-Economics course was the focus of this research. The classroom was composed of approximately 15 students with gender and race demographics that closely represent the rest of the school. For the past nine years, the classroom under observation has had an average pass rate of 85%, while the national average is approximately 63%. In two recent years, the highest classroom pass rate reached 92% and 96%. All students at this particular school were advised to attempt to complete at least one Advanced Placement course. No restrictions, prerequisites, or screenings were performed on students prior to admission to the class. Students of all academic levels were allowed entry to and completion of the class serves as the focus of the research.

Teacher - Based on his achievement in the classroom, the teacher was selected to be a state presenter for the annual conference for the AP Micro-Economics workshops. He was a married white male in his mid-30s and the father of two. His background was in economics, and he pursued a teaching career after graduating with a non-education undergraduate degree. He had been teaching for more than 10 years at the time of this study. He has chaperoned numerous school events, sponsored many student organizations, and served in committee leadership roles from time to time during his tenure at the high school being studied.

Data Collection Methods

The researcher served as the main instrument of data collection. Given the goal of qualitative research is to obtain a deep and rich understanding of the subject being studied, the researcher's involvement in data collection becomes essential. Furthermore, the theory of phenomenology is grounded in the process of being within the event. With the hermeneutic phenomenological process, the descriptions of observations are an essential part of the interpretive process (Kafle, 2011).

Observations/Field Notes

Physical classroom observations occurred from week one through week five. They consisted of daily observational periods lasting 1.5 hours each. The researcher sought to experience the daily lives of students working and learning in the particular teacher's classroom. Due to the type of phenomenology the researcher engaged in, it was the duty of the researcher to admit bias, understand predispositions and prejudices, and acknowledge it in the approach. The researcher invested significant time engaged in notetaking during the observation period. The researcher also made allowances for

reflective visual observations to develop a mental picture of the classroom. The

researcher engaged in the process for one month of classroom time, so the halo effect had

less influence over the data. The researcher spent sufficient time in the classroom, so the

students and the teacher viewed him as part of the environment, not an intruder or

outsider.

To ensure the observations captured the essence of the experience, the researcher

became a part of the atmosphere while maintaining enough distance not to upset the

classroom dynamic. The observation focused on capturing the specific interactions

between the teacher and his students. Effort was made to attain an in-depth

understanding of the nature of those interactions as they could affect academic success.

The observational instrument was comprised of notes gathered from each observation

period. These included a basic layout of the classroom as well as spaces for marking

each student with times in which they interacted with the teacher. These interactions

were noted and referenced in the observation notes with details (positive/negative,

vocal/physical, public/private in nature). Daily notes were created and contained a short

description of the teacher's disposition as well the researcher's own disposition. It was

equally important to capture the researcher's disposition as this could have affected

perceptions on a given day. With phenomenological research, the researcher is the

instrument of data gathering. Capturing of the researcher's feelings upon coming to class

each day was equally important to the process as was capturing the teacher's perceived

feelings or mood. Finally, the observational periods were informed by the process put

forth by Van Manen (1990) who created a list that guided the research observations notes.

The researcher reflected upon these guidelines each day:

(1) Describe the experience as though it was lived, avoiding casual explanation, generalizations, or abstract interpretations as much as possible.

(2) Describe the experience from the inside, as it were, considering state of mind: the feelings, the mood, the emotions, etc.

(3) Focus on an example or incident of the object of experience: Describe specific events, an adventure, a happening, a particular experience.

(4) Try to focus on an example of the experience that stands out for its vividness, or if it was the first time.

(5) Attend to how the body feels, how things smell, how they sound, etc.

(6) Avoid trying to beautify accounts with fancy phrases or flowery terminology.

Teacher Interview

Seidman's Three-Step Interview Method Modified. The interview process is uniquely suited for phenomenological studies. As Seidman (2013) noted, "At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding lived experience" (pg. 9). Through phenomenology, researchers seek to do the same. The interview is not a means to test the hypotheses; rather, the interview seeks to draw from the process the interviewee's meaning of a situation which they have lived. Thus, the interview served as a primary data gathering tool in this investigative process. The prescribed three interviews generated experiential data from the lived experiences of the teacher interviewed.

The researcher used a modified version of Seidman's (2013) interview protocol (Appendix A). His phenomenological approach to the interview informed the entire process of the study. All three of Seidman's (2013) stages, "Focused Life History, The Details of Experience, and Reflection on the Meaning," were used over the course of the

research (pp. 20-23). Interview one (90 minutes) focused on the interviewee's early life experience, family life, school life, and any/all experiences that led up to his decision to becoming a teacher. Interview two (90 minutes) focused on the interviewee's "lived experience" as a teacher on a given day. To put the interviewee's experience within the context of socialization, the researcher asked about the relationship to his students in the class. In the last interview (90 minutes), the researcher asked the teacher to reflect on the meaning of his experience in life and how that relates to what he does now in the classroom. These interviews were structured according to Seidman's (2013) protocol and took place within a month's time.

Beyond using Seidman's (2013) method, teacher interviews were performed weekly to debrief on the events of the week. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed as part of the data collection process. It was important that the data set contained as much input as possible from the participant in the classroom phenomenon. The teacher's "lived experience" brought another vantage point and data set. The questions were qualitative in nature and open-ended in their construct. Some of the questions included were "What stands out about today's class?" or "How do you think you handled that situation?" Follow up questions were conversational in nature such as "Why do you think that student did that?" or "What was your motivation for saying that?" These questions helped paint the picture of the teacher's mindset toward classroom interactions and his dealings with students. The intent was to delve into the nature of the teacher-student relationship, but directly engaging in questions formatted too obviously in their direction could have caused the teacher to resort to "teacher speak" and canned educational jargon. While indicative of an educated teacher versed in proper

interpersonal relationship tactics, questions that triggered these responses would have created an easy barrier to the true nature of the teacher's feelings and thoughts. The researcher's desire was to get beyond the "wall" teachers often put up when discussing education and to instead derive true insight into the teacher's feelings and nature of being in the classroom.

Documents and Artifacts Collection

All items written and collected in the process of the research became part of the physical evidence of the research process. This served as yet another form of data collection. Marshal and Rossman (2011) contend that items such as meeting records, logs, transcriptions, personal letters, and notes are all useful sources of legitimate documentation. Any information collected about the teacher, students, and school became part of the research record and is a meaningful source of data triangulation. Beyond the inclusion of the researcher's observational notes and audio recording/transcripts, worksheets, project directions, and teacher handouts were included in the data collection. These documents served to further the credibility of the study and were maintained with all other records of the research performed.

Data Analysis Method

Maxwell (2013) stated that analysis for novices to the research field may be the most mysterious aspect of qualitative research. Essential to beginning the process of analysis was the in-depth reading of the observation notes, interview transcripts, memos, journal entries, and transcriptions of audio recordings (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995). Maxwell (2013) also suggested the researcher should engage in the reorganization of physical notes and rewriting any rough observation notes. The researcher engaged in the

process of listening to all recorded audio and reexamining all observation and interview texts. While doing so, more notetaking was involved to cover the recorded data. While coding was essential to the data analysis process of this research design, Maxwell (2013) cautions researchers to avoid the impression that the coding itself is analysis. Rather, the coding only lays the groundwork for the thematic analysis approach to take place.

Coding

In order for the data to be gleaned from the text of the research documents, interview notes, and memos, the gathered information underwent a coding process. According to Seidman (2013), reading transcripts and noting what is interesting, labeling it, and placing it into related files are all "classifying" or "coding." Interview data were coded via Seidman's (2013) analyzation method:

- Reduction of interview data to specifics of researcher's study

- Labeling important excerpts into categories to explore themes

- Sorting those labels/themes that were easily identifiable and retrievable.

The physical method of marking or cutting out individual passages of interest from the observation transcripts and interviews began the analyzation process. This was preferred, as Seidman (2013) suggests first time researchers should work in paper prior to using cut-and-paste text within a computer program. The selected passages were then categorized by content. The categories were then analyzed for connecting threads and patterns between the various categories (Seidman, 2013). These connection threads became the area of focus and further analyzation in the hermeneutic process. Following the hermeneutic phenomenology process, the data collection, interpretation, and re-examination within a deeper and meaningful context were repeated. The cyclical nature

of the hermeneutic process allowed for continuous development of the constructs, and there was continuous cross-checking of data for accuracy and authenticity. Participant checking performed during the data collection was also essential to ensure data were accurate. Teacher interview notes were shared with the participant during the observation period. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated this form of member checking contributes to the credibility and trustworthiness of the research data. The overall approach within the hermeneutic process was one that is best described as a thematic analysis. Van Manen (2014) describes thematic analysis as "recovering structures of meanings that are embodied and dramatized in human experience represented in a text" (p. 319). In adherence to Van Manen's (2014) thematic process of phenomenology, the researcher engaged in the various prescribed methods of "insightful invention, discovery, and disclosure" in the examination process (p. 320).

Three reading approaches were applied in Van Manen's (2014) process: the holistic reading approach, selective reading approach, and detailed reading approach. The holistic approach looks at the texts and derives meaning or themes from the whole. A simplified phase could be the result of examining a body of text in this method. The selective reading approach requires the researcher to extract phrases from the examined text to derive the theme. Finally, the detailed reading approach looks at each sentence of the whole, thereby breaking it into parts. These parts are reorganized and summarized into the theme. After gathering observational data in the various method described above, the researcher used two of Van Manen's (2014) thematic approaches to determine meaning and formalize themes into an insightful reflection on the lived experiences of the

phenomenon. The simplified process found in figure 4 was used to develop research

constructs from the observation notes.
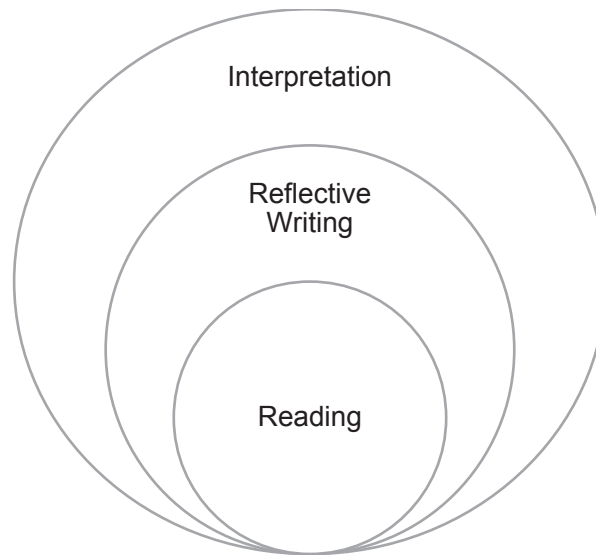
Figure 4. Hermeneutic Cycle. Adapted from Van Manen (2014).

Holistic Reading - According to Van Manen (2014), using the holistic approach

allows the researcher to engage in reading the text in its entirety. Once an understanding

of the text has been reached, the reader formulates a phrase that summarizes the core

meaning of the entire text.

Selective Reading - This process involves the reading and rereading of the text

and circling or highlighting key phrases that, as Van Manen (2014) states, seem

particularly essential or revealing of the nature of the text. Any statement or phrase that

seems to be overly evocative of the whole should be copied and saved for further deeper

analyzation.

Purposeful Memoing

Qualitative methods of research are strengthened by the researcher's dedication to

memoing (Maxwell, 2013). This is especially important to the phenomenological

method. The process requires the researcher to consistently engage in the text and memoing on the process to gain more depth on the subject matter. As Maxwell (2013) stated, "Memos are one of the most important techniques you have for developing your ideas" (p. 20). These daily memos serve as a means of constant engagement in the process and the information being gathered through the research study. Maxwell (2013) suggested one should consistently engage in reflection, analysis, and self-critique. Memos are an easy platform or mechanism to meet the suggestions put forth my Maxwell. As Howard and Barton (1989) stated, writing is thinking on paper. Putting thoughts onto paper for further examination is beneficial to the process research. If the researcher is successful in the writing phase of the phenomenological research, then as Van Manen says, "We may be able to say that the text speaks to us not unlike the way in which a work of art may speak to us even when it requires attentive interpretive effort" (2007, p.26). In the image displayed (see Table 2), the researcher has outlined further means by which he approached the data collection and analysis within the research.

Initially, as is required in the phenomenological process, the researcher sought to fully immerse himself in the process. Van Manen (2007) suggested giving one's self fully and completely to the process. For proper data analysis to occur, the researcher attempted to fully give himself over to surrounding himself with the vast amount of textual data. This engagement allowed for a smooth transition into the identification of constructs within the data and coding of the data collected. At that point in the process, the researcher allowed for a macro view of the data. Figuratively stepping back from the data and coding generated second-level constructs and themes in the abstraction stage. Further elaboration of themes took place in stage four once grouping of the sub-themes

into larger encompassing themes took place. Once those themes were finalized and solidified, the researcher engaged in (stage five) linking the themes evidenced with the themes collected in the literature review and reconstructing interpretations into stories. Finally, stage six was performed by critiquing the themes and communicating/reporting the final interpretations of the findings.

Table 2

Stages of Data Analysis (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007).

STAGE	TASKS
1. Immersion	• Observe, notetaking, interviews
	• Organization of text from data collection
	• Preliminary interpretation to inform the coding necessary
2. Understanding	• Identify constructs within data
	• Apply code across the collected data
3. Abstraction	• Identify second level constructs
	• Group second-tier themes
4. Synthesis and theme development	• Grouping sub-themes into themes
	• Further elaboration of themes
	• Comparing themes across groups
5. Illumination and illustration of phenomena	• Linking the literature to the themes identified
	• Reconstructing interpretations into stories
6. Integration and critique	• Critique of the themes by the researchers and externally reporting final interpretation of the research findings

Limitations

The phenomenological method relies heavily on researchers being attuned to the environment and observant of their place within the context of the experience (Van Manen, 2014). Hermeneutic phenomenology relies both on the accuracy of the

observation data and the researcher's ability to comb the text for relevant themes as they

present themselves (Kafle, 2011). The researcher sought to observe and record

interactions, experiences, and environments with clarity and attention to detail.

According to Patton (2002), limitations found within the qualitative model include

incomplete or inaccurate documents, distorted responses, and researcher bias. These were

addressed in the methodology of the research.

<center>*Validity Issues*</center>

Validity issues are inherent to the qualitative research process. Phenomenology

and phenomenological research require one of two processes. Husserl's method requires

"bracketing" as a means of adjusting for researcher bias; another option is

phenomenological research via Heidegger's process (Van Manen, 2014). Heidegger's

process, referred to as hermeneutic phenomenology, allows for researchers to

acknowledge their biases and work through them as observations are an integral part of

the interpretive process (Kafle, 2011). To reduce the validity issues of the data overall,

the researcher structured the process to allow for triangulation of data. Themes that are

constructed from the data were evidenced in all the various data collection methods.

Overall, the validity issues inherent to phenomenological research were addressed via the

determination of the quality of the researcher's ability to address the interpretive process.

As Van Manen asserts, "The validity of phenomenological study has to be sought in the

appraisal of the originality of insights and the soundness of the interpretive process"

(2014, p.348). By carefully adhering to Van Manen's (2014) hermeneutic process, the

researcher accounted for the following potential validity issues:

<center>64</center>

1. Researcher Bias: The teacher selected is a person the researcher worked with. However, the studied school had a staff of more than 150 teachers. The researcher saw and spoke with this teacher approximately two to three times a year. Usually the conversations were merely an exchange of pleasantries, although the researcher did think highly of this individual. The researcher admittedly had to work through his potential bias as this was part of the subject of the study. It was important to acknowledge any potential bias that could occur through the observations underwent some checks and balances due to the needed alignment of the data collected through the researcher's eyes and ears with the data collected from the teacher in his voice. However, while it is important to acknowledge these biases, Van Manen's (2014) process of phenomenology derived from Heidegger's process demands that the researcher as an observational instrument is inseparable from personal bias and should only embrace said bias through the research process.

2. Reactivity: As stated previously, the researcher sought to embed himself in the environment of the classroom. His desire was to become a fixture in the room and to have the students grow in their comfort level from day to day. However, there was always a possibility students were responding with answers and exhibiting behavior that they believed the researcher wanted to see and hear. Maxwell (2013) describes this effect as reactivity. This could also have been true for the teacher in the class. The researcher sought to move through the interviews that seemed to garner "canned responses" and "teacher speak" as those responses did little good for the overall quality of the data.

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After sufficient time was invested in the process, the researcher was confident

he obtained answers that spoke more to the core of the desired data.

Credibility

Credibility was established in multiple ways. Prolonged contact until data

saturation occurred was the first means by which this was accomplished. The

observation periods took place for a five-week timespan. Each daily observation

consisted of a 90-minute classroom period. Once the researcher saw the daily routine of

the classroom solidify with his continued presence in the classroom, and he performed

the stated interviews and observations, the data were more than sufficient to derive a

thick and rich analyzation of the teacher being observed and the classroom environment.

Member checking and peer review were also used to ensure credibility.

Transferability

Due to the nature of this study, there is some potential transferability, but at this

point, that is unknown to what degree. The act of engaging in phenomenology as a

research process is predicated on the desire to experience the essence of a circumstance

under specific conditions. However, as themes developed from the data analyzation stage

of research, the researcher's desire was that the characteristics of this successful

classroom be reproduced and implemented in other classroom environments. The

researcher also provided a vivid description of the observation site and detailed notes of

dialog generated with participants to enhance the possible transferability of the study.

Dependability

Dependability was established by triangulation of data. Cross checking of themes

was established across the data collection forms. Observation, participant interviews, and

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artifact documentation/evidence served as multiple points of data were analyzed for accuracy of the derived themes. The hermeneutic process was strengthened through daily systematic observation memoing. This served as another means of data checking. Daily and weekly member checking occurred as dialog transcripts were made available to participants to enhance accuracy of the data.

Ethical Issues

The researcher was unaware of how his research could have harmed the students or the teacher in this study. Students may have responded in less of an open manner in class for a few days, which could have potentially affected their experience. However, he was unaware of any way in which the observation periods or interviews could have negatively affected the students. It was possible the teacher in this study may have felt uncomfortable with the researcher's observations and notetaking, which could have led to diminished performance. Due to the sensitivity of including minors in the participant pool, informed consent of students was accounted for. The researcher applied for clearance to perform this research though the IRB and received approval (Appendix B). He also notified and requested permission from the school district and school principal. Permission was granted, and IRB guidelines met. All potential participants were informed about the intent to study the classroom dynamic, and full disclosure of the general nature of the observation and interview processes took place free of any potential deception. A question-and-answer session with participants took place prior to observation engagement to help the decision-making process for potential participants. After a week to allow for questioning and reflection, the participants were given the chance to decide if they agreed to participate.

The researcher established anonymity of the research site and participants by giving alias names using pseudo-codes (Office for Human Research Protections, 2010). The coded list helped to maintain participant anonymity. No student names were collected or retained. Print and digital records will only be available to this researcher and the dissertation committee.

To ethically obtain answers to the research questions, the researcher established a working research relationship with participants. This means the research itself was affected by the relationships established during data collection (Maxwell, 2013). The researcher sought to build trust as it empowers participants to actively engage in the project. Trust was foremost in the researcher's interactions, and without it, open communication would have been unobtainable.

Immersion in the classroom by the researcher also required awareness of Georgia's Code of Ethics (Georgia Department of Education, 2002). Being a certified teacher, the researcher was fully aware of the teacher code of ethics. He was aware that mandated reporting related to the welfare of children meant that he had to follow the mandated reporter law to protect the children of Georgia's schools. Furthermore, under Georgia Law, all educators are mandated reporters and thus are required to report any reasonable cause of abuse or neglect. If privacy was threatened due to issues related to the mandated reporter law, the researcher would not have continued with data collection with any participant.

Data Security

All data will be secured and maintained for five years. Students noted in the observations periods will remain anonymous. Students were identified within the

observation texts by "student" label only. Audio data from interviews were secured until

transcribed and destroyed according to IRB guidelines. All data that were cross checked

via peer review will only contain transcript data that are free of any personal or

descriptive participant information. Above all, research data security complied with

current Valdosta State University guidelines as it relates to human participants. A request

was submitted to and approved by the IRB board detailing data security prior to engaging

in the research data collection process. All requirements were accounted for and

complied with.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the characteristics and specific

interactions of the teacher-student relationship in the context of an identified, effective

Advanced Placement classroom taught by a highly effective teacher with a pass rate at or

above 85% over the past decade. Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenological research

design (Kafle, 2011) was used to guide understanding of the AP classroom teaching and

learning dynamics. Through careful engagement in the phenomenological research

process, the researcher sought to understand the essence of the teacher- student

relationship the AP classroom. Data were collected via detailed observation notes

gathered from full immersion in the AP classroom, teacher interviews, classroom

artifacts, and researcher memos. The researcher engaged in Van Manen's (2014)

hermeneutic cycle process and applied the principles of the holistic and selective reading

process to the data to identify and solidify themes from the information gathered.

Validity issues such as researcher bias and reactivity were addressed and accounted for.

Vivid descriptions of the research site and copious, rich observation notes were gathered

to assist with transferability. Dependability was established by triangulation of data. The researcher cross-checked the established themes across the data collection forms. Observation, participant interviews, and audio evidence served as multiple points of data that were analyzed for accuracy. Ethical issues of the research were addressed via clearance of the research project through an established, certified group of educators/staff of Valdosta State University. Also, detailed descriptions of this research process were submitted and approved by an IRB review board prior to the engagement of the research process. All potential data security issues were addressed at that time, and all Valdosta State University research guidelines were adhered to. If the researcher was successful, the results in this study may add to the body of knowledge on the positive teacher-student relationship and the teacher-student relationship within the context of a highly successful Advanced Placement classroom.

Chapter IV

FINDINGS

Despite the high costs to high schools and colleges in terms of human, financial, and time resources, many Advanced Placement courses continue to function with a failure rate of approximately 35% (College Board, 2016a). The researcher sought through this study to understand the characteristics and specific interactions of the teacher-student relationship in the context of an identified, effective Advanced Placement classroom taught by a highly effective teacher with a pass rate at or above 85% over the past decade. Two research questions guided the focus of the research:

RQ 1: What are the life and career experiences of a highly effective teacher in an identified Advanced Placement classroom with a pass rate at or above 85% over the past decade?

RQ 2: What are the characteristics of teacher-student relationships in an identified Advanced Placement classroom with a pass rate at or above 85% over the past decade? The researcher utilized Heidegger's (1988) hermeneutic phenomenology for the engagement in the initial observational process of the study. The researcher approached the study looking through the lens of observation grounded in the theoretical frameworks of Erikson's Socioemotional Theory, Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, and Deci and Ryan' s (2002) Relatedness component of their Self-Determination Theory. These theories tinted the lens and informed the observer's eye as he sought to fill in the gaps in the literature as they relate to teacher-student relationships in the AP classroom.

The researcher used Seidman's (2013) three-step interview process to gather direct data from the teacher in this study. Van Manen's phenomenological process was used for the examination, reflection, and aggregation of data from the classroom observation and individual interviews. Before discussing the findings of the study, the researcher will provide a brief narrative of the researcher as he is the main instrument in this study and his life, experiences, and background are a part of the study. The researcher will then provide a description of the teacher on which this study is based. The researcher has created a pseudonym for this individual and will refer to him as "Professor" from this point forward.

The Instrument of Observation

My name is Charles Grayson Day, Jr. I was born in the small Southeastern city of Brunswick, Georgia, on September 28, 1976. I am the youngest child and only boy born to my parents, Grayson and Patricia Day. I have two older sisters. The youngest is 10 years older than me, and the oldest is 16 years older. For most of my younger years, I felt as though I had multiple mother figures as both sisters cared for me like my mother. My parents both grew up in the Brunswick area. My father was born to a large family but one of meager beginnings. He is one of two siblings out of six who attended college. My mother is the middle child of three daughters. She, too, came from meager beginnings and did not attend college until much later in life after having children.

My father attended college at Georgia State University and worked in banking and finance. After several moves within the state from one branch to another, he was assigned the position of bank president at the State Bank of Kingsland in Kingsland, Georgia. My mother returned to school when I was a child and completed a degree in

primary school education. My sisters also pursued degrees in the field of education and taught primary school as well. Being steeped in a household of teachers, there was never a question that I, too, would pursue post-secondary education.

At an early age, my teachers noted my talent and predisposition for the arts. I was a good student but excelled most in the fine arts. I developed a passion for music early in life. I was often a part of school plays and participated in the drama department in high school, but the visual arts have always been where I excelled the most. It was in high school that I decided to combine the knowledge I had about teaching from my mother and siblings and my abilities in the visual arts to pursue a degree in art education.

After attending a junior college for a year, I transferred to the University of Georgia and completed my Bachelor of Science in Art Education. It was at the university where I met my future wife, Amanda. She majored in psychology but soon changed her degree path to become a teacher as well. Over the first half of my teaching career, I continued to seek higher education and have since completed my Master's and Specialist degrees in the educational field. It would be fair to say I have a greater appreciation for the teacher and the educational field than most, given I have been touched by the field in some form or another for the entirety of my life.

Throughout my teaching career, I have often thought of those teachers who have had the greatest impact on my life. There are days when I still identify specific characteristics about myself and my teaching that have been directly attributable to having been exposed to them in my life. I am also new to the field of teaching Advanced Placement classes in art. I have become curious to discover the connections some teachers have formed with their students and how those interactions may be alike or

different from the traditional education class. Understanding a highly successful teacher in this context has enhanced my own understanding of teaching in the AP classroom and provides great benefit to my future students.

The Focus (The Professor)

The Professor is a 35-year-old Caucasian male. He earned a bachelor's degree from Georgia Southern University and Master's and Specialist degrees from Nova Southeastern University. He is a self-described "happily married man," the father of two young daughters, and a 14-year veteran teacher in the South Georgia school. He speaks with authority both about his classroom and also the school at large. He has a clean, well-kept look to both his person and his clothing. He dresses in a modern fashion. He is not a teacher who wears a coat and tie; rather, he is what would be called dress-casual in his appearance. He appears to be physically fit and has engaged in cross-fit training. He typically wears khakis and a button up shirt with the sleeves rolled up.

The Professor spent his childhood moving frequently, as his father's occupation caused his family to move around the nation. He put down roots as much as he was able but became aware at a young age that all things are temporary. Eventually, he moved again due to his father's occupation. He spent a portion of his childhood growing up in Pennsylvania and New Jersey prior to his family's settling in Georgia for his high school years.

The Professor had a number of influential teachers over the years. His high school history teacher was one of the most important people of his early life. From the beginning of the course, the teacher challenged him to perform all the assigned readings and complete the homework assignments to the best of his ability. The Professor shared,

"He was at the front of the class, and he was like, 'If you aren't going to read the book, and you aren't going to try, then you're not going to get a good grade in this class.'" The Professor took on the challenge and "indeed did well on the tests and completed the class with an A." The Professor neatly captured the motivation he received from the history teacher in the following anecdote:

> He told me, "I just wanted to let you know, you've shown real improvement, and I just wanted to say good job." And it was just one of those atta-boy moments when you're like, allright, clearly I can do this. I wasn't one of the high flyers in his class. I was not outspoken in his class by any means, but for him to stop me before I was leaving to run off to fifth period to say, "I noticed you are doing better," and "I noticed you are trying now" meant a lot to me.

The Professor stated this acknowledgement resonated with him, and those words both affected him as a young student and as a teacher who also strives to encourage his students each day. It has become part of his philosophy of teaching.

The Professor has a strong belief in engaging his students and forming positive teacher-student relationships. This is in part due to the influence of his most influential teacher from his childhood. For the Professor, it is about connecting with the student as much as possible. He recounted an experience from his high school days:

> He (High School History Teacher) was pretty much all business, but every now and then he would share some of his life. I remember he would talk about when he was first voting and what a big deal that was for him and his family. And when he went off to college. Being (High School History Teacher) the first in his family to go off to college, which was for me, too. We had that in common. And

my parents didn't go to college, so that hit home a little bit and little stories like

that in class. I connected with him through that, which is why I try and tell as

many little personal stories as I can because it helps build that relationship. It

helps make economics at least a little more interesting for the kids.

This desire to engage students by sharing has not always been a part of the Professor's

philosophy of teaching. In his first year of teaching, the Professor stated that his delivery

was focused on fast-paced activity and pushing his classroom students. Little time or

desire was allotted for forming relationships with students. To the contrary, the Professor

stated that he was sure to emphasize a separation from his students as they were so close

to him in age at that point. He shared:

When first starting out, I'm like three years older, probably, than my classes. I

had to come off as an absolute jerk because there had to be a clear distinction that

I'm the person in charge. Even though we are close in age, there is a drastic

difference between me and you type thing. I think that I probably took that to an

extreme because my practicum teacher told me it's very easy to be a jerk and then

lighten up. It is impossible to be easy and then become a jerk.

This distance between him and his students has diminished over the years as he has now

made student-teacher connections and healthy relationships a strong element of his

teaching methodology.

The Professor's method of teaching is rooted in maintaining routine regardless of

daily content. It is not that the Professor does not allow for reactionary teaching as new

and unexpected questions arise; rather, the Professor builds time for these occurrences

within the routine and structure of the day. His classroom days are mostly formulaic:

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previous day's homework review, classroom concept review, notes/lecture for new material, homework introduction, and reviewing problems from new information delivered in lecture. Students seemed to appreciate the structure, and it was easy as an observer to pick up the flow of the classroom from activity to activity. This structure was noted in the daily observations. Students followed the flow of class and transitioned well from activity to activity. Overall, the Professor conducted an orderly and efficient classroom environment.

Setting of Observation

I observed the Professor's AP classroom approximately 20 times over a month to gain some insights into his relationships with students. In this section, I provide a detailed description of the classroom where the observations occurred. The classroom setting was the same for the entire observation period. The rectangular classroom consisted of four rows of chairs with five chairs in each. A standard dry erase board hung at the front and back of the room, and there was a Smartboard at the front of the room. The Professor's desk was positioned in the front right of the room on the wall opposite the entry door. Two windows on the same wall as the Professor's desk provided ample light into the classroom. Through these windows, I saw a grassy area between two hallways of the school. The walls of the room were decorated with a few informative posters and school maps. The school's student expectation statement and a school calendar hung in the room. Other than a few visuals, the classroom décor could best be described as Spartan and streamlined. I determined there were enough visuals to inform the classroom participant but not so many to become distracting or disruptive. Evidence of this can be found in the artifact visuals of the classroom environment. I sat in the same

chair each day in the first row closest to the door in the back seat of the row. This

location allowed me a completely unobstructed view of the rest of the classroom.

There were 15 high school students in the classroom under observation. The

student ages ranged from approximately 15 to 18. There were nine females and six males

in the classroom. Eleven of the students were Caucasian, two African American, one

Hispanic, and one Asian. These race designations are based on school records made

available through the classroom teacher.

Observation Data

The researcher has included five examples out of the 20 observation days in the

following section. This was done to provide examples of the level of observation

descriptions performed in the research. By doing so, the researcher also grants the reader

the context of the reference notes found elsewhere in the research. These examples also

provide many of the interactions that exemplify the characteristics that were the focus of

the study. The five examples are as follows:

Observation One

This was the first of the observation days when the researcher began physically

capturing observation notes. This was also the first captured data related to the

Professor's narrative skills or storytelling. This day began like most in that the Professor

displayed a positive attitude. He smiled and welcomed students at the door as they

entered. When the bell rang, the Professor entered the classroom with a cheery "Good

morning!" The class responded with various greetings." The Professor began the lecture

with an icebreaker in the form of a story about his friend's driving from Chicago to

Statesboro to see a college game. The Professor stated that his buddy worked for a law

firm and showed up at the game in an "old beat up Civic." The car was "worn out and dirty, just clunking along. This was not the car of a successful young lawyer at a big firm," the Professor stated. After some discussion, it was revealed that it was all he could afford. His friend described the firm that he worked at and the other people at his same level in the firm. He stated that they "drove fancy expensive cars and owned really nice apartments." He stated that it turned out that the law firm was cutting costs by hiring newly graduated lawyers. After the Professor asked about the application process, it turned out that his friend had thrown out a salary number during the interview, and the firm agreed to it. His friend thought he was being reasonable, but he was actually completely undervaluing himself. After taking the Professor's advice, he went back and asked for a substantial raise and got it. The Professor used the personal story to draw his students in, and they seemed very interested in the narrative. As the researcher looked around the room, the researcher saw the class of students sitting up attentively, with some nodding as the story was being told.

A young female student appeared to be losing focus, and the Professor tapped her desk and asked, "Do you think the salary my friend agreed to was a lot of money?" She nodded in agreement, then he told her how much more he was getting paid since the renegotiation. She seemed very surprised. He tied that to her interest by saying, "And that's why you have to pay attention to what's going on. My friend did not know what he did not know, so he never knew to ask for more! And it cost him a lot of money."

He continued the story. "So, my friend called me in the middle of the night to let me know about getting the raise, and he was completely still in the college, single-man life. Here I am: my wife and I had just had a baby, and we were sleeping when he called,

like normal people do at that hour. It was a bit awkward." The students laughed as the Professor gestured and nodded his head as if he were being woken from sleep. "But, anyway, this is why you want to do your homework before you go into an interview. Use the internet to gather information on the average starting salaries and get information on the job requirements and demands before you go into the interview." This was a well-used touch of humor to drive the point home with his students.

The Professor then moved on to a microeconomic term: Resource Immobility. The Professor talked about the potential to "paint oneself in a corner." A male student did not understand that analogy, and the teacher physically walked the room and demonstrated the issue. Doing so allowed the students to see and imagine how painting one's self in a corner would look. As he backed down the row of desks, he pantomimed the swinging and brushing with an imaginary paintbrush on the floor until he reached the corner of the room. "See, I've painted myself into a corner! Not a good place to be!" The male student raised his head and nodded in visual agreement with the teacher. This appeared to be a visual acknowledgment of his reaching an understanding. He connected this with the job field and occupational training. The Professor emphasized the need for students to develop a knowledge base on occupations from all over: "Open yourself to other destinations."

The Professor turned back to the core focus of the day and discussed market failures and externalities - negative and positive. He offered another story of his days at school and the college parties he used to attend. He told the students about everyone's drinking lots of "soda" and getting all "caffeinated up." The students laughed at this notion as it was clear the Professor was referencing alcohol and people becoming

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intoxicated. This veil of wordsmithing seemed to only enrich the story for the students.

They smiled and laughed as they enjoyed the playfulness of the changes to the story to

make it appropriate for a high school lesson. The Professor stated that the party got too

loud, and the people down the street heard the noise from all the kids pumped up and

excited on the soda and caffeine. This loud disturbance became a negative externality.

This story was extremely humorous, and the class seemed to get the concept readily, so

much so that a few students volunteered brief scenarios that were much like the

Professor's story. In this way, they appeared to recognize the concept, internalized it, and

synergized new meaning and stories from it. This indicated depth and complexity of

understanding by the students. The Professor shared a story of "Hotdog Joe" from his

college days. Hotdog Joe was a street hotdog vendor who would set up his cart at the exit

area of the library. The Professor said he and his buddies used to go to the library, and

each night as they left they were hungry, so they stopped at Hotdog Joe's stand. Joe was

smart enough to select a good area to place his stand to capitalize on the foot traffic.

Most important to the day's lesson, Joe had nothing to do with the college or the library.

He had only the forethought to focus his efforts in a highly-trafficked area devoid of any

other major food sources. While he had no connection to the school, he financially

benefited from the existence of both the library and the college. His business received

the benefit of a positive externality.

The Professor used the "call back" method. For example, "Here we have XYZ

and that does this, and what do we call that?" This seemed to keep students engaged and

listening as he did this type of call back questioning throughout the lecture experience.

Students displayed active engagement by verbally responding and affirming understanding.

The topics of taxes and government are directly connected with these students' lives, and the Professor used numerous methods to make that connection apparent to his students. He connected this to local federal impact forms that the teachers at the school were tasked with collecting from students. He informed the students about the need for federal impact funding and the importance of returning the forms. The Professor assigned homework in the form of a take home worksheet stack.

The researcher noticed that the Professor stayed on the move for almost the entirety of the class period. He moved from Smartboard to the students' desks, around the class while he lectured, and then back to the board to emphasize points as he was making them.

Observation Two

This observation was shared as it contains data that relate to the Professor's supportive nature in the classroom, his use of current events in which students are invested, and his references to stories shared on previous observation days used to encourage student recollection of the subject matter.

The Professor entered the class with a smile on his face and welcomed the class with a "good morning!" The class responded with a very vocal, "Good morning!" The Professor began the day by going over the past day's homework assignment. It was a multipage packet that the students had to take home covering the information shared on the prior day. The Professor went over each question and had a different student offer the answer for each item.

A few students were unaware of the correct answer, and the Professor gave them time to answer and look at notes as needed. If they could not reach the correct answer, then he took time to explain it. An example of this was when an African American female student failed to give a correct answer, the Professor gave her a mental cue by reminding her of the prior day's lesson, and she remembered the account. The researcher observed her as her eyes looked up, and she displayed the characteristics of a person trying to recall a memory. After verbal prompting by the Professor, she blinked and nodded then stated, "Oh yes! I remember that!" She proceeded to give the correct answer.

After completing the review, the Professor gave a verbal pop quiz from the notes. He threw questions at the students one at a time and moved around the entire class. He accentuated positives on student responses. When they answered correctly, he offered them positive feedback: "Great," "Absolutely." But even when students had the wrong answer, he took a minute and talked them through the answer. The students were allowed a "safe place" in the exchange to reach the answer without judgment. In the event that the answers were not coming to the student, then other students offered help and threw in words or ideas to trigger a memory.

The Professor referred to the "Hotdog Joe" story from the days before in the midst of the review. This was a good memory tool as the kids remembered the story. It was a negative externality, and a student who had a problem remembering the term was able to recall the correct answer. There were numerous times within the review when he reflected on or reverted back to stories he had shared, and the students seemed to connect easily with the personal stories that he related.

The Professor also referenced a current event with a Microsoft merger that was in the news at the time. Students were aware of this current event, and he tied it to the topics in the lesson. He posed a question on mergers, and one student started the answer, and another helped to finish it. The learning environment was very relaxed and supportive. Ideas and input were welcomed, and students' sharing input was welcomed. In a show of support, students helped each other if anyone was struggling. The Professor used humor and jokes to keep students engaged in the lesson. Sometimes it was the use of funny references to current culture or making sarcastic comments throughout his interactions. The tone was playfully sarcastic but not malicious in any way.

The Professor made a joke about Baby Boomers and how that related to social security. The students seemed interested in how social security works, and a spinoff discussion occurred. The Professor allowed for extended topic discussions at times as students seemed to draw interest in the class in general once they were allowed to explore the topics that interested them in particular. One Caucasian female expressed concern over a topic, and she stated that the concept was too hard. The Professor did not let this go unanswered. He told the young lady, "This content is hard." He admitted she was right and added, "You are a very intelligent young lady, and you can and will get the concepts. You are plenty smart enough." The student visually changed her body positioning. She was slightly slumped over as she said that. After the Professor's response, she seemed to straighten her back, and her chin rose. She sat up in her chair and appeared to be engaged with new vigor. The Professor's words of encouragement resulted in a physical change in the student's attitude toward the content.

A Caucasian male asked to go to the restroom, and the Professor made a joke

about him leaving during the hard content. "Oh, so now you need to leave the class? When it's getting tough!" The student laughed and said, "No, I swear I need to go!" The students laughed at the joke, and the Professor signed his pass.

The Professor turned the focus to GDP and discussed the current and normal status. He asked the students to think about their grandparents talking about "how you could buy all types of stuff for very little money. You guys have heard this I know. I remember my grandparents saying when they were my age, we could get a loaf of bread for a quarter." This became a discussion point for a while as students talked about different times they had this type of discussion with family members. The Professor continuously engaged different students in the discussion and looped those who had not offered any stories into the discussion. He said to a student who seemed to be drifting, "What do you think about that?" This pulled those students who were losing interest back to the group discussion.

The Professor talked about the Roaring '20s and the Great Depression, and connected this to the latest related event: the internet boom and the recent recession. The Professor then introduced a short video he had planned that succinctly described the content with a number of quality visual representations. This offered a change of pace, and the students seemed to enjoy the transition over to the video from the daily discussion mode of delivery. This was a very educational video with lots of facts on the subject matter. After the film, the Professor reviewed the content of the video. He was open to answer any questions students had on the subjects. The Professor was constantly rotating around the class and tried to stay visually moving throughout the period. This seemed to help keep students engaged due to his proximity.

A quick quiz was given after the discussion and video. The students seemed very comfortable when the teacher directed them to get out a half sheet of paper for a quiz. The Professor then engaged in what he called the "Trashcan Game." Students shot for the trash can and received points based on a combination of shooting the basket and answering questions. They played against their teacher, aiming to get extra points as a class for the upcoming test. The students were very enthusiastic about this game. They were all smiles and engaged in movement while waiting for their opportunity to go next. They gathered in the middle of the class. Many of the students stood or sat on desks. They cheered and clapped for each other, and many became very competitive. There was even a bit of trash talking and poking at each other in a playful manner. The usage of this game was very engaging and took up the remainder of the class period. Students engaged with and participated in the activity.

Overall, The Professor engaged in positive communication that was supportive of students. Encouragement was freely given to students who displayed a need for reassurance. The Professor's references to previous content related stories allowed students to easily recall previous lessons.

Observation Three

Observation three is included to provide examples of the Professor's efforts to motivate and cultivate positive and supportive interactions to increase student engagement and productivity in the classroom atmosphere. He created an environment in which imperfection was tolerated. The Professor encouraged students' input when he thanked a student for correcting something he mistakenly omitted from a classroom

visual. This action is another example of the Professor's making students feel as if they were in a safe and welcoming atmosphere.

The Professor began class by checking notes and vocabulary from the homework they did the night before. He called on individuals to answer questions from the worksheets. The Professor offered many positive affirmations as he went through the assignment with students. "Good!" "Right!" "That's right!" All participating students received positive verbal responses from the Professor. Students responded with smiles and nods, showing their appreciation.

After completing the review of the worksheet, the Professor asked students to get out a half sheet of paper. He then instructed them to draw the business cycle, with details including the economic indicators taught to them on the prior day. The Professor made students aware of the problems that exist at the top and bottom of the cycle by motioning with his hands. He did this just before allowing students to draw their cycles on the half sheet of paper. This was a visual prompting and memory jogger for them to recall the flow of the cycle.

After allowing students ample time to complete the assignment, he asked them to "check with a neighbor" to see if they had the same information on their business cycle drawings. The Professor then drew his own visual of the cycle on the Smartboard. An interesting event happened in the midst of the review. A Caucasian male noticed something missing from the visual and mentioned it to his teacher. The Professor was very welcoming to the offering of the missing information.   He replied, "You are absolutely right! Let's add that in here!" He welcomed the correction and thereby created a community of learners. He gave the student the same positive response that he

expected from his students when he corrected them. This was a passive way of modeling desired behavior. The "Golden Rule" of doing to others as one would have them do to one's self was respected in the Professor's classroom. He wanted his students to be able to take criticism, and he modeled the same.

The Professor then went over the details of inflation and how it follows spending. He pointed it out on the board and made a humorous statement about "hills not mountains" and pointed to his visual. The Professor also made a joke about "contraction and can't vs. won't." This reference was picked up by some, and a student stated that he would remember that because of how it was presented. The Professor then talked about the unemployment rate and the ins and outs of the unemployment rate. He made a reference to the fact that the unemployment rate does not mean fewer people are unemployed.

The Professor went to great lengths to ensure all students were engaged in the lesson. At one point, a student appeared to nod off, and The Professor checked in with the student by calling the student's name "You awake back there? Great! OK, let's look at this."

The Professor got a number of questions from students, and he answered them with positive responses. He did not move on until the students seemed happy with the response and comfortable with their knowledge. Another student looked as though she was drifting, and The Professor must have noticed it. He asked "Are you following us?" The student sat up and said, "Yes, sir." "Fantastic!" the Professor replied.

A topic came up on the use of kiosks and how this was affecting the job market. The Professor stated that robots and robotic machines will replace many of the lower

wage jobs over time. Students became very interested in this concept and named a few examples quickly. One student stated that bank tellers would be one. Another talked about McDonald's and its use of kiosks locally. Another talked about how many self-serve checkout stations were at the local Walmart. The conversation turned to job requirements and schools. Ivy league schools in particular and their relation to job training and education were brought up. The Professor used humor and joked about the job field just "clamoring over him as a big deal Georgia Southern graduate." Students laughed and carried on about this for a few minutes joking and talking.

The Professor then moved on to cyclical employment. He talked about education and how locally the school system had cut the fine arts field when the economy soured. He discussed how the art teachers were kept on if they acclimated to new work positions and earned re-certifications in other fields so they could remain employed. He stated that once the economy improved then the jobs began to open back up. The students became very engrossed in this, and many expressed concern over not having art and music in the lower grades in their school system. This was a discussion to explain why cuts sometimes occur in organizations and where they come from. The relevance to the students' lives made it a topic they connected to. The Professor then assigned the students to represent each phase of unemployment using their own visuals. The drawings could use no words, only visual representations. He was including some art with this project and allowed students to access other areas of the mind to learn and incorporate the material. The Professor then did a walk by on each student, checking in on their work. He offered to help a couple of them and even gave some ideas to add to make it work visually.   The Professor encouraged them as he walked by and give verbal praise and

pats on the back. This assignment continued until the end of the daily observation period.

This observation period was another time when the Professor displayed his positive demeanor, and his students responded with positivity as well. He consistently projected this positivity in his actions and continually modeled this positive behavior for his students. His lecture style allowed students' interaction and input. His students seemed to behave as if they were in a safe atmosphere and voluntarily shared input during the discussions on the subject matter.

Observation Four

This observation highlighted the Professor's attributes of caring and nurturing. I was particularly intrigued by the way he steered students through challenging tasks without making them overly apprehensive. This was particularly evident when he calmly engaged them and discussed the upcoming test.

The Professor began class with his usual jovial "Good morning!" He seemed extremely upbeat as he entered the room. He was casually dressed in tennis shoes. He appeared to have more bounce in his step. The Professor grabbed his gradebook and began moving from desk to desk and checked to see if students had completed the homework assignment. He made an effort to connect with individual students as he moved through the classroom. "Good morning, Sherry. How are we doing today? Do you have your assignment? Good!" He acknowledged them all. He did not appear to be checking for accuracy at this time, only to see if the assignment had been completed.

He then went about the review that he performed almost daily and had students give the answers to each question. He appeared to seek out answers from various students and did not allow one or two to dominate the question-and-answer session. As

usual, he showered his students with positive feedback. To those who seemed unsure of their answers, he said, "OK if you don't have this one, I'll come back to you on another."

Each student received words of encouragement: "Great! Right! Correct!" But when someone got it wrong, even then he kept his voice and tone very positive. "OK, that's close, but what about . . ." and "No, but I can see why you would think that…."

The Professor engaged in constant positive response with all his students. He reinforced content learning by writing the correct answers on the Smartboard as the lesson progressed, saving the review each day. He also maintained records of all work on a webpage the students could access.

The Professor then had students get out a half sheet of paper to work out the math on some unemployment numbers. He made a joke about unemployment: "Unemployment for some is like me and X and Y. I'm in between . . . jobs! Hahaha! Spatial jokes, people!" Students laughed at the dry humor.

Again, the teacher had students use the half sheet to draw the business cycle to check their understanding and if they carried the concept through from previous lessons. As he walked around the classroom, he paused to check in with a student who had missed several lessons. She appeared to be struggling with the drawing of the diagram and was sitting hunched over with her head in her hand, looking down at the almost blank sheet of paper. The Professor asked if she felt comfortable with what they were reviewing and if she had time to look at the notes. He crouched down and took a knee beside her desk while he talked in a low voice. He reassured her: "Let me know when you can stay after school so I can review the notes with you. Just let me know. I don't want you taking a

test without us doing so." She smiled, nodded her head, and promised to stay after the following week.

The Professor continuously engaged students by name and very few times resorted to calling attention by referring to the whole class. He also stayed on the go and moved fluidly around the class almost constantly. Changing gears, the Professor was moving from delivery method to delivery method multiple times in a given class. This seemed to keep students engaged in the lesson. The Professor made another joke about "Walkmans." A Caucasian female asked what that was. The Professor said, "Great! Thanks for making me feel *really* old! You don't even know what a Walkman is?"

The Professor explained to the student what it was, and the class realized that it was a small, portable tape player and likened it to an MP3 player. The Professor then returned to the core of the lesson. After lecturing for a few minutes on a new topic, he asked if anyone had any questions or if they all understood.

A student loudly said, "Excuse me," and paused to look at the board. The Professor allowed the young Caucasian lady a moment to construct the question in her mind. She then asked him to go back and review the last economic process again. He took the time to completely start over the introduction of that topic so the student was comfortable moving forward.

The last topic of the day was related to creeping inflation. The teacher physically "creeped" around while talking about it, giving them a visual physical demonstration of the term. The students liked the animation of the movement, and they smiled. A few chuckled at him. After introducing the topic and illustrating it, the Professor used the remaining class time to review a related YouTube video that covered the topic.

The Professor displayed his caring nature with the one-on-one interaction he had with the young lady who was having difficulty on this day. It was interesting to view not only the teacher-student direct interaction but to also see the surrounding students observe the Professor and the struggling student interacting. As the Professor stood and walked away, the young lady to the left of the struggling student reached out and tapped the other girl on the arm. She told her she had the notes and offered to let her borrow them to study. I could not help but believe that the Professor's modeling of this caring supportive nature was being echoed in his students' behaviors. The Professor reached out and offered help, and this was mirrored in his student in much the same way.

Observation Five

The Professor entered class laughing as he was just talking to another teacher in the hallway. He welcomed everyone to the class with a very energetic "good morning!" He almost had a hop in his step as he entered. "Hope you all are great today!" The students were engrossed in discussing a fight that had occurred elsewhere on campus. Some of the students saw it and talked about how one of the students was defending himself. They seemed concerned that the student would receive the same punishment as if he started the fight. The fairness of the potential punishment was the component of the discussion that students chimed in on the most. One student complained, "If you are standing there, and you get hit, and all you do is defend yourself, you get suspended too!" Other students also lamented this was not fair and stated their feelings. The Professor listened to the discussion for a few minutes and got their accounts of the fight. Instead of shutting the discussion down, he acknowledged their concerns before directing them to get their homework out.

He did a quick circle around the room and checked off the homework, as he did most days. The Professor then went over the homework as a class. He read and answered each question, and took questions the students posed as he went through the work. He checked in with them before moving forward by asking if they understood why the answer was what it was. The Professor took time to explore topics as they naturally arose from the question-and-answer review format of the class.

After he completed the review and offered the answers, he did a quick round of throwing questions at the students. He was very consistent with student praise on their correct answers and was understanding to those who were incorrect. He attempted to walk those students through the thought process to reach another answer. He used prompts to get them to recall the content. He usually drew a reference to one of the stories he used to teach the subject. Students tended to recall the topics readily once he introduced the reference to his story.

After the review, the Professor tested students by having them draw the business cycle again. Prior to beginning the practice test, he had them gather calculators and paper. He paced around the room and monitored students during the test time. After sufficient time elapsed, he had students check with neighbors and compare their drawings via peer review. He closed the teaching segment of the business cycle by referencing information on the Smartboard to wrap up the information and shift to another topic. As he did so, he continuously called on students to offer input on the cycle status and the labeling of the cycle.

The Professor expected students to use previously taught and known information to discover new knowledge (i.e. take this knowledge and info and apply it to x,y,z). He

had students write down seven types of unemployment from the previous day's drawing that had been created for the lesson. Both text and visuals were acceptable for them to put on their paper. One of the students recognized the format of the day's lesson and said, "Hey, that means 'Trashket ball' is today!"

The Professor smiled and then nodded. Expressions of joy reverberated throughout the room. The Professor monitored the assignment and his students by walking around the room until they completed the assignment. He quickly went over the test information as a class. As needed, he leaned over students and pointed out details in their notes if he saw something they needed to reference in their discussion or for when they studied at home.

The Professor turned the discussion to inflation and reinforced with references to his previous personal stories. Students remembered the stories, and many of them chimed in with the relationship of the stories to the economic terms. After the review, the Professor handed out a practice multiple choice test. He listed the questions that they did not have to do. "See, the Professor isn't the devil people!" he said, exonerating himself, and some students laughed. He also reminded them that the practice tests, test dates, and notes were all available on the Google classroom. One student seemed very relieved and said, "Thanks, Professor!" The Professor reminded them that they had been in class for 10 weeks and needed to constantly be gathering their notes and preparing for their test. A student seemed shocked and said, "No way!" "Yes, look at the calendar," the Professor said and pulled the calendar up on the Smartboard.

Students began talking about passing the class and doing well on their grades. One of the students declared that he just did his work and listened to the lectures, and he

was passing just fine. "It's easy if you do," he declared. The professor had a student who was expressing some concern over whether or not to take the test. She had been absent a number of days. The Professor instructed her to wait and take the test after school in order to maximize her study time.

After time was allotted for the classwork, the teacher engaged the students in the "Trashket Ball" game. The students competed using the Smartboard as time keeper to answer quiz questions for points. The game continued until the bell rang. The Professor dismissed the students with a reminder for them to do their homework and "have a great day!"

This observation day included a number of the outstanding characteristics of the Professor's class. There was another instance of the Professor's referencing a story and connecting it to content. There was more of the positivity that was consistent over the prior days of observation. The Professor allowed students to talk about the fight, something that was concerning them, and allowed them to air their concerns in a safe, accepting, and supportive atmosphere. The Professor allowed the students to work through their concerns, and once they felt they had had their voices, they relinquished the topic and voluntarily turned to the classroom topics/activities of the day. He was sensitive to the students' emotional needs and learning needs. He demonstrated this in the way he handled the fight discussion. The situation was weighing heavily on students' minds, and he was sensitive to their need to talk it out so that they could move forward with the classroom work. His mission goes beyond the role of just the teacher as he takes on the mantle of "pastor," at times offering them reassurance on matters outside the formal domain of his classroom.

Chapter V

DISSCUSSION OF THEMES

Regardless of the extensive investment by high schools and colleges in terms of

human, financial, and time resources, many Advanced Placement courses continue to

function with a failure rate of approximately 35% (College Board, 2016a). This research

study was conducted in order to gain an understanding of the characteristics and specific

interactions of the teacher-student relationship in the context of an identified, effective

Advanced Placement classroom taught by a highly effective teacher with a pass rate at or

above 85% over the past decade. In this chapter, I will explore the themes that emerged

through the phenomenological process.

From the aggregation of copious observational notes (examples found above) and

interview text gathered via Seidman's (2013) process, the researcher began the

hermeneutic cycle of reading, reflective writing, and interpretation. Using Van Manen's

(2014) design, the researcher engaged in both a holistic reading and then a selective

reading process. From these processes, the researcher developed the following analytical

themes to characterize the relationship between the teacher and his students, as well as

specific interactions of the teacher-student relationship in an identified effective

Advanced Placement classroom taught by a highly effective teacher.

Upon the initial reading of the gathered text, the researcher looked for specific

teacher characteristics and teacher-student interactions. Using the analytical parameters

established by Burleson and Samter (1990), the researcher identified affectively oriented skills and interactional skills associated with the teacher-student relationship. Skills such as comforting, ego support, conflict management, and regulation are categorized as affectively oriented skills. The interactional skills category included conversational, persuasive, referential, and narrative skills. As other teacher characteristics emerged which did not align with Bureleson and Samter's (1990) "Big Eight," these were recorded and given additional attention as they may be outliers (See Table 2).

After examining the data for affectively and interactional skills, the researcher sought to further categorize the nature of the interactions between those that are associated with the Professor and those that were present within the classroom by virtue of the teacher-student interaction. The categories are supported in Table 3 with statements of evidence drawn from the data. The teacher-student interaction category is a product of the circumstances in the classroom and descriptive of said classroom simultaneously. Within these categories are sub categories which are more fully explored in the section following the theme matrix.

Table 3

Teacher Characteristics ("Big Eight" and Emergent) - Characteristics From Coded Observations

Characteristic (BE= Big Eight or E= Emergent)	Affectively Oriented = (A) or Interactional Skill = (I)	Lack of Evidence in Data Evidenced in Data	Evidenced in Data	Multiple Instances
Comforting (BE)	A			X
Ego Support (BE)	A			X
Conflict Management (BE)	A	X		
Regulation (BE)	A	X		
Conversational (BE)	I		X	
Persuasive (BE)	I		X	
Referential (BE)	I		X	
Narrative (BE)	I			X
Caring (E)	NA			X
Empathetic (E)	NA			X
Morally Motivated/ Sensitivity (E)	NA			X

Note: These themes are extracts which emerged from the examination of the data collected in the study and reference Big Eight, Burleson and Samter (1990).

Table 4

Theme Matrix

Categories of Investigation Statement/Data	Extracted Theme Category	Theme Support
Teacher Characteristics	Comforting	The Professor exhibited numerous occasions when he made students feel better about themselves or their situations.
	Ego Support	The Professor constantly engaged in encouragement for his students and supported their learning. Students displayed supportive natures for one another and toward teacher.
	Narrative Skill	The teacher has advanced orating and storytelling skills that engaged students in learning.
	Caring	The Professor presented in a very caring manner. The Teacher felt compelled to show a sense of caring, and this was evident in his teaching.
	Empathetic	The Professor engaged in teen speak and referenced current events, memes, music, and popular culture themes as a means of connecting to students.
	Morally Motivated/Sensitivity	The Professor had a desire to improve the world around him in some capacity.
Teacher-Student Interactions	Positive	The Professor presented as very upbeat and engaged in positive interactions with students. Students

reciprocated the positive engagement.

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Note: These themes are extracts which emerged from the examination of the data collected in the study identified within *Table 3*.

Teacher Characteristics: Comforting

There are a number of different traits/behaviors/actions used by successful teachers to make an impact and gain the affection and respect of students, fellow teachers, and administration. One way to do that is by providing a learning environment where all students feel safe and loved (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). In the following theme, I focus on one teacher's display of effective and efficient classroom management which included classroom routines that promoted comfort, order, and appropriate student behaviors. By focusing on the Professor's comforting nature and positive learning environment, I am able to highlight the teacher's ability to balance his efforts to get to know and connect with each student in his classroom. He achieved this by always calling them by their names and striving to understand what they needed to succeed in school. However, he does so without the assumption that being kind and respectful to students is enough to bolster achievement. In this discussion, I will also focus on the teacher's dual classroom goals to hold students to appropriately high standards of academic performance and to offer students an opportunity for an emotional connection to their teacher, their fellow students, and the school.

The teacher in this study made sustained efforts to create a learning environment characterized with love and comfort for his students. The Professor perceived teaching as a means by which he could connect with students through positive learning environments

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and foster greater self-confidence, thereby increasing their abilities to learn (Muller et al., 1999; Wentzel, 2003). He shared:

> For a lot of these kids in our school environment, I'm not sure how their middle school and elementary school went. But a lot of these kids come in already beaten down. Many are thinking they are just going to fail this class like they have other classes. And I try and shake them away from that. I have to create a place where they are comfortable in their abilities so they can allow themselves the ability to learn.

This idea was confirmed by Jones (2005) who found comforting skills reflect the ability to make others who are depressed or sad feel better, and they differ from ego support as they concern the ability to make others feel good about themselves. From the observation periods, the researcher observed multiple instances when the Professor engaged in actions which denoted a strong sense of being comforting. On more than one occasion, the Professor stopped and individually engaged students about their assignments. As he rotated around the room, it appeared he was checking in with them and gauging their responses. It was not uncommon to see him catch the eye of a student across the room, and it was observable that his countenance changed if the student looked in distress or perplexed. He addressed the student sometimes from a distance to engage them and check in. If he appeared to be unconvinced that the student was well or on track, or he was satisfied with their level of understanding, he moved into close proximity and crouched down to their eye levels while speaking to them at their desks.

This engagement in comforting is one of the strong, foundational components of the Professor's teaching methodology. The Professor engaged students with the content

of the class but was attentive to students' emotional, physical, and social well-beings. This was a compelling aspect of the Professor's interactions. He displayed a heightened awareness to his students' feelings and modified his daily activities and schedule to address issues as they presented themselves. The following description captured one compelling classroom encounter:

> It became evident in the review with the questions being thrown at students that one young lady was completely out of tune with the topic. This young lady had been absent numerous times in the classes that I observed. After switching to examining the topic of trade barriers, he moved around the class until he came to her. He crouched beside her and asked what in particular she was having difficulty with. He took the time to help her get caught up and reassured her she could stay after school to get more help as needed. She appeared frustrated, but his words seemed to console her. He spent a few more minutes revisiting the missed topics with her before proceeding to the next student.

More evidence was found on other days of the observation period. The researcher noted an interaction in which a young lady expressed her concern over the difficulty of the lesson, and she stated the information was too difficult for her to comprehend and master. The Professor was quick to remind her that though the information was difficult, she was smart and that she could and would get the concepts. He encouraged her: "You are a very intelligent young lady, and you will get the concepts." The researcher noted that this interaction elicited a physical reaction in the young lady's appearance. The following description captures the physical effects of the interaction:

She was slightly slumped over as she said that. After the Professor's response, she seemed to straighten her back, and her chin rose. She sat up in her chair and appeared to be engaged with new vigor. The Professor's words of encouragement resulted in a physical change in the student's attitude toward the content.

Occasion after occasion, the Professor displayed this comforting nature that ranks highly on Burleson and Samter's (1990) "Big Eight." This adherence to comforting students could serve to build a foundation of trust between the Professor and his students that led to greater student engagement in the course and coursework. On a human level, the investment of the time required to comfort a student can deliver great dividends to the classroom teacher in the form of a positive learning atmosphere.

Teacher Characteristic: Ego Support

In the following section, I focused on the notion of ego support as a relational building process as understood from the perspective of the teacher. The teacher's vantage point was experiential, and his understanding process may have differed from the processes understood from the philosophy-based vantage point of educationalists. By focusing on ego support as a process, the researcher was able to highlight ongoing problems and challenges educators are faced with. Upon the initial reading of the collected data, the researcher noted the multiple references to the Professor's engaging in ego supportive praise. Whether it was a pat on the back, a "good job," or a whisper of praise, the Professor presented numerous occasions when he sought to boost student egos. Burleson and Samter (1990) referred to this as ego support. Burleson and Samter (1990) organized their identified communication skills into two categories. Ego support was a part of the "affectively oriented" category of communication skills also included

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comforting, regulative behavior, and conflict management. Non-affectively oriented skills included persuasion, narrative, referential, and conversational abilities.

The Professor invested a great deal of time in verbal praises for his students and acknowledging their success, effort, and improvements. The Professor stated there was a need to continuously try to show his students he was there to support them and that he believed in them. This teaching attribute is aligned with the Hawk et al. (2002) study. Hawk et al. (2002) identified two of the strongest indicators of effective teacher-student interactions as students' need to know that teachers believed in their abilities and teachers' use of additional praise as motivation. Both of these identifiers are directly related to ego support. Furthermore, a study conducted by Frymier and Houser (2000) cited ego support as the second highest-ranked identifier of beneficial teacher-student relationships. Whether knowledge of this need for ego support was philosophically or experientially learned by the Professor was unknown. However, the professor did state it was especially important in his class to use supportive language with students as many of them struggled with the level of difficulty. He stated:

> Economics is hard. I know a bunch of times, I'll stop somebody, and I'm like,
> "Hey, good job on that test!" even if the test was like a 76. Or I'll write on their
> test papers, "This is great improvement!" I try to reassure them that even when
> they have bad tests, I know they know the information.

The Professor also made note of the importance of displaying ego support for his students in the classroom and when he saw them outside of the classroom or school. He stated:

> I purposely try and say good morning to every kid that comes in. I say have a
> great day when they leave. If I see them in the hallway, if I see them out, I don't

shy away from them. Like in Publix or something like that. I ask them, "How is

your weekend going?" So, I think that the fact that I genuinely want them to do

well in my class, I think helps them believe that they can, and they work harder.

The Professor's statements revealed the nature of the level to which he used ego support

and all the connection techniques he employs. It became evident from examination of the

interview data that the Professor's classroom was not confined to the four walls of his

classroom, nor the walls of the school. Rather, the Professor strove to create a pedagogy

which was transferable, expansive, and limited only by the Professor's ability to interact

with his students. By nature of the Professor's dedication to continuously engaging

students in a supportive manner regardless of where his interactions took place, he was

able to have a greater field of influence over his students and thereby the physical

learning environment of his classroom.

Teacher Characteristic: Narrative Skill

Another teacher characteristic that became a key focus of this study was the

narrative skill. Of the "Big Eight" (Burleson & Samter, 1990), the narrative skill was

noted many times in the data. Frymier and Houser (2000) describe narrative skill as the

ability to entertain by jokes, gossip, or storytelling. Within the pedagogical process, the

practice of storytelling is one of the foundational elements of teaching methodology.

Narration, or the use of storytelling, as a tool of pedagogy has been recognized as a

powerful teaching methodology for as long as humans have had the ability to

communicate (Abrahamson, 1998). Zipes (1995) noted that storytelling as an educational

tool has been used throughout history, and storytellers are not unique to the teaching

profession. Rather, they have come from all sectors of society, and historically, their

purpose and functionality in the world have been predicated upon their abilities to instruct through the use of satire, parody, verbal illustration, and explanation. Egan (1986, 1992) proposed that for teachers to be most effective, they should approach each unit of learning as a story to be shared and stressed the leveraging of children's imaginations as learning tools.

The Professor displayed extensive use of narrative skills, or storytelling, in his delivery method. From my observations and interactions with the Professor, this might have been his strongest pedagogical tool. Noted by the researcher through the experience of being in the classroom, he was a gifted storyteller. As an observer, the researcher found himself entranced in some of the stories he shared. Numerous times, the researcher noted that the classroom students became transfixed and fully attentive to the Professor's story. Kuyvenhoven (2009) labeled this the "listener's hush": a moment when a listener is completely entranced by the storyteller's ability to bring a story to life. According to the Professor's admission, all the stories shared were real and from his life experiences. For each story, he had a connection to the content of the day's lesson. The following is one of his stories as shared during the classroom observation:

> The Professor shared a story from his college days of "Hotdog Joe," a street vendor who would set up his cart at the exit area of the library. The Professor and his buddies used to go to the library, and each night as they left, they were hungry, so they stopped at Joe's stand. Joe was smart enough to select a good area to place his stand to capitalize on the foot traffic. While Joe had no connection to the school, he financially benefited from the existence of both the library and the college. His business received the benefit of a positive externality.

Positive externalities were among the economic concepts for the day. This story was well detailed, and the students could easily relate the concept to the story. It was a personal story that the Professor had ownership of, so his act of storytelling was connecting by the nature of his relating the story to the class. He also shared a story that related to the concept of negative externalities. It was as follows:

> The Professor shared the story of his days at school and the college parties he used to attend. He told the students about everyone's drinking lots of "soda" and getting all "caffeinated up." The students laughed at this notion, as it was clear the Professor was referencing alcohol and people becoming intoxicated. This veil of wordsmithing seemed to enrich the story for the students, and they enjoyed the playfulness of the changes. The Professor stated that the party got too loud, and the people down the street heard the noise. This loud noise disturbance of the neighbors became a negative externality. This story was extremely humorous, and the class seemed to get the concept readily. A few students volunteered brief scenarios that were much like the Professor's story. In this way, they showed that they recognized the concept, internalized it, and synergized new meaning and stories from it.

The Professor's use of his narrative skill was highly effective and defined his teaching methodology. The content that some may have found too complex and difficult to comprehend became palatable and easy to understand due to the level of connection made with the narrative content. His students displayed their understanding by their abilities to offer various scenarios that they constructed Without prompting or extensive review, his students created their own stories to show their understanding of the focus of

the lesson and offered them as other examples for the class. This was evidence of their comprehension of the information delivered.

Teacher Characteristic: Caring

In this section, the researcher analyzed the nature of caring relations and encounters in the Professor's classroom and beyond. Attention was given to the interactions both in the classroom and those that took place outside as well. Tardy (1985) defined caring as a form of social support gained through the perceived act of caring that serves as emotional scaffolding for improved well-being that Malecki and Demaray (2003) identified as a predictor of success.

The Professor used caring relations to provide the foundation for pedagogical activity. First, he listened to his students to gain their trust, and, in an on-going relation of care and trust, his students accepted the concepts he taught more readily. Students responded well to his efforts and did not appear to perceive his efforts as "interference" but, rather, as cooperative work proceeding from the integrity of the relationship that was forged. Second, he engaged his students in dialogue that allowed him to learn their working habits, talents, and interests. Examples of these characteristics can be found from the stories shared in the interviews and the observations of the researcher. One such case was captured in the following observation:

> A female student asked the Professor about how to invest for her future. She
> stated that she tried talking to her parents about it, but they didn't offer any help
> or advice. The Professor used that time to talk about investments and risk versus
> return. He then proceeded to offer one of his "Professor Tips," as he liked to refer
> to them. These were life tips he had picked up over his days that he shared as he

was able. Students were visibly engaged and entranced in his presentation and

lecture that was most likely due to the direct connection to their lives.

The previous excerpt was evidence the Professor invested time to show his students that

he cared about them and their future well-being. The Professor routinely connected good

work ethics, habits, and life skills to the daily content and interactions in the class. These

interactions were almost fatherly in their nature, and students welcomed the guidance via

the strong relationship that the Professor nurtured through the classroom experience. An

example of the Professor's dedication and care for his students both in the classroom and

out can be found in this excerpt of the observation period. This goes well beyond the

expectations of a classroom teacher and takes on characteristics of a fatherly nature:

> A female student had spoken previously about getting a job at the local Lowe's.
>
> After the introduction of this lesson, she posed some investment questions related
>
> specifically to her new job. The Professor asked about what type of savings plan
>
> the company had. She remembered reading about it but wasn't sure what kind it
>
> was. The Professor seemed unhappy that he could not more readily answer her
>
> question and stated he would go to Lowe's that week and ask about the
>
> particulars. He stated that he wanted her to be completely aware of the savings
>
> plans available as even at a young time in her life, investing was important and all
>
> about the long-range commitment.

The above excerpt is evidence of the Professor's sharing information outside of the

required class content; however, this willingness to share sage/fatherly advice endears his

students to him and is a form of nurturing them by showing concern for their future.

Students were subject to comprehensive nurturing of their classroom and some of their

life needs through this sharing. The Professor was aware of the power of the need to project a sense of caring. He shared, "I think if they know you are, at the least, interested in their lives and are trying to understand where they are coming from and what they are going through, then I think it helps a lot. They need to know I'm here to help them succeed."

Through the building of caring relationships with students, the acquisition of knowledge on students' needs occurs. Noddings (1999) shared that this knowledge of students' needs informs teachers' need to increase their own competence. Educators, by nature or by training, may benefit by engaging a caring nature or aspect as a pedagogical foundation for improved teaching methodology. The Professor developed a means by which he could use caring interactions to heighten the efficacy of his teaching methods, and the effects were present in his students' academic performances. Beyond the classroom, it is imperative to remember the greater mission of caring for students. As Lipsitz (1995) stated, "Why should we care about caring? Because without caring, individual human beings cannot thrive, communities become violent battlegrounds, the American democratic experiment must ultimately fail, and the planet will not be able to support life."

Teacher Characteristics: Empathy

This section deals with the analyzation of the Professor's use of empathy in his planning and teaching. This use of empathy was interwoven into the fabric of the classroom dynamic and was a core tenant of fostering greater student knowledge via relationship building and development. Hawk et al. (2002) conducted research investigating effective teacher-student relationships and stated that empathy was one of

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the highest-ranked characteristics identified by participants as being important to successful teacher-student relationships. Research into cognitive empathy and its use in the classroom is well documented. Consequently, the researcher also noted many occasions when the Professor displayed an empathic nature in his teacher-student interactions. The engagement in this empathetic interaction was not completely a result of day-to-day, common human experience. To the contrary, the Professor sought means to make himself more empathetic to his students by attempting, when possible, to engage in the cultural influences that shaped his students' lives and experiences. Admission of this can be found in his account shared in the first interview conducted by the researcher:

> I try and listen in on what they say and what they are doing in their social lives. I cannot tell you how many CW television shows I've watched, and I've read so much young adult fiction to try and stay relevant with what they are talking about. It's not generally something I would read or watch, but I have five kids whom I have seen [with] this same book on their desk or talking about a show. So I might as well read it or watch the show to see if I can incorporate anything from it in my lessons and interactions. They will be like, "Hey, he knows what we are talking about." I decided that I have to try as best I can to keep up with language. I've got to stay fresh on what they are talking about. If they know you are at the least interested in their lives and trying to understand where they are coming from, then I think it helps a lot.

The Professor's use of purposefully placing himself in the mindset of his students and remaining up to date with trends, contemporary culture, internet memes, and teen speak, established a different level of understanding of his students and their lives.

Furthermore, the students were able to more closely relate to the Professor and the content as he has purposefully made himself and the content more relatable for them by virtue of his empathetic nature and activities.

Teacher Characteristic: Morally Motivated/Sensitivity

In this section the researcher focuses on the Professor's moral sensitivity and his ability to perceive and understand the moral content of situations. This involved more than mere empathy; it also included sensitivity to the variety of perspectives and available actions in the classroom and their moral implications. Moral sensitivity/motivation is the intrinsically motivating force that causes one to act after having deliberated and formed judgements about what is right and wrong/good or bad (Rosati, 2006).

Much has been studied and written as it relates to moral motivation, sensitivity, and reasoning. Kohlberg (1984) was notes as being one of the foremost experts in the field, and his research was groundbreaking as it resulted in the creation of six stages of moral growth grouped into three general levels of morality. The stages ranked from lowest to highest are preconventional, conventional, and postconventional (see Table 4). The researcher determined from the data that the Professor was highly moral, ranking in the postconventional range somewhere between a stage five and six. Stage five is associated with individuals who see rules as useful for maintaining general social order and as a means to protect individual rights. Stage six, which is rare in all of society, is the stage in which people adhere to universal principles around the equality of all people, respect for human dignity, and an adherence to justice in the purist sense (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2010).

Table 5

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

Stage	View of Persons	Social Perspective Level
6	Sees the extent to which human fallibility and frailty are impacted by communication	Mutual respect as a universal principle
5	Recognizes that contracts create norms and can increase mutual wellbeing	Contractual perspective
4	Able to grasp abstract systems of norms	Social systems perspective
3	Recognizes good and bad intentions	Social relationships perspective
2	Sees that others a) have goals and preferences, b) either conform to or deviate from norms	Instrumental egoism
1	No VOP: only self and norm are recognized	Blind egoism

Note. Table sourced from Modgil, Modgil, & Kohlberg, (1986).

The Professor's moral sensitivity and judgements were present in his teaching methodology and foundational to his decision to become a teacher. The Professor sought a livelihood where he would feel as if he was making a difference. From his own admission, he originally began his education to become a lawyer but quickly realized that law was not for him. After a graphic and morally reprehensible scenario was presented to his college law class, he was convinced that being asked to defend a guilty person was not within his capabilities. However, the negative experience he had in his pre-law class led to his meeting another professor who opened the door for the possibility of teaching. The Professor stated:

> I originally wanted to go to college to be a lawyer, and the general goal was, I wanted to have, it sounds cheesy but, to have an impact on the world in some shape or form. I wanted to make sure that the bad guys went to jail, or the good guys didn't go to jail.

As conveyed in his words, the Professor sought to follow an educational path that would lead him to an occupation in which he would have an impact on the world in a positive manner. He desired to see "good guys" avoid undue punishment and desired to have a hand in seeing the "bad guys" receive repercussions for their transgressions. However, his decision to enter the field of law was curtailed by the stark realization that he might face strong moral dilemmas that the Professor believed would impede his ability to successfully complete the duties of his job. He shared:

> I got to audit a pre-law class, and the professor gave a hypothetical situation the first day. He said, "OK, here is your client. He has killed 20 kids and admitted to you that he did it. He enjoyed doing it. Your job is to make sure he never goes to prison, and you have to fight with every inch of your being to make sure he never goes to prison."

The Professor stated that his college teacher told his class that if they were not willing to defend a person they knew was guilty, then the profession of law was not for them. His moral sensitivity would not allow him to participate in an occupation that he felt was morally reprehensible. It was on this day that the Professor decided to pursue a degree in another field. Through exposure to other positive teacher role models in his college life, he came to the decision to become a teacher. His moral apprehension to making a negative impact on the world by defending a guilty person was his driving force to leave his education in law. His decision to pursue education was a welcome compromise as it allowed him to fulfill his desire to have a positive impact on the world without the potential downside found in the field of law. His decision was made easier by his moral beliefs in right and wrong, and he was motivated to act accordingly. Further support for

his moral obligation to make a positive impact on the world and his students was neatly captured in the following:

> I think my role and obligation are to get them to believe that they can do it because I think when many students take this economics course, they see that this is history plus math. And for some, this is just misery. I have a kid now who, I think it was last week, said when she leaves this class she feels like she is smart. She said, "I feel like I know what I'm talking about." It's that kind of thing– just getting them to believe in themselves a little bit more and in their academic ability.

The Professor consistently identified his occupation as one that goes beyond the sharing of information in a teacher-student format. Rather, he expressed the obligation to help students believe in their own capabilities. The Professor was committed to helping students " understand that they can do hard stuff and be successful at it." This strong belief in a greater cause and service that the Professor adhered to guided his daily interactions with students. He desired to give back, to see justice maintained in some way, and to be a helper in the world through his service as a teacher. This intrinsic desire to help kids, do good, and serve humanity, while a lofty goal, was one that the Professor strove for. The Professor was a highly morally motivated individual, and this impacted both his teaching and his life decisions.

Teacher-Student Interaction Characteristics: Positive

In this section, the researcher chose to focus on the Professor's teaching practices and resources that fostered positive cognitions, positive relations, positive emotions, and learning identities in classrooms. Students flourish by having positive learning

experiences at school. Best pedagogical practices are associated with teacher talk, social and emotional resources for students, the supplementation of lessons with resource building materials, and the development of individualized learning goals that target the development of positive cognitions, emotions, and experiences (Allen & Allen, 2009, Crosnoe, 2000). Specifically, the researcher was interested to know which actions/behaviors the Professor undertook in the process of contributing to the "positive pedagogies" present in his classroom.

Skinner and Belmont (1993) stated that safe classroom environments are essential for learning and are the product of positive teacher-student interactions. These positive interactions and relationships are shown to have the greatest impact on student achievement (Hayes et al., 2006). I observed the Professor doing his best to project a positive appearance/posture and create a positive feeling in his classroom. As noted in the observation logs, the Professor daily engaged in welcoming students into class with a positive greeting regardless of his own mental and physical state. Although noted almost daily, the following observation excerpt is summative of this behavior: The professor began class with a positive entrance and a "good morning!" He seemed

extremely upbeat. He went about the review that he seemed to do almost daily.

Students gave the answers to each question, and he responded with positive

feedback. Again, he was upbeat and positive with his responses to students.

Here is more evidence of his positive interactions from the observation period:

The Professor began class by checking notes and vocabulary from the homework

students did the night before. The Professor called on individuals to answer the

questions from the worksheets. The teacher offered many positive affirmations as

he went through the assignment with students. "Good!" "Right!" "That's right!" A

student did not offer an answer without getting some positive response from the

teacher.

This positivity seemed to be a mainstay of his interactions. The Professor engrained

positivity into the learning session and the classroom as a whole through his positive

words for each of his students. This positivity was echoed by his students. This

atmosphere of positivity is neatly captured in the following observation excerpt:

During the classwork portion of the day, students began working on filling in their

various segments of the business cycle, but one student was lost on the concepts.

Her neighbor noticed her struggling and pulled her desk a little closer, and pointed

out areas on the cycle and offered her some help. After the young lady appeared

to be refocused and aware of the guidelines, the helping student reassured her and

stated, "That's it! You got this!" It was very uplifting and reminiscent of the

Professor's style of projecting positivity.

The overall environment could be described as comfortable, safe, healthy, and

welcoming. These all are characteristics of a classroom that Maslow (1943) described as

being a positive learning environment and one that is very conducive for student

achievement. It is that positive learning environment created and provided by the

teacher-student relationship that researchers have shown to have a net positive effect on

student achievement (Malecki & Demaray, 2003; Ryan & Patrick, 2001; Skinner &

Belmont, 1993).

Summary

Chapter 4 provided the findings of the interviews conducted with the Professor

and the daily observations notes, and memos. The teacher interviews followed the

Seidman's (2013) three series interview format, and the coding and processing of the

textual data were gathered via Van Manen's (2014) hermeneutic cycle. Using this

discovery process, the themes were pulled from the aggregate of data using both holistic

and selective reading techniques. Holistic reading was used to create an overall

understanding of the meaning of the text in its entirety. Chapter 5 contains the themes

that emerged from the data. The researcher engaged in the selective reading method to

hone in on the various extracted themes. Through this stage of the hermeneutic cycle, the

text was highlighted for key themes and phrases that presented themselves. These words

or phrases were selected as they seemed to most closely emote the gist of the greater

body of the text. Both the holistic and selective reading processes revealed topics and

meaning that began to coalesce around central themes that harken back to many of the

themes denoted in the literature review.

From the gathered data, the Professor's characteristics that emerged were:

comforting, ego support, narrative, caring, empathy, and morally motivated. These

characteristics above all others seemed to resonate from the text, and a strong connection

was found both in the teacher's interview and the observational notes. The morally

motivated theme reflected the Professor's core belief in the need to give back to the world

and to have a positive effect on his students. He projected this desire through his caring

actions and behavior. The Professor was consistently engaged in visual interactions that

displayed a strong sense of ego support and comforting his students. The narrative skill

the Professor displayed was a powerful tool in his teacher-student interactions. The

Professor was an avid storyteller who wove the talking point from the daily lessons into

the narratives of his stories. The passion for story-telling that became a tenant of this classroom delivery engaged students in the learning process in an enjoyable and seamless way. Finally, the Professor engaged the students with empathy by seeking to immerse himself into their culture and life as much as possible and as appropriate. This empathetic nature served to build bridges between the teacher and the students.

The teacher-student interactions remained positive in nature. This expectation of positivity was displayed by the Professor and mimicked to some degree by his students. This helped encourage positivity throughout the classroom. The Professor modeled a person who was passionate about learning and one who interacted in a kind demeanor. Students reacted to this positive nature, seemed eager to engage in the learning, and took part in meaningful lesson-based and life-based discussions.

Teacher lecturing, student-initiated talk and teacher's clarifying student ideas accounted for the largest percentage of interaction. Although the teacher spent a large percentage of talk in lecturing, he acted more like a guide and facilitator, developing student ideas with appropriate comments and providing ample opportunities for student talk. The students responded with active verbal behaviors and rapport. This phenomenological study provided a framework for analyzing teacher-student interactional behaviors in higher education context.

Chapter 6 will provide a discussion of these themes as they relate to the literature. Additionally, the final chapter will reflect on the research questions, the limitations of the study, implications, and a final conclusion of the research study.

Chapter VI

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Significant expenditures of time, human resources, and finances are devoted to

the Advanced Placement courses. Despite these expenditures, the AP programs continue

to function with a course failure rate of approximately 35% (College Board, 2016b). The

purpose of this study was to identify the characteristics and specific interactions of the

teacher-student relationship in the context of an identified, effective Advanced Placement

classroom taught by a highly effective teacher with a pass rate at or above 85% over the

past decade. The research was guided by two research questions:

RQ 1: What are the life and career experiences of a highly effective teacher in an

identified Advanced Placement classroom with a pass rate at or above 85% over the past

decade?

RQ 2: What are the characteristics of teacher-student relationships in an identified

Advanced Placement classroom with a pass rate at or above 85% over the past decade?

The researcher collected data through the use of direct observation and teacher

interviews. One Advanced Placement Microeconomics teacher and his classroom served

as the focus of the research study.

The data were derived using Heidegger's (1988) hermeneutic phenomenology

from the observation periods, and interviews were structured according to Seidman's

(2013) three-step process. Both collection methods were used to gather meaningful and

rich data from the teacher and the classroom environment. The textual data from both the

observations and interviews were transcribed and aggregated using Van Manen's (2014)

method of cyclical reading, both holistic and selective, to identify emerging themes.

These emerging themes were reexamined across the interviews, observations, and

existing literature in order to yield the interpretations and implications of the research

study.

The purpose of this final chapter is to discuss each emergent theme and its

relation to the identified relevant literature. The identified themes aligned into two

separate categories: teacher characteristics and teacher-student interaction characteristics.

These two categories are discussed as along with the corresponding characteristics of

each with the accompanying identified literary references. The following chapter also

includes a discussion of the study's limitations and implications, as well as

recommendations for future study.

Research Questions: Final Discussion Summary

Teacher Characteristics

In this section, the research questions are aligned with a summary of the findings

within the identified theme and its relationship to the conceptual framework. RQ 1: What

are the life and career experiences of a highly effective teacher in an identified Advanced

Placement classroom with a pass rate at or above 85% over the past decade? The

Professor's educational background was not one that is highly unusual but one which led

him to become an educator. His post-secondary educational start was focused on his

early goal of becoming an attorney. Early on in the curriculum, he was presented with a

hypothetical moral dilemma by one of his instructors. The outcome of the scenario

presented was one which had a great impact on his future. The potential outcome of the presented scenario would have required the Professor to receive financial gain by sacrificing his moral standards. The Professor was given the scenario of defending a known killer as an attorney. This was physically and emotionally adverse to the Professor's internal moral compass. This became a significant fork in the road which resulted in the Professor's eventually changing his educational goals from lawyer to educator. His decision has led to a highly effective career as an Advanced Placement high school teacher.

Evidence from observations and teacher interviews suggests the Professor was connecting and reaching his students. His students conveyed a sense of enjoyment for his class and his teaching methodology. His students' test scores revealed the effects of his hard work and student engagement in the classroom. But the core of the research was not performed to determine efficacy; rather, it was constructed to identify the characteristics of the Professor in the classroom and the teacher-student interactions themselves. While the researcher acknowledged there were countless positive teacher characteristics which were notable, it was evident in the observation period that a few seemed to emerge from the experience more strongly than others. Of the teacher characteristics, the researcher identified the Professor as being comforting, ego supportive, an expert storyteller (narrative skill), caring, empathetic, and morally motivated.

The characteristic of comforting was represented numerous times in the data. The Professor was observed interacting with students in a way in which he was seeking to boost a student's emotional state or demeanor. As needed, the Professor was observed to engage students who appeared to be visibly struggling or saddened by their

performances. He was quick to offer a kind word or boost to their emotional states. He

was noted to physically get down on students' levels and engage them eye-to-eye in a

semi-private manner. He then inquired about a student's struggles, issues, or problems

and went about improving the situation by offering verbal help via comforting words.

These positive interactions helped to build an environment of safety and trust that is

essential to a productive classroom (Baker etal., 2008; Hayes et al., 2006; Silver et al.,

2005). As Baker et al. (2008) noted, "Teachers provide an important source of emotional

security that permits children to actively engage in the trial-and-error approach necessary

for school learning." The Professor worked to build students' self-confidence and sought

to get them to believe in themselves.

Through careful observation, it was revealed the Professor consistently exhibited

the characteristic of being supportive of students' egos in his interactions. The researcher

noted daily occurrences of the Professor's encouraging, reassuring, and boosting of

student morale. The researcher recorded the Professor's responding to students with

statements such as "Good!" "Right!" "That's right!" He was also noted helping to

encourage a student who was expressing concern with grasping the content by stating:

"You are a very intelligent young lady, and you can and will get the concepts. You are

plenty smart enough." The Professor indicated a dedication to this support both in his

own voice in the interviews and reinforced in his actions evidenced in the observations.

Tardy (1985) connected social and emotional support with students' perceptions of the

classroom as being a safe place to share ideas. The Professor created an environment in

which students felt empowered to share ideas and even to correct the teacher when

something was communicated incorrectly. This was noted in the observation period

when a student corrected the teacher when he was in the midst of a lecture. The Professor welcomed the interaction and thanked the student for seeing the mistake. This teacher-facilitated empowerment of students permitted their abilities to take control and ownership of their learning within the environment provided. His ability to accept the correction from students also speaks to the nature of the individual himself. He was comfortable relinquishing the mantle of sole-provider of knowledge and the "teacher is always right" tenant that is often times prevalent in pedagogy. This also encouraged more students to voluntarily offer answers to classroom questions by virtue of the safe and welcoming learning environment. Even students who offered incorrect answers seemed undeterred from responding later in the same classroom period. The researcher noted this was most likely connected with the positive response and supportive feedback offered by the Professor as he redirected the student and used positive spin to react to the incorrect answer. His enthusiastic ego supportive nature helped to scaffold students' emotional and social wellbeing. This type of support was identified by Malecki and Demaray (2003) as being a significant predictor of academic success.

Burleson and Samter (1990) noted what they referred to as the "Big Eight" relational skills that were identified by their research participants. Of the eight, they identified narrative skill as being highly valued amongst people involved in relationships. The Professor exhibited strong traits of narrative skills. The Professor engaged in storytelling to communicate the various economic terms and concepts. The researcher noted the story of "Hotdog Joe" was shared to teach the concepts of positive and negative externalities. The Professor shared a story about a family vacation and buying rebranded versions of Doritos called "American Flavor" chips to explain import and exports. He

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also shared stories of travelling to Disney World to connect students with the concept of tourism and its effect on the tax base for an area. These simple stories were shared with humor and emotion that brought the concepts to life and connected the students to complex ideas in a simplistic format.

While the narrative skill was ranked seventh in Burleson and Samter's (1990) list of the "Big Eight" relational skills valued among friendships, this non-affectively oriented skill is one which resonated with the Professor's classroom instruction. The Professor masterfully applied the method of storytelling to his lessons, and the method had a profound effect on his classroom. This attribute of the Professor's interactions seemed to transcend the others and remained in the forefront of the researcher's mind. The researcher held the characteristic of narrative skill in the highest regard as it related to the Professor. Burleson and Samter (1990) labeled this skill as being non-affectively oriented. The narrative skill of the Professor in the classroom was exceptionally employed. His ability to formulate a story pulled from his life and seamlessly integrate that story into the context of the lesson was truly phenomenal. He vividly described the participants in the stories and by virtue of his storytelling was able to masterfully transform complex concepts into meaningful and easy-to-recall stories. Over the observation period, the researcher was privy to numerous occasions when the Professor's storytelling was employed. As the weeks passed and the Professor engaged the class in review sessions, he referenced the characters of the stories. The researcher was able to immediately recall the story and the concept to which it was attached. The context of the story became the vehicle by which the Professor was able to deliver content precisely, effectively and perhaps most important, on at a human level of connection.

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This approach was not unlike the method of memory enhancement used by ancient Greeks and Romans known as the "method of loci." Yates (1966) credits the method to the Greek poet Simonides of CEOs who used the visual memory of guests sitting around the dinner table to later identify their unrecognizable dead bodies after tragedy befell. As the story goes, Simonides was invited to a dinner party, and while there, he managed to leave the dining area only moments prior to the roof caving in and killing everyone in the room. The families of the dead soon gathered and wished to retrieve the bodies of their loved ones, but they had no way of identifying them. Simonides used the memory device of envisioning the dinner party guests around the table from his vantage point in his chair. He was able to recall all of the party guests as they sat around the table before the tragedy. As a result, the families were able to retrieve their dead, and the issue of missing loved ones was solved. Simonides developed this memory technique into what is known as the "method of loci." These "memory places," sometimes referred to as memory palaces or memory journeys, allow the individual to create an image of an object in a space and associate a concept, name, date, etc. with the image. This association between a visual and concept enhances the ability to easily remember and recall larger concepts. The Professor's stories had this effect on his students. He often began each story with a visual description of a place and time. He described himself, his friends, Hotdog Joe, the scenes of the parties he attended, and the visual of his friend's beat-up Civic in great detail. These items, people, and places created visual representations in his students "memory palaces." They could think back to those visuals and envision the Professor in his stories by virtue of his excellent narrative skills. One did not just hear the Professor's stories, but one could see them in

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his or her mind. This is an ancient memory technique the Professor may be completely unaware that he was employing. Regardless of his knowledge of the process, he was engaging in the practice successfully.

The Professor was also identified as being a person who projected a sincere sense of caring, both for his role as a teacher and for his students. Rimm-Kaufman et al. (2014) associated caring and rewarding students with highly engaging classroom environments. The caring exhibited by the Professor was captured though one-on-one teacher-student interactions in which he offered additional support both in class and after school. In another instance, he offered to dedicate time beyond the school day and the physical job parameters of the school to travel to the student's job site to inquire about savings plans. Further evidence was found in his willingness to offer life skill information and tips, as his expressed goal was to see that they are all financially secure adults. His students appeared to welcome and appreciate the Professor's acts of caring and responded positively to his caring nature by staying engaged and attentive. This attention and engagement supported the findings of Rimm-Kaufman et al. (2014) who concluded students in classrooms with teachers who provided emotional support reported higher cognitive, emotional, and social engagement. Malecki and Demaray (2003) found that emotionally supportive behavior provided by teachers is strongly related to student school success outcomes.

Empathy was also noted by the researcher as being an outstanding characteristic of the teacher-student relationship. The Professor was savvy about current lingo and culture. A number of comedic interactions took place over the days in which the research was performed. Whether it was a reference to teen terminology, internet memes, or

musical celebrity, the Professor was relatively current in his knowledge of teen culture. The Professor engaged students through the use of pop culture items, terms, and lingo. Pop culture is a useful tool that can spark students' interest, engage them in learning, and even offer resources for better understanding of classroom material. Pop culture offers an opportunity for educators to meet students where they are. Students spend much of their time interacting with popular culture and using it as an educational tool allows teachers to make that time more productive. Clapton (2015) recognized that popular culture integration in the pedagogical process can be useful as a teaching tool for developing understanding and in assessment practices.

The ability to tap into students' interests allowed the professor to effectively communicate with his students. Students who may not be interested in discussing historical details may be more likely to open up quickly when a teacher mentions a popular YouTube video or sports team (Jackman & Roberts, 2014). Although bringing popular culture into the classroom is not always directly related to learning, it does allow teachers to capture the attention of students who would otherwise not be interested. Tierney (2007) and Dougherty (2002) argued that using popular culture as a teaching tool can aid in stimulating students' attention and developing their excitement in class content.

As stated in the interview, the Professor dedicated time and effort to maintaining an up-to-date pop culture mental checklist of what students are engaged with physically, socially, and culturally. The Professor stated it was important to connect with students by understanding what they are going through and how they live their lives. Hawk et al. (2002) confirmed the importance of empathy in their studies. This characteristic was identified as being highly valued by students as teachers showed their affection by

displaying a desire to get to know students and their world/culture. Hawk at al. (2002) determined this was extremely important for a beneficial teacher-student relationship.

The Professor was committed to making a positive impact on the world through his various life choices and early experiences. The end result was a teacher who felt a calling to give back to the world via the classroom. As he shared, teaching was not his original plan as an occupational goal. Rather, the decision to move into the educational field was predicated upon his disdain for the hypothetical bad that could have been done should he had chosen his original occupational goal of becoming a lawyer. Being morally satisfied was held in higher regard than financial well-being by the Professor. He was pushed from one field by moral aversion and drawn to another due to his desire to give back and improve the world around him. This desire to have a positive impact on the world was the Professor's stated calling to the field. As referenced in his own words: "I can be emotionally attached and also make a small impact on the world at large by being a teacher."

Teacher-Student Interactions

The second subject of study that was revealed through the research was that of the teacher-student interaction. The basic teacher-student interactions became apparent to the researcher by virtue of the observation and interview periods. However, the complexities of those interactions required examination and reflection in order to derive meaning and understanding. From these characteristics, the researcher narrowed the interactions into one theme. The aggregate of the interaction could best be described as positive.

This positivity was noted throughout the daily classroom observations. The Professor welcomed students each morning with a smile and communicated a sense of

joy for his occupation. He consistently engaged in positive affirmations for students as he interacted with them during the daily lessons. This positivity permeated the classroom environment and the student-teacher interactions. The researcher noted positivity is a hallmark of successful classroom environments. As Hayes et al. (2006) found, positive teacher-student interactions have the greatest effect on student achievement. The classical study of Main and Cassidy (1988) put forth the idea that positive interactions between teachers and students promoted within the safe learning environment encourage students to engage in learning and exploration. This was confirmed in the Professor's classroom where students displayed behavior one would identify as an eagerness to learn. Further examination into the effects of positive interactions revealed significant evidence of the importance of its inclusion in the learning environment. Many researchers have determined that positive teacher-student relationships are not only indicators of, but essential to, safe and secure teaching environments crucial for learning to occur (Baker et al., 2008; Silver et al., 2005). Furthermore, researchers have clearly demonstrated a net positive effect on the field of education when schools seek to promote safe learning environments created by positive teacher-student relationships (Hayes et al., 2006; Malecki & Demaray, 2003; Ryan & Patrick, 2001; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). The Professor's classroom was maintained in a positive manner, from his daily salutation and his upbeat presentation of subject matter to his positive affirmations of students as they interacted. The Professor cultivated an environment that encouraged positive teacher-student interactions within the classroom.

Implications and Discussion of the Study

Although this study focused on one teacher's outstanding relationship with students, it has broader implications, particularly for the training of teachers. For example, the study described the everyday interaction dynamics of one AP teacher. The means by which the teacher interacted resulted in an uncommon bond within his classroom. The methods of interaction and interpersonal skills he employed could be incorporated into the overall training of educators. Currently, most teacher training focuses on the importance of content and knowledge building, which although essential, might not directly address the problem of teacher-student relationships that often lead to poor student academic performance and high incidence of discipline problems.

Another feature apparent in the study is that the teacher seemed to have an extended role that encompassed caring, nurturing, and providing emotional support. It is possible the instructional efficiency of the teacher in some areas might be adversely affected by these extended roles. However, if the teacher is made aware that the value that the diverse roles he plays are an integral part of his professional identities, then providing him with "professional" training in interpersonal skills might be necessary. If these areas of expertise (social management, public relations, social and emotional support) are all part of his responsibilities as a teacher, then these roles have to be considered when teachers are being assessed for promotion. Providing sufficient means of training for and accounting of the application of interpersonal skills by the teacher could be considered essential the future of education.

These findings support an increased investment in the need for proper guidance and encouragement of the teacher-student relationship in the classroom. The healthy

interactions observed as a part of the lived experience of this classroom revealed the need

to foster closer, more meaningful interactions and connections in the learning

environment. Further, the researcher identified the success of the observed teacher's

engagement in storytelling (narrative skill). While the gift of storytelling is not one that

is universal to all people or educators, the inclusion of storytelling (narrative skill)

methods in post-secondary educational programs as a means of concept simplification

would be highly beneficial. As noted, the Professor employed the storytelling technique

as a means of creating visual mental connections with students while simultaneously

simplifying complex concepts. This was implemented in the AP classroom but holds

implications across all of the education fields and practices.

Policy Implications

Based on the findings of this research study, future policy implications to the

educational field could move to reflect a greater investment in both the interpersonal

skills development and a greater focus on narrative information delivery skills within the

AP teacher training and requirements. Further, the same focus could be applied to all

teachers across all curricula areas. Currently, the Georgia teaching evaluation platform

(www.gadoe.org), known as TKES (Teacher Keys Effectiveness System), accounts for

two related criteria to the classroom environment and teacher communication. These

areas are identified as "Positive Learning Environment" and "Communication." While

the criteria are efficiently identified, the basis of the quality and depth of each standard is

lacking in detail. Teachers are provided with a brief description of the expected

assessment standard, but currently there persists a need for policy and program training

support for the development of both "Positive Learning Environments" and

"Communication" best practices based on the most current research. The Georgia Board of Education could invest in required training and staff development involving heightened attention and sensitivity to student emotional climate and culture, race relations, and socio-emotional development/communications. These required programs could be tied to the "Professional Growth" component of the teacher evaluation system. A greater investment in these areas could result in teachers' being more responsive to students' social and emotional needs while becoming more effective in their teaching.

Limitations of the Study

Patton (2005) stated that study limitations should be identified in order for qualitative research to be trustworthy and credible. Maxwell (2013) defined purposeful sampling in qualitative research if one wishes to study a particular setting, person, or activity relevant to a particular question and goals. I desired an in-depth study of a high-functioning AP classroom, and a purposeful site selection and participant was made. The phenomenological observation methods were established to maintain quality of data gathered from the lived experience of being in the classroom of study. Seidman's (2013) process was also used to interview the participant in order to gain rich data from the subject's own words. Data were collected over a month, and conclusions were drawn on the past experiences of the Professor and the quality and nature of the interactions of the Professor with his students in the AP classroom. The primary goal was to identify these characteristics and interactions of the teacher-student relationship in the event this data could help improve the state of the Advanced Placement program and perhaps impact the teaching field as a whole.

I presumed all participant feedback and interactions were accurate and complete. I assumed all classroom interactions observed were genuine and normal to the classroom regardless of my presence. While I cannot rule out the possibility my presence had an effect on the classroom, I can attest to the continuity of the classroom environment and quality of interactions over the entirety of my observational period. I noted little change over the period of observation of the teacher's delivery methods and students' interaction/participation in classroom activities. It is also presumed the participant answered all interview questions accurately. However, I cannot attest to the legitimacy of his background stories and origins beyond my trust in his willingness to share information that is free of falsehoods and inaccuracies.

It is important to note, while the school selected was a Title 1 school, the system in which the research was conducted is very unique among South Georgia Title 1 schools. The high school operated within a naval community. The transient nature of the students served within the district offered a unique blend of students from a multitude of backgrounds, locations, and ethnicities. It is also important to note that the school system has received state and national achievement recognitions and awards. The school's atmosphere of excellence directly affected students' mentality and academic expectations.

The dominate limitation of my research centered on my own potential bias. I am educator who has dedicated his life to teaching. I could have inadvertently been biased in my analysis of the observational data. While I do not share a passion for the subject matter of the observed classroom, I undoubtedly have a passion for the field of education. This could have impacted my overall analysis of the data. However, while this potential bias should be acknowledged, according to Maxwell (2013), the Hermeneutic

phenomenological process requires little beyond the acceptance of this acknowledgement. Heidegger (1988) stated the researcher cannot suspend bias and achieve full separation from the phenomena being observed. The trademark characteristic of the Hermeneutic phenomenology process is the acknowledgment of one's biases and working through them as they are a natural part of the interpretive process (Kafle, 2011).

I worked to address subjectivity of my data collection by cross-checking interview data with the participant. The memos and notes gathered from the interviews were cross-checked against the transcript text taken from the digital recordings. Any identified clarity issues from the recordings were communicated with the interviewee for review. The depth, quantity, and richness of data gathering methods allowed for triangulation of data and aided in consistency of analysis. While the findings may not be generalizable to all AP classrooms, the findings may aid the United States Department of Education, state educational agencies, university systems, school districts, and teachers of Advanced Placement classes seeking to foster greater teacher-student relationships in order to improve student scholastic achievement.

Recommendations for Future Research

Possible future research opportunities became apparent through the analysis of the data. First, another study on the same teacher might be beneficial to see how he interacts with different students in another class. I believe this would provide more evidence of this particular individual's positive impact on students through his interactions in the classroom. The subject teacher was a state and nationally recognized AP teacher of merit, and I believe it would be of great benefit to locate and study other highly decorated AP

teachers to study their teacher-student relationships. The subject teacher was also a male.

There are implications associated with a male teacher in a predominately female field. It

would be of value to perform a study in the same manner with a female teacher as the

subject of study. The interactions may be different, and it would be beneficial to

determine what characteristics are mirrored in a female-led classroom versus a male-led

class. Furthermore, a follow up study with the students from the subject teacher's

previous classrooms might reveal more data gathered from a historically reflective

standpoint of previous students. Future studies will likely need multiple perspectives on

the same phenomenon. Such studies may also need to select AP teachers from the same

location with comparable experiences.

Conclusion

The Advanced Placement program continues to grow in popularity each year

(Collegeboard, 2016b).   With that popularity, schools across the nation continue to invest

more time and resources into the program. Regardless of the popularity and increase in

financial investment, failure rates remain at an unsatisfactory rate. For schools to see a

better return on their significant investment, it would be beneficial to invest equal time in

the improvement of best practices in the delivery methodology of information.

A multitude of studies (Baker, 2006; Baker et al., 2008; Bureson, 2003; Choi &

Dobbs-Oats, 2016; Frymer & Houser, 2000; Guvenc, 2015; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Klem

& Conell, 2004; Liberante, 2012; McCormick & O'Connor, 2015; Murray & Malmgren,

2005; Pianta et al.; 2012) have been performed on teacher-student relationships, but few

have been applied to the Advanced Placement classroom. While it might seem intuitive

to expect similar outcomes in Advanced Placement classrooms from the application non-

Advanced Placement classroom best practices, the efficacy of their application remains to

be studied. This study was performed in order to identify specific experiences and

characteristics of the teacher-student relationship in a highly successful AP

microeconomics classroom. The teacher who served as the subject of study engaged in

highly beneficial teacher-student relationships which aided in the positive learning

environment necessary for learning to occur (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Choi & Dobbs-

Oates, 2016; Ladd & Burgess, 2001; Liberante, 2012; Malecki & Demaray, 2003;

McNeely & Falci, 2004).

The data revealed that the teacher of study displayed six significant

communication skills and characteristics that have been found as highly valued among

positive relationships. The characteristics identified were comforting, ego support,

narrative skill, caring, empathy, and morally motivated. Burleson and Samter (1990)

performed extensive research on relationships. They developed the "Big Eight" of

positively valued characteristics within relationships. The data from this research

revealed the subject of study engaged in or displayed six of the eight most valued

characteristics of effective relationships. Three of the "Big Eight" (comforting, ego

support, and narrative skill) were employed and identified numerous times throughout the

observation period. In particular, the narrative skill was found to be highly successful

within this particular classroom. Three characteristics (caring, empathy, moral

motivated/sensitivity) were emergent from the data and supported within the gathered

literature (Daniels & Araposthasis, 2005; Montalvo et al., 2007; Muller et al., 1999;

Murray & Malmgren, 2005; Pianta et al., 2012; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2014; Wentzel,

2003). These findings suggest many of the best practices related to the non-AP

classroom should be nurtured in the Advanced Placement classroom. Furthermore,

extensive training as it relates to the building of healthy teacher-student relationships

would be beneficial to increasing student classroom engagement, which could lead to

improved academic success. The potential improvement of the overall classroom

experience via a nurturing, safe, and supportive classroom environment

fostered by positive teacher-student relationships could have a profound effect on the

reduction of failure in the Advanced Placement programs.

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APPENDIX A:

Individual Interview Guide

Interview 1

Basic Interviewee Bio/Background Information

1. When did you decide that teaching would be your career?

2. Did you have any experiences that you feel laid the foundation for your choosing to become a teacher?

3. Can you tell me about one of those educators that come to mind, any particulars and who was that person?

4. Do you ever find yourself remembering that and purposely engaging students?

5. Dr. Bryant, you said, had a lasting effect on you. Did you know anything about him personally? Did he ever share anything story-wise with you? Did he ever engage with sharing his life or was it more of a business-like relationship with his students?

6. So you have no other family members in education?

7. Share with me, or speak to any philosophy of teaching that you feel like you adhere to in the classroom. What is your teaching mantra?

8. Is that a philosophy you came to teaching with?

9. Three types of teaching- Directing, discussing, or delegating. Which do you feel is most like your style of teaching and why?

10. What do you think is your role in helping your students reach their full potential?

11. Does a student's culture or background effect your style of teaching?

12. How do you see yourself interacting with your students?

Interview 2

Reflection Questions

1. How do you think you are doing with this group of students?

2. Can you tell me about an exchange or interactions over the semester that occurred with a student or group of students that you feel was extremely positive?

3. Can you describe what a great day of teaching looks like to you?

4. I see a lot of follow up questions from day to day. Is that hard to deal with sometimes?

5. From a methodology standpoint- What methods from your education do you find yourself referencing in your teaching or can you recall any specifically?

6. Do you think you are a by the book teacher or do you feel like you are creating your own path as an educator?

7. I notice you don't allow any downtime. You pivot from one point/project/lesson to the next.

8. Your students have different cultures and backgrounds. Do you feel like you have a good handle on that by this point?

9. Do you feel yourself gravitating to certain kid? If so why?

10. You mentioned see a kid that worked at Zaxby's earlier…do you have other experiences like that which have been memorable?

11. Final question, would you say that you teach the AP course completely by the prescribed method

Interview 3

Reflection on the Observation Period

1. How would you characterize your semester with this class so far?

2. Are there any challenges that you have experienced in prior semesters that are evident this semester?

3. Have you had a defining moment as a teacher within this class this semester? If so, can you describe that event?

4. Have your expectations of your class differed than what you thought from the beginning of the semester?

5. Is there a teacher-student relationship or connection that you feel has been exceptionally beneficial? What and how?

6. When you think about past successful years as a teacher, how would you say this year is going?

7. What about your connection with students may have had an effect on this level of success?

8. How do you describe your relationship with you students as a class at this point in the school year?

9. Can you describe any other challenges that were overcome in your progress toward your current state?

10. If you could give advice to yourself at the beginning of your career as a teacher, what would it be?

APPENDIX B:

VSU Protocol Exempt Report

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
For the Protection of Human Research Participants
PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 03542-2017   **INVESTIGATOR:** Mr. Charles Grayson Day

SUPERVISING FACULTY: Dr. Rudo Tsemunhu

PROJECT TITLE: *Exploring the Teacher-Student Relationship in a High School Advanced Placement Classroom: A Hermeneutic Phenomenology Inquiry.*

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:

This research protocol is **Exempt** from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight under Exemption **Categories 1 & 2**. You may begin your study immediately. If the nature of the research project changes such that exemption criteria may no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator (irb@valdosta.edu) before continuing your research.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

- *As part of the informed consent process you, as the researcher, must read aloud the prepared research statement at the start of recording. Your reading of the research statement must be documented in the transcript.*
- *Audio taped recordings of the interview must be destroyed immediately upon creation of the transcript.*
- *Audio recording during teacher-student classroom interaction is not permitted under this approved protocol.*
- *A modification form must be filed with the VSU IRB office and approved prior to making changes to this approved protocol.*

☒ *If this box is checked, please submit any documents you revise to the IRB Administrator at irb@valdosta.edu to ensure an updated record of your exemption.*

Elizabeth W. Olphie   **11/10/2017**

Elizabeth W. Olphie, IRB Administrator   Date

Thank you for submitting an IRB application.
Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-259-5045.

Revised: 06.02.10

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