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An Eyeball, a Rock, and a Purple Rubber Ducky: Portraits of Leaders Implementing AP and IB Open Enrollment Programs Concurrently at One Urban High School in the Southeast

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An Eyeball, a Rock, and a Purple Rubber Ducky: Portraits of Leaders Implementing AP and IB Open Enrollment Programs Concurrently at One Urban High School in the Southeast

by

Chanika R. Perry

Under the Direction of Kristina Brezicha, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

With the disproportionately low number of minority and underprivileged students enrolled in advanced courses when compared to their more affluent peers, there has been a steady increase in the number of administrators employing open enrollment AP and IB programs in their high schools. There are multiple studies examining the effect of those open enrollment programs on student achievement and performance, but there is a noticeable gap in the extant literature utilizing hermeneutic phenomenology and portraiture to distill the essence of administrators' lived experience within such an equity-minded initiative. This research study, anchored in the southeastern United States, sought to document and interpret the lived experience of leadership team members implementing both AP and IB open enrollment programs in their singular school site. To ascertain the administrators' lived experience, the researcher collected data using the hermeneutic circle, Groenewald's (2004) Phenomenological Research Design, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's (1997) portraiture, and a slight modification of Seidman's (2006) in-depth phenomenological interview sequence. To ensure triangulation occurred in the study, the researcher included artifact analysis and memoing in conjunction with a modification of the in-depth phenomenological interview sequence. Data explication involved line-by-line coding to determine general and unique themes spanning all interviews and artifacts to give voice through portraits to administrators' lived experience concurrently implementing an AP and IB open enrollment program in their high school.

INDEX WORDS: Equity, College-Readiness, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Hermeneutic Phenomenology, Portraiture, High School

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A Dissertation

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in

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DEDICATION

This dissertation – and my life in general – is dedicated to the Creator and to my ancestors whose radical imagination conjured up this moment before I could even conceive it for myself.

To my hilarious and constantly affirming parents, Curtis and Patrice, who always power my battery when it runs low – this is for you. Everything is for you.

I dedicate this dissertation to my larger family whose belief in me knows no bounds, but here's a special dedication to Nate and Tyrone who make it really easy to be a nerdy big sister. Thanks for inspiring me each day.

To Vera Mae, my grandmother, who wouldn't let me sing in the house if I didn't know how to spell all the words of the songs. I wish you were here to see where all that spelling led me, but I'm sure you read every draft over my shoulder while I sat in Hodgepodge Coffeehouse cranking them out. You truly were love I-N-C-A-R-N-A-T-E. This is for you.

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I have to acknowledge every professor who spent countless hours teaching Cohort V. We were indeed "The Whole Handful," but you remained patient and flexible with us as we strove to be the best versions of ourselves. Thank you for always believing in us and pushing us to dig deeper on this educational journey. We are better educators and researchers because of it. To Cohort V, thanks for being the most supportive group of people ever. So grateful for the gift of you all.

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Lastly, thanks to the co-researchers who allowed me to paint their portraits for this study. Your vulnerability, candor, and genuine commitment to improving educational outcomes was a gift to experience firsthand. Thanks for co-constructing knowledge with me.

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Introduction

The issue of educational equity has manifested itself in a multitude of conversations, to include a discussion of the re-segregation of schools despite the landmark ruling of *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954) and the insidious tendency to passively accept the achievement disparities experienced by students of different racial demographics (McDermott, 1987; Pollock, 2001). Educational equity also appeared when discussing the need for increased minority representation in advanced classes throughout American high schools (Gewertz, 2008; Handwerk et al., 2008; Klopfenstein, 2004; Roegman & Hatch, 2016). It was this latter conversation that compelled the researcher to conduct a study centered on a potential solution for the educational inequity limiting the access of minority and disadvantaged students to advanced coursework: the implementation of open enrollment policies involving Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses.

In 1999, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Southern California filed a class-action lawsuit on behalf of Black and Hispanic public high school students who were being denied the same access to Advanced Placement (AP) classes as their white, affluent counterparts (ACLU, 1999). While this case illustrated the gravity of educational inequity when it came to the discussion of programs that provide open access to AP and IB courses for students, especially Black, Hispanic, and low-income students, it was not alone in the field (Alford, 1997; Roegman & Hatch, 2016; Wakelyn & the National Governors Association, 2009). There were also researchers who questioned the goal of open enrollment AP and IB policies, contending that its aim may yield negative results for students who are often unprepared for advanced coursework

(Jaschik, 2010; Oxtoby, 2007; Tierney, 2012; Tegund, 2017). Despite these reservations, initiatives widening access to traditionally underserved students continue to be touted throughout the country.

When open enrollment AP and IB policies are implemented, most of the focus is on student performance and achievement. AP and IB courses were not necessarily designed to be taken by all students in high school, nor do all students have equal access to those courses (Hallett & Venegas, 2011; Handwerk, Tognatta, Coley, Gitomer, Educational Testing Services, P.I.C., 2008; No Child Left Behind Act, 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Some schools and districts make concerted efforts to ameliorate this problem by providing open and equal access to AP and IB courses for all their students. When undertaking such a daunting task, school leaders and staff should work in tandem to implement an open enrollment initiative capable of meeting the needs of all students.

Significance of the Study

Studies by Mayer (2008), McIlroy (2010), Bavis, Arey, & Leibforth (2015) focused on open enrollment in terms of equity and the access afforded to disadvantaged populations through open enrollment AP and IB policies, but there are not many studies viewing the issue through a phenomenological lens or through the framework of portraiture. The following questions remain largely unanswered and the researcher aimed to address those in her study: What are school leaders' perceptions of the implementation process? How are they articulating the benefits and drawbacks of the initiative? What lessons can we learn from their lived experiences about the beliefs, mindset, attitudes, and skills required to participate in a college-readiness and equity-minded initiative that marries AP or IB with open enrollment?

These questions needed to be addressed to shine light on how educators are working to combat the monumental inequities plaguing our students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) asserted her belief that

> there has been a shift away from research that reflects a single disciplinary lens toward inquiry that is purposefully interdisciplinary…A shift away from questions that emerge out of perceived gaps in the academic literature to research seeking to respond to problems in the field. (p. 8)

This research study inherently addressed perceived gaps in the field, but ultimately, the goal was to address and better understand the lived experiences of leaders implementing equity-minded academic initiatives within one school site. The enormity of the problem of equity was underscored in the recent report released by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center that found African-American students had the lowest six-year college completion rate among students attending four-year public institutions – only 45.9% – when compared to their white, Asian, and Hispanic counterparts (Shapiro et al., 2017). Couple this data with a 2016 historical trend report published by The Pell Institute that found only 10% of students from households earning less than $35,000 earned bachelor's degrees in 2014 and the gravity of the situation became even more stark (Cahalan et al., 2016). All students, especially those from underserved communities, need to be prepared for academic postsecondary success, and their high school administrators play a significant role in making that possible. Understanding their lived experiences as they attempt to combat educational injustices and inequities through significant curricular and organizational changes provided the impetus for this research study.

Guiding Questions

Looking specifically at the southeastern context of the United States, I chose a high school within a large urban school district operating a concurrent AP and IB program open to all students.[1] In this district at the time of the research study, there were two high schools that fulfilled this criterion. This specific school was chosen based on the student demographics because there was a significantly higher minority population and I was interested in exploring the phenomenon in a school site expressly focused on equity. The school's location in a community undergoing gentrification also spoke to the leaders' desire to operationalize an equity-minded agenda to increase the likelihood of proportionate racial representation in the AP and IB programs. More specifically, the existence of both programs in a high school with an 87% minority student body made the site an ideal location for a researcher hoping to capture the essence of an open enrollment AP and IB phenomenon. The school's inclusion of an exception clause allowing students to opt into advanced courses even if they had not fulfilled the suggested requirements for entry into AP or IB courses substantiated the claim that it was a school with open enrollment AP and IB policies.

In this research study, I sought to document, understand, and interpret the lived experiences of members of the leadership team undergoing the phenomenon of AP and IB programs with open enrollment at their school site. Most of the studies on the topic of open enrollment in advanced courses tended to privilege the student experience or the quantitative results of student participation in open enrollment programs, but very few examined the adult leader's perspective through a phenomenological lens or portraiture that allowed them to be the co-constructors of

[1] It is worth noting that first-person pronouns will be used throughout the research study when I am referring to myself. This choice reflects the chosen framework of hermeneutic phenomenology and the intimate relationship between the researcher, the participants/co-researchers, and the phenomenon being explored.

their experience. This study hoped to shine light on the nature of concurrent AP and IB implementation at one school site by addressing three research questions:

1. What is the lived experience of administrators implementing open enrollment AP and IB programs in an urban high school located in the southeastern United States?
2. From administrators' perspectives, what are the perceived benefits of implementing AP and IB open enrollment programs in an urban high school located in the southeastern United States?
3. From administrators' perspectives, what are the perceived challenges of implementing AP and IB open enrollment programs in an urban high school located in the southeastern United States?

An examination of AP and IB open enrollment programs through a phenomenological lens using portraiture provided a means of understanding the factors contributing to the quantitative data readily available on the College Board's website and statewide data tracking platforms. Dukes' (1984) assertion about the nature of understanding and explanation mirrored my desire to conduct this study from a phenomenological perspective: "Understanding, which is the goal of phenomenology, can lead to explanation; but explanation, the province of empirical research, can never furnish understanding – a clear grasp of the meaningful structure of an experience – where that quality is initially lacking" (202). This study aimed to add depth and nuance to the quantitative data released by entities such as the College Board. Before diving into an explanation of AP and IB open enrollment initiatives, it is important to establish a clear definition of terms.

Definition of Terms

Recognizing that there are multiple definitions and iterations of the concepts discussed throughout this dissertation, I adhere to the following definitions indicated below.

AP Open Enrollment Programs. This initiative is defined as one that gives 100% of students access to Advanced Placement (AP) courses offered by the College Board and taught within the school. There are criteria that should be met to enroll in AP courses, but there is also an option for students and parents to opt-in to those advanced courses even if students do not meet the identified criteria. As such, the courses are viably offered for all students interested in pursuing advanced coursework. Students in AP open enrollment programs are also typically expected to take the AP exam at the end of their AP courses in May.

IB Open Enrollment Programs. This initiative is defined as one that gives 100% of students access to International Baccalaureate (IB) courses offered by the International Baccalaureate Organization. There are criteria that should be met to enroll in the IB Diploma Programme (IBDP), but students have an opportunity to provide additional documentation in lieu of the entrance recommendations. As such, the IBDP is a viable option for all students interested in pursuing advanced coursework and potentially earning an IB diploma at the end of their senior year. Students in IB open enrollment programs are typically expected to take the IB exams at the end of their second year of coursework.

Equity-Minded Initiative. Using the definition espoused by the University of Southern California as the foundation, equity-mindedness "refers to the perspectives or mode of thinking exhibited by practitioners who call attention to patterns of inequity in student outcomes" (Center for Urban Education, n.d., p. 1). An equity-minded initiative, therefore, is one that actively seeks to tackle established patterns of inequity affecting student achievement at the high school level that have implications on postsecondary preparedness and success.

College-Readiness. Using the criteria delineated by Roderick, Nagaoka, and Coca (2009), college readiness entails four components: "content knowledge and basic skills, core academic skills, non-cognitive skills and norms of performance, and 'college knowledge'" (p. 190). To expound, "college knowledge" refers to knowing how to navigate the college admission process from the research to application phase.

Theoretical Framework: A Discussion of Hermeneutic Phenomenology & Portraiture

Before specifically discussing hermeneutic phenomenology, it is important to understand the nature of phenomenology itself. Credited as the founder of the philosophical school of phenomenology, German philosopher Edmund Husserl's existential conceptualization of the theoretical framework has been expanded by Moustakas, Heidegger, Gadamer, and van Manen. This interpretivist and ontological branch of phenomenology provided the foundation for this research study and its mission to contribute to an understanding of the phenomenon of AP and IB open enrollment programs. Literature in the field on the topic is relatively scarce, but the emphasis on the quantitative results or effects of open enrollment AP and IB programs devalues the importance of arriving at understanding before seeking explanation. Phenomenological research combats this tendency by focusing on the phenomenon itself to arrive at "increasingly adequate approximations or probabilities [instead of] correct or final conclusions" (Spinelli, 2005, p. 25). There are no absolute truths or final answers espousing the single generalizable nature of a phenomenon, nor would that ever be the goal of phenomenological research. Phenomenological researchers are also uninterested in cause and effect (Adams and van Manen, 2008; Moustakas, 1994; Spinelli, 2015), choosing instead to emphasize the journey of determining the essence of a person's lived experience (Moustakas, 1994). As Moustakas (1994) contends, "phenomenology is the *first* method of knowledge because it begins with 'things themselves'" (p. 41).

Phenomenology begins with the "thing itself" and I must oscillate between "naïve openness and sophisticated criticality" (Finlay, 2008, p. 3) to maintain the phenomenological attitude necessary to conduct this type of research. The transcendental phenomenology of Husserl emphasized the role of description devoid of interpretation in this embodiment of the phenomenological attitude (Finlay, 2008; Moustakas, 1994). On the contrary, Heidegger, considered the father of hermeneutic phenomenology, claimed that "all description is always already interpretation. Every form of human understanding is interpretive" (Adams and van Manen, 2008, p. 615). Researchers grounded in hermeneutic phenomenology believe that when participants contribute their stories as co-researchers, their experience is inherently reflective of their beliefs, interpretations, memories, recollections, and contexts.

Theoretical Framework: A Discussion of Portraiture

Considered the creator of portraiture, Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot would dispute the idea that she somehow invented the framework that aims to blend art and science to reflect a holistic understanding of the human experience (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005). This relatively new methodology was developed in 1983 after Lawrence-Lightfoot published *The Good High School* with portraiture as the framework used to describe the elements that made the six schools she visited "good." She did not believe that a framework existed at the time that would allow her to capture the complexity, nuance, and dynamism of the environments, so she found herself developing a methodology that blended the boundaries of art and science. As Lawrence-Lightfoot explained,

> I wanted to develop a document, a text that came as close as possible to painting with words. I wanted to create a narrative that bridged the realms of science and art, merging the systematic and careful description of good ethnography with the evocative resonance

> of fine literature. I wanted the written pieces to convey the authority, wisdom, and perspective of the "subjects;" but I wanted them to feel as I had felt, that the portrait did not look like them but somehow managed to reveal their essence. (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 6)

Lawrence-Lightfoot worked with visual artist, Jessica Davis, to fully delineate the methodology of portraiture in 1997, declaring the book was "about boundary crossing, about a methodology that hopes to bridge aesthetics and empiricism and appeal to intellect and emotion, and that seeks to inform and inspire and join the endeavors of documentation, interpretation, and intervention" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 7). As someone who embraces narrative, artistic expression and its ability to contextualize the oftentimes simplistic nature of quantitative facts, I was drawn to the vehicle of portraiture as a way to reflect the lived experience of administrators implementing AP and IB open enrollment programs concurrently at a singular school site.

It is worth stressing that this predilection for narrative expression does not equal an aversion to scientific inquiry. On the contrary, the aim of portraiture is "to combine systematic, empirical description with aesthetic expression, blending art and science, humanistic sensibilities and scientific rigor" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 3). Lawrence-Lightfoot positioned portraiture alongside the social sciences of ethnography and phenomenology in its conception and recognized the similarities of the methodology with the work of novelists and artists who worked tirelessly to create cohesive texts. In this case, the cohesive text manifests itself as a crystallized portrait reflecting the aesthetic whole, something only possible through a rigorous, collaborative process between researcher and co-researchers. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) expounded on the aesthetic whole, claiming:

> it is in the resolution of the generative tension between the requirements of responsible research and the potential of artistic expression that the portraitist will successfully create an aesthetic whole – a portrait that tells the story faithfully, but in such a way that it holds interest for the general as well as the specialized reader. Portraiture strives to resonate beyond the particular that has so preoccupied science to the universal that echoes throughout art. (p. 37)

To explain more pithily, portraiture reflects the "challenge in realizing the field's 'demand for accuracy' and the portraitist's 'urge for poetry'" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 37). The framework's emphasis on bridging science and art while maintaining a high level of readability for experts and laymen greatly appealed to me and my sensibility as a researcher and a consumer of research. I was drawn to portraiture and its overt desire to appeal to a wide audience, recognizing the power of portraits to illuminate the human experience in a more palatable manner.

Theoretical Framework: The Intersection of Hermeneutic Phenomenology & Portraiture

There are a plethora of overlaps between the seemingly disparate worlds of hermeneutic phenomenology, inherently more traditionally scientific in nature, and portraiture, a more arts-based framework that relies on the co-construction of narratives between the researcher and the co-researchers. Portraitists subscribing to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's (1997) methodological framework believe in the collaborative process with co-researchers and stress the importance of context: "Like all researchers working within the phenomenological framework, portraitists find *context* crucial to their documentation of human experience and organizational culture" (p. 41). Being able to identify and explore a phenomenon is inherently dependent on context, emphasizing the link between phenomenology and portraiture. Phenomenological researchers and portraitists also believe that interpretations reflective in individual experiences can be distilled

"to a description of the universal essence" (Creswell and Poth, 2017, p. 75). Moustakas (1994) described it as "a unified vision of the essences" (p. 58) that can only be achieved after examining the multiple sides and perspectives of people who have experienced the phenomenon. Once that unified description of "the thing itself" is created, practitioners of hermeneutic phenomenology believe that it can be further interpreted. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's (1997) methodological approach of portraiture intersects well here, allowing for the creation of a portrait to represent the unified description of "the thing itself." In this study, I described and interpreted how school administrators experience and understand the phenomenon of AP and IB open enrollment programs, making this theoretical framework ideal.

To expound, I anchored this research study in a hermeneutic or interpretative phenomenological approach that incorporated portraiture to organize and share my findings because both acknowledge that multiple perspectives may lead to a universal essence but they can never lead to an absolute truth. Hermeneutic phenomenology and portraiture emphasize the fluid, constantly evolving nature of meaning-making. Van Manen (2015) contended that "no interpretation is ever complete, no explication of meaning is ever final, no insight is beyond challenge" (p. 7). Even though portraits represent a crystallization of information co-constructed with the researcher and the co-researchers, portraitists also do not believe that they have created an absolute truth. Instead, as Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (997) asserted, "the portraitist's standard, then, is one of *authenticity*, capturing the essence and resonance of the actors' experience and perspective through the details of action and thought revealed in context" (p. 12). I understood that the quest to understand leadership in a high school with open enrollment AP and IB programs would not produce a finite answer or absolute truth, but hermeneutic phenomenology and portraiture allowed the administrators to give voice to their own nuanced experiences and interpretations

while illuminating the nature of this phenomenon. The choice of hermeneutic rather than transcendental phenomenology also reflected my agreement with Heidegger that the human experience is undeniably interpretive and it is impossible to access "brute data (i.e. data containing no presuppositions or preunderstandings)" (Benner, 2008, p. 461). Hermeneutic phenomenology's emphasis on interpretation in conjunction with description spoke to the goal of this research study and the choice of methodology.

Lastly, the interpretative branch of phenomenology and portraiture emphasized the role of reflexivity in the data collection and explication process that transcendental phenomenology disparages. With hermeneutic phenomenology and portraiture, researchers are encouraged to "use empathy or relevant prior experience as an aid to data analysis and/or interpretation of meaning" (Sloan & Bowe, 2013, p. 1297). Portraiture specifically centralizes the role of the researcher and highlights the role of interpretation within the framework. To follow the parameters of portraiture, my role was to be visible "not only in defining the focus and field of the inquiry, but also in navigating the relationships with the subjects, in witnessing and interpreting the action, in tracing the emergent themes, and in creating the narrative" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 13). Being able to consider and interpret co-researchers' verbal and non-verbal cues during the phenomenological interview sequence and the artifact analysis employed in the methodology further crystallized the decision to approach this research study from a hermeneutic phenomenological viewpoint rather than a transcendental one while also integrating the framework of portraiture.

No predetermined theoretical framework like distributed leadership, transformational leadership, or critical race theory grounded this study because the open, unlimited, constantly questioning nature of phenomenological study and portraiture expressly frowned upon it. One of

the researchers whose methodology was used in this study, Groenewald (2014), explained the premise clearly: “The aim of the researcher is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon, refraining from any pre-given framework, but remaining true to the facts” (p. 44). Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis’s (1997) explanation of portraiture discussed the lack of a predetermined theoretical framework as well because it is “an iterative *and* generative process; the themes emerge from the data and they give the data shape and form. The portraitist draws out refrains and patterns and creates a thematic framework for the construction of the narrative” (p. 185). Approaching the work through the lens of a specific theoretical framework would be anathema to the spirit of hermeneutic phenomenology and portraiture. As a result, I consciously refrained from incorporating a predetermined framework. There was also no desire to create a theory from the themes that emerged because that would defeat the purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological research using portraiture and move it into the category of grounded theory research (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Kafle, 2011).

With the goal of understanding the essence of AP and IB open enrollment programs and representing them from multiple perspectives, it would have been counterproductive to impose a strict theoretical framework on the research. Hycner (1985) stamped this belief by pointing out how the imposition of a predetermined theoretical framework “is the kind of reductionism that the phenomenologist is most concerned about avoiding since it has been such a serious error in much traditional research” (p. 300). The essence of the lived experience should only be arrived at after unearthing all possible aspects of the phenomenon in question, and a predetermined lens inherently filters out elements of the phenomenon by narrowing the focus of the research from the outset. Moustakas (1994) emphasized the role of authentic discovery after wide and deep exploration in this type of research where the aim is to better understand the human experience. The

final word goes to Benner (2008) who perhaps said it best when he asserted, “Reducing the interpretive account to power terms, or theoretical constructs and causal explanations based on hidden meanings or mechanisms, is not the goal. Being true to the text, or articulating the phenomenon in its own terms, is the aim” (p. 463).

Literature Review

With the intention of expanding the scope of research devoted to implementing a schoolwide initiative such as AP and IB open enrollment programs, this research study examined the lived experiences of high school administrators in an urban, southeastern United States public school system. Quite frequently, literature on this topic focused on how the implementation of a high-quality, advanced curriculum bolsters the educational outcomes and opportunities of underserved students. There is also a gap in the phenomenological research conducted to explore the experience of taking or teaching AP and IB courses. The phenomenological research in high schools tends to focus on gifted students’ experience or the effect of using AP and IB tests as accountability measures within school districts. While this work is undoubtedly meaningful, there is a lack of research examining how the initiative is operationalized and the nature of the lived experiences of those leaders responsible for executing this equity-minded, schoolwide reform. This study aimed to reflect administrators’ experiences by focusing on three research questions:

1. What is the lived experience of administrators implementing open enrollment AP and IB programs in an urban high school located in the southeastern United States?
2. From administrators’ perspectives, what are the perceived benefits of implementing AP and IB open enrollment programs in an urban high school located in the southeastern United States?

3. From administrators' perspectives, what are the perceived challenges of implementing AP and IB open enrollment programs in an urban high school located in the southeastern United States?

This study reflected the complex experiences of educators actively working to combat educational inequities plaguing students today. By focusing on the lived experiences of administrators, this study also explored the behaviors, attitudes, and actions attributed with implementing AP and IB open enrollment programs in a large, metropolitan city. While the findings are not generalizable, they offer insight into the benefits and challenges of AP and IB open enrollment program implementation that may prove useful to other equity-minded leaders considering undertaking such an initiative in their local school sites.

Expanding Access: Open Enrollment "For All"

The push for open enrollment policies that allow high school students access to advanced coursework regardless of their race, gender, or socio-economic status has not occurred in a vacuum. For context, advanced coursework at the high school level consists of honors, AP, IB, or dual enrollment classes that allow students to take college courses while still completing their high school graduation requirements. Federal legislation and nongovernmental reports have discussed, quantified, and criticized the lack of racial and socioeconomic diversity in the student population taking advanced courses in high school (College Board, 2014; Handwerk et al., 2008; No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 2000; Wakelyn, 2009). Additionally, numerous research studies have evaluated the lack of equity that exists for disadvantaged students and proposed solutions to address this injustice (Alford, 1997; Bavis et al., 2015; Dwarte & Anderson, 2016; McIlroy, 2010; Solórzano & Ornelas, 2004).

Educational inequity and inequality has plagued the United States from the days of slavery to *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). The trend continued into the 21st century. In 2000, the College Entrance Examination Board and the U.S. Department of Education co-sponsored a report entitled, "Dispelling the Culture of Mediocrity: Expanding Advanced Placement" that discussed the impact of low minority and underprivileged student enrollment in advanced courses from an economic perspective. The report drew a connection between educational equality and the job sector to promote advanced coursework for all high school students. Considering the need for qualified workers in "three of the nation's most critical national institutions—the public schools, the information technology sector, and the national defense" (U.S. Department of Education, 2000, p. 7), the report argued that students need to have high-quality foundational skills if they are going to be prepared for careers in those fields. The candidate pool was significantly lessened, however, if disadvantaged students did not flex their academic muscle in advanced classes and continued to believe that college was not a viable option for them (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Historical data from 1997 substantiated this concern because "among people ages 25 to 29, only 14 percent of African-Americans and 11 percent of Hispanics completed four or more years of college" (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Although the report focused on the economic effects of educational inequity and inequality, it also offered a possible solution: increasing minority enrollment in AP or IB courses.

The U.S. Department of Education did not endorse AP or IB specifically in the report, but it did acknowledge that both programs provided the high-quality education necessary for success in college and on the workforce (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). With the inclusion of the College Board, however, AP seemed to garner the most attention in the report. The argument for

dispelling the culture of mediocrity hinged on providing minority students and those from disadvantaged communities more access to AP and IB courses. The report sadly noted, "31 percent of AP students are from minority populations, and 7.8 percent of AP exams are taken by students from low-income families; only one in 20 students who take the AP exam is African-American" (U.S. Department of Education, 2000, p. 8). These numbers were much too low, but the authors of the report surmised that change was impossible as long as minority students believed they did not belong in higher-level courses. To counter this reality, the report drew a connection between taking advanced coursework and self-esteem, equating advanced coursework with a desire to attend college after graduation:

> One of the biggest effects Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and other college-level courses can have is dispelling the attitude of many poor and minority students that college is not an option for them. Through Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate, schools can help poor and minority students set—and achieve—high goals. (U.S. Department of Education, 2000, p. 11)

With this premise, students needed to have greater access to those courses and teachers who believed in their ability to learn (U.S. Department of Education, 2000, p. 25). The report labeled this a communal effort and charged multiple stakeholders with the task of increasing enrollment in advanced classes. Instead of being comfortable with the abysmal number of poor and minority students taking AP or IB courses, the report prodded educators to act with urgency: "We need to hold all students to the same high standards, no matter their race or socioeconomic status. We cannot make excuses for students who are not achieving to high levels. We do not have the time" (U.S. Department of Education, 2000, p. 24). AP and IB courses needed to welcome all students or educational inequity and inequality would continue throughout the nation.

Although the federal government was involved in this co-sponsored report, Congress took an even more definitive stance toward increasing access to advanced coursework for disadvantaged students with the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001). One of the provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) aimed to increase the participation rates of low-income students by offsetting the costs of AP exams and expanding access to AP courses by training more teachers to be capable of teaching AP content (National High School Center, 2006). Common Core and the Race to the Top program followed in 2009, promoting the standardization of a high-quality education for all students in the nation.

AP & IB as the Standard-Bearers & Accepted Indicators of College-Readiness

With multiple ways to elevate high school course offerings and indicate accelerated or honors status, one may question how AP and IB became the gold standard for curricula in the United States. A 2007 research study led by Byrd in conjunction with the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation directly questioned whether AP and IB deserved to be considered the standard-bearer for curricula, evaluating four AP and IB courses to determine whether they were simply popular choices or rightfully endorsed for their academic rigor. Ultimately, the researchers found both programs to be "mostly gold and mostly worthy of emulation" (Byrd et al., 2007, p. 6) despite some reservations about AP and IB math offerings. The researchers acknowledged that both programs were not perfect, but they rose to the top for their high academic standards, transparent and thorough learning targets, alignment between the content and end of course tests, and the development of college preparatory knowledge and skills (Byrd et al., 2007).

The reality is that AP and IB were considered standard-bearers well before 2007. The purpose of the first AP courses offered in 1956, after all, was to "mimic the corresponding college introductory level course" (Duco, 2016, p. 1). With AP courses being more popular than IB

in the United States, it is no surprise that there were 22,169 schools offering AP courses in 2016-2017 (The College Board, 2017). Since the 1990-1991 school year, the number of schools offering a bevy of AP course offerings has only continued to rise each subsequent year. College preparation and college-readiness are inherent functions of the AP program, and the same can be said for the IB Diploma Programme (IBDP). When the IBDP was created in 1962 at the International School of Geneva, one of its explicit purposes was to "provide a diploma which would be recognised for entry to higher education around the world" (Hill, 2012, p. 342). As of February 2018, there were 3,182 schools offering the Diploma Programme in 153 different countries ("Key Facts," n.d.). The number has increased since its inception in 1962 and every indication points toward its continued global popularity. For now, however, AP reigns supreme.

Research on Open Enrollment for AP Courses

With AP's nationwide popularity, there is more research readily available on its implementation than IB. In light of this particular study's focus, I looked for articles and studies that examined high schools with open enrollment policies and most of them centered on increasing the number of underprivileged students taking AP courses. It was also common for the studies to be conducted through a social justice and equity lens. McIlroy (2010), Posthuma (2010), and Rowland and Shircliffe (2016) are three studies that predominately represented the adult perspective implementing AP open enrollment, and the researchers focused primarily on the lens of equity and social justice when discussing increased access to these advanced courses.

Using a case study method and critical race theory as her theoretical framework, McIlroy (2010) sought to understand the lack of minority representation in AP programs in New Mexico despite open enrollment policies. The researcher questioned the perceptions of educators in open enrollment schools and the implementation policies within those schools that potentially limited

the participation of minority students in AP courses. In the researcher's sample, she identified four public school districts and eight educators to participate in hour-long semi-structured interviews. Additionally, the study examined district enrollment data during the 2006-2007 school year and the promotional materials used for AP recruitment, when available. Worth noting, the district with the lowest percentage of students participating in the AP program had no promotional materials or tangible evidence of AP recruitment.

After coding, analyzing, and distilling interview data and the limited documents provided by the districts, McIlroy (2010) found that "other centered as opposed to student centered practices" (p. 106) played a significant role in minority students being underrepresented in AP courses. Educators alluded to wanting to maintain exclusive AP classes with small numbers and highly motivated students, a desire deemed to be at odds with the concept of open enrollment (McIlroy, 2010). The researcher concluded, "equity is not an institutional value despite adoption of an equity policy" (McIlroy, 2010, p. 95), further emphasizing the disconnect between the policy and the practice of open enrollment in four New Mexico districts. For school leaders promoting inclusive, equitable AP for All initiatives in their schools, thought should be given to creating actionable ways to translate the policy into an organizational value. Otherwise, invisible gatekeepers could continue to negatively affect the participation of minority students in AP courses.

While McIlroy (2010) wanted to understand the factors contributing to the low representation of minority students in AP courses, Posthuma (2010) focused on how students deemed to be at-risk were perceived in their AP courses and the effect their enrollment had on the larger school community. Posthuma (2010) interrogated the perceptions of teachers and administrators in a school working to increase the numbers of at-risk students enrolled in AP courses, but he incorporated the students' voice as well. Focusing on Advancement Via Individual Determination

(AVID) students, Posthuma (2010) sought to determine how their enrollment in AP courses affected school culture. AVID students were at-risk students who received academic and organizational support to help them participate in advanced coursework (Posthuma, 2010). Using a critical ethnography methodology, the researcher investigated the impact of AVID students in AP courses on the high school's culture and the "participants' perceptions of the educational equity of the AP program in terms of how power is managed, modified, or shifted within the culture under study" (Posthuma, 2010, p. 41). The study was conducted at a high school in California with 2,632 students during the 2008-2009 school year, and 165 students participated in the AVID program. The principal, two assistant principals, a counselor, an AVID coordinator, all 117 faculty members, and 100 students in the school participated in the study.

The participants' perceptions were mainly captured via a questionnaire, but Posthuma (2010) also included notes gathered during weekly administrative meetings and semi-structured interviews with three school administrators, three AP teachers, and five AVID students. Those notes along with observations, AP exam results, AVID students' transcripts, AVID students' grade and progress reports, and the district course catalogs were analyzed as data to determine participants' perceptions of at-risk students in AP courses (Posthuma, 2010). Four themes emerged from the data: 1. Inequitable practices in the past, 2. Anti-inclusion practices in the present, 3. Current improvement practices, and 4. Need/Suggestions for future action (Posthuma, 2010, p. 82). The study revealed that teachers within the school restricted access to AP courses, but many teachers and administrators wanted to change that historical practice and offered suggestions to prevent it from continuing (Posthuma, 2010). Moreover, power was found to be wielded unfairly by AP teachers, counselors, and department chairs who used exclusionary measures to allow only the brightest students into their AP courses (Posthuma, 2010). Since AP

scores were used as the primary factor allowing teachers to continue teaching their courses, Posthuma (2010) observed that some teachers felt motivated to limit access to retain their status as AP teachers. For school leaders hoping to combat educational inequities and eliminate gate-keeping from occurring in their schools, Posthuma (2010) concluded that teachers cannot afford to feel compelled by organizational reasons to prohibit access.

Six years later, questions of AP access and open enrollment policies explored by McIlroy (2010) and Posthuma (2010) continued to be relevant to researchers in Florida. In a suburban Florida high school identified as Palm Crest High School, "an urban school in a suburban environment" (Rowland and Shircliffe, 2016, p. 405), the researchers were particularly invested in whether an implementation gap existed between suburban schools and the Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement. This organization pushed for greater inclusion of underserved students in AP classes. Under the Florida Partnership, high schools earned bonus points for increasing AP participation on their campuses, further incentivizing the move toward inclusiveness. The researchers sought to determine whether the increased number of minority students in suburban areas led to an expansion of access to advanced courses or whether they were effectively "tracked out" (Rowland and Shircliffe, 2016, p. 404) of advanced coursework. The researchers documented educators' perspectives about AP expansion at the district-level – which they elaborated on in a separate study – and at Palm Crest High School, which had experienced three decades worth of changing demographics. These changes prompted participants in the study to refer to the school as an urban school despite its suburban location.

After conducting semi-structured interviews with teachers and the principal at Palm Crest High School along with the district leader who oversaw the AP program, Rowland and Shircliffe (2016) identified distinct differences between the individuals' perception of AP expansion for

underserved students. Teachers criticized policy implementation that failed to consider the level of preparation poor and minority students received before enrolling in AP courses; administrators at the school and district level posited the problem as an issue of "overcoming teacher gatekeeping and parental expectations" (Rowland and Shircliffe, 2016, p. 417). Without a common definition of the problem or a unified approach to increasing AP enrollment for underserved students, Palm Crest experienced mixed results in their goal of establishing an inclusive AP program. From 2009-2012, the number of Hispanic AP test takers increased by 3% and their pass rates increased by 2%; between 2009-2011, the number of African-American AP test takers increased by 1%, but their overall pass rates increased by 2% (Rowland and Shircliffe, 2016, p. 417). The gains for white and Asian students, however, surpassed these numbers. External pressures and incentives along with a shared mission to open AP enrollment to more students failed to effectively combat the educational inequity of limited participation of minority students in advanced courses. School leaders hoping to implement AP open enrollment initiatives could potentially learn from this case study and proactively address possible implementation gaps.

In 2010, McIlroy and Posthuma conducted research that found invisible gatekeepers still managed to play a role in the execution of open enrollment policies at various high schools. Rowland and Shircliffe (2016) also uncovered invisible gatekeepers affecting the enrollment of minority students in AP courses, but the study highlighted the quantitative achievement rates of students on AP exams instead of diving deeply into understanding the experiences of educators within the school. While all three studies are undoubtedly important in depicting the factors leading to implementation gaps of open enrollment policies, none of them employ a phenomenological lens aimed at understanding the essence of AP and IB open enrollment programs. How can the lived experiences of administrators operating within AP and IB open enrollment programs be

distilled to capture the essence of the phenomenon? This research study aimed to shine light on the phenomenon of AP and IB open enrollment and the leaders' experiences, acknowledging the impossibility of ever being able to provide a definitive answer to the aforementioned question.

Research on Open Enrollment for IB Courses

While research on open enrollment in high schools offering the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) is not as prevalent as those promoting open enrollment in AP programs, a notable exception was a mixed-methods study by Mayer (2008) that explored the implementation of an IB open enrollment initiative in a district that opted for a voluntary magnet-based desegregation plan in 1991. Despite the attempt to attract white families back into the California school district given the fictitious name of Portville, the school identified as Jefferson High School in the study served a student body of 3,176 students – 60% Latino, 13% Asian, 12% African-American, 10% White, and 5% American Indian or Alaskan Native (Mayer, 2008). As such, the implementation of IB open enrollment had an opportunity to benefit the largely minority student body from socioeconomically disadvantaged families in this Title I school.

Mayer (2008) visited Jefferson High in the Portville district 24 times during the 2003-2004 school year to conduct her mixed-methods study. Coupled with her visits, she also conducted 30-50 minute long, semi-structured interviews with several groups of people associated with the IBDP: official IB representatives in New York, program coordinators at the school, counselors, administrators, teachers, parents, district administrators, and a school board member. The 63 interviews, 24 visits, and longitudinal transcript data from students attending Jefferson High from 2000-2004 provided the primary data sources for the researcher who ultimately found

that a school with these demographics could implement an IB open enrollment initiative provided that adults approached their work with a growth mindset and offered the proper supports and scaffolds to students (Mayer, 2008).

The IB open enrollment initiative did not begin in Jefferson High until 1999 when the principal selected two teachers to serve as co-coordinators of the IBDP in an effort to reinvigorate their failing program (Mayer, 2008). With only three students eligible to be diploma candidates from 1995-1999, the program was no longer tenable and the co-coordinators needed to change their admission policies to attract a new wave of students. Not only did they adopt a more inclusive admissions policy, but they also increased the scaffolds offered to students to increase their likelihood of remaining in the program. These scaffolds – counseling, academic enrichment courses, and social supports (Mayer, 2008) – contributed to students feeling more supported and invested in the IBDP. One student observed, "'IB is more than just an academic program…It's a family'" (Mayer, 2008, p. 229).

Although it was not highlighted by the research, it is worth noting that the size of the IBDP in relation to the student body still left much to be desired. In 2005, the number of candidates taking IB exams was only 145, but it was an increase from the 50 students in the same category in 2001 (Mayer, 2008). With a school of more than 3,000 students, the scope of the IBDP was still glaringly small. The researcher included demographic data from 2004 that offered a promising trend, however, with the percentage of African-American, Latino, and Native American students in the IBDP at Jefferson High exceeding the average throughout the state. While 12.4% of IB students in California were African-American, 47.3% Latino, and 0.1% Native American, Jefferson High's demographics included 13.7% African-American students in the IBDP, 56.1% Latino, and 4.3% Native American (Mayer, 2008). The gains were attributed to the

consistent, relentless efforts of the co-coordinators and the social, emotional, and interpersonal supports provided by the scaffolds built into the IBDP.

Throughout the study, Mayer (2008) incorporated anecdotal data revealed through semi-structured interviews that helped to contextualize the quantitative data used to support the growth and success of the IB open enrollment initiative at Jefferson High. There was a singular Title I school serving as the research site, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews of multiple participants, and there was a focus on the implementation of a rigorous curriculum responsible for raising the academic achievement of students at the school while addressing the achievement and opportunity gap. My study enjoyed these overlaps, but the aim was to employ a hermeneutic phenomenological lens to capture the essence of administrators' lived experience implementing AP and IB open enrollment programs in their high school. Reading their portraits along with the benefits and drawbacks they experienced undertaking such a daunting task could deepen our understanding of the behaviors, attitudes, and actions attributed with implementing AP and IB open enrollment programs in an urban context.

Research on open enrollment IB programs continues to be scarce, but a recent 2019 study shed more light on schools committed to implementing this type of equity-minded initiative and echoed Mayer's (2008) findings that proper scaffolds and supports could yield results for students. Atteberry et al.'s (2019) extensive study used an interrupted time series approach spanning 18 years of detracking in Grades 6-10 and IB open enrollment in the Diploma Programme in Grades 11-12 to analyze the overall achievement data of students in a suburban high school in Nassau County, on Long Island, New York once gatekeeping mechanisms were lifted. The high school, South Side, located in the Rockville Centre School District served a student demographic where nearly 75% of students identified as white, approximately 10% were African-American,

12% were Latino, and approximately 3% were Asian (Atteberry et al., 2019). In terms of socio-economics, most of the white students and families were upper-middle-class while their minority counterparts were described as mostly being eligible for free-or-reduced lunch and living in Section 8 housing. South Side High School began offering the IB Diploma Programme in 1981, restricting it to its highest-achieving students only who were identified as gifted and talented. In 1999, detracking efforts began to allow more students the opportunity to experience the IBDP, and the school made a bolder stand in 2009 when IB English was the only English course available for juniors (Atteberry et al., 2019). The researchers collected data from South Side's three distinct phases of detracking: Phase I – before detracking, Phase II – when detracking existed in the 9th grade but 10th grade remained tracked, and Phase III – when 9th and 10th grade math and English Language Arts were fully detracked and there was IBDP open enrollment in the 11th and 12th grades (Atteberry et al., 2019).

Ultimately, their findings revealed three significant trends potentially supporting the existence of detracking policies. Perhaps most unsurprising of all the trends, the researchers found that detracking increased access to advanced courses for student populations typically underrepresented in such courses. They complicated this initial finding by also concluding that the inclusion of these minority or lower-achieving students did not change the school's average scores on IB exams, suggesting these students were able to experience success in more challenging courses (Atteberry et al., 2019). Their second finding centered on math scores specifically, and they found that detracking efforts led to higher scores on math IB exams for students across all three levels of prior achievement – low, middle, and high (Atteberry et al., 2019). To provide more insight into the low, middle, and high categorization of students, the researchers based this determination on students' math and verbal PSAT scores since all students at South Side took the

exam during their sophomore year (Atteberry et al., 2019). Lastly, the researchers found that detracking did not lessen the likelihood that students would take the more challenging of the two math IB courses offered in the school regardless of students' prior achievement (Atteberry et al., 2019), perhaps suggesting students' level of self-efficacy.

This study highlighted the benefits of detracking, with the researchers declaring "by any criterion, the results associated with the SSHS [South Side High School] detracking reform are desirable" (Atteberry et al., 2019, p. 35). Open enrollment endeavors benefitted the district on a whole with 82% of the school's students completing an IB English assessment and 72% attempting an IB Math assessment after detracking measures began in 1999 (Atteberry et al., 2019). The researchers discussed IB instructional principles and strategies echoed in this hermeneutic phenomenological study. They found that the instructional principles at the heart of IB, "critical thinking, oral and written communication, research, and problem-solving," were best supported by "heterogeneous grouping combined with accelerated curriculum, support for struggling learners, and high expectations for all students" (Atteberry et al., 2019, p. 39). Moreover, the researchers offered leadership practices and qualities they believe best serve open enrollment administrators: "They must share a commitment to the belief that equity and excellence are not mutually exclusive. School leaders must have the stamina and tolerance needed to work through opposition" (Atteberry et al., 2019, p. 39). Although not written from a framework aligned with hermeneutic phenomenology, I believed this extensive case study spanning 18 years offered a meaningful exploration of detracking and the student achievement data reflective of those efforts. This research study, however, focused on the lived experience of administrators leveraging both AP and IB programs in their singular school site and the benefits and challenges they perceive exist with such an equity-minded initiative.

Research on Students' Experiences in AP & IB Courses

Although my study focused on the lived experiences of administrators implementing AP and IB in an open enrollment setting, it was important to also consider the experiences of students in advanced courses. These studies underscored the dearth of literature written through a phenomenological lens about open enrollment AP or IB programs operating in U.S. high schools. The notable exception was Vanderbrook (2006) which will be discussed in this section. Vanderbrook's (2006) study employed a phenomenological and educational criticism methodology, and the lived experiences of five intellectually gifted females in AP and IB programs anchored the research. Solórzano and Ornela's (2002) study based in California begins this section of the literature review, followed by a discussion of Vanderbrook (2006) and her findings about gifted females taking AP and IB courses. The qualitative systematic review by Park, Caine, and Wimmer (2014) and Hallett and Venegas's (2011) study focusing on the experiences of minority students will effectively conclude this section delineating the student experience with AP and IB courses.

Narrowing the focus to one demographic of students, Solórzano and Ornelas's (2002) study focused specifically on the underrepresentation of Chicana/Latina students in AP courses. Through a critical race theory lens, they examined one of California's largest school districts and highlighted the educational inequities evident in the lack of Chicana/Latina representation in advanced classes. They relied on district-wide data from the 1995-1996 school year and determined that even though Chicana/Latina students comprised 68% of the district's student population, only 45% of them enrolled in AP courses (Solórzano and Ornelas, 2002). As a point of comparison, they noted that of the 7% of Asian-American students enrolled in the district, 26% of them participated in AP courses (Solórzano and Ornelas, 2002). The researchers found that the underrepresentation of Chicana/Latina students was exacerbated in suburban, racially mixed, and

more affluent schools within the district, however, despite relatively high AP enrollment numbers overall. Looking at one racially diverse school identified as School M, Solórzano and Ornelas (2002) wrote that only 8% of Chicana/Latina students were enrolled in AP courses although they comprised 43% of the student population.

Such data along with other district-level data prompted the researchers to identify three trends of unequal access for Chicana/Latina students: 1. They were disproportionately underrepresented in AP courses throughout the district, 2. Urban, low-income schools with significant Chicana/Latina communities had low AP student enrollment, 3. An increased number of students taking AP courses in a school did not correlate to an increased percentage of Chicana/Latina students enrolled in AP courses (Sólorzano and Ornelas, 2002, p. 224). They ended the study offering K-12 and university admissions recommendations to minimize the educational inequity inherent in unequal access and participation in AP courses, but there was little to no exploration of the experiences of students or educators in this school district in California. Subsequent studies by McIlroy (2010), Posthuma (2010), and Rowland & Shircliffe (2016) included interviews and surveys that represented stakeholders' perceptions, but their studies along with Sólorzano and Ornelas (2002) did not attempt to capture the essence of the students' or educators' experience.

Marrying the phenomenological approach with educational criticism, Vanderbrook (2006) directly engaged with five gifted females to describe, interpret, and evaluate their experience taking AP and IB courses. The demographics of the students varied: three of them were of European descent, one was Cuban-Lebanese, and the last participant was Chinese (Vanderbrook, 2006). The group attended two different schools in two different districts as well. As Vanderbrook (2006) described, three of the girls participated in the AP program in a suburban school

with a 68% European American, 23% Hispanic, 4% African-American, and 5% Asian and American Indian student body. They all hailed from upper-middle class home environments. Conversely, the two students of European descent attending the urban school offering the IBDP were part of a 65% Hispanic, 19% European American, 8% African-American, 4% Native American, and 2% Asian student body. They both came from lower-middle class families. The IBDP was the primary draw for the girls to attend this particular school outside of their standard enrollment zone (Vanderbrook, 2006).

The following themes emerged from Vanderbrook's (2006) phenomenological interviews: challenges of the AP and IB program, the influence of effective teachers within both programs, the impact of ineffective teachers, the importance of strong interpersonal relationships with peers, and the lack of counseling targeted to address the social, emotional needs of students. The five scholars ultimately attributed their success in AP and IB courses to having passionate, knowledgeable teachers in their classes, even if they did not particularly enjoy the subject area (Vanderbrook, 2006). One student in the AP program insightfully recognized that the opposite of loving a course was being indifferent toward it, and she had reached that point with an AP English teacher deemed incompetent and unprepared (Vanderbrook, 2006). Along with having effective teachers, the five students spoke to the importance of being fully prepared for the demands of the AP and IB program. They believed the accelerated classes they were placed in their first two years lacked the level of preparation necessary for advanced coursework; instead, busywork and cookie-cutter assignments dominated their experience and left them ill-prepared for critical thinking and independent learning (Vanderbrook, 2006). Lastly, they emphasized the need for counseling support outside of the college and career sphere because their social, emotional needs were being largely overlooked and deprioritized.

Vanderbrook's (2006) article was one of twenty to be included in Park, Caine, and Wimmer's (2014) study that synthesized the body of qualitative research at the time that addressed the student experience with the AP and IB program. These researchers wanted to focus on student voice and distill a wide variety of studies that examined students' perceptions of their experience with advanced coursework in high school. Their qualitative systematic review centered on students participating in the AP or IB program and they synthesized the themes captured in qualitative research up to July 2013. After searching databases, systematically filtering, and screening articles with the assistance of two independent reviewers, the researchers identified 20 studies that became the basis for their qualitative systematic review. Posthuma's (2010) and Vanderbrook's (2006) studies were included in the list of 20, but only two overall used a phenomenological framework, further emphasizing the need for more qualitative research "committed to descriptions of experiences, not explanations or analyses" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 58). Just as Vanderbrook's (2006) study focused on the experiences of intellectually gifted females, the other phenomenological study included in Park, Caine, and Wimmer's (2014) systematic review focused on the experiences of high-achieving high school students. The difference, however, is that this phenomenological study by Milburn (2011) centered on high school graduates who had taken four or more AP courses during one academic year to discuss the impact of that choice on their lives. None of the other studies included in Park, Caine, and Wimmer's (2014) qualitative systematic review reflected phenomenological methodology.

Using a detailed thematic analysis and free codes turned into categories, five themes emerged to be discussed in-depth in the review: the "impact of peer relationships, impact of teacher-student relationship, construction of self-image, development of concept of 'success,'

and impact of future planning" (Park et al., 2014, p. 135). The researchers highlighted the prevalence of students finding comfort in their "homogenous cohort" (Park et al., 2014, p. 135) of peers participating in the AP or IB program when analyzing the impact of peer relationships. In the discussion of teacher-student relationships, students reported disengaging when they had a negative perception of their teacher and feeling positive pressure from teachers with high expectations of their AP or IB students (Park et al., 2014). These findings could have implications for school leaders in urban, Title I, AP or IB schools where heterogeneous groups of students are enrolled in advanced classes.

Sólorzano and Ornelas (2002) illuminated trends leading to unequal access in advanced classes for Chicana/Latina students, while Vanderbrook (2006) detailed the lived experiences of five intellectually gifted students in the AP and IB program. Park et al. (2014) conducted research that synthesized the body of literature on the topic and revealed five themes discussed by students who participated in AP and IB courses during high school. The overt inclusion and focus on students' perspectives explored a necessary topic in the research literature. Hallett and Venegas (2011) also represented the student perspective in their research, but they conducted their research on students who had already graduated to garner their reflections on taking AP courses in high school.

Hallett and Venegas's (2011) study focused on minority students' experiences in advanced courses and questioned whether increased access to AP courses alone was enough for urban, low-income students. Their research utilized a funds of knowledge theoretical framework and included interviews and statistical data from 48 students from the Los Angeles metro area who graduated from low-performing high schools to determine the students' levels of academic

preparation. Hallett and Venegas (2011) noted that 60% percent of the students identified as Latino and 25% as African-American, but the racial identification of the remaining students was not included. The students selected were participants in an intensive five-week summer writing program aimed at bridging the gap between high school writing and the demands they would face at the selective colleges and universities they were matriculating to in the fall. While most of them took AP courses while in high school, seven of them did not (Hallett and Venegas, 2011). The researchers collected data by conducting semi-structured 30-minute interviews with each of the 48 students and informally observing them during the program. They also corroborated the interviews with quantitative data from the students' transcripts and their official scores on AP exams.

Hallett and Venegas (2011) found that although 81% of students enrolled in AP courses participated in end-of-course testing, only 46% of them earned a 3 or higher on those exams (p. 476) which had implications on their ability to earn college credit at their selective colleges and universities. In interviews, the students also attributed their negative perception of their experience with AP coursework to the lack of preparation/motivation of their teachers, lack of alignment between their course materials and the content covered on the exams, and the combination of structural and human resource issues within the school (Hallett and Venegas, 2011). More specifically, the structural and human resource concerns included the absence of a counselor to provide timely guidance to students, scheduling constraints that made it difficult for students to take advanced courses, and the need to "'fight' with the administration and counselors to have AP courses taught in their schools (Hallett and Venegas, 2011, p. 482). These results – most notably, the commentary about teachers' lack of motivation and the need to fight for advanced

courses – reinforced the need for qualitative research that examines how school leaders can combat issues of teacher motivation when increasing AP participation and access. It also echoed themes found in earlier studies by researchers like Vanderbrook (2006) who emphasized the role adults play in shaping the positive or unfortunate experiences of students in the AP or IB program. With the site of this study in a southeastern United States high school offering insight into AP and IB open enrollment programs, I looked forward to adding to the body of literature reflecting the lived experiences of administrators leading this type of college-ready and equity-minded initiative.

Conclusion

Using a phenomenological framework and method grounded in hermeneutics and portraiture, the goal of this research study was to "make the objective subjective and the subjective objective" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 59) while addressing the following questions:

1. What is the lived experience of administrators implementing open enrollment AP and IB programs in an urban high school located in the southeastern United States?
2. From administrators' perspectives, what are the perceived benefits of implementing AP and IB open enrollment programs in an urban high school located in the southeastern United States?
3. From administrators' perspectives, what are the perceived challenges of implementing AP and IB open enrollment programs in an urban high school located in the southeastern United States?

To answer research questions aimed at representing and interpreting the lived experiences of administrators, a combination of hermeneutic phenomenology and portraiture provided the best

theoretical framework. Some research studies included in the literature review relied on phenomenology as their framework as well, but the gap existed in an explicit discussion of AP and IB open enrollment programs and the experience of leaders attempting to lead for equity in their respective schools. By joining the theoretical framework with the specific co-researcher pool of school leaders implementing AP and IB open enrollment programs in a high school context, this study capitalized on the strengths of its predecessors while extending the current body of literature in the field of educational leadership. Research currently focuses on AP and IB as the standard-bearer for college readiness and the need for culturally responsive schools if we are to meet the needs of all students and eliminate the achievement and opportunity gap. I hoped to further the discussion by examining the equity-minded and college readiness initiative of AP and IB open enrollment through portraiture and a hermeneutic phenomenological lens that aimed to color the quantitative metrics of such an initiative with the lived experiences of practitioners.

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2 AN EYEBALL, A ROCK, AND A PURPLE RUBBER DUCKY: PORTRAITS OF LEADERS IMPLEMENTING AP AND IB OPEN ENROLLMENT PROGRAMS CONCURRENTLY AT ONE URBAN HIGH SCHOOL IN THE SOUTHEAST

The University of Southern California has defined equity-mindedness as "the perspectives or mode of thinking exhibited by practitioners who call attention to patterns of inequity in student outcomes" (Center for Urban Education, n.d., p. 1). As such, an equity-minded initiative is one that actively combats systemic and systematic patterns of inequity where student outcomes and achievement are concerned. This study anchored in hermeneutic phenomenological research and portraiture aimed to detail, understand, and interpret the lived experiences of administrators implementing the equity-minded initiative of Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) open enrollment programs in their individual high school. The premise of such an equity-minded initiative is to increase the access, enrollment, and subsequent achievement levels of students typically excluded from participation in advanced courses. Currently, there is a notable lack of literature in the field that addresses the lived experiences of adults implementing open enrollment AP and IB programs, an overlooked demographic in the quest to understand what it means to attempt to minimize educational inequities through this type of initiative. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the lived experience of administrators implementing open enrollment AP and IB programs in an urban high school located in the southeastern United States?
2. From administrators' perspectives, what are the perceived benefits of implementing AP and IB open enrollment programs in an urban high school located in the southeastern United States?

3. From administrators' perspectives, what are the perceived challenges of implementing AP and IB open enrollment programs in an urban high school located in the southeastern United States?

Methodology: Hermeneutic Phenomenology, Groenewald's Method (2004), & Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis' Portraiture (1997)

A phenomenological framework and methodology along with portraiture was most suited to meet the demands of the research study because it focuses on the lived experiences of human beings to determine the essence of a phenomenon they have all encountered (Moustakas, 1994). Hermeneutic phenomenology and portraiture rely on the intimate connection between the researcher and the participant, acknowledging the close proximity between both parties and the impossible disconnection of the researcher's interpretive lens from the creation of meaning. More specifically, a hermeneutic phenomenological method was employed because it allowed me to observe and interpret the phenomenon of AP and IB open enrollment programs through the use of a hermeneutic circle where language is emphasized and meaning is conceived as a circular movement between understanding and interpretation (Gadamer, 2004). In line with Gadamer's (2004) stance, the movement from whole to part to whole allowed me to suspend judgement and immerse myself in the reality co-constructed between me and co-researcher. Language and the movement from whole to part to whole were equally stressed in van Manen's (2017) assertion that phenomenological study can only occur "in the process of wrestling with writing and reflective rewriting – weighing every word for its cognitive weight and vocative meaning" (p. 823). It is worth highlighting that the hermeneutic circle never truly ends even though I must reach a conclusion in this research. Conclusion only occurs when researchers "[have] reached a place of sensible meaning, free of inner contradictions, for the moment" (Laverty, 2003, p. 25). For this

study, the conclusion is represented by the portraits created. There will never be a moment of ultimate understanding where there is nothing left to learn; the same holds true for hermeneutic phenomenological research. I hoped that a cycle through the hermeneutic circle from whole to part to whole and the representation of that cycle through portraiture would lead to a place of sensible meaning about the essence of the phenomenon of AP and IB open enrollment in a singular school site.

Along with the use of the hermeneutic circle, I chose to follow Groenewald's (2004) Phenomenological Research Design and Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's (1997) portraiture to provide a clear structure to investigate AP and IB open enrollment implementation within one school and school leaders whose lived experiences shed light on the essence of this phenomenon. The hermeneutic cycle, oftentimes referred to as the hermeneutic circle, was an obvious choice because of the frequency with which it is used in phenomenological research and its emphasis on the gradual unfolding of knowledge to create meaning (van Manen, 1997; Laverty, 2003; Kafle, 2011). The circle, consisting of rigorous reading, reflective writing, and interpretation allowed me and the participants/co-researchers to uncover the essence and the nuances of the phenomenon. Perhaps more importantly it serves as a process where "our prejudgments are corrected in view of the text, the understanding of which leads to new prejudgments" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 10). Without cycling between reading, writing, and interpreting, the ability to generate new understandings would have been grossly limited. The decision to marry the hermeneutic circle with Groenewald's (2004) Phenomenological Research Design and portraiture was motivated by the desire to provide more structure to the data explication process, especially considering my status as a novice researcher. Most proponents of hermeneutic phenomenology shy away from recommending a prescribed methodology when doing this type of research (van Manen, 1997; Kafle,

2011; Laverty, 2003). Keen (1975) and Hycner (1985) specifically cautioned against viewing any phenomenological methodology as a cookbook with step-by-step instructions that should not be deviated away from when producing a final product. Instead, they encouraged researchers to view phenomenological methodology as a set of guidelines, a recommendation, or an approach. Again, this would be aspirational for someone undertaking phenomenological research for the first time. While I felt comfortable making some modifications to the phenomenological methodology as readers will see throughout the explanation of the process, I did not feel my level of expertise substantiated complete abandonment of a research design with more overt structures.

For this study, I used Groenewald's (2004) five-step adaptation of Hycner's fifteen-step phenomenological analysis of interview data because it was a more concise, targeted, and synthesized version I could employ while working with administrators. More importantly, it maintained the richness of Hycner's methods and preserved the key components necessary to conduct hermeneutic phenomenological study – bracketing and phenomenological reduction, delineating units of meaning from each of the interviews in the in-depth phenomenological interview sequence, clustering units of meaning to form themes within each interview, summarizing each interview, and determining general and unique themes across all interviews before writing a composite summary (Groenewald, 2004; Seidman, 2006). It also encouraged and emphasized the role of the interpretative process through memos and field notes that became a part of data explication. As illustrated in Figure 1, the use of Groenewald's (2004) method allowed me to move fluidly from whole to part to whole as dictated by the hermeneutic phenomenological process. The use of the hermeneutic circle will be discussed in more detail in the data explication section of the methodology. In this research study, the subjective perspective of each participant merged to

create a composite description that captured the essence of the lived experience of administrators implementing an AP and IB open enrollment initiative in a high school located in the southeast.

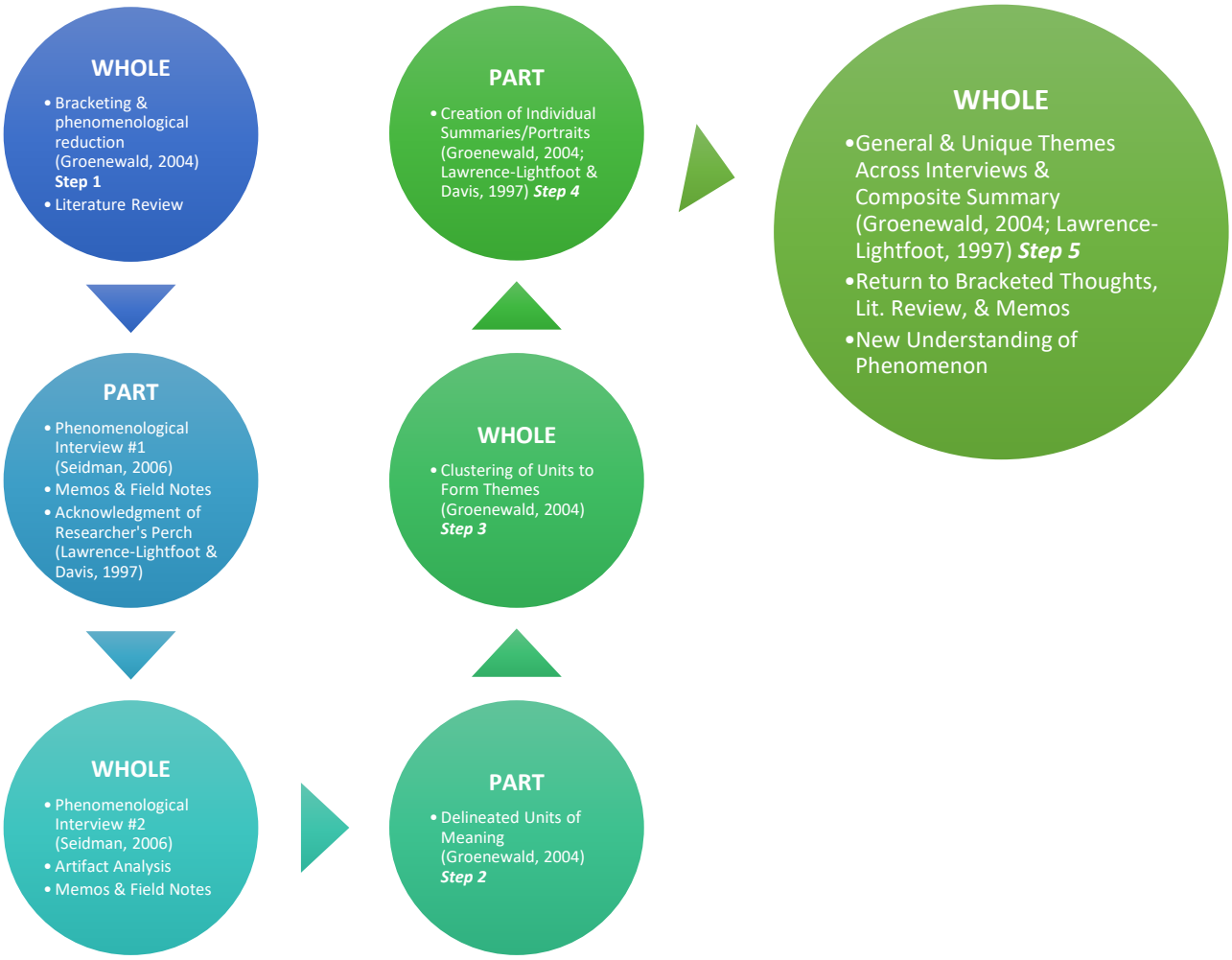


Figure 1. Integration of the Hermeneutic Cycle, Seidman's (2006) Phenomenological Interview Sequence, Groenewald's (2004) Modified Phenomenological Research Design, & Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis's (1997) Portraiture

Participants/Co-Researchers in the Research Study

Participants in this study are identified as co-researchers, a term widely used in phenomenological studies. An urban high school located in a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood in the southeastern United States was the target site as a location marrying open enrollment with their AP and IB programs. The school, hereupon identified by the fabricated name of Hurston High, offers 14 AP courses. The International Baccalaureate Organization also authorized the school in

2013 and deemed it an IB World School eligible to offer the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP). Since the arrival of the IBDP in 2013, the school has offered AP and IB concurrently. The school has also recently added the International Baccalaureate Career-related Programme (IBCP) to their offerings as well. Notably as well, over the last twenty years, the student demographic has changed from being 100% African-American to 76.9% African-American and the landscape is predicted to continue to change at Hurston High as the neighborhood undergoes gentrification. The school is also comprised of 13.5% white students, 5.2% Hispanic students, 3.5% Multi-Racial, and less than 1% who are classified as Other.

The two co-researchers included in the study represent critical positions in the high school: the principal, a white middle-aged male, and the AP/IB Coordinator, a Black middle-aged male, overseeing the IBDP and IBCP and AP program. The researcher contacted all members of the leadership team via email to discuss the proposed study in detail, hoping that the members in critical roles would agree to participate as co-researchers. Otherwise, there was no desired number of co-researchers since this research study attempted to discover the essence of adults' lived experiences in their AP and IB open enrollment school through triangulation of the phenomenological interview sequence, artifact analysis, and memoing. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) noted that "using triangulation, the researcher employs various strategies and tools of data collection, looking for the points of convergence among them. Emergent themes arise out of this layering of data, when different lenses frame similar findings" (p. 204). Privileging triangulation over saturation reflected my belief that the phenomenon under investigation would not yield co-researchers with the exact same story and there would not be "a point in the study at which the researcher [began] to hear the same information reported" (Seidman, 2006, p. 55). The intersection of phenomenology and portraiture required me to pay especial attention to the

unique themes that emerged from the co-researchers, which eliminated the possibility of reaching saturation since I was interested in engaging with divergent themes as well. Furthermore, I recognized that there were only two co-researchers participating in this co-construction of knowledge as well, making any assertion of saturation problematic to this research study. Co-researchers voluntarily chose to participate in the study and knew that they could cease their involvement at any time. Throughout this research study, the two co-researchers are referred to by the pseudonyms of Ray and Lewis. Lastly, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Georgia State University and the local school district's IRB also granted permission for this research study to occur.

Data Collection

The primary source of information to answer the research questions came from the slight modification of the three in-depth phenomenological interview sequence recommended by Seidman (2006). Recognizing that the need for alternatives may arise, Seidman (2006) endorsed them provided that "a structure is maintained that allows participants to reconstruct and reflect upon their experience within the context of their lives" (p. 21). Instead of following his recommended sequence exactly, I executed a sequence consisting of two interviews before creating individual portraits and writing a composite summary. The modification from three interviews to two was required for district IRB approval because the original sequence was deemed too intrusive and time-consuming for leaders. The condensed interview sequence focused on two main objectives: 1. Establishing a connection with the co-researcher while learning their personal history and 2. Understanding their lived experience implementing AP and IB open enrollment programs at one school site. As one way to compensate for this change, I merged the second and third interview

to stay as true as possible to the goal of phenomenological research. Before initiating any interview, both co-researchers were given aliases and their actual names were never recorded on tape or in writing. The school was also given an alternate name, Hurston High, to preserve anonymity.

Using Seidman's (2006) interview sequence in conjunction with the constructs of portraiture, I recognized that "in the process of data collection, a story is reconstructed through interview – co-constructed by the interviewer's listening and the interviewee's telling" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 118). The topic under discussion in the first semi-structured interview was the co-researchers' reflections on their general experience as an educator and a leader. Seidman (2006) referred to this initial interview as the "focused life history" with the main objective being "to put the participant's life in context by asking him or her to tell as much as possible about him or herself in light of the topic up to the present time" (p. 17). I conducted the initial interview in person to build a relationship, establish trust, and lay the foundation for future conversations. This interview focused on their personal life histories, especially their childhoods, early careers, and general impressions about leadership. I met both co-researchers in their respective offices at Hurston High, their location of choice, when they were officially off-duty and not in danger of being interrupted. Framing the conversation, I repeated the intention of the first interview to make sure the co-researchers were clear on its purpose. I also let them know there were eight questions prepared for this interview with the potential for additional questions should I find the need for greater elaboration or clarification. Using the voice memo recorder on my phone or iPad, I sat across from both co-researchers to ensure both of our voices could be captured clearly on the devices. In this semi-structured interview, I made sure to ask both leaders the following eight questions. (Table 1)

1. Where did you grow up?
2. What's your earliest memory of school?
3. What was your impression of your teachers and leaders as you were growing up?
4. When did you know you wanted to be an educator and what prompted that revelation?
5. How long have you been in the field of education? How long have you been an educational leader? What motivates you to remain in the field?
6. How would you describe yourself as an educator? as a leader?
7. How would you describe the best teacher or leader you've ever interacted with as a student or colleague? Have you incorporated aspects of their leadership into your practice? If so, what are those aspects?
8. What do you enjoy the most about being a leader? What would you change?

Table 1. Phenomenological Interview #1 Questions

While the co-researchers answered questions, I jotted down a few notes that would become a part of the research journal, mostly taking note of the non-verbal cues being exhibited that might not show up as vividly through the audio. I also wrote down repeated words/phrases heard throughout the conversation. To stay connected to the co-researcher, however, I tried to minimize the amount of time spent writing memos and more time making eye contact, exhibiting positive or neutral body language (head nods, smiles, neutral hand placement, etc.), and absorbing the information being shared to ascertain the need for pointed follow-up questions. At the conclusion of this interview, I saved the file under the co-researchers' aliases. I also made sure to flesh out impressions in the research journal to include observational and theoretical notes. This step reflected adherence to the concept of memoing, a part of the bracketing process that captures "what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on

the [interview] process" (Groenewald, 2004, p. 48). Aligning with Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's (1997) discussion of how integral the acknowledgment of the researcher's perch is to the methodology of portraiture as well, I made sure to complete the memoing process within 24 hours of each interview. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) explained the critical nature of the researcher's perch and perspective to the art and science of portraiture in a succinct way that I kept in mind throughout the initial bracketing and phenomenological reduction and the form of bracketing represented through memos during the research process:

> In portraiture, then, the place and the stance of the researcher are made visible and audible, written in as part of the story. The portraitist is clear: from where I sit, this is what I see; these are the perspectives and biases I bring; this is the scene I select; this is how people seem to be responding to my presence. (p. 50)

I made sure to complete this memoing process within 24 hours of the first interview to capture impressions while they were the freshest, knowing that these reflections would be helpful in the execution of Groenewald's (2004) five-step process and the future creation of portraits.

The second semi-structured interview occurred in-person no more than two weeks after the initial interview at the same location of choice for the co-researchers, their offices at Hurston High. I used the same dual methods of recording to ensure our voices were easily captured on both devices and continued the note-taking process as well. During the second interview, the co-researchers were asked to reflect on their lived experience implementing AP and IB open enrollment programs at Hurston High. This interview combined the second and third interviews proposed by Seidman (2006) to incorporate the co-researchers' experience with the phenomenon in question – usually the focal point of the second interview – and their reflection on their experi-

ence within the phenomenon, which is typically the domain of the third interview in the sequence. In this case, the co-researchers discussed their experiences as implementers of AP and IB open enrollment programs and reflected on that experience in the second interview. As illustrated in Figure 1, this interview reflected movement through the hermeneutic cycle from part (Interview #1) to whole (Interview #2) with the constant goal being to lead to a greater understanding of the phenomenon under exploration. Due to the consolidation of the interviews, I prepared 16 questions for the co-researchers to learn more about their leadership at Hurston High and their reflection on AP/IB open enrollment implementation at their singular school site. (Table 2)

1. How long have you been at Hurston High?
2. How would you describe the school?
3. What type of educator excels at this type of school?
4. How would you describe the AP program? What about the IB program?
5. Were you a part of the leadership team that decided to pursue AP and IB open enrollment? Do you believe your seat at the table or lack thereof affects your thoughts/perceptions about both programs?
6. What is your lived experience as an administrator implementing AP and IB open enrollment at Hurston High?
7. What do you believe to be the benefits of implementing such a program?
8. What do you believe to be the drawbacks of implementing such a program?
9. Do you believe your past experiences as a student or educator affects your perception of AP and IB open enrollment? Tell me more.

10. You've brought an artifact to this interview that you believe encapsulates your experience as an AP and IB open enrollment administrator. Please describe your artifact.
11. ***[If the co-researcher uses subjective language in the description]*** Please describe the artifact again without using subjective language. What am I looking at?
12. What made you choose this artifact?
13. How does the artifact build upon or challenge information shared with me in the previous two interviews?
14. Why do you believe you are suited (or not) to life as an AP and IB open enrollment administrator?
15. Is there a question you wish I would've asked during this interview sequence that I did not?
16. What are your final words about implementing an AP and IB open enrollment program?

Table 2. Phenomenological Interview #2 Questions

To expound on this second synthesis interview, each co-researcher was asked to reflect on our initial interaction and come to the interview with an artifact he believed encapsulated his experience as an AP and IB open enrollment administrator. The artifact represented the documentation of this reflection. No specific parameters were given about the nature of the artifact, but I anticipated it would be anything from a diary entry, piece of artwork, lesson plan, flyer, photograph, song, exemplar, anchor text, handout, to a quote or a newspaper article. Although this study is not an example of qualitative counseling psychology research, the use of an artifact mirrored the intention of research within that discipline: it helps to "provide substantial contributions to filling out the structure and character of the experience under investigation" (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 139). The secondary goal of incorporating an artifact into this interview was that

it allowed for even greater variation, individuality, and nuance that is at the heart of phenomenological pursuits. As van Manen (2017) eloquently avowed, phenomenology done well motivates us to "be forever attentive to the fascinating varieties and subtleties of primal lived experience and consciousness in all its remarkable complexities, fathomless depths, rich details, startling disturbances, and luring charms" (p. 779). I believe the inclusion of an artifact spoke to this desire for variety, subtlety, and complexity that could lead to rich, thick description. I did not ask to collect any artifacts, but I came prepared to remove any personally identifying information from any artifacts voluntarily contributed to the research study. Seidman (2006) recommended spacing each interview three days to a week apart, but I was open to extending that timeframe before the second interview to allow more time for co-researchers to find an artifact they believed truly captured their experience with AP and IB open enrollment programs. It was my belief that a shortened timeframe may have negatively affected the co-researchers' ability to think meaningfully about the artifact.

Seidman (2006) emphasized that co-researchers have been constructing meaning throughout the entire interview sequence even though the second interview explicitly focused on the co-researchers' understanding of their experience leading in a school embracing open enrollment practices while concurrently offering AP and IB courses. I reiterate that claim as well and believed that the inclusion of an artifact highlighted this desire for continual meaning-making. Having highlighted two of the triangulation methods involved in this study – the in-depth phenomenological interview sequence and artifact analysis – it is important to detail the third one: memoing (Groenewald, 2004, 2008). During all interviews, I used memos to bracket my thoughts, feelings, and assumptions to maintain the integrity of the co-researchers' description and the overall integrity of the phenomenological study. This bracketing differed from the initial

phenomenological reduction undertaken before beginning the interview sequence because it directly responded to the actual words and nonverbal expressions of the co-researchers. These memos became a part of the more comprehensive field notes and research journal I maintained. Field notes, inherently interpretative and reflective, consisted of observational notes, theoretical notes where I attempted to note memorable and repeated words/phrases that may become a part of the initial coding process, methodological notes on the process with helpful reminders or pointers for future interviews, and analytical notes that provided a preliminary summary and interpretation of the interview (Groenewald, 2004). The takeaways listed after replaying each interview, the commentary included on the actual interview transcriptions, and the notes captured in the research journal represented the memoing process. As Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) described, "making the anticipatory schema explicit (in the form of memos, journals, or self-reflective essays) allows for greater openness of mind" (p. 186). Data from the phenomenological interview sequence, artifact analysis, and memos/field notes provided the basis of the data collection and explication processes.

A Note About Data Trustworthiness & Validity

While phenomenological research decries the idea of a final or absolute "correct" interpretation of reality, data trustworthiness and validity can still be pursued and achieved. The phenomenological interview sequence itself is inherently a validity measure because it allows co-researchers' comments to be contextualized and checked for internal consistency (Seidman, 2006). With the interviews occurring at different intervals, Seidman (2006) stressed that the gap in time increased my ability to account for potentially idiosyncratic days that could not be predetermined. Furthermore, the validity of the study was enhanced through the use of an artifact that allowed the co-researchers' experiences, beliefs, and descriptions to remain at the forefront of

the investigation. The second interview's focus on reflection also helped to ensure that the co-researchers processed and made meaning of their experience with the phenomenon of AP and IB open enrollment program implementation, which in and of itself was a meaningful step toward increasing data trustworthiness.

Along with the use of an interview sequence, multiple measures typically reflective of data validation informed this research study. This included member checking, collaborating with participants, generating rich, thick descriptions, corroborating evidence through triangulation, enabling external audits, and engaging in reflexivity through the process of bracketing (Creswell and Poth, 2017). I also created an individual portrait of each co-researcher and a composite summary including themes from both co-researchers' interviews. For this particular research study, the composites were created in a portraiture style akin to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) method. Generating rich, thick descriptions included incorporating contextual descriptions into the data explication to give the co-researchers and readers of the study an opportunity to generate their own thoughts and interpretations (Creswell and Poth, 2017). Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) explained how portraiture works to expand the boundaries of phenomenological research

> in its focus on the convergence of narrative and analysis, […] in its standard of authenticity rather than reliability and validity (the traditional standards of quantitative and qualitative inquiry), and in its explicit recognition of the use of the self as the primary research instrument for documenting and interpreting the perspectives and experiences of the people and the cultures being studied. (p. 14)

While recognizing the importance of authenticity above traditional measures of validity, it was still important to this novice researcher that those more recognizable validity checks were incor-

porated into this research study. As such, the last measure undertaken was the use of external audits when I involved an objective code validator to assess the viability of the preliminary research findings. The objective code validator consulted holds a terminal degree and works as a college professor at a local research institution. It is important to know the goal of this strategy was to determine "whether or not the findings, interpretations, and conclusions [of the study] are supported by the data" (Creswell and Poth, 2017, p. 262). It is also worth stressing that the pursuit of data validation is an organic and authentic process rather than a mechanistic one that occurs to determine whether someone is telling the truth or lying. To reiterate, there was no absolute truth being sought in this research study, and co-researchers could only present their interpretation of their reality as open enrollment AP and IB implementers. The nature of phenomenological research is one that investigates the shared nature of the human experience while also honoring individual aspects and truths. Therefore, all interpretations are welcome in the quest to distill the essence of the co-researchers' lived experience.

Data Explication: The Hermeneutic Cycle, Groenewald's (2004) Phenomenological Research Design, & Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's (1997) Portraiture

Segueing from data collection where the story of AP/IB open enrollment implementation was being co-constructed by me and the co-researchers, the data explication process continued movement through the hermeneutic cycle to arrive at a new understanding of the phenomenon being explored. The data explication process involved line-by-line coding to determine general and unique themes from significant units of meaning to arrive at a complex understanding of the phenomenon being explored – concurrent AP and IB open enrollment implementation at one school site. Through the lens of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's (1997) methodology, the new

understanding manifested itself in the creation of crystallized portraits where "the story is reconstructed yet again, in its presentation by the portraitist within a particular context" (p. 118). To anchor the discussion of the data explication process, it is important to begin this section with the co-researchers' portraits. Doing so also attends to the reality that readers of this research study also travel through the hermeneutic cycle as well on the journey with me to reach new understanding of the phenomenon being explored. I have captured my process as the researcher undertaking this work and represented the intersecting frameworks at play visually in Figure 1; now it is essential to visually represent what the hermeneutic cycle looks like for readers engaging with this research as seen in Figure 2.

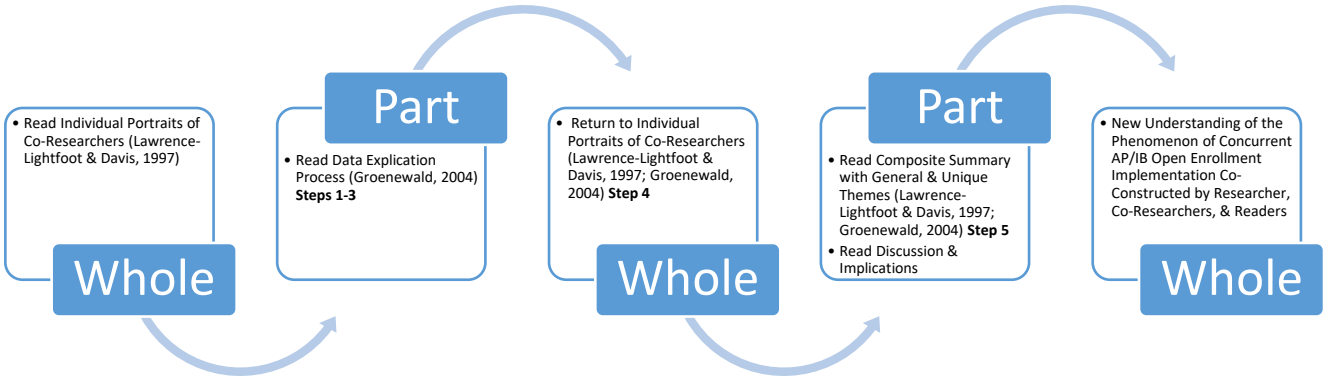


Figure 2. The Hermeneutic Cycle as Experienced By You, the Reader

In the spirit of phenomenological research and portraiture, the interpretive process is iterative and overtly welcomes and involves the reader in the process. My role as the researcher and portraitist situates me prominently in the exploration of the phenomenon of AP/IB open enrollment implementation at a singular school site, but that should not signal passivity in readers of

the study. I invite you into the research to explore the phenomenon beside me and the co-researchers who have graciously allowed their experiences to be distilled on these pages. You play an integral role in the construction of knowledge and the creation of a re-imagined portrait at the end of the study. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) eloquently explained this process in *The Art and Science of Portraiture*:

> In portraiture, the researcher – the artist – interprets the subject of the portrait internally by searching for coherence in what she observes and discovers. The researcher represents that interpretation through the construction of the portrait intentionally employing aesthetic aspects in order to convey meaning. The reader – the perceiver – makes sense of the subject that is portrayed through his or her active interpretation of the portrait. This new interpretation of the subject on the part of the reader or perceiver can be thought of as a kind of reinterpretation. With each reinterpretation, it is as if the portrait is being recreated. (p. 30)

As promised, the portraits begin the data explication section with a thorough delineation of Groenewald's (2004) method and Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's (1997) portraiture framework to follow.

Portrait of Ray: "The Challenge & the Choice."

Ray is a challenge-seeker and has been one since his days as a high school student. The teachers who stand out to him the most were the ones who challenged him, pushed his thinking, and required him to examine the world from multiple perspectives. "What made them the best in my eyes was that they exuded a passion and confidence for what they were teaching," he affirms. "It wasn't about them being easy." Along with an appreciation for people who demand energy and effort, Ray also gravitated towards storytellers – people who approached content through a

narrative, nuanced lens rather than a dissemination of facts and figures. It's no wonder then that he became a social studies teacher after undergrad despite entering as a pre-med major at Penn State. "I was pre-med. Um, did not love it. I mean, I was performing okay, but I did not love the classes." The question remains whether his high school history teacher directly motivated his decision, especially since Ray named him one of the best teachers he interacted with as a student. The sound of him chewing gum left an imprint that Ray still chuckles about when reminiscing about that teacher. "He always had a piece of gum that he chewed, like, rapidly. I think he must have been a smoker," he jokes. The teacher's ability to tell a story considering multiple perspectives, not his gum chewing, resonates the most and it's a quality he carried into his tenure as a social studies teacher.

> He approached telling history as kind of a story and I appreciated that piece. Um, and it made it more interesting, other than just a series of facts, um, and brought in multiple perspectives, which I thought was, which was good, you know? […] He did this, so you know, saying like, let's view this from this perspective and this perspective and this perspective. And that was challenging.

The themes of challenge and storytelling permeate Ray's depiction of himself as an educational leader.

One of the motivating factors behind his decision to transition from teacher to leader stems from his desire to have greater access to people's stories. Leadership allows him the ability to hear those stories and then make changes both big and small to improve a person's quality of life.

> I like being able to see the kind of, the smaller impacts on kids, like knowing what kids have going on, having access to their stories in ways that I didn't always have as a

> teacher – sometimes you did. Um, and then knowing just the little things that we do, whether it's as simple as connecting them to, um, a social worker because, um, that's an avenue for them to get extra food in the morning beyond and knowing that those little things make a difference in a way.

Another significant motivator for Ray is his ability to make an impact on a grander scale. We're not talking the type of impact embedded into a metric like CCRPI, but an impact that improves the academic outcomes and emotional well-being of students, families, and communities. "Test scores aren't really our impact. That's just the, that's not really our impact. CCRPI and all that. It's the kids that we've helped that we sometimes don't know in the moment." His hands unfold temporarily while delivering that message and his eyes flicker in exasperation at the mention of test scores and CCRPI, but his voice slightly drops and he trails off when speaking about the kids. It's almost as if he can see them in the space between us as he sits behind his desk and I sit across from him.

As a leader, his ability to interface with a plethora of stakeholders has increased and he gets to hear from all constituents before making a decision. This is not a man who likes being pi-geon-holed or tied to a particular department in a school, so he appreciates having this reach.

> Being able to not just be assigned to a particular department, um, or a particular class, but being able to, um, you know, see the arts and PE and math and social studies, um, and to see all of those different dynamics that are working within those departments, um, you know, student services or, and as well as with parents and, and, and being able to interact with them on a regular basis I think is good.

He also doesn't believe he has all the answers, despite his 20 years of experience in a variety of educational settings – traditional, alternative, and independent. He values input and collective decision-making reflective of his belief in distributed leadership. If he wanted to make every decision or operationalize all aspects of running a school, he would just do everything himself. The desire for all voices to weigh in could manifest itself as indecisiveness or an aversion to pissing people off. That is not Ray's truth. He never wants to be seen as a dictator or a leader who lashes out when someone violates a non-negotiable. "I hate that phrase," he qualifies after saying the word non-negotiable, but he does believe in communicating any parameters that may exist to his team before asking them to execute his vision.

> I think that asking questions, asking the right questions to people so that they can see where the things that I'm thinking about that I want them to consider when taking this project on. Um, make sure you're considering these things and if there's any kind of like non-negotiable, I hate that phrase, but any non-negotiable pieces, like, being upfront about them, saying we need to weave these pieces in.

He recognizes the position he's in as principal – "the CEO of a small company" – and understands that being the leader means there are times he cannot wait for everyone's opinion. He may have to make a decision in the best interest of all stakeholders although it may not be popular, and he accepts that reality. Ray understands the humanity and emotion entangled in the work of being an educational leader because it involves dealing with people's jobs and children. That's not a responsibility he takes lightly, even on the days he's wearing a goofy tie-dye shirt and jeans to support one of his sports teams.

At the heart of this work lies his unshakeable belief in the power of relationships. An English teacher he admired when he was a relatively new teacher in a traditional high school setting relayed her belief that genuine relationship-building is the key to establishing trust. That lesson has served him well throughout his career.

> When I moved to a more traditional public school setting, um, you know, there was the learning curves and things like that, trying to figure out my way. I think the teacher that I recall, um, who I was impressed with was an English teacher who, um, I really learned from her, the importance, first of, it's not so much of what you know, um, it's about developing. You have to, you have to develop the relationships with the kids before they're gonna trust you in any way. And that was key.

Yes, content knowledge matters and is also integral to students believing in their teachers, but they also need to know that their teacher sees them, knows their interests and passions outside of class, and believes that mistakes are a natural part of the learning process. Instead of holding their faults against them, effective teachers have the ability to separate the child from the mistake and do what it takes to guide them on the path of learning. Inflexibility with high expectations and standards is an asset; inflexibility with mindsets and the presence of deficit-thinking is a detriment.

> Teachers who are most impactful are those who, um, form great relationships with kids, um, and don't hold their mistakes against them. You know? Have forgiveness? Um, maybe teach them something? Maybe fuss at them a bit, but then say, you know what, it's done. Let's move forward to the next thing.

Ray believed that as a social studies teacher and approaches his work as an educational leader with the same core belief. Relationships matter and have to be cultivated with all stakeholders to

build a community of trust and excellence. He stresses the importance of boundaries, however, because building a relationship doesn't mean prying and making others feel uncomfortable. Knowing birthdays, interests, whether someone's kids have an upcoming ballet recital or swim meet is well within bounds though. Recognizing when someone has done something awesome outside of school helps build a meaningful relationship.

> Like you've got to know your kids, and it's not just their names and it's not just having a tutorial. It's like, show up every once in a while to, like, that kid who's driving you nuts. But did you know that he's also, like, like the star basketball player and if you went and saw him on that court, you'd be like, he exhibits all of these skills that are amazing athletically, but also the ability to run plays and to problem-solve on the court, and work as a team. Imagine if you actually saw that and complimented him on it and he saw you.

No gesture is too small when it comes to relationship-building. Helping someone recognize their educational beliefs and style is also of paramount importance with relationship-building. It's also important that these relationships are built upon establishing clear expectations, especially with teachers who may decide to separate themselves from Ray, his leadership, and the school.

> I look at teachers who leave us or whatnot, it's, it's clear sometimes it's not that they're not good teachers. Some, it's just sometimes they're not good fits and they start realizing it. And, um, that's good. It's like, listen, like I expect you to do these types of things and if you don't, like, I'm not giving up on this. Like, I'm going to keep bringing it up and any feedback I give you.

He doesn't shy away from that aspect of relationship-building because it's all about making a positive impact on others' lives for him. He didn't get into education to play it safe or do what's easy. Again, easy is perhaps the adjective he enjoys the least.

Ray doesn't like challenges for the sake of it, however, especially if they border on unsustainability. He left his alternative school experience in the wilderness of North Carolina behind because it became unsustainable and wasn't conducive to a quality of life that allowed him to be a present, high-functioning husband and father.

> That was an intense job. That was literally 24 hours a day, five to six days a week and you had 48 hours off after every six-day shift. Um, some of the times you had two-month trips where you had no days off 'cause you were traveling down, we took river trips and hiking trips. Um, and so like, long-term that was not gonna be good. […] Um, that was not good for, like, long-term relationships and, and, and health and things like that.

His job as a high school principal involves the right amount of teaching, challenge, and problem-solving – aspects that cannot be undervalued in an administrator implementing AP and IB open enrollment programs concurrently. "I still view myself as an educator. I'm not a teacher in the classroom, but I'm a teacher of parents and, and teachers and students and all community members, constantly teaching."

Although he sees the benefits and ultimately believes in the co-existence of AP and IB programs in a singular school site, what seems to resonate with him is the individuality of each program and the difficulty posed when trying to implement them with fidelity. He is a staunch advocate for choice and appreciates having a highly rigorous program like IB available in the school, but he recognizes that limitations may still exist for students.

> Um, we're an IB cluster. Our signature program is IB, so, you know, that's what we want to see grow, but then again, it might not be for everybody. And so having those types of conversations where it's not like, well, I'm not, I want to grow the program but it might not be for everybody.

The artifacts he chose for our second interview – a bouncy rubber eyeball, a rock, and a purple rubber ducky – could not have stamped that idea more clearly. Multiple options should be available for students, and it is his job as the leader to ensure they can co-exist harmoniously. He hadn't put much thought into the artifacts, plucking them off his office bookshelf, and he readily acknowledged their seeming randomness. "Um, this particular collection of artifacts was chosen, um, I mean there was no specific, they're not necessarily individually representing something. Um, they, because they're all different. So I wanted like, several different things." The eyeball became the representation of AP, the purple rubber ducky became IB, and the rock represented everything in the middle (to include the Early College program). The English teacher in me could ascribe meaning to those associations, but Ray's labeling of them appeared too randomized and haphazard to support such micro-analysis. On a broader level, however, his choice of artifact highlighted some of the difficulties he experiences as an AP/IB open enrollment administrator.

> We're expected, as an IB school, our kind of IB framework has to be seen in all classes including AP and it's not always that easy of a fit. Um, sometimes you know, AP, you're trying to cover a bunch, although some subjects, a bunch - you know a mile wide and that narrow - wherein IB is really talking about digging into depth and much less worried about kind of the wide scope. So how do you merge those two in, um, into the same place?

How do you make an eyeball, a rock, and a purple rubber ducky, make sense together? This is the challenge of Ray's work – the puzzle pieces resting on his desk, sitting beside the Waterloo sparkling waters in his refrigerator, lying on the stairs leading up to the second floor where his AP & IB Coordinator resides. It's one of the things keeping him in the work and continuing to propel him, the 1300 students, and the 130 staff members in his school forward. Why is he suited

for the principalship of a school implementing AP and IB open enrollment programs simultaneously?

> I believe I'm suited for it because I believe that they're both good programs, um, that benefit students, um, regardless of how they perform in the class. I think that, um, I think that I have a desire to, in particular with, um, a desire to figure out how we can do better, um, and reach more kids with them.

The challenge of implementing AP and IB pales in comparison to the value Ray places on students having the kind of choice in their high school career that undoubtedly increases their chances for post-graduate success. He has been drawn to challenges throughout his academic career as a student and an educator, and they continue to motivate him to remain in the field of education. “Why I stay in? I just, I, I like it, yeah, I do. It's challenging for sure.”

Portrait of Lewis: “The Ebbs & the Flows.”

Lewis often speaks in images, metaphors, and binaries, a perception that becomes more illuminating the longer you listen to him. The flow of his conversation can sometimes feel like a current at high tide – he speaks in long paragraphs and takes few breathers – forcing you to ride the waves of his thoughts. “I might talk kind of fast, I’m sorry. Let me know if I need to slow down. I tend to get kind of, you know.” His love of history, cultural legacy, family (he’s a proud husband and father of two young girls), English literature, and all things IB is on prominent display along with his admirable sense of self-efficacy and agency. There’s an air of William Ernest Henley’s “Invictus” surrounding Lewis’s youthful and lean frame. This is a man who wants to make a difference in the lives of all children and likes doing so in a space where there are “higher highs and lower lows” when compared to more affluent communities or those with more

resources. He's always been drawn to the idea of helping the youth and potentially making a difference.

This urge to effect change has been with him since he was a teenager trying to figure out what he wanted to pursue as a career. He always loved telling stories but knew that would take more time and expertise.

> Like back in the day, I used to like, um, tell stories and stuff. And I used to say like, um, when I get older, maybe one day I'll be a writer, you know what I'm saying? I used to say I want to make movies and stuff. Then I said to make movies, I have to learn about cinematography and lighting and directing and all that. I just want to be able to just, I want you to just get the story out and not have to do all the extra kinda, you know, extra stuff. So I said I'll write books and so, um, I want to be a writer, kind of, you know, for the most part. But then I used to say, well, what can I do to, like, hone my craft? So this is young me talking, this is like 18, 16, whatever, but how can I hone my craft and you know, you know, have a career and help people and still have somewhere to do this stuff? Oh, I could be a teacher. I can teach English, duh-duh-duh. I can help the youth.

For him, "teaching was just like, a way, it's like a direct pipeline to the youth of America kind of." This desire to help has been with him throughout his career and continues to be a primary focal point for his work and why he values the role he plays as AP/IB Coordinator at Hurston High. "The things that I have the opportunity to, uh, either expose students to or just, you know, just that's around, you know, they might not normally get, and I enjoy being able to do that." Ultimately, he just wants everyone to succeed and feel that he's made a positive contribution in

their lives. “I just want to make sure all parties, um, I don’t know how to put it, just that everybody I interact with gains from the interaction with me.” That can be a lot of pressure for some, but for Lewis, it’s a point of pride.

Lewis is a consummate professional who wants to be perceived as a beacon of knowledge, expertise, and approachability. Not only is he the AP/IB Coordinator, but he sees himself and his role embedded in the fabric of the school. “It’s our flagship signature program, so to speak, you know, IB is. That’s why people are coming to the school, and you know, I’m kind of the face of it, so, so, I, I take that seriously.” He also took over coordination of the program immediately after the school became authorized to offer IB and believes that the success of the program is contingent upon his ability to deliver. “I have autonomy to run it how I feel like it should be ran, but on the other hand, the buck stops with me. But I don’t mind that, you know what I’m saying? I like that.” The story he’s writing at Hurston is one that attempts to showcase how all students – the ones experiencing the “higher highs and the lower lows” – can thrive in advanced classes. It’s also a story reflecting his belief about change and impact. “I think we’re able to make a greater difference with like, uh, when the stakes are higher.” He’s constantly working to craft the story of his ability to be a change agent at Hurston while becoming credentialed at the highest level in his beloved field of English. Lewis has a BA in English, an MA in English Education, and is currently pursuing his doctorate. He’s hoping to finish his PhD in English Literature in the near future, swapping the ABD behind his name for the Dr. in front of it.

> So between now and December, well if not December, next, you know, at the end of the school year in May, I’m hoping to finish it all up. But, um, but after that, down the road, you know, I wouldn’t mind being a college professor or something like that. […] And on

> the side, like write those books I mentioned, you know what I'm saying? […] But for now, I mean while I'm doing this, I enjoy doing it.

Lewis loves his job, but there are points of frustration. The reality of gentrification in the neighborhood and the perception that IB is for the white, more affluent students coming into Hurston have represented continual obstacles in his path, contributing to the feeling of ebbs and flows that exist in the work. He recognizes the school's earliest iteration of IB with limited access led to the belief that IB students were more like polished, soothing classical music while everyone else was raucous, chaotic rock, but he works hard to show that open access truly exists and all students can excel.

> [The early iteration of IB] caused a striation in the school. Like it made it where once they got into classes it was noticeable, and they had like the IB wing where it was like one side of the school, one hall where all the students, all from the charter schools, they all looked different. They all in a certain area, they all got these top-notch classes going on. You walk down the hall, it's like classical music playing, you know, hypothetically. And then, um, on the other side of the school was like "Welcome to the Jungle." […] When I did get the job [of AP/IB Coordinator], it was like, okay, now I really gotta fix this.

Advanced courses, especially IB, are not meant only for white students. He believes IB has helped Hurston become the school it is today because the school now boasts stronger academic success and has notoriety.

> For better or for worse, the people who are at first, uh, hesitant about buying into Hurston, they would not have bought in if they had known they would've been mixed with everyone else. So at the end of the day, it was bad that that was the initial thought:

> that they was trying to come in to keep it separate. But now they're no longer separate and now the program is growing and everything is good, you know, it's a good thing for all parties involved. So now we can, y'know the saying, a rising tide raises all boats. And so that's kinda the story.

He frames any differing opinion as a misinterpretation that more open and direct communication could solve if only people were more adept at sharing their concerns. Being the model of transparency, openness, and approachability is one way that he attempts to counter and dispel concerns. "Sometimes, I'll just say, you know, 'Some people say that a lot of white people are coming to the school and it's causing a problem,' and they are like, 'Kinda, yeah.'" After using such a frank, straightforward approach, he frequently provides quantitative data he believes will offer a counternarrative: "Well, y'know, the thing is though, the school is still 80% Black. Y'know, it's like, it still is more scholarships ever for minorities. And the funny thing is it's more college acceptances in the school history for Black people." Does that approach always work? Of course not. It's a constant revision and editing process he undergoes depending on the audience to attempt to get the message across. "And so that's kind of what we try to impress upon the students too, is that, y'know, it's not them, y'know, us and them and only select people. Anybody can participate if they so choose. So choose." In his role, he has to be a cheerleader, a marketer, a recruiter, a go-getter, a master communicator and professional.

The need to be a professional constantly embodying professionalism was instilled in Lewis at a young age by his father and reinforced in the male role models he's encountered throughout his career.

> It's some people that I just call like, uh, benefactors. There's people who in your life, they just like, you know, you see them and you're like, man, you really, I'm impressed by

> it. […] There's a few that I can name, but they all people who are just, you know, I just kind of seen them grow and they've always been humble, always been good, always had the best interest in mind. You know, they're never like in a negative way, they don't curse or badmouth, not saying that cursing is the most evil thing in the world, but they're all around, just good wholesome people, you know what I'm saying?

During his student-teaching days, his father told him, "Always wear a shirt and tie every day." He took those words to heart and showed up every day in a shirt and tie regardless of the school's dress code for the day. Not only did that help him have more gravitas since he was easily one of the youngest-looking staff members in the building (he continues to sport a rather young appearance), but it also led to the impression that "Man, that guy's always, y'know, on point." These same words may have been uttered before he decided to interview for the newly vacant AP/IB Coordinator position at Hurston all those years ago. He had been hired to be an AP and IB English teacher even though he had been a teacher and part-time IB and Extended Essay Coordinator at his previous job. When he arrived at Hurston, he was easily the most knowledgeable staff member when it came to IB and frequently helped teachers and students navigate the new waters of the program. He calls it "a perfect storm of a situation." The IB Coordinator at the time was not invested in learning more about the program, frequently blaming others for their lack of knowledge and minimal initiative in finding out answers. Lewis believes her unwillingness to answer questions and her general contrariness was off-putting and prompted more people to approach him for help.

> So when [IB teachers] would have questions, you know, they would come to her and say, "Hey, what about these IAs and these essays and whatever like that, how to do the orals and what am I gonna record it on, how are you gonna get it, and what about these forms,"

> you know, and all that kind of stuff. You know, then with the questions, she was like, "Look it up. You know it. Go to the training." You know, 'cause she wouldn't really know 'cause she was new and I would help her out too. I'd be on the sidelines like, "Oh this is dah, dah, dah, dah." And that's kinda how I, and then as a result, you know, I don't know, I guess all those things. The teachers kind of come to me for stuff on the side.

When the IB Coordinator position became available, it was easy for him to apply as the surrogate coordinator and receive the job because of his hard work.

> The lady didn't come back and we had the position open to apply for. And I applied for it and got it. And that's it. And the biggest reason why was, they said, they was like, well, you know, your hard work.

In his full-time role as AP/IB Coordinator, Lewis uses water imagery to describe the work. "It's like ebbs and flows." From the natural movement of the calendar year to the demands of the job, it's all comprised of ebbs and flows that require one consistent thing from him: time management and organization. "It all depends on me, like, well, on being as organized as I can and prepared as I can beforehand." From time spent getting students and teachers prepared to completing course schedules to supporting all stakeholders to scheduling meetings for current and prospective families to arranging field trips and hosting events to handling testing logistics and reflecting on exam results, Lewis is constantly floating from one task to another.

> It's like getting ready for tests, ordering exams, and getting teachers together and then, you know, and then the biggest part I guess is the culminating thing is, you know, it ebbs and flows. And of course people come here, like different little things get thrown at you here and there, you know, just throughout the days. You know, different, miscellaneous tasks, you know, to do throughout the day. So people might ask for a certain thing for you

> or you might have to break up that fight or whatever it is, whatever the situation is, but, um, it really gets a lot at the end because then it's the exam time. So as you may know from your experience, you know, the IB exams alone is already a lot, but then you have IB on top of AP. So over the years we had to just, well, I've had to learn how to just orchestrate all of that.

The work is one massive orchestration effort that requires the kind of meticulousness and attention to detail he prides himself on possessing.

This quality manifested itself in the three artifacts he brought to our second conversation. The first artifact was contact information stored in his phone for every IB student he's ever worked with since 2009. Even before we officially arrived at the artifact sharing portion of our interview, he had already pulled out his phone to scroll through the long list of names.

> Since I'm been doing this and no matter what school, I've always went in the room and said, let me. I'll write my name, number on the board, and I'm like, "This is my phone number. Text me your name, we'll be in contact. I'm either gonna contact the group or I'm gonna contact you personally, but I just want to have your contact information." And, and lo and behold, that is always the case because, you know, IB is like an experience. […] You know, 'cause you taught at an IB school, but you really don't understand unless you're in it. And so, um, and the students, the parents and the students when they're fresh, they don't know what's going on. They, they need somebody to guide them through all of that. And so that's what I tried to do.

His second artifact, a ship/captain metaphor drafted during a professional development session, also spoke to his ability to guide students, families, and staff on their journey through AP/IB. When one of his heroes facilitating the session, James DeFoors, asked the attendees to create a

metaphor to describe their experience as AP and/or IB Coordinators, Lewis once again turned to water imagery to capture his reality. The artifact he brought to our interview was the same metaphor he drafted for DeFoors along with a few additional details.

> So it's kind of like a whole process and the whole time the captain is doing what he gotta do, but unbeknownst to the rest of the people, all the things that are going on behind closed doors. Like, it's a lot of things that like to the students' eye, or you know, the outside eye, you know, it just seems like, you know, I'm in class, everything's going well, dah, dah, dah. But like I said, they don't know about the student that, you know, we have to figure out how to get him, he don't have electricity. […] Or, you know, it's all kinds of different things that's behind the scenes that nobody knows that we had to do. And then there's just the miscellaneous stuff. Like, you know, something like, "Oh, you know, I lost IAs." Like, "Oh no!" then we gotta figure out what we're gonna do. […] And so at the end of the day, like I told you before, it all kinda falls on me.

His third and final artifact also reflected his longevity juggling the world of AP/IB coordination – calendars and planners from 2009 with key AP and IB dates. This was the only artifact he didn't have within reach on his desk when we met because of their fixed location on top of his file cabinet, but the speed in which he hopped up to grab them mirrored the rapidity of his speech. The first calendar, dated back to 2009, was given to him by another one of his heroes in the work, Kareem O'Neal.

> When I first got the job, uh, a guy named Kareem O'Neal, he's retired now, […] he said, "Well, I'll come help you out." […] So he brought his own calendar. He brought, actually, he might've brought this calendar. He brought this calendar. And he was like, this might be his handwriting actually. So he was saying, "Okay, so let's put out all the

> dates." He said, "How many classes do you have, dah dah dah?" And he literally like made out the calendar. […] I don't know, I don't know why I keep it, like when I first started I just put this calendar on top of that file cabinet, you know? And well, I had another office, and it just never left. So whenever a new year comes, I just put it with other, other calendars and they just add up over years and that's what it is. So you said, an artifact to convey my experiences? This is pretty much it because it, like, lays out all the stuff, y'know what I'm saying. Well, at least most of the stuff from the beginning 'till now and it's just sitting over there.

With clear forethought and attention to storytelling, Lewis proudly showcased each of the artifacts that speak to the heart of his experience as an AP and IB open enrollment implementer. To categorize Lewis's artifacts, the perception of himself as captain clearly showed up in the written metaphor with the sailors representing the students on his contact list and the calendar reflecting the annual and cyclical voyage to AP/IB exam season and beyond for graduating seniors. This captain, unlike the one eulogized by Whitman, does not ever take a final journey. Instead, Lewis sees himself as a captain "weathered with experience from traversing this perilous voyage numerous times over many years" that must immediately begin a new journey after shepherding a group across frequently choppy waters. He can only rest and celebrate for a short time before continuing his mission.

> Because on land, there is an even larger group of passengers bolstered by the elation of the recently arrived group. After giving explicit instructions and directions to the new set of passengers and young sailors, the Captain and his crew turn to set sail to the next destination with a group of unseasoned guests who are largely unaware of the trials of the open seas. And with this knowledge, the Captain navigates the ship knowing that, even

> though it takes considerable effort, *as always* [emphasis added], he will get the ship to its destination so that the young sailors can receive the best training as they embark on their own journeys through life.

Again, this is a man with self-efficacy and agency who never settles for failure. As a captain, Lewis embraces his role on the ship of AP/IB implementation, accepting the tide changes that come along with the work. It fuels him and his belief in the role he plays within Hurston High and the greater community.

Step one: Bracketing and phenomenological reduction.

With the portraits of Ray and Lewis anchoring us, I will return to an extensive delineation of the hybrid data explication process of the hermeneutic circle, Groenewald's (2004) method and Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's (1997) portraiture used to inform their ultimate creation. The first step of the data explication process, bracketing and phenomenological reduction, technically began at the inception of the research study. In this step of Groenewald's (2004) method, I bracketed my biases and assumptions in a research journal to avoid imposing prejudgments that drastically affected the ability to see and hear with fresh eyes and ears. The following extensive list comprises many of the topics I journaled about while bracketing: my beliefs about AP and IB open enrollment programs, my personal experiences regarding the initiative, the benefits and challenges I believe are associated with the initiative, and how AP and IB open enrollment aligns with my personal educational philosophy. Bracketing can appear to be a bit of a paradoxical misnomer because "the biases of the researcher are not bracketed, or set aside" (Laverty, 2003, p. 28) at the beginning of the research process to be discarded, ignored, or avoided. Instead, bracketing allows for the possibility of greater recognition, awareness, and insight into how a re-

searcher's personal beliefs may color their understanding of and interaction with the phenomenon under investigation. The researcher must recognize and appreciate this step because "the articulation of early presumptions does not inhibit or distort her clear vision; rather it is likely to make her lens more lucid, less encumbered by the shows of bias" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997, p. 186). The goal of bracketing is for researchers "to come to know things with a receptiveness and a presence that lets us be and lets situations and things be, so that we can come to know them just as they appear to us" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 86). This self-reflection is crucial to phenomenological study and extends to the data collection and explication processes, but hermeneutic phenomenology differs in the purpose behind bracketing. For transcendental phenomenologists, the goal of bracketing is to protect against imposing assumptions and biases from the data collection to data explication process, but hermeneutic phenomenology asks researchers to engage in bracketing and phenomenological reduction in order to acknowledge and embed their thoughts explicitly into the interpretive process (Laverty, 2003; Moustakas, 1994). Bracketing also extended to the final two steps of Groenewald's (2004) method and intersected well with Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's (1997) discussion of portraiture that informed this research study. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) stressed the importance of undertaking a process of self-reflection, declaring "most importantly, portraitists need to reflect on their personal contextual frameworks and become clear about the assumptions and expectations they bring to the work at hand" (p. 67). Bracketing provided an optimal opportunity to reflect and unearth my perspective, biases, and presumptions about the phenomenon under investigation.

Bracketed research journal entry.

In accordance with the first step of phenomenological research, I bracketed my thoughts in a journal before beginning the modified interview sequence with co-researchers. The goal was

to capture any and all thoughts associated with both academic programs, the potential co-researchers, and AP/IB implementation. Instead of being written in narrative form, I listed my thoughts with bullet points to capture the more stream-of-consciousness experience I felt during the bracketing process.

- AP and IB are two separate beasts. AP allows you to pick and choose, not necessarily building a clear profile or alignment. It's more about a bar and understanding content at a wide swath. IB, on the other hand, emphasizes depth over breadth.
- I believe that IB is a superior program, but I never experienced it from a student's perspective. It's a holistic program though that establishes a bar across all content areas and operates from a school of thought more than just that "advanced" bar. There's also more of a recognition of the whole child with the inclusion of Theory of Knowledge, Extended Essay, Creativity/Action/Service that AP is lacking.
- I valued my time as an IB educator – I grew more and had to up my game in ways that I did not anticipate before teaching IB. I was also a part of the IB authorization process, so I take pride in being a part of the team that brought the IB Diploma Programme to Brooklyn Latin and saw it through.
- IB is tied with my most rewarding educational experience as a practitioner. I was still involved with IB at Harlem Village Academies when I transitioned into administration, but my lens was different and I was no longer in the classroom. In the South, I have not worked at a school that offers IB.
- I struggle to understand how one school can house AP and IB without creating a school within a school for those who opt into IB since it's such an extensive program and course

of study. How does it not become the flagship program with more prestige than its AP counterpart?

- I am an AP4All administrator now and I value the opportunity it affords our students who would not otherwise have access. I do believe that it helps establish a rigor bar for our teachers who were not consistently finding the college-ready bar beforehand.
- I believe IB is more challenging and rigorous, but I have become way more familiar with AP assignments and find value in what students are being asked to produce on those assessments.
- I like IB rubrics more than AP rubrics.
- I believe the IB examiner process makes more sense than the AP reader process, but the camaraderie and on-site component of AP speaks more to my love of relatedness and relationships. It would be awesome to score IB papers with other people because it is an isolated process.
- My research study is taking place at a location whose data shows that more white students participate in the IB program. The school, however, is more diverse.
- My research site is in a rapidly gentrifying area. The IB program was sought after to encourage more white students and academically stronger students to return to it.
- I enter this study believing that the school site operates a school within a school and wondered how the administration felt about it. I recognized that the school had recently transitioned from a Black female leader to a white male leader as well. Does that have any relevance? I'm sure.

- I believe that it is hard to serve multiple masters, so one of the programs at the school must be suffering or running a clear second to the other one. My assumption is that the inferior program will be AP.
- I believe that the administrators are doing the absolute best they can and happen to like the principal a lot. I think he means well, loves his job, and loves the city.
- If I had children, I would want them to participate in a well-taught IB Programme.
- I think there's an element of craziness that has to exist in an administrator working at a school that has AP and IB programs and wonder how you schedule to accommodate both programs. I also wonder how students feel attending a school with both programs? Does it feel like there are more options or is it confusing? What if you're a student who doesn't want to participate in either program? Do you still feel like you belong? What if you're a teacher who doesn't teach an AP/IB course? Do you feel like you teach the lower-achieving students? Is there a hierarchy? Does that hierarchy extend to teachers (i.e. teachers of AP/IB courses are somehow more elevated/experienced/effective than their counterparts?)

With the goal of bracketing being to "acknowledge our implicit assumptions and attempt to make them explicit" (Kafle, 2011, p. 190), I wanted to unearth as many assumptions, biases, and preconceived notions I had about AP and IB programs. Doing so was essential to the hermeneutic phenomenological process because it illuminated the embedded thoughts I had about the phenomenon in question that could potentially color my perception of the co-researchers' lived experiences. Bracketing also intersected with the reality of any researcher embracing portraiture because "the researcher does not come as an empty slate to the job of interpreting the subject of the portrait. Individual characteristics and experiences shape the portraitist's voice" (Lawrence-

Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 66). Being acutely aware of my thoughts and beliefs rooted in prior experiences was of paramount importance before attempting to crystallize the co-researchers' lived experiences with AP and IB open enrollment implementation at a singular site through the vehicle of portraiture.

Step two: Line-by-line coding, transcription, and determining units of meaning.

To begin the second step of the data explication process in Groenewald's (2004) method while incorporating aspects of portraiture, all interviews were listened to three times initially without the written transcripts accompanying this process. Instead, I used a notebook to take literal notes of the conversation, capturing as many details as possible without adding in my personal thoughts or interpretations. I also made sure to pay attention to notable words and phrases that might potentially lead to significant units of meaning. The next step was to create transcripts of the interviews. As a novice researcher, I made the decision to use Temi, an online speech-to-text automated transcription service, believing that it would provide structure and scaffolding to my transcription endeavors. It is worth noting that I spent a total of 55 hours on the editing platform correcting the spelling of words, fixing punctuation errors, transcribing words that the software was not able to understand due to the co-researchers' volume, speed of talking, or their speech patterns, and creating line breaks between speakers. Although the intention of using Temi was to add scaffolding and efficiency into the data explication process, I recognize that it was unnecessary and detracted from my experience with the co-researchers' words. Instead of being responsible for transferring their words from the recordings to written form, I outsourced aspects of that responsibility to a transcription service. Hindsight bias truly exists and it is one I felt when reflecting on the decision to use Temi during step two of Groenewald's (2004) process. If I

were completing this step again, I would manually transcribe all interviews to maintain an intimate connection with the co-researchers' words for the entirety of the explication process. Doing so would have also ensured my absolute fidelity to my chosen methodology.

During the 55 hours spent perfecting the transcripts, I also made note of specific non-verbals like minor and major pauses, finger tapping, chuckles and laughter, huffing, and phones ringing to reflect more nuance and contextualization. Since I had listened to each interview three times as well, there was a level of familiarity with the co-researcher's words and non-verbals that I appreciated having when I transitioned to editing on the platform. After making the necessary edits and including the non-verbal cues, I printed the transcriptions. This step was critical because hand-coding is an essential part of phenomenological research that allowed me to maximize the intimate connection between myself and the co-researcher's words. Using computer software to provide codes would have inherently distanced me from the coding/clustering process, a reality that would be averse to the intent of phenomenological research aimed at distilling the essence of people's lived experiences. Furthermore, hand-coding ensured that each statement was regarded with equal value to maintain the integrity of the process.

With the printed transcripts in hand, I listened to each interview another three times to ascertain the gestalt or gist (Groenewald, 2004; Hycner, 1985). To better understand the concept of gestalt, it is a psychological term referencing the idea that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Gilligan, Brown, and Rogers (as cited in Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997) argued that this "voice-centered analysis […] requires that the researcher read and scrutinize an interview transcript four different times," (p. 191), and I believed the triple listening without written transcripts and the subsequent listening rounds with the written transcripts reflected adherence to that suggestion. Listening to each interview multiple times allowed me to "develop a holistic sense"

(Groenewald, 2004) of the co-researchers instead of focusing on their specific responses to questions. Figure 3 below will further delineate this process. After having a general sense of each interview, it was important to transition to focusing on the micro-level by "going over every word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, or significant non-verbal communication" (Hycner, 1985, p. 282). This led to the creation of descriptive codes believed to capture the meaning of the co-researcher's words. Hycner (1985) delineated an effective example of descriptive coding in his guidelines for phenomenological analysis that I referred to often during this step. In his example, he created a table with the transcribed interview in the left column and the units of meaning in the right column written in the language of the co-researcher with little variation. When I hand-coded the transcripts, I followed the essence of his strategy, writing the units of meaning in the co-researcher's language above the text. At that point, I had not aesthetically reconfigured the interview into columns. When I transferred the hand coding to the computer, however, I reformatted the transcribed text into two columns with the original text appearing in the left column and my subsequent codes, units of meaning, and accompanying commentary in the right column.

The decision to code the significant units of meaning to create themes was not taken lightly in this phenomenological study. After all, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) pointed out that researchers working in the interpretive or hermeneutic tradition typically "resist the use of rigid, discrete codes and give less emphasis to the organization of data into analytic categories" (p. 191). As a novice researcher, however, it was important to embrace the structure provided by using codes. Moreover, I believed the similarities between hermeneutic phenomenology and portraiture allowed me to follow the process of portraitists who balance "the tension between

organization and classification on one hand and maintaining the rich complexity of human experience on the other" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 192). Descriptive codes and complex interpretative analysis coexist in Groenewald's (2004) phenomenological process as well.

All units of meaning were initially listed in this second step with the goal being to determine "the essence of the meaning expressed in a word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, or significant non-verbal communication" (Hycner, 1999, p. 282). I cross-referenced memos and field notes to ascertain relevant nonverbal communication that helped delineate units of meaning, following the process illustrated below (Figure 3). I also retained the original words of the co-researcher as recommended by Hycner (1985) and Groenewald (2004). Once all units of meaning were coded, they were examined in conjunction with the research question to determine if the co-researchers had contributed information illuminating the questions under investigation (Hycner, 1985). Statements and units of meaning deemed "clearly irrelevant to the phenomenon being studied" (Hycner, 1985, p. 284) were eliminated along with any redundancies at this stage.

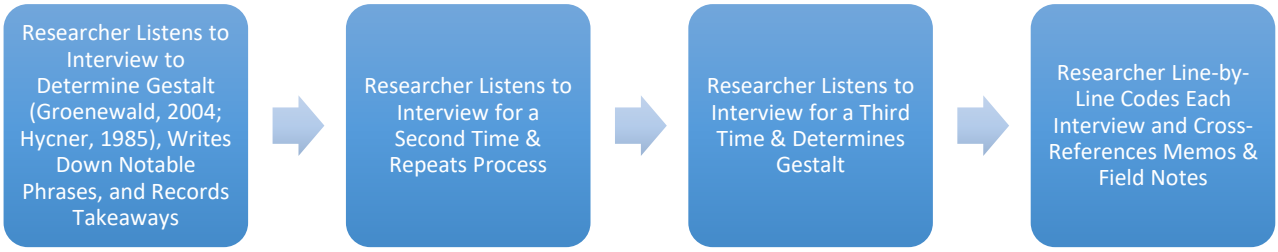


Figure 3. Process of Determining Codes & Units of Meaning

Codes and units of meaning.

Again, the process began with a triple listening of each interview to discover the gestalt or gist and begin capturing units of meaning (Groenewald, 2004; Hycner, 1985). As Hycner (1985) defined, a unit of meaning represents "those words, phrases, non-verbal or para-linguistic meaning (irrespective of the research question) clearly differentiated from that which precedes and follows" (p. 282). Each interview was played continuously and I intentionally refrained from

rewinding to minimize the urge to transition into an interpretative phase of analysis. While listening the first time, I jotted down key words, phrases, and quotes in a notebook, making sure to double-space to allow space between these units of meaning for future rounds of annotation. I also wrote down my first listen takeaways immediately afterwards to capture them while the impressions were the strongest. Combining the captured units of meaning while allowing space for potentially subjective takeaways responds to Groenewald's (2004) recommendation to keep a journal to record "specific issues that might arise or to record general impressions. In this manner, these perceptions do not interfere with the attempt to bracket interpretations and biases while trying to stay as true to the interviewee's meaning as much as possible" (p. 281). The takeaways captured in the research notebook summarized significant units of meaning heard in each interview along with some of my musings and subjective reflections. After waiting 10 minutes, I then listened for the second time, adding depth to the annotations in the space provided on the empty lines using a different color pen. During the second listen, I paid more attention to non-verbal cues heard (i.e. fingers tapping, throat clearing, hand clapping, chuckles or laughter, sighs and huffs) on the recording to further contextualize my initial thoughts. I jotted down second listen takeaways immediately afterwards without re-reading the initial takeaways. During the third listen that occurred within an hour of the second listen, the goal was to re-read both rounds of notes and make any final additions or corrections to the key words, phrases, quotes, and non-verbal cues heard in the interview. Again, I used a different colored pen to distinguish between each round of listening. I completed this process for both of Ray's interviews before transitioning to Lewis in order to determine the general gist of each co-researcher's interviews in isolation.

The images below illustrate an excerpt of this colorful process with the three listening rounds represented in purple, turquoise, and pink ink on the left page and the more macro-level takeaways represented on the right. (Figure 4)

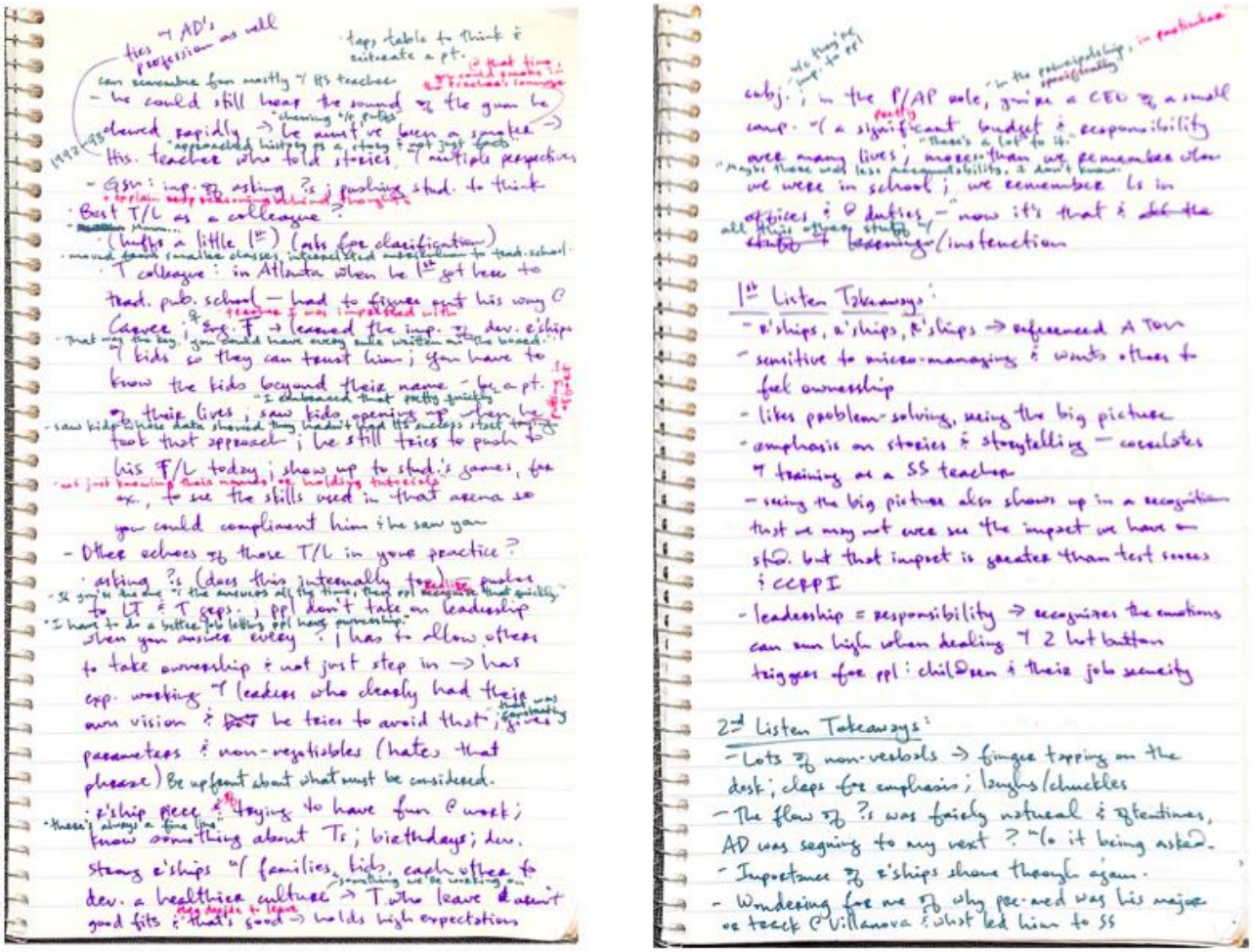


Figure 4. Copies of Interview Notebook with Annotations from Multiple Listening Sessions

The takeaways combined specific details that emerged from each interview, but there were also entries that captured reflective thoughts about the co-researcher and the data explication process itself. As an example, after listening to the first interview in the modified phenomenological interview sequence with Ray, here were the two rounds of takeaways recorded in my research notebook (Table 3). Note that place names have been changed throughout to protect anonymity.

First Listen Takeaways	• Relationships, relationships, relationships → referenced A TON • Sensitive to micro-managing and wants others to feel ownership • Likes problem-solving, seeing the big picture • Emphasis on stories & storytelling → correlates with training as a SS teacher • Seeing the big picture also shows up in a recognition that we may not ever see the impact we have on students but that impact is greater than test scores & CCRPI (College and Career Ready Performance Index) • Leadership = responsibility → recognizes the emotions can run high when dealing with two hot button triggers for people: children & their job security
Second Listen Takeaways	• Lots of non-verbals → finger tapping on the desk; claps for emphasis; laughs/chuckles • The flow of questions was fairly natural and oftentimes Ray was segueing to my next question without it being asked. • Importance of relationships shines through again. • Wondering for me why pre-med was his major or track at Penn State & what led him to SS • Alternative pathways echo throughout his early experiences until he becomes certified & then enters traditional public schools • Kudos for mostly capturing the gist of the content on Listen #1 → found myself adding quotes during Listen #2 and filling in more specifics to flesh out the gist referenced in the 1st round of notes. Listen #2 started about 10 minutes after the 1st listen; I switched pen colors to show shift & started from the top • Had a thought during Listen #2 that I appreciated not having the precise transcription in front of me to see what I caught by myself. Excited to see the transcription now so I can layer on context & better pinpoint the unique themes. • Last thought: I see why phenomenologists like immersing themselves in the text & I appreciate the process of going from whole to point to whole to point to whole.

Table 3. Takeaways from First Interview with Ray

I repeated the process with Lewis's first interview as well, but the tenor of those reflections were different since the content of his interview differed significantly from Ray's. Without prompting, Lewis ended up discussing content that I did not intend to cover until our second interview and

my preliminary interpretations and reflections included some of that specific content about the IB Programme. Although I allowed the interview to include this content and did not interrupt him, I made sure to ask the questions that encouraged him to reflect on his general experience as an educator and a leader. Seidman (2006) specifically cautioned against blurring the lines between interviews in the phenomenological sequence, insisting "the interviewer must maintain a delicate balance between providing enough openness for the participants to tell their stories and enough focus to the allow the interview structure to work" (p. 20). I attempted to do so during Lewis's first interview, but acknowledge that I faltered at times in maintaining this delicate balance as a novice researcher who perhaps overprivileged openness and uninterrupted conversation throughout the process. Here are my takeaways from Lewis's initial interview. (Table 4)

First Listen Takeaways	• Emphasis on history throughout • Emphasis on autonomy • Concepts can feel binary for him: charter vs. traditional; Black vs. white; IB vs. general education; suburbs vs. city; old vs. new; old district norms vs. new district norms; neighboring district vs. his district • He *does* speak really fast (like he warned me early on) ☺ & packs a ton of details into each question. • Sees diversity as an asset & believes misinterpretation has led some to see IB & gentrification in a negative light • I was pinged by the discussion of the neighborhood changing & schools declining as a result of housing projects being eliminated → integration of "those students" into the suburban schools seen as a negative while integration of white, mostly charter students into city school seen as a positive – lots of race & class implications with political considerations, but I would have wanted the conversation to have more nuance & complexity. That's probably my bias showing though. • He enjoys his work because of the ability to help change outcomes, especially for folks representing the "lowest lows." So interesting. Is there an element of savior mentality there or simply a recognition that effecting greater change often comes with interacting with folks deemed to be living the lowest lows?

	• Sees himself and IB as a change agent & feels like the face of IB
Second Listen Takeaways	• Still felt the emphasis on "this vs. that" • He definitely feels passionate about IB. • This interview helped shine some light on him as a man, educator, husband, & father, but most information bled heavily into focal point of interview #2. • He's a helper at his core & feels inspired by humble people who constantly progress and become experts of some kind. • He's also a builder & likes being a part of programs from the start so he can make his mark and recruit more people into it. He's a marketer, recruiter, and gunner. • He sees himself as the one to get things done & wants everyone to be on the same page & see the IB Programme in the same beneficial light. • He loses train of thought a lot and can sometimes share beginning of a thought without closing the loop – some dangling ideas.

Table 4. Takeaways from First Interview with Lewis

Coding also included exporting the Temi interview transcripts to ensure I had the actual words of the co-researchers in front of me during this part of the data explication process. The exported versions were reformatted into two columns akin to Hycner's (1985) approach to separate the transcribed interview from the identified units of meaning, coding, and the accompanying commentary. After reading and annotating each interview line-by-line, specific and oftentimes overlapping units of meaning emerged for each co-researcher. Focusing on Lewis's first interview, one of the takeaways was that concepts seemed binary to him and there was an emphasis on "this vs. that." This synthesizing, culminating thought was only valid if there were units of meaning that reflected a juxtaposition of ideas from his interview. What specific comments did Lewis make that could potentially support binary thinking representative of "this vs. that?" Specific units of meaning are included below with my accompanying coding and commentary. It is worth noting again that place names have been changed to protect anonymity; the

same will continue to occur throughout this study. While the list is non-exhaustive, it is comprehensive enough to highlight units of meaning from Lewis's first interview and my subsequent line of thinking while coding. (Table 5)

Concept of This vs. That	
They had, like, the IB wing where it was like one side of the school, one hall where all the students, all from the charter schools, they all looked different. They all in a certain area, they all got these top-notch classes going on. You walk down the hall, it's like classical music playing, you know, hypothetically. And then um, on the other side of the school was like, "Welcome to the Jungle." You know what I'm saying?"	Juxtaposition b/t experience w/ classical music & peace (IB) vs. "Welcome to the Jungle" Nirvana & *Lean on Me* (everyone else)
"Oh, you going to Southern[2]? Oh y'know, watch out," you know, all that kind of stuff. And then when they get here, this group of kids were like, wow, you know, it's not, you know, why am I in this class? You know what I'm saying? And then their friends are across the hall, "You saw the fight down the hall?" And they're like, "Nah, I was…" you know what I'm saying? "Like, what's going on?"	Juxtaposition of IB students vs. other students: peace & learning vs. chaos & jungle
So we have kids that are, you know, go to Paris for the summer and they do all kinds of stuff, you know. And we got kids,	Juxtaposition b/t the haves & have nots to illustrate higher highs & lower lows

[2] Context: Before Hurston adopted a new name, it used to be known as Southern. Students used to be warned about the roughness of the school, but Lewis is describing the experience of the IB students once they arrive.

it's like literally, you know, trying to find out where they're going to eat tonight and sleep tonight and that kinda stuff.	
‘Cause I know back in Tucker, I used to chump off anybody, like [smacks teeth] “Guy, what you gonna do?” But here they, people would be like, "Hey, you know, I gotta stash the gun in the back, you know, whatever. You know, my brother, he went to jail last night, you know."	Juxtaposition of stud. across districts: students you could “check” or verbally shut down quickly vs. stud. w/ more violent/unfortunate backgrounds

Table 5. Units of Meaning Reflecting Concept of "This vs. That" in First Interview with Lewis

In order to delineate units of meaning, it was important to anchor my findings in the specific language of each co-researcher. This step of the data explication process “is a crystallization and condensation of what the participant has said, still using as much as possible the literal words of the participant” (Hycner, 1985, p. 282). To complete this step of Groenewald’s (2004) method, I allowed the co-researchers’ language, wording, and non-verbal cues to shine and provided coding and commentary I believed to be in direct alignment with their ideas, thoughts, and beliefs.

Step three: Units of meaning become themes.

In the third step of Groenewald’s (2004) simplified method, the units of meaning were clustered to form themes. At this point, the interviews were listened to again to make sure that the clusters were reflective of the units of meaning expressed in the respective interviews. Gilligan, Brown, and Rogers (as cited in Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) suggested four distinct readings of an interview transcript to ensure a nuanced interpretive analysis and I extended that recommendation to include listening to the interview a minimum of four times as well throughout the data explication process. Marrying the transcripts with the gestalt, or general essence, of

the interviews, memos, field notes, and artifact analysis aligned with the concept of the hermeneutic circle and helped accomplish the mission of "maintaining the rich complexity of human experience" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 192). In the study, I listed each unit of meaning beside the co-researcher's words to make my interpretative process fully transparent. The units of meaning were accompanied by a summary or analysis of the co-researcher's words to further illuminate my understanding of those specific words, phrases, or sentences. Once the clustered units of meaning were identified, I determined if one or more central theme encompassed the essence of the clusters (Hycner, 1985). I recognized all themes present in the interviews that could be supported by units of meaning, irrespective of their relationship to the study's research questions. The goal was not to minimize the nuances of the text by overly consolidating or narrowing the focus. In a manner akin to the hermeneutic circle and the construct of portraiture, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) reminded me of the similarities between this step in the phenomenological process and the interplay between the parts and the whole:

> The identification of emergent themes does not reduce the complexity of the whole; it merely makes complexity more comprehensible. Indeed the recognition of emergent themes serves as surely to identify important disjunctures as to clarify the ways in which the parts of the whole fit together. (pgs. 215-6)

Even though I was encouraged to bracket presumptions and presuppositions again during this step (Groenewald, 2004), there was still subjectivity in the naming of themes that should be acknowledged. I did so by making my interpretive process transparent.

Themes and accompanying commentary from interviews.

Staying consistent with the method of line-by-line coding by hand, the initial recognition of themes and accompanying commentary was done in the same manner. Using pencil to code

the typed transcripts allowed for quick modifications as categories and themes emerged from the specific units of meaning found in each interview. Seidman (2006) explained this process as the moment where the researcher "searches for connecting threads and patterns among the excerpts within those categories and for connections between the various categories that might be called themes" (p. 125). Similar to his explanation, I looked at all the significant words, phrases, and sentences I had underlined throughout the interview and began attempting to categorize them into themes. At this point, I did not consider whether the themes were aligned to my research questions; I simply labeled the themes distilled from the various units of meaning and "kept the labels tentative [because] locking in categories too early can lead to dead ends" (Seidman, 2006, p. 126). Table 6 lists the most significant themes that emerged from the units of meaning spanning all interviews.

Actions	Attitudes
Results of Action/Attitude	Past Experience
Beliefs	Knowledge
Feeling	Direction
School Description	Student Description
Essential Educator Qualities (EEQ)	Undesirable Educator Behavior (UEB)
Belief about Students (BAS)	Ideal Student Outcome (ISO)
Leadership Practice (LP)	Past or Current AP/IB Practice
Benefits of AP/IB	Drawbacks of AP/IB
Beliefs about AP/IB	Policy & Politics

Table 6. Most Significant Themes/Categories from Units of Meaning Across All Interviews

This categorization process also included additional notations to help me create more distinctions. For example, an (A) after a theme indicated that the co-researcher was speaking about an adult experience or an adult belief. A (K) was used when the co-researcher was speaking about

an experience from their earlier years as a kid. An (S) reflected that students were under discussion. I also used symbols to reflect gradations in the content being shared: a (+) indicated that the co-researcher was sharing information they deemed to be positive; a (-) was used for neutral content; a (△) indicated a negative or qualifying sentiment was being shared. For greater clarity, I will provide a tangible example of what I processed as a qualifying statement. In his second interview, Ray made the following comment to describe his school community, the students, and the staff:

> I would say it's a school filled with, um, wonderful students who bring a lot of strengths to the table, um, yet have a lot of needs, um, that we have to address as well for them to succeed. And a place filled with, um, educators who, for the most part care, um, about children, um, and who go above and beyond and spend, uh, a lot of time outside of the contracted hours trying to do things to benefit, um, this school and the community.

Here is my initial coding of these two sentences with additional notations:

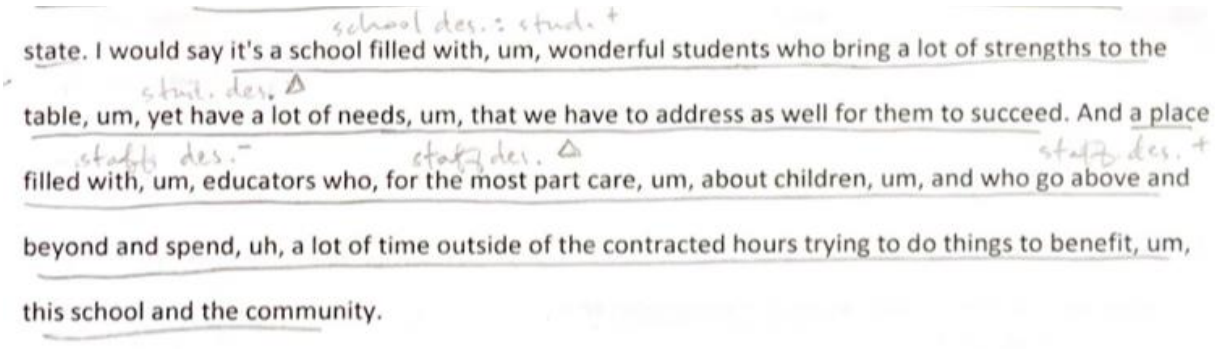
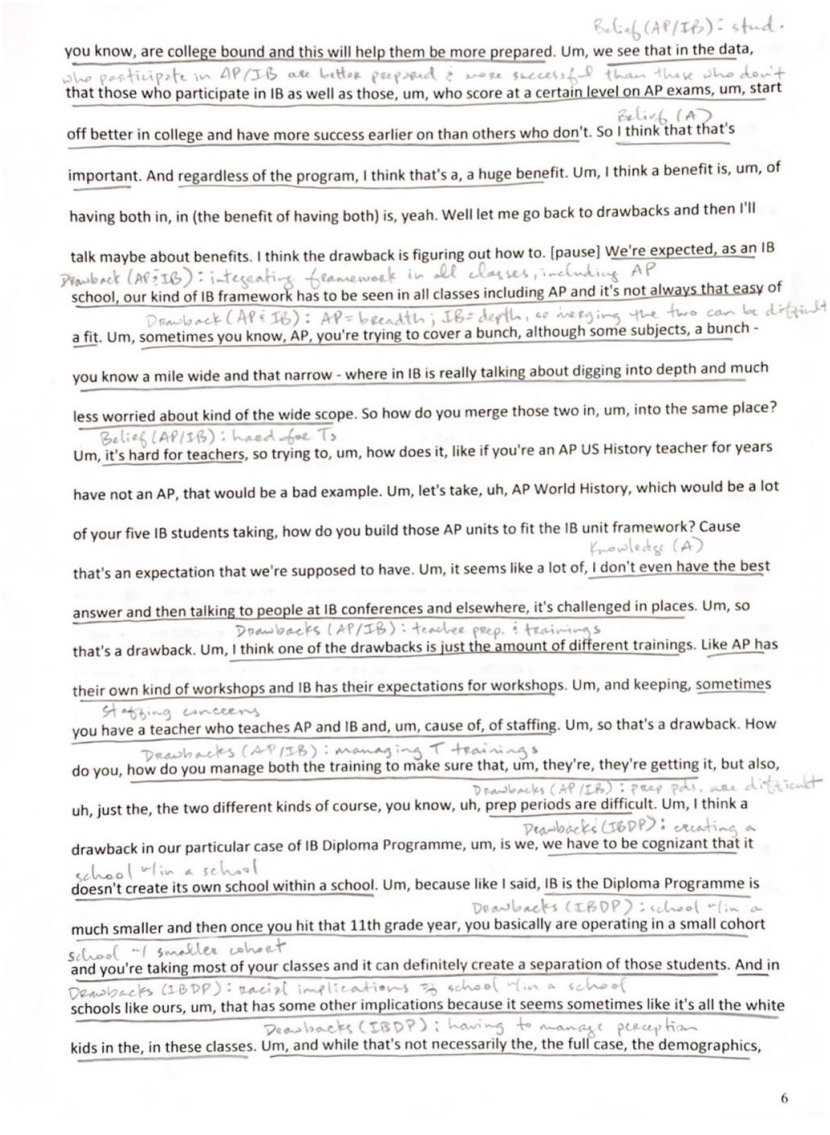


Figure 5. Initial Coding

All three symbols appear in these lines. Ray made statements that positively described the student and staff community, but he also used words and phrases I categorized as qualifying because they complicated his initial thought and changed the tenor of his ideas. Describing the school as "a place filled with educators" was a neutral statement (-) but adding the phrase "who,

for the most part care, um, about children" complicated that thought (△). One can assume from his statement that there are some educators he believes do not care about children. He finished with what he deems to be positive attributes of educators (+), the ones "who go above and beyond […]."

To grasp what this process looked like on a larger scale, here are two transcribed pages with my initial pencil coding (Figure 6). Ray was responding to a question about what he deems to be the benefits and drawbacks of operating an AP and IB program concurrently.



Belief (AP/IB): stud.

you know, are college bound and this will help them be more prepared. Um, we see that in the data,
who participate in AP/IB are better prepared & more successful than those who don't
that those who participate in IB as well as those, um, who score at a certain level on AP exams, um, start
Belief (A)
off better in college and have more success earlier on than others who don't. So I think that that's
important. And regardless of the program, I think that's a, a huge benefit. Um, I think a benefit is, um, of
having both in, in (the benefit of having both) is, yeah. Well let me go back to drawbacks and then I'll
talk maybe about benefits. I think the drawback is figuring out how to. [pause] We're expected, as an IB
Drawback (AP&IB): integrating framework in all classes, including AP
school, our kind of IB framework has to be seen in all classes including AP and it's not always that easy of
Drawback (AP&IB): AP=breadth; IB=depth, so merging the two can be difficult
a fit. Um, sometimes you know, AP, you're trying to cover a bunch, although some subjects, a bunch -
you know a mile wide and that narrow - where in IB is really talking about digging into depth and much
less worried about kind of the wide scope. So how do you merge those two in, um, into the same place?
Belief (AP/IB): hard for Ts
Um, it's hard for teachers, so trying to, um, how does it, like if you're an AP US History teacher for years
have not an AP, that would be a bad example. Um, let's take, uh, AP World History, which would be a lot
of your five IB students taking, how do you build those AP units to fit the IB unit framework? Cause
Knowledge (A)
that's an expectation that we're supposed to have. Um, it seems like a lot of, I don't even have the best
answer and then talking to people at IB conferences and elsewhere, it's challenged in places. Um, so
Drawbacks (AP/IB): teacher prep. & trainings
that's a drawback. Um, I think one of the drawbacks is just the amount of different trainings. Like AP has
their own kind of workshops and IB has their expectations for workshops. Um, and keeping, sometimes
staffing concerns
you have a teacher who teaches AP and IB and, um, cause of, of staffing. Um, so that's a drawback. How
Drawbacks (AP/IB): managing T trainings
do you, how do you manage both the training to make sure that, um, they're, they're getting it, but also,
Drawbacks (AP/IB): Prep Pds. are difficult
uh, just the, the two different kinds of course, you know, uh, prep periods are difficult. Um, I think a
Drawbacks (IBDP): creating a
drawback in our particular case of IB Diploma Programme, um, is we, we have to be cognizant that it
school w/in a school
doesn't create its own school within a school. Um, because like I said, IB is the Diploma Programme is
Drawbacks (IBDP): school w/in a
much smaller and then once you hit that 11th grade year, you basically are operating in a small cohort
school ~ smaller cohort
and you're taking most of your classes and it can definitely create a separation of those students. And in
Drawbacks (IBDP): racial implications 2; school w/in a school
schools like ours, um, that has some other implications because it seems sometimes like it's all the white
Drawbacks (IBDP): having to manage perception
kids in the, in these classes. Um, and while that's not necessarily the, the full case, the demographics,

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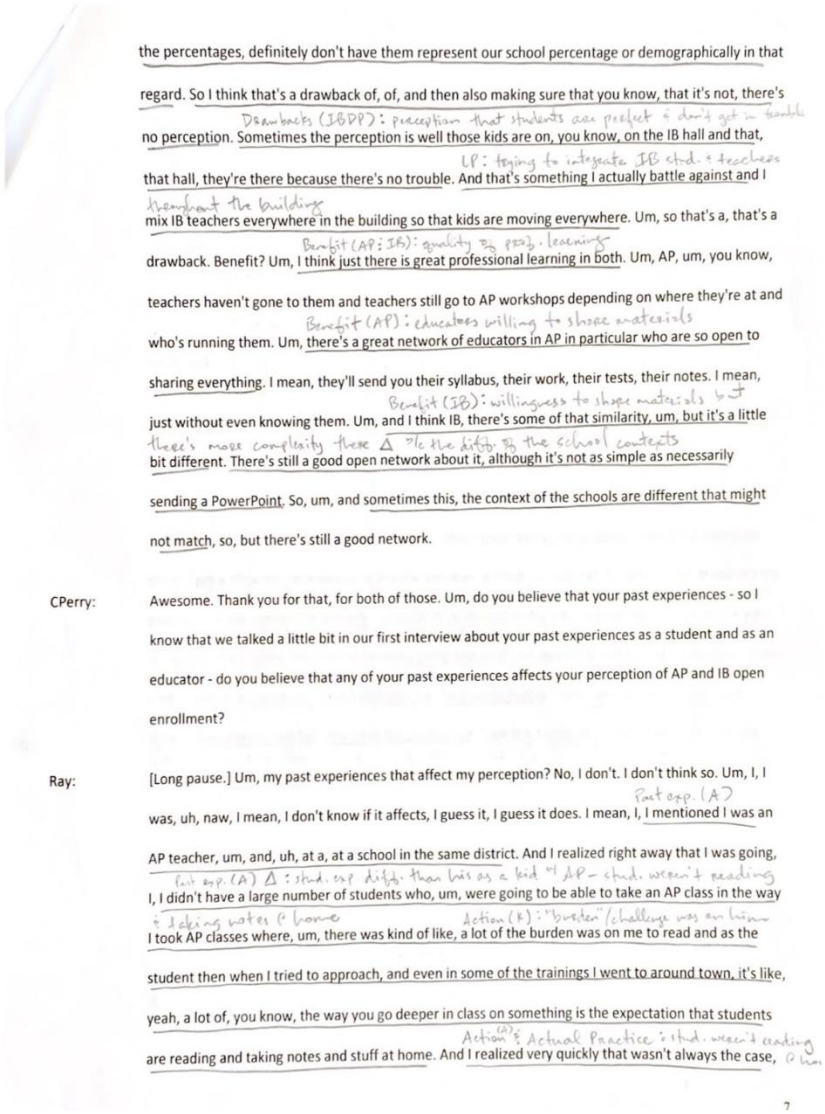

the percentages, definitely don't have them represent our school percentage or demographically in that regard. So I think that's a drawback of, of, and then also making sure that you know, that it's not, there's no perception. Sometimes the perception is well those kids are on, you know, on the IB hall and that, that hall, they're there because there's no trouble. And that's something I actually battle against and I mix IB teachers everywhere in the building so that kids are moving everywhere. Um, so that's a, that's a drawback. Benefit? Um, I think just there is great professional learning in both. Um, AP, um, you know, teachers haven't gone to them and teachers still go to AP workshops depending on where they're at and who's running them. Um, there's a great network of educators in AP in particular who are so open to sharing everything. I mean, they'll send you their syllabus, their work, their tests, their notes. I mean, just without even knowing them. Um, and I think IB, there's some of that similarity, um, but it's a little bit different. There's still a good open network about it, although it's not as simple as necessarily sending a PowerPoint. So, um, and sometimes this, the context of the schools are different that might not match, so, but there's still a good network.

CPerry: Awesome. Thank you for that, for both of those. Um, do you believe that your past experiences - so I know that we talked a little bit in our first interview about your past experiences as a student and as an educator - do you believe that any of your past experiences affects your perception of AP and IB open enrollment?

Ray: [Long pause.] Um, my past experiences that affect my perception? No, I don't. I don't think so. Um, I, I was, uh, naw, I mean, I don't know if it affects, I guess it, I guess it does. I mean, I, I mentioned I was an AP teacher, um, and, uh, at a, at a school in the same district. And I realized right away that I was going, I, I didn't have a large number of students who, um, were going to be able to take an AP class in the way I took AP classes where, um, there was kind of like, a lot of the burden was on me to read and as the student then when I tried to approach, and even in some of the trainings I went to around town, it's like, yeah, a lot of, you know, the way you go deeper in class on something is the expectation that students are reading and taking notes and stuff at home. And I realized very quickly that wasn't always the case,

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Figure 6. Transcribed Interview Pages with Themes and Additional Notations

After this initial round of coding, it was important to transfer the ideas into an entirely computer-based document for ease of safe-keeping, more data manipulation capabilities, and to incorporate a more visual and colorful coding system that allowed for quicker theme location across interviews. It also provided an additional opportunity to meaningfully engage with the interview content. To begin this process, the interview transcriptions were re-formatted to create a second column where coding and commentary could live directly beside the precise words spoken by the co-researcher. I then incorporated color for the additional notations and some of the significant

themes spanning interviews. To clearly showcase this transference of coding from being pencil-based to computer-based, we return to the excerpt from Ray's second interview where he commented on his school, student, and staff community. (Figure 7)

Ray: I would say it's a **school filled with, um, wonderful students who bring a lot of strengths to the table, um, yet have a lot of needs, um, that we have to address as well for them to succeed.** And **a place filled with, um, educators who, for the most part care, um, about children, um, and who go above and beyond and spend, uh, a lot of time outside of the contracted hours trying to do things to benefit, um, this school and the community.**	School Desc.: + *wonderful students & ^ statement re: their needs along with their strengths* Staff Desc.: - ^ + *staff going above and beyond the workday hours seen as a positive*

Figure 7. Coding Example with Additional Notations

The written (△) became a (^) symbol for the sake of speed while transferring the codes and I incorporated color to more easily see trends within and across interviews. Green represented the positive (+) category, neutral statements (-) were left in black, qualifying statements (^) became orange, and comments reflecting a negative thought became red. Using another excerpt from Ray's second interview, Figure 8 shows the inclusion of red text to indicate content shared that the co-researcher deemed to be a negative. The categorization system is also expanded here to include (IBDP) for thoughts shared specifically about the IB Diploma Programme, (AP) for Advanced Placement, (IB) for International Baccalaureate, and (AP/IB) for thoughts representing both programs (Figure 8). Again, Ray was responding to what he believed to be the drawbacks of implementing an AP and IB program concurrently.

Ray: **Sometimes the perception is well those kids are on, you know, on the IB hall and that, that hall, they're there because**	Drawback (IBDP): *perception that students are perfect & don't*

there's no trouble. And that's something I actually battle against and I mix IB teachers everywhere in the building so that kids are moving everywhere. Um, so that's a, that's a drawback.	*get into trouble; he combats by mixing IB teachers & students throughout the building*
Benefit? Um, **I think just there is great professional learning in both**. Um, AP, um, you know, teachers haven't gone to them and teachers still go to AP workshops depending on where they're at and who's running them. Um, **there's a great network of educators in AP in particular who are so open to sharing everything. I mean, they'll send you their syllabus, their work, their tests, their notes. I mean, just without even knowing them**. Um, and **I think IB, there's some of that similarity, um, but it's a little bit different. There's still a good open network about it, although it's not as simple as necessarily sending a PowerPoint. So, um, and sometimes this, the context of the schools are different that might not match, so, but there's still a good network.**	Benefit (AP/IB): *quality of professional learning* Benefit (AP): *educators willing to share materials* Benefit (IB): +^ *willingness to share materials but there's more complexity involved b/c of the different school contexts*

Figure 8. Coding Example #2 with Additional Notations

It is important to stress that all of the themes generated from the units of meaning in each interview were not pre-determined with the notable exception of benefits and drawbacks of the AP/IB programs. Since I asked each co-researcher specifically about what they deemed to be the benefits and drawbacks of AP and IB, it made sense to anticipate that they would provide information that I could eventually code using those categories. In true phenomenological fashion, however, I did not enter into conversations with the co-researchers anticipating the content they would share in response to our semi-structured interview sequence. I wanted their organic, unfiltered thoughts

about their personal and professional experiences to better understand the phenomenon of implementing AP/IB open enrollment programs concurrently.

Step four: Summarizing interviews and creating portraits.

The fourth step of Groenewald's (2004) process, summarizing each interview, is fairly straightforward in its intention. The goal at this stage is the "reconstruction of the inner world of experience of the subject" (Groenewald, 2004, p. 51) that should be validated by each co-researcher upon completion. With the overlap of portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997), I incorporated the themes from the interview into a summary or portrait that aimed to deliver a holistic view of the co-researcher's lived experience. To create a coherent portrait, "the portraitist must thoughtfully delineate and organize the separate parts, and then weave them together into a pattern so carefully unified that the conjoining seams are invisible" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, pgs. 261-2). Determining a central theme, anchoring the narrative on that theme while attending to the various parts and nuance of the interviews, and clearly communicating a unified portrait intersected well with this step of Groenewald's (2004) phenomenological process. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) viewed the creation of a portrait synonymously with the creation of "the aesthetic whole [where] we blend empirical choices and aesthetic sensibilities; we seek to capture insight and emotion; we want to develop a narrative that both informs and inspires" (p. 259).

This step of the phenomenological process harkens back to bracketing and the phenomenological reduction where an awareness of my thoughts and biases were placed on the forefront to minimize the chance of them coloring my ability to see the phenomenon under investigation with relatively fresh eyes. In the creation of a portrait, the paradox continues because

> there is a crucial dynamic between documenting and creating the narrative, between receiving *and* shaping, reflecting *and* imposing, mirroring *and* improvising…a string of paradoxes. The effort to reach coherence must both flow organically from the data *and* from the interpretative witness of the portraitist. (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 10)

The intersection of phenomenology and portraiture is highlighted in this penultimate step of the data explication process. After creating the individual portraits, I shared them with the co-researchers to see if they experienced the "click of recognition" Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) refer to as resonance. Ultimately, the hope was that resonance would exist with three unique audiences –

> with the actors who see themselves reflected in the story, with the readers who will see no reason to disbelieve it, and with the portraitist herself, whose deep knowledge of the setting and self-critical stance allow her to see the 'truth value' in her work. (p. 247)

The portraits of Ray and Lewis were my attempt to fulfill this hope and reflect the convergence of hermeneutic phenomenology and portraiture. Inherently, both portraits also addressed the first question guiding this research study: What is the lived experience of administrators implementing open enrollment AP and IB programs in an urban high school located in the southeastern United States? At this time, readers are encouraged to return to the portraits at the beginning of the data explication section to continue traversing the hermeneutic cycle.

Step five: Determining general & unique themes for composite summary creation.

Determining general and unique themes spanning all interviews comprises the fifth step of Groenewald's (2004) research design along with the creation of a composite summary. I examined all four interviews to ascertain general themes emerging from the interviews. It is important at this juncture to also note unique or deviant themes representing counter-narratives and

counterpoints of the phenomenon under investigation. General and unique themes were taken into consideration in the composite summary reflecting the essence of the lived experience of administrators implementing AP and IB open enrollment programs in the urban context of Hurston High.

With the portraits reflecting the lived experiences of both leaders as they implemented AP and IB open enrollment at Hurston High, the composite summary more directly addressed the remaining two questions guiding this research study:

1. From administrators' perspectives, what are the perceived benefits of implementing AP and IB open enrollment programs in an urban high school located in the southeastern United States?
2. From administrators' perspectives, what are the perceived challenges of implementing AP and IB open enrollment programs in an urban high school located in the southeastern United States?

In the spirit of phenomenological research using Groenewald's (2004) research design, space will also be given to discuss the unique themes that emerged from each co-researcher while attending to overlapping themes from both sets of interviews. Portraitists refer to unique themes as the deviant voice that is "useful in drawing important contrasts with the norm; the divergence in perspective and the idiosyncratic stance helps us see the quality and contours of the convergent themes more clearly" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 193). Before that discussion, however, it is important to delineate the benefits and drawbacks common to both co-researchers. Two benefits framed both leaders' discussion of having concurrent AP and IB open enrollment programs within Hurston High: 1. Choice and 2. College preparation and matriculation. They perceived three drawbacks: 1. The perception of a school-within-a-school, 2. The overly positive

perception of IB students versus the rest of the student population, and 3. The difficulties faced by teachers in a school implementing both programs.

Benefit: Choice.

Both co-researchers emphasized the importance of students having choice and options during their high school experience and believed that having fully operationalized AP and IB programs attended to that need. When explicitly asked about what they believe to be the benefits of implementing AP and IB open enrollment, they referenced choice and options before discussing anything else. Ray responded,

> Okay. Um, benefits, uh, choice for sure. I think it speaks to our commitment to providing a rigorous environment where we're offering students classes that are, um, looked upon highly for colleges, um, by colleges, many of whom, most of the students taking AP and IB classes, you know, are college bound and this will help them be more prepared.

On the other hand, Lewis answered, "It gives options because if we just did [Diploma Programme], okay. DP, if we just did DP alone, then people would be left out." To parse out the discussion of choice a little further, Ray's initial response combined the concept of choice with college access while Lewis suggested that options correlates with having an inclusive school community.

When discussing the options in more concrete terms, however, both men emphasized the flexibility and inclusivity inherent in having multiple pathways for all students to explore. Ray referred to IBDP, IB Career-related Programme (IBCP), AP, and dual enrollment/early college when discussing the options available for students. His choice of artifact during our second interview also reinforced his viewpoint that having multiple choices is an asset for students.

> If I'm talking AP and IB, I'm talking and I'm, I'm also thinking about, um, so one kind of representing IB; one, AP; and one, kind of all the other. And by other, that could mean like Early College. […] Well, Early College would be a, another big one.

He punctuated the statement by alternatingly picking up the eyeball, the rock, and the purple rubber ducky as he referenced each of those pathways. His overarching description of Hurston High embedded choice and opportunity into the school's foundation: "I would describe [Hurston] as a place of great opportunity, a place, um, where a student can come and basically pursue just about anything that they want to, um, whether it's academically or extracurricularly." Lewis echoed the value of multiple pathways in positive terms when thinking about the different types of students walking through the halls of Hurston High. He talked about IBDP, IBCP, AP, dual enrollment, and the "regular" course of study for students who "just want to get outta high school." His discussion posited the IBDP as the pinnacle of success for the most academically-minded and college-bound students with the "regular" course of study existing for those without a pressing desire to attend college after graduation: "So it just allows way more opportunity for all parties. So, you know, the top of the top have something [IB], the middle range have something [AP and dual enrollment], and the lower tier students academically, you know, have something too [regular courses]." When framing the benefits of AP and IB open enrollment, the co-researchers expanded their discussion to include the larger student body, even if they were not actively choosing to participate in either of those pathways.

Benefit: College Preparation and Matriculation.

Naturally, the student body experience narrowed with the discussion of a benefit of AP and IB open enrollment being college preparation and matriculation, focusing exclusively on Hurston's college-bound students. Ray's earlier comment highlighting the importance of choice

referenced college preparation, but he expounded by saying, “We see that in the data, that those who participate in IB as well as those who score at a certain level on AP exams start off better in college and have more success than those who don’t.” Their level of preparation included participation in AP and IB courses as well as their exposure to the summative exams at the end of the course. While assessment scores matter and he wants all students to achieve at the highest levels, their participation in the course has a value beyond the score they may receive on their final exams. In Ray’s words, “even if the whole class gets a one, I would rather them take the test because you can never truly be, have an understanding of the type of rigor on such college exams if you don’t ever see them.” Students participating in the AP and IB program are poised to be better prepared for college, a benefit he stressed throughout his commentary. He specifically described the AP program as

> a place where hopefully students are being exposed to high, you know, instruction where they’re being pushed to think, to debate, to discuss, to um, hopefully prepare themselves for, you know, college and career and, um, or at least become, you know, better critical thinkers.

The soft skills of debating, discussing, and critical thinking represented values Ray believed were in alignment with college- and career-readiness. He described IB in a similar way, emphasizing the discussion and debate, but he added an additional value that he believed would benefit students after high school.

> And so that’s a framework of instruction where we’re trying to, um, uh, provide students with an inquiry-based learning environment, um, trying to think globally, um, to work together collaboratively. Problem-solve. It’s not so much about a bunch of different facts as much as it is kind of applying this knowledge to situations, to coming up with unique

> ways of solving things. […] So the Diploma Programme is very rigorous. Um, high expectations for writing, um, high expectations for research.

For Lewis, college preparation and matriculation was also a benefit of having open enrollment AP and IB programs at Hurston High. Similarly to Ray, he believed that taking the courses and the culminating exams better prepared students for college rigor, but his discussion of the scores included more nuance than his counterpart: "We make it a policy. Everybody takes the test. If we get a bunch of ones, we'll take the ones as long as we get some threes, fours, and fives too, from those who can get the twos, threes, fours, and fives." From his position as AP/IB Coordinator, it was not surprising that he would qualify his response to reflect the goals he has for himself in his role. Qualifying scores on assessments leads to greater student success in college and reflects their level of preparation as they matriculate onto college campuses. For IB specifically, high scores lead to IB diplomas and an increased chance that students will be granted college credit. Seeing the number of diplomas increase during his tenure at Hurston High has been one of his greatest accomplishments:

> I'll never forget the day I was sitting up looking at the scores for the first cohort or the second, the first group to get diplomas. I scrolled through and I was like, "Oh my God, diplomas!" I was scrolling through like, "Oh nine, ten!" That was like the biggest thing ever for me. I was like, you know, jumping up and down in my house.

Knowing that students performed well enough to earn IB diplomas at the end of their senior year was a source of pride and a tangible representation of the program's value.

Being able to celebrate students who have matriculated to competitive colleges after opting into the more rigorous coursework available through AP and IB classes was also named as a benefit. Lewis was thrilled by the number of diplomas students received, but he recognized that

the external community might not be as impressed by that metric. Instead, they may be more appreciative of the colleges students were admitted to and their ability to matriculate successfully to such prestigious institutions: “No matter how many diplomas we get, whatever it is at the end of the day, the people see, ‘Oh, that’s the val or sal. That guy went to Harvard and that girl went to Duke.” For him, the ability to celebrate students’ college acceptances and matriculation was an invaluable benefit of operating an AP and IB program concurrently. When he first began coordinating the program, he knew that it would be difficult to convince stakeholders of its benefits because he could not identify examples of student success. With time, more cohorts of students participating in the open enrollment programs, and more evidence of college matriculation into highly competitive colleges and universities, he now had precedent. For him, that was a clear benefit of implementing AP and IB programs concurrently.

Drawback: The perception of a school-within-a-school.

Ray and Lewis spent considerable time discussing the drawback of AP and IB open enrollment implementation being the perception that there is a school-within-a-school, particularly for students opting into the two-year IB Diploma Programme (IBDP). In the particular context of Hurston High, the perception of a school-within-a-school cut across racial lines and created division. Ray discussed this drawback in detail:

> I think a drawback in our particular case of IBDP is we have to be cognizant that it doesn’t create its own school-within-a-school. IBDP is much smaller and then once you hit that 11th grade year, you basically are operating in a small cohort and you’re taking most of your classes and it can definitely create a separation of those students. And in schools like ours, that has some other implications because it seems sometimes like it’s all the white kids in these classes.

Unlike AP which allows students to take a sprinkling of courses, IB requires students to take six content courses during their junior and senior years anchored by assessments in all of those courses. Additionally, students must complete an extended essay, a theory of knowledge course, and a project reflecting creativity, action, or service (CAS) measured through seven learning outcomes. The IBDP can easily lend itself to a rather insular experience, one that Ray and Lewis saw as a drawback considering their student population and the possibility of negative perception from their stakeholders.

Lewis also named the perception of a school-within-a-school being a drawback of operating AP and IB concurrently at Hurston High. His discussion of the drawback, however, explicitly named the original conceptualization and implementation of the IBDP as the primary source of this negative perception. Under the leadership of the previous principal who brought IB to Hurston High and the first IB Coordinator who fast-tracked students from certain charter feeder middle schools into the IB Programme, there was noticeable division that led to the feel of a school-within-a-school:

> And when the previous coordinator first started, the precedent was set that anybody from the charter schools was automatically in. So it's kinda, I was taught, against the rules a little bit. And so because of that, it caused a striation in the school. Like it made it once they got into classes it was noticeable, and they had like the IB wing where it was like one side of the school, one hall where all the students, all from the charter schools, they all looked different. They all in a certain area, they all got these top-notch classes going on.

Although some students from the feeder charter schools were minority students, the overwhelming majority of them were white. In the face of such division and negative perception, both men

believed a part of their role in Hurston High was to actively work to combat the view of a school-within-a-school. From his seat in the principalship, Ray named a structural change he made to the physical location of classes as one way to potentially change the narrative around the IBDP. “That’s something I actually battle against and I mix IB teachers everywhere in the building so that kids are moving everywhere,” he said while naming his frustration with the idea of a school-within-a-school. For Lewis, his ability to communicate and network directly with the primary feeder middle school – the one with an overwhelmingly minority student body – were his chosen methods to combat the negative perception. Like Ray, he viewed it as a drawback he was obligated to address after the damage he perceived had been done by the first IB Coordinator.

> When I did get the job, it was like, okay, now I really gotta fix this. Because the whole year, that one year that we had of striation, well a couple of years, I guess, before that class graduated, it really caused tension in the school. So when I first got the job, one of the first things was, we went to Bryant Middle School [pseudonym] and said, ‘Hey, we need like 30, 40 of your top kids, we need names, emails, whatever. And we just put them in honors. Cause at the time – it’s not the case now – but at the time the precedent was set that you had to be all honors everything to participate in DP. You had to have all honors classes, which is not the case now, but it was at the time so everybody got honors in 9th grade and they locked in all the way for the whole ride. So once you’re in, you’re in. Once you’re out, you’re out. But to alleviate that, we said okay, well that’s over now. But at the time though, when it was the case, okay, we’ll make sure these Bryant kids are in it.

Both men actively worked to change the unflattering perception of the IBDP as an exclusionary program with Lewis's efforts stretching to the middle school students on the verge of becoming Hurston High School freshmen.

Drawback: The overly positive perception of IB students versus the rest of the student population.

The second drawback named by both leaders also focused on IBDP students and the perception that they were somehow model students when compared to their counterparts choosing other pathways. Their commentary aligned with the idea that there was a school-within-a-school. Ray acknowledged that this perception stemmed from the initial implementation of the IB Programme when students were relegated to one area of the building: "Sometimes the perception is well, those kids are on the IB hall, and they're there because there's no trouble." He also referenced that "there's this misnomer, this perception that IB kind of equates to honors." Students participating in the program, therefore, are considered to be somehow superior to everyone else. In contrast, Lewis discussed how other students were perceived in juxtaposition to their IB counterparts: "You walk down the [IB] hall, it's like classical music playing, you know, hypothetically. And then um, on the other side of the school was like, 'Welcome to the Jungle.'" The seeming placement of IB students on a pedestal did not happen in isolation, in Lewis's opinion. Adding more nuance to his commentary, he reflected on the leadership of Hurston High's former principal, Ms. Brady, and how some of her choices may have contributed to the idea of a school-within-a-school and an inflated perception of students in the IBDP.

> [Ms. Brady] really did a good job, in my opinion, of turning the school around. But in that though, she really focused on IB a lot, like she really promoted IB kids a lot and bolstered IB kids a lot. And at that time the IB kids were, well not honestly, predominately

> white, but you know, out of all, okay, let's say if it's a 90-something percent Black school, a third or a half of the IB program is white. […]And then she's giving all kinds of accolades and announcements, announcing stuff and they're getting all kind of awards, and you know, then people are like, "What's really going on here?" And so that caused a thing.

Both men identified the concept of a school-within-a-school and the correlating idea that students participating in the IBDP were somehow better behaved and more deserving as drawbacks that they were charged to actively counteract.

Drawback: The difficulties faced by teachers in a school implementing both programs.

The final drawback shared by both men centered on the experience of teachers on the frontlines working to implement AP and IB open enrollment programs concurrently. This drawback already existed between AP and the IBDP, but it had become more prominent now that the school was in the authorization phase for the IB's Middle Years Programme (MYP). Not only will Hurston High be operating the MYP for all 9th and 10th graders, but Bryant Middle School, the largest feeder middle school for Hurston, will also be participating in the program designed by the International Baccalaureate Organization specifically for 11-16 year old students around the world. On Hurston High's website, verbiage about the MYP connected the two schools in their adoption of the program and stressed their belief that the program will assist in closing the achievement gap. Unlike the IBDP, MYP does not include a set series of courses that students must take; instead, it is an instructional philosophy that should govern all teachers' approach to pedagogy. At Hurston High where the IB focus had been on the IBDP, an experience relegated to the last two years of a student's experience, this shift casted a wider net and forced all members of the community to engage in IB programming.

Ray named the process of merging AP and IB programming as a drawback from the vantage point of teachers. He recognized how the different guidelines governing AP and IB courses could result in confusion and potential frustration from teachers.

> We're expected, as an IB school, our kind of IB framework has to be seen in all classes including AP and it's not always that easy of a fit. Sometimes, you know, AP, you're trying to cover a bunch, although some subjects, a bunch – you know a mile wide and that narrow – wherein IB is really talking about digging into depth and much less worried about kind of the wide scope. So how do you merge those two into the same place? It's hard for teachers. Let's take AP World History, which would be a lot of your IB students taking. How do you build those AP units to fit the IB unit framework? 'Cause that's an expectation that we're supposed to have.

He believed the addition of MYP compounded the challenge because it involved "everybody in the school, no matter what, if you have an IEP or you're in gifted." He added that the program was growing but "it's a change of mindset for those teachers," which was not always the easiest reality to manage.

Lewis also discussed the difficulties faced by teachers in light of MYP authorization and adoption. For him, however, the difficulty stemmed more from a perceived lack of understanding about IB and the recurring fear that it was creating a school-within-a-school and represented another attempt to privilege the IB experience over any other program at the school.

> When MYP became involved, everyone had to understand what IB was about, and then that whole remnant of, "Aww, they trying to take over the school" thing came back. And so then you had people that were, like, overtly against it. "That's not on my lesson plan," you know, whatever. "That's not in my job description. I'm supposed to do this, not

> MYP. I'm supposed to teach lit," or whatever it is. Gigi, our MYP Coordinator, and Ray would ask me, like, "Well, maybe you could talk to 'em, Lewis." I'm not MYP, but they want me just to come in and say, "Well you see, IB is a thing." And kinda just break down what IB is and what it's about. "And it's not out to get you. And this is just an overlay on your lessons."

Similarly to Ray, Lewis alluded to the challenge of meshing the IB philosophy and pedagogical approaches with AP, honors, and courses more overtly geared toward high school completion than college-readiness. He also couched his narrative within other drawbacks referenced about AP and IB open enrollment implementation.

Unique benefits and drawbacks of AP and IB concurrent implementation from Ray's perspective.

While it is important to create a composite summary reflecting commonalities between the co-researchers' experiences, phenomenological research also stresses the importance of attending to the unique themes that emerge from each person's account of their lived experience. As succinctly explained by Groenewald (2004),"The unique or minority voices are important counterpoints to bring out regarding the phenomenon researched" (21). There was a certain level of synergy between Ray and Lewis's perception of the benefits and drawbacks of AP/IB open enrollment implementation, but there were also individual themes shared that color their respective lived experiences.

The additional benefit Ray spoke about centered on the professional development opportunities available through the College Board and the International Baccalaureate Organization. He appreciated the quality of those development and networking opportunities and the participants he shared the experience with during conferences and workshops.

> I think there is great professional learning in both. […] There's a great network of educators in AP in particular who are so open to sharing everything. I mean, they'll send you their syllabus, their work, their tests, their notes. I mean, just without even knowing them. I think IB there's some of that similarity, um, but it's a little bit different. There's still a good open network about it, although it's not as simple as sending a PowerPoint. So sometimes the context of the schools are different that might not match, but there's still a good network.

The nature of AP courses tend to lend themselves more easily to sharing across educators and across schools, but an IB syllabus can have significant variation that makes it virtually impossible to share with other educators.

In his discussion of the drawbacks, Ray named the amount of different trainings and staffing limitations leading to some teachers having to teach both AP and IB classes. In his ideal state, teachers would be able to focus their energies on planning and executing courses in one program rather than juggling multiple prep periods. Complicating his stated benefit of professional development experiences within AP and IB, he shared a challenge he has faced attending professional development sessions. Specifically, he referenced the non-existent lifelines he has to access when trying to figure out how to integrate AP and IB frameworks more seamlessly in his school setting because it is not a common practice at many schools. After his question about how AP World History teachers would incorporate the IB unit framework into their classes, he admitted his inability to arrive at a feasible answer.

> Let's take, uh, AP World History, which would be a lot of your IB students taking. How do you build those AP units to fit the IB unit framework? 'Cause that's an expectation that we're supposed to have. Um, it seems like a lot of, I don't even have the best answer

> and then talking to people at IB conferences and elsewhere, it's challenged in places. Um, so that's a drawback.

As a principal leading the charge, he found this lack of commensurate experience frustrating but he plans to continue trying to network with schools implementing IB with similar demographics and a like-minded belief in offering as many pathways as possible to students. At the end of our second interview, he affirmed,

> What I've come to realize is that it's so varied. It's so varied out there and experiences like ours in a major city, you know, larger scale. I struggled to find similar schools at this conference to really call on. So I want to keep finding them though so that I can see how they implement [IB] to improve that program.

Considering what we learned about Ray in his portrait, it is unsurprising that this is a challenge he looks forward to conquering.

Unique benefits and drawbacks of AP and IB concurrent implementation from Lewis's perspective.

Lewis's discussion of implementing AP and IB open enrollment programs in a singular school site included a specific articulation of the benefit of having one person serve as the AP/IB Coordinator instead of splitting the job responsibility between two coordinators. Tied into this perception was his belief that the two programs inherently complement each other.

> Well, it's definitely doable, in my opinion. […] When people say it doesn't work, I think it's because there are just different people handling it. Like, if it's a separate person doing AP and I'm doing IB, you know, they have their own ways. It's two different people. So it's a whole, it's not two different worlds per se, but it is two separate programs that are running concurrently. But when you're doing both, you have the benefit of knowing

about both. So it's like a broader view that the individual AP or IB Coordinator wouldn't have because they're not concerned about other stuff.

Being able to navigate the waters of AP and IB personally appealed to Lewis, but he also believed the benefit extends beyond his experience. In his opinion, having the knowledge centralized through one person is an asset. He expounded, "I think it makes it a little more seamless because it's just one person handling all of it. So you kind of see the nuances a little bit better and that kind of thing."

When referencing drawbacks, Lewis spoke at length about the existence of an IB bubble that could be viewed as negative and contributory to the perception of a school-within-a-school. For him, the bubble directly tied to a sense of entitlement that students within the IBDP felt in comparison to all other students in the school, to include the students choosing to participate in the IB Career-ready Programme (IBCP). The IB bubble was the first challenge he listed when asked about the drawback of AP and IB concurrent implementation at Hurston High. Two main factors led to this sense of entitlement in his estimation: 1. The reality that a good number of students funneling in from the charter schools had been together in grades K-8 and 2. Their belief that IBDP students work harder than anyone else in the school. He acknowledged that students participating in IBDP "had a little air about them. And people would notice that and it would rub them the wrong way, you know? Understandably. So we had to work on that." He went on to contextualize his assertion about the students' personalities and attitudes, anchoring his initial thoughts on the reality that most of them had attended elementary and middle school together.

That kind of comes from the whole charter school dynamic because you know, they

> were cliquish. Like they had kids that were in the same school since kindergarten to eighth grade. […] And then they get here and they still in the same class together. You know what I'm saying? Except now in different environments and people notice that.

Unsurprisingly, those students gravitated towards each other and remained isolated from the rest of their peers. This was especially evident in the beginning of the IBDP when students were physically separated from the rest of the student body. With the influx of outreach efforts to Bryant Middle School to include more diverse representation in the IBDP, this further illuminated the bubble and additional resources had to be leveraged to bridge the gap between white and minority students. Lewis acknowledged, "We've had it where the counselors had to come in there and we have everybody have a little heart to heart about prejudice in your impressions of people and what you think." He directly attributed the need for this work to the existence of the IB bubble.

> Unfortunately, that's one drawback I guess in our situation and we've worked through it Now, but it's kinda like, um, people live in a bubble. […] I'm not dissing charter schools, mind you, but it was a bubble there and they never see, they've never seen outside that bubble until they come here.

Compounding their relative isolation and lack of exposure to many of their peers, Lewis described how they also believed that the work they were doing was superior to everyone else. He framed this part of the commentary around IBDP students' perception of their IBCP counterparts. Both groups of students are responsible for projects outside of their core classes, with IBDP students completing activities towards Creativity, Action, and Service (CAS) and IBCP students completing service learning projects. Lewis described his experience trying to get the

groups to work together since the requirements are similar and he wanted to bridge any perceived gaps between the students.

> So I encourage them and say y'all should work together on this because I don't want, you know, cause if not, they're gonna be apart. And so certain students might say, 'Why they have to do it because they're not doing the real IB. They're just taking a couple of classes, I'M doing the real. You know, they're doing so much, which is true, they are doing more. But at the same time, they asked for more. Like they want what they have.

Even though he viewed the IBDP students' feeling of superiority as a drawback, he acknowledged that their workload was heavier and required more than other students. Their decision to pursue an IB diploma and participate in the IBDP, however, was not given enough weight from his vantage point. Ultimately, Lewis was able to conclude, "So that's one drawback, I guess, is that whole elitism piece that we try to work on." Although there were commonalities between both co-researchers' experiences implementing AP and IB open enrollment at Hurston High, the unique themes that emerged in their interviews also warranted discussion and consideration when representing the essence of their lived experiences.

Discussion & Implications

Through the use of the hermeneutic circle allowing for fluid movement between the whole and the part, the discussion section of this study represents a return to the whole where a new construction of AP and IB open enrollment at Hurston High can emerge in conjunction with the representations included in their individual portraits and the composite summary. Ray and Lewis's lived experiences reflected similarities while also offering nuances that contextualized their shared and individual experiences. Throughout their interviews, it was clear that they were committed to the equity-minded initiative of AP and IB open enrollment and offering the widest

range of learning experiences for the students of Hurston High. Their narratives also highlighted the impact of gentrification on the concurrent implementation of AP and IB open enrollment programs and the benefits and challenges of operating this initiative in a quickly changing landscape. Ray described Hurston High as "a unique school within our particular system – in that there's really no other high school that is like ours in terms of demographics, race, ethnicity, socioeconomics, probably in one of the most quickly changing areas of the city." Less than 20 years ago, the student demographic was 100% African-American and that percentage was 76.9% at the time of this research study and projected to continue falling. The rest of the student body was 13.5% white, 5.2% Hispanic, 3.5% Multi-Racial, and less than 1% Other.

Lewis added more context to explain the impact of the gentrification efforts. He discussed how more affluent and more educated people moved into the neighborhood when Hurston was still known as Southern, decided it was not good enough for their children, established charter elementary and middle schools, and then turned their gaze towards their students' future high school experience.

> And so the parents got together and said, "Well, what are we going to do about high school?" And they, and this is how the story was told to me by the parents, by some of the parents who I've worked with over the years. They said, well, they got a group of parents together and said, "Okay, we can vote to either start a charter high school or invest in this, [Southern], which was under-enrolled anyway."

This is not a foreign educational experience in gentrified neighborhoods. Friedus (2019) recounted a similar belief about investment in her study of a school located in a gentrified area in Brooklyn when families evaluated whether it was worth it to invest in PS 808, the local school in the community.

> By gentrifying the school, [the advantaged families] saw themselves as investors. […] They had to first delineate the school's value. They then added value to the school in the expectation that they would get value from it, putting their social and cultural capital to work to benefit their children. This was the nature of their individual investment in the educational marketplace. (Friedus, 2019, p. 1141-2)

Lewis's recounting of the history of Hurston as shared with him by the parents reiterated the intersection of agency and affluence for the advantaged families moving into areas where Black and Brown families had been displaced. With the ability to apply political and economic pressure in their new communities, advantaged families were positioned to be the loudest voices in any room with decision-makers. Interestingly enough, the advantaged families in Friedus's (2019) study also believed that their contributions benefitted the larger community and not just their own students. As AP/IB Coordinator at Hurston, Lewis has employed a similar argument as well to convince his stakeholders that a "rising tide raises all boats." Ray and Lewis acknowledged the presence and impact of race, gentrification, and access on their work, especially as leaders who were not at the table when the decision was made to become an IBO World School. AP was already present in the school, but the addition of IB and the subsequent decision to initially populate the program with the predominately White and/or affluent students coming from feeder charter schools complicated the scope and nature of their work. The attempt to promote equity and access – two cornerstones at Hurston High – is now inextricably tied to the student body demographic and the students/families opting into the challenge and the choice of AP and IB courses.

The school's adoption of the IBDP has been named as one of the primary methods used to attract more diversity to Hurston High and that decision has led to tremendous gains for student achievement and overall reputation within the school's district. Ray stamped that Hurston is

"a school with great community support, of real desire to see this become one of the top performing schools in the state." The families gentrifying Brooklyn's PS 808 were also committed to transforming the school into a "great public school" (Friedus, 2019, p. 1142), a desire that most parents and educators would share regardless of context. Unfortunately, the context of gentrification added a somewhat insidious undertone to this goal. The gains and positive strides at Hurston have come with a few costs and growing pains that the leaders are working to counteract. While both co-researchers named community support as an enabling factor that allowed them to implement rigorous college-ready programs, there was also an acknowledgment that the more affluent families operated with more agency than most of the families coming from their primary feeder, Bryant Middle School.

The imbalance of agency, knowledge, and advocacy between both camps of parents created inequities before students walked into Hurston High, and the co-researchers recognized that their work needed to extend beyond the walls of Hurston if they truly had a chance of effecting change for underserved students. As a result, Ray and Lewis employed recruitment and outreach strategies to directly address students from Bryant Middle School who traditionally had less knowledge of college-readiness programs like AP and IB. Ray's own experience as a teacher in other schools cemented his belief in the power of outreach and opening access: "I realized that if we don't push these things out there to all populations, all students then, than some, some groups will never be exposed to AP or IB because no one would be there to push them." While attempting to expand access, there was also a recognition that IB in particular might not be conducive for all students. Ray gave voice to this tension directly, noting, "Our signature program is IB, so you know that's what we want to see grow, but then again, it might not be for everybody." In his

discussion that categorized students as AP, IB, dual enrollment, or "regular," Lewis also reflected the belief that more than one pathway existed for students and they were not all interested or invested in participating in programs overtly geared towards college-readiness.

> So it just allows way more opportunity for all parties. So, you know, the top of the top have something [IB], the middle range have something [AP and dual enrollment], and the lower tier students academically, you know, have something too [regular courses].

There was a notable tension in Ray and Lewis's words between desiring equity by providing open access to rigorous programs like AP or IB and believing that those programs may not meet the individual needs of all students. How should equity be assessed in this context: By the elimination of racial disproportionality in the percentage of students participating in the AP and IB program or the development of enabling structures – open enrollment, room assignments that avoid isolating AP/IB students on one hallway, and vigorous recruitment and outreach efforts? Those structures could increase the possibility of all students seeing a place for themselves within both programs. Is that significant step enough to constitute success for an equity-minded initiative? Ray and Lewis are not the only educational leaders who must grapple with the answer to that question; it is pertinent to all leaders attempting to operate schools with equity in mind.

Despite Ray and Lewis's charge to counteract the overly positive perception of IBDP students at Hurston High and the existence of a school-within-a-school, their lived experiences continued to reflect a tension that also had equity implications. They both framed the multiple pathways as a benefit, and while that can undoubtedly be seen as a positive, a hierarchy was inherently embedded in the pathways that created an imbalance. Students participating in the IBDP seem to be positioned at the zenith while students taking "regular" courses were at the nadir, ironically epitomizing Lewis's discussion of the "highest highs and the lowest lows." The tiers

became apparent in Lewis's specific commentary about the benefit of having IB, AP, dual enrollment, and "regular" courses at Hurston High. Ray also echoed a similar sentiment in his characterization of students opting into the IBDP. His discussion reiterated his appreciation of challenge and choice that resonated in his portrait as well.

> Everybody's IB year four and five, 9th and 10th [through IBMYP], but then you're making a choice. Um, and if you're continuing along that pathway, you're committing to challenging yourself your last two years of high school, um, in a way that I don't think you, you could maybe slide by a bit in some other pathways. You know, even AP. You could take a few AP classes and fill them in with some others, but you don't have the extended essays and all of those things involved, the tests to the same extent. Those IB tests are pretty intense, you know.

Undeniably, there are more requirements for the IBDP and it is a more involved program than other college-readiness programs commonly found in high schools. There are implications to placing it on a hierarchy, however. To frame it as a syllogism, Ray and Lewis seemed to be saying that high-achieving students appreciate a challenge, IB represents the greatest challenge, therefore students willing to rise to the challenge are high-achieving students who opt into the IBDP. What are the implications then at Hurston High with a student body of 1300 where only 116 participate in the IBDP? To be more equitable, would the leaders need to unpack potential bias they may have towards students in the IBDP to see it as an option on a continuum and not the supreme option in a hierarchy? Is that too lofty and unrealistic of a goal considering our educational landscape and the privileging of AP and IB that occurs in high school grading policies, statewide evaluation metrics, and the college admissions process?

Lewis could not remember the exact number of students enrolled in AP courses for the 2019-2020 school year, but he knew there was a higher participation rate in AP than the IBDP and the number of AP students had grown significantly in the last five years. He was able to produce a document showing that during the 2018-2019 school year, there were 402 students enrolled in an AP course. Five years prior, during the 2014-2015 school year when the IBDP would have only been in its second year, there were only 136 students enrolled in an AP course. If I attempt to provide an estimate for AP students in the 2019-2020 school year, I might increase the number to 415. Accounting for the reality that some IBDP students also take AP courses (i.e. students interested in STEM field who take AP Calculus as well as IB Math Studies because it is more positively received in the college admissions process), my estimate of AP students could reduce to 405. With 116 students enrolled in IBDP and 400 potentially enrolled in AP at this school with its 1300 students, approximately 40% of the student body would be participating in one of the college-readiness programs. How does that further complicate the assessment of equity at Hurston High? Would more students need to participate in the IBDP for it to be equitable and proportionate considering the racial make-up of the school or is 40% of students participating in either AP or IB statistically significant enough to constitute equity? Is there a magic percentage that would place Hurston High as a beacon of equity for high schools across the nation? Again, Ray and Lewis are not the only educational leaders who must consider these questions in their quest for equity-mindedness, college-readiness, and multiple pathways that meet the diverse needs of all students.

There was also a noticeable tension between equity, access, and student results. For Ray, equity and access superseded potential exam scores: “Even if the whole class gets a one, I would

rather them take the test because you can never truly be, have an understanding of the type of rigor on such college exams if you don't ever see them." Equity in that sense then manifested itself as exposure and access, which would be impossible without all students being eligible to participate in the AP and IB programs. I can deeply appreciate Ray's ability to see the benefits of the courses beyond the confines of standardized test scores, especially considering that some students would be discouraged from taking the course if their value was measured based solely on their potential exam score. Such a stance understates the external pressures placed on schools where test scores are concerned, however, and Lewis recognized that truth in his discussion of open access and test scores. Although Lewis agreed that all students should take the culminating exams at the end of their AP and IB courses, he contended that, "If we get a bunch of ones, we'll take the ones as long as we can get some threes, fours, and fives too, from those who can get the twos, threes, fours, and fives." His comment revealed the pressure he still felt to ensure that some students achieved high scores on their assessments, but there was also another sentiment lingering in the subtext about students' achievement potential in both Ray and Lewis's discussion about test scores. The idea that a significant number of students could earn ones on their exams suggests a lack of preparation and readiness for the demands of the course and questions whether some students were capable of achieving anything higher than the lowest score. Perhaps there are inequities and unbalanced expectations even for students who decide to take advantage of the AP and IB programs at Hurston High. Once again, what implications does that have on how equity should be assessed? Does it lie in access and providing all students equal exposure to college-readiness standards or should other factors like test scores be included in ascertaining whether equity exists? If we acknowledge the problematic nature of standardized assessments on minority students and accept that AP and the IBDP were not established with equity in mind, how does

that affect our interpretation of Ray and Lewis's comments about their students' test scores? In true Socratic fashion, there seems to be more questions than answers, but they are all worth considering to arrive at an understanding of all the implications embedded in pursuing an equity-minded initiative like AP and IB concurrent implementation.

Operating AP in isolation poses its own obstacles, but overlaying it with IBDP, IBCP, IBMYP, and dual enrollment amplifies them and demands leaders primed to tackle the challenge. Ray and Lewis's struggle with minority representation in advanced courses echoed Mayer's (2008) research study that examined the implementation of an IB open enrollment initiative in California after the school district operationalized a voluntary magnet-based desegregation plan in 1991. While more students participated in the IBDP in both cases, disproportionality still existed when looking at IB students in relation to the rest of the school. In the context of Hurston High, the disproportionality also still existed within AP and IB classes. Ray and Lewis recognized the initial implementation of the IBDP under the leadership of the former principal contributed to the perception of a school-within-a-school and the belief that the program was primarily relegated to the upper echelon of students. Many of those students happened to be white and from one of the feeder charter middle schools. Both leaders viewed their role as one that needed to actively combat such a restrictive and inequitable perspective in order to increase minority participation rates in AP and IB courses. Lewis affirmed that minority student participation in AP classes was slightly higher than their participation in the IBDP even though he did not know the exact numbers off-hand, but he estimated that white students comprised 40% of the IBDP students. They had made strides in increasing outreach efforts and changing the physical location of classes to counteract the perception of a school-within-a-school, but they both recognized that more needed to be done to change the racial composition of students enrolled in their

AP and IB programs. Ray and Lewis are not alone in their quest to see open enrollment programs actually reflect the demographics of their student body (McIlroy, 2010; Mayer, 2008; Solórzano and Ornelas, 2002) and their political landscape and context will only enhance the challenges they face implementing AP and IB open enrollment programs concurrently at Hurston High.

Limitations

Most of the perceived limitations of this research study were anticipated by Hycner (1985) when he first delineated guidelines for phenomenological analysis. In this hermeneutic phenomenological study where the findings are represented in the individual portraits and composite summaries, the lack of clear generalizable results may frustrate practitioners in search of a traditional answer to the research questions guiding the study. Elaborating on the question of generalizability, particularly in light of a study with a limited number of co-researchers, Hycner (1985) made sure to stress that "though the results in a strict sense may not be generalizable, they can be phenomenologically informative about human being in general" (p. 295). There are lessons about human nature, educational leadership, and navigating the waters of gentrification that we can indeed learn from Ray and Lewis's experiences. Hycner (1985) also highlighted the lack of replicability as a potential limitation of phenomenological research. The subjective nature of hermeneutic phenomenological research and the close interaction between researcher and co-researcher makes replicability an undesirable goal of this type of research. I could argue that the individual portraits, composite summary, and subsequent discussion would be different if I were to begin the study again with the same co-researchers. For instance, I know that I would ask more targeted questions about the racial composition of the staff at Hurston High, and that

knowledge may provide a different tenor and texture to the research study. Furthermore, the nature of time, our subjective experiences, and the information we chose to share with each other would probably produce a different distillation of the co-researchers' lived experience.

From a procedural perspective, a limitation of the study was the need to make additional modifications to the already modified iteration of Seidman's (2006) three-interview phenomenological sequence. The initial modification made to the sequence was the inclusion of an artifact during the third interview to better contextualize and encapsulate the co-researchers' lived experience as AP/IB open enrollment implementers. After attaining IRB approval from Georgia State University to conduct a study using Seidman's (2006) recommended three-interview series, the school district's IRB believed that it was too time-consuming and must be altered before approval would be granted. As such, I consolidated the second and third interview to fit the parameters required for district IRB approval. It is my belief that greater, more nuanced insight could have been gained by following Seidman's (2006) sequence as intended to foster a stronger relationship with the co-researchers and allow for one interview to be solely focused on reflection. In its original conceptualization, the final interview is dedicated to the co-researcher's reflection on their experience within the phenomenon being explored. Without having a dedicated interview for this type of in-depth reflection that allowed co-researchers to connect their past experiences to their current reality, some context and potentially enlightening narrative undoubtedly remains undiscovered. Furthermore, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) articulated the benefits of multiple touchpoints and sustained interaction with co-researchers, arguing that "the quality and complexity of the relationship will be shaped by both temporal and temperamental dimensions – that is, by the duration of time spent and the frequency of encounters between the researcher and

the actor" (p. 138). Decreasing the number of interviews in the sequence worked against the likelihood that the co-researchers and I could establish such a quality and complex relationship.

Recommendations

Based on Ray and Lewis's lived experiences implementing AP and IB concurrently at Hurston High, there are five specific recommendations I would give to educational leaders looking to embrace multiple equity-minded initiatives concurrently in their school communities.

1. Consider hiring one person as the AP/IB Coordinator.

I would not have imagined this recommendation when I first began this research journey, but Lewis's lived experience allowed me to see the merits of centralizing the leadership of AP and IB coordination. Having one person understand the nuances and complexities of both programs and being able to speak knowledgeably about them to all stakeholders cannot be understated. It also ensures that one person is responsible for all of the administrative aspects, which minimizes the chance of important deadlines being missed. One coordinator is also able to think more deeply about how assignments, tasks, and events overlap for families with students participating in AP and IB programming. It is worth noting that advocating for one coordinator does not mean that they are solely responsible for the informed articulation or execution of open enrollment AP and IB programs. There should always be a team or committee supporting the coordinator, but having one dedicated person spearheading the efforts is an asset to smooth implementation. Having the committee also ensures that multiple people within the school community can speak comfortably about both programs.

2. Physically integrate all students as much as possible throughout the school to avoid halls devoted to AP or IB students.

Ray and Lewis strongly condemned Hurston High's initial roll-out of IB that placed students participating in the IBDP on their own hall. This physical barrier also manifested itself as a structural barrier condoned by the school officials who knowingly created separate spaces for different groups of students. Ray and Lewis were not the administrators who made the decision to create a different hall for IB students, and it was one of the first changes Ray made when he became principal of the school. The effects, however, still lingered years after the change was made to integrate students from all pathways more intentionally throughout the school. For educational leaders considering AP and IB open enrollment programs in one school site, it may be more prudent to avoid making such a choice that directly contributes to the perception of a school-within-a-school. Add the element of gentrification to the discussion and the need to avoid overtly separating students in ways that may exacerbate differences along lines of race and class becomes more apparent. The recommendation to integrate students' classes does not directly address the demographic of students within AP and IB classes and ensuring equity exists, but it is a macro-level decision that educational leaders should take into consideration when creating master schedules and room assignments. There are other recommendations on this list that speak to potentially diversifying AP and IB courses.

3. Provide opportunities for prospective students and families to engage in AP and IB coursework and understand the requirements of both programs.

While open enrollment implies that all students have access to rigorous courses, it is also true that the choice can be between the known and the unknown unless students have exposure to events and opportunities that allow them to more meaningfully engage with the requirements of AP and IB. At Hurston High, prospective students have an opportunity to participate in recruitment events, after-school meetings with their families and AP/IB staff members, and Saturday

workshops that give students networking opportunities and a chance to interact with each other on college campuses while learning about the benefits of AP and IB courses. Those types of opportunities have worked to increase students' and families' knowledge about both programs, improving the likelihood that more students would opt into AP and IB courses. I would recommend those efforts after speaking with Ray and Lewis, but I would also encourage educational leaders to consider shadowing opportunities for prospective students to sit in actual AP and IB classes to see them in action. Similarly, giving parents/guardians an opportunity to preview or complete an assignment in a mock AP or IB course would also increase their familiarity with what the programs have to offer their students. Providing these opportunities to middle school, 9th, and 10th grade parents could make the programs seem less foreign when it is time for course registration. Additionally, there would be merit to having non-AP or IB teachers incorporate an AP and IB-inspired performance task in their classes to give students a chance to preview the assessment strategy before opting into an official AP or IB course. Students would potentially feel more comfortable and have a high sense of self-efficacy that may make the courses feel more accessible.

4. Partner with leadership teams at feeder middle schools to lay the foundation for students' future success in AP and IB.

With the inclusion of the IBMYP at Hurston High, Ray and Lewis made a conscious decision to partner with the leadership team at the primary feeder public middle school, Bryant Middle School, to also encourage them to apply for IBMYP authorization. They made this choice knowing that students coming from their other two charter middle schools tended to have access to families with greater agency and advocacy. Those families tended to be familiar with AP and IB course offerings and their attraction to Hurston stemmed from the school's implementation of

concurrent AP and IB programs. The level of college-preparation was also higher for students attending the two feeder charter schools, placing them at an advantage to their counterparts coming from Bryant Middle School. Ray and Lewis's decision to partner with administrators at Bryant to attempt to level the playing field by bringing IBMYP to students there was a strategic attempt to directly address the inequities at play before students ever walked into the doors of Hurston High. If possible, I would encourage other high school educational leaders to attend to the K-12 spectrum of education and recognize that their work extends beyond their respective walls. To center equity in the educational discussion, efforts should be made to work with middle school and primary leaders to create a consistent, standardized bar of excellence that all students can access. If all students were exposed to AP and IB standards before their high school experience, there might be a greater likelihood that the demographic of students opting into those programs would more closely reflect the larger student body. More time is needed to see if the introduction of IBMYP at Bryant Middle School will yield greater rates of students from racial minorities participating in AP and IB programs at Hurston High. The initiative in and of itself, however, reflects a desire to be more equity-minded and directly address the disproportionality that exists in AP and IB courses that may be of interest to other educational leaders.

5. Prioritize consistent professional development opportunities that allow all staff members to understand and operationalize the essential features of AP and IB.

The final recommendation stems from Ray and Lewis's discussion of professional development efforts and the importance of fostering open communication between all staff members. Incorporating consistent professional development or professional learning opportunities focused on understanding, questioning, and internalizing AP and IB policies and practices would help foster a common language and knowledge base around both programs. I would recommend a cadence

that is monthly to ensure the information is timely and relevant. Some of the obstacles shared by the co-researchers existed because staff lacked a clear understanding about the programs' goals and they were not able to see themselves and their work within the implementation of AP and IB open enrollment. Regardless of whether staff members are the actual teachers of record for the AP and IB courses, it is beneficial for everyone to have a deep understanding of both pathways. Increasing their knowledge could potentially reduce fear of the unknown, allow staff members to see their work within the context of both programs' course offerings, and enhance their ability to have accurate, meaningful conversations with multiple stakeholders. Moreover, it could change the perception that students pursuing the IBDP are somehow a different, superior caliber of student, an idea that directly contributes to the perception of a school-within-a-school.

Another feature of the professional development sessions would be offering support in operationalizing the essential features of AP and IB. Ray discussed the difficulties of weaving both programs together, and while it is indeed his responsibility to figure out how they can peacefully coexist, it is also true that he does not have to do that work alone. Leveraging the strengths of the larger staff to brainstorm ways to achieve the objectives of AP while overlaying the courses with IBMYP principles could be done within professional learning communities, for example. The lessons learned within an individual professional learning community could then be extrapolated to other departments to improve course quality and fidelity to AP and IB principles. For educational leaders considering concurrent AP and IB implementation, frontloading with consistent professional development and integrating professional learning centered on operationalizing both programs could create greater synergy amongst the staff. Similarly to Ray and Lewis's desire to not create a school-within-a-school, educational leaders want to avoid creating a staff-within-a-staff as well. Consistent professional development may alleviate that concern.

Conclusion

Recognizing the dearth of literature available centered on the lived experience of leaders operationalizing a complex equity-minded initiative like AP and IB open enrollment, this study illuminated this problem of practice. The idea of students having access to high-quality advanced coursework is rarely contended, and when it is, the question is typically around whether granting access waters down the rigor of the classes and students' preparation for the cognitive, social, and emotional lift required in advanced courses (Atteberry et al., 2019; Hallett & Venegas, 2011; Posthuma, 2010; Rowland & Shircliffe, 2016). This study, executed through the lens of hermeneutic phenomenological research and portraiture, brought the particular experiences of leaders actively working to prioritize equity and access to the forefront. To reflect their experiences, I used a modification of Seidman's (2006) interview sequence in the data collection process and Groenewald's (2004) simplification of the Hycner (1985) method of phenomenological analysis in the data explication and interpretation process. The inclusion of an artifact for analysis and Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's (1997) portraiture also contextualized and added nuance to the co-researchers' articulation of the merits and drawbacks of employing an AP and IB open enrollment initiative.

By adhering to Groenewald's (2004) method, integrating the concept of a hermeneutic circle, and incorporating portraiture, I believed I could conduct a study that emphasized "attunement, listening, feeling, and pondering deeply the commonalities of our human experiences" (Crowther, Ironside, Spence, & Smythe, 2017, p. 834). This intersection of frameworks also invited the reader into the interpretive process so they could traverse the hermeneutic circle to arrive at their own understanding of the phenomenon of concurrent implementation of AP and IB in one high school. With AP and IB as the current standard-bearers of advanced coursework in

the United States, it could be beneficial to understand the lived experiences of leaders choosing to house both programs in their singular school site. No argument is made that their experience is generalizable or the exemplar; phenomenological research would explicitly frown upon such an assertion. Instead, the claim being made is that their experiences yield lessons and takeaways that may help educational leaders better understand the nature of undertaking an equity-minded initiative akin to the one at Hurston High.

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APPENDIX

Lewis's Ship/Captain Metaphor

As the ship embarks on the high seas for the two-year journey, the passengers all anxiously board. Some humble, meager passengers huddle inside with small children, others bring lavish wardrobes and personal assistants. As the ship departs, the Captain informs the passengers and crew of what to expect throughout the journey as well as any mishaps and dangers they may face. At the bottom of the ship, parents and community stakeholders dine, drink, and laugh as they listen to live music from a band of volunteers. Since they are on the bottom of the ship and cannot see the destination or the open sea, some of these passengers have some apprehension. But they still manage to put their trust in the faithful Captain to get all the passengers to their desired destination. This is mainly because just above them, in the middle level of the ship, the passengers' children – young sailors in training – are to learn all about life on the open seas, so that once the boat reaches its destination, the children will be able to successfully embark on their own paths.

Traversing from the deck to the middle section of the ship is the Captain's crew of sailors, all seasoned and trained. The crew works with the young sailors in the middle section to complete all the various tasks to keep the ship functioning properly throughout the voyage.

On the deck, behind the wheel, is the Captain, weathered with experience from traversing this perilous voyage numerous times over many years. At the top of the ship, the Captain faces the raging storms, the torrential downpours, the blazing sun, and the frosty nights that come along with the voyage. He has learned to navigate the jagged rocks, clandestine quagmires, and perilous icebergs along the way. The Captain works with the people on all three levels of the ship – making sure the ever-growing number of guests on the bottom are satisfied, ensuring that the

young sailors get the tools and expertise that they need, and making sure that the experienced sailors have the tools and resources to lead the young sailors. The Captain has overcome notable ship damage and leaks, potential insurrections, threats of young sailors to jump overboard, and even has evaded mutiny. All the while, the passengers at the bottom of the ship only get small glimpses of the incredible work and effort it takes to get the ship and all the passengers ashore.

Once the ship successfully reaches land, all parties rejoice. Everyone is often satisfied and elated – some even sing the Captain's praises; others simply walk away into the new land to claim their destiny without looking back. But for the Captain, the reprieve is short-lived. Because on land, there is an even larger group of passengers bolstered by the elation of the recently arrived group. After giving explicit instructions and directions to the new set of passengers and young sailors, the Captain and his crew turn to set sail to the next destination with a group of unseasoned guests who are largely unaware of the trials of the open seas. And with that knowledge, the Captain navigates the ship knowing that, even though it takes considerable effort, as always, he will get the ship to its destination so that the young sailors can receive the best training as they embark on their own journeys through life.