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### “Humanistic Approach beyond Pedagogical Strategies: An Analytical Study of Trailer The Holdovers”

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#### KEY WORDS

#### ABSTRACT

**humanistic values, methodologies of teaching, emotional safety**

*As the world becomes more interconnected and diverse, education has to follow suit not only to develop academic skills but to enhance humanistic values. Humanistic teaching approaches based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Carl Rogers' person-centered theory enhance the pedagogy for emotional development. This study analyzes the trailer of The Holdovers to juxtapose two different methodologies of teaching rooted in strict discipline versus teaching rooted in empathy and relational connection. Results show that emotional safety, psychological well-being, and empathy are vital for students to succeed in their studies. These factors help nurture internal motivation, self-esteem, and self-actualization. The interactions between students and teachers, as shown in the film, highlight the importance of student-centered learning environments built on trust, autonomy, and honest relationships. This analysis calls for a teaching approach that focuses on humanistic learning methods. These methods promote both academic and emotional growth. Education should be viewed not just as a way to transfer knowledge, but as a means to support the overall development of the student.*

## Introduction

In today's fast-paced technological age, globalization and cultural diversity education are facing significant changes. The challenges of the modern world require an educational approach that not only focuses on academic skills but also fosters human values. The connection between teaching methods and human experience highlights the importance of a human-centered approach to education. This approach prepares learners with essential skills, empathy, and critical thinking needed to navigate this complex reality. A humanistic approach in teaching helps students learn better and boosts their self-esteem. Teachers are great mentors in the life of students, specifically those who try to understand them. Hoffman and Compton (2022) say that mentorship must extend beyond skill-building to assist in self-actualization when approached from the paradigm of Maslow's Daoist-influenced humanism.

Similarly, Carl Rogers (1969) advocates learner-centeredness as the basis for educational activities where authenticity, empathy, and unconditional positive regard can become conducive to personal growth. Furthermore, it emphasizes the growing importance of cross-cultural encounters in preparation for present-day teachers of language with a pedagogical outlook and perspective. Çelik (2025) pointed out that international experiences like study-abroad programs and virtual cultural exchanges facilitate the development of linguistic proficiency, intercultural competence, and teaching flexibility among non-native English teacher candidates.

Similarly, Can (2024) involved the dynamics between students' instrument performance self-efficacy and approaches to learning, uncovering the salient role of

students' voluntary involvement and intrinsic motivation in promoting effective learning strategies and skill mastery. Rahman (2013) bemoaned the humanistic philosophy of language education as emphasizing empathy, emotional attachment, and personal growth in learner-centered classrooms. For Chandra (2023), a peace linguistic analysis of "Freedom Writers" was employed to propel the idea that language teachers serve as peace leaders through their strategic and empathetic language use. Both of them call for a transition from being transactional to transformational roles for teachers in multicultural, emotionally laden learning environments.

Fleming (2018) discusses Mezirow's theory of transformative learning. He supports this with Habermas's critical theory and Honneth's recognition theory. This framework serves as a strong base for understanding how critical reflection and dialogue help learners grow and gain freedom. At the same time, Séguin (2020) used a corpus-based approach to study synonym usage in teaching settings. This shows how useful language corpora are for highlighting differences and improving clarity in instruction for language learners.

Miller and Moyers (2017) also bring motivational interviewing into the Rogersian background of person-centeredness to temper the transformation through the therapeutic and pedagogical relationship. Furthermore, Quinn (2013) demonstrates that culturally adapted person-centered therapy improves therapeutic outcomes for racial and ethnic minorities, thereby highlighting the importance of culturally responsive, humanistic pedagogy in diverse educational settings.

Hence, after all discussion, it can be said that humanistic approach in pedagogy is

endorsed by most of the scholars, and it also fulfills all the requirements of a student for becoming a good learner.

### Research questions

- How do the teaching methodologies depicted in *The Holdovers* trailer align with Maslow's and Rogers' humanistic principles?
- How do the two teaching styles of empathy and strictness influence student education and emotional development as depicted in the film trailer?

### Research objectives

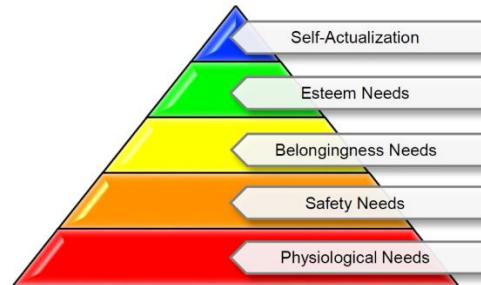
1. To analyze the teaching methodologies portrayed in *The Holdovers* trailer and align with Maslow's and Rogers' humanistic principles
2. To evaluate the influence of two different teaching styles of empathy and strictness on student education and emotional development, as shown in the film trailer

### Methodology

This research adopts the qualitative research methodology to fulfill its research objectives. Researcher applies the Maslow and Rogers humanistic model to analyze the pedagogical approach of a teacher towards students. Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) serves as a touchstone of humanistic psychology. It presents the theory on human motivation as the gradual satisfaction of five different needs: needs of the body, needs for established protection, needs for love and belongingness, esteem, and finally, need for self-actualization. Maslow's conclusion implied that the fulfillment of lower needs is a prerequisite for a person to be capable of seeking higher-level psychological growth. His later work included a concept of self-transcendence, which rid men of the narcissism of self-

integration to march towards altruism and existential goals.

Figure 1: Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



It applies to educational situations. According to Maslow's model, the first step in creating a learning environment is to ensure the emotional and physical well-being of students so that they are engaged on higher-order cognitive levels. Addressing needs such as psychological safety, belonging, and esteem provides the very foundations for fostering intrinsic motivation, creativity, and autonomy. Hence, it is the responsibility of teachers to create spaces that allow students to feel safe, respected, and empowered to reach their fullest potentials.

Drawn on Maslow's ideas, Rogers developed a relational model emphasizing the conditions that foment personal growth: unconditional positive regard, empathic understanding, and congruence. Rogers saw the educator in a facilitative role, one who creates a supportive and genuine learning environment. He believed that when learners feel accepted and empathized with, they flow toward self-actualization and self-directed learning.

Figure 2: Humanistic theory of Carl Rogers



Put together, Maslow's hierarchical formulation and Rogers' relational thought provide an equally sound humanistic basis for present-day education and mentoring. They stand for holistic learning environments in which emotional wellness, genuine relationships, and an innate craving for personal and intellectual fulfillment are paramount. With educational practice centered on these tenets, educators would create resilient, self-sufficient, life-long learners. There are the key components of Maslow and Rogers' humanistic approach essential for pedagogy.

**Table 1: Key Components of Maslow and Rogers' Humanistic Theory**

Component	Description
Psychological Safety	Creating a safe and non-threatening learning environment where the students feel valued and respected.
Learner-Centeredness	With interests, emotions, and goals, the learner is put at center stage.
Authentic Relationships	Among other things, a teacher develops trust, empathy, and congruence with students.
Self-Directed Learning	Learning is primarily a matter of ownership for students; autonomy assumes prime importance.
Experiential Learning	Learning is grounded in real-life, personal, or emotionally resonant experiences.
Intrinsic Motivation	Shift the focus toward nurturing curiosity and a passion for learning over external rewards.
Self-Actualization	The ultimate objective is to enable learners to reform themselves completely.

Moreover, with the help of this theory, researchers can contextualize the scenario of the movie *The Holdover* trailer in order to achieve the research objectives for the pedagogy field.

### Data Analysis

Researcher collected the data from *The Holdovers* official trailer from YouTube channel *Focus Features* and transcribed it with the help of Turbo Scribe software for the purpose of analysis. *The Holdovers* trailer puts on an academic view where emotional complexities have a huge bearing on how student-teacher relationships develop, perfectly fitting Maslow's and Rogers' humanistic theories. According to Maslow, all basic psychological and emotional needs need to be fulfilled before higher learning and growth can take place.

Psychological safety and belongingness were core to this necessity.

Rogers, on the other hand, considered unconditional positive regard, empathy, and the authenticity of relationships to be an important component of the process of growing effective learning environments. The winter break setting, in which students have nowhere to go, highlights unmet needs for security and emotional belonging, and the specific name to refer to these kinds of students, The Holdovers, accelerates the loneliness and separation. Creating barriers on an emotional level, students must cross to reach their teachers. Establishing psychological



safety is the key to addressing these needs as it would unlock the students' capacity for engagement and growth, as Roger would argue.

Similarly, the trailer clearly outlines two contrasting teaching perspectives: Mr. Hunham's stern and distant attitude versus Mary's more nurturing interaction with students. Mr. Hunham's rigidity is explained by his dialogue. When his student said *I can't fail this class* in response, he said *Oh, don't sell yourself short, Mr. Coates. I truly believe that you can.* Hunham's rigid discipline is predicated on an objectivist theory of learning that completely neglects the humanism which Rogers emphasized: emotions, interests, and goals should always

be centered on the student and set the tone of the teaching/learning process.



On the other hand, Mary embodies Rogers' humanistic ideals by placing priority on the inner emotional worlds of students and nurturing authentic relationships with students while offering them unconditional



positive regard. This dynamic directly evaluates the impacts of empathy and strictness on emotional development and education, and emphasizes that a learner-centered, empathetic approach promotes engagement and motivation in the learning process.

Maslow's theory emphasizes the necessity of psychological safety and belongingness among motivational and learning factors. First, Mr. Hunham's frigid and punitive approach - *even you is already one big detention* - will aggravate alienation among students and destroy any possible basis for growth. Even his student dialogue towards him, *I thought all the Nazis were hiding in Argentina*, reflects the hate of his students toward him.

Then, gradual psychological safety and authentic relationship building begin with the surfacing of some emotional vulnerability, such as admitting to personal

losses - *my father is dead*. This aligns with Rogers's thought that through empathic understanding and congruence, defensive students can become engaged learners, confirming emotional security as a major factor in any worthwhile educational process.

As the trailer discloses the nuanced subtleties in Mr. Hunham's behavior — gestures of camaraderie and acknowledgment of individuality, among matters — suggest a progression toward the facilitation of self-directed learning. Students begin to assert themselves, showing that in an environment where ownership of learning is prized, learner empowerment is central to both.

*-You know that, right? I find the world a bitter and complicated place, and it seems to feel the same way about me. I think you and I have this in common. I don't think I've ever had a real family Christmas like this before.*

Rogers' concept of facilitating personal growth and Maslow's drive toward fulfilling higher needs such as esteem and self-actualization. Then, genuine interconnections signify experiential learning — emotional encounters in real life, very strong motivation for academic and personal development — thus further supporting the case for experience-based education.

Both Maslow and Rogers stressed internal barriers-such as fear, self-doubt, and societal pressure-inhibiting growth and self-actualization. Students and even Mr. Hunham face these psychological hindrances in *The Holdovers*, representing Maslow's "Jonah Complex," a fear of one's potential. Characters begin to dismantle such barriers through mentorship over time with honest dialogues. The students recognize their inner worth and autonomy to point toward emerging intrinsic motivation, that is, learning and self-improvement driven by

inner passion rather than external rewards and culminating in real educational and emotional development.

Essentially, *The Holdovers* trailer paints a humanistic view where genuine, empathic relationships facilitate an educational transformation. The slow integration of psychological safety, learner-centeredness, authentic relationships, self-directed learning, experiential learning, intrinsic motivation, and movement towards self-actualization thus captures an energetic journey from detachment to deep human connection. This evolution manifests Rogers' and Maslow's theories in practice, whilst validating the research objectives: empathy and not authoritarian strictness becomes the essence for fostering emotional resilience, intrinsic motivation, and holistic growth for students in education.

### **Findings**

The content analysis of *The Holdovers* trailer shows the strong presence of humanistic educational principles as conceived by Maslow and Rogers. The case of the emotionally wounded students being portrayed during wintertime—isolated and abandoned—conveys the absence of psychological safety and sense of belongingness considered foundational in Maslow's hierarchy. The trailer seems to hint that the emotionally neglectful environments provided by school settings hinder students' development. Gradually given empathy and acknowledgment, the students start returning to the learning process, which indicates the necessity for the presence of unconditional positive regard emphasized by Rogers to heal emotional withdrawal toward re-establishing a psychologically safe environment.

At the same time, the trailer depicts a pretty big pedagogical contrast between Mr. Hunham's tiresome, discipline-centered approach and showing Mary as

demonstrating a more relational, empathetic way of teaching. Mr. Hunham's way of teaching is at first suppressive of student independence and emotional expression and demonstrates the limitations of the authoritarian model in punishing academic noncompliance. On the other hand, teaching methods by this approach are much more associated with Rogers, as both of them emphasize congruence and empathy to promote learner agency and emotional well-being. There, however, it also shows a progression from those in the traditional classroom to a connection where Mr. Hunham gradually comes to exhibit his "humanism" through vulnerability and authentic relationships by which students develop more self-efficacy, control of their learning, and emotional openness. It is reflective of the possible direction change from controlling to facilitating in student development.

The evolution of character dynamics in the trailer also sustains the humanistic curve toward self-actualization. By fulfilling psychological requirements-requirements such as safety, connection, autonomy, and meaning- the students begin showing signs of both the high-end pinnacle of Maslow's need theory and the fully functioning person as visualized by Rogers. The emotional turning points in the story that serve as means for authentic and experiential learning are often found in real-life suffering and common experience. And, of course, this is manifested by intrinsic motivation, theorizing that students begin acting out of inner drive rather than compliance. Together, these simply affirm that when humanistic conditions prevail, classroom activities can aspire for something greater than mere transmission of knowledge to holistic conversion of students.

## Conclusion

As researchers analyze the trailer of The Holdovers, we can use Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Carl Rogers' humanistic approach to support the argument that emotional safety, empathy, and genuine relationships are essential for meaningful educational development. The juxtaposition of a teacher's strictness versus empathy argues for the essential role of learner-centered, psychologically safe environments in fostering both academic success and emotional growth. Naturally, when students' basic needs—the feeling of belonging, autonomy, and recognition—are met, they become increasingly endowed with self-esteem, intrinsic motivation, and self-actualization. Thus, this analysis suggests that humanistic principles should become part and parcel of educational practice because they can lead students toward better learning outcomes and simultaneously nurture their holistic development. These observations enthroned empathy and emotional understanding in this regard for modern pedagogy.

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