

READING FOR EMPATHY, REFLECTING FOR AWARENESS:

A PILOT STUDY FOR IMPROVING SELF AND
OTHER AWARENESS THROUGH WRITING

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BY

RACHAEL GRAY REYNOLDS B.A., M.A.

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DEDICATION

To my wife and daughter.

For your patience, love, inspiration, and silliness. This may not change the world, but I hope it helps our understanding of it a bit better.

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ABSTRACT

RACHAEL GRAY REYNOLDS

READING FOR EMPATHY, REFLECTION FOR AWARENESS: A CASE STUDY FOR IMPROVING SELF AND OTHER AWARENESS THROUGH WRITING

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The recent popularity of the term *empathy* has generated much discussion about how to gain empathetic awareness of the world around us. Within the context of composition studies, this relates specifically to writers' audience awareness: a successful student writer should have an awareness and understanding of who they are as an individual, as well as an awareness and understanding of who their audience is. The primary purpose of this study was to develop a way to talk about such empathetic awareness in writing, in order to suggest a means for producing more audience-aware writing in the composition classroom. A total of 22 participants, nine participants for the control group and 13 participants for the test group, completed three stages of this mixed-methods research study: 1) a written pre-reflection assessed for empathy and a Defining Issues Test (DIT) that assessed for moral judgment; 2) the reading of four short stories, with the test group completing a guided reflection for each story; and 3) a repetition of the assessments from the first stage. The data collected from all three stages (1) confirmed that reading literary fiction increases empathetic awareness, (2) revealed that writing guided reflection about the reading leads to a further increase in empathetic awareness, and (3) prompted the definition of two separate forms of empathy known as

“external empathy,” or empathetic awareness of the other, and “internal empathy,” or empathetic awareness of the self. These results indicated that adding reflection to the practice of reading increases the amount empathy performed in writing. This suggests that future research should explore how to incorporate this type of empathy performance in composition writing in order to gain better audience- and self-awareness in writing.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Empathy has recently become a popular buzz word. A quick search on Google generates over 900,000 news stories published in the last three years. A Google video search contains over 3,000,000 videos that range from TED talks to clips from Sesame Street to amateur videos with pirated music tracks and homemade animation. Professor Brené Brown's video (2013) on empathy has received over 9,000,000 views and has been shared thousands of times through multiple social media platforms since its release. According to the Center for Building a Culture of Empathy (n.d), Former President Barack Obama has discussed and used the term in at least 134 public addresses, correspondences, publications, and speeches from 2001 to 2017.

During his farewell address in 2017, Former President Obama spoke about the way our "increasingly diverse nation" and democracy will be effective and continue moving forward is through the use of empathy. Quoting Atticus Finch from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, he told the nation that "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view. . . until you climb into his skin and walk around in it" (Obama, 2017). A year later, the president of the United States is no longer associated with this type of productive use of empathy. Instead, a Google search of "empathy" and "Trump" generates over a 400,000 hits with titles ranging from "Donald Trump is missing this key ingredient to being a successful president" (Cillizza, 2017, n.p.),

“Harvey exposes Trump’s empathy deficit” (Graham, 2017, n.p.) and “Trump has ‘social autism,’ doesn’t see ‘other people,’ says conservative pundit George Will” (LeMiere, 2017, n.p.).

With the discussion of empathy gaining popularity in public forums, it is time for academia to more consciously consider empathy in the classroom. More specifically, I argue that professionals in the field of composition and rhetoric have the responsibility – and enormous opportunity – to help students develop ways to become more empathetic scholars and citizens. We need to develop a better understanding of how we might teach this as a skill for students, by adjusting our approaches to designing curriculum and assignments. Basically, we need to provide students with the tools to help them “climb into... and walk around in” their audience’s point of view, as well as their own (Lee, 1960, p. 39). The goal of this dissertation is to show the importance of and help find a space for empathy – the awareness of the other and the self as audience members – in the composition classroom.¹

Personal Experience

As a child, my mom often told me: “It’s not what you say, but how you say it.” At a young age, I was already exposed to audience awareness and the importance of how I communicated my thoughts. At the time, I knew she was not talking about cussing at someone or insulting them; instead, she meant anything I had to say could be said as long as I said it in an appropriate way for the person to whom I was talking. This adage, even as a child, made a huge impact on how I tried to speak to others, how I listened and processed what was communicated to me, and how I judged if someone was a friend or foe, or if

they were someone I even wanted to be associated with. As I grew older, I also came to realize that she meant if I had something I understood or felt important to communicate, no matter who I was communicating with, then there was an appropriate way to share my thoughts. This has been a leading factor in how I negotiate friendships, set ethical limits to professional relationships, and even how I approach my writing. I would go as far to say that her telling me this was the catalyst for my studying writing and rhetoric.

Most people may not consciously think about who they are talking to or how that communication is received, yet audience awareness is vital to any successful communication. While our primary audience is the other, we, the I-self, the me-who-is-talking is also part of this audience. As communicators, we have to be aware of what the me-who-is-talking wants to say. This means understanding ourselves from an empathetic space just as we have to be aware of the other with whom we are talking and approach them from a similar empathetic space of understanding. For compositionists and rhetoricians, audience awareness is a key component for properly communicating ideas and thoughts. Unfortunately, it is also one of the trickier elements to navigate when composing a text or attempting to communicate an idea.

Composition classes often call upon students to write to an imaginary audience. However, there is not much discussion about how to conceptualize this audience, much less tools and resources provided to help build and understand the members of this audience. And on the other hand, class projects and papers do not typically allow much time for students to explore their own personal thoughts on a topic. Instead, instructors provide a prompt to help students define their research and narrow their topics. They may

show students how to search for academic scholarship and where to find other informational resources. Instructors may also walk students through the formula for the genre in which they are writing or have class discussions on how to synthesize a conversation for academic writing. While all of these are necessary for creating a composition or putting a project together, students are expected to understand who they are writing to without much time given to how to discover and understand who makes up their imaginary audience. There is not much provided in the form of resources to help students fully understand what they think and what they want to communicate to this audience, either. We are asking them to be aware of what they want to say to this audience, as well as how they want to say; however we have not provided any means for them to build this type of understanding or awareness. We have asked them to say something without working through the idea of “It’s not what you say, but how you say it.”

Teaching Experience

After reading Walter Ong’s (1975) article, “The Writer’s Audience is Always a Fiction,” I developed a writing exercise for my composition class in an attempt to help them understand the importance of knowing their audience. First, my students and I have discussions about the different approaches we take to communicating thoughts based on who we are speaking to. I ask them to think about something important, something that has happened to them, or something that they want to see changed. Most of them do not have problems coming up with a topic for this assignment. If I only follow this with instructions to write a 250 to 300-word essay about their topic, they write in very general

statements. Some include brief rants, while others spend most of their time writing a narrative of their story with only a brief amount of discussion actually describing, explaining, and presenting a solution for their topic. The majority tends to fail to include a justification for their writing or for the outcomes they want to see based on that writing.

After they've completed this exercise, we briefly discuss what they wrote and then move into the conversation about who they wrote it for and the choices they made for that audience. Typically, students answer that they did not think of a specific audience, or that they were talking to a general audience. We then have a conversation about free- and pre-writing, in which I explain that no writing is wasted writing and that they have now created a document that they can refer to for ideas and points when they go back to write about this topic with a specific audience in mind.

For this next writing exercise, they write three letters on the same topic as their first exercise, but each letter is written to a specific audience. One letter is to a close friend or relative, the second to a classmate or coworker, and the third to a professional in a selected field or a manager at a job. Students report that the letter to their friend was the easiest, followed by the letter to their classmate or coworker. They feel that they have a better sense of audience awareness as far as word choice, how to construct their narrative, and which details to include based on the perceived audience. They are able to concede better to a point or address an issue the friend or relative may have with their argument. They are typically more aware of and attempt to provide the resolution they want to see from their communication to that individual in comparison to what they wrote to the classmate or coworker.

The letter to the professional is almost always the most difficult for students. They understand that word choice is important in these letters, and they have an understanding that they may need to describe their situations differently to each specific audience. However, when it comes to justifying their position and the outcomes they want to see, they often flounder when addressing the professional, or the person who is most removed from their immediate self. While some of this difficulty may be apprehension from addressing an individual in authority, most of it seems to stem from not having better awareness of who this person is and what motivates them, similar to how they are more removed from the classmate or coworker when compared to the friend or family member.

When we begin working on major projects for class, we talk about them constructing an imaginary audience similar to how they imagined the audiences for their letters. Using the ideas from Lisa Ede's and Andrea Lundsford's (1984) article, "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked" and Wayne Booth's (2008) book *Rhetoric of Rhetoric*, I ask them to think about who they want to share their information with, why it is important for this audience to hear what they have to say, and what they want that audience to do with that information.

General Conversation

Like many writing instructors, I attempt to help my students understand that neither I nor their classmates conducting peer review of their work are their primary audience. We discuss that each one of them is writing to a very particular audience with specific knowledge, motivations, and agency for how they consume the information they are given and what they do with it. These are the hurdles many instructors face with

projects that exist only within the space of the classroom (Lewis, 2001, p. 193; Rahmat, 2016; Ross, 2014; Lapp, Shea, & Wolsey, 2011); there is no audience beyond the instructor and their classmates, nor is there a response or (re)action to what they produced other than a grade.

Projects designed to ultimately live in an arena outside of the classroom, such as writing for an op-ed, posting to a blog, or creating deliverables to a living community, make this audience issue much easier for students overcome, but a lack of understanding as far as that specific audience's knowledge, motivation, and agency is still present (Lewis, 2001; Ross, 2014; Parette, 2006; Lapp, 2011). I attribute this to not just the lack of understanding the audience, but also the lack of understanding of what the student really thinks and wants to see happen with their subject.

By incorporating an empathetic awareness of the self and the other, I believe the student writer would have more critical understanding of what they really think instead of letting their sources guide what they say in a text. They would also have better insight into what they want to see happen as an outcome of their work. By having an understanding of what is important to the self, in this case the student-writer, and why this is important, what impact it has, and what it does to or for them, they could better communicate their thoughts. This understanding would give them deeper awareness of themselves, a deeper understanding of the impact of the subject, and lead to a richer conversation with clear goals for the project. At the same time, having an understanding of who their audience is, what is important to that audience, why it is important, what impact it has on them, and what it does to or for them, would help the student writer use

the appropriate appeals for and approach to their communication (Lewis, 2001, p. 193-94).

All of this audience awareness requires empathy, or the ability to see the world from another's perspective. A 2016 study, "Analyzing Audience Awareness in Academic Writing Among Undergraduates," reported that student writers who spend more time on "planning instead on being overly concerned with the content and sentence structure" were better able to reach their target audience and had an easier time with the writing assignment in general (Rahmat, p. 94). This "planning" included "finding out who would be reading the finished product, finding out what the audience already knew, finding out what the audience wanted to know, and finally knowing the language capacity for the intended audience" (Rahmat, 2016, p. 94). In order to be successful in these ways, the student writer must have an empathetic understanding of who they are as an individual as well as an empathetic understanding of who their audience is. This dissertation coins two terms, respectively, to define these different types of understand: internal empathy, and external empathy.

To be a member of society and successfully navigate the social world, one must be able to understand those around them. For psychologists, this means that one must be able to "make inferences about the mental life of others" which helps aid in "appropriate social behavior" (Doddell-Feder, Lincoln, Coulson, & Hooker, 2013, p. 1). For composition scholars, it requires critical thinking, audience awareness, and delivery from an informed space. Both fields might agree, however, to call these things "empathetic awareness." Posting reactionary comments behind the safety a computer screen is not a

substitute for critically engaging in a discussion and adding to an open and informed discourse in which all parties are taken into account. The almost constant and instant ability to complain about a bad frappe-experience, tweet a shout-out to the local DJ for playing the best jams during the commute home, or to post a picture of Fluffy Pants Dogenstien doing something cute seems to be stripping away the realization that what we communicate has a larger impact than just the instant gratification social media allows from our followers.

Our ability to share thoughts and ideas with others continues to evolve as societies become more enmeshed in social media and instant communication, but we seem to be slipping further from actually seeing those we are communicating with as important, unique individuals. Students are constantly engaged in conversations with others who are not present. They can share pictures of themselves in various settings, upload videos of strangers performing odd behaviors, and post about the bad experience they had at Starbucks. Their social media audience, in turn, gives them likes, shares, and sometimes a barrage of witty comments or supportive outcries. Students then come to class and are expected to talk to a very specific, yet imaginary, audience. Although they are aware of their social media audiences, many times the information they share is either emotionally driven or lacks critical awareness and insight. This is not to say that social media users do not engage in purposeful, constructive discussions. However, the communications that they engage with frequently outside of the classroom are more “expressive rather than strategic” thus the need for providing tools for “adaptive search, rhetorical planning,

linguistic manipulation, and problem diagnosis” and teaching students how to use them (Flower, Schriver, Carey, Hass, & Hayes, 1989, p. 2).

Social media has created a space for an almost infinite audience whose reactions consist of “LOLs,” thumbs-up, angry faces, or smileys. It allows for a space in which the author does not have to justify their actions or thoughts. It also provides a platform for instant responses that do not have to be justified, critical, or constructed with any audience awareness. Thus, audience issues exist even before the student enters a writing class. This means that, as instructors, we not only have to overcome the traditional student issues of audience awareness, but we also have to overcome the almost engrained idea of a faceless audience who is either with us or against, and whom, either way, does not really impact what we say or how we say it.

However, what and how we communicate does have an impact on us and our audience, regardless of the platform from which we are talking or writing. Therefore, not only does a writer need be informed but also aware of how they are informing their audience. The ability to critically think and have awareness about the rhetorical problem is the beginning stage of the writing process, and one that is often revisited during the construction of a text (Flower & Hayes, 1980). Flower and Hayes (1981) discuss this in terms of “task environment, the writer’s long-term memory, and the writing process” (p. 369). As an author writes, they go through a process in which they “communicate” with themselves, “facilitating” their own learning of what they want to say (Liebenberg, 2016, p. 1). Without awareness of what the writer wants to say, the writer cannot “attempt to ‘solve’ or respond to this rhetorical problem,” or the task environment (Flower & Hayes,

1981, p. 369). The writer needs to have empathetic awareness and understanding of their long-term memory, or their “stored knowledge” of the subject, audience, and ways to approach each in order to be successful within the writing process (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 369). Empathy is at the crux of all of this.

Social media is not to blame for a lack of empathy or even the inability to grasp audience awareness. While many people engaged in social media do fall into a somewhat self-absorbed state of being by participating and consuming so much of the empty-calorie communications that take place on social media, the lack of tools, resources, and training in academia, in a space where people learn how to be in the world and how to create and produce consumable knowledge and products, shoulders much of this blame and burden. This erasure of the critically-thinking, empathetic self is not just occurring in our personal lives; it is becoming part of the curriculum on all levels of education. The steady reduction of the humanities in education, emphasis on STEM fields, and increased dependence on standardized testing and assessment driven programs are robbing learners of the opportunity to develop and build the basic critical thinking skills required to be productive members of society. The Common Core standards, as well as the massive increase in standardized assessment, have been met with a huge push back from professional educators (Mead, 2015). In October 2015, the then U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, admitted that the “drill and kill” concept does not truly measure performance, nor add to the toolbox of applied skills and understanding (Mead, 2015).

Critical thinking and awareness are crucial for communication. The main goal of education, and the core of teaching writing, is to help shape critical thinkers who are

aware of the world around them and know how to perform in it. In the opening statement of his 2017 article, “The Good Writer: Virtue Ethics and the Teaching of Writing,” John Duffy says, “[t]o write is to make choices, and to teach writing is to teach rationales for making such choices” (p. 229). To be a productive and contributing member of society, our students must be able to see and understand a situation for what it is and why it is occurring, see and understand those impacted by it, and see and understand how we feel about it, how they are impacted by it, and what they want to become of it. They have to be “kairotic, calling for the right words at the right moment...conveying...the values, traditions, and narratives of the communities in which they were developed” (Duffy, 2017, p. 235). We are teaching them how to be ethical beings in the world, and for most college students, the FYC classroom is the first space they have entered as adults expected to behave as such.

Unfortunately during their primary and secondary schooling students’ and teachers’ hands are metaphorically tied by state mandated assessments and the need for students to perform well on standardized tests. Therefore, these instructors do not have the same amount of time and freedom for the type of discussions and activity that being in a college classroom allows. By the time the majority of first-year students enter their first college composition classroom, they have been inundated with 12-years of school telling them what to think and the formula to present it in (Lewis, 2001). In their college composition classroom, they are then asked to create a text on a subject of their choosing, to an audience they construct, through means and appeals they feel appropriate for the subject and their audience. While most college instructors give their students tools and

resources to construct a polished final product, in my experience and interactions with colleagues, the importance of understanding the self and the other through an empathetic lens is only implied through discussions of audience awareness and the need to be an informed researcher, and not explicitly stated.

I do not think these conversations lack specific focus on empathy because instructors feel that it is not important. I do not think that this stems from a lack of empathy on the instructors' parts, their inability to properly teach their classes, or any reason other than we simply do not have enough awareness of the importance of empathy, the proper tools and resources to share with our students to help build empathy, or enough support from those who control the funds and curriculum for these classes. Thus, I am adding to the awareness of the importance of empathy in this dissertation and hope to begin to suggest ways we might develop resources for instructors to create a space in which their students can begin to build these skills.

The focus of this dissertation, then, is how composition instructors can help our students increase their empathetic awareness for others and for themselves. The first step on this journey to adding empathy into the curriculum is to determine how we can build empathy with the tools we already have available for our classes. The questions I want to answer are: What, if any, impact does reading literature and reflecting upon that reading have on the level of empathy for others? What, if any, impact does reading literature and reflecting upon that reading have on empathy for the self?

Some may question the use of fictional literature in a composition classroom. They may argue that teaching composition should focus on genre-based writing, the

mechanics of producing expository essays, and developing awareness of rhetorical appeals and how to use them. I argue, however, that examining the choices made during speech writing, academic articles, and non-fiction essays and texts are not the only types of examples students should be exposed to. While these texts do serve a purpose and should be part of the curriculum, reading fictional texts transports the reader more easily into an empathetic space by mediating reality in a way that lets the reader enter situations we cannot imagine without the text. It allows the reader to enter a space of understanding others, as well as understanding how they would respond in a given situation (Dodell-Feder, 2013; Elbow, 2002).

By reviewing the outcomes from my study, I will add to the already existing conversation that reading literature does increase empathy in the reader. I also hope to show that by answering guided reflection prompts designed to help the reader critically explore the thoughts and feelings they had from the reading that they have not only increased their empathy for another but empathy for themselves, as well. This empathy, both for the self and for the other, may translate to better understanding of rhetorical situations through better understanding of what the individual self thinks, knows, and does in a given situation, as well as developing awareness for the appropriate approach for delivering this information to a given audience.

I hypothesize that the importance of combining empathy and self-awareness in the student writer ultimately leads to better, more authentic communication. By opening student's access to others' experiences through reading diverse narratives, they can enter a world that is similar to their own but experienced through someone else's perspective

so that they may experience and understand what the world is like for someone else (Foy & Gerrig, 2014).

Reading a narrative or escaping into a novel allows us to enter the world of the other (Gerrig, 1993). Reading is a “thought-experiment” that requires critical thinking, reflection, and understanding (Hakemulder, 2000, p. 18). Scanning headlines, reading tickers, and following the latest sagas unfolding on social media are not the same as entering the narrative space of a well-rounded, fully developed character (Mar, Oatley, & Peterson, 2009). Being transported into the world of a narrative, in comparison to consuming information of the world around us, places the reader in an empathetic state of awareness. The information gained from reading literature not only helps the reader understand the world of the character but gives insight into the real world around them and how they would respond to it. It allows readers to immerse themselves in a story beyond a summarized version of events and outcomes that many news and social media stories report. Engaging with literary fiction opens the reader to ideas and issues in daily life (Hakemulder, 2000). It heightens awareness of social developments, generating an “open-minded attitude” that allows readers a “new, fresh, and intense way” to look at the world around them (Hakemulder, 2000, p. 23).

According to Jerome Bruner (1986), fictional pieces invite the reader into a world that is oddly familiar to events in life, but “with gaps that call upon the reader to become a writer” (p. 24). These texts place the reader into the position of writer in its “perpetual present” (Barthes, 1975, p. 5); the reader of these texts is “no longer a consumer, but a producer” who adds to the plurality of the story with their own language (Barthes, 1975,

p. 4). While becoming a producer of the text, the reader reflects not just on the world of the story, but the world around them, “thus avoiding the fossilization of our political and social norms” (Hakemulder, 2000, p. 23). Without this type of reflection, the reader-turned-writer may merely regurgitate the information they have consumed, leading to a potential stasis in thought and creation. If readers are only passively consuming, then critical thinking and the kind of insightful response that active reflection elicits may be lost. This dissertation aims to measure the difference between these passive and active modes of reading.

Critical awareness for both the self and others can be created through reflecting on the experiences within a story and how they affected not only the characters, but our individual self as well. By reflecting on the characters in the story, their position in their world and the purpose for their actions, we, as readers, are practicing what I am coining external empathy, or empathy for others. Similarly, reflecting on how we would respond if in the characters’ situation and developing a critical understanding of why were affected in such a way allows for self-awareness, or what I am coining internal empathy. I contend that internal empathy not only makes the reader understand their thoughts and feelings better, but the external empathy that is being practiced may lead to better communication by virtue of the awareness of the other. This awareness may translate into clearer communication by the reader in their work as a writer because they have a better understanding of not just the purpose behind their own (re)action, but they are also developing more awareness of the other and the purpose behind that other’s (re)action. This awareness for the self and other may then allow for more understanding of how to

address the self's audience and the affect their communication may have on that community.

While each act—reading for empathy, writing for awareness—is important on its own, the combination of the two helps form a more, well-rounded individual. At the moment, the field of composition studies is not actively engaging in conversations about what the awareness that external empathy and internal empathy can add to a text or what this awareness can do for the development of the individual producing that text. The writer's awareness for themselves and the other can help them become more empathetic to those they encounter. This empathy may translate into the writer being able to communicate on a more authentic and purposeful level with their audience. The purposeful communication that includes insightful responses to the rhetorical situation and addresses and answers the needs of the audience could lead to richer, more productive conversations between the self, or writer, and the other, or audience. This type of engaged, critical discourse, which requires external empathy and internal empathy, may prevent social stasis, and hopefully lead individuals to becoming more productive members of society who can successfully navigate the world around them.

Dissertation Road Map

In order to understand the ideas of external empathy and internal empathy that I introduce here, and to see how they can improve the teaching of composition, we must first understand the historic perception of empathy. Chapter II: Discussion of Terminology and Concepts explores the history of the term “empathy” up to its current usage. In order to gain a full understanding of empathy and the effect of reading for

empathy, a conversation of “Theory of Mind” and Transportation Theory must also take place. To fully situate this project within the context of student writing, this is followed by a discussion about reflection’s place in the field of composition. A brief conversation about the implication of bringing together these terms and concepts concludes this chapter, in order to set up the argument for using literature in the composition classroom because of the impact it has on empathy for the reader and writer. After establishing the basis of this argument, definitions of terms used frequently throughout this dissertation and a narrative about the design of this study are presented in Chapter III: Methodology. In order to understand the purpose and procedures for administering each stage of the study, this chapter offers descriptions and explanations of the methods used to analyze the collected data. The results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis are in Chapter IV: Results. This includes qualitative analysis of the pre- and post-reflections from both groups, along with discussions of each. The final chapter, Chapter V: Discussion, summarizes the overall findings from the previous chapter, including places for improvement, and a discussion about the potential use of these findings for the field of composition in the future, as well as a discussion about the bigger implications for reading for empathy and reflecting for self-awareness.

CHAPTER II

DISCUSSION OF TERMINOLOGY AND CONCEPTS

Empathy

The history of the term “empathy” is almost as complicated and contested as the use of the term itself. The following provides an overview of the way “empathy” has been defined by the fields of anthropology, philosophy, and psychology, in order to contextualize the definition used for this dissertation. It is important to lay out the historical background of this term in order understand its current usage and lack of more substantial use of it in composition studies.

While our current term for the concept is drawn from the ancient Greek term *empathes*, the idea we currently associate with empathy was not widely discussed until the 19th century. At this time, it was referred to as *empfindung*, and thought to be “the quality or power of projecting one’s personality into or mentally identifying oneself with an object of contemplation, and so fully understanding or appreciating it” (“empathy, n.,” 2014). Almost 25 centuries after the concept was first used, the term “empathy” was coined by British psychologist Edward Titchener while translating German philosopher Theodor Lipps’s work on aesthetics (Wispé, 1986; Edwards, 2013).

Today, the term’s usage typically points to the “ability to imagine” (Martin & McFerran, 2017; Garner, 2016; Richmond, 2005; Harris & White, 2013), “identify with”

(Scott, 2015) or “understand” (Martin, 2015; “Empathy,” 2014; Chandler & Munday, 2016; Colman, 2015) the “emotions of another person” (Martin & McFerran, 2017; Scott, 2015; Martin, 2015). A key aspect of empathy is the “ability” (Martin & McFerran, 2017; Garner, 2016; Richmond, 2005; Harris & White, 2013), or “capacity” (Chandler & Munday, 2016; Colman, 2015) to slip into a cognitive role of “experiencing and sharing the feeling of the other” (Decety & Ickes, 2009, p. 2). This mental jump of the imagination will come into play later when we discuss transportation theory and reading for empathy. For now, we will attempt to put a working definition of the term together by using its historical and modern roots.

Early 20th century philosophers viewed empathy as the most direct way of understanding others as “minded creatures” (Stueber, 2008, “Philosophical Problem”). However, the term “*einfühlung*,” or empathy, and its definition were a source of much debate throughout its early use. While Theodor Lipps (1907) and Edward Titchener (1909) are considered the first to work with what we now loosely think of as empathy, the debate about its meaning was going on long before their time.

One of the conversations that most influences our ideas about empathy was a public feud that took place in 18th century between German philosopher Immanuel Kant and Johann Gottfried Herder, German philosopher, anthropologist, and literary critic (Edwards, 2013). Herder’s and Kant’s debate about how *einfühlung* worked was fueled by their stance on absolutism versus relativism. Unfortunately, their feud on the semantics of how the term works overshadowed an actual discussion of the term and its usage (Edwards, 2013, p. 270). Kant took opposition to Herder’s lack of distinction

between feeling and thinking (Edwards, 2013, p. 271). He accused Herder of “failing to distinguish sensation, emotion, and thought” because, for Kant, these were all distinct in origin and action (Edwards, 2013, p. 271). Herder believed that the “relationship between sensation and cognition . . . are with us mixed creatures intertwined; we have cognition only through sensation, our sensation is always accompanied with a sort of cognition” (Herder, 2002, p. 222). Ironically, neither was willing to use an empathetic approach to their debate, much less concede to the other; therefore, their dispute never reached a real resolution.

Instead, Kant moved on to other issues of absolutism, the mind, and experience, while Herder continued his work with the concept of “feeling into.” Although Herder often contradicted himself by “[d]enying continuity and inherent subject-object interrelatedness” his work led to the concept of *einfühlung* being studied as a way to become objective through the awareness of one’s own subjectivity (Edwards, 2013, p. 273). Herder’s inability to remain consistent with his approach to empathy is an example of the slipperiness of the term.

Most of Herder’s work focused on the ethnography and ethnology of communities (Bahr, Durrant, Evans, & Maughan, 2008). For Herder, to understand a community as an outsider, subjectivity and one’s own biases had to be acknowledged and suspended. He claimed that “ignorance and pride . . . reject everything that contradicts [one’s own] manner of thought and comprehension,” and to subjectively approach a community or individual makes one no better than the “Greeks and Romans with the title *barbarian*, which with sovereign majesty they conferred on all people who were not—Greeks and

Romans” (Herder, 2002, p. 248). Herder emphasized the need for scholars to “recognize their own embeddedness and naturally occurring epistemology” in order to remain somewhat objective so they may interpret their studies without emotion or sentiment (Edwards, 2013, p. 272). He wanted them to remember that “in order to share in feeling this, do not answer on the basis of the word but go into the age, into the clime, the whole history, feel yourself into everything—only now are you on the way toward understanding the word” (Herder, 2002, p. 336). Herder attempts to overcome the lack of continuity in his assertion and inability to unravel the interrelatedness of objectivity by including the realization that the self cannot be fully removed from any understanding of a being or object. Instead, for Herder, the self has to acknowledge the social, cultural, and historical knowledge it carries with it, attempt to push aside that specific, personal knowledge, and view the subject for what and why it is through subject’s history and world around it. This idea of the situatedness of the self is strongly related to the idea of a writer’s awareness of themselves and their relationship to their audience in a given rhetorical situation.

Admittedly, the scholar's personal history is their only way to and through understanding and “they could not impose these arbitrarily without losing accuracy” (Edwards, 2013, p. 272). Herder realized that overgeneralizations and categorizing go along with being subjective, and that “all the works of humanity are *texts*, to be interpreted” and that these texts “cannot be judged on the same scale, and may even represent differing, incompatible ideals” (Bahr et al., 2008, p. 506). However, he did not intend for a “sort of psychological self-projection onto texts” but an “arduous process of

historical-philological inquiry” (Herder, 2002, p. xvii). In order to understand something one must “feel one’s way into . . . an imaginative reproduction” of the subject and all of the pieces that make up that subject (Herder, 2002, p. xvii). This understanding is not about what makes up the scholar; instead, the scholar must understand everything that is, makes up, and came before the text they are viewing. For this project, the *scholar* in Herder’s discussion is our *writer*, and what must be understood by our writer is the world view and agenda of the audience.

Herder’s scenario of the scholar understanding of what makes up the text(or, for our discussion of empathy and composition, the writer and their audience awareness) does not fall in line with Kant’s absolutism which calls for a distinction between thinking and feeling. Herder’s approach that one must “feel one’s way into” is much more a type of abstract form of thinking than it is really about a feeling. To put this in context of the writing compositions, the writer has to be aware of who they are, their personal history, and the world view they bring to a piece of communication. They also must be able to realize that those they are communicating to do not necessarily come from this same background with the same experiences.

The type of inferences made in order to understand an other’s experiences are not those that can easily follow a specific pattern or formula. They are made through a negotiation of thoughts pieced together until it “feels” like a proper fit or a proper reproduction of the experience. Therefore, the writer has to project themselves into the world of their audience in this “imaginative reproduction” to have an awareness of what is needed in their communication to that audience (Herder, 2002, p. xvii). Historically,

this “imaginative reproduction” was discussed as an aesthetic object, or an “imagined mental representation” of art (Verducci, 2000, p. 67). In order to have this realization actualized, similar to knowing when a recipe needs a hint more salt in order to make the flavors stand out or a painting needs just a touch of blue to convey the proper emotion, the thinker must “feel” their way through their understanding of the other.

Father and son German philosophers, Friedrich and Robert Vischer, build on the aesthetic aspect of imagining others, giving us another way to consider empathy. While Herder was primarily focused on anthropological studies, the Vischers were focused on art and art appreciation. The Vischers, like Herder, believed that one projects the self into an object or other while simultaneously retaining the self’s “own identity” and “mysteriously transform[ing] into this other” (Ikonomou & Mallgrave, 1994, p. 19-20). This “empathic union of subject and object” fills the space between “others in nature” through instinct (Verducci, 2000, p. 67 & 68). For the Vischers, it is human nature to want to bond, or create a union, with objects and others around them (Ikonomou & Mallgrave, 1994). This “union” is created through the “imagined mental representation” in which the self’s thoughts are woven with that of the object or other (Verducci, 2000, p. 67). The desire for unity leads the self to a harmonious understanding that was not present before encountering the other (Verducci, 2000, p. 68-69). This encounter, then, leads to

An interpenetration of multiple acts...the transference of the soul...with its physical feeling and bodily perception, extends its forms and movements...in the coalescence, the bundle of acts that flows together into one act...an initial sensing

and then a feeling behavior. The former is already relatively psychological, but the latter is psychologically intensified and involves the projection of the self and its content into the subject...By thinking of the whole and breaking self-will out of its own egotistical aloofness, self-consciousness expands, softens, and warms, becoming species-consciousness. (Vischer, 2015, p. 433-4 & 438)

According to Gustav Jahoda (2005), “it is reasonable to describe the process of aesthetic appreciation conceived by Vischer as the projection of the self into the object of beauty” (p. 154). The self projecting into the other, an “empathetic union,” creates a “pleasant feeling of harmony...because it bridges the gaps between others in nature” (Verducci, 2000, p. 67) According to the Vischers (2015), the breaking out of owns own ego driven self and the natural desire to form unions is how it is “possible to put oneself in the place of other individuals,” or to have an empathetic experience (p. 438). The Vischers repeat Herder’s notion of “empathy” as a way to talk about the self experiencing the other through the lens of the other. However, the Vischers are viewing this from a space of “aesthetic appreciation” (Jahoda, 2005, p. 154) which creates a “pleasant feeling of harmony” (Verducci, 2000, p. 67). For them, empathy is not just a way to view and appreciate art, nor does it always create a positive response that unites. However, their notion of a pleasing feeling coming from this empathetic experience is closer to what we understand to be sympathy than empathy.

Empathy, the way it is used in this dissertation and the way it is understood in present time, does not necessarily include or elicit a positive or negative emotion.

Empathy is simply the act of feeling *into* an other and being in a place to understand the

world of the other outside of the self's knowledge of the world, while sympathy is feeling *for* an other. This is where Theodor Lipps and Edward Titchener become relevant to our understanding of empathy, with their study of the term from more of a psychological perspective.

Similar to Herder and the Vischers, German philosopher Lipps (1907) and British psychologist Titchener (1909) suggested empathy involves “a willful agent deliberately making an effort to step outside the self and ‘into’ the experiences of others” (Davis, 1996, p. 5 - 6). The “willful agent,” they believed, has to feel his way into the other's experience without bringing in personal experience or biases. Removing personal experience and biases means that the agent remains in the empathetic moment instead of having a sympathetic, apathetic, or disillusioned reaction.

Lipps, similar to the Vischers, first used empathy as a way to discuss experiencing a piece of art. In doing so, he developed the first scientific theory of “feeling into,” or *einfühlung*, in order to discuss how individuals “experience inanimate objects,” which in turn includes “understand[ing] the mental states of other people” (Montag, Gallinat, & Heinz, 2008, p. 1261). In essence, Lipps work with *einfühlung* moved the term from an *impulse* found in philosophical aesthetics to an *innate ability* for the social and human sciences to unpack (Stueber, 2008, “Historical Introduction”).

His initial work combined Hume's ideas on sympathy with the Vischers' work with *einfühlung* in an attempt to explain aesthetic-mechanical theory for various forms of visual illusions (Montag et al., 2008, p. 1261; Wispé, 1986). Lipps' focus on how people understand optical illusions led him to believe that “aesthetic enjoyment lies in the

enjoyment of an object which, in so far as it is the object of enjoyment, is not object, but subject” (Seashore, 1904, p. 329). He saw that this shift occurs when the observer “feel[s] one’s self into the aesthetic object,” which takes place simultaneously outside of and within the observer (Seashore, 1904, p. 330).

Like the Vischers, Lipps only saw empathy working when enjoyment was present. No longer was it something created or driven by an urge or desire for enjoyment; instead, people were born with this ability to “feel . . . into the aesthetic object” (Seashore, 1904, p. 330). However, as mentioned above, our current concept of empathy does not include pleasure nor is it only reserved for aesthetics. What distinguishes our current idea of empathy from previous understanding is the idea that the empathetic moment or experience comes before judgment or emotional response. This distinction is important for understanding the qualitative analysis of the data gathered for this study – the identification of the *empathetic moment* is not necessarily connected to any subjective reaction.

As Lipps continued to study this phenomenon, he began to develop his theory that the “generic self arises in . . . consciousness through encounters with the other” (Jahoda, 2005, p. 156). According to Lipps, and similar to the Vischers, this experience is based on a “natural instinct” and “inner imitation” that fuses the subject and object, or individual and other (Montag et al., 2008, p. 1261; Verducci, 2000). However, where the Vischers saw an urge for harmony as the catalyst for “*einfühlung*,” Lipps maintained that it was for the “sheer pleasure” of the experience with the other (Verducci, 2000, p. 69). One experiences an other “based on the observation of his bodily activities or facial

expressions . . . [which] is ultimately based on an innate disposition for motor mimicry,” even when this “disposition is not always externally manifested” (Stueber, 2008, “Historical Introduction”). As human beings, according to Lipps, we were born with the ability and need to mimic those around us. The pleasure that comes from this imitation is the realization of a commonality coupled with having a new, shared experience.

According to Lipps, this form of aesthetic empathy creates an understanding that was not known prior to the encounter; “the antithesis between myself and the object disappears, or rather does not yet exist” (Verducci, 2000, p. 69). The idea of discovering something new, or having an understanding that “does not yet exist” prior to the empathetic encounter is a helpful addition to the understanding of “empathy,” because if the self already knew or understood the other through the other’s perspective then the empathetic moment would not exist. This moment would instead be an instance in which the self recognizes and understands the encounter from their own, already formed perspective. However, one can re-experience an empathetic moment if it builds upon the already existing knowledge with new information, but that means that this “innate ability” requires a bit more conscious thought than merely an automatic response or natural understanding. The key to this part of the discussion for this project is that there can be a building upon already existing knowledge and that the empathetic moment, or empathetic awareness, can still take place. The writer does not have to separate themselves to the level Herder suggests or engage is Lipps’ “disappearing.” By building on the previous realization of the other’s world, or the world of the audience, the author

can respond with more critical awareness of the world of the audience through the understanding of the impact they have already had on that audience.

This is where Lipps felt that the *primary epistemic means* for our ability to understand someone else's perception was a problem not just for philosophers to ferret out, but for psychologists to understand as well (Stueber, 2008, "Empathy and Philosophical"; Jahoda, 2005, p. 155). His work did ultimately propel empathy from the "concept of philosophical aesthetics into a central category of the philosophy of the social and human sciences" as the "primary basis for recognizing each other as minded creatures" (Stueber, 2008, "Historical Introduction"). Agreeing with Lipps, German historian, psychologist, and philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey and British psychologist Edward Titchener had an understanding of *einfühlung* that went beyond the artistic and aesthetic world (Jahoda, 2005, p. 156-160). However, Dilthey and Titchener disagreed with Lipps' notion that "*einfühlung*," or empathy, does not begin with what we know of ourselves and that knowledge is then used to understand others later. Dilthey and Titchener made the first claims that empathy can be increased through consciously performing it. Dilthey's ideas of a conscious, methodological approach to understanding is similar to what a writer goes through in order to understand their audience. The audience's reality is reconstructed by the author in order to understand how to approach them through word choice, rhetorical appeals, and appropriate argumentation.

Dilthey went as far to side with fellow anthropologist, Herder, in that "[t]ransposing oneself into another's reality, re-experiencing what an author has experienced, and reconstructing another person's reality . . . free from the taint of

subjectivity” (Edwards, 2013, p. 274) is a more conscious, and more viable, methodological approach to understanding than Lipps’ “natural instinct” and “inner imitation” (Montag et al., 2008, p. 1261). Dilthey’s notion of transportation and reconstruction of an other’s reality is closer to our understanding of empathy today than Lipp’s inner imitation which implies moving beyond the empathetic movement in order to imitate the other based on an emotional interpretation. As previously mentioned, once the self has moved beyond being transported into the other’s reality to a place of judgment, the empathetic experience is replaced by feelings of either sympathy, apathy, or disillusionment.

Dilthey believed that “the social-psychological factors of human experience in historical time themselves enter into the transcendental framework of human knowledge and cannot be reduced to purely contingent conditions” (Harrington, 2016, p. 316). Like Herder, Dilthey believed that the historical, cultural, and psychological background of the other must be present in order for an empathetic understanding to take place (Harrington, 2016). He, in fact, did not use the term *Einfühlung*, favoring instead *hineinversetzen*, *nachleben*, and *nachbilden*, or “transposing oneself,” “re-experiencing,” and “reconstruction” (Edwards, 2013, p. 274). Similar to Herder, Dilthey believed that one could “transpose oneself into another’s reality, re-experiencing what an author has experienced, and reconstructing another person’s reality . . . free from the taint of subjectivity” (Edwards, 2013, p. 274).

As a relativist, Dilthey saw that meaning could be obtained from a “contemporaneous” understanding of the other (Harrington, 2016, p. 312). In order to understand an other, all of the context the other brings must be understood as,

elevating one moment above the other, such as the biography of the author over the semiotic structures of the text or the creative license of the interpreter, would have been like attempting to remove two sides of a triangle: all three moments are equally essential. (Harrington, 2016, p. 318)

To understand an other, one cannot focus on a single utterance, tic of the mouth, or rising of the eyebrows no more than one can rely on merely understanding the meaning of an idiom or importance of a location (Harrington, 2016, p. 318).

Avoiding the use of *einfühlung* in order to “dissociate himself from Lipps,” Dilthey’s approach to empathy was an “interpretation [that] involve[d] both an art of eliciting meanings through feeling for the psychology of creative expression and, at the same time, a firm grasp of the structuring of all psychic states and intentions by historically specific frameworks of communication and social action” (Jahoda, 2005, p. 160; Harrington, 2016, p. 313 & 318). For Dilthey, feeling oneself into a subject led to an extinguishing of the self, which ultimately leads to a loss of “all consciousness of the self” and “what it is that distinguishes their world from that of the others” (Harrington, 2016, p. 312). Again, like Herder, Dilthey believed that it was important to be conscious of the self as an interpreter of the other, in this way, one could understand the other’s world “as an objective totality” (Harrington, 2016, p. 318). What is important to draw from this conversation is that distinction of the self, or writer, from that of the other, or

audience. The writer has to understand their position in the world and their position in the conversation that is taking place in a given text. Not only must they elicit meaning through what they want to communicate; at the same time, that communication must be intentionally structured in a way that responds with an objectivity that satisfies the reader.

When Dilthey's contemporary, Titchener translated Lipps' work in 1909, empathy appeared in an academic paper for the first time (Wispé, 1986; Edwards, 2013). Titchener borrowed from the German *empathie* as well as the Greek "emphatheia," both of which use the idea of "self-projected" in their definition, to create the word empathy. Titchener based his idea of empathy off of Lipps' notion that "perceivers [must] project themselves into the object of perception – a kind of animism" (Wispé, 1986, p. 315 - 6). For Titchener, similar to Dilthey, one "could not know about consciousness of another person by reasoning analogically from one's own behaviors to those of the other person," instead "only in the mind's muscle," which is "of the imaginal sort," can one project themselves into the object of observation (Wispé, 1986, p. 316; Titchener, 1909, p. 21). The self picks up cues while experiencing the other and mentally "act[s] the feeling out" in the mind's muscle (Titchener, 1909, p. 21). A very visual thinker, Titchener discussed imagery, and the cognitive importance of how the "associative network . . . carr[ies] meaning" to explain how empathy, imagination, and "feeling into" another works (Thomas, 2014). This "mind's muscle" is where "empathetic ideas are . . . the converse of perception. Their core is imaginal, and their context is made up of sensations that carry the empathetic meaning" (Wispé, 1986, p. 316). In contrast to proponents for "imageless thought," he argued that one acts out the feeling within the "imaginal and not in

sensational terms” which provides for a kind of “free masonry among all men” (Titchener, 1909, p. 185 & 293). Similar to the “feeling” Herder pointed at, Titchener’s “mind’s muscle” and “free masonry” allows the self to enter the world of the other without following a set formula or pattern that absolutist Kant wanted.

The use of “mind’s muscle” and acting out what is imagined, or experiencing and understanding through the “feeling into” of the other, gives an unintended nod to the ability for building empathy. Like any muscle, the more it is used, it will grow. Thanks to Herder, Dilthey, and Titchener, since the early 1900s there have been indirect discussions about the ability to become more empathetic through consciously practicing empathy through imagination.

The imaginal is what allows the self to realize the “intrinsic nature” of the other, compared to a mere representation of the other of which Titchener labelled a *stimulus error* (Thomas, 2014). He explains this through antidotal evidence of experiencing a table. The representation of the table is that of a rectangle, but this is a stimulus error; in fact, the intrinsic nature of the table is that of a trapezoid (Thomas, 2014). On the surface, one can see the table as a rectangle, but to imagine, or project oneself into the table through the “mind’s muscle,” its true self is much more dimensional. In terms of composition and student writing, students who do not have empathetic awareness in their writing produce metaphorically rectangular texts. The stimulus error that occurs is from the lack of audience awareness, and thus a flat piece of writing that is not really representational of their thoughts and does not fully address the audience’s needs. Students with empathetic awareness, on the other hand, produce trapezoidal texts that

fully embody what they want to communicate while at the same time fully engaging with their audience and addressing their needs.

Titchener's example of the representation of the table versus the table's intrinsic nature is comparable to the surface level thinking often found in student composition that lacks self and audience awareness. A surface level paper may address the intended audience, present information that is new to them, and provide a conclusion that the audience can infer what to do with the given information, but it is only a representation of a well-crafted essay. A much more dimensional paper, the trapezoid of essays, is one that was crafted from an empathetic author who understands not just their thoughts and justifications for them, but who used their mind's muscle to understand their audience's needs and concerns as well.

Edmund Husserl, a German philosopher of psychology, known as being the father of phenomenology, offers a further nuance for our understanding of empathy by exploring intersubjective experience (Beyer, 2003; Zahavi, 2011). For Husserl, "intersubjectivity comes in when we undergo acts of empathy . . . it occurs in the course of our conscious attribution of intentional acts to other subjects, in the course of which we put ourselves into the other one's shoes" (Beyer, 2003, n.p.). Empathy, intersubjective and life world"). The other's perspective is not primary to the self but is transferred in a *passive synthesis* of the other because "each one has its own phenomena exclusively to him" who is "felt to be living . . . 'like me,' but 'over there'" (Zahavi, 2011, p. 227; Owen, 2000, n.p.). This passive synthesis, is "an involuntary automatic and rapid cognitive-affective process of consciousness based on the recognition of a fundamental

similarity functioning without any conscious action of the ego” (Owen, 2000, n.p). While Husserl believes that empathy is a “distinct and direct kind of empirical experience,” he sees it as a way to understand the “consciousness of consciousness for the consciousness of others” in an indirect mode that “lacks the originality of self-perception” of the other’s perception (Zahavi, 2011, p. 228). While the other’s primary perception may be lacking, Husserl believed that, on a certain level, empathy is a form of perception (Jardine, 2014). This type of perception is understood “as an intuitive experience of a transcendent object in one’s surrounding world that is experientially grasped as such” (Jardine, 2014, p. 277).

Like Dilthey and Herder before him, Husserl’s “consciousness of consciousness” allows for a mental projection into the other’s world in order for the self to develop understanding. Husserl contends that “prior self-experience will serve as a reservoir of meaning that is transferred onto the other in a purely passive manner” (Zahavi, 2011, p. 235). The self, he argues, brings a world view unique in and of itself, while also realizing that the other also brings a specific and unique perspective. For instance, if the self and other are viewing an object, the self realizes that not only is the other seeing it, but that other is also seeing something slightly different from the self because of the separate worldview of each other’s unique perspectives. Similarly, an author may realize their own world-view is distinct and special to them, but in order to communicate well with their audience, they must realize that their audience’s world view is just as distinct and special, and therefore communication must be filtered through and for these unique perspectives.

This unique self view with the realization of the other seems to be at the crux of Husserl's notion that empathy is "the vicarious feelings and responses in self" that makes up "part of an intersubjective co-constitution which constitutes the shared experience of the same objects in one, fundamental cultural world" (Owen, 2000, n.p). Once the other is present(ed), the self's knowledge of the world changes because "the other will always be given . . . in a situation or meaningful context that points back to the other as a new center of reference" (Zahavi, 2011, p. 244). In terms of rhetoric and composition, we might relate this idea to Kenneth Burke's notion of consubstantiality, or the idea that "two persons may be identified in terms of some principle they share in common, an 'identification' that does not deny their distinctions" (1950, p. 20).

Psychologist Carl Rogers, like Husserl, believed that one must be willing to put themselves in the position of the other in order to understand the other's phenomenological experience, or the reality in which they live (Beyer, 2003; Rogers, 1951). Rogers, famous for developing client-centered therapy, employed empathy in his theory of counseling, thus "redefining the therapeutic relationship" (Bozarth, 2009) that had for so long been based on the therapist as "a leader" (McLeod, 2014) and the "patient as the follower" ("Revisiting Carl Rogers," n.d., n.p.), receiving expert insight and advice. By doing so, the therapist is able

to perceive the world as the client sees it, to perceive the client himself as he is seen by himself, to lay aside all perceptions from the external frame of reference while doing so, and to communicate something of this empathic understanding of the client. (Rogers, 1951, p. 29)

Most of Rogers's work on empathy focused on the client-patient relationship and being able to provide a *reflection of feeling* for the client (Rogers, 1942; 1951; 1975). For writing, and this project, this means the author, or self, not only needs to be aware of the audience's agenda and how it impacts their world, but that the author also needs to address it explicitly within their work. While what the author wants to communicate as the self is important to the text, it is just as important that they communicate these ideas in such a way that the audience can understand it through their world view and it be important and impactful to that audience's world.

Although Rogers work stressed the need for the therapist to be empathetic and work under unconditional positive regard, he meant for them to do so still working under the "as if" condition (Rogers, 1951, p. 210). This "as if" is similar to Husserl's "consciousness of consciousness," Titchener's mind's muscle projecting itself into the imaginal, Lipps' feeling to the other both outside and within the observing self, and the Vischers' projection into the other with retaining the self's identity (Zahavi, 2011; Wispé, 1986; Titchener, 1909; Seashore, 1904; Ikonomou & Mallgrave, 1994). The "as if" allows the therapist to "temporarily" live in the client's world and reflect back those experiences and meanings without malice or prejudices (Rogers, 1975, p. 4). What is important to remember for this project, is that the "as if" is a way for the writer to step into the world of the audience, gain understanding of their perspective of the world, and return to the text they are creating.

Other than the Rogerian theory of Client-Centered therapy, which is still the approach most therapists use in their practice, the study of empathy did not boom again

until the late 1970s, early 1980s (Main, 2017, n.p.). After Rogers revised his theory of empathy in 1975 from it being a “state” to that of a “process,” many psychologists began studying and theorizing the various processes that take place when one is being empathetic (Bozarth, 2009, p. 104). Upon its resurfacing, the definition of the term no longer held the same precedence in academic and professional circles; instead, their focus shifted to the stages of development and empathy.

Psychologist Martin Hoffman (2000) claimed that empathy is an “affective response more appropriate to someone else’s situation than to one’s own” (p. 4; 1990, p. 48). He posited that “empathy is the product of natural selection” because “its significance for social life (Hoffman, 2002, p. 4; 1990; 1979, p. 962). According to Hoffman, empathy is a skill set we begin building as infants starting with basic motor mimicry (Hoffman, 2000; Davis, 1996). Throughout childhood and adolescence, our cognitive role-taking skills develop, leading to more sophisticated empathetic and contextually appropriate reactions to others (Hoffman, 1987). For instance, if a child sees another child crying they may offer the individual a hug or attempt to share a toy with them. By adulthood, we have established a personal identity, and we are capable of going beyond the contextual cues to an abstract idea of the other’s “life conditions” (Hoffmann, 2000). For instance, a coworker may lash out at an office mate. Having heard that the fellow worker recently lost a family member, the office mate may be more inclined to understand that the coworker is not truly upset with the office mate but is instead transferring their emotions from the loss of a loved one into a form of lashing out at a trifle frustration. These contextual cues and abstract ideas fall into “two higher-order

cognitive modes: mediated association and role- or perspective-taking” (Hoffman, 2000, p. 5). The ability to understand someone else’s perspective “may combine with the cognitive awareness of others and how others are affected by one’s behavior, resulting in an internal motive to consider others” (Hoffman, 1979, p. 964). For teens and young adults,

Reciprocal role taking, especially with peers, may also heighten the individual’s sensitivity to the inner states aroused in others by one’s behavior; having been in the other’s place helps one know how the other feels in response to one’s behavior. (Hoffman, 1979, p. 964)

An individual can control these inner states, but they are typically “involuntary and triggered immediately” when experiencing an other (Hoffman, 2000, p. 5). This experience can occur when the self and the other are together, but, through the self’s imagination, a person can empathize with someone who is not present or who is fictitious (Hoffman, 2000, p. 5 & 8). This ability to imagine the world of the other “depends on the level at which one cognizes others,” and through “cognitive development, one can comprehend the plight of an entire class of people . . . [which] may be the most advanced form of empathic” understanding (Hoffman, 1979, p. 962 & 963). This may also be a “self-reinforcing” ability in which “the resulting co-occurrence . . . increase[s] the strength of the connection between cue of another . . . and our own empathic response” (Hoffman, 1990, p. 49). Most important for this project is the idea that the other does not need to be present in order for the author to have empathetic awareness of them. To continue with Hoffman’s statements and how they correlate to composition, repeated

practice of empathetic awareness for the audience, even when not present, increases the amount of awareness the author has for a given audience. The test group for this study demonstrates how practicing empathy leads to more empathetic awareness and performance in the “Results” chapter.

Prior to the publication of his book, *Empathy: A Social Psychological Approach* (1996) in which he examines the historical ideas and contemporary works on empathy, Mark Davis (1983) defined empathy as “the reactions of one individual to the observed experiences of another” (p. 113). In his book, published 13 years later, he admitted to the historical contestation of the term, thus treating the definition of empathy with the wide brush strokes. He begins his definition by explaining that empathy is a “set of constructs having to do with the responses of one individual to the experiences of another” (1996, p. 12). These constructs fall into the arena of “antecedent,” “process,” “intrapersonal outcomes,” and “interpersonal outcomes” (Davis, 1996, p. 12). For Davis, the “antecedent” is what is special to the individual, the other, and the situation at hand. The “process” is what takes place during the experience with the other when the individual has the “intellectual ability to engage in role taking or the species-wide capacity to experience affect in response to witnessing affect in others,” which leads to a response within and outside of the individual (Davis, 1996, p. 12 - 14). The “intrapersonal outcome” takes place within the self and is “not manifested in overt behavior toward” the other (Davis, 1996, p. 12). The “interpersonal outcome” is the “behavioral response directed toward” the other (Davis, 1996, p. 12). For the purposes of our discussion, Davis’ “antecedent” is the rhetorical situation and the “process” is the creation of the text.

The “intrapersonal outcome,” then, is the empathetic awareness the author experiences during the stages of writing, and the “interpersonal outcome” is the final text.

Davis (1996) found that current studies using organization models to define empathy tend to “favor an affective definition,” but it is not the empathetic act that they are defining, instead they attempt to find “distinctions among the various affective reactions” (p. 20). What Davis was saying, then, is that each field has its own way of understanding empathy, but instead of developing and using a concrete definition of the term, most discuss it through the way empathy is presented – such as the aesthetic appreciation of a piece of art or the innate desire to bond with an other that was discussed earlier in this chapter.

The hole that Davis found in the discussions of empathy, the lack of a concrete and synthetic definition that might be broadly used, is part of what this dissertation attempts to fill. It aims, as well, to continue to build upon what is already known about developing empathy as a skill. This project focuses on the idea is that empathy is an affective response to a cognitive process. One must “feel” their way into an other’s perspective in order to understand that other’s world view. All of the previous scholars mentioned in this chapter have hinted, if not directly stated, that the act of empathy requires the self, or subject, to take the role of the object, or other, and then return to the role of subject with the knowledge gained from that experience. This knowledge includes not just the awareness of the other’s world, but also the awareness of how the other is impacted by that world. This means that the self is gaining an understanding of how the other thinks and feels, as well as why the other thinks and feels this way. Before moral

judgment comes into play, if the self is truly focused on having an empathetic experience, they will not only be able to recognize the other and their world, but also realize that the self impacts that world.

As writers, we attempt to meet our audience in their world in order to communicate the ideas that generated from the experiences in our world. What seems to be lost in some discussions of audience awareness is the transparency of this action. It is not enough to simply know who your audience is; a good writer must understand the world of the audience from the audience's perspective in order to truly understand who the audience is, what motivates them, where their points of view lie, why they feel a certain way, and how they consume information. This is what I describe as external empathy for an author. At the same time, we must also understand these things for ourselves, or have what I call "internal empathy," in order to communicate our thoughts in a way that are authentic to the self.

Davis' (1996) book did not end the discussions about empathy, but in the 20 years since its publication, the focus on the history of the term and the semantics of its definition that I address above have shifted to theory and praxis. Fields such as cognitive narratology, psychology, and sociology, have been examining the importance of empathy, how we use it, and what can we learn from it. While empathy is not a foreign concept to the humanities, nor specifically English departments, it is mainly housed in discussions of literature. My work deliberately brings empathy and its functions into the First-Year Composition classroom. In order to understand how gaining empathy through

reading works, however, we must first discuss Theory of Mind and Transportation Theory.

Theory of Mind and Transportation Theory

Psychologists argue that empathy is a skill set we begin building as infants starting with basic motor mimicry (Davis, 1996). However, in order to begin developing empathy, we must first develop ToM, or the ability to “recognize that another person’s knowledge is different from our own” (Firth & Firth, 2005, p. R644). As children, we learn the meanings of words by observing things around us and the words others use to reference those things; in this way, we are “learning something about the thoughts of other people” (Bloom, 2000, p. 55). Throughout childhood and adolescence, our cognitive role-taking skills develop, leading to more sophisticated empathetic and contextually appropriate reactions to others (Hoffman, 1987). Like the example of the child seeing someone cry mentioned above, cognitive role-taking skills are those skills that allow us understand that the other has a world that is not our own with experiences we may not be witness to. As we mature, so does our ToM. As advanced ToM begins to develop, we are able “to reason about second and higher-order beliefs” as well as “interpret social actions . . . [and] understand multiple perspectives within a communicative situation” (Bialecka-Pikul, Kolodziejczyk, & Bosacki, 2017, p. 146). In order to be successful in society our brains must develop in a way that allows us to “process information in the social domain” in order to “recognize other individuals, to find a mate, to nurture the young, to know one’s place in social hierarchy, to recognize other’s people’s emotional states, and to form and maintain allegiances” (Firth & Firth,

2001, p. 151; Seyfarth & Cheney, 2013; Kidd & Castano, 2013; Doddell-Feder et al, 2013).

By adulthood, we have established a personal identity, and we can go beyond the contextual cues to an abstract idea of the other's "life conditions" (Hoffmann, 2000). For instance, consider the example of the coworker who lost a family member and lashes out at an office mate. The office mate realizes the coworker's loss of a loved one has added stress to their "life conditions," thus leading them to overreact to a minor disturbance. Developmental psychologists consider all of these actions as part of ToM (Kidd & Castano, 2013). According to David Kidd and Emanuele Castano (2013), affective ToM is "the ability to detect and understand other's emotions," and cognitive ToM is "the inference and representation of others' beliefs and intentions" are part of the skill set that "depends upon the use of imaginal and mimetic capacities" (p. 377; Wispé, 1986, p. 318). Most agree that both affective and cognitive ToM are active/activated when one is in the process of empathy (Davis, 1983; Decety & Ickes, 2006; Kidd & Castano, 2013; Johnson, 2011). As an "effortful process," it must be practiced in order to build and maintain a level of empathetic awareness and response (Wispé, 1972, p. 318; Brown, 2013).

Reading literature is one way to practice building and maintaining empathy. According to "Using Fiction to Assess Mental State Understanding: A New Task for Assessing Theory of Mind in Adults," a 2013 study conducted by David Doddell-Feder et al.,

exposure to fiction is positively associated with great ToM ability, the tendency to become emotionally transported into fictional stories is positively associated with an increase in empathy, and that the neural network recruited for ToM is largely overlapping with the network recruited during narrative comprehension. (p. 2)

Dodell-Feder et al. (2013) used literary fiction in their study since the experiences within the text are able to “transport the reader into the social and mental life of story characters” (p. 2). The thoughts and feelings of the characters are not explicitly described in the texts they selected, which required “readers to make a series of first and second-order mental state inferences regarding epistemic states, affective states, and intentions, [in order] to understand story events and character actions” (Dodell-Feder et al., 2013, p. 4). The first-order mental state inferences that they refer to is the basic understanding of a story; the reader is presented with a plot, and through the reading, that reader is able to understand the story as a whole. The second-order mental state inferences is the deeper understanding of the characters’ actions and reactions; the reader is able to understand why characters’ acted and reacted to elements within the story.

The initial focus of their study was to improve upon earlier ToM measures by using the Short Story Task (SST), which asks participants to read a short story and then give their response to that story based on a list of questions (Dodell-Feder et al., 2013, p. 2). For this, they tried to create a task that could

provide a relatively sensitive metric of ToM ability in adults, capable of picking up individual differences and normal variation in ToM ability, with assessment procedures that were quick and easy to administer and score . . . [and] was

representative of real-world, dynamically unfolding, complicated social scenarios that required the application of social knowledge, and [had] questions that assessed both explicit mental state reasoning and spontaneous mental state inference. (Dodell-Feder et al., 2013, p. 8)

The study found that participant answers “demonstrated substantial variation in performance . . . suggest[ing] that the SST is sensitive to individual differences in ToM ability” (Dodell-Feder et al., 2013, p. 8). Dodell-Feder et al.’s findings show that reading literature about realistic characters and experiences triggers ToM. The participants were first able to recognize that the characters thoughts, actions, and experiences were different from their own through ToM, but the inferences the participants made were through the process of being empathetic. While ToM was triggered, and the inference the participants made were empathetic, the SST was designed with fictional characters in fictional stories.

In a 2009 study, “Exploring the Link between Reading Fiction and Empathy: Ruling out Individual Differences and Examining Outcomes,” Mar, Oatley, and Peterson found that “exposure to narrative fiction and expository nonfiction were highly correlated” when measured for print-exposure and social ability, but that “fiction was associated with the empathy . . . whereas nonfiction was not” (p. 416). Based on data produced from the Mind in the Eye Task, the Author Recognition Test, the Big Five Inventory that measures personality traits, Mar et al. (2009) found that the exposure to fiction leads to higher rates of empathy regardless of participant demographic (Mar et al., 2009, p. 420). Thus, differences between individual participants have no “observed

association between fiction exposure and empathy” (Mar et al., 2009, p. 420). Instead of “gender, age, English fluency, trait openness, and trait fantasy” (Mar et al., 2009, p. 420) being used to predict participant performance, a more reliable predictor of participant performance can be found in the participant’s ability to actively engage with the text, or the ability of the participant to be transported into the text, (Mar et al., 2009, p. 412). Simply put, the more exposure to reading fiction, the more likely a participant is to have higher rates of empathy. In this study, the post-reflection data for both the test and control group confirm this finding.

Similarly, David Kidd and Emanuele Castano (2013) found that “[f]amiliarity with fiction, self-reported empathy, and performance on an advanced affective ToM test have been correlated” (p. 377). In three separate experiments using literary fiction, nonfiction and popular fiction, they found that participants reading literary fiction “uniquely engage[d] the psychological processes needed to gain access to characters’ subjective experiences” (Kidd & Castano, 2013, p. 378). While engaged in a reading, participants were able to go through the experiences of the characters “without facing the potentially threatening consequences of that engagement” (Kidd & Castano, 2013, p. 378). Specifically, “literary fiction . . . facilitates ToM processes” which “may lead to stable improvements in ToM” (Kidd & Castano, 2013, p. 380). In other words, reading literary fiction allows the participant to be transported into a world where they can engage in and with the action of the story without the consequences of that engagement putting them in a place of danger or harm. By having this experience in a fictional world, the participant is not in harm’s way but gets to empathetically experience whatever

occurs in the story world. This is an important point for this study that will be discussed later in the methodology section that addresses the short story reading participants were asked to complete.

The scholarship, then, is clear: Reading literary fiction triggers and improves ToM, as well as being a way to practice and build empathy by transporting the reader into the fictional world of the characters (Hakemulder, 2000; Kidd & Castano, 2013; Oatley, 2004; Parisi, 1979). Through the phenomenon of transportation, the reader is transported into the world of the story, creating an awareness of the characters' emotions and actions (Keen, 2013; Appel & Richter, 2007; Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008; Mazzocco, Green, Sasota, & Jones, 2010). According to Kidd and Castano (2013), reading literary fiction "increases self-reported empathy," while "expand[ing] our knowledge of others' lives, [and] helping us recognize our similarity to them" (p. 377). It helps us reflect on the world around us, both good and bad, "thus avoiding the fossilization of our political and social norms" and helping us "to make more discerning ethical inquiries" (Hakemulder, 2000, p. 23 & 25).

Getting "lost in a story" creates a space for narrative empathy in which a reader enters this other person's reality (Green & Brock, 2000). As Firth & Firth (2005) noted, "We naturally explain people's behaviors on the basis of their minds" through perspective taking which requires stepping out of our own "egocentric" world and into the other's phenomenological experience, or reality (p. R644 & R645). We are "transport[ed] into [the reality of] a narrative world [through] a distinct mental process, an integrative melding of attention, imagery, and feelings" (Green & Brock, 2000, p.

701). This transportation into the story is a type of “immersion” which may “reduce negative cognitive responding . . . may make the narrative experience seem more like real experience . . . [and] is likely to create strong feelings toward story characters” (Green & Brock, 2000, p. 702). Stories “allow people a way to infer other people’s mental states . . . allowing insight into behavior,” or an empathetic understanding (Mar & Oatley, 2008, p. 175). All of this motivates my choices to use fiction in this study, as well as helps support my argument for fiction in the composition classroom.

As Keith Oatley and Philip Johnson-Laird (2014) noted, “literature has focused on emotions” because “everyday events and people with whom one interacts makes emotions central to life” (p. 136; p. 134). When reading, we enter the “process of mental simulation . . . put[ting] aside our day-to-day concerns and insert[ing] the protagonists’ goals into our own planning processors . . . and experience emotions related to what happens in the story” (Oatley & Johnson-Laird, 2014, p. 136). Oatley and Johnson-Laird (2014), citing studies that support their theory, state that these “emotions are empathetic” and “focus on goals and interpersonal relations” of the character(s) (p. 136).

By reading, we “temporarily shar[e] the same desires and anxieties characters have” (Hakemulder, 2000, p. 17). The reader is positioned in a way that allows him or her to understand the world of the character through the character’s perspective allowing the reader “to stimulate and learn from [the] social experience” (Johnson, 2011, p. 150). This stimulation and learning occurs through “critical reflection on philosophies of life and contemporary developments in society” that reading triggers (Hakemulder, 2000, p.

21). In this regard, it is not necessarily “what is represented” in the story, but “how it is represented” that leads to reflection and understanding (Hakemulder, 2000, p. 22).

When a text triggers ToM through transportation into a story, the reader becomes empathetic to the situations and experiences of the characters in the story. In studies of ToM of mind that use fictional stories, as well as studies using Transportation Theory, the outcomes show that, by reading fictional literature with realistic characters and situations, the reader is more likely to gain empathetic understanding of the characters and situations. The temporal suspension of the reader’s reality for that of the characters’ allows that reader to “climb into [the character’s] skin and walk around in it” (Lee, 1960, p. 39). The more journeys a reader takes into different story worlds, the more they engage in being empathetic.

Reflection

While reading literature can strengthen empathy and ToM, critically reflecting upon those readings in reflective writing could increase the reader’s empathetic ability, as well as lead to better recognition and understanding of the self (Mar et al., 2009; Kidd & Castano, 2013; Jacoby, 2011; Yancey, 1998). A critical reflection engages one in evaluating and reevaluating gained knowledge and insights, reassessing previously held assumptions, and questioning the experience of the material (Jacoby, 2011). It is a way to “go beyond the text” into a space that includes the empathetic understanding of the reader and the experience they had with it (Yancey, 1998, p. 5). This type of writing is a “valuable making-sense tool” for “puzzling through and reflecting on ideas, relating, and changing ideas” (Mason, 2001, p. 326).

By having these insights and through conscious reflection, the reader can develop a more authentic style of communication as a writer, and thus a more authentic voice (Bessant, 2014; Lamott, 2014; Silvia & Phillips, 2011). Authenticity, or an authentic voice, can include gaining insight and “power over decisions” (Jupp & Ali, 2010, p. 29). It “enables critical analysis of the world” and opens the writer to the understanding of “human well-being, the search for truth and respect for others, and [a more informed ability] to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Jupp & Ali, 2010, p. 31). It also involves enhancing one’s ability to make informed choices through looking at “desired actions and outcomes” (Jupp & Ali, 2010, p. 30). Therefore, reflecting on a story that the reader/writer has empathetically experienced creates more awareness and insight about how that reader/writer thinks and feels in a given situation, what is important to them, as well as the potential outcomes of their actions and how they want to navigate those outcomes in the actual world in which they live.

Through conscious reflection writers are able to perform critical analysis of the world of the text, as well as their own worlds. They can become more aware of their own thoughts and feelings by questioning and exploring their resources, ideas, and beliefs (Hakemulder, 2000; Ibrahim and Alkire, 2007). They have the opportunity to voice choices they would make and the imagined outcomes they would like to see from them, thus helping them to become more authentic, or presenting a more real version of themselves, in what they communicate (Combaz & McLoughlin, 2014; Jupp & Ali, 2010). Writing through conscious reflection, exposes an authentic “truth of [our] experience [that] can only come through in [our] own voice” (Lamott, 2014, p. 1457). For

Peter Elbow (1973), writing and creating personal narratives provide the writer time to explore how they think about a subject and what it means and does for them. Throughout this process of personal writing, the writer is engaging in a discussion with themselves. This discussion is not hindered by outside voices who may question ideas, attempt to correct lower level issues, or interrupt with their own thoughts (Lamott, 2014; Elbow, 1973). Instead, the writer is able to hear how they speak. As writers become more familiar with what they think about a subject and how they want to speak about a subject, their individual voices become stronger (Elbow, 1973; Lamott, 2014; Lovejoy, 2009). This type of authentic writing can lead to better understanding of the writer's autonomous self in the world, as well as more empathetic understanding of others. While these are different outcomes that impact different people, the writer and the audience, they are both equally important to this project. Authentic communication means that the writer is speaking their own truth, or what is important to them, with justification for it being important. Empathetic understanding of others is what allows the author to communicate their truth and explain it in such a way that the audience not only understands that communication but also understands how it is important to themselves as the audience.

Conclusion of Discussion of Terminology and Concepts

Empathy is the process that takes place after ToM is activated. While a concrete definition that is unanimously agreed upon by those who use the word "empathy" may not be reached, the basic principle of "feeling into" an other and what the various ways of and reasons for "feeling into" is now widely agreed upon. Reading fictional literature triggers ToM, which allows the reader to enter an empathetic space with the characters in

the story. This has been shown in numerous studies using various methods. Empathy for the other, is not just awareness of the other and their world view, but an understanding of why the other presents themselves the way they do, the reason for their (re)action in given situations, as well as how the other is impacted by the world around them. By being empathetic to the other, the self is better able to understand them and the purpose behind the way they interact with the world around them.

While reading can build the self's empathy for the other, reflection through questioning and exploring ideas builds awareness of the self's personal thoughts and feelings on a subject, or empathy for the self. I see this act of reflection as a discussion between the fractured self made up of a present-self and a past-self. The present-self engages with the past-self in a form of empathy that allows the present-self to explore the knowledge gained through experiences of the past-self. This engagement creates deeper awareness and understanding of the self's thoughts and feelings. This awareness is what allows a more authentic, autonomous self to communicate with the other by virtue of the empathetic understanding.

By combining reading for empathy and reflecting on that reading, I argue in the chapters that follow that an individual can not only build upon their empathetic understanding of the other, but can also build upon their empathetic understanding of themselves. By honing this empathetic understanding, we can teach writers to not only communicate with their audience on a deeper, more purposeful level that is appropriate for their audience, but that they will be able to communicate a more authentic version of themselves to that audience. To demonstrate how empathetic understanding for the self

and the other can be built upon through reading fictional literature and reflecting upon that reading, I created the study described in the following chapter, Chapter III, with the results of this study provided in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Part I: Definition of Terms

This dissertation uses three common terms: intentionality, Theory of Mind, and empathy. The following definitions have been synthesized from the literature in the previous chapter:

Intentionality is defined as the participant's understanding of the story and the character's roles within the story. This is also known as "comprehension."

Theory of Mind (ToM) is defined as a participant showing awareness of a character's choices and situation through the world view of the participant.

Empathy refers to the moment the self, or participant, views the experience of the other through the lens of the other. This means that the participant has mentally moved from understanding the world and their experiences through their world view to seeing through the other's world view in order to understand their experiences. Many times this is seen with or as a reaction to the other's circumstance, an emotional response about the situation of the other, or justification for the other's behavior or response.

Additionally, I am coining and using two new terms to discuss empathy.

External empathy refers to the act of a participant viewing the world through the lens of the other or seeing the world through a perspective different than their own. This

often appears as statements or questions about how another or others think or do something given their current situation or other information specific and special to the other. It also refers to reflections about characters' motives, experiences, or the world of the character reflected through the world view of that character.

Internal empathy refers to the act of a participant viewing themselves through the lens of their past-self and the world view from that past-self, or as a projection of a future-self. This includes when a participant reflects on their past experiences and reasons for their actions or what they learned from the experience. It may include discussion about how they were impacted when reading or writing and how it reflects on their own personal experience of an event. It can also include the use of the participant speaking about what they would do based on what they learned about the character and the situation the character was in, or how the participant felt, would act, or saw themselves impacted by the given situation of the character or story. Self-reflection and self-awareness, or realizing, viewing, or acknowledging the self as a unique being in the past or the future is used interchangeably with internal empathy. These statements reflect an event, thought, or purpose of the participant's experience with or without regard to the other.

Part II: Design and Background of Study

This study uses a mixed methods approach to determine the impact of reading literature and reflecting upon that reading has on the level of empathy for others, as well as the impact of reading literature and reflecting upon that reading has on empathy for the self. This methodology was chosen because of the complicated nature of assessing

writing. The quantitative side of this study was constructed in order to align with the current trend of evaluation of student work. This type of assessment requires that work to be scored based on criteria assigned numerical values. Analyzing how individual participants scored, as well as how the test and control groups scored overall, produces a more detailed understanding of the outcomes of this study than what a qualitative analysis alone could provide. However, simply providing a quantitative analysis of the results does not give nearly as much breadth or depth to the understanding of the impact of reading and reflecting on empathy. Based on the nature of the type of work the participants were asked to complete, the qualitative aspect of this study was constructed in order to provide a deeper discussion about what took place within the participants' writing, the changes witnessed from their pre-reflections to their post-reflections, as well as an analysis of where and why these changes occurred.

Initially, this project was conceived as an examination of the impact of reading Shirley Jackson's short fiction and creative non-fiction on audience awareness and empathy. Specifically, I wanted to see if reading Jackson's work led to an increase in empathy, as well as if writing reflections on the readings also increased empathy. However, after reviewing the literature on empathy, transportation theory, and reading, I realized that I need to expand my reading list to include other authors and only fictional texts that would be understandable to participants while foreign enough to make them have to critically think and reflect about the characters and events (Singer, 2013; McNamara & Magliano, 2009). The new list of reading included four short stories: Raymond Carver's (1983) "Cathedral," Zora Neale Hurston's (1926) "Sweat," Kate

Chopin's (1893) "Desiree's Baby," and ZZ Packer's (2003) "Brownies." I chose these readings because I was not only familiar with each of them, but they all took the reader through life events that were either relatable to a general audience or presented experiences easily understandable by most college-level readers (Singer, 2013; McNamara & Magliano, 2009). As a collection, they also presented a variety of situations set in different times with characters from different racial, economic, and social backgrounds.

I then began searching for psychological assessments that measured empathy in participants with outcomes scored by the originating developer. While there are numerous psychological assessments that seemed to be easy to deliver with accessible outcomes, the majority of them seemed to use methods that were too far removed from the focus of reading and reflecting for empathy. For instance, the "Emotional Intelligence Quiz" developed by The Greater Good Science Center at the University of California at Berkeley was available online with instant results. However, the quiz used actors making different faces based on various emotions. The Reading the Mind in the Eyes test developed by Baron-Cohen, Wheelwright, Hill, Raste, and Plumb (2001) at the University of Cambridge used a similar format. For this assessment, participants were shown pictures of actors' eyes in order to determine the emotion they were expressing. The set of pictures were used to determine the participant's ability to understand the emotions of others with the outcome determining *social intelligence* (Baron-Cohen, Wheelwright, Hill, Raste, & Plumb, 2001, p. 246). While this also seemed to be a valid test for determining empathy, it again called for participants to "read" pictures which

were presented out of context of a given situation. The use and examination of facial gestures, while a way to test for empathy, did not compliment my study's use of reading and writing reflection. Reading an actor's face without contextual information was neither an accurate, quantifiable measure of empathy nor a way to track changes in it for this particular study.

This led me to search for psychological assessments of empathy with deliverable outcomes using scripted scenarios. Ultimately, I used the Defining Issues Test (DIT), developed by Rest, Cooper, Coder, Masanz, and Anderson (1974) at the Center for the Study of Ethical Development (CSED) at the University of Minnesota. The DIT not only includes scenarios for participants to read and respond to, but it also includes access to the scored assessment via raw data and a summary report of this data produced by the CSED. For this assessment, participants respond to six different dilemmas designed to "activat[e] moral schemas" (Center for the Study of Ethical Development [CSED], n.d.). Participants were asked to read each scenario and then select what they thought the protagonist from the scenario should do or should have done, including "can't decide." They were also asked to rank a list of twelve statements about the story from low to high importance (Bebeau & Thoma, 2003, p. 37). The ranked statements are not fully developed positions about the dilemma. Instead they provide an open ended and slightly ambiguous choices from which the participants assign meaning. This was then scored for "moral judgment," "moral sensitivity, moral motivation, and execution and follow through" (Bebeau & Thoma, 2003, p. 18).

Other psychological assessments of empathy, such as the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Task, Cartoon-Sequencing tasks, the Faux Pas Task, and the Hinting Task, use pictures of facial gestures, biographical reflections, or personal narratives that fail to provide “reliable information about the inner processes that underlie moral behavior” (CSED, n.d.). The DIT, however, is designed to activate these “moral schema” and assess them in “terms of importance to judgments” (CSED, n.d.). The six different dilemmas assigned to the participants determine how they “define important issues of social problems,” what “the important questions a person should ask [themselves] in making a decision” on the problem, and “what basis [they] would want people to decide what is crucial in these problems” (Bebeau & Thoma, 2003, p. 3). Although the DIT ultimately assesses moral judgment, the design of the tool requires that participants use empathy *prior* to making a moral decision based on the reading and the provided questions. Therefore, while the results of the assessment do provide information about the participants’ moral judgment which fall outside the bounds of this study, it does indeed demonstrate the use of empathetic thinking. The design of the DIT, using scenarios to respond to the same pool of responses to select from, was the best existing fit for the fully developed, quantifiable psychological assessment of empathy with deliverable outcomes for which I was looking.

As for participants, I knew I wanted to recruit First-Year Composition (FYC) students because the end goal of this study is help add more empathetic audience awareness for both the self and the other in *composition*, beginning with first year writers. FYC is part of the core curriculum at Texas Woman’s University, which means

participants recruited from FYC are not only actively engaged in composition but also represent the various areas of study on campus and present a range of ages and experiences. My position as a Graduate Teaching Assistant for the FYC program within the English, Speech, and Foreign Language Department provided me with access to these classes, as well as insight for gaining permission from their instructors to visit each class for recruitment.

The numerous studies on empathy, reading, and reflection that I read previous to this study led me to realize that I needed to include pre- and post- measures of both quantitative and qualitative assessments of empathy. Most of the studies on reading for empathy have used either quantitative or qualitative methods only or investigator-participant interviews. Based on information presented about the design of the DIT, which claims to trigger moral decision making without intervention or interference from an investigator, I knew I did not want to conduct face-to-face interviews with participants and needed to come up with a way to determine if they understood the reading. I therefore needed to develop a question based reflection prompt with open ended questions (CSED, n.d.).

A 2013 study conducted by Dodell-Feder, Lincoln, Coulson, and Hooker, “Using Fiction to Assess Mental State Understanding: A New Task for Assessing Theory of Mind in Adults,” not only included quantitative and qualitative methods, but also used questions to determine reader comprehension and ToM through explicit mental state reasoning and spontaneous mental state inference. The questions were then scored on an easy-to-use rubric with a 0 assigned for *inaccurate or little to no understanding*, a 1 for

partial understanding, a 2 for *full comprehension* (Dodell-Feder et al., 2013, p. 4).

Although their study only focused on ToM and used several of the assessments for empathy I already ruled out (i.e., Mind in the Eye Test), their line of questioning and approach to scoring and understanding responses was very much in line with how I wanted to assess short story reflections from my participants. While Dodell-Feder et al. (2013) were specifically assessing ToM, the inferences participants made in order to respond to the study's questions indicate empathetic responses were given.

Using the basic structure of their rubric, a 0 to 2 scale for three distinct types of responses, I developed a set of open ended questions for my test group to answer after each short story reflection (see Appendix A). The questions were designed to help the participants begin the reflection process by thinking about the experiences within the stories, as well as what those experiences would look like in their own lives. The first five questions were designed to trigger ToM processing, which can then be assessed based on reasoning and comprehension (Dodell-Feder et al., 2013). The questions probed comprehension of the reading, as well as “explicit mental state reasoning regarding story characters’ beliefs, emotions, intentions, and desires,” and the reasoning regarding their own beliefs, emotions, intentions, and desires (Dodell-Feder et al., 2013, p. 4). The last three questions not only probe for ToM responses, but ask the participants what thoughts or actions they may have in the given situation, as well as what they would change. These questions were designed to uncover not only empathy in participants writing, but also to allow for self-reflection. Although these reflections were an important aspect of the study, the use and analysis of these reflections was not designed to track changes in

empathy. Instead, the data generated from and the analysis of these reflections was used only to show that external and internal empathy was present in the participants' reflections, as well as to provide predictors for the results of the pre- and post-reflection analysis.

By creating the test group's reflection prompt for the short stories, I was then prepared to create an open-ended question prompt administered at the beginning and end of the study that both my test and control group would use to create their pre- and post-reflection responses. The questions from the prompt asked the participants to explore their thoughts on reading and writing, their preferences for each, and the justification behind these preferences, as well as the benefit they felt they gained from both reading and writing. By asking these questions, I hoped the participants' responses would provide me with enough information to examine changes in empathy on both a quantitative and qualitative level.

A description of the steps taken to launch this study, participant demographic information and an explanation of the use of this information, as well as the evaluation methods used to complete this study concludes this chapter

Part III: Launching Study

After the IRB approved the study, I began recruitment. Initially, the study was only going to be conducted during the Spring 2016 semester. However, lack of participant volunteers during the first semester led to it being conducted for an additional two semesters, Fall 2016 and Spring 2017. During both the Spring and Fall 2016 semesters, participants were recruited from FYC classes.

After requesting and being granted permission from the instructor of record for each class I visited, I arrived to each class session with my recruitment letter (see Appendix B), I read the letter to each class, answered any questions they had, and asked for potential participants to write their name and email address on a sign-up sheet. I then used the collected sign-up sheets to contact potential participants via email. The email included the stamped consent form (see Appendix C) approved by the IRB, as well as the approved initial email (see Appendix D).

For the Spring and Fall 2016 semesters, participants submitted their consent forms and came to my office to collect the DIT test form and answer Scantron, the initial reflection prompt, and a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix E).

For the Spring 2017 recruitment, I repeated the above process of visiting FYC classes. After approval from IRB the study was also extended to allow requirement from a pool of all undergraduate students from Texas Woman's University. The recruitment email announcement was sent to the "bulk-enrolled-students" email list from my dissertation advisor, Dr. Busl (see Appendix F).

In order to complete the first stage of the study, after submitting their signed consent form, they were asked to return the demographic questionnaire, their DIT answers, and the initial reflection by a predetermined date. As participants submitted these, they were placed in either the test or control group. The first participant to complete and submit both was assigned to the test group, the second participant to submit both was then assigned to the control group, and so on until the final due date for submission.

After being placed in a group, each participant was assigned a unique five-digit identification number for the DIT. The numbers were created specifically for DIT identification based on the requirements from the CSED at the University of Alabama. The first two numbers assigned (“61,” “72,” “81,” and “92”) to each participant specified either control group or test group and pre- or post- test (i.e. “61” indicated the participant was part of the control group and the submission was for the pre-assessment, a “92” indicated the participant was part of the test group and the submission was for the post-assessment). The third number was used to identify those in FYC classes with “0” for ENG1003, “1” for ENG1013, and “2” for ENG1023; “4” was assigned to those who had completed the first year composition sequence prior to participating in the study. The final two numbers were used to identify the individual participant with the first participant being assigned to “01,” the second participant “02,” and so forth throughout all three rounds of the study (see Appendix G).

During the Spring 2017 semester, participants had the option of picking up hard copies of the DIT and initial reflection prompt, or completing a Google form of the DIT, approved for use by the CSED and TWU’s IRB, as well as the initial reflection prompt emailed to them for them to complete electronically and submitted by a predetermined date. Participants were placed in the test group or control group after submitting both pieces of the first stage of the study, in the same manner as the assignments for the Spring and Fall 2016.

Once the deadline for the first stage of the study was reached, participants in the control and test group were emailed one short story every two weeks (see Appendix H for

control group email; see Appendix I for test group email). The stories everyone received, in order, were: Raymond Carver's (1983) "Cathedral," Zora Neale Hurston's (1926) "Sweat," Kate Chopin's (1893) "Desiree's Baby," and ZZ Packer's (2003) "Brownies." I selected these stories because they each contain situational anecdotes common in our present society. Based on the literature about Transportation Theory and the use of fictional literature, I selected stories that included social issues that would be familiar to participants without being "too real" to life. Domestic abuse, racism, disability discrimination and other prejudices are all common to our society, therefore I felt each participant would be familiar enough with them to have a response to them. I did not want to use any story that a participant could relate *too* closely to their own experience, which might lead to them not being fully transported into the narrative and The selected stories thus provide participants with a view into someone else's world that could be similar to their own, but distant enough to allow transportation into the narrative and an empathetic understanding of the story.

Participants in the test group were also sent a reflection prompt to complete before the next reading was sent (see Appendix J). The story reflection prompt was designed to encourage the participants to think critically and discuss their feelings about the reading. Participants were asked to write about what they thought about the characters' actions and the experiences, as well as what the participant would do in that type of situation, if they have had a similar experience and what they learned from it, and what they would do differently if in a similar situation.. They were instructed to spend 30

to 45 minutes writing about the thoughts and emotions they experienced while reading the stories.

After completion of stage two of the study, all participants were then emailed with instructions for the final stage (see Appendix K). Once the final stage was completed and all materials were collected for the study, DIT answer sheets were sent to the CSED for scoring, and coding began on reflection responses.

Part IV: Participants

Demographic information was collected on all participants. However, this information was only collected to show that various backgrounds, interests, and ages made up the participant population.

Twenty-one students enrolled at TWU completed this study and ranged in age from 18 to 40; 15 participants' aged ranged from 18 to 22, five participants' aged ranged from 23 to 28, and one participant's reported age was 40. When asked about the number of books they had read in the past year, the majority of participants responded with a number similar to that of the national average of 3 to 4 books a year (Rainie & Perrin, 2015, n.p.). A total of 13 participants reported reading zero to five books, two participants reported reading six to 10 books, one participant reported reading 15 books, and one participant reported reading over 20 books. Of the 21 participants, three identified as male and 18 identified as female (Table 3.1). The reported fields of study for all participants included: Biology, Business Administration, Dance, Dental Hygiene, English, General Studies, Government and Political Science, History, Nursing, Nutrition,

Music Education, Musical Therapy, Pre-Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Psychology, and Social Work.

Table 3.1

Participant Demographics

Characteristic	Control Group	Test Group
Gender:		
Female	8	11
Male	1	2
Age Group:		
18 to 22	7	9
23 to 30	2	3
30+	0	1
Number of Books Read:		
0 to 5	7	8
6 to 10	1	2
11 to 15	0	1
16+	0	1
n/a	1	1

Part V: Explanation of Methodology

For the quantitative aspect of the study, empathy was assessed using the DIT developed by the CSED and based on Lawrence Kohlberg's "Theory of Moral Development" at the beginning and end of the research study to test for any change in the participants' empathy levels. The pre- and post-DIT answers were returned to the CSED. The CSED generated and returned a thorough report including: a list of raw data, scores for each participant, results of the consistency check, descriptive statistic for the total sample, statistical analysis between my sample and the national norm, and statistical analysis of comparisons between my control group and experimental group (Bebeau & Thoma, 2003, p. 8). The initial test, completed during stage one of the study, provided the

baseline of moral judgment for each participant; the concluding test, completed during the stage three, the final stage of the study, showed any change in moral judgment from the initial test.

Based on the guidance provided by the CSED, the report excluding the raw data is “sufficient for some users” of the DIT, and it is not necessary to use all reported indices depending on the type of study and what is being evaluated (Bebeau & Thoma, 2003, p. 3). The returned report information that was used for the results section include the “Case Process Summary” and “Individual Participant Output” in three areas of “developmental indices.” The first area used is “Personal Interests,” which

represents the proportion of items selected that . . . focus on the direct advantages to the actor and on the fairness of simple exchanges of favor for favor [and] focus on the good or evil intentions of the parties, on the party’s concern for maintaining friendships and good relationships, and maintaining approval.

(Bebeau & Thoma, 2003, p. 18-19)

“Maintaining Norms,” the second area from the summary, which “represents the proportion of items selected that appeal to Stage 4 considerations. Stage 4 considerations focus on maintaining the existing legal system, maintaining existing roles and formal organizational structure” (Bebeau & Thoma, 2003, p. 19). Finally, the third area is the “Postconventional Score,” which

represents the proportion of items selected that...focus on organizing a society by appealing to consensus-producing procedures (such as abiding by majority vote), insisting on due process (giving everyone his day in court), and safeguarding

minimal basic rights [as well as] on organizing social arrangements and relationships in terms of intuitively appealing ideas. (Bebeau & Thoma, 2003, p. 19)

The “Developmental Profile and Phase Indices” reported by CSED used for this dissertation include the “Type Indicator,” which is used to give

a more complete picture of. . . moral cognition characteristics than any of its independent component variables. . .to provide a more fine grained evaluation of pretest/posttest change scores for educational intervention studies.. In other words, examining pathways provides a more sensitive evaluation of pretest/posttest change scores. (Bebeau & Thoma, 2003, p. 21)

The “Humanitarian/Liberalism,” a proxy for a humanitarian liberal perspective on moral issues (Bebeau & Thoma, 2003, p. 23). As well as the “Antisocial Score” that “represents considerations that reflect an anti-establishment attitude. These considerations presuppose an understanding of Stage 4, but fault existing authorities and ‘the establishment’ for being hypocritical and inconsistent with its own rationale” (Bebeau & Thoma, 2003, p. 26).

The DIT report also accounts for missing data for items left blank and a “meaningless item check” which are items “included in each story that are lofty sounding, using complex style or verbiage, but are essentially meaningless statements in order to “detect respondents who are trying to fake a high score” (Bebeau & Thoma, 2003, p. 25). Participants who score high on either of these are purged from the report. No participant in this study scored high in either of these areas.

While the DIT report could be used to profile individual participants based on the information it generates from the responses in regard to beliefs and values of participants, this information does not specifically answer the questions for this study. Therefore, the three developmental indices and the three phase indices will only be used to report changes from the pre- and post-test for individuals in the control and test group, note similarities and differences between the scores for each group as a whole on the pre- and post-test, and to report changes from each group as a whole from the pre- and post-test.

Quantitative methods were also used to assess comprehension and intentionality, ToM, and self-awareness in the test group's reflections on the short stories. While the data from these reflections cannot be analyzed for change in empathy levels because there is no baseline to use for comparison, it does show if participants understood the reading and had presence of ToM and/or self-awareness during their reflection of it. If the individual participant's short story reflection contained these three pieces of criteria their post-reflection was included in the quantifiable analysis of empathy; if an individual participant's short story reflection did not contain all three pieces of criteria, then their post-reflection was not included in the quantifiable analysis of empathy.

Each reflection was scored based on Dodell-Feder's et al. (2013) scoring criteria for reflection on short stories, with a 0 to 2 scale (see Appendix L). Their study was specifically assessing ToM, however the inferences their participants made in order to respond to their questions indicate that they were empathetic responses (Dodell-Feder et al., 2013).

For comprehension and intentionality, a 0 was assigned for little to no understanding of the story and the story's characters, meaning they did not understand the basic plot line, who the character was, or the motivation behind the character's choices. A 1 was assigned for partial understanding of the story and the story's when a participant expressed some understanding of the story, such as the basic issues within a given story but not necessarily an understanding of how the plot progressed or a basic understanding of who the characters were. Full understanding of the plot and character choices, or an accurate summary of the action and those involved, received a 2 for comprehension and intentionality.

For ToM, a 0 was assigned for little to no awareness of the characters' choices and situation, meaning the participant showed no knowledge of who a character was or the actions they performed in the story; a 1 was assigned for partial awareness of the characters' choices and situation (first-order inferences), meaning the participant acknowledged who the character was and named experiences the character had in the story; and a 2 was assigned for full awareness of characters' choices and situation (second-order inferences, including non-verbal/indirect communication), meaning the participant not only acknowledged who the character was and named experiences the character had in the story, but also elaborated on the purpose of the character, the character's behavior, and the impact of the experiences within the story on that character.

For self-awareness, a scoring method similar to the Dodell-Feder et al. (2013) reflection scale was also employed. A 0 was assigned for no feedback on what the participant thought, felt, or would do in the given situation; a 1 was assigned for partial

feedback including only their thoughts or feelings with no action, or only action with no justification about their thoughts or feelings; or a 2 was assigned for full feedback on thoughts, feelings, and actions the participant would take.

If a participant did not complete the short story reflections or scored a 0 for intentionality on two or more short story reflections, then their pre- and post-reflections were not included in further quantitative analysis. For instance, one participant who completed every reflection scored a 0 on intentionality for one of the short stories, but they scored a 1 or a 2 for the other three, therefore their pre- and post-reflections were included in the quantitative analysis. However, one participant only submitted one reflection. Although this participant scored above a 0 for intentionality, their pre- and post-reflections were not included in the quantitative analysis because they did not submit more than one short story reflection.

The study also incorporated NVivo software, using the coding and query search functions in order to produce quantifiable data about the amount of empathy exhibited in each reflection. Each original pre- and post-reflection was saved as word file with the last three digits of the participants DIT number, their initials, and the title of the reflection (i.e., 108.VW.PreReflection) with no questions included. Another file was created for each reflection with the questions from the reflection prompt used as headings for each answer. Reflections were then loaded into NVivo in two internal folders. The first folder contained all pre- and post- reflection files with no questions included; the second folder contained all pre- and post- reflections broken up with the questions as headings.

The information that was coded consisted of the pre- and post-reflections, as well as the short story reflections. Nodes for external empathy and internal empathy were coded based on responses to the reflection prompt and the type of statement provided (see Appendix M). Coded statements either showed external empathy or internal empathy/self-reflective.

In the pre- and post-reflection responses, external empathy occurred when participants reflected on seeing the world through a different perspective. This often appeared as statements or questions about how another or others think or do something given their current situation or other information specific and special to the other. It also was seen in reflections about characters' motives, experiences, or the world of the character reflected through the world view of that character. For instance, one participant showing external empathy said, "seeing other people's views and perspective on the world we live in" (CB, pre-reflection). Another example, using a statement about a specific character from a reading, included the participant saying:

I thought about Dr. Frankenstein's ambition and hubris and felt utterly grief stricken at his abandonment of his creation, which had previously been his obsessive ambition. I could see parallels in society where ambition and hubris go unchecked to tragic ends. I could see what destruction and devastation the consequences of deluded and narrow-minded ambitions can cause to others. (CC, pre-reflection)

Both of these statements include external empathy by talking about seeing the world of the other through the perspective of the other and through trying to understand an other's experience with ambition and devastation.

External empathy can also be seen in statements such as "I don't know how people are able to write textbooks or academic papers. Being forced to write essays on boring studies in college is bad enough; how do people write and read these things for fun" (GD, post-reflection); or escape was discussed as being in a different reality, for example "I feel like I lose consciousness and am truly engrossed in a different life" (TN, pre-reflection). In both of these examples, external empathy is specifically discussed through the use of questioning how an other can complete a writing task and becoming engrossed in an other's life.

In the pre- and post-reflection responses, internal empathy was displayed when participants reflected on their past experiences and reasons for their actions or what they learned from the experience. One participant reported that "While reading, characters find joys, grow and develop, and eventually die. There are times when I am sitting alone, crying over the loss of a character. Although I have never experienced profane loss, hunger, fear for my life, I can try to understand when I read" (MJD, post-reflection). The internal empathy in this passage is expressed through trying to understand how the loss that other must have felt but in the world of the self. This is also reflected in statements about how they were impacted when reading or writing, like this comment:

When reading I always try to have an open mind because the person who is writing the story is usually coming from a different life perspective than I have,

meaning that when I come across something I don't understand or agree with I especially pay attention because it's different from what I am usually surrounded with. (CB, post-reflection)

Or, participants mentioned escaping from their own reality, by saying "I enjoy reading mainly for the escape from myself" (GD, pre-reflection).

For the short story reflections, external empathy and internal empathy were coded in the same way as the pre- and post-reflection nodes. External empathy was seen through discussion of the characters' motives, experiences, and the world of the character. For instance, one participant said, "It seems like these children have a low opinion of white children as much as they think that the white kids will have on them. . . . We are not only influenced by our family and media, but by our peers as well, especially at a young age" (KS, "Brownies"). Internal empathy was seen through the use of the participant speaking about what they would do based on what they learned about the character and the situation the character was in. For example, a participant said, "I think what most sets Delia and I apart is our circumstances. As a white, middle-class woman, I can't even begin to imagine her life, especially given the era. . . . However, there have been times where pressure has lead me to snap at people, as she did" (MG, "Sweat"). Other reflections contained a statements about how the participant felt, would act, or saw themselves impacted by a given situation. One example is the statement that "The experience they [the character] had felt similar to the feelings I had when I felt alone, lost, afraid, and blinded. It was during a time I felt in-between. In between of everything

in my life” (RO, “Cathedral”). These statements reflected on an event, thought, or purpose of the participant’s experience with or without regard to others.

A holistic qualitative approach was used to examine the pre- and post-reflections for both the test and control group in order to compare and contrast the type, focus, and thoroughness of the responses from the control group to that of the test group. Using the reflections files with the questions from the reflection prompt used as headings for each answer, pre- and post-reflection responses were compared to each other for the control group and for the test group. The only reflections included in this analysis were those that could be paired from both the pre- and post-reflection submissions. This included a total of twelve reflections from the control group, six pre-reflection responses and six post-reflection responses, and a total of 18 reflections from the test group, nine pre-reflection responses, and nine post-reflection responses. Each pairing was examined for similarities and differences reported between the pre-reflection response from the individual participant to their post-reflection response.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The organization of this chapter is as follows: the reflection results are reported beginning with the pre- and post-reflections by question from the control and test group, external empathy from the pre- and post-reflections for both groups, internal empathy in the pre- and post-reflections for both groups, a brief report and discussion about the results from the short story reflections looking for intentionality, ToM, and self-awareness, the results from the test group's short story reflections for external empathy, the results from the test group's short story reflections for "internal empathy," and then the results of the DIT assessment. The qualitative, holistic results are reported first in order to show the type of responses given for the pre- and post-reflections from both groups. The quantitative results for external empathy and internal empathy are then provided in order to show the amount of change in each category from each group from pre- to post-reflection. The report and discussion of the short story reflections is presented in order to show that the test group had intentionality, ToM, and self-awareness while reflecting upon the reading. This is followed by the quantitative results of the short story reflections which shows that the test group was actively practicing the use of external empathy and internal empathy during the short story reading. The DIT results are

presented last in order to show change from both the control and test group's responses from the pre- to post-assessment.

The result and discussion section for intentionality, ToM, and self-awareness is brief in comparison to the rest of the sections in this chapter because these results are only used to show that the participants' reflections contained each element: understanding of the story or intentionality; understanding of the characters, their choices, and the world of their story, or ToM; and awareness of how the participant would feel if in a similar position as the characters, or self-awareness. The results and discussions for external empathy and internal empathy that follow provide a much deeper examination of the participants' understanding of the characters, their choices, and the world of their story, and awareness of how the participants would feel if in a similar position as the characters. The results from the pre- and post-DIT are reported together because this assessment was used to track a change from the beginning to the end of the study. The data from the pre-DIT was used as a base line to compare to the data produced from the post-DIT in order to determine change in responses after the reflections of the study were completed.

Pre- and Post-Reflection Question Responses

Control Group: Reading

Overall, for both the pre- and post-reflections, participants in the control group preferred fictional reading over non-fiction or textbooks. Four of the six participants who submitted both pre- and post-reflections included fictional reading as their favorite (CB, MD, TN and MH). The genres of fiction enjoyed included science fiction, fantasy,

romance, young adult and children's fiction, and horror. The two participants who did not list fiction as a favorite said they enjoyed nonfiction books and historical texts (GC and SG).

Of the six to complete the study, two changed their preferred reading from the pre- to post-reflection. One (MD) from fictional stories to nonfiction novels, and the other (SG) from history texts to nonfiction books and other genres that pertain to people's experiences and thoughts such as essays, magazines, and blog posts. Both participants reported in the post reflection that they prefer this type of reading because they are able to gain better insight into someone else's experience. MD was able to get inside the author's or character's head to better understand "the mindset . . . of the character or even the author" and what they were "going through physically and or mentally." SG enjoyed being able to "learn about the experiences of others . . . how they approached an event" and having a better understanding of what the participant would do in "a similar situation" (SG).

Responses to why the participant enjoyed the listed type of reading varied in the pre-reflection. Most participants stated in the pre-reflection that the excitement of a story and getting to escape into another world was part of what drew them to a reading (CB, MD, TN, GC, and MH). In comparison, the post-reflection response regarding reasons the participant enjoyed the listed type of reading was more detailed and tended to focus on gaining insight from a character's point of view (CB, GC, and SG) and experiencing situations and events different from those of the participant (CB, GC, MD, SG, and TN).

There was a marked difference in pre- and post-reflection responses to what reading does for the participant, as well. While reading about “life lessons” (CB), putting things into “perspective” (GC), and “look[ing] at the world in a different way” (MH) were part of the responses in the pre-reflections, most of the discussions were short and typically focused only on the participant. For the post-reflections, the discussions tended to focus on the world outside of the participant or delved into a deeper, philosophical discussion of what was gained from reading. Some participants discussed “hav[ing] an open mind” while reading about “a different life perspective” (CB), visualizing characters and seeing what they were “going through physically and mentally” (MD), becoming “more open minded” and using “a different way of thinking [to] understand other perspectives” (SG), and “envisioning” themselves in a “created world” that they can “relate to” (MH). Others explored the ideas that “we as a society get exposed to happy endings” in stories, when in reality “[t]here are so many what if’s” and “that things aren’t always sunshine and rainbows,” but without these things one “cannot grow” (GC). Some explained that when reading something they “don’t understand or agree with [to] especially pay attention because it’s different from what [they are] usually surrounded with” (CB).

Similarly, the responses to what the participant wanted to gain from reading shifted from a general statement to a more pointed, insightful response. Pre-reflection responses included statements about improving “sentence structures and increasing vocabulary” (MD) or being better able to analyze a text (CB, SG, and MH). On the contrary, post-responses included discussions about “get[ting] a little preview of what’s

inside [the character's or author's] mind and how they perceive the world" (CB), learning about "perspectives that others share (SG), and wanting "to gain more perspective" by "look[ing] at things in the real world a different way (MH).

Responses to how participants felt about reading others' works were similar to what participants gained from reading. Most participants responded favorably to reading others' work. The pre-reflection responses focused on what is gained from the work created by another person rather than what is gained from the work without mention of another person. For instance, one participant reported that they enjoyed other people's work and getting that author's "perspectives on the world" (CB), while another said they "enjoy correcting someone's paper . . . [because] it helps spark what [the participant] want[s] to say" (GC), or adds awareness to how they should address an audience in written communication. Another stated that it "impacted me in a way that I improve more and more" (MD); one said it was "exciting to see how other people assemble words" (TN); while two other participants reported that they enjoy learning new things from different perspectives because it gave them insight on how to communicate their thoughts (SG and MH).

Similarly, several of the post-reflection responses discussed enjoying reading others' work because it is like "get[ting] a little preview of what's inside their mind and how they perceive the world" (CB) and that it "helps me understand a topic [and] gives me advice on how I can improve my writing" (SG). One participant reported that they enjoy getting to experience writers who are "great with words [and who] write so eloquently...yet you understand the message," as well as finding it "easier" to give

feedback to someone else because they “can hear or read people’s paper[s] and can help give feedback” (GC). However, two participants, who reported enjoying reading others work in the pre-reflection, said “[a]s long as I like the subject or the writer’s style, then there are no complaints” (TN). Another noted that “sometimes...things irritate me, like the way the story is set up or the wording with dialogue...makes it hard to follow” (MH).

Control Group: Writing

When asked what they enjoyed writing, participants in the control group were split between enjoying writing about themselves (MD, SG, TN, and MH) and writing about things they’ve learned (CB and GC) in both the pre- and post-reflection. The responses to what participants did not like to write about were the same as what they enjoyed writing, but the participants giving the answers were reversed. In both the pre- and post-reflection responses, four participants did not like writing about things they learned (MD, SG, TN, and MH), while the remaining two reported that they did not like writing about themselves (CB and GC).

When asked about what compels them to write, of the four participants who responded, two reported in their pre- and post-reflection responses that school or a class assignment was the main reason they wrote (CB and GC). One reported in the pre-reflection that they did not know what compelled them to write other than “happen[ing] to be in a quiet area” where they begin to “just write” (MD). In the post-reflection, this participant said “I get to express how I am feeling in that instant [which] relieves stress as I write about topics that concern me” (MD). The fourth participant stated in the pre-reflection, “[n]arrative writings help me share experiences [while] hav[ing] the

opportunity to communicate with readers” (SG), and then in the post-reflection again focused on having “the opportunity to explain to readers the significance of a particular work and how it relates to society” (SG).

Responses about other people reading participants’ work varied throughout each participant’s response and from pre- and post-reflection, but there was not much change in individuals from the pre- to post-reflection. Three reported that they enjoy the process of getting feedback and learn from the opportunity (CB, MD, and SG). One expressed dislike and apprehension about feedback in their pre-reflection because each person has their “own writing style” and to “judge [a] paper a certain way because [of] a different writing style” dismisses their “unique way of communicating” (GC), but then stated, “I still don’t like others reading my work, but someone has to” in order for the participant to improve (GC). The fifth participant to respond to this question answered for both their pre- and post-reflection that it is “horrifying” to allow someone else to read their work (TN).

Test Group: Reading

For both the pre- and post-reflections, the majority of participants in the test group preferred fictional reading over non-fiction or textbooks. Seven of the nine participants who submitted both pre- and post-reflections included fictional reading as their favorite (KT, GD, MJD, JVA, GB, KS, and RO). One participant said, “the only things I would read in my free time was scriptures” (BG), while the other remaining participant reported nonfiction essays and articles as their preferred reading (LC).

Unlike the Control Group, only one participant submitted a different answer in their post-reflection from that of their pre-reflection response. BG, who reported only reading scripture in their pre-reflection stated that, through their participation in the study, said “I have been able to realize that although there will be other readings I dislike, there are also some readings I do like . . . because I like seeing the different opinions, settings, and views” found in stories beyond scripture (BG).

In the pre-reflection the types of reading participants enjoyed varied. Five participants’ pre-reflection responses stated that they enjoyed reading for escape or entertainment (KT, GD, MJD, JVA and RO). Two participants reported that they enjoyed watching characters interact or liked gaining a deeper understanding of the subject they were reading (LC and GB). One participant reported that they enjoyed reading because it made them “feel closer to God” (BG). Similar to the control group responses, the statements for the post-reflection were more detailed than those given in the pre-reflection. A majority of participants tended to focus on the enjoyment of experiencing someone else’s world (KT, GD, BG, and LC) and gaining new and different insights from the unexpected (JVA and RO). One participant discussed enjoying “watching characters work through moral dilemmas” (GB). While another focused on being exposed to situations saying, “they make me think about my emotions in response to [stories] and what I believed was right and wrong” (MJD).

Similar to the control group, there was a difference in the pre- and post-reflection responses about what reading does for the participant, as well. The pre-reflection responses were more focused on the participant with statements such as “reading does not

only help my neural plasticity but also allows me escape” (JVA); “it opens new worlds for me” (RO); and “it makes me think” and “it’s a great escape from life (KT). In comparison, post-reflection responses focused on “get[ting] other world perspectives” (KT), realizing that within “every conversation there is a story [that can be] interpret[ed] from . . . different perspectives” (RO), and having the ability to “expand [their] line of thinking and communication with others” (JVA). Participants also reported that reading allowed them “greater socializing powers” and provided “models...for situations [that] influence my behavior and help me understand how to form meaningful connections with those around” them (GB), “inspir[ation] to be swept up in another person’s journey through cultures that are foreign to” them (LC), and “inspire[d] emotion” and “a greater degree of empathy” for others and experiences new to them (MJD).

Unlike the control group, most of the responses about what the participant wanted to gain from reading stayed consistent from the pre- to post-reflection response. In the pre-reflection, participants reported that they “want[ed] to gain knowledge” (BG) or “learn something” (GD). Others said they wanted “to expand [their] vocabulary” (JVA), or they wanted to be entertained or escape (MJD, GD, and KS). The post-reflection responses also focused on gaining skills, obtaining knowledge, and being entertained. Six participants reported they wanted to gain writing skills or knowledge from reading (KS, BG, JVA, GB, and MJD), one participant wanted to be entertained (GD), and two did not respond to the question.

As for reading other’s work, only four participants in the test group responded for both the pre- and post-reflection. In the pre-reflection, three stated that they enjoy reading

others' works because they "like seeing other people's opinions about a topic that are different or similar" to their own (BG). Another said, "I enjoy the connection either between the book and my own work or the emotional involvement between the characters" and themselves (MJD). A third "sees it as those people sharing a part of their soul and their personal experience" (GB).

In the post-reflection, the test group participants shared the same sentiment from the pre-reflection response, but one participant said, "I used to not really enjoy others work but I have learned to enjoy them now because I like seeing the different opinions, settings, and views through each paper I read" (BG). One stated that they "believe reading literature is part of a well-rounded education" and that they are "sad and regretful that the general populace has become out of touch with deep thinking and writing at a higher processing level" (MJD). A third participant reported that "[r]eading another's work is a great privilege" and that being "an author involves a great measure of interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence, [and] those who are gifted in those areas bless us with sharing their internal and external observations" (GB). In the pre-reflection, another participant said that they read others' work from "an analytical stance where I do not judge the work, but rather take in as much information [and then] being to judge their work" (JVA), but for their post-reflection stated that they "enjoy reading others work [because] it is a window to how they see things" (JVA).

Test Group: Writing

Five of the nine test group participants indicated what they like to write about for both the pre- and post-reflection. Two stated that they enjoy writing for fun (KT and GB),

with one saying that they enjoy writing poetry “because of how feelings oriented it is” (GB, pre-reflection), but that finds doing so “much easier said than done” (GB, post-reflection). Another reported that they either write “angsty ramblings in a notebook or an essay for college” in the pre-reflection, and then said “I would like to write my own fiction” in the post-reflection (GD). Another stated, “I like to write about life experiences. . .[a]long with informative writing over what I have analyzed” (JVA) in the pre-reflection, but then said, “I cannot say what like to write about, but what I usually write about is more conceptual and theory based” (JVA) in their post-reflection. The fifth participant reported that they prefer to write with “detail and clear language to provide resources” (LC) in their pre-reflection, and said “I haven’t done much writing lately, but if I were to start again, I would do poetry” for their post-reflection (LC).

Only two participants explained what they do not like to write about. The first reported in their pre-reflection that they “have a hard time writing papers” and said, “I don’t like writing when . . . forced to write things I am not interested in” (KT). In the post-reflection, they stated the same thoughts, claiming, “I am not a big fan of writing things I am forced to write [because] I just feel so limited with what I can say [and] I get stressed so easily I forget to have fun with it” (KT). The other participant reported that they are “not a big fan of writing fact based on extremely logical things” in their pre-reflection (GB). In their post reflection, they stated, “I am not much of a writer [because] I am a little too self-conscious to be thoroughly involved in that art, but the I am able to put to paper is almost always lyrical in nature” (GB).

Four participants responded to what compels them to write. One reported in the pre-reflection that “vanity was the driving force” for their writing when they were younger (GD). While they said, “I employed gratuitous diction in my endeavor to appear intellectually superior to the unlearned masses” in their pre-reflection, they stated “the reward of a good grade, or helping someone in their study” was what compelled them in their response to the post-reflection (GD). Another said, “I write about experiences because some things I feel are worth telling” (JVA) in their pre-reflection, but in their post-reflection reported that “the desire to understand my own thoughts laid out in front of me was a way to fulfil their desire to learn and understand” their own emotions (JVA). Another said, “I normally write as a method of pouring out emotions or when I become too overwhelmed to logically think without paper in place” in their pre-reflection (GB). For their post-reflection they reported that they are “incredibly interested in human nature and the bonds we form with those around us, and [writing on] these two topics is the best method for exploring that interest” (GB). A fourth participant claimed in their pre-reflection that they were compelled to write in order to “provide someone an escape” and “to entertain” (KS), but for their post-reflection explained that they were compelled to write in order “to discover more of my own taste” (KS).

The five participants to report feelings about others reading their work in the pre-reflection cited being “self-conscious” (KT), having “no confidence” (GD), getting “extremely nervous” (GB), being “timid” (KS), or really wanted an “honest response . . . in order to improve” their writing (JVA). Those that reported negative feelings in the pre-response stated that they were still apprehensive of feedback in their post-reflections.

However, participants also stated that they like the response because it is “the best way to get better” (KT). Another claimed that their “apprehension” dropped because their writing “is usually about something boring” and they are “detached from” it (GD), and that they feel “vulnerable, but really enjoy being able to share those things with others” (GB). On the contrary, a third participant said that they “are constantly learning from others [and] must constantly learn from their fellow writers” (KS). However, the one participant that reported just wanting an “honest response . . . in order to improve” in the pre-reflection, stated that they feel “vulnerable” when others read their work because saying, “I do not believe that I am a good writer” in their post-reflection (JVA).

Discussion of Control and Test Group Question Responses

The responses to the questions for the pre- and post-reflections from both groups were fairly similar. The pre-reflection responses, for both groups, contained the same type and amount of critical-reflective thinking. While the control group responded to the majority of the questions more frequently than the test group in the post-reflection, by and large, the test groups’ post-reflection responses were much more thorough, containing specific mention of the self or other with examples and/or justification for their responses. Both groups did show growth in this area in the post-reflection; however, the test group went into more detail and elaborated more in their reflections than the control group.

The control group tended to focus more on themselves and their experiences in the post-reflection than in the pre-reflection. This shows that there was more internal empathy and awareness of self, meaning it may be possible to gain empathy through

reading even without including written reflection like the test group. This confirms previous studies in cognitive narratology and psychology about reading fiction. Even within this shift, however, the control group's responses were not nearly as detailed as those provided by the test group. Overall, the test group focused on experiences of others, learning from others, and explored the questions they did answer much more than in pre-reflection and more than control group for both the pre- and post-reflection. I think some of what may have contributed to the test group being more elaborate in their post-reflection responses is their comfort in reflecting on their thoughts and feelings gained from writing the reflections for the short stories, as well as being more invested in the study itself. This is not to say that participants in the control group were not invested or did not fully respond to the post-reflection prompt, but the test group had constant engagement with the study, a consistent practice of reflecting by having to respond to the reading, as well as receiving a reminder email from me about submitting those reflections.

Unlike participants in the control group, some test group participants emailed me throughout the study with questions about the prompts, readings, or due dates, increasing their involvement with the study. I think if ways of practicing empathy (such as through this type of reflection) were employed in a classroom setting, the role of the teacher and the teacher-student relationship could have even greater impact on the amount of empathy that is exhibited in student writing. By having a more active role as a teacher who can encourage and provide more questions and feedback, compared to that of a hands-off investigator, student writers might feel more comfortable inserting themselves

in their writing on a more critical level, as well as engaging more directly with their audience.

Pre- and Post-Reflection Responses for External Empathy

Control Group

The control group presented external empathy in 7.05% of their total Pre-Reflection samples. For their Post-Reflection, the amount of external empathy was present in 9.84% of their total samples, with one participant (MH) showing no external empathy in their post-reflection (see Table 4.1). This is a gain of 2.79% from pre- to post-reflection in which they reflected on seeing the world through a different perspective, statements or questions about how another or others think or do something, or escape was discussed as being in a different reality.

Table 4.1

Percentage of External Empathy in Pre- and Post-Reflection Submissions for Control Group

Participant	Pre	Post
CB	0.47%	2.14%
GC	1.52%	3.96%
MD	1.02%	1.3%
SG	0.49%	1.6%
TN	1.93%	0.84%
MH	1.62%	--
Total	7.05%	9.84%

For the pre-reflection, participants mentioned escaping to another world (MD) or being “engrossed in a different life” (TN); “seeing other people’s views and perspectives

on the world we live” (CB); and how reading “makes me look at the world a different way” (MH). Others said reading “helps me put in perspective that [other writers] were human too” (GC) and that “[r]eading others’ work helps me understand [others’] points of view . . . and become more open-minded” (SG).

In their post-reflection, participants expressed similar thoughts about being able to escape into a different reality, but were slightly more detailed in their statements. One participant’s response claimed that “[r]eading others’ stories or essays is always fun because it’s like you get a little preview of what’s inside their mind and how they perceive the world” (CB). Another stated that they are “able to learn about the experiences of others and learn about how they approach an event” while being “able to hear and understand their perspectives toward the topic” (SG). A third participant shared that they “used to not have the mindset of depictions . . . of what the character or even the author was going through physically or mentally” (MD).

Test Group

The test group presented external empathy in 8.6% of their total pre-reflection samples. However, three participants (KT, RO, and JVA) showed no external empathy in the pre-reflections. For their post-reflection, the amount of external empathy was present in 28.28% of their total samples (see Table 4.2). While the control group gained 2.79% from their pre- to post-reflection for external empathy, the test group had a gain of 19.68%. In their post-reflection, participants reflected on seeing the world through a different perspective, provided statements or questions about how another or others think or do something, or escape was discussed as being in a different reality.

Table 4.2

Percentage of External Empathy in Pre- and Post-Reflection Submissions for Test Group

Participant	Pre	Post
KT	--	0.51%
GD	0.18%	3.92%
BG	0.54%	0.78%
MJD	0.93%	5.96%
LC	2.86%	3.62%
GB	2.52%	6.7%
RO	--	2.27%
JVA	--	2.07%
KS	1.57%	2.45%
Total	8.6%	28.28%

For the pre-reflection, most of the test group's responses were relatively short statements about escaping into a fictional world (KS; GB) and "delv[ing] into various author's minds" (GD); gaining a "deeper understanding" of history, characters, and other's thoughts (MJD; LC); and how reading allows them to see "other people's opinions about a topic that are different or similar to" their own (BG). In fact, had it not been for one participant (LC) going into detail about the thoughts they had after reading *Frankenstein*, the pre-reflection score for the test group would have been the same as the control group's pre-reflection score. It should be noted that, due to the small group size, a single participant elaborating on a thought, or including a lengthy discussion on a certain point, can have a statistically significant effect on the data. In this specific case, the discussion the participant included added 1.55% coverage to the amount of external empathy recorded for the test group's pre-reflection score. While a significant addition,

this only stands out as an anomaly for the pre-reflection report because it only occurred for a single participant; most of the test group included lengthy discussions in their post-reflections. Therefore, this anomaly in the pre-reflection was the norm in the post-reflection.

In their post-reflection responses, however, the test group was much more detailed in their discussions about other's perspectives and statements about or questioning how others think or do something. Based on the discussions in their short story reflections, this kind of detail is not all that surprising. Most of the participants showed a large amount of external empathy when discussing character choices and events within the short stories. Therefore, the transference from the short story reflections in which participants were actively thinking about others and their experiences should be expected to be seen in other forms of reflection. For instance, one participant commented that they "don't know how people are able to write textbooks or academic papers" and that "[b]eing forced to write essays on boring studies in college is bad enough; how do people write and read these things for fun" (GD). While there was still mention of reading being "one of the best ways to get other world perspectives" (KT), and "I have learned to enjoy [reading] now, because I like seeing the different opinions, settings, and views through each paper I read" (BG), most of their comments were more detailed than in the pre-reflection and in comparison to the control group's pre- and post-reflections.

One participant went into detail about how "characters find joy, grow and develop, and eventually die," saying that there "are times when I am sitting alone, crying over the loss of a character. Although I have never experienced profane loss, hunger, fear

for my life, I can try to understand when I read,” and that “[b]ooks, if they are written well, can inspire that emotion” (MJD). While another participant discussed that they are “very curious when it comes to what people are researching and writing,” that they “enjoy learning the current trends in how people think,” and how it is “fun and inspiring to be swept up in another person’s journey through cultures that are foreign” (LC). This participant reported, “I can sometimes see myself in other people and then imagine how I would be in that circumstance” (LC). A third participant said,

I generally hope to gain a deeper understanding of human motive and thoughts [and] books do accomplish these great feats, but they have even greater socializing powers that often go unnoticed. The characters we identify with and the models they provide for situations influence our behavior and help us understand how to form meaningful connections with those around us. (GB)

This participant also reported that they “enjoy watching characters work through moral dilemmas” (GB).

Discussion of Control and Test Group for External Empathy

An analysis of the pre- and post-responses of both groups for external empathy provided similar, yet more specific results compared to the holistic discussion of their responses to each questions. Statistically, the test group showed greater amounts of external empathy in their reflections than what was seen in the control group. However, the post-reflections for both groups contained more external empathy than the pre-reflections. I think this is largely due to discussions about others being easier to have than focusing on ourselves. In grade school, many writers are taught not to write in the first-

person, and by extension not to include themselves in their discussions. Over time, it becomes a habit to not include the self, but to focus solely on the other and remain in the third-person throughout discussions. Both groups' responses were similar to each other for the pre- and post-reflection, but similar to what was reported in the previous section, the test group provided much deeper and more detailed discussions than the control group. That both groups scored higher on the post-reflection for external empathy could be due to both groups reading the short stories, but it would be naive to discount the individual participant's growth over the semester outside of what they were exposed to in this study as a potential contributing factor. Like I previously discussed, I do attribute the large gain the test group had in external empathy from the pre- to post-reflection to that group completing the responses from the short stories, though. By practicing this type of reflection, getting comfortable exploring their thoughts, and thinking about themselves and others in a reflective manner, the test group was better able to go into depth with their answers in the post-reflection.

Pre- and Post-Reflection Responses for Internal Empathy

Control Group

The control group presented internal empathy in 5.33% of their total pre-reflection samples. For their post-reflection, the amount of internal empathy was present in 12.07% of their total samples (see Table 4.3). Two participants (CG and MG) showed no internal empathy in either their pre- or post-reflections. Even without these two participants, there was a gain of 6.74% from pre- to post-reflection in which the other five participants reflected on their past experiences and reasons for their actions or what

they learned from the experience, reflected on how they were impacted when reading or writing, or they mentioned escaping from their own reality.

Table 4.3

Percentage of Internal Empathy in Pre- and Post-Reflection Submissions for Control Group

Participant	Pre	Post
CB	0.79%	2.88%
GC	2.84%	3.93%
MD	--	--
SG	0.65%	2.98%
TN	0.43%	0.65%
MH	0.62%	1.63%
Total	5.33%	12.07%

For the pre-reflection, participants commented with “reading takes me out of my own mind” and “I can focus on something completely different than my personal life,” at the same time they “hate writing about a personal experience” (CB). One said that as they read and write, they “can see how it applies to my own life” and upon reading work they created in the past, they are “surprised [about] how I thought back then compared to now” (GC). Another commented that they are “able to become more open-minded” (SG). A third said that “[e]xperiencing another person’s life also helps me develop” (TN). While another reported that reading “gets me out of this world” (MH).

One participant in the post-reflection reported,

[w]hen reading, I always try to have an open mind because the person who is writing the story is usually coming from a different life perspective than I have; meaning that when I come across something I don’t understand or agree with I

especially pay attention because it's different from what I am usually surrounded with. (CB)

Although similar in sentiment, the post-reflection was much more detailed than that of the pre-reflection.

A participant discussing writing stated, “knowing that if I didn’t procrastinate I could have had a better paper, but still found myself waiting until the last minute hoping what I write is good enough and could pass” but that they “get the inspiration [to write] under the pressure” of a deadline (GC). Another participant discussing reading and writing claimed

I can become very well informed about a topic/subject and can discuss with other . . .the perspectives I have and propose a solution if there is an issue for the topic, or simply spread awareness for a topic that may not be known. (SG)

While a fourth participant said “getting lost in a story with fiction allows me to find hidden meaning and value that relate to my own life” (MH).

Test Group

The test group presented internal empathy in 7.14% of their total pre-reflection samples with four participants (TG, KT, BG, and KS) not presenting any internal empathy in their samples. For their post-reflection samples, the amount of internal empathy was present in 21.94% of their total samples (see Table 4.4). While the control group gained 6.74% from their pre- to post-reflection for internal empathy, the test group had a gain of 14.8% from in which they reflected on their past experiences and reasons

for their actions or what they learned from the experience, reflected on how they were impacted when reading or writing, or they mentioned escaping from their own reality.

Table 4.4
Percentage of Internal Empathy in Pre- and Post-Reflection Submissions for Test Group

Participant	Pre	Post
KT	--	2.74
GD	2.69	4.58
BG	--	0.72
MJD	1.26	2.37
LC	0.7	2.49
GB	1.37	2.48
RO	0.63	1.97
JVA	0.49	1.94
KS	--	2.65
Total	7.14	21.94

For the pre-reflections, one participant stated, “I enjoy reading mainly for the escape from myself” (GD). Another said they enjoyed reading to escape, the “stress of normal life” (MJD). A third said it was a “chance to leave [their] own reality” (RO). One also reported that reading “does not only help my neural plasticity but also allows me escape from the worries that may be upon me at the time” (JVA). While others discussed writing being a way “to find the word for [their] emotion and be comfortable with putting that starkness on the page” (LC), and that “[a]nswering writing prompts is a great way to find insight into things we subconsciously decide or care about” (GB).

The post-reflections, similar to those from the control group, also carried the same ideas, but participants again offered more in depth with their discussions. Three participants discussed their feelings about writing. One said, “I hate talking about myself

because I always talk about myself like I am someone unique,” and although they do like themselves, they continued with “I don’t think I am different from the average person” (KT). However, this participant claimed that “I do get to a point where I just let loose and write how I feel [which] eventually turns into something I can be proud of” (KT). The second participant said, “the thing that compels me to write has been the desire to understand my own thoughts laid out in front of me. Even though the emotional content behind it might be different, the desire to earn and understand” drives their compulsion (JVA). The third participant found it “interesting how the usual mundane experiences of life can be inspiring,” but said the “times when I am most motivated to write is when I am experiencing an unusually emotional experience, or when I am feeling very introspective” (LC).

Other participants showed internal empathy in their discussions of reading. One participant reopened by saying, “it helps me to escape from my own life for a little while,” and that “I am not creative, but I love creativity” and “have always preferred other people’s imaginations to my own” (GD). Another stated, “the stories I read have made me think about their emotions in response to what I was reading more analytically. I had to discern what I believed was right and wrong” (MJD). While a third said, “the more I read the more I start to interpret things differently. For example, in a simple conversation, I can interpret what someone is saying from two or more perspectives. For me, almost everything is a story, so I can perceive it how I want” (RO).

Discussion of Control and Test Group for Internal Empathy

An analysis of the pre- and post-responses of both groups for internal empathy also provided similar, yet more specific results compared to the holistic discussion of their responses to each questions. Statistically, the test group showed greater amounts of internal empathy in their reflections than what was seen in the control group. However, the post-reflections for both groups contained more internal empathy than the pre-reflections. I think this the inclusion of more internal empathy for the post-reflection – from both groups –stems from the empathetic thinking both experienced through the process of reading the short stories and completing the first stage of the study. The prompts for the pre- and post-reflection were the same, but by the post-reflection both groups have had more time to develop empathetic awareness from going through the study, thus having more awareness of their personal thoughts. Both groups' responses were similar to each other for the pre- and post-reflection, but similar to what was reported in the previous two sections, the test group provided much deeper and more detailed discussions than the control group.

That both groups scored higher on the post-reflection for internal empathy could be due to both groups reading the short stories, but it would be naive to discount the individual participant's growth over the semester outside of what they were exposed to in this study as a potential contributing factor. Some of the increase in internal empathy seen in the post-reflection compared to the pre-reflection also could be due to the participants feeling more comfortable submitting their writing to me. Both groups did score higher in the post-reflection for both external and internal empathy. However, the

control group scored higher for internal empathy than they did for external empathy.

Similar to students in a classroom becoming more comfortable with the instructor and what is expected of them and their work as a semester advances, I attribute some of the increase in internal empathy to participants becoming more at ease with me and their participation in the study.

Over the course of the semester, each participant received emails directly from me with personalized greetings, the readings, and the phrase “Happy Reading” as part of my closing signature line. This type of familiarization could contribute to participants feeling more at ease talking about themselves and their experiences compared to our initial meeting in which they had paperwork to fill out, an assessment to complete, and a prompt to respond to. While they completed the same reflection and assessment at the end of the study, they were more familiar with me and the material they were being asked to complete than when they began the study.

I do contribute the large gain the test group had in internal empathy from the pre- to post-reflection to them completing the responses from the short stories, though. By practicing this type of reflection, getting comfortable exploring their thoughts, and thinking about themselves and others in a reflective manner, the test group was better able to go into depth with their answers in the post-reflection. Like I previously argued, I think if ways of practicing empathy such as through this type of reflection were employed in a classroom setting, the role of the teacher and the teacher-student relationship could have even greater impact on the amount of empathy that is exhibited in student writing.

Short Story Reflection Responses for Intentionality, ToM, and Self-Awareness

“Cathedral”

Twelve participants submitted reflections for “Cathedral.” One participant (VW) scored a 1 for intentionality, or full understanding of the story. This participant also scored a 1 for ToM, but scored a 2 for self-awareness. The remaining 11 participants (MS, BG, RO, KS, KT, MG, LC, LH, GD, GB, and MJD) all scored a 2 for intentionality. Four of those participants (KS, KT, MG, and GD) received a 2 for ToM and self-awareness. The remaining seven participants (MS, BG, RO, LC, LH, GB, and MJD) received a 1 for ToM; two of whom (RO and GB) scored a 2 for self-awareness, while three participants (MS, BG, and LC) received a 1 for self-awareness, and two (LH and MJD) scored a 0 for self-awareness (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5

Rubric for Short Story Reflection Responses for “Cathedral”

Participant	Intentionality	Theory of Mind	Self-Awareness
MS	2	1	1
BG	2	1	1
RO	2	1	2
KS	2	2	2
KT	2	2	2
MG	2	2	2
LC	2	1	1
LH	2	1	0
GD	2	2	2
VW	1	1	2
GB	2	1	2
MJD	2	1	0
JV	--	--	--

“Sweat”

Ten participants submitted reflections for “Sweat.” One participant (KT) received a 1 for intentionality and ToM, but scored a 0 for self-awareness. The remaining nine participants (BG, KS, MG, LC, LH, GD, VW, GB, and MJD) are received a 2 for intentionality. Three of these participants (KS, MG, and GD) also received a 2 for ToM and self-awareness; two participants (LC and MJD) received a 2 for ToM and a 1 for self-awareness; and the remaining four participants (KT, LH, VW, and GB) all received a 1 for ToM. Of these four participants, two (KT and VW) both received a 0 for self-awareness, one participant (LH) received a 1 for this category, and the fourth participant (GB) scored a 2 for self-awareness (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6
Rubric for Short Story Reflection Responses for “Sweat”

Participant	Intentionality	Theory of Mind	Self-Awareness
MS	0	0	0
BG	2	0	0
RO	0	0	0
KS	2	2	2
KT	1	1	0
MG	2	2	2
LC	2	2	1
LH	2	1	1
GD	2	2	2
VW	2	1	0
GB	2	1	2
MJD	2	2	1
JV	--	--	--

“Desiree’s Baby”

Twelve participants submitted reflections for the final reading, “Desiree’s Baby.” Of the 12, 10 participants (MS, KS, KT, MG, LC, LH, GD, GB, MJD, and JV) received a 2 for intentionality. Five of these participants (MS, MG, GD, GB, and JV) scored a 2 for both ToM and intentionality. Two of the 10 participants (KS and LC) both scored a 2 for ToM and a 1 for intentionality. One of the ten participants (KT) to receive a 2 for intentionality scored a 2 for ToM and a 0 for intentionality. The remaining two participants (LH and MJD) to score a 2 for intentionality both scored a 1 for ToM, but one of the two (MJD) scored a 1 for self-awareness, whereas the other (LH) scored a 0 in this category. The remaining two participants (BG and RO) to submit this reflection both scored a 1 for intentionality. One of these participants (BG) also scored a 1 for ToM, but a 0 for self-awareness. While the other participant (RO) scored a 1 for ToM but a 2 for self-awareness (see Table 4.7).

Table 4.7

Rubric for Short Story Reflection Responses for “Desiree’s Baby”

Participant	Intentionality	Theory of Mind	Self-Awareness
MS	2	2	2
BG	1	1	0
RO	1	1	2
KS	2	2	1
KT	2	2	0
MG	2	2	2
LC	2	2	1
LH	2	1	0
GD	2	2	2
VW	--	--	--
GB	2	2	2
MJD	2	1	1
JV	2	2	2

“Brownies”

Twelve participants also submitted reflections for “Brownies,” all scoring a 2 for intentionality, or full understanding of the story. One participant (RO) showed neither ToM nor self-awareness in their reflection for this story. Seven participants (MS, KS, KT, MG, LC, GB, and MJD) scored a 2 for ToM, or understanding of the characters, their choices, and the world of their story, four of whom (KS, KT, MH, and LC) also scored a 2 for self-awareness, or awareness of how the participant would feel if in a similar position as the characters; one participant (MJD) scored a 1 for self-awareness; and, the other two participants (MS and GB) scored a 0 for self-awareness. Four participants (BG, LH, GD, and VW) scored a 1 for ToM. Three of these participants (LH, GD, and VW), however, scored a 2 for self-awareness for this story; and the third participant (BG) scored a 0 (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8
Rubric for Short Story Reflection Responses for “Brownies”

Participant	Intentionality	Theory of Mind	Self-Awareness
MS	2	2	0
BG	2	1	0
RO	2	0	0
KS	2	2	2
KT	2	2	2
MG	2	2	2
LC	2	2	2
LH	2	1	2
GD	2	1	2
VW	2	1	2
GB	2	2	0
MJD	2	2	1
JV	--	--	--

Discussion of Results from Short Story Reflection on Intentionality, ToM, and Self-Awareness

Overall, the reflections for the short stories showed a range of understanding, insight into the characters’ thoughts and the world around them, as well as self-awareness from the participants about how they would respond, react, or feel in a similar position as the characters from the stories. “Brownies” seemed the most accessible and easy to understand for the group as a whole, with “Cathedral” being the next easily accessible and understandable of the four stories. The time period and discussions that take place in “Cathedral” and “Brownies” seem to be more familiar to the participants. “Cathedral” scored the highest for self-awareness, with “Brownies” and “Desiree’s Baby” both a close second for this category.

For the most part, the selected stories seemed to allow participants to be “transported” into the stories, since as fiction they are far enough removed from real life that the reader can escape into the world of the story without it being too close to real life. The topic of racism was hit upon in all three of the stories mentioned above, but I think because there are no physical or mental threats made in “Cathedral,” participants were able to put themselves in the position of the characters much more easily than any of the other stories they read. While violence, both mental and physical, were part of “Brownies” and “Desiree’s Baby,” because it was not actualized in the same way as it was in “Sweat,” that may account for participants not being able to fully engage with “Sweat.” To put it another way, the fact that “Brownies” and “Desiree’s Baby” were not as graphic of a reality as “Sweat” may account for participants being able to discuss their reactions and how they would respond in more depth and detail than what was seen in the reflections from “Sweat.” Overall, “Desiree’s Baby” elicited the most ToM responses. The temporal distance from the story to present day seemed to have justified the characters’ racism and actions caused by it. The emotional anguish of a woman with a baby being forced out of her home because of race seemed to allow participants a window into trying to understand the characters’ motivations, while the distance in time does not play as large a role in comparison to watching the abusive relationship and the outcomes of it unfold in “Sweat.”

“Sweat” seemed to be the hardest story for participants to understand. While two participants (BG and RO) seemed to have missed Armand discovering he was black and not Desiree in “Desiree’s Baby,” two participants (MS and RO) admitted to not being

able to read and understand the story due to the dialogue, so they did not submit a reflection for it. Another participant (KT) showed some understanding of the events that took place in the story, but clearly missed large points due to not understanding what the characters were saying. For this story, in comparison to the others read, it appears that the participants were really disconnected from both the characters and the events that took place within it. While I think the dialogue was an issue, like previously mentioned, I speculate that some of the distance seen in their reflections was due to the violence and cruelty within in the story.

Short Story Reflection Responses for External Empathy

Nine of the 12 submitted reflections showed external empathy for “Cathedral” and “Desiree’s Baby.” Eight of the 11 submitted reflections on “Sweat” contained external empathy, and 11 of the 12 reflections for “Brownies” also contained external empathy. The average percentage of external empathy for “Cathedral” was 35.28%; the average percentage for “Sweat” was 28.04%; the average percentage for “Desiree’s Baby” was 28.81%; and the total average for “Brownies” was 42.67% (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.9

Percentage of External Empathy in Reflection Responses for Short Stories

Participant	Cathedral	Sweat	Desiree's Baby	Brownies
VW	--	13.36%	--	--
KT	51.49%	80.77%	--	34.65%
MG	43.45%	44.37%	33.81%	29.5%
GD	40.17%	16.14%	19.33%	7.45%
LH	14.3%	--	24.93%	28.4%
LC	--	19.61%	54.92%	62.91%
KS	36.46%	14.67%	16.05%	50.92%
GB	--	--	32.16%	53.32%
RO	14.13%	--	--	17.48%
MJD	20.43%	7.56%	17.54%	63.97%
MS	58.73%	--	43.02%	73.07%
BG	38.32%	27.85%	--	47.65%
JVA	--	--	17.5%	--
Average when Present	35.28%	28.04%	28.81%	42.67%

Examples of external empathy from “Cathedral” reflections showed participants discussing the world of the story at large and from the characters’ perspectives, including comparisons to the time of the story to society today, talking about how or why the characters thought the way they did, as well as justification for the characters thoughts and actions based on the world of the characters. For instance, one participant said,

The discomfort seeped through the page. The wife just left them alone, maybe she didn’t realize how awkward that might have been. Maybe her husband wasn’t always that awkward about being around new people. Either way, they were left alone. (KT)

Another participant focused on the narrator/husband but also included discussion about society during the time the story took place, saying,

For the narrator's part, he seems to learn mostly from TV. Ironically, this is also the case for Robert. The narrator's preconceptions about the blind mostly stem from films and television shows he's watched, media that depicts the blind as pitiful and slow. That device, however that gave the narrator those impressions turns out to be the same device that allows he and Robert to bond. By listening to TV programs, the two become closer and take a little from one another's worlds.

In addition, the story conveys something deeper about TV and its representations of certain demographics, most especially during that era. The narrator was never exposed to blind people, or people of color, so he took everything he gleaned from TV and assumed that it applied. He prejudged Robert for his blindness, and prejudged Beulah for her skin tone. (MG)

A third participant also focused on the narrator/husband, conceding to his being a product of his time but noting that the world has not changed much since the time of the story, saying,

The narrator, who seems to be a somewhat introverted and prejudiced sort of man, clearly was at a loss of what to do around someone who couldn't see. He almost felt like this man was barging in. That combined with how much his wife liked the man, and the discomfort of being around someone who has just lost a loved one.

The setting, both in time and place, has a lot to tell the reader about the characters. It being probably in the 60s, racism and prejudice of all sorts was much more blatant in America. The characters, especially the narrator, are

products of their time, and ought to be judged accordingly. If the story were to take place in modern times, I don't know whether it would be any different. There are all kinds of people, and you never know how even you yourself will react to certain situations. (GD)

While most participants were able to understand the narrator's behavior based on the time of the story, many showed external empathy by implying that his behavior would be considered wrong today.

Participants' external empathy in their reflections for "Brownies" also examined the time and lifestyles of the characters, while expressing thoughts about how most people can relate to the situation, good or bad, the characters were in. For instance, one participant said,

If the story had been set in a different place or period the outcome would have not been the same, the girls may have had more of an understanding about the troop 909 girls and their learning disabilities or had a more or a less chance of confrontation, meaning that the outcome of the story could have changed. Laurel might have never received Daphne's diary or understood her in a way she felt she had now. . . .I am sympathetic towards the situations some of the camp girls were in, as almost every student goes through some sort of bullying, living in someone else's shadow or being victimized because of events, ethnicity or learning difficulties. (LH)

Another participant focused on one character by quoting her, and then discussing the deeper implications of the life lessons children go through that is reflected in the quote, saying,

Reading about Snot's words about how "[w]e had all been taught that adulthood was full of sorrow and pain, taxes and bills, dreaded work dealings with whites, sickness and death." It's [a] very mature analysis that is very self-aware. It recognizes that as a child you are being taught how to live in the world and how to communicate and interact with the world around you through your parents, and others who raised you. And, that as a child you imitate that behavior. That, in addition to receiving messages on the television that highlight an image that does not reflect your own, probably does cause a lack of empathy. And, these feelings of lack of empathy or low self-worth can be learned from media if you see only those who are not like you predominately depicted in a positive light, especially if you think that images on television are portraying the truth. (LC)

A third participant mused about how children are trained to think in a certain way, justifying a character's behavior; while also discussing how the message of the story would not have been as strong had the author written the story from another character's perspective. This participant said,

It is safe to say that growing up that we all have had predetermined mindsets about people of different races etched into our brain by family and media. Many of the black girls immediately assume that the white girls will be mean to them by calling them derogatory names. Naturally, there is a character like Octavia who

wants to beat them to the punch, feeling as if the white girls have already committed the act. . . . If Packer decided to lead with all the girls having the mindset of Octavia, and in the end it turned out they were wrong about the white girls, the lesson learned aspect would have been less impactful. Through Laurel we can see the racism around her, learn about her experience with racism at school, and see that the assumptions of one does not account for all. (KS)

Similar to their reaction to prejudices seen in “Cathedral,” many participants attributed the racism in “Brownies” to the time period of the story. The external empathy most participants exhibited showed was in the form of being accepting of children behaving a certain way because of learned behavior from observing adults, as well as children simply learning how to navigate the world of adult issues.

Reflections for “Sweat” that showed external empathy mainly focused on the time of the story being the reason for the characters’ behavior and their community accepting what would be considered wrong. One participant said,

This story takes place in the mid-1920s. As a black woman, this means that she doesn’t have very many resources, a sentiment that is perfectly expressed by the inaction of those around her. Despite sharing sympathies for her, and being well aware of the mental and physical abuse that she suffers, the village men do nothing to intervene on Delia’s behalf. She is largely left on her own, which explains her evolution from meek and docile to resilient and defiant. (MG)

While another reported,

The characters are heavily impacted by the setting in which they live, as they are mostly poor Black people during segregation. If the story happened now, I don't know how different it would be. Sykes might have been able to live had it been in the modern age, what with cellphones and increased urbanization. (GD)

A third participant also reported that the story would be different if it took place today, but focused more on what the world around the characters would look like, saying,

If this story were to have taken place in a different setting, it would have changed the story. For example, if this story were to have taken place in the present time, then people around her would have helped her in her violent relationship. There also would not have been as much racism than [sic] before. (BG)

Although several participants struggled with understanding this story, the external empathy exhibited by those who submitted reflections was in the form of blame for Syke's abusive behavior, the lack of support from the community, and Delia's failure to leave an abusive relationship on the time period in which the story takes place.

Most of the external empathy found in the reflection for "Desiree's Baby" did not excuse the behavior of characters based on the time period of the story, but they did show awareness of how it impacted the choices of the characters. One participant said,

The characters acted how I expected them to act. That is not to say that I predicted that Armand and Desiree would separate and discover that Armand was hiding his race, that is to say that Armand was shown as cruel at the beginning of the story. It was entirely possible for him to change, and that result would have been expected as well; Armand's growth was always dependent on his surroundings,

his personality, and if he experienced a drastic revelation at exactly the same time. Perhaps, more importantly, it depended on his ability to self-examine and think critically about his beliefs, values, etc. This was a time wherein slavery (and associated rampant racism) was still, well, rampant. They are both landowners, which translates to wealthy or perhaps upper-middles class, regardless, it means a life of privilege. Being sheltered is not a get-out-of-jail-free card in regards to ignorance, much less such outright hatred. Perhaps he is merely a product of his time, yet to stand by and do nothing while evil happens is evil as well. Desiree is perhaps a product of her time as well; she has a gentle demeanor and a kind heart. She is glad when her husband is kind and sad when her husband is not. (MS)

Another participant focused on the setting and time period of the story, saying,

The setting of Louisiana tied in well with the French influence and also the story's relevance of slavery and African Americans. A time period where segregation and slavery had not been abolished . . . fit Armand's disgust when he thought Desiree was also of this heritage. I feel if the story took place in a different setting or time, in a more accepting and open minded society, the effects of Armand's disgust would have been less appropriate. (LH)

While a third participant discussed the rollercoaster of emotions elicited for both, Armand and Desiree, experiences, reporting that

Previous to reading his mother's letter, he [Armand] seemed to feel betrayed and demoralized by finding out his baby was not white and putting the cause on his wife. Though he recognized that this was an "unconscious injury," he still

persisted in casting her out of his life by avoiding her and finally agreeing with her mother that she should leave. And, my sadness only deepened when Desiree with her baby in her arms left her life supposedly committing suicide, feeling overcome with the idea that she was different than she thought, that she was part of a race that was considered less than in the eyes of her white counterparts, and that she was part of an oppressed race in which she was also the oppressor.

Though, she did not seem to like it when her husband was strict with the slaves, nevertheless, she was in a stage of great fright upon considering that she herself was black. So, clearly she did not want to be black. I'm not sure if she thought of this in terms of how her life would be different; I'm not sure if she thought she might need to live as a slave and that's what also caused her mental anguish. And, I can't imagine how [Armand] felt as he learned that it was he that was black, and not his wife as he had assumed. (LC).

Similar to the other three stories, external empathy was shown in response to "Desiree's Baby" largely through discussions of the time period of the story, particularly the societal priorities and expectations demonstrated.

Discussion about External Empathy in Short Story Reflections

Generally, the external empathy seen in the short story reflections involved discussions about the time in which the story took place, where society was at that time, and the relatability of the characters. For most participants, "Brownies" was the easiest to show external empathy. The use of children as the main characters seemed to create an understanding for the participants as far as the behavior and choices these children made.

While some discussed the poor behavior of these characters, most included discussion about how confusing it can be trying to navigate the world as a child. They also mentioned the feel of needing to belong and conform to a social group even if the majority of the group does not behave in ways the individual feels appropriate. The second story that most participants displayed external empathy was “Cathedral.” Overall, participants reported disgust for the narrator; however, they discussed that the situation he was in was not an easy one, thus being able to understand why he behaved the way he did. Many also mentioned that the timing of the story was most likely the reason for the narrator’s prejudices and lack of awareness.

The final two stories, “Desiree’s Baby” and “Sweat,” did not seem to elicit as much external empathy from the participants. For several participants, the dialogue in “Sweat” was too difficult for them to understand. However, the physical and emotional abuse seem to be what led those who could understand the story from being able to empathize with the characters. Several participants also did not understand the ending of “Desiree’s Baby.” While this was not due to the language in the text, the somewhat ambiguous ending left several participants confused as to what really took place.

Short Story Reflection Responses for Internal Empathy

Seven of the 12 who submitted reflections for the stories “Cathedral” and “Brownies” showed internal empathy. Seven of the 11 who submitted reflections for “Sweat” also showed internal empathy. Eight of 12 participants who submitted reflections for “Desiree’s Baby” showed internal empathy. The total average percentage of internal empathy for “Cathedral” was 23.40%; the total average for “Brownies” was

30.20%; the total average percentage for “Sweat” was 26.04%; and the total average percentage for “Desiree’s Baby” was 21.45% (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.10

Percentage of Internal Empathy in Reflection Responses for Short Stories

Participant	Cathedral	Sweat	Desiree's Baby	Brownies
VW	39.17%	--	--	28.41%
KT	17.81%	--	--	51.71%
MG	10.83%	18.28%	7.61%	32.48%
GD	9.52%	13.67%	20.59%	16.97%
LH	--	10.35%	--	12.05%
LC	--	31.09%	--	26.06%
KS	39.27%	46.26%	5.03%	43.73%
GB	27.66%	40.78%	47.28%	--
RO	19.55%	--	31.25%	--
MJD	--	21.9%	--	--
MS	--	--	11%	--
BG	--	--	14.6%	--
JVA	--	--	34.29%	--
Average when Present	23.40%	26.05%	21.46%	30.20%

Examples of internal empathy from “Cathedral” reflections discussed how participants felt or would feel in the same situation as the character, as well their own past experiences that felt comparable to those of the narrator. For instance, one participant said,

If I were in the same situation as the narrator, I don’t think I would have been so judgmental right off the bat. I may have been uncomfortable with having a blind man in my house, but only because I wouldn’t know how exactly I am supposed to behave around him. (VW)

Another participant reported,

I could feel the overall discomfort of having some stranger in my house that I suddenly feel forced to entertain. I have social anxiety, and just reading about this sort of situation made me feel uncomfortable. Even thinking that the husband was a jerk, I suddenly found myself relating to him more because of this awkward situation. (KT)

While another said,

I think the narrator and I are alike in some ways, but quite different in others. He reminds me of myself in middle school and high school. I had the same attitude of isolationism and an inability to make genuine friendships with people. For me, that stemmed from anxieties about being mistreated. (MG)

Participants who showed internal empathy for “Cathedral” either understood the narrator’s actions based on their own similar experiences or thought about how they would respond if in a similar situation.

Participant’s internal empathy in their reflections on “Brownies” also examined the lifestyle of the characters in comparison to their own, while others expressed dismay with character choices based on the participants’ own experiences. One participant, comparing lifestyles, said that the characters “lives and culture differ from mine in a lot of ways . . . I am not Black, or a girl, so my experiences are much different than [the characters]” (GD). However, they continued by saying, “[s]ome of the similarities include being raised around racial tension and racism, having unjustified assumptions

about people who are different from me, and being raised in the South, so I understand a lot of the emotions that [were] going in the story” (GD). Another participant explained,

I was shocked at the behavior of the characters even after learning that the troop was a brownies group that had learning difficulties and were still made fun of.

This touched a nerve with me as I have a younger sister struggling with Asperger’s that experiences bullying from her Indian classmates. (LH)

A third participant stated that the story

made me think of growing up and the prejudices that I was surrounded by or heard around me, and how as I have grown up I have developed an awareness of the origins of those prejudices and biases. And that awareness has helped me to expand my perception of people and their behavior. (LC)

Like “Cathedral,” the internal empathy in the reflections for “Brownies” was exhibited through discussions of commonalities such as growing up around racism, developing awareness of personal thoughts on racial issues, and/or seeing others being discriminated against because of race or disabilities.

Reflections on “Sweat” that showed internal empathy included discussions about the protagonist’s, Delia, circumstances and how the participant could or could not relate to being in the same position. One participant said,

what sets Delia and me apart is our circumstances. As a white, middle-class woman, I can’t even begin to imagine her life, especially given the time era.

Compound that with experience of physical abuse, and her situation is extremely foreign to me. However, there have been times where pressure has lead me to

snap at people, as [the female protagonist] did. Sometimes pressure mounts and things build one on top of the other. . . . You find yourself getting irrationally frustrated and saying things you may come to regret, or thing you should've said long ago. That's typical of my life, so I really identify with [the female protagonist] in that respect. (MG)

Another claimed,

I do feel a strong connection with [the female protagonist] and I feel that our cultures are close enough to spark a strong empathy [for] her situation. I grew up in a series of apartments in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and I have encountered my fair share of abusive men. The first was a boyfriend...who was never physically violent, but put me down, threatened me, and controlled me enough to greatly impact how I saw the world for many years. The second . . . is the man my mom married who greatly reminds me of this character. The hatefulness, sullenness, and contradictory nature of the two practically matches. Actually, that match could be the reason for my intense anger at this character in the story. I experienced a great deal of frustration with that particular relationship, and this story seems to be an emphasized version of similar (although slightly different) events. (GB)

The internal empathy exhibited in the reflections for “Sweat” carried the same sentiment as the reflections for “Cathedral” and “Brownies.” Participants discussed being in similar situations, or knowing others in similar situations, and the feeling of realizing what is taking place without any real way to control it or change it.

Most of the internal empathy found in the reflections for “Desiree’s Baby” focused on Armand’s actions (MG and MS), relationships, and cultural differences between the participant and the story. One participant stated, “I cannot say how I would act if I were to learn that child was not mine” (KS). While a second participant said “how can I apply [the situation of the story] to my own past, present, and future judgments. . . I personally believe that relationships with those in a community, friendships, and family are some of the most important treasures on this planet” (GB). Another reported that the type of lifestyle and culture in which this story takes place are completely different from my own. I live over 150 years after the Civil War, which ended the type of lifestyle depicted in this story. . . . I also don’t live in a society with as strict of a class system. The only similarity I can think of is that I feel a lot of what [the characters] feel. I can understand falling in love, and fear, and desperation. (GD)

The time period of “Desiree’s Baby,” like that of “Sweat,” caused some participants to feel a bit more removed from the story. However, the internal empathy displayed in the reflections for this story focused on the emotional relationships and not understanding how one could turn their back on family or loved ones.

Discussion of Short Story Reflection Responses for Internal Empathy

The internal empathy seen in the short story reflections involved quite a bit of comparison of events in the story to experiences the participants have had, as well as a discussion about what the participant would do if in a similar situation. For most participants, similar to what was seen from the results of the recorded external empathy,

“Brownies” led to the greatest levels of internal empathy. The use of children as the main characters seemed to create an understanding for the participants that allowed them to compare how they behaved as children, and the pressure they felt from their peers to conform. The second story that elicited internal empathy was “Sweat.” Although not many participants were able to understand the story, those who did reflect upon it discussed abusive situations they experienced or situations they knew about from a personal friend who experienced similar domestic abuse. The final two stories, “Cathedral” and “Desiree’s Baby,” did not seem to elicit as much internal empathy from the participants. Several participants focused on Armand’s treatment of Desiree in “Desiree’s Baby,” discussing how they would have felt if in a similar situation. However, the majority reported that they could not imagine a partner telling their spouse to leave and take their child because of race. This type of discussion, while briefly focused on the participant, often held more external empathy, focusing on the choices the characters made in the story. Similarly, most of the discussions about “Cathedral” that exhibited internal empathy often shifted focus from discussing how the participant would feel in a similar situation to a discussion with more external empathy that focused on the reason behind the characters actions.

DIT Results

Control Group

Overall, there were statistical changes from the pre-DIT assessment to the post-DIT assessment for the control group in every category with the exception of the reported scores for the Humanitarian/Liberalism variable. As a whole, the control group had a

1.66% change from pre- to post-DIT in Stages 2 and 3, or the Personal Interest Stage that predicts if the participant prefers a “direct advantage to the actor and on the fairness of simple exchanges of favor for favor,” as well as on “the good or evil intentions of the parties, on the party’s concern for maintaining friendships and good relationships, and maintaining approval” (Bebeau & Thoma, 2003, p. 18 - 19). The control group had a -0.37% change from the pre- to post-DIT in Stage 4, or the Maintaining Norms Stage that “represents the proportion of items selected that appeal to maintaining the existing legal system, maintaining existing roles and formal organizational structure” (Bebeau & Thoma, 2003, p. 19). The overall change in the P score, or Postconventional score, which represents the participants’ preference for “organizing a society by appealing to consensus-producing procedures (such as abiding by majority vote), insisting on due process (giving everyone his day in court), and safeguarding minimal basic rights, and organizing social arrangements and relationships in terms of intuitively appealing ideas” (Bebeau & Thoma, 2003, p. 19) had a -0.187% change from pre- to post-DIT. As a whole, the group had a 0.11% change from pre- to post-DIT for the Antisocial category which “represents considerations that reflect an anti-establishment attitude” and “fault existing authorities and ‘the establishment’ for being hypocritical and inconsistent with its own rationale” (Bebeau & Thoma, 2003, p.26). Interestingly, there was no change from pre- to post-DIT for any of the participants in the control group for the Humanitarian/Liberalism category which is a “proxy for a humanitarian liberal perspective on moral issues” (Bebeau & Thoma, 2003, p. 23) (see Table 4.11).

Table 4.11
Pre and Post DIT Results for Control Group

Participant	Stage2/3		Stage 4		P Score		N2		Type		HumLib		Antisoc	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
CB	30	50	28.33	11.67	36.67	30	36.6	30.75	6	2	4	4	3	4
GC	23.33	6.67	46.67	53.33	30	38.33	17.31	40.75	4	4	1	1	0	1
CE	10	13.33	33.33	30	56.67	56.67	55.53	61.39	7	7	2	2	0	0
SQ	40	21.67	31.67	55	26.67	20	27.58	27.94	2	4	3	3	1	1
MD	31.67	23.33	30	43.33	26.67	28.33	32.01	31.95	2	5	2	2	5	2
SG	15	23.33	61.67	43.33	18.33	28.33	28.2	37.46	4	4	2	2	0	0
TN	23.33	30	6.67	10	43.33	33.33	40.59	30.4	6	6	4	4	9	14
MH	13.33	23.33	31.67	18.33	35	43.33	36.26	47.38	6	7	2	2	9	6
ET	31.67	41.67	41.67	43.33	21.67	15	24.25	17.71	3	3	2	2	0	0

Individually, six participants (CB, CE, SG, TN, MH, and ET) scored higher on the post-DIT for Personal Interest Schema score, indicating an increase for their preference of the personal interest of the actor and individual relationships, while three participants (GC, SQ, and MD) scored lower from pre- to post-DIT indicating a decrease in this preference (see Figure 4.1).

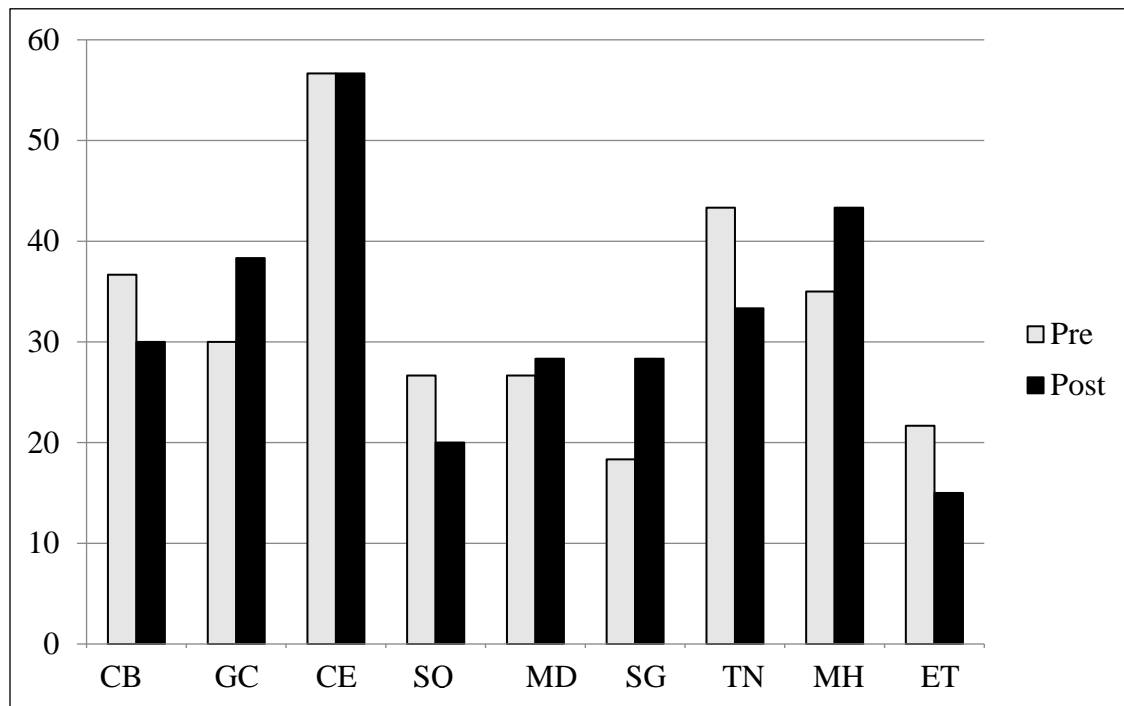


Figure 4.1
Pre and Post DIT Results for Control Group for Personal Interest Schema

Five participants (GC, SQ, MD, TN, and ET) scored higher on their post-DIT Maintaining Norms score, indicating a higher preference for maintaining laws and social norms over the personal interest of the individual. The remaining four participants (CB, CE, SG, and MH) scored lower in this category, indicating a lower preference for maintaining society norms than what they reported on their pre-DIT (see Figure 4.2).

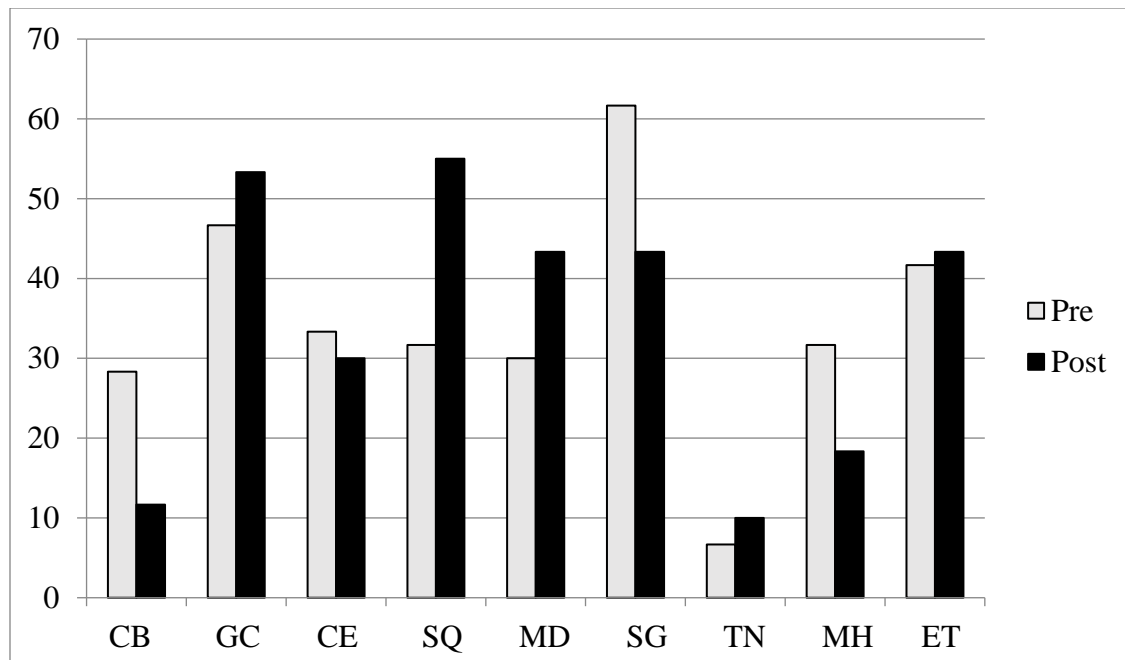


Figure 4.2
Pre and Post DIT Results for Control Group for Norms Score

The Postconventional score for all but one participant (CE) changed from pre- to post-DIT. Four participants (GC, MD, SG, and MH) scored higher on their post-DIT, indicating a higher preference for society organized based on majority rule, due process, and basic right. While, four participants (CB, SQ, TN, and ET) scored lower in this category on their post-DIT compared to their pre-DIT scores (see Figure 4.3).

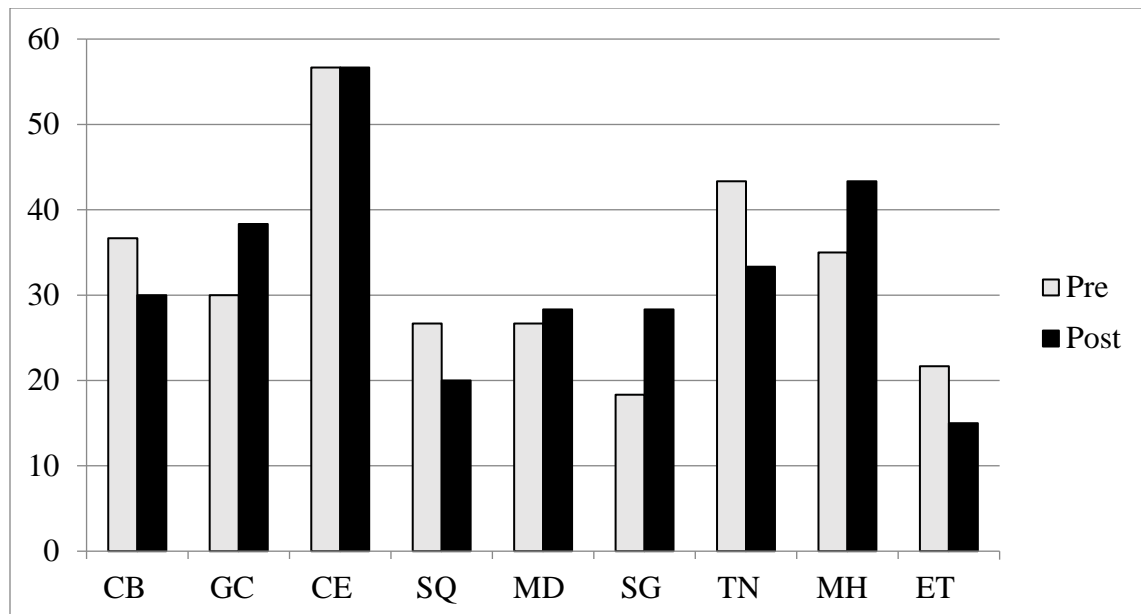


Figure 4.3

Pre and Post DIT Results for Control Group for Postconventional Score

The Type Indicator score remained the same from pre- to post-DIT for four participants. This indicates that they had no change in their predominant preference, nor a change in their profile of being either transitional or consolidated (GC, CE, SG, TN, and ET). One participant was categorized as a Type-6 on their pre-DIT, indicating that they were predominantly focused on Postconventional schema but transitional, while their post-DIT score placed them in the Type-2 category, indicating that they were predominant in personal interests schema, but still transitional (CB). For the pre-DIT, a second participant score also placed them in the Type-2 category, but their post-DIT score showed their preference to be that of Type-4, or predominant in maintaining norms schema and consolidated (SQ). A third participant also scored in the Type-2 category for their pre-DIT, but scored in the Type-5 category, or having a predominant preference for maintaining norms and transitional, but showing a secondary preference for

postconventional schema (MD). The final participant to show a change in Type Indicator scored a Type-6 on their pre-DIT, but then scored in the Type-7 category for their post-DIT, indicating that they were predominantly in favor of postconventional schema and consolidated (MH) (see Figure 4.4).

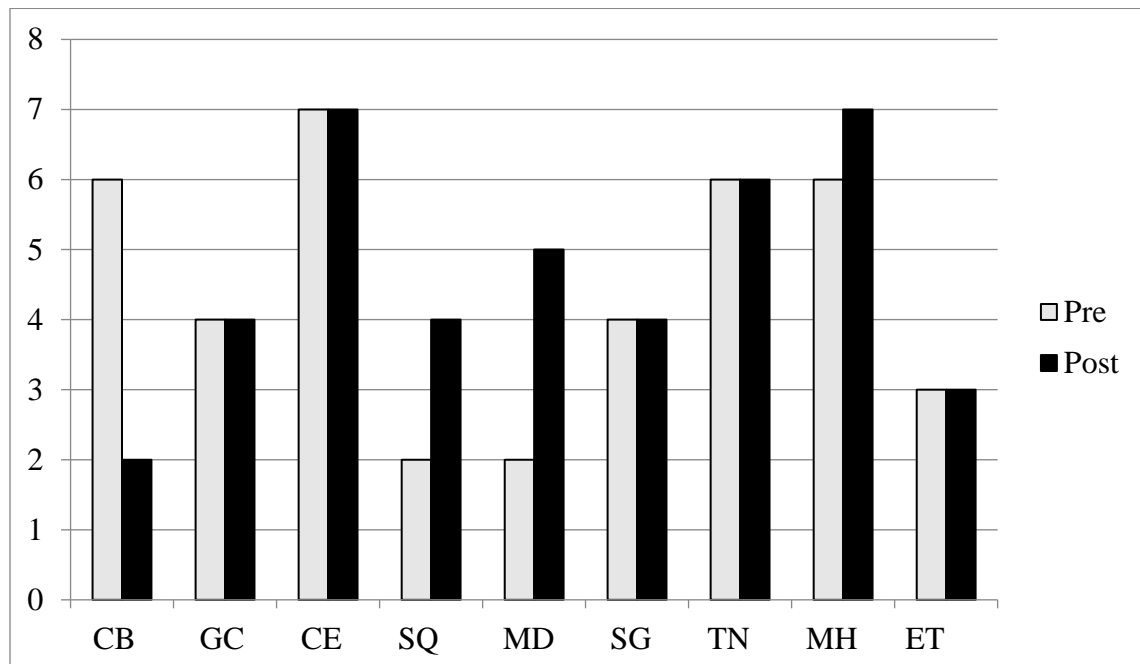


Figure 4.4
Pre and Post DIT Results for Control Group for Type Indicator Score

Three participants (CE, SG, and ET) showed no tendencies towards having an anti-establishment attitude in either the pre- or post-DIT. One participant (SQ) had no change in antisocial tendencies from pre- to post-DIT. Two participants (CB, GC, and TN) showed an increase in tendencies towards an anti-establishment attitude in their post-DIT score in comparison to their pre-DIT score. The remaining two participants (MD and MH) showed a decrease in tendencies towards an anti-establishment attitude in their post-DIT score compared to their pre-DIT score (see Figure 4.5).

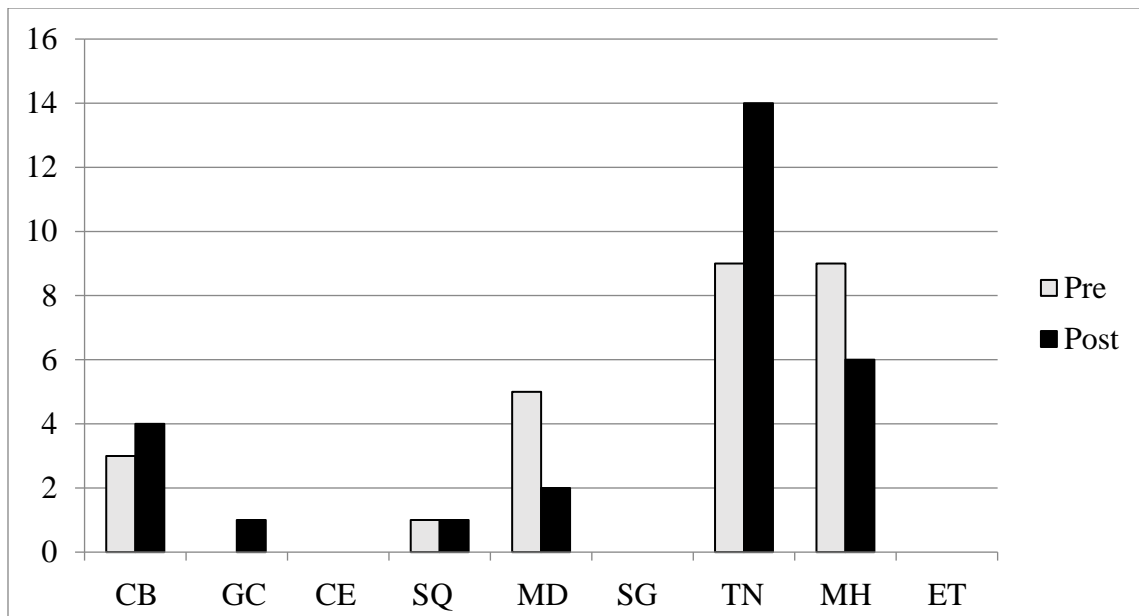


Figure 4.5
Pre and Post DIT Results for Control Group for Antiestablishment Attitude Score

Test Group

Overall, there were statistical changes from the pre-DIT assessment to the post-DIT assessment for the test group in every category. As a whole, the test group had a -2.5% change from pre- to post-DIT in Stages 2 and 3, or the Personal Interest Stage, that predicts if the participant prefers a “direct advantage to the actor and on the fairness of simple exchanges of favor for favor,” as well as on “the good or evil intentions of the parties, on the party’s concern for maintaining friendships and good relationships, and maintaining approval” (Bebeau & Thoma, 2003, p. 18 - 19). The test group had a 3.61% change from the pre- to post-DIT in Stage 4, or the Maintaining Norms Stage that “represents the proportion of items selected that appeal to maintaining the existing legal system, maintaining existing roles and formal organizational structure” (Bebeau & Thoma, 2003, p. 19). The overall change in the P score, or Postconventional score, which

represents the participants preference for “organizing a society by appealing to consensus-producing procedures (such as abiding by majority vote), insisting on due process (giving everyone his day in court), and safeguarding minimal basic rights, and organizing social arrangements and relationships in terms of intuitively appealing ideas” (Bebeau & Thoma, 2003, p. 19) had a -3.75% change from pre- to post-DIT. As a whole, the group had a 1.66% change from pre- to post-DIT for the Antisocial category which “represents considerations that reflect an anti-establishment attitude” and “fault existing authorities and ‘the establishment’ for being hypocritical and inconsistent with its own rationale” (Bebeau & Thoma, 2003, p.26). The Humanitarian/Liberalism category which is a “proxy for a humanitarian liberal perspective on moral issues” (Bebeau & Thoma, 2003, p. 23), showed a 0.583% change from the pre- to post-DIT (see Table 4.12).

Table 4.12
Pre and Post DIT Results for Test Group

Participant	Stage2/3		Stage 4		P Score		N2		Type		HumLib		Antisoc	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
VW	25	23.33	18.33	38.33	56.67	35	49.12	36.06	6	5	3	2	0	0
KT	46.67	50	18.33	23.33	25	16.67	20.72	15.89	2	2	4	5	6	6
MG	15	20	26.67	31.67	50	38.33	53.64	48.96	7	7	3	3	4	6
MS	10	6.67	23.33	36.67	65	53.33	64.36	61.16	7	7	1	3	1	2
GD	28.33	38.33	28.33	36.67	43.33	25	41.48	30.99	6	2	4	3	0	0
BG	30	18.33	40	58.33	28.33	23.33	19.7	10.5	3	4	3	3	0	0
MJD	33.33	18.33	21.67	25	36.67	48.33	43.55	46.9	6	6	3	3	0	0
LH	40	46.67	23.33	6.67	33.33	31.67	19.11	19.93	2	2	5	5	2	7
JV	16.67	15	30	18.33	40	43.33	44.29	41.7	6	6	3	5	0	6
LC	28.33	21.67	21.67	18.33	46.67	50	51.58	52.2	6	6	2	3	2	6
GB	20	20	31.67	33.33	48.33	46.67	55.12	56	7	7	1	1	0	0
KS	31.67	20	31.67	26.67	26.67	50	36.35	49.01	3	6	3	4	4	2
RO	30	26.67	25	30	38.33	31.67	31.03	41.38	6	6	2	4	3	7

Individually, four participants (KT, MG, GD, and LH) scored higher on the post-DIT for Personal Interest Schema score, indicating an increase for their preference of the personal interest of the actor and individual relationships, while eight participants (VW, MS, BG, MJD, JV, KC, KS, and RO) scored lower from pre- to post-DIT indicating a decrease in this preference. One participant (GB) showed no change in their preference from pre- to post-DIT (see Figure 4.6).

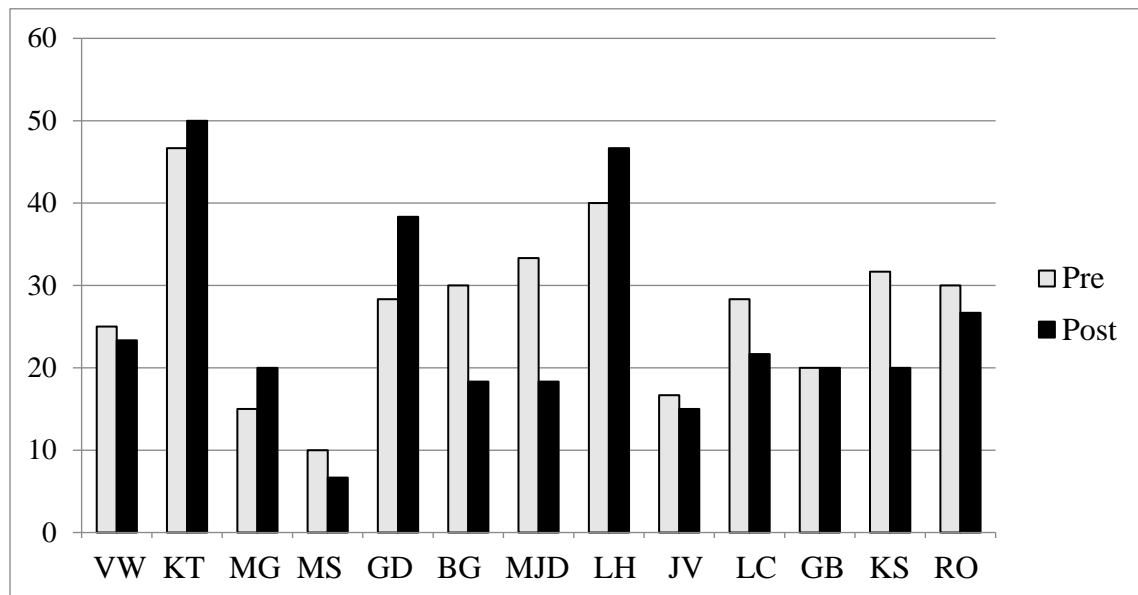


Figure 4.6
Pre and Post DIT Results for Test Group for Personal Interest Schema

Nine participants (VW, KT, MG, MS, GD, BG, MJD, GB, and RO) scored higher on their post-DIT Maintaining Norms score, indicating a higher preference for maintaining laws and social norms over the personal interest of the individual. The remaining four participants (LH, JV, LC, and JS) scored lower in this category, indicating a lower preference for maintaining society norms than what they reported on their pre-DIT (see Figure 4.7).

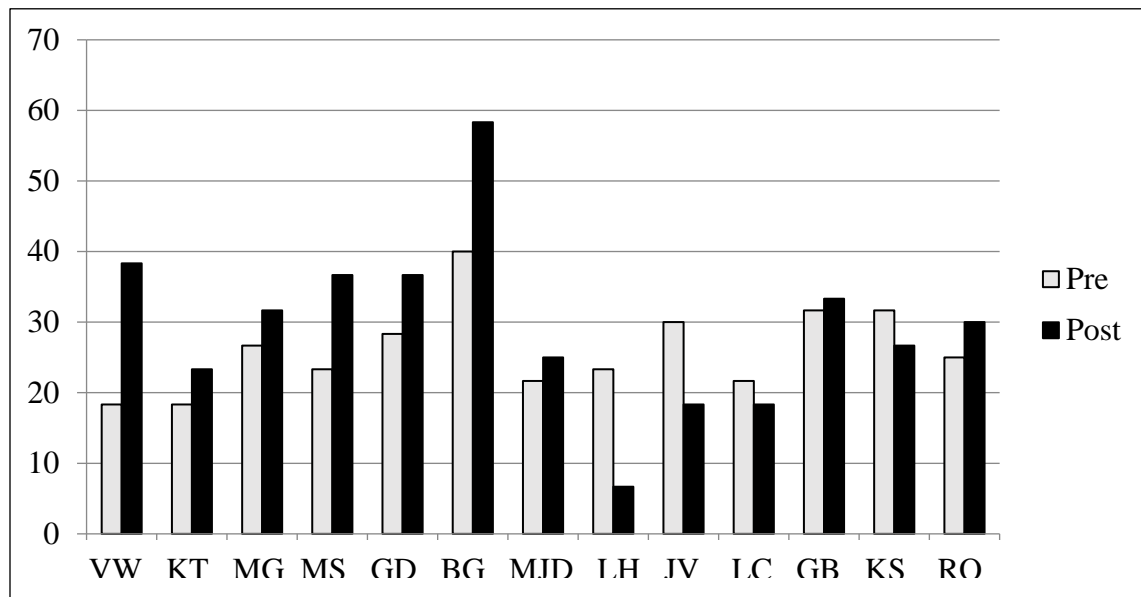


Figure 4.7

Pre and Post DIT Results for Test Group for Maintaining Norms Score

The Postconventional score for four participants (MJD, JV, LC, and KS) was higher on their post-DIT than their pre-DIT, indicating a higher preference for society organized based on majority rule, due process, and basic right. The remaining nine participants (VW, KT, MG, MS, GD, BG, LH, GB, and RO) scored lower in this category on their post-DIT compared to their pre-DIT scores (see Figure 4.8).

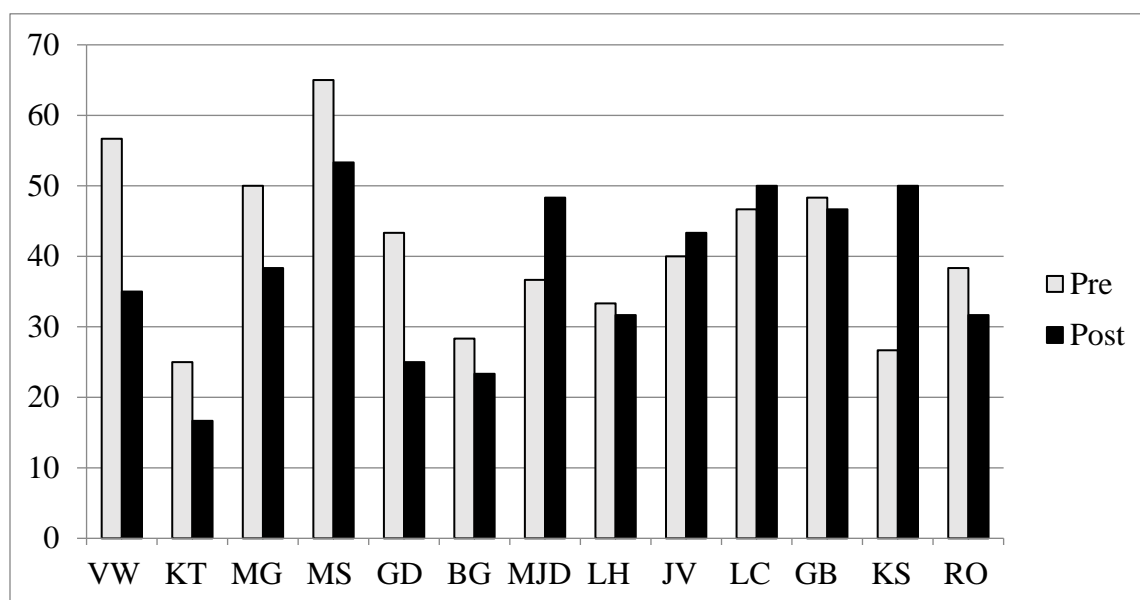


Figure 4.8
Pre and Post DIT Results for Test Group for Postconventional Score

The Type Indicator score remained the same from pre- to post-DIT for nine participants (KT, MG, MS, MJD, LH, JV, LC, GB, and RO). This indicates that they had no change in their predominant preference, nor a change in their profile of being either transitional or consolidated. One participant (VW) to show change was categorized as Type-6 on their pre-DIT, indicating that their pre-DIT classified them as predominant in postconventional schema, but transitional, while their post-DIT score placed them in the Type-5 category, indicating that they were predominant in maintaining norms schema and transitional, but with postconventional secondary schema. For the pre-DIT, a second participant's (BG) score placed them in the Type-3 category, indicating they scored predominantly in maintaining norms schema, but transitional with postconventional schema as their secondary preference, but their post-DIT score showed their preference to

be that of Type-4, or predominant in maintaining norms schema and consolidated. A third participant (KS) also scored in the Type-3 category for their pre-DIT, but scored as a Type-6 in the post-DIT (see Figure 4.9).

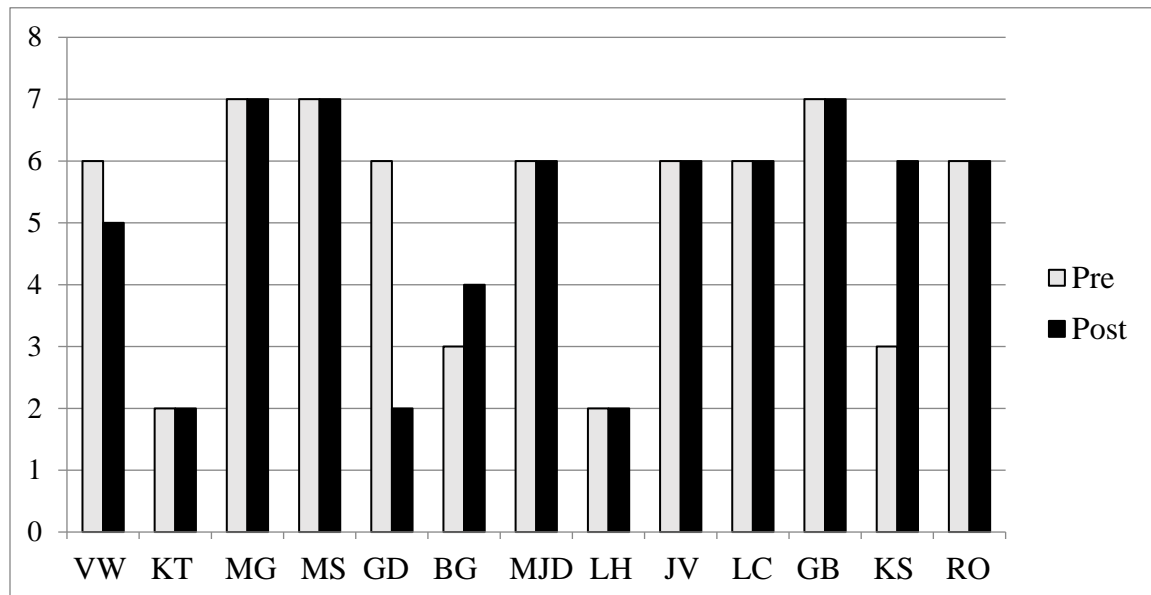


Figure 4.9
Pre and Post DIT Results for Test Group for Type Indicator Score

Five participants (VW, GD, BG, MJD, and GB) showed no tendencies towards having an anti-establishment attitude in either the pre- or post-DIT. One participant (KT) had no change in antisocial tendencies from pre- to post-DIT. Six participants (MG, MS, LH, JV, LC, and RO) showed an increase in tendencies towards an anti-establishment attitude in their post-DIT score in comparison to their pre-DIT score. One participant (KS) showed a decrease in tendencies towards an anti-establishment attitude in their post-DIT score compared to their pre-DIT score (see Figure 4.10).

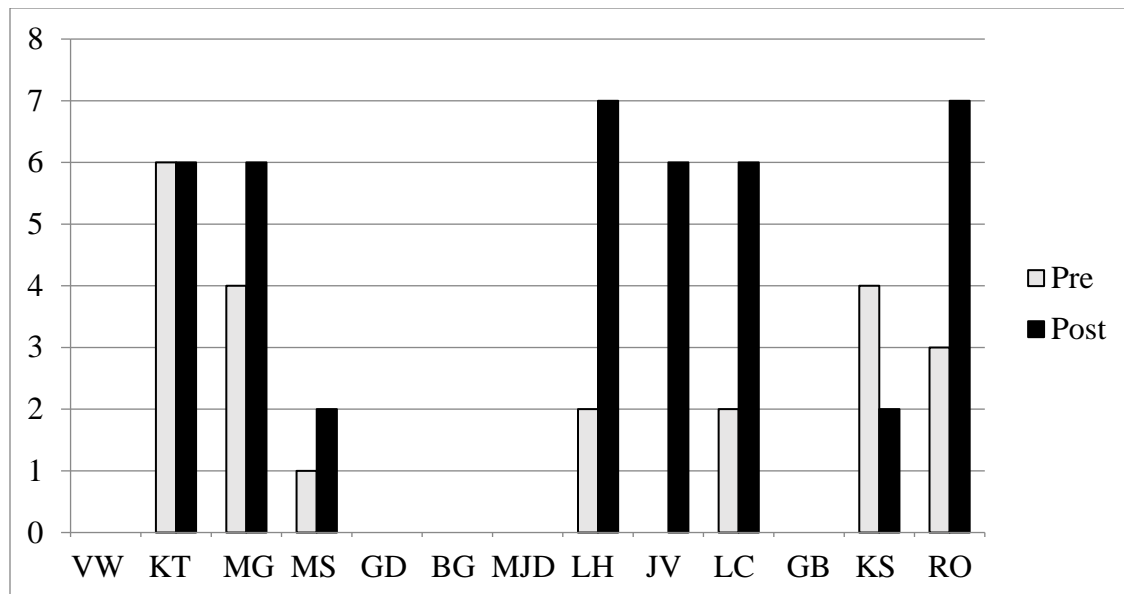


Figure 4.10
Pre and Post DIT Results for Test Group for Antiestablishment Attitude Score

Unlike the control group, the test group did show change in the reported scores for the Humanitarianism/Liberalism category, indicating no change in their perspectives on moral issues in regard to humanitarian liberalism. While five participants (MG, BG, MJD, LH, and GB) showed no change, six participants (KT, MS, JV, LC, KS, and RO) scored higher on their post-DIT than their pre-DIT; with the remaining two participants (VW and GD) scoring lower on the post-DIT than their pre-DIT (see Figure 4.11).

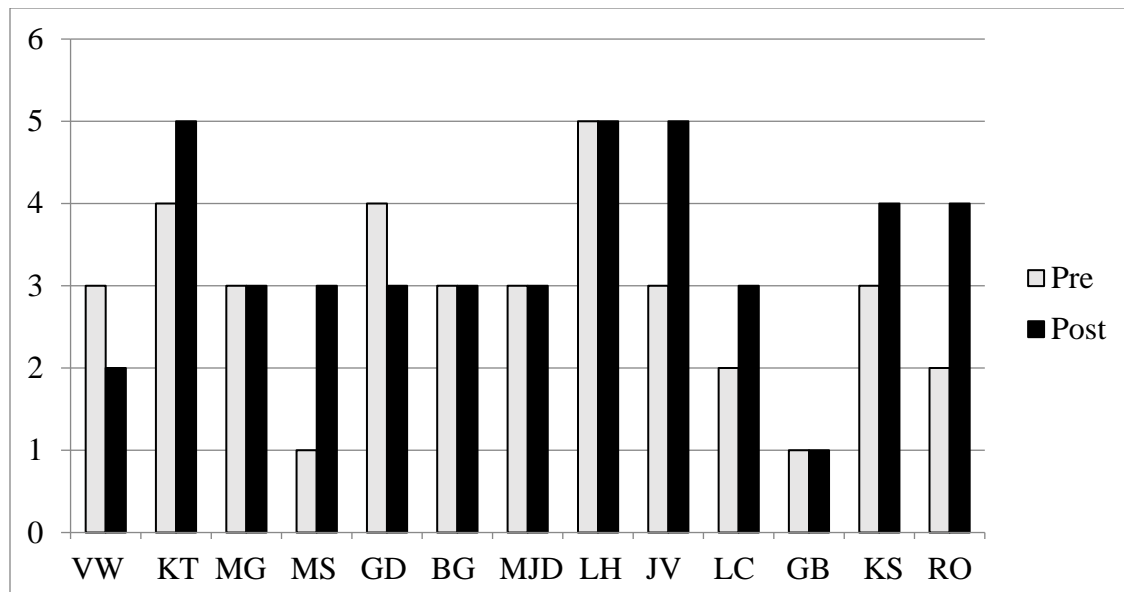


Figure 4.11
Pre and Post DIT Results for Test Group for Humanitarianism/Liberalism Score

Discussion

The test group had the most change from pre- to post-DIT in each category in comparison to the control group, with the exception of the Type Indicator. I do not feel that the DIT report specifically answers the questions asked in this dissertation. However, that the reported results do show change from pre- to post-DIT and that the most change occurred in the test group indicates that the test group was more likely to exhibit change in their post-DIT responses from those given in the pre-DIT than the control group.

The control group's score for the Personal Interest category had the most change from pre- to post-DIT. The reported scores suggest that this group had fewer tendencies towards the personal interest of individuals at the time of the post-DIT than they did during the pre-DIT. The test group's score for the Postconventional category had the

largest amount of variation from pre- to post-DIT for their group. For both groups, the Humanitarianism/Liberalism scores reported the least amount of change from pre- to post-DIT, with the control group exhibiting no change at all in this category. The reported scores indicate that the control group had no change in their thoughts on moral issues, whereas the test group exhibited slightly higher tendencies in this category. The reported scores for the Type Indicator reflect the above scores in that the majority of the test group's scores that indicate they primarily support Postconventional thinking. In comparison, the control group's Type Indicator scores indicate that they are more likely to support maintaining social norms, personal interests, and then Postconventional thinking.

CHAPTER V

FINAL DISCUSSION

Summary

Empathy is well into its 15 minutes of fame as a buzz word used by celebrities, professionals, and the media. While most who encounter this word have an instinctive understanding of what it means, how to increase it and use it to produce more meaningful communication is not as easily understood. Without empathy for others and empathy for ourselves, properly communicating our ideas, sharing our thoughts, and explaining the importance of an issue can fall flat or lead to misunderstandings.

Composition classes provide multiple tools and resources for student writers to improve their researching and writing skills, but there is a hole in the conversation about audience awareness, how to understand who they are what is required to communicate properly with them. As well, there is a hole in the conversation about understanding the purpose behind the purpose of writing, or a deeper understanding of what we think and feel about a subject and how it impacts us. This dissertation attempts to help fill that hole and add more understanding to how empathy can be increased. More specifically, the purpose of this study is to determine if there is a way to build empathy through reading and reflection. Twenty-two students from Texas Woman's University participated in the three-stage, semester long study. The first stage of the study asked participants to

complete a DIT to assess their level of empathy at the beginning of the study, as well as response to a reflection prompt that asked them to discuss their thoughts and feelings about reading and writing. The second stage of the study consisted of both the test and control group receiving a short story to read every two weeks for eight weeks. The participants from the test group were also asked to write a reflection after completing each reading based on a provided set of questions. The third stage of the study required the participants to respond to and submit another reflection based on the same questions from stage one, as well as complete the DIT again. The data from these reflections and the DIT help answer the two questions posed at the beginning of this dissertation: What, if any, impact does reading literature and reflecting upon that reading have on the level of empathy for others? What, if any, impact does reading literature and reflecting upon that reading have on empathy for the self?

Strengths and Limitations

There are several strengths for this current study. The small, but diverse, group of participants represent a range of disciplines in which they are studying. While most of the participants are considered traditional students, non-traditional students were also represented in the group. The questions used throughout the study remained consistent, allowing each participant from the test group to become comfortable writing the reflections they were asked to submit. The submitted responses allowed for both quantitative and qualitative analysis of empathy in each writing sample. As well, the DIT provided a quantifiable look at the level of empathy for each participant at the beginning and end of the study.

There are also several limitations in this study, the first being the number of participants to volunteer for and complete the study. While a large amount of data was produced from these participants' responses, there was not enough participation to make this anything but a pilot study. The second limitation is that the participants were only from TWU and not students from different campus or different universities. The third issue is the use of only two groups. Again, the data produced from these groups seems reliable and answers the research questions; however, using a third group of participants who only complete stages one and three would have provided even more insight into the effect of reading and writing reflection on empathy levels.

Another issue is the way the study itself was conducted and the amount of time requested of the participants. Instead of asking for volunteers to participate, this study should have been conducted as part of the curriculum for a FYC class. By conducting this study in a class setting, I think the length of the study would not have been an issue nor would participation be so low. As it is, asking volunteer participants to remain in and respond to a study that spans the length of a semester may have been too much. While those who volunteered to participant would not have been enough for this to be a full study, I do think the amount of participants to finish would have been higher if the study was shorter.

Finally, I do not think that using the DIT is a necessary measure for this study. While the data it produced is helpful and adds support to my claims by showing (as predicted) a greater change in what was reported from the beginning of the study to that of what was reported at the end in the test group as compared to the control group, it does

not specifically answer the questions posed in this dissertation. Instead, the data produced from the responses to the reflection questions that I created is more than enough evidence that reading and writing reflections does add to an individual's level of empathy. That the DIT is a measure of moral judgment is a step beyond what this study was examining. While empathy and moral judgment go hand-in-hand, moral judgment occurs after the empathetic instance. Because this action takes place after the empathetic instance, the information provided from the DIT is still valid (the participant had to take an empathetic stance in order to make a moral judgment), but the data produced goes beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Implications

While increased empathy from reading has been proven in numerous studies, this study answers questions that have not been examined before. Specifically, no study has examined the impact on empathy from writing reflection after reading has taken place. Empathy can be found in every writing sample submitted for this study, including the pre-reflection samples. However, both the control and test group showed more instances of empathy in their post-reflections than their pre-reflections. All participants were made aware of the focus of the study and were told what they would be asked to do for each stage therein; however, the pre-reflections were created before being exposed to the short story reading. I think this may contribute to why both groups scored lower for the internal empathy for the Stage 1 pre-reflection in comparison to their scores for the Stage 3 post-reflection. This outcome, an increase in empathy seen in the data for the final stage of the

study, was expected based on the previous studies based on Transportation Theory and reading for empathy that were cited earlier in this dissertation.

Students, in general, seem to struggle with inserting themselves in their writing. I do not know if this an attempt to remain focused on the subject of their writing, an attempt to sound, from their perspective, academic in their writing while allowing their sources to inform their claims, or from trying to follow a rule prescribed to them at some point about needing to write in the third person. This is not to say that students are coached to approach writing without empathy, but they often remove themselves from their writing, thus removing the potential for more internal empathy in their work. I do know, at least from work produced by students in my classes, that rarely students mention themselves or their own thoughts in their work. I think this is a large factor in the amount of empathy seen in the pre-reflections compared to that in the post-reflections.

Beyond the outside variables (such as professional and personal growth that takes place during a semester) that may account for some of the changes seen from the pre- to post-reflection, I think familiarity with the work required for the study, as well as my role as investigator, may have influenced some of the findings. Similar to students in a classroom becoming more comfortable with the instructor and what is expected of them and their work as a semester advances, I attribute some of the increase in empathy in post-reflections for both groups to participants becoming more at ease with me and their participation in the study.

Over the course of the semester, each participant received emails directly from me with personalized greetings, the readings, and the phrase “Happy Reading” as part of my

closing signature line. This type of familiarization could contribute to participants feeling more at ease talking about themselves and their experiences compared to our initial meeting in which they had paperwork to fill out, an assessment to complete, and a prompt to respond to. While they completed the same reflection and assessment at the end of the study, they were more familiar with me and the material they were being asked to complete than when they began the study. This is not uncommon behavior during the course of a semester. For most instructors and students, the first few class meetings focus on administrative business, including reviewing the syllabus and signing acknowledgements of awareness for class policies. Once initial paper work and rules have been established, instructors and students then begin to grow their working relationship as the semester continues. This is very much the same pattern I experienced throughout the course of this study, and what I assume most of my participants experienced.

The amount of empathy, external and internal, for both groups for the pre-reflection was relatively similar. By the end of the study, every participant had read the short stories, thus the potential for added context surrounding the reasoning for the questions on the reflection prompt. At the beginning of the study, participants were just answering questions without much awareness for the purpose of them beyond doing it for a study on empathy; during the post-reflection, participants were answering questions for a study that required them to read about others prior to creating that reflection. Oftentimes, it is easier to write in broad statements that do not include discussion about the individual writing those statements, which seems to be what took place in the pre-

reflection. In contrast, the post-reflection responses were much more focused on individuals and provided deeper conversations about the self and the other.

The control group exhibited the least amount of growth in external empathy from the pre-reflection to the post-reflection. While there was more external empathy seen in the post-reflection, I think this number did not grow as much in comparison to the amount of internal empathy in the post-reflection because of the influence of reading the short stories throughout stage two of the study. By reading the short stories in stage two, the control group seemed to gain awareness of how they were influenced by others. In a sense, they showed more awareness about themselves through the realization of the other and the other's actions, but the self remained the subject more often than the other.

On the other hand, the test group's post-reflection scores, dramatically increased in both areas. This group had the least amount of growth in internal empathy in comparison to their pre-reflection. I think there are several different reasons for this. First, by reading the stories and reflecting upon them, the test group gained experience with reflective thinking and being empathetically aware of both the other and their past or future selves. Second, the exercise of writing reflection for the short stories, with the comfort of reflective thinking, allowed them to practice exploring their thoughts and imagining themselves experiencing the world of the other. While the short story reflections cannot be used to show a change in empathy levels, the data collected from them does represent the consistent use of both external empathy and internal empathy. Third, by virtue of focusing on the other, the other's world, and the other's experience during the short story reflections, the test group was better equipped and more focused on

discussing the other in their post-reflection. Thus, the large increase in the amount of external empathy in the post-reflection.

There was also an increase in internal empathy in their post-reflections, although it was not as large as the amount of external empathy. I contribute the large amount of growth to the same factors stated above for external empathy. That internal empathy is lower than external empathy for the test group may be attributed to several factors. I think the main reason this number is lower is because of how much focus was given to the characters in the stories during the short story reflections. By and large, the submitted reflections focused on discussions about the characters. While most participants made comparisons to their personal lives or responded with the type of reactions they would have in a given situation, they were still primarily focused on the characters and that story world, or the world of the other.

As for the reading each participant completed, I do think the selected stories were foreign enough to the participants to make them critically think and reflect about the characters and events within them, as well they each took the reader through life events that were either relatable or easily understandable. Based on the responses to the short story reflection, I think a collection of fictional stories that are considered “timeless” and include specific issues found in many cultures, societies, and communities could be used, as long as the stories are not too graphic or contain too much violence. Although several participants were confused by the ending of “Desiree’s Baby,” all of the submitted reflections on the stories showed enough awareness of the characters and the events taking place in the story to infer that participants were able to empathetically understand

the characters and the overall issues within the story. While there was emotional abuse and neglect, the story did not focus on nor was it advanced by these things. “Sweat,” on the other hand, may not have been as strong of a selection as the other three short stories.

While I do think the idiomatic dialogue may have prevented some from understanding the basic plot of the story, I think the biggest reason only two participants had more than 20% external empathy in their reflection on the story was due to the graphic nature of it. The purpose of using fictional literature is to allow the *safe* transportation into a story, or transportation into a space that may be uncomfortable but only in the sense of being uncomfortable in the fictional world. The abuse seen in “Sweat,” as well as the lack of support for the protagonist by those around her, makes the story an uncomfortable space for the reader both in the fictional world and the world outside of the story.

As previously mentioned in Chapters II and III, the stories in this study were deliberately selected so not to cause the participants to feel overly sympathetic, apathetic, or any kind of disillusionment; using “Sweat” was not the best choice because it elicited too much sympathy by putting the participants in an uncomfortable space outside the world of the text. From what the participants reported, this uncomfortable feeling was too close to real life. Over half of the participants who submitted a reflection for “Sweat” scored between 21% and 47% for internal empathy because they all had experience in their own worlds with domestic abuse. In a classroom setting, the confusion at the end of “Desiree’s Baby” could be talked out, just like the vernacular in “Sweat” could be

explained. However, “Sweat” may not be the best selection for a list of works to use in an exercise to help build empathy through transportation into a story.

Directions for Future Research

At this point, the primary focus of my research is how to build empathy for others and the self through reading and writing. Further studies on this should include at least three participant groups; a test group who completes each stage of the study, a test group who completes each stage of the study less the short story reflections, and a control group who only completes stages one and two. After receiving the data produced by the DIT, it was clear that the DIT was not the best mechanism to use to collect quantifiable data for this study, because it did not answer the specific questions for this study. I do, however, think the basic idea of using a scenario-driven assessment with standardized responses could be beneficial. Based on the type of scenarios used in the DIT and the outcome of that study, I think non-fiction texts that focus on the experience of individual’s could be included in further studies. This would allow further understanding of not only reading and writing for empathy, but also more specifically how the *type* or genre of reading affects the individual.

I also think further research should develop criteria for the best types of stories to empathy through reading and reflection. While Transportation Theory emphasizes fictional literature, there is not much discussion about the specific characteristics (e.g., gender of author; social, economic, and sexual issues addressed in story; length of text; age and gender of protagonist; and setting) that might elicit more or less empathy. Similarly, the studies I suggest below, targeting individual professional fields and the

impact reading for empathy has on those specific professionals, may add to the understanding of how specific types of stories might be used for particular purposes..

As I said, there is also a large space to fill as far as how this translates to student writing for classes and in the professional world. While this study has shown that reading and writing reflection does increase empathy, it does not show change in student writing or if this skill of empathetic awareness transfers to academic and professional work. I do think incorporating reflection and more empathetic awareness in writing can translate into students producing work that is driven more by their ideas than the sources they find for their work. As well, I think student writers will be better equipped to address and make concessions within their work by this better understanding and awareness of who their audience is, why they feel a certain way on an issue, and how they consume information. Therefore, future research should include explore how the empathy develops by reading and reflecting on literature can be incorporated into the composition classroom. One clear direction for such study is to investigate whether or not increased empathy contributes to students better understanding and capitalizing on the rhetorical situation of their assignments. Also, since the “genre approach” to teaching first-year composition is very common, it offers an opportunity to study if reading other genres and using the same type of reflection as in this study has the same outcome regarding empathy and audience awareness.

Conclusion

In conclusion, an inference of the quantitative and the qualitative results points to both the control and test group having changes in empathetic awareness after completing

the study. The control group's change in empathetic levels, while small in comparison to the test group's and predictable based on previous studies of reading for empathy, are easily seen in the comparison of the quantifiable data produced from the pre- and post-reflection data, as well as the DIT results. The test group's changes in empathy level can also be gleaned from the comparison of the quantifiable data produced from the pre- and post-reflection data, but are also obvious based on the DIT report. These results are encouraging as far as being able to help students build their empathetic awareness. This type of awareness has the potential to not only aid in audience awareness, but it also has the potential to lead to better understanding of the self. This type of understanding and awareness should then translate into better communication about issues that are important to the self and delivered in a way that is accessible to the audience. Simply put, by being more empathetic, our students have the potential for being better communicators.

NOTES

¹ Throughout this dissertation I use gender-neutral pronouns, including the singular “they” and “them” for the sake of simplicity. While I grant that gender may play a part in how students respond to the stories provided, it does not factor into my study or my pedagogy. Regardless of how one identifies, my expectations of performance on classwork, or in this case work submitted for this study, is the same for all students. Therefore I did not collect any demographic data from the participants about how they identify themselves.

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APPENDIX A

Short Story Reflection Prompt

Short Story Reflection Prompt

When reading, once you've gotten a good feel for the characters and/or story, think about what you expect to happen or how you expect that/those character(s) to act.

- After you have finished reading, think about that initial expectation. Did it change? Why/How? Were you surprised? Why/How?
- What did you learn about the characters in the story? Their lives? Their culture? Their behavior?
- How might this be different than you/yours? How might it be the same? (Remember, the situations may be different, but you may have experienced something that triggered the same kind of emotions or response.)
- What did you think of the setting? Did it impact the story or the characters? If the story took place in a different setting or time, would it change the outcome? Why? What do you think would be different?
- What did you like about the story? Why? What did you not like about the story? Why?

* These are merely suggested ideas to help get you started. These are not the only things you can/have to write about, but they are a good place to start.

APPENDIX B

Recruitment Letter

Recruitment Letter

[Date]

Dear prospective participant,

I am currently recruiting participants for a study on empathy and self-awareness. The requirements for participation are:

- Must be at least 18 years-old or older
- Must be an undergraduate student-Willing to spend no more than 11 hours reading and writing throughout the [Semester and Year] semester
- Have reliable access to steady email and internet connection

If you are interested in participating, over the course of the semester, you will be asked to take a pre- and post-assessment of empathy level, to read 4 short narratives, and submit a short writing sample at the beginning and end of the research study. You may also be asked to submit 4 additional writing samples throughout the semester. Each reading should take less than an hour to complete, and each writing sample should take no longer than 45-minutes to write. Upon completion of the study, you will be entered into a drawing for one (1) of two (2) \$10.00 gift cards.

From this study you will have more experience with critical thinking and writing, as well as receiving constructive feedback to help improve your writing. You may also gain improved writing and communication skills from the reading and writing aspect of the research. Your work will help contribute to the fields of communication and composition, as well as broadening the understanding of gaining empathy through reading and empowerment through writing.

Participants will receive an email with a consent form and further instructions. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time.

I appreciate your time and look forward to working with you.

Rachael Reynolds
Lead Investigator
BA, MA, PhD Candidate
rgeary@twu.edu

There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality with any email, downloading, and internet transactions.

APPENDIX C

Consent Form

Consent Form

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Confident Voices and Shared Experiences: Empowerment through Writing, Empathy through Reading

Investigator: Rachael Reynolds, B.A., M.A., PhD Candidate (940) 898-2254
Advisor: Gretchen Busl, PhD (940) 898-2331

Dear _____,

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Rachael Reynolds. This study is not part of a class assignment, nor is it a substitute for your class. The purpose of this research is to further understand the effects of reading to build empathy and writing to empower voice.

Your participation will involve taking a pre- and post-assessment of empathy level, submitting a short writing sample at the beginning and end of the research study, and reading 4 (four) short narratives. You may also be asked to submit 4 writing samples. Each reading should take less than an hour to complete, and each writing sample should take no longer than 45-minutes to write. The total amount of time to complete this four-month research study should be no more than 11 hours.

Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. The researchers will try to prevent any problem that could happen because of this research. You should let the researchers know at once if there is a problem and they will help you. However, TWU does not provide medical services or financial assistance for injuries that might happen because you are taking part in this research.

Potential benefits

From this study you will have more experience with critical thinking and writing. You will also gain improved writing and communication skills from the reading and writing aspect of the research. Your work will help contribute to the fields of communication and composition, as well as broadening the understanding of gaining empathy through reading and empowerment through writing.

Risks and discomforts

This study is attempting to expose ways to increase empathy—or, a better understanding of others—and help the writer's voice become more empowered—or, help develop a clearer understanding and ability to communicate the ideas of the author.

However, emotional and psychological distress or discomfort may occur during the reading

Page 1 of 3

Approved by the
Texas Woman's University
Institutional Review Board
Approved: October 16, 2016
Modifications Approved:
February 2, 2017

Initials

and/or writing components of this study. You may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. If at any time you feel emotional or mental stress, discomfort, or anxiety due to the content of this study, please contact the TWU Denton campus' counseling center at West Jones Halls. They may be contacted at (940) 898-3801. You may find more information about the counseling center at: <http://www.twu.edu/counseling/>.

There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality with any email, downloading, and internet transactions, thus you will use a pseudonym on written communication, as well as being assigned a numerical code for the pre- and post-assessments of empathy levels. All electronic correspondence will take place between secure, single user, password protected email accounts which will be saved on the investigator's password protected personal computer. Collected electronic material from participants will be stored on the single user, password protected computer, and on a password protected USB storage device that only the investigator will have access to. All printed material will be stored in a locked metal filing cabinet in the investigator's private home office to which only the investigator has access to the key. All data collected from this study will be destroyed within 10 years from the end of the study.

The amount of time involved to complete the study has been explained in this document, as well as in the call for participant email. You may withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty.

Personal writing, created only for the author to read, and public writing, written work that is shared with someone other than the author, can reveal personal opinions, feelings, and emotions. To limit the possibility of embarrassment, participants will use a pseudonym on all submitted work. If at any time you feel emotional or mental stress, discomfort, or anxiety due to the content of this study, please contact the TWU Denton campus' counseling center at West Jones Halls. They may be contacted at (940) 898-3801. You may find more information about the counseling center at: <http://www.twu.edu/counseling/>.

Participation or nonparticipation in this research study will have no effect on your student status at TWU. You may withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty

Protection of confidentiality

All participant information will be made anonymous through the use of pseudonyms during the research process as well as the written stage of this study. You will select your own pseudonym (made up name) which will appear at the top of all writing samples. For the pre- and post-assessment, you will be assigned a numerical code by the investigator in order to maintain confidentiality.

Page 2 of 3

Approved by the
Texas Woman's University
Institutional Review Board
Approved: October 16, 2016
Modifications Approved:
February 2, 2017

Initials

Voluntary participation

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. Upon completion of the study, you will be entered into a drawing for one (1) of ten (10) \$10.00 gift cards.

Contact information

You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep. If you have any questions about the research study you should ask the researchers; their phone numbers are at the top of this form. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research or the way this study has been conducted, you may contact the Texas Woman's University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 940-898-3378 or via e-mail at IRB@twu.edu.

Consent

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my consent to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date: _____

There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality with any email, downloading, and internet transactions.

Approved by the
Texas Woman's University
Institutional Review Board
Approved: October 16, 2016
Modifications Approved:
February 2, 2017

Page 2 of 3

APPENDIX D

Initial Email

Initial Email

Hi [Student's First name]!

I'm following up on the interest you expressed about participating in my study, *Confident Voices and Shared Experiences: Empowerment through Writing, Empathy through Reading*. Attached is the consent form to participate in the study. In order to participate, you'll need to initial the bottom of each page and sign and date the last page. You may come to my office in [office location and number] to sign this form, or print it out and return it to my office. You may also electronically initial and sign this form and return it electronically.

After you turn in the signed consent form, our first step will be to complete the DIT empathy assessment. This assessment should take no longer than an hour to complete. We can set up an appointment when you turn in your consent form, or you can email me a time that will work for you. I'm available [day and times available], and by appointment.

Please, return your signed consent form and let me know a time we can set up an appointment to take the DIT by [due date].

You may also email any questions you may have to rgeary@twu.edu or call [office phone number].

Thank you,

Rachael Geary

Lead Investigator

There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality with any email, downloading, and internet transaction.

APPENDIX E

Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic Questionnaire

Participant Information Sheet

Required information

Name: _____

Email: _____

Alias: _____

Which Composition class are you currently taking:

☐ ENG1003 ☐ ENG1013 ☐ ENG1023

Which Composition classes have you completed:

☐ ENG1003 ☐ ENG1013 ☐ ENG1023

Optional Information

Proposed Major: _____

How many books did you read last semester that were not assigned for classes? _____

Gender: _____

Age: _____

APPENDIX F

Recruitment Email Announcement

Recruitment Email Announcement

Sent on behalf of Doctoral Candidate Rachael Reynolds, PI:

Hi!

My name is Rachael Reynolds, and I'm conducting a study on empathy and self-awareness. I am looking for undergraduate participants currently enrolled in classes for the Spring 2017 semester. You must be 18 years or older and have study access to email to be eligible. If you qualify and complete the study, you will be entered into a drawing for one (1) of ten (10) \$10.00 gift cards.

What will I be doing in this study?

If you are willing to participate, you'll be asked over the course of the semester to take a pre- and post-assessment of empathy level, read 4 short narratives, and submit a short writing sample at the beginning and end of the study. You may also be asked to submit 4 additional writing samples throughout the semester.

How long will this take?

Each reading should take less than an hour to complete, and each writing sample should take no longer than 45-minutes to write. The pre- and post-assessment should take no longer than an hour to complete, with most finishing within 30 to 45 minutes. You will have the majority of the semester to complete this.

When and where?

After the consent form is returned, you will have the option to complete this study electronically, or you can take the assessment in my office and complete the rest of the study via email. After the initial assessment and reflection are complete, I will begin to send the readings every two weeks.

Interested in participating?

Please email me at rgeary@twu.edu to receive the consent form and further instructions. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time.

If you have any questions, please contact me at rgeary@twu.edu.

I appreciate your time and look forward to working with you,

Rachael Reynolds
Lead Investigator
BA, MA, PhD Candidate

There is potential risk of loss of confidentiality with any email, downloading, and internet transactions.

APPENDIX G

Identification Number Key

Identification Number Key

First Digit: “6” for control group Pre-DIT,
“7” for control group Post-DIT
“8” for test group Pre-DIT
“9” for test group Post-DIT

Second Digit: “1” for Pre-DIT
“2” for Post-DIT

Third Digit: “1” enrolled in ENG1013
“2” enrolled in ENG1023
“3” enrolled in ENG1003
“4” completed FYC courses

Fourth Digit: 01-99 based on number of participants

Example: The fifth on the participant list, in the control, taking the Pre-DIT, who is enrolled in ENG1013 would receive “61105” as their identification number for the Pre-DIT assessment. For the post-DIT assessment, this participant would receive “71105” as their identification number.

APPENDIX H

Control Group Short Story Email

Control Group Short Story Email

Hi,

The next reading for the study, “[Short Story Title]” is attached to this email. Please read it before I send our next story on [Date].

You may email any questions you may have to rgeary@twu.edu or call [\(940\)898-2254](tel:(940)898-2254).

Happy Reading,

Rachael
Lead Investigator

There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality with any email, downloading, and internet transaction.

APPENDIX I

Test Group Short Story Email

Test Group Short Story Email

Hi,

Attached is the reading for our study and the reflection prompt is pasted below. You have until [date] to complete this reading and return the reflection for it. If you have not done so already, please send your reflection for “[story title]” to me by this [day, date].

After completing reading “[story title]” spend 30 to 45 minutes writing about the thoughts you had and the emotions you experienced while reading the story.

To help get your started:

- When reading, once you’ve gotten a good feel for the characters and/or story, think about what you expect to happen or how you expect that/those character(s) to act.
- After you have finished reading, think about that initial expectation. Did it change? Why/How? Were you surprised? Why/How?
- What did you learn about the characters in the story? Their lives? Their culture? Their behavior?
- How might this be different than you/yours? How might it be the same? (Remember, the situations may be different, but you may have experienced something that triggered the same kind of emotions or response.)
- What did you think of the setting? Did it impact the story or the characters? If the story took place in a different setting or time, would it change the outcome? Why? What do you think would be different?
- What did you like about the story? Why? What did you not like about the story? Why?

* These are merely suggested ideas to help get you started. These are not the only things you can/have to write about, but they are a good place to start.

Once you have completed this writing, please email it to: rgeary@twu.edu no later than [date]

You may also email any questions you may have to rgeary@twu.edu or call [\(940\) 898-2254](tel:(940)898-2254).

There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality with any email, downloading, and internet transactions.

APPENDIX J

Short Story Reflection Prompt

Short Story Reflection Prompt

After completing each reading please write about the thoughts you had and the emotions you experienced while reading the story.

To help get your started:

- When reading, once you've gotten a good feel for the characters and/or story, think about what you expect to happen or how you expect that/those character(s) to act.
- After you have finished reading, think about that initial expectation. Did it change? Why/How? Were you surprised? Why/How?
- What did you learn about the characters in the story? Their lives? Their culture? Their behavior?
- How might this be different than you/yours? How might it be the same? (Remember, the situations may be different, but you may have experienced something that triggered the same kind of emotions or response.)
- What did you think of the setting? Did it impact the story or the characters? If the story took place in a different setting or time, would it change the outcome? Why? What do you think would be different?
- What did you like about the story? Why? What did you not like about the story? Why?

* These are merely suggested ideas to help get you started. These are not the only things you can/have to write about, but they are a good place to start.

Once you have completed this writing, please email it to: rgeary@twu.edu

APPENDIX K

Final Stage Email

Final Stage Email

Hi!

Thank you for all your work on this study. The last steps that will need to be completed consist of taking the Defining Issues Test (DIT) empathy assessment again and submitting the final reflection.

For the DIT assessment: Please read each scenario and then select the answers that best describe how you feel or would react in the given situation. When completing the electronic version of the DIT, please make sure you included your email address and name (or alias) in the space provided and that you have completed each section. If you have any questions, you can reach me at [\(940\) 898-2254](tel:9408982254) or at rgeary@twu.edu.

To take the DIT, follow this link: <https://goo.gl/forms/JKjanifyRYU3Nb0j1>.

Once you have completed the DIT questions, please complete the final reflection. Below are questions to help guide you through it.

For the reflection, please spend some time writing about how you feel about writing and reading others work.

Think about the experiences you've had in your personal and professional life with reading.

What do you like to read? Why do you enjoy that type of reading? What don't you like to read? Why don't you like it? What do you want to gain from reading? What does reading do for you? How do you feel about reading others work? Think about the experiences you've had in your personal and professional life with writing.

What do you like to write about? What compels you to write? What don't you like to write? What don't you like to write about? How do you feel about others reading your work? How often do you revisit a piece you've written? What kind of chances, if any, do you make when you revise your work?

These are not the only questions to explore for this writing, but they can be used to help you get started. If you get stuck, answer the question "why" for each of your statements and explore the reasons behind why you feel the way you do.

These last two steps need to be completed by [date]. Once you have completed the writing, please email it to: rgeary@twu.edu You may also email any questions you may have to rgeary@twu.edu or call [\(940\) 898-2254](tel:9408982254).

Thank you!

Rachael

Lead Investigator

There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality with any email, downloading, and internet transactions.

APPENDIX L

Short Story Rubric

Short Story Rubric

Reading: Cathedral			
	0 - none	1 – partial	2 - full
Comprehension and Intentionality			
Empathy and ToM			
Self Awareness			

Reading: Sweat			
	0 - none	1 – partial	2 - full
Comprehension and Intentionality			
Empathy and ToM			
Self Awareness			

Reading: Desiree's Baby			
	0 - none	1 – partial	2 - full
Comprehension and Intentionality			
Empathy and ToM			
Self Awareness			

Reading: Brownies			
	0 - none	1 – partial	2 - full
Comprehension and Intentionality			
Empathy and ToM			
Self Awareness			

APPENDIX M

Coding Guide

Coding Guide

The following are examples of statements and phrases that are coded for “external” or “internal” empathy. Empathetic statements that focus on the other are coded as “External Empathy.” Empathetic statements that focus on the self are coded as “Internal Empathy.” While many statements begin with “I,” the statement that follows the pronoun focuses on an “other,” thus being coded as external empathy; or, the statement that follows the pronoun continues with a discussion about the self, thus being coded as internal empathy

Examples of external empathy statements:

“I don’t know how people...”
“I could see how [character] would...”
“I feel like I am escaping into a different world when...”
“it seems like [character]”
“we are influenced by [other]”
“the time of the story..”
“the location of the story..”
“if the story had been set in...”
“seeing other people’s....”
“...escape into a different reality”

Examples of internal empathy statements:

“there are times when I...”
“I always try to....”
“I enjoy ... for the escape from myself”
“...escape from my reality”
“I think what I would have...”
“In my experience...”
“similar to my own”
“if I were in the same situation...”
“I felt...”
“I had the same..”

APPENDIX N

IRB Approval Letters



Institutional Review Board
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619
940-898-3378
email: IRB@twu.edu
<http://www.twu.edu/irb.html>

DATE: October 16, 2015

TO: Ms. Rachael Geary
English, Speech & Foreign Languages

FROM: Institutional Review Board (IRB) - Denton

Re: *Approval for Confident Voices and Shared Experiences: Empowerment through Writing, Empathy through Reading (Protocol #: 18367)*

The above referenced study has been reviewed and approved at a fully convened meeting of the Denton IRB (operating under FWA00000178) on 10/16/2015. This approval is valid for one year and expires on 10/15/2016. The IRB will send an email notification 45 days prior to the expiration date with instructions to extend or close the study. It is your responsibility to request an extension for the study if it is not yet complete, to close the protocol file when the study is complete, and to make certain that the study is not conducted beyond the expiration date.

If applicable, agency approval letters must be submitted to the IRB upon receipt prior to any data collection at that agency. A copy of the approved consent form with the IRB approval stamp is enclosed. Please use the consent form with the most recent approval date stamp when obtaining consent from your participants. A copy of the signed consent forms must be submitted with the request to close the study file at the completion of the study.

Any modifications to this study must be submitted for review to the IRB using the Modification Request Form. Additionally, the IRB must be notified immediately of any adverse events or unanticipated problems. All forms are located on the IRB website. If you have any questions, please contact the TWU IRB.

cc. Dr. Genevieve West, English, Speech & Foreign Languages
Dr. Dundee Lackey, English, Speech & Foreign Languages
Graduate School



Institutional Review Board

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619
940-898-3378
email: IRB@twu.edu
<http://www.twu.edu/irb.html>

DATE: November 24, 2015

TO: Ms. Rachael Geary
English, Speech & Foreign Languages

FROM: Institutional Review Board - Denton

Re: *Notification of Approval for Modification for Confident Voices and Shared Experiences:
Empowerment through Writing, Empathy through Reading (Protocol #: 18367)*

The following modification(s) have been approved by the IRB:

Mod 1: Addition of control group, which expands the number of eligible participants from 10 to 20 with the minimum amount of eligible recruits being no less than 10. All students will do the pre- and post-assessment of empathy level, submit writing samples at the beginning and end of the study, and read the four narratives. Half of the students will complete reflections for the four narratives, and half will not.

Mod 2: Remove two of the readings and the corresponding writing prompts: Attachment 06: "How It Feels to be Colored Me";

Attachment 07: Reflection Prompt 1; Attachment 16: "From a Pueblo Indian Perspective"; and Attachment 17: Reflection Prompt 6. Removing these two readings and prompts reduces the amount of time spent on study from no more than 14 hours to no more than 11.

Mod 3: Revision of the recruitment letter to reflect above modifications. Changes are highlighted for ease of review.

Mod 4: Revision of consent form to reflect above modifications and new advisor and phone number (Gretchen Busl, PhD (940) 98-2331). Changes are highlighted for ease of review, and a clean copy is also attached.

Mod 5: Change of advisor to Dr. Gretchen Busl. Training certificate attached.

cc. Dr. Dundee Lackey, English, Speech & Foreign Languages



Institutional Review Board
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619
940-898-3378
email: IRB@twu.edu
<http://www.twu.edu/irb.html>

DATE: February 25, 2016

TO: Ms. Rachael Geary
English, Speech & Foreign Languages

FROM: Institutional Review Board - Denton

Re: *Notification of Approval for Modification for Confident Voices and Shared Experiences:
Empowerment through Writing, Empathy through Reading (Protocol #: 18367)*

The following modification(s) have been approved by the IRB:

1. Mod 1: Expanding the eligible participants from 20 to up to 100 with the minimum amount of eligible recruits being no less than 10. All students will do the pre- and post- assessment of empathy level, submit writing samples at the beginning and end of the study, and read the four narratives. 60% of the participants will complete reflections for the four narratives, and 40% will not.
2. Mod 2: Revising Consent Form. Remove "[potential participant]" from greeting line; add "_____". Remove "as well as receiving constructive feedback to help improve your writing"
3. Mod 3: Adding Participant Information Sheet to be filled out when picking up DIT.
4. Mod 4: Adding email to potential participants to schedule appointment to take/receive Defining Issues Test and explain attached Consent Form.
5. Mod 5: Revising Attachment 05: Pre-Study Prompt. Remove "Dear [participant]"; replace with "Hi <insert alias>,". Insert "These first two steps need to be completed by <insert date>." Add "Don't forget to use your alias on submitted documents." Add "Some participants will be selected to submit a written reflection to accompany each reading. If you are selected, you also will receive the guided writing prompt for each reflection with the instructions on when and how to submit it." Remove "Your DIT answers and reflection will be due no later than Monday, February 8." Add "Happy Reading! Rachael Lead Investigator."
6. Mod 6: Adding email to Control Group with first reading attached.
7. Mod 7: Adding email to Test Group with first reading and reflection prompt attached.
8. Mod 8: Adding email to Control Group with reading attached.
9. Mod 9: Adding email to Test Group with reading and reflection prompt attached.
10. Mod 10: Adding email to participants to schedule appointment to take/receive Defining Issues Test and final reflection.
11. Mod 11: Revising the Reflection Prompts ("Attachment 09: Reflective Writing 2," "Attachment 11: Reflective Writing 3," "Attachment 13: Reflective Writing 4," Attachment 15: Reflective Writing 5") to single reflection prompt template for Test Group. Add "for <insert title>" to "Reflective Writing." Add "the" and remove "How It Feels to be Colored Me." Add "Please complete and return your reflection by <insert date>." You may email your reflection to rgeary@twu.edu, or turn in a hardcopy to me in CFO127. Don't forget to use your alias on all submitted documents. Remove "Once you have completed this writing, please email it to: rgeary@twu.edu no later than" and due date. Remove "Please

allow one week after I receive your writing sample for a response with commenting. You are not required to submit revisions, but please use the commenting to help deepen your discussion in your reflection.”

12. Mod 12: Revising “Attachment 18.” Delete “[participant]”; add <insert alias>.” Add “(DIT) empathy assessment” and “and submitting the final reflection.” Add “For the DIT assessment:” Remove “The other part of our final step is for you to”; add “For the reflection, please.” Add “The least two steps need to be completed by <insert date>.” Remove “this”; add “the.” Remove “After I receive your writing sample, I will email you the first reading as well as the guided writing prompt for the reading” and due date. Add “Thank you! Rachael Lead Investigator”

13. Mod 13: Revising “Attachment 19.” Delete “[name of participant]”; add “<insert alias>.” Add “If you have not done so, please return the DIT scantron and your last written reflection by <insert date>.”

cc. Dr. Dundee Lackey, English, Speech & Foreign Languages



Institutional Review Board
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619
940-898-3378
email: IRB@twu.edu
<http://www.twu.edu/irb.html>

DATE: September 8, 2016

TO: Ms. Rachael Geary
English, Speech & Foreign Languages

FROM: Institutional Review Board - Denton

*Re: Notification of Approval for Modification for Confident Voices and Shared Experiences:
Empowerment through Writing, Empathy through Reading (Protocol #: 18367)*

The following modification(s) have been approved by the IRB:

Mod 1: Changing estimated beginning date of study to 09/12/2016 and estimated duration of study to 12/09/2016

Mod 2: Changing date email correspondence will be destroyed to 12/09/2016 and that all remaining identifiable data will be destroyed no later than 12/09/2026.

Mod 3: Revising office phone number on all emails and reflection prompts from "(940) 898-2253" to "(940)898-2254."

Mod 4: Revising office room number on all emails and reflection prompts from "CFO127" to "CFO128"

Mod 5: Resubmitting Consent Form with phone number changed from "940-898-2253" to "940-898-2254" for new stamp.

Mod 6: Revising email that accompanies Consent Form. Change office number from "CFO127" to "CFO128." Change availability from "Monday through Friday, with the exception of 2:30 to 4:00 on Mondays and Wednesdays" to "Monday through Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., and by appointment." Change "call (940)898-2253" to "call (940)898-2254."

cc. Dr. Dundee Lackey, English, Speech & Foreign Languages



Institutional Review Board
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619
940-898-3378
email: IRB@twu.edu
<http://www.twu.edu/irb.html>

DATE: October 10, 2016

TO: Ms. Rachael Geary
English, Speech & Foreign Languages

FROM: Institutional Review Board (IRB) - Denton

Re: *Extension for Confident Voices and Shared Experiences: Empowerment through Writing, Empathy through Reading (Protocol #: 18367)*

The request for an extension of your IRB approval for the above referenced study has been reviewed by the TWU IRB (operating under FWA00000178) and appears to meet our requirements for the protection of individuals' rights.

If applicable, agency approval letters must be submitted to the IRB upon receipt prior to any data collection at that agency. If subject recruitment is on-going, a copy of the approved consent form with the IRB approval stamp is enclosed. Please use the consent form with the most recent approval date stamp when obtaining consent from your participants. A copy of the signed consent forms must be submitted with the request to close the study file at the completion of the study.

This extension is valid one year from October 16, 2016. Any modifications to this study must be submitted for review to the IRB using the Modification Request Form. Additionally, the IRB must be notified immediately of any unanticipated incidents. All forms are located on the IRB website. If you have any questions, please contact the TWU IRB.

cc. Dr. Genevieve West, English, Speech & Foreign Languages
Dr. Gretchen Busl, English, Speech & Foreign Languages
Graduate School



Institutional Review Board

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619

940-898-3378

email: IRB@twu.edu

<http://www.twu.edu/irb.html>

DATE: February 3, 2017

TO: Ms. Rachael Geary
English, Speech & Foreign Languages

FROM: Institutional Review Board - Denton

Re: *Notification of Approval for Modification for Confident Voices and Shared Experiences:
Empowerment through Writing, Empathy through Reading (Protocol #: 18367)*

The following modification(s) have been approved by the IRB:

1. Expanding the eligible participants to include all undergraduate students, not just first-year college students. Recruitment materials have been changed/added to include recruitment for undergraduate students.
2. Changing the estimated beginning study date to 1/30/17 and the duration of the study to end around 8/11/17.
3. Changing the date for destroying email correspondence to 5/11/17 and the destruction of all other identifiable data to be no later than 8/11/17.
4. Changing PI's last name on consent form and all other correspondence from "Geary" to "Reynolds" and changing data destruction from 2 years after the completion of the study to 10 years on the consent form.
5. The DIT will be available electronically as well as in physical form. All documents have been revised and submitted to include instructions for completing both physical and electronic versions.

cc. Dr. Gretchen Busl, English, Speech & Foreign Languages