EDUCATORS’ PERCEPTIONS REGARDING EMPATHY AND ITS OVERALL IMPACT ON THE EDUCATIONAL LEARNING PROCESS IN SCHOOLS

DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO

THE DWIGHT SCHAR COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

ASHLAND UNIVERSITY

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree

Doctor of Education in Leadership Studies

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ASHLAND UNIVERSITY

ASHLAND, OH

2014
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A DISSERTATION

ENTITLED

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By

Joseph Alan Hendershott

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree

Doctor of Education in Leadership Studies

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This study explores the differences in perceptions among educators regarding whether an empathic connection between themselves and students has a positive impact on the learning process and social issues like bullying. The exploratory study is based on responses to four survey statements regarding empathy based on a 7-point Likert scale. An independent t-test analyzed the data after a split half reliability test established the survey instrument as reliable. The data were analyzed in response to two research questions: Is there a difference between perceptions of empathy by those serving as school support personnel as opposed to those serving as teachers, and is there a difference in perceptions of empathy among those classified as limited longevity educators as opposed to those classified as veteran educators? Of the eight areas of analysis, the findings of this study concluded there were two areas that had statistically significant different outcomes from respondents. Both instances of statistically significant differences occurred within the demographic grouping of school support personnel and teachers with the differences in perceptions being in (a) whether they feel equipped as educators to be empathic with their students, and (b) if they believe that teaching empathy can have a positive effect on bullying.
Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife, Dardi. This is what a marriage is all about. The teamwork and sacrifice you showed during my doctoral studies and the completion of this dissertation were amazing. Thank you for always supporting me and who I am. This dissertation was inspired by a vision and mission we continue to dream about and walk together on behalf of children. I am blessed to have you as my wife and best friend. I love you and who you are.

To Kaelee, Kearsten, Kameryn, Kyler, Kade, K’Tyo, Kaya, Kemeri, & Kendi: Typically, a parent is a child’s biggest supporter, but what a gift it has been to be on the receiving end of your endless encouragement and support. I am grateful and blessed by you. I am excited to continue watching each of you develop into the gifts God has given you. I love each one of you. The compassion and empathy you show for others inspires me and makes me proud.

To my dad, Jack Hendershott: Witnessing the empathy you displayed towards others is the basis for this dissertation. I saw how empathy not only impacts the daily life of others, but also eternity. You made a difference in the lives of many during your time on this earth.

For the ultimate Teacher, the One who models the way, Jesus Christ. Not for my glory, but Your glory: not for my honor, but Your greatness. Not for my title, but for Your title as Lord. Not to show my perseverance, but to display Your sustaining power. You, Lord, have taken the least of these, including me, and displayed your grace, mercy, compassion, and empathy.

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28 (NIV)
Acknowledgements

Dr. Harold Wilson, Dr. Constance Savage, and Dr. Greg Gerrick—You have made a difference in my life. The gift of your teaching for the benefit of my learning goes far beyond any classroom or grade.

Dr. Terry Wardle—Thank you for sharing your knowledge, wisdom, and time with me throughout my doctoral program. I will always value your input that led to the focus of this research on empathy. The insight you have given me on empathy is invaluable.

Dr. Bob Cyders and Ms. Susan Blake—I appreciate your constructive guidance as I was putting the pieces of this study together.
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CHAPTER I

Introduction

During my career in education, which spans over twenty-five years as a teacher and administrator in public and private schools, alternative schools, correctional facilities, and higher education, I have constantly sought ways to become a more effective educator. Over the years, I have attended several conferences and professional development trainings, read books and articles, received more formal training, earned a master’s degree in administration, joined professional organizations, and have been mentored by more experienced teachers. The recurring theme of most of these trainings and experiences revolved around the academic success of students, exploring what kind of curriculum would provide the greatest chance for academic achievement. New models and fads in teaching would come and go, typically (a) providing some valuable insight; (b) in many cases, helpful when addressing academic issues. The evolving theories for effective teaching techniques have proven beneficial as we begin to see an increase in the national graduation rate. However, my concern is for people who do not graduate from high school. What is the missing link? How can the system be beneficial to many but still fall short for some? Through my experience and research, I have concluded that educating the whole child takes much more than just addressing academics.

The social and emotional aspect of learning and development is just as important to what educators are trying to bring to fruition, which are students that are not only successful in the classroom, but also in life outside the classroom. According to Kouzes and Posner (2003), “The people who make a difference in our lives are not the ones with the most credentials, the most money, or the most awards. They are the ones who care”
(p. 207). It is unfortunate that little of my professional development training addressed issues such as effective classroom management, de-escalation skills, brain development research, emotional intelligence, identity issues, at-risk behaviors, and children who have experienced trauma, abuse, and/or neglect. There is a void in the available training geared towards understanding and reaching the population of students affected by adversity in order to transform their academic performance and ensure a solid foundation for life success.

Because academics remain the main focus in our schools, how do we take time to be empathic to student needs outside of that focus? Should we be transforming our schools’ professional development training to investigate such issues? Although the effects of financial poverty on children have been observed, I have ascertained that there are also children in emotional poverty from all walks of life. Emotional poverty crosses all financial, racial, and social barriers. Would it benefit educators to have a better understanding of how the mind operates because we are the molders and the shapers of these young minds? Siegel and Bryson (2011) have suggested, “With an understanding of the brain, you can be more intentional about what you teach kids, how you respond to them, and why” (p. xiii). I wonder if training educators in emotional literacy topics might be the link to some of the at-risk population of students finding academic success.

Approximately eight years ago, my wife and I began the process of becoming licensed as foster parents and approved as adoptive parents. I soon became acquainted with the demands of paperwork, financial planning, and learning how to assess the physical and educational needs of a child that might come with little background information about those needs. Another key component to the training to be an effective
caregiver was learning how to connect with or attune to the child’s emotional needs. Foster and adopted children may come from traumatic situations that require a certain level of knowledge and understanding from caregivers. Above all, children require empathy from caregivers. Pink (2006) has stated, “Empathy is the ability to imagine yourself in someone else’s position and to intuit what a person is feeling. It is the ability to stand in other’s shoes, to see with their eyes, and to feel with their hearts” (p. 159). During these training sessions, I wondered why the training I had received as an educator did not include this crucial information on understanding the whole child. I began developing an interest in studying these questions:

1. Do educators understand students’ emotional needs?
2. If so, are educators empathic to those needs?
3. Is empathy understood by educators, and what impact can it have on the learning process?
4. Ultimately, can training educators in emotional literacy create a culture that is healthier, safer, and more successful for everyone?

**Significance of the Study**

According to Smith (2013), “Empathy is an intellectual experience that involves perception and understanding. With empathy, children re-create in their own minds the circumstances and experiences of someone else” (p. 77). Moving beyond simply understanding to caring for another person is extremely important to developing relationships in the classroom. Sassen has suggested that empathy allows for taking into account everyone’s feelings, and this connection within the classroom can override the competition of academics, promoting relational education (2012). Bevel has stated:
Schools desperately need teachers and administrators with integrity and empathy who will inspire others with their dedication to step across the boundaries of regulations, policy, procedure, practices, standardization, and discrimination and withstand the cultural norms in order to create new opportunities for all children. (2008, p. 14)

This study explored educators’ perceptions of (a) the existence of empathic connections within schools, (b) whether educators feel adequately equipped to be empathic towards students, (c) whether an empathic connection between educators and students is essential to the learning process, and (d) whether educators believe teaching empathy can have a positive effect on social issues, such as bullying.

**Purpose of the Study**

This research was an exploratory study to examine the perceptions of educators regarding the emotional literacy topic of empathy and the role it plays in the learning process as well as issues like bullying. There was very little research about how educators perceive empathy and its overall role in the learning process or how they perceive themselves as being equipped or trained to address emotional literacy issues such as empathy. In addition, do educators believe that teaching empathy can have a positive effect on issues such as bullying? Many of the current studies on bullying were reaction-based and not preventative. For instance, Gordon and Green have noted that cameras are placed in schools and schoolyards to catch bullying after the fact, but if emotional literacy is taught and understood, bullying could be decreased or even prevented (2008).
The purpose of this study was to add to the available body of literature regarding the impact of emotional literacy on the learning process and social issues like bullying. Based on research outcomes, suggestions were made about specific areas to provide professional development training for educators regarding emotional literacy. The results of this exploratory study could provide school districts with new ways to view emotional literacy topics such as empathy, and the role empathy can play in the overall school culture.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

Statement of Problem: What is the difference in perception among educators regarding whether an empathic connection between themselves and students has a positive impact on the learning process and social issues like bullying?

RQ1 - Is there a difference between perceptions of empathy by those serving as school support personnel as opposed to those serving as teachers?

H₀₁ - There is no difference at the .05 level.

Data were entered into a data base for analysis utilizing an independent t-test seeking to identify differences between the groups.

RQ₂ - Is there a difference between perceptions of empathy among those classified as limited longevity educators as opposed to those classified as veteran educators?

H₀₂ - There is no difference at the .05 level.

Data were entered into a data base for analysis utilizing an independent t-test seeking to identify differences between the groups.
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was based on research about empathy, the empathic connection between students and teachers, and whether or not this connection is essential to the learning process. The majority of my research focused on the significance of empathy, empathic connections, emotional literacy, and emotional intelligence.

According to Gordon and Letchford (2009), setting up empathy programs in schools allows for both teachers and students to see each other as emotional human beings. Schertz (2007) has further stated that empathy pedagogy allows for subjectivity and shared inter-subjective feelings between people. Empathy is a fundamental way to communicate, which is critical to human relationships and the learning process. Stripling’s (2012) research indicated that empathy is a “bridge between knowledge and understanding” (p. 22). In order to understand empathy, students need to have the opportunity to look beyond content and grasp what empathy actually feels like. For example, Siegel and Bryson (2011) have suggested, “Empathy is another important function of the upstairs brain. When you ask simple questions that encourage the consideration of another’s feelings, you are building your child’s ability to feel empathy” (p. 55).

In addition to the teacher-student relationship, the need for students to feel empathy is further demonstrated when we consider that the basis behind some bullying behaviors can be a lack of empathy among students. Bullying can cause significant damage, both physically and mentally, to the victims. According to Schubert (2012), “The path to eradicating this threat to safety and well-being will be found at the core of
empathy” (p. 36). Gordon and Green (2008) have stated, “The development of social and emotional competence and empathy awakens the sense of moral responsibility in children for the well-being of their peers” (p. 35).

The need to understand the effects of empathy on student learning as well as their social, emotional, and physical health is important. Equally important is discerning how empathy can tap educators’ emotional wellbeing. Though it has merit to assist others, the ability to be keenly tuned into one’s own boundaries is essential. Taking on others’ feelings can sometimes cause secondary issues for the professional exhibiting empathy. According to Pfifferling and Gilley (2000), when professions require both empathy and objectivity, it is important to maintain an equal balance of both to prevent feeling exhausted or burning out. Najjar, Davis, Beck-Loon, and Doebbeling (2009) evaluated the importance of discussing how to deal with another’s trauma individually or in groups because it can affect one’s own health or job performance. Campbell has suggested that educating caregivers on the importance of protecting themselves from “compassion fatigue” is critical for the health of the workers in disaster or trauma situations. The need to develop healthy strategies helps create emotional and physical boundaries. If these boundaries are not formalized, a caregiver can start to develop an overwhelming stress from their work (2007).

Empathy and emotional literacy are not topics commonly cited by researchers as typical approaches to teaching and learning. There was little research on educators’ perceptions regarding the effects of empathy on learning. The goal of this study was to bring what is currently out in the field of education to light on behalf of both educators and students. An empathic teacher-student relationship should be viewed as a direct link
between teaching and learning. According to Gregory and Ripski (2008), the relationship approach between teacher and student not only decreases discipline problems and referrals, but also develops trust and cooperation. An empathic approach leads to more time for academic instruction and less stress among teachers.

**Definition of Terms**

This section provides a definition to frequently used terms found in this study.

*At-Risk:* In an educational setting, “at-risk” describes a student that is more likely than others to fail academically or fall victim to emotional and/or physical trauma.

*Educators:* For the purpose of this study, educators are inclusive of teachers, administrators, and school counselors.

*Faculty:* For the purposes of this study, faculty is used interchangeably with teacher within this research paper.

*Limited Longevity Educator:* For the purposes of this study, a limited longevity educator is a teacher, administrator, or counselor with zero to ten years of experience.

*School Support Personnel:* For the purposes of this study, school support personnel are a combination of school counselors and administrators.

*Veteran Educator:* For the purposes of this study, a veteran educator is a teacher, administrator, or counselor with eleven or more years of experience.

*Wounded:* This term is used to describe individuals that are beyond at-risk having suffered some form of emotional and/or physical trauma.
Summary

The research is plentiful regarding the impact of empathy in the many aspects of our lives, both emotional and physical. Its impact has also been examined in various professions that require someone to be in the role of caregiver, including medicine and counseling. The way in which empathy is tied to school culture and how it affects the teaching and learning process is just now becoming a point of discussion. It is imperative that the role of emotional literacy in schools, including empathy, be investigated so that proper training and methods of incorporation can be put in place to benefit educators and students. Further, teaching empathy to students may assist in decreasing the instances of bullying.

The research on emotional literacy training for educators and its significance in creating a safer environment that is more conducive to teaching and learning needs to be expanded. The purpose of this study was to add to the available body of literature regarding the impact of emotional literacy on the learning process and social issues like bullying. Based on research outcomes, suggestions were made about specific areas to provide professional development training for educators regarding emotional literacy. The results of this exploratory study could provide school districts with new ways to view emotional literacy topics such as empathy and the role empathy can play in the overall school culture.
CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This research study was designed to develop and use a survey to statistically analyze the perceptions that educators have regarding the emotional literacy topic of empathy and the role it plays in the learning process as well as social issues like bullying.

The goal of Chapter II is to provide an inclusive review of the literature. In order to accomplish this, the literature review consists of the following sections: (a) defining empathy, (b) the importance of empathy in learning, (c) gaining knowledge of empathy, and (d) the positive impact of empathy on the issue of bullying.

Defining Empathy

To have empathy or to empathize is to take on another’s feelings and see it from their perspective. To pity someone is to recognize the pain itself, but not connect to it at any personal level. To sympathize is not connecting with these feelings but maybe having some understanding of the feelings. Empathy is the ability to see from another person’s perspective and take on their feelings (Szalavitz & Perry, 2010). Maxwell and Des Roches (2010) have defined affective empathy as “a state of emotional involvement that can motivate pro-social behavior” (p. 37) whereas cognitive empathy is “an enabling mental capacity that serves reflection on social conflicts from a point of view other than the child’s own” (p. 36).

Orlans and Levy (2006) have stated that empathy is based in principles of morality, which can lead others to have compassion for people who are less fortunate or helpless. Trout has said, however, that it is a moral indifference when a person has to weigh the reasons for reaching out to assist another (2009). Children that have the
acumen of morality make decisions about right and wrong from an empathic perspective, placing others first (Siegel & Bryson, 2011).

Regarding the complexities of brain function, Baron-Cohen (2011) has said, “There is a consensus in neuroscience that at least 10 interconnected brain regions are involved in empathy” (p. 11). Further, Siegel and Bryson (2011) have stated, “The art of considering the mind of another requires us to use our right hemisphere and upstairs brain” (p. 137). According to Small:

With normal aging and growth in the life cycle, the front lobe neural circuits strengthen, and judgment improves; we develop a greater capacity to delay gratification, consider other people’s feelings, put things into perspective, and understand the danger certain situations may hold. (2011, p. 17)

Even if it is not viewed as achievable, by definition empathy can still be viewed as valuable to others and guides us to be helpful as well as responsible (Claypool & Molnar, 2011), promoting an awareness that other people have different views, thoughts, and feelings. Siegel (2007) has referred to this as a state of mindful awareness when “we come not only to know our own minds, but embrace our inner worlds and the minds of others with kindness and compassion” (p. xv).

The Importance of Empathy in Learning

Studies have shown the relevance of empathic connections to increased academic achievement. According to O’Conner (2013), “There have been research findings that suggest that teachers’ empathy with their pupils has a positive impact on achievement and attitude to learning” (p. 25). Siegel (2010) has suggested that empathic connections should be made through (a) eye contact, (b) tone of voice, (c) facial expressions, (d) body
posture, (e) intensity of response, and (f) developing a supportive community. Bevel and Altrogge have stated:

Programs need to focus on improving learning of every student, every teacher and every administrator, on closing the achievement gap for all learners, on developing empathy for others, on accepting differences and building on the strengths and uniqueness of each individual. (2010, p. 55)

According to a high school survey of student engagement which compiled responses from 81,499 students in 110 schools across 26 states, 31% of the students reported that they are bored in school because they have no interaction with a teacher (Yazzie-Mintz, 2006). The national graduation rate was 80% for school year 2011-12, meaning one in every five students is still not graduating from high school per most recent statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education (Stetser & Stillwell, 2014). Boutte (2008) has proposed, “Teaching toward a more inclusive social order or teaching humanity means working toward reducing our peculiar ethnocentrism so we can appreciate humanity and its many dimensions” (p. 171).

Cowan, Presbury, and Echterling have suggested:

A lack of sufficient and accurate empathy early in life means that a person not only is disconnected from others but also, over time, becomes disconnected from his or her own internal experiences, which can emerge later only in conflicted and ambivalent expressions. (2013, p. 58)

Gordon (2005) has stated further, “The child who is in emotional pain from feeling excluded does not have the heart for learning. What happens to the child on the playground or at lunchtime can have a tremendous effect on the child’s education” (p.
Gordon and Green have suggested that due to the world being more globalized, students are developing into individualized learners through the increased use of technology. We see students who do not have a chance to interact or socialize, therefore becoming more isolated (2008). “The term community hardly applies to the way we interact with each other. We live in networks, not communities, and everyone I know is lonely because of that. School is a major actor in this tragedy” (Gatto, 2005, p. 21).

Lima (2013) has offered:

   In my class, we strive for true empathy, ‘morally contoured empathy’, to speak to them. We strive so that when we step in to intervene, we may do so carefully, humbly, willing to question our assumptions, willing to learn from a child, informed but not emboldened by the best available evidence, and always embracing the utmost respect for every child. (p. 49)

Vanier (1992) has said, “Many people in our world today are living deep inner pain and anguish because as children, they were not valued, welcomed, loved” (p. 14). “As educators, I would venture to suggest that ‘connecting’ to our students is an urgent need which all teachers must prioritize and we must be innovators here too. We need to make sure that our students are connected to each other too” (Kiraly, 2011, p.14).

**Learning Empathy**

In an era of endless curriculum standards and guidelines, finding time in the school day to address emotional literacy topics can be difficult. Seaman (2012) has asserted that all teachers in every content area can find moments to incorporate compassion and empathy and still not have to adjust curriculum integrity. Furthermore, Hanko (2002) has said that the endeavor to teach empathy could be viewed as a
developmental accomplishment for not only the children, but also the educators. This is helpful when we are preparing teachers’ professional progression. According to Small (2011), “Learning empathy involves mastering three essential skills: (1) Recognizing feelings in others, (2) learning to listen, and (3) expressing understanding” (p. 17).

Empathy can sometimes be difficult to incorporate or teach in school environments that tend to be competitive in nature. However, making teachers and students more aware of the importance of empathy and cultivating this knowledge can create school environments that have more group cohesiveness for students and teachers alike. Moreover, this is the way in which empathy can support the goals of academic achievement (Weissbourd & Jones, 2014). According to Gerdes, Segal, Jackson, and Mullins, the benefits of teaching empathy can be countless. The result is students with the ability to understand empathy in a more refined manner when it comes to social justice, social wellbeing, or interaction with individuals (2011). Claypool and Molnar (2011) have said, “We know that for some people, developing and having empathy is seen as a necessary aspect of being in proper relationship to others, a necessary part of reducing violence in society and pursuing social justice issues” (p. 184). Perhaps, shared emotional experiences can be a social benefit through learning to communicate properly, thus creating social solidarity (deVignemont & Singer, 2006). Decety and Jackson have stated:

Empathy is a motivated process that more often than commonly believed is triggered voluntarily. This makes empathy a flexible human capacity as well as a method of gaining knowledge of understanding another, and it is susceptible to
social cognitive intervention, such as through training or enhancement programs for targeting various goals. (2004, p. 93-94)

Weissbourd and Jones (2014) have claimed, “Children develop empathy when it lives and breathes in their relationships, including their relationships with teachers” (p. 46).

According to Tschannen-Moran and Tschannen-Moran (2014), when school leaders express empathy to school personnel that are disheartened about things they cannot control, a compelling sense of connection is established which promotes an encouraging environment for ingenuity.

**Awareness of Emotional Literacy**

Concerning the teaching of emotional literacy, Dolby (2013) has stated, “As budgets tighten and the focus of higher education shifts toward skill-driven courses and outcomes-based competencies, and away from a broad education in the humanities and social sciences, the ability to develop a culture of empathy erodes even further” (p. 63). In a research study on empathy, Baron-Cohen developed an Empathy Quotient (EQ) scale, which revealed that science students scored lower on the Empathy Quotient scale than humanities students (2011). Teaching emotional literacy, including empathy towards students, is of global importance as it not only enhances the lives of individual students, but of society, as well. According to Gordon and Letchford:

We know that the biggest predictor of later success in life is social and emotional competency. Adults who do not possess these skills are more likely to face mental illness and addiction, incarceration, unemployment or underemployment, and other negative life consequences. (2009, p. 52)
In addition, Slote (2011) has said, “If empathy also helps make us morally decent individuals, then, once again, it has a social, political, and individual significance that recent scientific studies of empathy have not really or fully honed in on” (p. 14). Gordon has further (2005) stated, “It is emotional literacy that opens the door to empathy, allowing us to see situations from another’s perspective and to understand their feelings” (p. 117).

**Being Equipped for Empathic Connections**

Gordon (2005) has noted that children are coming to school with their poor behaviors and their wounds, but educators’ lack of training to address these issues can be a barrier to students’ success. “Right from the first day of school, these children were swimming upstream. They wore their wounds in their behavior. Learning was hard for them. Getting along with their classmates was a challenge. The school was not ready for them” (Gordon, 2005, p. 16).

Establishing empathic connections with children that exhibit dysfunctional behaviors and/or are coming from a background of trauma can be a challenging undertaking. According to Bride and Figley:

Working with children who need empathy due to their life circumstances, which typically include traumatic events, is taxing. The emotional, and sometimes physical, drain that is experienced by professionals in fields requiring empathy is referred to as compassion fatigue, the ‘unwanted effects of secondary trauma in the course of their work with the suffering’. (2007, p. 152)

As the demand of having a deeper understanding of a child’s extenuating circumstances has increased for today’s educators, they need to be more aware of their own emotional
and physical needs as more and more empathy is poured out. Because empathy is taking on the perspective of another and putting ourselves into that person’s (student’s) situation, caregivers (educators) can be susceptible to shared hurts and danger (Trout, 2009). Educators are characteristically child-centered, so their first instinct is to help a child in need, which is a part of the makeup of professionals who are caregivers for a multitude of children. Lima (2013) has contended that it is not enough to act, but to have the proper training to think through as well as feel differing situations. Pfifferling and Gilley (2000) have noted, “Physicians with burnout adapt to their exhaustion by becoming less empathetic and more withdrawn, compassion-fatigued physicians continue to give themselves fully to their patients, finding it difficult to maintain a healthy balance of empathy and objectivity” (p. 39).

Regarding empathic connections, Molnar posed the question of whether people can really place themselves in another’s position with an understanding and recognition of their situation, experiencing the same feelings they are having. There is a possibility that one would base what they think another person is feeling dependent on their own beliefs being projected onto that person (Claypool & Molnar, 2011). Lima (2013) has said, “It can, in fact, interfere with our development of true empathy, in that our own emotional distress can disable us. We can end up acting to alleviate our own pain, in a way that may not actually help the original victim” (p. 48). Molnar has further stated, “In these moments we are tasked with respecting the difference of others even as we seek to identify with them emotionally in order to better be in a proper relationship with them” (Claypool & Molnar, 2011, p. 183).
Lima has concluded that in order to most effectively assist those experiencing pain or trauma, a combination of examining research as well as consideration of the humanistic aspect should be utilized. Taking a scholarly approach inclusive of both parts is beneficial whereas trying to act properly without education can place someone in jeopardy (2013).

**Impact of Empathy on Bullying**

Some experts in the field of emotional literacy have surmised that empathy can alleviate bullying. Gordon and Green (2008) have said, “Learning to relate to the feelings of others constitutes bully-proofing from the inside out” (p. 35). Further, Szalavitz and Perry have stated, “Failure to empathize is a key part of most social problems—crime, violence, war, racism, child abuse, and inequity, to name just a few” (2010, p. 4).

Gordon (2005) has determined, “Empathy is integral to solving conflict in the family, schoolyard, boardroom, and war room. The ability to take the perspective of another person to identify commonalities through shared feelings is the best peace pill we have” (pp. xvi-xvii). According to Weissbourd and Jones:

> We can’t teach children empathy as if it were just a skill, like word decoding or simple addition. The kind of empathy that is crucial to develop in children is not simply a skill or a strategy: It’s born of a broad and deep sense of humanity.

(2014, p. 44)

Furthermore, de Souza and McLean (2012) have said, “Learning programs that focus on treating the other with kindness, respect, and dignity should raise the empathy level of the individual, mature spirituality, and reduce the incidents of bullying and
violence in schools and classrooms” (p. 178). When the entire school is bought into well thought out interventions that involve various strategies inclusive of curriculum and pertinent social skills, bullying can be notably decreased (Vreeman & Carroll, 2007). Bathina (2013) has stated, “Incidents of bullying and hate crimes could possibly be averted if teachers take time to actively teach empathy, respect, and tolerance in the classrooms” (p. 47). Further, Gordon and Green (2008) have suggested that “the development of social and emotional competence and empathy awakens the sense of moral responsibility in children for the wellbeing of their peers” (p. 35).

**Summary**

The importance of empathy and its role in who we are and how we connect with others has been the topic of several studies and articles. As it pertains to learning, research has shown that establishing an empathic connection with students keeps them more engaged in the educational process. Engaging with students and being more inclusive establishes a sense of community where empathic relationships can be practiced. However, failing to establish empathic connections with students can cause feelings of isolation for them. Therefore, every caregiver/educator should be equipped with strategies to develop inclusive environments for students. Understanding the value of empathy for ourselves and others should afford the insight to suggest the validity of further study into its important role in schools and the learning process. The interactions between educators and students as well as how students behave towards one another have the potential to create a less stressful learning environment. Additionally, the presence of empathic relationships has been shown to reduce the instance of bullying. Being equipped to establish empathic connections can be accomplished through emotional
literacy courses that include the practice of empathy. The aim of this literature review was to bring the awareness that educators need to be fully and properly trained in this area for it to be beneficial to struggling students as well as those that endeavor to educate them, regardless of the strife that can interfere with their learning.
CHAPTER III

Methodology

Before beginning my research, I had to complete online training through The National Institute of Health entitled, “Protecting Human Research Participants.” I received a certificate of completion (Appendix A) showing that I had completed and passed the course. This enabled me to submit my application for approval to use human subjects in research to the Human Subjects Review Board at Ashland University. I received the signed approval from Dr. Carol Reece, HSRB Chair, on March 11, 2014 (Appendix B).

The data set was collected from the 2014 Connections Conference held March 12, 2014, at the Pheasant Run Resort in St. Charles, Illinois. This conference was chosen for the collection of data due to its central location in the United States. With the location being near a large city (Chicago), this conference was likely to attract a diversified audience representing various areas of the country. The conference brochure and registration form reflect that the audience was inclusive of administrators, counselors, and teachers/faculty for elementary, middle grades, high school, and post secondary levels (Appendix C). Sponsors for the conference were the Illinois State Department of Education and Illinois State University. Before the start of the Connections Conference, I met with the conference administrator to explain the study and obtained his signature on the Administration Consent Form (Appendix D) in order to hand out my surveys at the conference.

The conference was designed for educators, administrators, and counselors from all discipline areas. I presented two one-hour sessions (10:45-11:45 a.m.): “Reaching the
Wounded Student”, 1:15-2:15 p.m.: “Lessons from the Back of the Classroom”) and one two-hour session (2:30-4:45 p.m.: “7 Ways to Transform Wounded Students”). I had a conference aide helping me distribute a Participant Consent Form; a sample of the form is attached (Appendix E). My survey (Appendix F) was distributed to the session attendees along with the Connections Conference Session Evaluation Sheet before each session. The survey on empathy was voluntary and anonymous, and each participant was given a copy of the Participant Consent Form to keep. The questionnaire was a two-page, twenty-question survey, but for the purposes of this study, items 2, 9, 19, and 20 were used as research for this dissertation with responses based on a 7-point Likert scale. There were a total of 62 conference surveys (N = 62) distributed and 47 of the surveys were completed and returned (N= 47).

The survey was designed as part of two independent study courses during my doctoral program in collaboration with and reviewed by the instructor of the cognate classes, Dr. Terry Wardle. The courses were Current Issues of Wounded Students and Trends in Abuse, Neglect, and Trauma of Children. Dr. Wardle holds a B.A. from Geneva College, M.Div. from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, and a D.Min. from Fuller Theological Seminary. Dr. Wardle covers the topic of empathy in his seminars and is the author of Wounded (1994), Healing Care Healing Prayer (2001), The Transforming Path (2003), Helping Others on the Journey (2004), Outrageous Love Transforming Power (2004), and Strong Winds Crashing Waves (2007), to name a few. Dr. Wardle suggested that I have someone with a background in developing survey tools related to my topic of research review the survey to validate the questions. Dr. Louise Fleming-Dufala, Ph.D.; Professor of Education; Chairperson, Department of
Foundations, Inquiry, and Community Education; Director, Center for Civic Life at Ashland University, reviewed and substantiated the content of my survey.

Survey items 2, 9, 19, and 20, which pertain to empathy, were the focus of this study. The total number of respondents (N = 47) was entered into an excel database and analyzed through SPSS algorithms which sought to reject each null hypothesis at the .05 level of significance.

Each of the research questions analyzed responses from two different groupings of respondents. The responses reflect the differences between each set of groups. As a result, an independent $t$-test was utilized as the design for this statistical model to assess the level of statistical significances of any differences in mean responses. It was presumed that there were unequal variances seeking to reject the null, which was the rationale behind this study using an independent $t$-test for a small sample size.

**Limitations**

Creswell has stated that there may be inherent shortcomings within this study that are beyond the researcher’s control. The limitations and shortcomings of this study were identified to address the generalizability of this study and to assist those who may wish to conduct a comparable study (2008).

- The survey that was conducted had a small sample size of educators (N = 47).
- The survey that was conducted only had a total of (N = 38) from the state of Illinois and (N = 9) did not indicate what state they were from, which posed geographic limitations.
- The survey had a small number of male responses (N = 4) and a large number of female responses (N = 43).
• The survey was only passed out to those in attendance at three of the conference sessions. There were (N = 62) in attendance but only (N = 47) questionnaires were returned. The conference presentation times were chosen by the conference planning committee. Different presentation times may have had the potential to draw a larger attendance, thus garnering a greater number of completed surveys.

• The survey had an unequal representation of teachers (N = 27) to school support personnel, which included administrators and guidance counselors (N = 20).

• The sample consisted of mainly middle grades and high school educators (N = 47). There were (N = 3) surveys that indicated experience teaching at the post-secondary level, as well. The surveys indicated that (N = 4) had 0 to Pre-K or elementary experience in addition to middle grades or high school. (N = 1) did not indicate a grade level.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations describe boundaries set by the researcher that limit the span of the study (Creswell, 2003). The following delimitations were put in place to narrow the focus of this study to educators’ perceptions of whether empathic connections are essential to learning and if empathy has a positive impact on social issues like bullying:

• Because this study is a pilot, the decision was made to use only one conference for data collection.

• The study grouped guidance counselors with administrators, described as school support personnel.

• The decision was made to survey only educators in attendance at my conference sessions since this was a pilot study.
• The decision was made to only employ items 2, 9, 19, and 20 from the survey because they pertained specifically to empathy. The other survey questions addressed identity, brain development, trauma, wounded students, and transformation. Although these topics can be associated with the need for empathy and empathic connections, they are not specific to the perceptions of empathy, so the responses to the other seven open-ended questions and additional nine items based on the same 7-point Likert scale were not utilized for this study.

• The decision was made to divide respondents into the following demographic information for analysis of responses: (a) Teachers and school support personnel, and (b) Limited longevity educators and veteran educators. Theoretically, guidance counselors and administrators have obtained additional training which might affect their perception of the importance of empathy just as being a veteran educator might also involve a different perception based on more years of firsthand experience.

Data Analysis

The study was designed so as to respond to two research questions: RQ1: Is there a difference between perceptions of empathy by those serving as school support personnel as opposed to those serving as teachers? RQ2: Is there a difference in perceptions of empathy between those classified as limited longevity educators as opposed to those classified as veteran educators? Responses to four survey items were recorded for each respondent along with applicable demographic data. These demographic data were used to identify groupings for analysis. These data points were recorded in a database for analysis utilizing SPSS algorithms.
Therefore, the study included the following:

RQ1: Is there a difference between perceptions of empathy by those serving as school support personnel as opposed to those serving as teachers?

HO₁.₁ There will be no difference in mean attitudes reported at the .05 level in Empathic Connection at the .05 level of significance chosen a priori.

HO₁.₂ There will be no difference in mean attitudes reported at the .05 level in Teachers Empathic at the .05 level of significance chosen a priori.

HO₁.₃ There will be no difference in mean attitudes reported at the .05 level in Adequately Equipped at the .05 level of significance chosen a priori.

HO₁.₄ There will be no difference in mean attitudes reported at the .05 level in Positive Effect at the .05 level of significance chosen a priori.

RQ2: Is there a difference in perceptions of empathy between those classified as limited longevity educators as opposed to those classified as veteran educators?

HO₂.₁ There will be no difference in mean attitudes reported at the .05 level in Empathic Connection at the .05 level of significance chosen a priori.

HO₂.₂ There will be no difference in mean attitudes reported at the .05 level in Teachers Empathic at the .05 level of significance chosen a priori.

HO₂.₃ There will be no difference in mean attitudes reported at the .05 level in Adequately Equipped at the .05 level of significance chosen a priori.

HO₂.₄ There will be no difference in mean attitudes reported at the .05 level in Positive Effect at the .05 level of significance chosen a priori.

Each question compared the respective groups using an independent t-test comparing the differences of the group mean seeking to reject the null hypothesis that
there would be no significant difference in the mean at the .05 level chosen a priori. The following is the key used for the Likert scale: (7) Agree Strongly; (6) Agree Moderately; (5) Agree Slightly; (4) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (3) Disagree Slightly; (2) Disagree Moderately; (1) Disagree Strongly.

Survey Item 2: An empathic connection between the teacher and student is essential to the learning process (please circle one corresponding number with above answer key). 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Survey Item 9: I believe teachers are empathic towards their students (please circle one corresponding number with the above answer key). 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Survey Item 19: I feel adequately equipped as an educator to be empathic towards my students (please circle one corresponding number with above answer key). 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Survey Item 20: I believe that teaching empathy can have a positive effect on bullying in schools (please circle one corresponding number with above answer key). 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
Summary

Discussed in this chapter was the design used in this exploratory quantitative study as well as a description of the survey, its participants, and the techniques used for analyzing data. Data were collected through a voluntary survey distributed during my conference sessions at the Connections Conference in St. Charles, Illinois. The main reason for data collection from this particular conference was its centralized location and participants were inclusive of elementary and secondary teachers and school support personnel. The goal was to gather data from conference attendees representing diversified demographics.
CHAPTER IV

Introduction

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the perceptions of educators, which included teachers, counselors, and administrators, on the impact that empathy has on the overall educational culture. The study also analyzed the perceptions that educators have concerning whether they are empathic with their students and if they feel they are adequately trained in emotional literacy. To measure these perceptions, I utilized the raw data set to divide the educators into two groups by positions for the purpose of analyzing perceptions of the two groups. The data were divided into two groups: teachers and school support personnel, which was inclusive of administrators and guidance counselors. I then conducted a split half reliability test to measure the reliability of the survey instrument. The instrument was deemed reliable. An independent t-test was used to analyze the data collected. I then reorganized the raw data to examine the results of two more groups of educators. These groups were divided into limited longevity educators, which included teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors with zero to ten years of experience and veteran educators, which included those with eleven or more years of experience.


Analysis by Position Group

For the first comparison, respondents were grouped as either teachers (N = 27) or school support personnel, which includes administrators and guidance counselors (N = 20) as noted in Table 4.1. RQ1 asks, “Is there a difference between perceptions of empathy by those serving as school support personnel as opposed to those serving as teachers?” All respondents used a 7-point Likert scale: (7) Agree Strongly; (6) Agree Moderately; (5) Agree Slightly; (4) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (3) Disagree Slightly; (2) Disagree Moderately; (1) Disagree Strongly.

Table 4.1

Comparisons of Descriptive Data by Position Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grouping</th>
<th>Empathic Connection</th>
<th>Teachers Empathic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>6.037</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>2.037</td>
<td>0.4631</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adequately Equipped</th>
<th>Positive Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>5.2593</td>
<td>6.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>2.1994</td>
<td>0.4711</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the 20-question survey, Survey Items 2, 9, 19, and 20 were used for this study utilizing a 7-point Likert scale. Survey Item 2: An empathic connection between the teacher and student is essential to the learning process. The teacher response revealed a mean of 6.037 with a variance of 2.037 while the school support personnel mean response was 6.6 with a variance of 0.4631.

Survey Item 9: I believe teachers are empathic towards their students. The teachers’ group had a mean response of 5.037037 with a variance of 0.883191 while school support personnel had a mean response of 4.85 and a variance of 0.8711.

Survey Item 19: I feel adequately equipped as an educator to be empathic towards my students. The teacher mean response was 5.2593 and had a variance of 2.1994. The school support personnel mean response was 6.05 with a variance of 0.4711.

Survey Item 20: I believe that teaching empathy can have a positive effect on bullying in schools. The teacher mean response was 6.37037 with a variance of 0.703704 while school support personnel had a mean score of 6.8 with a variance of 0.1684.

Survey Item 2 asked respondents if an empathic connection between the teacher and student is essential to the learning process using a 7-point Likert scale. Results of a t-test analysis are displayed in Table 4.2. The null hypothesis was there would be no difference in mean attitudes reported at the .05 level in empathic connection at the .05 level of significance chosen a priori. The t-score was 0.6766 with a P score of 0.5021. Therefore, the null hypothesis could not be rejected. It could not be demonstrated that there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups.
Table 4.2

*T-Test for Significant Differences Empathic Connection*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grouping</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P(t) two-tailed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support Personnel</td>
<td>6.037</td>
<td>0.4631</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(df=26)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>2.037</td>
<td>0.6766</td>
<td>0.5021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(df=19)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey Item 9 asked respondents to rate their belief that teachers are empathic towards their students using a 7-point Likert scale. Results from a t-test analysis are noted in Table 4.3. The null hypothesis was there would be no difference in mean attitudes reported at the .05 level in teachers empathic at the .05 level of significance chosen a priori. The $t$-score was 0.6766 with a P score of 0.5021. Therefore, the null hypothesis could not be rejected. It could not be demonstrated that there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups.
Table 4.3

*T-Test for Significant Differences Teachers Empathic*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grouping</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P(t) two-tailed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support Personnel</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>0.8711</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(df=26)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>5.037</td>
<td>0.8832</td>
<td>0.6766</td>
<td>0.5021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(df=19)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey Item 19 asked respondents if they feel adequately equipped as an educator to be empathic towards their students using a 7-point Likert scale. Table 4.4 displays t-test results for analysis from survey item 19. The hypothesis stated that there would be no difference in the mean attitudes reported at the .05 level of significance chosen a priori. The t-score was 2.2109 with a P score of 0.0322. Therefore, the null hypothesis could be rejected. It demonstrated there was a difference between teachers and school support personnel.
Survey Item 20 asked respondents if they believe that teaching empathy can have a positive effect on bullying in school using a 7-point Likert scale. Table 4.5 displays the following t-test results for analysis from survey item 20. The null hypothesis was that there would be no difference in the mean attitudes reported at the .05 level of significance chosen a priori. The \( t \)-score indicated was 2.107 and a \( P \) score of 0.0407. It could be demonstrated that there was a difference between teachers and school support personnel regarding their perceptions of feeling adequately equipped to make empathic connections. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.
Table 4.5

*T-Test for Significant Differences Positive Effect*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grouping</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P(t)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support Personnel</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>0.1684</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(df=26)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>6.3704</td>
<td>0.7037</td>
<td>2.107</td>
<td>0.0407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(df=19)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Bold indicates significance at the .05 level.

**Analysis by Experience Group**

The second comparison of respondents took teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors and grouped them according to years of experience with those having zero to ten years of experience being considered limited longevity educators (N = 24) and those with eleven or more years of experience being labeled veteran (N = 21) educators. There were two educators who did not indicate their years of experience. Table 4.6 addresses RQ2: Is there a difference between perceptions of empathy among those classified as limited longevity educators as opposed to those classified as veteran educators? All respondents used a 7-point Likert scale.
Table 4.6
Comparisons of Descriptive Data by Experience Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grouping</th>
<th>Empathic Connection</th>
<th>Teachers Empathic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited Longevity</td>
<td>Veteran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>6.0417</td>
<td>6.4762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>2.3025</td>
<td>0.4619</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adequately Equipped</th>
<th>Positive Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>5.4167</td>
<td>5.8095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>1.6449</td>
<td>1.6619</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the 20-question survey, Survey Items 2, 9, 19, and 20 were used for this study using a 7-point Likert scale.

Survey Item 2: An empathic connection between the teacher and student is essential to the learning process. The limited longevity group revealed a mean response of 6.0417 with a variance of 2.3025 while the veteran educators’ mean response was 6.4762 with a variance of 0.4619.
Survey Item 9: I believe teachers are empathic towards their students. The limited longevity group revealed a mean response of 4.8333 with a variance of 1.014493. The veteran group’s mean response was 5.1429 with a variance of 0.7286.

Survey Item 19: I feel adequately equipped as an educator to be empathic towards my students. The limited longevity group had a mean response of 5.4167 with a variance of 1.6449. The veteran group’s mean response was 5.8095 with a variance of 1.6619.

Survey Item 20: I believe that teaching empathy can have a positive effect on bullying in schools. The limited longevity group had a mean response of 6.625 with a variance of 0.331522. The veteran group’s mean response was 6.4762 with a variance of 0.7619.

Table 4.7 illustrates the t-test results for analysis of survey item 2 from the survey instrument which asked respondents if an empathic connection between the teacher and student is essential to the learning process. The null hypothesis was there would be no difference in group means reported at the .05 level of significance chosen a priori. The $t$-score was 1.2091 with a $P$ score of 0.5021. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. It could not be demonstrated that there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups.
Survey Item 9 asked respondents to rate their belief that teachers are empathic towards their students using a 7-point Likert scale. Results from a t-test analysis are noted in Table 4.8. The null hypothesis is there would be no difference in the mean attitudes reported at the .05 level of significance chosen a priori. The $t$-score was 1.1033 with a $P$ score of 0.5021. Therefore, the null hypothesis could not be rejected. It could not be demonstrated that there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups.

### Table 4.7

**T-Test for Significant Differences Empathic Connection**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grouping</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$P(t)$ two-tailed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited Longevity</td>
<td>6.0417</td>
<td>2.3025</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$(df=23)$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran</td>
<td>6.4762</td>
<td>0.4619</td>
<td>1.2091</td>
<td>0.2332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$(df=20)$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.8

*T-Test for Significant Differences Teachers Empathic*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grouping</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P(t)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited Longevity</td>
<td>4.8333</td>
<td>1.0145</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(df=23)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran</td>
<td>5.1429</td>
<td>0.7286</td>
<td>1.1033</td>
<td>0.276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(df=20)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey Item 19 asked respondents if they feel adequately equipped as an educator to be empathic towards their students using a 7-point Likert scale. Table 4.9 displays t-test results for analysis from survey item 19. The null hypothesis was that there would be no difference in mean attitudes reported at the .05 level of significance chosen a priori. The *t*-score was 1.0227 with a *P* score of 0.3122. Therefore, the null hypothesis could not be rejected. It could not be demonstrated that there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups.
### Table 4.9

**T-Test for Significant Differences Adequately Equipped**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grouping</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P(t) two-tailed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited Longevity</td>
<td>5.4167</td>
<td>1.6449</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(df=23)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran</td>
<td>5.8095</td>
<td>1.6619</td>
<td>1.0227</td>
<td>0.3122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(df=20)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey Item 20 asked respondents if they believe that teaching empathy can have a positive effect on bullying in schools using a 7-point Likert scale. Table 4.10 displays the following t-test results for analysis from survey item 20. The hypothesis was that there would be no difference in mean attitudes reported at the .05 level of significance chosen a priori. The $t$-score was 0.683 with a $P$ score of 0.4983. Therefore, the null hypothesis could not be rejected. It could not be demonstrated that there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups.
Table 4.10

*T-Test for Significant Differences Positive Effect*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grouping</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P(t) two-tailed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited Longevity</td>
<td>6.625</td>
<td>0.3315</td>
<td>0.683</td>
<td>0.4983</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Veteran</td>
<td>6.4762</td>
<td>0.7619</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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Overview of Findings

The purpose of this exploratory study was to address the question, “Is there a difference among educators in perceptions regarding empathy?” The data examined the differences in responses by asking the following two research questions:

RQ1: Is there a difference between perceptions of empathy by those serving as school support personnel as opposed to those serving as teachers? School support personnel was inclusive of administrators and guidance counselors while teachers included those teaching any grade level or content area.

RQ2: Is there a difference between perceptions of empathy among those classified as limited longevity educators as opposed to those classified as veteran educators? Educators included guidance counselors, teachers, and administrators. For the purposes of this study, a limited longevity educator was any educator with zero to ten years of experience, while a veteran educator was any educator with eleven or more years of experience.

Responses to the following four survey statements based on a 7-point Likert scale were analyzed to respond to the two research questions:

Survey Item 2: An empathic connection between the teacher and student is essential to the learning process.

Survey Item 9: I believe teachers are empathic towards their students.

Survey Item 19: I feel adequately equipped as an educator to be empathic towards my students.

Survey Item 20: I believe that teaching empathy can have a positive effect on bullying in schools.
The analysis found measurable differences in all of the statements, but the differences were only compelling enough to achieve statistical significance for two of the statements. 

First, the research data demonstrated there were statistically significant differences between school support personnel and teachers in the area of feeling adequately equipped to be empathic towards students. School support personnel indicated that they felt more adequately equipped to be empathic towards their students than did the teachers.

Secondly, there were statistically significant differences between school support personnel and teachers in the area of believing that teaching empathy could have a positive effect on bullying. School support personnel had a stronger perception that teaching empathy would have a positive effect on bullying than teachers perceived.

Although there were other measurable areas of perception, statistically significant differences were not demonstrated. No other conclusions can be drawn at this point. The results of this study indicate a need for future research.
CHAPTER V

Chapter V will focus on the review of the research questions and hypothesis, summary, discussion, and recommendations and conclusion based on the research data. To begin, the following is a recap of this exploratory study’s statement of the problem with the research questions and hypothesis:

Statement of Problem: What is the difference in perception among educators regarding whether an empathic connection between themselves and students has a positive impact on the learning process and social issues like bullying?

RQ1: Is there a difference between perceptions of empathy by those serving as school support personnel as opposed to those serving as teachers?

H01: There will be no difference at the .05 level.

Data will be entered into a data base for analysis utilizing an independent t-test seeking to identify differences between the groups.

RQ2: Is there a difference between perceptions of empathy among those classified as limited longevity educators as opposed to those classified as veteran educators?

H02: There will be no difference at the .05 level.

Data will be entered into a data base for analysis utilizing an independent t-test seeking to identify differences between the groups.
Summary

The reason an exploratory study was used was due to the fact there is very little research done on educators’ perceptions of the impact that emotional literacy has on the overall school culture. The literature is plentiful on emotional literacy topics such as empathy or even how empathy and teaching empathy can impact issues like bullying in schools, but these topics are typically discussed as standalone issues devoid of any research about educators’ perceptions of its impact on or connection to the learning process. For the purposes of this study, respondents were grouped demographically as teachers and school support personnel and then as limited longevity educators and veteran educators.

The first area of analysis explored whether educators perceive that having an empathic connection between a teacher and student is essential to the process of learning. Even though there was no statistical significance between the perceptions of school support personnel and teachers, teachers had a higher mean score which seems to indicate teachers perceive the connection between empathy and learning to be slightly greater. It is important to note that both groups indicated its relevance with a mean score of 6.037 on a 7-point Likert scale for school support personnel and a mean score of 6.6 for teachers, which is in the agree moderately range.

The next area of analysis considered whether educators believe that teachers are empathic towards their students. Again, no statistical significance was indicated between the two groups. School support personnel scored slightly lower with a mean score of 4.85, which suggests they neither agree nor disagree. Teachers had a mean score of
5.037, which indicates they agree moderately that teachers are empathic towards their students.

Another area of analysis studied whether school support personnel and teachers feel equipped as educators to be empathic with their students. This was one of the two areas mentioned earlier that had a statistically significant difference between the perceptions of school support personnel and teachers. The mean score of school support personnel was 6.05 indicating that they agree moderately. However, teachers had a mean score of 5.2593 indicating that they agree slightly.

The final area of analysis investigated whether educators believe that teaching empathy can have a positive effect on bullying. This was the second area to show a statistically significant difference between the perceptions of school support personnel and teachers. School support personnel showed a mean score of 6.8 while teachers had a mean score of 6.3704. Though there was a statistically significant difference, both school support personnel and teachers scored in the agree moderately range.

The subsequent area of analysis involved the second demographic grouping of limited longevity educators and veteran educators. Concerning the perception of whether an empathic connection is essential for the learning process, limited longevity educators had a mean score of 6.0417 while veteran educators had a mean score of 6.472. There was no statistically significant difference between these two groups with both indicating that they moderately agree.

The next area for analysis was educators’ perceptions on the belief that teachers are empathic with their students. Limited longevity educators had a mean score of 4.833 while veteran educators had a mean score of 5.1429. This indicates that limited longevity
educators agreed slightly while veteran educators agreed moderately, but there was no statistically significant difference noted.

Another area for analysis addressed whether educators feel adequately equipped to be empathic with their students. Again, there was no statistically significant difference in the analysis. Limited longevity educators had a mean score of 5.4167 and veteran educators had a mean score of 5.8095, both being in the agree slightly range.

The final area for analysis examined whether educators perceive that teaching empathy can have a positive impact on bullying. Both limited longevity educators and veteran educators scored in the agree moderately range with mean scores of 6.625 and 6.4762, respectively. There were no statistical differences between the two groups.

**Discussion**

The need to understand empathy and the important role it can play in school cultures and students’ lives requires that we first understand the current perceptions of empathy by educators. The question of whether empathy is essential to learning and the emotional safety of students remains the focus of this study. Students today are more inundated with a global perspective of knowledge. Digesting this information requires what some say is the most prevalent skill of the 21st century, empathy (Stripling, 2012). This research study established a starting point for understanding the current perceptions of the importance of empathy in the educational realm. As mentioned earlier, our world is more globally connected than it has ever been. Our ability to appreciate others’ surroundings, cultural norms, differences, or perspectives can impact our teaching and learning preparations and processes. It is my goal to provide more insight into the areas reviewed in this research study.
This research study has analyzed several different areas regarding empathy and the role it plays in teaching and learning as well as its role in issues like bullying. The suggestions made to address the stated problem (What is the difference in perception among educators regarding whether an empathic connection between themselves and students has a positive impact on the learning process and social issues like bullying?) will be built from the findings based on the research results. Some of the results are statistically significant in their differences while some of the outcomes are only slightly dissimilar.

The responses from four survey statements were analyzed to address RQ1: Is there a difference between perceptions of empathy by those serving as school support personnel as opposed to those serving as teachers? Respondents were grouped as school support personnel (administrators and guidance counselors) and teachers. Item 2 asks if an empathic connection between the teacher and student is essential to the learning process. There was no statistically significant difference on the perceptions of the importance of having an empathic connection between school support personnel and teachers, but the mean score was slightly higher on this perception for teachers. It would appear logical that the perception would be higher for teachers since on a day-to-day basis, teachers would be the ones faced with making this connection. On the other hand, it would seem that school support personnel would see this more from an outside perspective since their contact with students is typically inconsistent. It is important to point out that both groups rated in the 6-range on a 7-point Likert scale, which indicates that they agree moderately.
In Survey Item 9, school support personnel and teachers were asked if they believe teachers are empathic with their students. There was not a statistically significant difference between the two groups, but interestingly, teachers had a higher score in this area than school support personnel. On one hand, it is conceivable that teachers would tend to rate themselves higher in this area. On the other hand, it was surprising that school support personnel appeared to perceive that teachers were not as empathic as teachers saw themselves. Even though these were slight measurable differences, this is worth noting because it would appear that school support personnel might have more training on empathy which would enable them to evaluate its presence more accurately. It would also seem that school support personnel may have a more objective viewpoint from an outsider’s perspective. However, the opposite could be deduced, as well. It is possible that teachers are best to evaluate their ability to be empathic since they are closer to the students and situations that exist in their classrooms that require empathy.

The response to this statement was also interesting in that the mean scores indicate that school support personnel neither agree nor disagree that teachers are empathic with their students and that teachers only agree slightly. Out of all the survey statements, Survey Item 9 had the lowest mean scores in relation to RQ1. It would appear that even though there is no statistically significant difference in the results, further knowledge and understanding of empathy may be needed in order for teachers to be more empathic with their students. Because teaching is inherently a caring profession, one could presume that to agree strongly with the statement that teachers are empathic would be a better expected outcome of respondents’ scores. Considering that Survey Item 9 analyzes respondents’ perception of teachers having empathy as a whole, it could be that
the score would be higher if they were scoring their own capacity to be empathic with their students.

Even though there is no statistically significant difference in the responses, the implication is that it appears from the responses to Survey Item 2 that both groups agreed moderately that empathy is essential to the learning process, but the responses to Survey Item 9 imply that these same two groups neither agree nor disagree or only agree slightly that teachers are empathic. This could illustrate the knowing and doing gap. It appears that educators perceive that empathy is essential to learning, but the apparent perception amongst respondents is that teachers do not exhibit empathy with their students proportionately with its perceived essence in the learning process. Nevertheless, since the study cannot verify these statements, more research is necessary.

Whether or not educators feel adequately equipped to be empathic with their students is the perception analyzed in Table 4.4, which showed a significant statistical difference between school support personnel and teachers. School support personnel agreed moderately about feeling adequately equipped to be empathic with students while teachers only agreed slightly. I would concur with these results based on the additional training that school support personnel typically receive for aiding or counseling students in the school setting. It would seem this may have implications for the previous responses in Table 4.2 and Table 4.3. If both groups do not agree strongly that they are adequately equipped to be empathic with their students, how could they be as empathic as they might need or want to be as educators?

Table 4.5 addresses the perception of educators’ belief that teaching empathy can have a positive effect on bullying. Though both groups scored in the “agree moderately”
range, there was a statistically significant difference in the results with school support personnel responses being higher than teachers. I believe this difference is due in part to school support personnel having a higher instance of involvement in critical situations or student crises. Additionally, it is typically the responsibility of school support personnel to initiate peer mediation groups, individual or group counseling, and/or anti-bullying education or prevention programs thus having a more immediate indication of the positive effect empathy has on bullying. Further, in many districts administration is required to establish and implement anti-bullying policies and procedures, which again they have more than likely received some training that those in the classroom setting would not be required to obtain. I am not suggesting that teachers do not see the value in receiving training on emotional literacy topics or the impact teaching empathy could have on bullying; it is just the difference in job description and the expectations for job performance. Teachers must remain focused throughout their day on the academic needs of each student along with their social and emotional wellbeing. With the increase in academic rigor, a teacher might relinquish certain non-academic issues to those more equipped and trained for such issues, which is why they are classified as school support personnel. It is meaningful to note this statistical difference so as to have an understanding of the role each respondent group plays within the educational setting and how those roles affect their perceptions of empathy’s importance.

Utilizing the same four survey statements, responses were analyzed to address RQ2: Is there a difference between perceptions of empathy among those classified as limited longevity educators as opposed to those classified as veteran educators? Respondents were divided into limited longevity educators (teachers, administrators, and
principals with zero to ten years of experience) and veteran educators (teachers, administrators, and principals with eleven or more years of experience). Table 4.7 displays the results from Survey Item 2 which asks if an empathic connection between a teacher and student is essential to the learning process. There was no statistically significant difference between the two groups. However, there was a slight difference in scores. It is important to note that both groups agreed moderately, but the score was slightly different. It would appear that veteran educators perceived an empathic connection as more essential to the learning process than limited longevity educators. It is possible that this is due to veteran educators having more years of experience to witness the role empathy plays in the learning process as well as the likelihood that they have had more opportunities to develop this connection. Since the study cannot verify these statements, more research is necessary.

Survey Item 9 asked respondents if they believe teachers are empathic towards their students. Results, which are shown in Table 4.8, do not show any statistically significant differences between the two groups. Based on the scores, limited longevity educators neither agreed nor disagreed, but veteran educators scored just higher placing them into the category of slightly agree. It would appear that with both groups moderately agreeing on empathy being an essential part of the learning process but having lower scores on feeling that teachers are empathic with their students, that again there is a knowing and doing gap. Because veteran educators scored slightly higher, it would seem that veteran educators might be able to mentor limited longevity educators on developing empathic connections in the classroom. Because the study cannot verify these statements, more research is necessary.
Table 4.9 displays the findings from Survey Item 19 which asks if educators feel adequately equipped to be empathic towards their students. There was no statistically significant difference in responses with both groups being in the agree slightly range. There were measureable differences with veteran educators scoring slightly higher. It would seem that the higher scores might reflect more years of firsthand experience and possibly more opportunities for training to feel better equipped. However, the study cannot verify this statement, so more research is necessary.

Survey Item 20 explores whether educators believe teaching empathy can have a positive effect on bullying in schools with results documented in Table 4.10. Both groups scored high, falling into the agree moderately range with no statistically significant differences. There were measureable differences with limited longevity educators scoring higher in this area of research. It appears that even though limited longevity educators do not perceive that they are as adequately equipped to be empathic with students as veteran educators are, they seem to have a greater perception of empathy’s influence on the bullying issue. This could be a result of current coursework and training for educators tending to include more information on anti-bullying measures. Because this study cannot verify these statements, more research is needed.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

I would recommend two major strategies when conducting this research in the future with regard to the survey tool. First, I would obtain a pre-assessment survey to determine respondents’ current working definitions of empathy. Then I would provide professional development training in emotional literacy inclusive of an appropriate working definition of empathy. Finally, I would follow this professional development
training with a post-assessment survey to evaluate whether there is a more cohesive understanding of the definition of empathy among respondents. This could demonstrate more accurate results if everyone were starting with a more similar understanding of empathy.

Second, when developing the survey tool for future research, I would only include statements or questions specific to empathy rather than including other topics. My survey included questions on identity, brain development, trauma, wounded students, and transformation. While these topics can be associated with the need for empathic connections, they are not specific to the perceptions of empathy. For the purposes of a research study and analyzing data, it would be best to expand on research methodologies.

Using a qualitative approach for future research could strengthen this exploratory study. Because empathic connections are relational in nature, a qualitative approach would provide insight within the various dynamics associated with school culture and social issues like bullying within that culture. Drew, Hardman, and Hosp have observed that because schools are complex social sites, it would be valuable to amass information about how educators work in their natural surroundings (2008). Furthermore, Merriam has noted that other benefits to a qualitative study would include not only an examination of the numbers, but discovering the meaning of what is being studied or understanding how the participants may interpret their experiences. The opportunity is also present to get more descriptive through interviews, field notes, and documents. Words are used instead of numbers to express what a researcher is trying to analyze (2009). Both qualitative and quantitative methods have merit in research, therefore a mixed methods approach could also be beneficial. Drew, Hardman, and Hosp have suggested that a
mixed methods approach can cut down on the potential for limitations or instability of the research study (2008).

In order to further strengthen the study, I would also suggest dividing data into additional demographic categories which would broaden and generalize the study. I would consider using any or all of the following categories:

- male and female
- areas of the country (urban, suburban, rural)
- grade levels
- highest degree held
- state
- licenses held
- subjects taught
- race
- ethnicity

Additionally, the scope of the research on the perceptions of empathy could be broadened to include the general public, parents, and/or caregivers. The survey could even be modified for students taking into account different demographics and analyzing the perceptions of students regarding their understanding of empathy as well as their feelings about empathic connections with teachers, other students, and whether they feel empathy has an impact on bullying. It is possible that educators’ perceptions are different than the perceptions of those being served. This could be a useful comparison study so that educators and students might have a better understanding of one another.
Recommendations and Conclusion

This research study analyzed the perceptions that educators have about the emotional literacy topic of empathy and the role it plays in the learning process as well as issues like bullying. Do educators perceive that they are meeting the empathic needs of students, and do they feel equipped to embody empathy as a component of teaching and learning?

One area of the study that showed a significant statistical difference was between school support personnel and teachers with the latter not feeling as adequately equipped to be empathic with their students. I would suggest exploring professional development training options geared towards understanding emotional literacy. In today’s educational realm, it is fairly commonplace for administrators and guidance counselors to be equipped with training which involves emotional literacy concepts. I believe this type of training would be beneficial to teachers as well.

The other area of the study that showed a significant statistical difference was again between school support personnel and teachers regarding the perception that teaching empathy can have a positive effect on bullying. School support personnel seemed to have a stronger belief that teaching empathy can have a positive effect on bullying than teachers. There are many stakeholders representing the school system locally, nationally, and internationally. In a culture that necessitates keeping safety first for education to take place, it needs to be determined how teaching empathy can become a trusted practice for creating safe environments. Safety is often viewed as being protected from physical harm, which is indeed imperative. However, bullying can be physical or emotional in nature. This study attempted to establish emotional safety as
being of equal importance, which I believe begins with empathy. The first step to an
emotionally safe environment begins when educators feel more equipped and empowered
to develop empathic connections with students. The logical progression is that through
establishing empathic connections and modeling an empathic posture with students,
children will learn empathy with one another. Developing a perspective to appreciate and
respect others’ differences is not only beneficial to everyone in the school yard, but it
evolves into a lifelong asset in one’s character.

I have heard some educators say that we do not have time to focus on anything
but academics. Emotional literacy is just one more thing to deal with. I could not agree
more. Emotional literacy is one more thing we need to deal with so that we can focus on
academics. When students feel physically and emotionally safe, they are less stressed
and more apt to think critically.

As educators, we cannot take a depraved indifferent approach to empathy and
pass it off as someone else’s responsibility. Not making the correlation between empathy
and the overall education of children will only magnify issues like bullying and
emotional poverty within our schools and society. I would suggest that anyone
interacting with children in schools be trained through an emotional literacy program
conducted by professionals on the topic. This would be a critical first step in building a
foundation for redesigning the school culture to be an empathic community of inclusion.
Tapping into community resources such as social workers, school counselors, or mental
healthcare professionals to assist with continued evaluation and integration of empathy
within the school would be a recommended starting point to ensure sustainability of the
redesign. Furthermore, sending representatives from the school to attend conferences
that offer sessions involving emotional literacy topics would be another way to stay abreast of current trends and research. In addition, I believe every student should have the opportunity to understand and feel empathy through education and experiential learning. Educating the whole child is an educator’s ultimate responsibility.

In closing, further research needs to be conducted on empathy in education so we can measure our current perceptions and develop programming that addresses issues surrounding emotional literacy. This study is a beginning point of understanding the need for pre-service training in empathy as well as in-service training to keep educators current in the evolving field of emotional literacy and its link to an improved educational experience for students and educators.
References


Bevel, M., & Altrogge, G. (2010). Preparing future administrators and teachers:


Seaman, M. (2012). Learn how to foster empathy within your curriculum to increase the emotional intelligence of middle schoolers. *Education Digest, 78*(1), 24-28.


APPENDIX A

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION
Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that Joseph Hendershot successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 02/24/2014.

Certificate Number: 1415154
APPENDIX B

LETTER OF HSRB APPROVAL
TO:        Joseph Henderson and Dr. Harold Wilson  
FROM:      Carol Reece, HSRB Chair  
DATE:      March 11, 2014  
SUBJECT:   Human Subjects Review Board Approval  
PROJECT TITLE:  "Educators' Perceptions Regarding Empathy and Its Overall Impact on the Educational Learning Process in Our Schools"  
HSRB APPROVAL CODE:  01-21-14-4073

The Human Subjects Review Board has approved the research proposal you submitted. You may proceed with the project.

The primary function of the HSRB is to ensure protection of human research subjects. As a result of this mandate, we ask that you pay close attention to the fundamental ethical principles of autonomy, justice, and beneficence when establishing your research proposal. These ethical principles pertain specifically to the issues of informed consent, fair selection of subjects, and risk/benefit considerations.

If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Carol Reece, DNP, APRN-CPNP  
E-mail:  creece1@ashland.edu
APPENDIX C

CONNECTIONS CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM
Connections Conference 2014
Technical Assistance for Rigorous Academic and
Career Technical Education Project (Connections Project)
Registration Form

If you are new to Connections, you will find this conference to be one that is clearly focused on new and exciting practices in all discipline areas. It features teachers, counselors and other educators from Illinois and around the United States sharing innovative programs and strategies that have been successful in their schools so to grow professionally, to showcase exemplary programs, and to support school improvement strategies.

Early Registration Deadline: February 7, 2014

- Improving rigor in middle school and high school coursework
- Creating positive student transitions to and from high school
- Advancing students success through the Illinois Learning Standards incorporating the Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards
- Building quality career & technical education concentrations in high school
- Designing high impact guidance and advisement systems
- Addressing the cultural and human relations needs of students, parents and communities
- Integrating innovative instructional technology approaches to advance student learning
- Utilizing data to improve school practices
- Advancing students success in the core learning areas
- Creating policies and support systems to advance student attendance, graduation rates, career success, and postsecondary transitions
- Preparing students for their future through Career Counseling programs
- Addressing the important role career & technical education plays in developing student academic core abilities

March 12-13, 2014
Wednesday & Thursday

Pheasant Run Resort
in St. Charles, Illinois

Offering:
- Keynote Speaker
- Featured Presentations,
- Breakout 1-hour Sessions
- Networking Social

Conference Sponsor:
Illinois State Board of Education and Illinois State University
**Name badge information (Print clearly)**

*(Attendees only - No exceptions!)*

**Name**

**Badge Name**

**Position/Title**

- Check the category that best applies to your responsibilities:
  - Administrator
  - Counselor
  - Faculty

**Subject Area:** (Faculty only)

**Institution/Company**

**Mailing Address**

**City**

**State**

**Zip**

**Telephone**

**Ext.**

**Fax**

**E-mail**

**Special needs**

- Reasonable accommodations are available upon request. Please indicate services needed:
  - Sign language interpreter
  - Assistance because of visual impairments
  - Wheelchair accessibility
  - Vegetarian meal
  - Diabetes-friendly meal
  - Seashell Beach-friendly meal
  - Other

**Registration fees**

Registrations received without a check or credit card information will not be processed. Purchase orders will be allowed ONLY for group registrations of 10 or more people with an official purchase order attached.

**I plan to attend:**

- Early Registration - Postmarked by February 7, 2014
  - Full 1/2 Day Conference $390
  - Wednesday, March 12th ONLY $115
  - Thursday, March 13th ONLY $50

- Regular Registration - Begins February 8, 2014
  - Full 1/2 Day Conference $210
  - Wednesday, March 12th ONLY $138
  - Thursday, March 13th ONLY $110

**Total enclosed/charged**

I am registering a group of 10 or more people and have enclosed an official purchase order to cover the group's registration.

**Methods of payment with Registration**

- Check enclosed, payable to Illinois State University
- VISA
- MasterCard
- American Express

**Account number:**

**Expiration date:**

**Cardholder's signature:**

**Registration deadline**

All early registrations must be postmarked by February 7, 2014. Regular registrations can be received through February 8, 2014. The last day to register by phone is March 7, 2014. Online registration is available only with payment by credit card. Check or cash for regular registration fees (as listed by right).

**Confirmation**

If you have not received confirmation at least 10 days prior to the conference, please call Illinois State University Conference Services at (309) 438-2160 or (800) 877-1375.

**Refund/Cancellation Policy**

If cancellations are made in writing at least 10 days prior to the scheduled conference, registration fees will be refunded less a $45 processing fee. However, no refunds will be made for cancellations received within 10 days of the conference.

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**Presenters:** Do not register with this form. Once confirmed as a presenter, you are registered for the conference through the Connections Project office.

If you have questions regarding this, please call (309) 438-5185 or send an email to connections@ilstu.edu.
Registration, Lodging, and CPDU Information

Four easy ways to register:
- Telephone: (800) 877-1473 or (309) 438-2166 by credit card
- Fax: (309) 438-5344 by credit card
- Mail: Send the completed registration form with payment to Illinois State University Convention Services 2014, Attendee Registration, Campus Box 8611, Normal, IL 61761-8611
- Web: Please visit us online at http://www.conventionproject.ihs.edu or call Convention Services at (309) 438-2160 or (800) 877-1473.

Registrations received without a check or credit card information will not be processed.

Confirmation
- If you have not received confirmation of your registration within 10 days, please call Convention Services at (309) 438-2160 or (800) 877-1473.

Questions?
- For registration questions, call Convention Services at (309) 438-2160 or (800) 877-1473. For questions about the hotel, call (309) 438-5185.

Refund/Cancellation Policy
- If cancellations are made in writing at least 10 days prior to the conference, registration fees will be refunded, less a $5 processing fee. However, no refunds will be made for cancellations received within 10 days of the conference.

Registration Deadlines
- Early registration must be postmarked by February 7, 2014.
- Regular registration begins February 8, 2014.

Lodging
- Lodging is the responsibility of the individual registrant. It is strongly recommended that you make your reservations early. If you are staying at the Renaissance Hotel, please make your reservations at the conference rate. Reservation information is in the Event Program packet.

Continuing Professional Development Units (CPDUs)
- Only CPDU credits are available for attending the Conference.

EARLY REGISTRATION - Tuesday Night, March 11, 2014 7:30 p.m. — 9:00 p.m.

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>7:30 a.m. - 8:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>8:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Opening Keynote Presentation</td>
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<td>10:30 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.</td>
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<td>11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>5:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.</td>
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"Early registration is offered on Tuesday evening for conference attendees only. "Onsite registration will be offered for attendees as well. An additional charge will apply. Presenters registration will begin at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday morning."
APPENDIX D

ADMINISTRATION CONSENT FORM
ADMINISTRATION CONSENT FORM

“Transforming Wounded Students—Impact of Trauma, Empathy, Identity, & Brain Development on Wounded Students”

Dear Administrator:

The Department of Education at Ashland University supports the practice of informed consent and protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you will allow the attendees of your conference to participate in the present study. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time.

This project is designed to gather data from educators on the topics of empathy and wounded students. This data collection will examine the role that the understanding of these topics play in the education of the children in our schools, what the current thoughts are on the training we have received in these areas, and whether more training is necessary.

Attendees of the conference will be asked to complete a survey which will take approximately fifteen minutes to complete. Attendees will not put their names on the survey. Attendees’ participation is solicited but strictly voluntary. We assure you that your attendees’ names and the name of your organization will not be associated with the research findings. The results of this study will be used in a report given to Ashland University in Ashland, Ohio. Results might also be published or used in a dissertation.

If you would like additional information concerning this study before or after it is completed, or have any issues or concerns, please contact one of us by phone or mail. Thank you very much for your time. We appreciate your interest and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Name of Investigator  Name of Faculty Member
Graduate Student       Joseph Hendershott  Professor       Dr. Carol Reece
Phone Number           419-606-7037       Phone No.        419-521-6877
Address                2021 Stone Ridge Ct.  Address        Schar College of Nursing & Health Sciences
City, State, Zip       Ashland, OH 44805      City, State, Zip  Ashland, OH 44805

I have read and understand the information about this study. I give consent for the attendees of this conference to participate in this study if they so choose. I understand that this consent is voluntary and can be withdrawn without penalty at any time.

Name of Conference  Signature of Conference Administrator  Date
APPENDIX E

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

“Transforming Wounded Students—Impact of Trauma, Empathy, Identity, & Brain Development on Wounded Students”

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Joseph Alan Hendershott in Ashland University’s College of Education is conducting a research study to help understand wounded students in our schools and how wounds of trauma (poverty, abuse, neglect, etc.), knowledge of brain research, identity, behaviors, empathy, and transformation affect learning in our schools and classrooms. You are being asked to participate in this research study because of your current or past involvement with children in an educational setting, including but not limited to teachers, administrators, counselors, school nurses, etc. This study focuses on empathy and the perceptions regarding empathy and its overall impact on the educational learning process in our schools.

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in the study, the following will occur:

1. You will be given a survey along with a duplicate participant consent form to sign.
2. If you are willing to participate in the research study, you must sign this consent form and return it.
3. You will not be asked for your name on the survey and no identifiable information will be collected. Additionally, no individual identities will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study.
4. You will be asked some personal information such as age, gender, state or region, years of experience, subject and grade level taught, race, or ethnicity.
5. The survey will be in the form of short answer and rating scale.
6. The research survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

1. Some of the questions about wounded students and trauma-type issues may be difficult to read and may make you feel uncomfortable. Please answer as many questions as you can to the best of your ability. If a question makes you feel uncomfortable, you may decline to answer that question and move on to the next one.
2. Confidentiality: Participants in this research study will involve no loss of their privacy and all information will be handled confidentially. Participants will not be asked to put their name on the research study survey.
D. BENEFITS

The information that you provide in this survey will help educational professionals have a deeper understanding of wounded students in our schools in order to bring them to academic success and the role empathy may play in the process.

E. COSTS

There will be no cost to you as a result of taking part in this study.

F. PAYMENT

You will receive no payment for participating in this research survey, and you will not lose anything if you choose not to participate.

G. QUESTIONS

If you have questions regarding this survey, you may contact the researcher, Joseph Alan Hendershott, at 419-606-7037 or email joe@hope4thewounded.org.

If you have any comments or concerns about participation in this study, you should first talk with the researcher. If for some reason you do not wish to do this, you may contact the Ashland University Human Subjects Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. You may reach the Chair of the board, Dr. Carol Reece via email at creecel@ashland.edu.

H. CONSENT

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. Your decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on your present or future status as an educator or student.

If you agree to participate, you should sign below.

_________________________  ________________________________
Date    Signature of Study Participant
20 QUESTIONS ON EMPATHY, WOUNDED STUDENTS, & EDUCATION

Demographic Information:

Position: ___ Teacher  ___ Administrator  ___ Guidance Counselor  ___ Other
State: ______  Area: ____ Suburban  ____ Rural  ____ Urban  ____ Other
Gender: ____  Years Experience: _____  Grade Level(s): __________________________
Subject(s) Taught: ______________________________________________________________
Highest Degree Held: ___BA/BS/BSEd/other baccalaureate degree
___MA/MS/MAT/Med/other master’s degree  ___EdS  ___EdD/PhD/other doctoral degree
Licenses Held: ___ Teaching License  ___ Administrative License (___ Principal or
___ Superintendent)  ___ Other School Personnel
Ethnicity: ___ Hispanic/Latino  OR  ___ Non Hispanic/Latino
Race: ___ American Indian/Alaskan  ___ Asian  ___ Black or African American
___ Hawaiian/Pacific Islander  ___ White  ___ Other

**KEY**  {7} Agree Strongly; {6} Agree Moderately; {5} Agree Slightly; {4} Neither Agree nor
Disagree; {3} Disagree Slightly; {2} Disagree Moderately; {1} Disagree Strongly

1. How do you define empathy?

2. An empathic connection between the teacher and student is essential to the learning process
   (please circle one corresponding number with above answer key).
   
   7  6  5  4  3  2  1

3. What are the signs you look for that might identify a student as wounded?

4. I understand the basic concepts of brain development (please circle one).
   
   7  6  5  4  3  2  1

5. I understand how trauma affects behavior (please circle one).
   
   7  6  5  4  3  2  1

6. I am able to identify wounded students in the classroom (please circle one).
   
   7  6  5  4  3  2  1

7. Please provide an example of an empathic connection between a teacher and student.

8. As an educator, how do you approach a student who may need an empathic connection?

9. I believe teachers are empathic towards their students (please circle one).
   
   7  6  5  4  3  2  1

10. When you were in school, what percentage of teachers developed an empathic connection
    with you as a student?
11. How would you define “wounded student”? 

12. I understand how to work with wounded students in the school or classroom (please circle one).

    7 6 5 4 3 2 1

13. How do you define identity?

14. As an educator, I believe I am significant in the lives of my students (please circle one).

    7 6 5 4 3 2 1

15. How do you define transformation?

16. I believe I can help students transform their lives through education (please circle one).

    7 6 5 4 3 2 1

17. I believe students need to have a strong identity to achieve in school and in the classroom (please circle one).

    7 6 5 4 3 2 1

18. I feel I need more training on how to better deal with wounded students in my school or classroom (please circle one).

    7 6 5 4 3 2 1

19. I feel adequately equipped as an educator to be empathic towards my students (please circle one).

    7 6 5 4 3 2 1

20. I believe that teaching empathy can have a positive effect on bullying in schools (please circle one).

    7 6 5 4 3 2 1