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The Influence of Reading a Young-Adult Novel About Social Justice, with Dialogue Journals, on Students' Empathy and Academic Skills

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THE INFLUENCE OF READING A YOUNG-ADULT NOVEL ABOUT SOCIAL

JUSTICE, WITH DIALOGUE JOURNALS, ON STUDENTS' EMPATHY AND

ACADEMIC SKILLS

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

TEACHING AND LEARNING

by

Carmen Maria Marroquin

2022

To: Dean Michael Heithaus
        College of Arts, Sciences & Education

This dissertation, written by Carmen Maria Marroquin, and entitled The Influence of Reading a Young-Adult Novel about Social Justice, with Dialogue Journals, on Students' Empathy and Academic Skills, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

Rebecca Christ

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Date of Defense: October 18, 2022

The dissertation of Carmen Maria Marroquin is approved.

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Vice President for Research and Economic Development
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2022

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my children, husband, and parents, who have supported me throughout this process. I also dedicate this work to my students, who have been an endless source of inspiration for me.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

accomplish much without you. Thank you for your patience with me and your constant support.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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by

Carmen Maria Marroquin

Florida International University, 2022

Miami, Florida

Professor Joyce C. Fine, Major Professor

The purpose of this study was to determine if a relationship exists between using dialogue journals (DJs) while reading a young-adult novel and students' empathy development and academic skills. The researcher applied a convergent mixed methods design to research and analyze the data from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives to compare the results and tell a broader story. The quantitative data were derived from a pre and post Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) questionnaire. Ninth-grade students (n=137) read a young-adult novel, The Hate U Give (Thomas, 2017), and completed the questionnaire before and after reading the novel. Additionally, some students from the sample (n=47) participated in using DJs to answer questions and discuss the novel in writing with the teacher and their peers. A basic qualitative research design was implemented to provide a broader view of the data. Then, a thematic analysis was employed to report the major themes found through coding of the dialogue journals with culturally relevant pedagogy as a framework.

Results from the paired samples *t*-tests revealed significant differences in the means from the pre- and post-administration of the questionnaire for the fantasy scale (FS), empathic concern scale (EC), and personal distress scale (PD). By comparing the pre- and post-questionnaire responses of students who read the book, their empathy increased toward fictional characters, and in feeling sympathy towards others. Also, their feelings of despair towards negative circumstances decreased. To investigate if there was a significant difference in empathy because of the DJs, the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) showed that there was no change in empathy between students who used the DJs and those that did not.

Instructional implications include teachers using pre-selected books and guided discussion to help promote the development of empathy and perspective taking in students while also addressing students' academic skills. Until now, limited research exists on the relationship between literature and empathy and DJs and writing skills for high school students. This study builds on that and contributes to the importance of choosing a young-adult novel while using DJs.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Educational and interdisciplinary scholars have debated education's purpose(s) for centuries. What is the purpose of education? It depends on who the question is directed to. However, there is some consensus amongst foundations of education scholars who study the school-society relationship. In a democratic society, the normative assumption is that education should be viewed "as a human value essential for helping individuals create autonomous and meaningful lives in communities with others" (Tutwiler et al., 2013, p.115) and one that education and society are intertwined and educational researchers seek to investigate social dilemmas through philosophical thought, historical inquiry, and sociological theory, often utilizing interdisciplinary approaches which inform professionals in the field beyond the necessary standards of teacher preparation and praxis (Dotts, 2013). Because school and society are connected, it is important to understand this relationship and its influence on the lives of students, teachers, administrators, and society as a whole. As multicultural social reconstructionist Counts (1932/1978) states, "on all genuinely crucial matters, the school follows the wishes of the groups or classes that actually rule society" (p. 29). However, what if education could transform this system by fostering critical thinking and dialogue?

English language arts (ELA) is a content area where teachers have many opportunities to engage students through discussion. They also have the unique opportunity to use fiction and nonfiction to create safe spaces for students to dialogue on their views. With dialogue between the teacher and peers, students may develop their

critical consciousness, defined as the ability to recognize and analyze systems of inequality and the commitment to take action against these systems, in the classroom when exploring a novel with social justice themes (El-Amin et al., 2017). Dialogue is instrumental in the ELA classroom because it engages students in what they are reading and helps them construct new meanings of the text by encouraging critical thinking (Freire, 1970/2018). This study builds on the idea that dialogue is an act of freedom, and the classroom may be a place to exercise that freedom (Freire, 1970/2018). Additionally, Freire's (1970/2018) concept of dialogue is one that fosters equity and works toward social change. While dialogue is typically verbal, one way that students and teachers may use dialogue in the classroom is through writing. In the case of written dialogue, the teacher and students may use a dialogue journal (DJ) to examine the text they are reading in the classroom (Atwell, 1984). Through a DJ, students may connect and express their ideas in writing using the text and their lived experiences. DJs may also provide a safe space for students who do not feel comfortable speaking during whole-class verbal discussions to speak freely about any topic. Additionally, students and teachers may use a DJ to engage with the reading in meaningful ways while also learning writing skills to communicate more deeply about their thoughts. The DJ may be a venue for teachers to increase the dialogue and discussion of essential ideas in a text and increase students' critical thinking (Atwell, 1984).

The pedagogical framework of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) addresses student achievement while helping students accept their cultural background and challenge the status quo school system perpetuated in education (Ladson-Billings, 1995a,

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p. 469). Another vital component of dialoguing and discussing with each other to promote critical thinking is the young-adult novel that the teacher chooses to use with their high school students, a process in line with Freire's (1970/2018) concept that dialogue cannot be reduced to the teacher "depositing" information onto students, but one in which the teacher collaborates with students. The text is instrumental in increasing students' awareness of the world and empathy (Cress & Holm, 2000). The selection of curricular materials

> "must be the present, existential, concrete situation, reflecting the aspirations of the people. Utilizing certain basic contradictions, we must pose this existential, concrete, present situation to the people as a problem which challenges them and requires a response — not just at the intellectual level, but at the level of action" (Freire, 1970/2018, pp. 95-96).

Thus, the text's subject matter may be the catalyst for connections the students may make and the new ideas they may have about the world. Critical consciousness and the praxis of justice are what teachers can address through text that engages students and that reflects the injustices in society. Social justice is anchored in critical consciousness and interrogates typically oppressed people's social and political practices that promote civic participation toward emancipatory education (Freire, 1970/2018). A way to address social justice, empathy, and academic ability in the classroom is through young-adult novels that create a space for students to feel safe and that allow them to see themselves in the text and also will enable them to learn about people and communities that may or may not be like their own communities (Bishop, 1990). To date, there is past research that

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suggests that literature may increase dialogue and empathy in students (Keen, 2007).

Still, until now, no study has looked at how DJs and reading a young-adult novel with

social justice themes promote empathy development in adolescent students.

Empathy

Empathy leads to a capacity for prosocial behavior where one can see a situation

from another's point of view, which may increase in late adolescence (Hawk et al., 2013).

Empathy has been studied across various disciplines in the social sciences. Psychologists

develop scales, utilize self-reported data, or even employ brain imagining to measure the

presence or absence of empathy and the connection between a human experience (Keen,

2006). Narrative theorists have identified that the use of first-person narration and the

internal representation of characters' consciousness and emotional states correlate to the

development of empathetic experiences in students (Keen, 2006). To do so relies on the

prerequisite development of critical thinking skills, defined as "a learning process that

focuses on uncovering and checking assumptions, exploring alternative perspectives, and

taking informed actions as a result" (Brookfield, 2022, p. 311). Critical thinking goes

hand in hand with empathy because it requires that an individual see situations beyond

what is directly in front of them. To feel empathy, individuals need to have the ability to

think critically and ascertain different perspectives to find other ways to approach a

problem (Keen, 2007). Research reveals that children with high empathy have lower

aggression than children with low empathy (Bryant, 1982). Additionally, teachers may

teach empathy in the classroom and, in doing so, may increase students' empathy (Meek,

1957). Therefore, this suggests that educators can teach empathy which may lead to a

decrease in hate crimes and an increase in critical thinking. To that point, educators may be able to create safe spaces where students can explore their own biases through reading, discussing, and writing about literature, which may help their development of empathy. The educator's choices can help students make sense of the world around them and encourage students to use the knowledge they gain about other cultures and communities to come to their conclusions. This study aims at examining how students develop their empathy and academic skills by reading a young-adult novel that contains social justice themes while engaging in written dialogue and discussion through DJs.

Statement of the Problem

Social justice has been at the forefront of education because teachers can engage students in ways that may increase their critical consciousness and empathy. Recent developments in increased violence against minorities have shown the need for teaching empathy in the classroom. The FBI released hate crimes statistics for 2020 in 2021, and the statistics show an increase of 32% from 2019 in hate crimes related to race, ethnicity, and ancestry (The United States Department of Justice, 2022). Examples of past and present hate crimes exist in society, and the statistics suggest that they are increasing. For example, in 2012, a 17-year-old Black adolescent was shot and killed with a bag of Skittles in his pocket by a then 28-year-old George Zimmerman; in 2018, a 46-year-old gunman opened fire in a Synagogue in Pennsylvania while shouting antisemitic slurs and killing 11 congregants; in 2019, a 21-year-old white supremacist opened fire on a primarily Latin American crowd of patrons at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas and killed 23 people; during the summer of 2020 an unarmed Black man, George Floyd died of

asphyxiation because a 46-year-old White police officer would not take his knee off his neck for eight minutes and 46 seconds. There are many more instances of hate-motivated attacks around the United States, and these more significant societal inequities impact students and teachers within the classroom. Across the United States and worldwide, hate groups are flourishing, with social media being a prime facilitator for the exposure and spreading of lies about minority groups (Seitz, 2022). According to a survey by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2022), 99% of young adults between the ages of 13-17 reported using social media at least once, with both social media usage and internalization of media messages increasing during COVID-19 (Dennen et al., 2021). As such, educational spaces have the potential to foster critical thinking and equip students with tools for deconstructing these media messages. Providing spaces to encourage the development of empathy may counter the rising hate that has taken hold in this society. This study builds on past research surrounding literature and empathy development. It contributes to the relationship that DJs may have with students' empathy development and academic ability, which goes beyond grammar, usage, and spelling.

Purpose of the Study

Studies have been conducted by educational researchers on the effect literature has on students' empathy; however, a body of research on the relationship between reading a young-adult novel that contains social justice themes while using a DJ with empathy does not exist (Whalen, 2010). Most of the existing research focuses on how literature affects student empathy (Junker & Jacquemin, 2017; Nomura & Akai, 2012).

However, this present study aims to determine whether there is a relationship between developing empathy and academic skills while reading a young-adult novel (Whalen, 2010). In this study, high school students read a social-justice-themed novel, *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2017) while completing a 28-item Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) to document and measure empathy through dialogue and scale measurement and participating in DJs. In this study, dialogue journalling included answering prompts, responding to their peers in writing, and responding to their teacher in writing. Also, the secondary purpose of this study is to determine if deeper discussions are gleaned through DJs and if using DJs has a relationship with students' academic skills. Additionally, it describes to teachers how written dialogue with their students may produce rich conversations with them about the text and society.

Research Questions

This study will seek to answer the following questions:

1. Does reading *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2017) increase self-reported empathy using the Interpersonal Reactivity Index questionnaire with ninth-grade students?

    a. Does empathy increase in classrooms that use dialogue journals?

2. How is students' empathy expressed through dialogue journals?

3. How does participating in dialogue journals affect academic ability?

    a. How do dialogue journals influence the depth of written discussion based on thematic analysis?

    b. How do dialogue journals influence the level of reading comprehension based on thematic analysis?

Assumptions

Several assumptions are part of this study. The first assumption is that the students in this study are a representative sample of the multicultural landscape of a multi-ethnic community in South Florida. The students that participated in this study are in ninth-grade English language arts between the ages of 14-16, and the classroom curriculum aligns with the Florida State Standards. Another assumption is that students will be amenable to reading a current young-adult novel that includes social justice themes that may or may not represent their community. Furthermore, it is assumed that students' academic skills would benefit from the teacher modeling writing skills through the DJs. It is also assumed that the self-reported data collected through student responses in the IRI scale and DJs will be honest and reliable. Thus, a validated scale was utilized to measure empathy in both the pre- and post-tests for purposes of quantitative data analysis, while thematic analysis was used to organize the qualitative data utilized to describe student experiences throughout reading the novel. Ultimately, it is assumed that an increase in empathy in the student sample will lead to positive prosocial behavior, an assumption supported by research that will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.

Delimitations

Participation in this study was delimited to teachers and students in ninth-grade English language arts classes in one high school in the southeast part of the state of Florida, a multi-ethnic community.

Operational Definitions

The following terms are defined to clarify their use in the current study:

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). This pedagogy "addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 469).

Critical Consciousness. The ability to recognize and analyze systems of inequality and the commitment to take action against these systems (El-Amin et al., 2017)

Critical Thinking. A learning process that focuses on uncovering and checking assumptions, exploring alternative perspectives, and taking informed actions as a result (Brookfield, 2022, p. 311).

Dialogue. A practice of freedom where the teacher and the student learn from each other to make sense of the world around them fosters equity and works toward social change (Freire, 1970/2018).

Dialogue journal (DJ). It is a way to carry out "a written conversation between two persons" (Staton, 1982, p. 4). To further the definition, they are a way to hold a conversation with students through a "written exchange" as if to recreate a "dining room table" (Atwell, 1998, p. 41).

Discussion. A classroom practice where teachers and students are involved cognitively and affectively in social ways to construct meaning and arrive at new conclusions (Almasi, 2002).

Empathy. A combination of "affective (for instance, the emotional reaction one may have toward or with a person or character) and cognitive dimensions (for example, the mental processes of considering another's perspective or imagining oneself in the situation of the

person or character)" (Junker & Jacquemin, 2017, p. 79); a prosocial behavior where one can see a situation from another's point of view, which may increase in late adolescence (Hawk et al., 2013).

Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI). A 28-item instrument that measures four empathy subscales: Fantasy, perspective taking, empathic concern, and personal distress (Davis, 1980).

Social Justice. Anchored in critical consciousness that interrogates typically oppressed people's social and political practices that promote civic participation toward emancipatory education (Freire, 1970/2018).

Summary

English language arts teachers in secondary school are tasked with exploring literature and teaching students academic writing skills. These skills are usually taught in discrete ways and sometimes do not incorporate issues relevant to social justice. In the context of the multi-lingual and multi-ethnic tapestry of the United States, it may be beneficial to include different voices and value diverse perspectives in the classroom. Students gain knowledge and make connections based on their reading materials, which may help them develop higher levels of empathy and increase their academic skills and provide them with the tools needed to participate in prosocial behavior, such as helping, sharing, and comforting others in a time of need (Eisenberg et al., 2005).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review examined the current literature related to this study. The dominant

topics of this research include: (a) the theoretical framework, (b) how DJs can impact

students' academic ability, and (c) how literature can elicit empathy in people. The

literature review also synthesizes common theoretical frameworks and research

methodologies utilized in relevant literature to review and further build a rationale for the

theoretical framework and methodology utilized in the current study.

Theoretical Framework

The Florida Standards of 2020 incorporate speaking and listening into the

curriculum for grades K-12 (CPALMS, 2019a). In grades nine and ten, the standards ask

students to prepare for a discussion of a text they previously had read. In addition, they

ask students to support their ideas with evidence and to explain why the evidence

supports their ideas (CPALMS, 2019a). Therefore, teachers must teach students how to

prepare for the discussion and support their views convincingly. Additionally, discussion

in the classroom is instrumental to engaging students in real-world issues and guiding

them toward social justice issues occurring in society and their environments. Discussion

may transform the student's ability to think about broader societal issues and construct

meaning at a deeper level (Freire,1970/2018). Therefore, the paradigm that informs this

research is critical social theory.

The critical social theory paradigm seeks to eliminate social injustices and elicit

transformation (Savin-Badin & Howell Major, 2013). Critical social theory stems from

the work of the Frankfurt School (Corradetti, n.d.). However, Paulo Freire's ideas, as they relate to education and critical theory, underpin this study in what has become known as critical pedagogy. Freire (1970/2018) claims that dialogue is a revolutionary act that seeks to give the oppressed a voice and incite change. Additionally, he asserts that educators should move away from engaging in "banking education," categorized by teachers depositing information to students to help them find their voice to create change (Freire,1970/2018). In other words, dialogue and discussion in the classroom that allows students to engage in critical thinking and where a teacher is a facilitator instead of a depositor of knowledge will increase student knowledge. It will also raise students' critical consciousness (Freire,1970/ 2018). As Freire (1970/ 2018) add, "dialogue…is also capable of generating critical thinking" (p. 92).

Additionally, Leonardo (2004) states that "[i]n quality education, criticism functions to cultivate students' ability to question, deconstruct, and then reconstruct knowledge in the interest of emancipation" (p.12). He furthers his argument that critical social theory is centered on criticism and is constantly evolving (Leonardo, 2004). Therefore, through critical social theory brought into the classroom as critical pedagogy, teachers may grow in their practice by accepting the nuances in a classroom through questioning, discussion, and new knowledge. Leonardo (2004) also argues that it is "Freire's work that promotes an analysis of culture, attention to discourse, and a recasting of the teacher as an intellectual or cultural worker" (p. 12).

Critical literacy is a component of critical social theory that supports the ideas of emancipation put forth by Freire. Appleman (2009) argues that teaching literary theory is

essential in the secondary language arts classroom. Her work stems from the ideas of

Freire (1970/ 2018) and asserts that a teacher's job "is to help students read the world and

the word" (Appleman, 2009, p. 2). While Appleman's (2009) work centers around the

teaching of literary theories in the secondary language arts classroom, she posits the idea

that teachers should present "multiple perspectives" (p. 9) as an "antidote" (p.9) to

singular ideas so that students can come to their conclusions instead of being guided by

what the teacher says is correct (Freire,1970/ 2018). Additionally, Knoblauch and

Brannon (1993) argue that critical literacy "entails an understanding of the relationships

between language and power together with a practical knowledge of how to use language

for self-realization, social critique, and cultural transformation" (p. 152). To add to the

understanding of critical literacy, Luke (2012) asserts that "it is focused on the uses of

literacy for social justice in marginalized and disenfranchised communities" (p.5). Not

only is discussion a tool for freedom, but analyzing literature that critiques "the dominant

ideologies" creates a citizenry that is an active participant in the world (Luke, 2012, p.5).

Luke's (2012) ideas support critical social theory and Freire's (1970/2018) assertions that

education should be an emancipatory practice and further ties the power that dialogue has

in creating a space of critical thinking and self-realization when students are able to see

literature and the characters from multiple perspectives (Appleman, 2009). Furthermore,

critical literacy theory is a framework that also examines how language is used and how

biases are exhibited, encouraging students to be cultural "border crossers" (Lewison et

al., 2002, p. 384; Giroux, 1992). Freire's (1970/2018) work in critical pedagogy is the

basis for critical work in education. Along with critical social theory and critical literacy,

another framework that uses the tenets of critical social theory is culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). Figure 1 provides a visual of the theoretical framework and how the ideas derive from critical social theory.

Figure 1

Visual representation of the theoretical framework that leads to CRP

Critical Social Theory	• Frankfurt School • Centered in criticism of society and is always evolving (Leonardo, 2004).
Paulo Freire	• *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* argued that dialogue is a form of freedom from the status quo (Freire, 1970/2018). • Underpinning of this study
Critical Literacy	• Is a component of critical social theory that supports the ideas of emancipation put forth by Freire. • Knoblauch and Brannon (1993) argue that critical literacy "entails an understanding of the relationships between language and power together with a practical knowledge of how to use language for self-realization, social critique, and cultural transformation" (p. 152).
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy	• Derives from Critical Social Theory, Critical Literacy and addresses Freire's pedagogical claims. • It is a framework that guides the pedagogical practice in this study (Ladson-Billings, 1992).

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) conceptualized by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1992) is used as the framework to guide the pedagogical practice in this study. This theoretical model "addresses student achievement…helps students accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives" (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 469; Ladson-Billings, 2021, p.18). By being intentional in what to teach students, addressing

their uniqueness, and introducing students to other cultures, teachers can help students see challenges from different perspectives and identify and manage their own implicit biases. This work also calls for students to grow in their "critical consciousness" (Ladson-Billings, 2017, p. 146), and teachers may achieve this through discussion. In education, this lens will provide a way of tapping into knowledge and skills that students already have when they enter the classroom (Moll et al., 1992). Students are not seen as deficient; instead, they bring ideas and knowledge from their culture and the mainstream culture. Not only does this lens bring students' own cultures to educational settings, but students also learn about other cultures, which is necessary for the global economy they will be entering (Ladson-Billings, 1995a).

According to Ladson-Billings (2009), "culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 20). To provide a picture of what CRP is, she conducted an ethnographic study examining eight teachers' teaching practices that varied in experience and how they exhibited culturally relevant teaching with African American students. Through this study, she found some commonalities between the teachers in her research and their teaching practice. The teachers "work in opposition to the system that employs them" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 20). By providing an environment where students felt valued, engaged, and part of a community, the students were encouraged to achieve "academic and cultural excellence" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 82). Additionally, a theme that appeared in Ladson-Billing's (2009) interviews is that teachers believed that students brought their knowledge to the

classroom and that they were not "empty vessels"(p.95) that the teachers needed to fill. Her ethnographic study elucidated what culturally relevant teaching looks like in the classroom. It showed that not only are teachers concerned with students as individuals and creating a community, but they also encourage students to be critical of the knowledge that they receive. This practice, in turn, creates an environment of constant learning for the students and the teachers. The knowledge created based on the eight teachers supports Freire's (1970/2018) opposition to "banking" education. The teachers encouraged students to work as a community and learn from each other (Freire,1970/2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Additionally, while Ladson-Billings (2009) found examples of CRP through her study, a tenet of this work is that it is not a one-size-fits-all or a set of directions to follow. Teachers use what they know and guide students in teaching the content by using CRP as a lens for their lessons.

As a theoretical tool, CRP has been used in teacher education programs and qualitative research. However, the fact that it is not a set of prescribed instructions means it looks different in different spaces. A study conducted by Young (2010), with eight individuals that worked at a school, showed the complexities of applying CRP to their lessons. While CRP is valued in teacher education programs, teachers in the study showed a vague understanding of it based on cultural competency and not on the other two CRP tenets, academic achievement, and critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Young, 2010). Not only that, but they also found that the newer teachers felt it was impossible to apply CRP to the teaching curriculum because they did not see how it fell in step with the "standardized curriculum and high-stakes tests" (Young, 2010, p.

257). The conclusions that Young (2010) made align with critical social theory in that there should not be a distinction between theory and practice as if they were mutually exclusive (Leonardo, 2004). However, teachers in the study found it difficult to operationalize CRP in their practice and did not adequately prepare for it because of the influence on high-stakes testing. The main limitation of this study is that they did not see a correlation between high academic achievement and high-stakes testing (Young, 2010). However, studies suggest that the opposite is accurate, and the CRP does have a positive relationship with academic ability. To support that idea, a meta-analysis by Morrison et al. (2008) shows that "Paradoxically, by disallowing real student involvement in the curriculum, the result is that the students are disengaged and alienated from their schooling and often do not succeed at high levels on the standardized tests" (p. 444). Therefore, while teachers have difficulty operationalizing CRP in their classrooms because of fear of standardized test preparation, instead of helping students show high achievement in state tests, they disengage students. In turn, they have the opposite effect.

Other studies, such as a mixed-methods study conducted by Walker and Hutchinson (2021), found that by intentionally using CRP as a guide in lesson planning, the middle school students in the study showed gains in high-stakes testing. The teaching included intentionally choosing culturally responsive texts and providing opportunities for discussion of the text, reflective writing activities, and providing time for the teacher to give small-group instruction (Walker & Hutchinson, 2021). Their study suggests that students achieve when teachers know their students and are intentional in their teaching. This study also indicates that teachers who intentionally choose the texts to read in the

classroom may have a higher possibility of increased academic achievement. Although standardized testing goes against the basis of critical social theory, it may still serve as an indicator for access to the dominant educational framework and show academic achievement through other means of culturally relevant teaching that the teacher implements (Ladson-Billings, 1995a; 2021). The findings are further supported by another mixed-methods study conducted by Houchen (2013), a teacher-researcher, who found that by intentionally implementing culturally relevant teaching tenets into her lesson planning, her students were successful in the high-stakes testing titled Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), which resulted in 84% of her students passing the state standardized tests as assessment retakers in 11th grade. The year her students retook the FCAT, the state's passing rate was 29%. Her study centered around high-school students who had not passed the FCAT during their tenth-grade school year. They were placed in an Intensive Reading course for remedial reading instruction. Her study consisted of units of study that included building a class community where students felt cared for, testing skills and strategies, and teaching about topics that students were interested in. As noted in her study, she also learned from her students and created a caring relationship with them. While she provided them with test-taking techniques, her teaching also reflected high academic expectations, an intentional insight into their culture and needs, and critical consciousness (Houchen, 2013).

With that in mind, teaching must carefully consider students' interests and cultural identity. One way that researchers have exhibited the practice of CRP is through the use of the musical genre Hip Hop in education. Ladson-Billings (2017) admitted that

CRP needed to consider the student's cultural identity, but that does not necessarily mean where they came from. Another iteration of culturally relevant teaching is culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP). As reflected by Paris and Alim (2017), incorporating "youth culture" further supports the students' cultural competence (p. 147). By including what the students identified with through Hip Hop and the arts, Dr. Ladson-Billings (2017) created an inclusive program that did not neglect a group but created an inclusive environment. While there is value in CSP, CRP provides a complete framework for student learning. In a review of the research that has used CRP, Piazza et al. (2015) found that the practices exhibited by teachers are aligned with literacy learning in that students read the texts and form connections to create meaning. While research shows the positive effects of CSP, there is limited empirical evidence that supports the claims that CRP or CSP helps students increase their reading abilities.

To that point, DJs present an opportunity to use written discussion in the classroom to investigate if reading a young adult novel and dialoguing about it in writing provides data that support increased academic skills and empathy development. According to Staton et al. (1982), the DJs are used "[to carry] out a written conversation between two persons" (p. 4). To further elaborate, it is a dialogue between two people in the written form that may resemble a conversation around the "dining room table" (Atwell, 1998, p. 41). This conversation presents an opportunity for students to engage in writing about what they are reading and make connections to the text. It may also provide a safe space for students to speak about controversial issues in the reading and explore their feelings about events or themes in writing instead of verbal discussion. Students

who do not typically contribute during in-class oral discussions may find it easier to discuss through written communication. Freire's (1970/2018) ideas about challenging the status quo and transforming through dialogue are in step with the goals of using a dialogue journal to promote critical thinking in students.

Dialogue Journals and Academic Ability

Typically, teachers use DJs as a source of communication between the teacher and the student or student-to-student to engage students in their lives organically. In a study conducted with fifth and sixth graders in an elementary school with students from different ethnic and racial groups, the teacher gave topics to initiate a conversation with students at the start of the school year (Staton et al., 1982). Teachers gave students expectations on how to use the journals and write in them at any time throughout the school day. The teacher would take the journals home and respond to the students. The researchers identified themes in their journals and found "richness and diversity" in the students' writing (Staton et al.,1982, p.50). In the case of the study, the teacher did not formulate questions. Instead, she consistently asked questions based on what students wrote in the journal. Additionally, the "mutual conversations" positions the teacher at the same level as the students and promote equality (Staton et al.,1982, p. 98). While this study did not incorporate the teaching of writing, the researchers found that the students' spelling improved from Fall to Spring in their journals (Staton at al.,1982). It provides valuable insight into how journals can serve as a modeling tool for teachers to teach writing to students about literature. However, the study did not look at students' responses further than spelling. Even though conventions can measure student

improvement, they do not give information on students' learning or critical thinking. Furthermore, DJs can be "authentic assessments" (Hernandez & Montelongo, 2013, p. 40) of writing. They may also be a starting point for more lengthy writing assignments in the classroom (Hernandez & Montelongo, 2013). Teachers may shy away from DJs because of the time constraints in the curriculum and the amount of time it takes to reply to students. Students may also benefit from peer-to-peer interaction through DJs, so the responsibility is not solely on the teacher (Hail et al., 2013). Additionally, teachers can use DJs in the classroom as a low-risk way to engage students in writing, model writing, and engage with peers. DJs can give students multiple ways to discuss topics and various points of view with the teacher and the other students in the class.

DJs are written discussions through dialogue, a necessary component of any English language arts classroom. It helps students find their stance on issues, and it also helps increase reading comprehension. In a study Pearson (2010) conducted, she found that students used words to find meaning in the text together. The selected text may be a catalyst for developing independent thought on social issues and presents a way for students to disagree and relate the text to their own lives (Bishop, 1990; Knoblauch & Brannon, 1993). In a study at a secondary high school where students needed to partner with another student to dialogue in writing about a multi-cultural text, *Buried Onions* by Gary Soto (1997), students exhibited a stance on "societal norms and social conditions [that] could be resisted and overcome" (Bean & Rigoni, 2001, p.245). They also found a "mutual respect and value for diverse opinions" (Bean & Rigoni, 2001, p. 247) between dialogue partners. Therefore, in using DJs with novels, students practice writing and find

ways to make connections to their lives and the real world. Additionally, the researchers

reflected on the implications of this study and worked on social empathy through the

main character's conflicts for future research (Bean & Rigoni, 2001). DJs have many

benefits in the classroom, such as increased student motivation, gaining consciousness of

other perspectives, and a meaningful way to integrate literature (Camicia & Read, 2011).

The DJs provide teachers and students with an outlet for writing about complex topics

and bring connections between the students' lives, teachers' lives, and classroom

learning.

DJs are a way for teachers and students to connect on various levels that may not

always be feasible in whole-class verbal discussions. Nancie Atwell (1984) sees the

dialogue journal as a "dining room table" (p. 241) where the discussion of topics and

books take place. In her article, the students she highlights reflect on the role of the

journal and their writing. Both students acknowledge that they grew as readers and

writers through the journal process (Atwell, 1984). In a different study by Wells (1992),

eight DJs between students, teachers, and peers were analyzed for reading development

in eighth-grade students. Wells (1992) identified categories to determine how the DJs

promoted reading development. In her analysis of the categories, she found that students

wrote letters to her differently than their peers. Additionally, she discovered that in

categorizing student letters, students became "aware of their monitoring behaviors"

(Wells, 1992, p. 301). They also became more aware of connections as they wrote to their

teachers and peers. Monitoring for understanding (Anderson & Kaye, 2017) and making

connections with the text are two critical skills in reading comprehension (Liu, 2015).

Therefore, the DJs increased students' understanding of the texts they read. One of the students reflected on the text she was reading as a difficult read, so writing about the text helped her understand the text better (Wells, 1992). Additionally, since DJs are a written form, the simple act of writing about the text aids in comprehension, as there is a connection between reading and writing (Zsigmond, 2015). In a different study by Garmon (2001), he studied how the DJs affected teacher educators in a college-level multicultural education course. The teacher and students asked questions of each other during the class. Garmon (2001) required students to answer questions in a specific format and graded the entry on completing the journal entry. In this study, Garmon (2001) categorized the responses from the 22 students who decided to participate. His analysis found that 81% of his students had a positive perception of DJs, and 19% saw drawbacks. He also created a subcategory for benefits. He determined the results as follows: "facilitating learning of course material (27%), promoting self-reflection and self-understanding (25%), procedural conveniences and benefits (21%), opportunity to express ideas (14%), getting feedback on ideas and questions (8%), and improving the teacher-student relationship (5%)" (Garmon, 2001, p. 41). More specifically, one of his students reflected on the experience of journal writing as a way to understand the main points of the reading material or lecture. By noting the main points, the students could comprehend the material from the text (Garmon, 2001). Research on the effects of writing on comprehension also supports the impact of DJs on students' understanding since students will write about what they read (Zsigmond, 2015). These studies indicate that DJs are a useful strategy teachers and students can use to enhance comprehension.

However, they do not elaborate on how students developed critical thinking through their dialogue of the text.

Not only does the use of DJs have the potential to enhance comprehension, but it is also a place where students can reflect and make sense of the world around them. Through dialogue, the teacher can engage students in a conversation that becomes more than the Initiate-Response-Evaluate (IRE) questioning model (Cazden, 2001). By giving students room to explain their thought processes and defend their ideas, they can develop their stance on multiple subjects (Appleman, 2009). A qualitative multiple-case study by Bean and Rigoni (2001) used DJs to discuss a multicultural young-adult novel in a tenth-grade social studies class. In this study, university graduate students taking a content literacy course interacted with high school students through DJs about the young-adult novel. The adult students could expand their thoughts on the book and the character from their perspective, and the high school student could do the same. This practice afforded each with insight into each other's perspectives that they each had to recognize and value (Bean & Rigoni, 2001). Furthermore, the partners also asked each other to use drawings to interpret how the characters may look. They were able to transform their communication in writing to each other and their different ways of seeing the same character. As a result, one of the high school students commented on how writing about the book helped him understand the text. This study provided more support for using DJs with novels; however, it did not show the role of the teacher. Another study by Cahyono and Deliany (2022) investigated using online tools to engage English as a foreign language university students in Indonesia to analyze their language learning by counting

the words in their paragraphs. Students had topics to choose from to guide them in their

writing. At the end of the five sessions, the researchers found that six out of the 22

students wrote more through the online DJs than they did for assignments given in class.

The results showed that the DJs helped students write more and found it a positive way to

practice writing. After all, they could communicate with the course lecturer, which made

the writing more productive because they had an audience that would respond to them.

Another positive reaction to the DJs was that the students felt more comfortable in that

the focus was on the content and not grammar and mechanics. The study supported

students using the DJs as a form of self-expression. Even though the teacher provided the

topics so students could speak about their experiences, they did not address critical

thinking or reading comprehension. As the aforementioned study suggested that students

felt optimistic about their participation in DJs, students may also feel comfortable

analyzing characters and answering questions that may probe at students' empathy and

academic ability.

Empathy

In this present research, empathy is defined as a combination of affective and

cognitive reactions of individuals (Junker & Jacquemin, 2017). That is, sharing feelings

with others and recognizing and understanding another person's mental state. Empathy is

essential in society because it promotes prosocial behavior. Empathy is a trait that

develops over time and can also be observed through prosocial behaviors. According to

"An Index of Empathy for Children and Adolescents," Bryant (1982) studied empathy

among a wide range of ages from first to seventh grade. Empathy was measured by the

Mehrabian and Epstein measure of empathy to research empathy. The results showed that seventh-grade students exhibited more empathy than lower-grade students (Bryant, 1982). Additionally, with the first and fourth graders, the "mean empathy scores" (Bryant, 1982, p. 422) had an equal effect. Therefore, this suggests that when students become older, they show signs of more empathy toward others. These findings also agree with the claim that empathy is both cognitive and affective, so as students mature and learn, they may also increase empathy (Davis, 1980). Research by Eisenberg et al. (1987, 1991) shows that as children age, their empathy increases. In a longitudinal study that examined moral reasoning in children from the age of 4-17, they found that children at younger ages acted out their prosocial behaviors. However, as children enter adolescence, their empathy becomes a "global empathy," which is exhibited as care for people that are not in their immediate environment, and perspective taking increases in adolescence. Additionally, hedonistic behavior is higher in young children, then decreases into adolescence, and then increases toward the end of adolescence (Eisenberg et al., 1991). Furthermore, children in elementary school seek approval from their peers and adults. Then in the late elementary school years, their cognitive reasoning increases, and they start experiencing more complex emotions like guilt and internal satisfaction and moving towards adolescence, where they become more apt to understand other perspectives and empathize with others (Eisenberg et al., 1991). This research supports the idea that children in adolescence are more developmentally ready to develop their empathy. Eisenberg et al. (2005) continued the longitudinal study measuring empathy from youth into adulthood on three constructs of the IRI: empathic concern (EC), perspective taking

(PT), and personal distress (PD). They examined the changes in empathy from ages 15-16 and 25-26 and saw that for the EC and PT, there was a linear relationship that showed an increase in PT but not in EC, and PD went down. They also measured helping to see if the participants helped more as they aged, and they found that it increased from early adolescence into early adulthood but then went down. Helping is an example of prosocial behavior, and EC is an example of sympathy towards others; however, the study showed that there was not a consistent upward trend for both. Therefore, teachers have an opportunity to help students further develop their empathy in high school, but research shows that empathy does not consistently increase (Eisenberg et al., 2005).

A change that may deter the increase of prosocial behavior and empathy that was not examined by Eisenberg et al. (2005) is the use of social media. More recent research on empathy has investigated social media's role in EC and PT in adolescence. A study by Dalvi-Esfahani et al. (2021) used the IRI items for the EC and PT scales, Social Media Disorder Scale (SMA), and the NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEDO-FFI) to measure empathy, social media addiction and to determine personality traits in adolescents between the ages of 15 to 18. The analysis of the respondents' data showed that adolescents with SMA reported lower empathy on EC and PT scales. This research suggests that adolescents with higher empathy are less likely to be addicted to social media (Dalvi-Esfahani et al., 2021). This research also indicates that social media usage may have a relationship with less empathy and supports the idea that teachers may be able to help students make sense of the media that they consume through literature and written reflection. Since social media is where hate groups recruit people, by addressing

empathy in the classroom, teachers may help students develop their empathy and increase it to dissuade overexposure to negative messages on social media.

Social media may have contributed to hate crimes in 2020 in Florida, where hate 109 crimes were committed (The United States Department of Justice, n.d.). While it decreased from 111 the previous year, race/ethnicity/ancestry was the motivation for 65 of those crimes, which increased from 48 the year before (The United States Department of Justice, n.d.). Indeed, a decreased empathy may not be directly linked to hate crimes. Still, hate crimes come from a lack of empathy for a particular group and exhibit the opposite of prosocial behavior (Eisenberg et al., 1991). Koopman et al. (2018) argue that "empathic reactions can be evoked…through reading about (fictional) characters" (p.170). An aspect of the empathic response is called narrative empathy, which is part of narrative feelings that happen when the reader feels sympathy and empathy for a fictional character (Keen, 2007; Koopman et al., 2018). To add to the effect reading fiction has on empathy, a study with undergraduate students showed that students with a higher score in perspective taking on the Empathy Quotient Test correlated with a higher appreciation of reading; however, empathic concern did not show to have a correlation to reading fiction (McCreary & Marchant, 2017). Perspective taking is a step towards a form of empathy because students can see situations from different perspectives through perspective taking. There is evidence that supports that reading for enjoyment may increase empathy, as mentioned above; still, there is not sufficient evidence to support that reading literature centered on social justice increases empathy. Additionally, the level of empathy may be associated with reading competence in students. A study with 38 university students who

were a mix of students with dyslexia and typical readers showed that the higher the

empathy in the FS of the IRI, the higher the correlations with reading competence in

students (Gabay et al., 2016). As such, this study seeks to investigate if there is a

connection between reading social justice-oriented literature and an increase in empathy

and also if there is a connection between academic skills and empathy levels.

Empathy through Literature

While there is no direct link between the increase of empathy and reading fiction,

through books that represent students, they can connect with the characters and put

themselves in the character's position (Bishop, 1990). The text may serve as a

"springboard to the development of empathy" (Mirra, 2018, p. 5). Adolescence is a

crucial time for children as they are finding their identity. Evidence suggests that

empathy is affected by children's relationships, which shows that they may be empathetic

toward certain people in certain situations (Silke et al., 2018). Therefore, the literature the

students engage in can help them in a time of need when dealing with many different

relationships.

A way that teachers may foster empathy in students is by exposing them to other

cultures and multiple perspectives on a variety of subjects. Changing cognitive structures

of how others perceive individuals could mitigate discrimination towards groups of

people. A tool that teachers may use to increase empathy in students is literature. Hatcher

et al. (1994) found that "true empathy in adolescence seems to begin in an identification

with fictional characters" (p. 971) as opposed to college students who are more receptive

to direct instruction in empathy. However, discussing empathy and how someone can

show empathy towards others has shown to be an effective and direct way to teach empathy to high school students (Meek, 1957). Through literature, students can experience other lives and situations that they may not be exposed to in their world. They can learn about cultures and put themselves in the character's shoes, which is part of empathy (Eisenberg et al., 1991). High school students can benefit from reading literature, and so can young children who are developmentally less empathetic (Eisenberg et al. 1991) but can learn how to create empathetic responses based on reading literature. Through stories, children can learn how to understand what is happening in the world around them (Cress & Holm, 2000). Additionally, teachers can tap into students' empathy through literature by selecting text that may elicit an emotional response in students. Then, teachers may direct students to interact with the text by asking students to underline critical parts where they may have an emotion toward the text and then discuss it (Koopman et al., 2018). In Koopman et al.'s (2018) foregrounding study, she found that undergraduate students who were directed to find text lines that created an emotion in them affected students' empathic understanding. Another way that teachers may foster empathy in students is by using writing to analyze many viewpoints, cultural contexts that influenced how characters behaved, emotional reactions to the writings, and literary themes (Junker & Jacquemin, 2017) based on literature. In this study, students were in a higher education setting, and the results gleaned valuable information about what teachers must pay special attention to foster empathy. Junker and Jacquemin (2017) assert that students' writing skills and their chosen texts must be carefully considered. Reading alone might not be sufficient to alter their levels of empathy significantly.

Therefore, while selecting literature that provides an opportunity to engage students in the characters' lives is essential, it is not enough to read. The research suggests that having writing paired with reading is also crucial in the process of not only analyzing but also reflecting (Junker & Jacquemin, 2017). Also, the researchers found that selecting a text that is accessible to students increases their empathy because it is easy to understand, as opposed to a complex text where students expel their energy in understanding the text instead of on the cognitive and emotional complexities of the text (Junker & Jacquemin, 2017). Based on this, reading and writing about literature are two tools teachers can use to increase empathy in students. Increasing empathy means that students exhibit prosocial behaviors, such as helping, caring, and acting in a way that will benefit others (Eisenberg et al., 2005). Exhibiting prosocial behaviors will discourage antisocial behaviors such as violence, bullying, and aggressive and destructive behavior (Warden & Mackinnon, 2003). Therefore, by incorporating these different practices, teachers may foster empathy in students, minimizing antisocial behaviors that may lead to hate crimes.

Empathy has many definitions across the literature, making it challenging to measure empathy in research. Davis (1980) developed an instrument that addressed individuals' cognitive and affective tendencies called the IRI. This instrument has four components that may glean information on what teachers can focus on as they decide to address the teaching of empathy in the classroom. This instrument is a self-reported questionnaire that looks at how individuals exhibit empathy through four subscales: fantasy scale, perspective taking scale, empathic concern scale, and personal distress scale (Davis, 1980, pp.10-11). These subscales may be used as components to develop

classroom tasks and activities to help students become more empathetic. As previously

mentioned, writing about reading may help students understand how they see others and

how their biases may be challenged by looking at the conflict from different perspectives.

Another aspect of empathy is self-reflection, which may be induced through writing by

answering a prompt that elicits self-reflection (Eisenberg et al., 1991). While the existing

research fails to provide a way to use direct instruction to teach empathy in English

language arts, teachers can intentionally choose literature and create prompts that tap into

a student's empathy by addressing empathy scales and asking students to reflect on their

choices. Also, empathy as a means to see the world in someone else's shoes ties in with

critical social theory because it accepts that people must look at their own lives to

"interpret the experiences of others" (Mirra, 2018, p. 8).

Additionally, empathy relates to CRP in caring for students and their work

(Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 2021). Empathy may also lead to a citizenry that strives for

social justice and the freeing of the oppressed by the oppressor (Freire,1970/2018), which

relates to cultural competence and critical consciousness detailed in CRP (Ladson-

Billings, 1995a). With that in mind, CRP through DJs presents an opportunity for

educators to strive toward social justice and ignite student empathy while also addressing

academic skills.

Synthesis of Theoretical Frameworks

Various theoretical frameworks have been employed in the literature to frame the

study of dialogue journaling. As previously mentioned, the purposes of dialogue

journaling can vary, from increasing academic performance and ability in students to

utilizing DJs as a mechanism for increasing empathy. Some studies employ a particular

framework to measure an aspect of learning, such as Liu's (2015) quasi-experimental

design that utilized schema theory to investigate how the abstract knowledge structure

that a reader brings to the text impacts recall or Zsigmond's (2015) study of

metacognition to develop strategies for increasing reading comprehension. While useful

in concrete measures, at the core, DJs are a source of classroom communication and can

be a critical source of ensuring that teachers hear children's messages. Several studies

utilize Vygotsky's social development theory as the theoretical framework that defines

the power of the connection of thought and social interaction (Vygotsky, 1987; Garmon,

2001; Hail et al., 2013). While many studies posit that DJs are social facilitators of

learning, more specific theoretical frameworks are utilized, such as the use of

multiculturalism as a mechanism to encourage multiple interpretations and to increase

awareness of social justice issues (Bean & Rigoni, 2001) and Camicia and Read's (2011)

focus on DJs as a democratic tool that fosters the deliberation of the public problems that

leads to beneficial societal action. Critical frameworks were utilized in additional studies

where DJs were used in connection to prosocial behavior or to learning about societal

issues and acting. Appelman's (2009) text *Critical Encounters in High School English*

includes chapters on the use of critical pedagogical practices in the classroom, including

Reader Response, Marxist Theory, Feminist Theory, and Deconstruction. Additionally,

Anderson and Kaye's (2017) research utilized the theoretical framework of critical

teaching to support the development of self-monitoring in students. As demonstrated in

the literature, a variety of frameworks are utilized. As this present study employs the use

of a novel containing social justice and the use of DJ to determine whether there is a relationship between developing empathy and academic skills and to determine if deeper discussions are gleaned using DJs, critical social paradigms (specifically drawing on critical pedagogy [Freire, 1970/2018] and CRP [Ladson-Billings, 1995a]) are most appropriate, as the content of the novel and subsequent use of DJs as a communicative tool encourages students to investigate and analyze a broader societal issue.

Methodologies

While dialogue journaling is an educational activity primarily informed by collecting qualitative responses and analyzing content, researchers utilize qualitative and quantitative methodologies to analyze the impact of DJs. The most common methodology used in the study of DJs over time is employing case study methodology to examine the use of DJs within one classroom or across multiple schools (Bean & Rigoni, 2001; Cahyono & Deliananey, 2022; Garmon, 2001; Pearson, 2010;). However, within the case study methodology, data collection tools differ. Some studies prioritize qualitative content analysis, such as Pearson's (2010) approach, which included the use and analysis of audio recordings, participant observation/field notes, and individual interviews. Similarly, Bean and Rigoni (2001) coded descriptive data from student DJ responses, teacher reflections, and individual interviews, an approach later reflected in Camicia and Read's (2011) analysis of DJs, written reflections from pre-service teachers, and interviews with the elementary school teacher.

In contrast, statistical measures are also utilized. For example, Hail et al. (2013) sought to determine if there was a significant difference in the quantity and content of

written responses in fourth-grade students' journals for students who had routinely dialogued with their teacher and those who had regularly dialogued with a peer, utilizing covariance (ANCOVA) to compare group scores. Cahyono and Deliany (2022) quantitatively measured the impact of DJs in the online classroom to analyze how DJs impact the number of words students write, finding a correlation between DJs and increased content. Mixed methodological approaches are also utilized in research, such as Liu's (2015) quantitative and qualitative analysis of how schemas work in the reading process, using t-tests (SPSS) to analyze a questionnaire as well as qualitative student responses to determine that readers with appropriate schema would perform significantly better than those without in both immediate and delayed recall of information from a given passage. Because the purposes of this present study are two-fold: to determine whether there is a relationship between developing empathy and academic skills while reading a young-adult novel and to determine if deeper discussions are gleaned using DJs, a mixed methodological approach will provide the most comprehensive analysis relative to the purpose of the study.

Rationale

Teachers have used discussion in the classroom widely to engage students. In the classroom, students and teachers interact and discuss different ideas that will lead to new interpretations (Almasi, 2002). One way they can do that is to engage in a discussion where teachers are facilitators who allow students to explore ideas and themes. By doing the aforementioned, teachers may encourage students to explore new ideas they did not think about before. Additionally, Freire (1970/2018) asserts that "human existence cannot

be silent" (p. 88). He argues that a teacher and student can learn from each other through dialogue. Furthermore, he states that the teacher no longer becomes a depositor of information; instead, they learn from their students (Freire,1970/2018). His research suggests that dialogue in the classroom is a powerful tool to elicit critical thinking in students (Freire,1970/2018). Therefore, dialogue that leads to a discussion is a powerful pedagogical tool for encouraging students to be active learners, and they can improve comprehension, motivation to learn, and communication skills (Boele, 2018).

To that point, dialogue that leads to discussion addresses required standards in today's classrooms. In the 21st-century classroom, the Common Core Standards, which have been adopted by most states and were used as a model for the Florida Standards, require that teachers create an environment where they will "propel conversations by posing and responding to questions . . . [to] actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions" (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2019). Because the Common Core Standards are more prevalent in the United States, they are used as a standard for generalizing what students are expected to learn nationally. For students to become independent thinkers, teachers may help students more by being a facilitator during discussions and avoiding the "banking" (Freire,1970/2018, p. 80) style. Students become critical thinkers when they listen to other claims and come to their conclusions. The main goal of education is to create critical thinkers that will solve the world's problems in the future (Mirra, 2018). One avenue that may result in fulfilling that goal is to promote discussion (written or verbal)

in the classroom where the teacher probes but does not push their thinking onto the students (Knoblauch & Brannon, 1993).

The CRP framework aligns with the research because it addresses the critical social theory that underpins this work and connects to the development of empathy in students. The researcher created questions that asked students to reflect and connect their world with the characters in the book. Additionally, the teacher replied to students, made connections, and broke down the hierarchy in the search for truth and relatability with students.

Summary

This study used a convergent mixed methods approach to analyze the relationship between the use of DJs and students' empathy and academic ability. A general background and a review of the literature concerning (a) the theoretical framework, (b) how DJs can impact students' academic ability, and (c) how literature can elicit empathy in people were presented in this chapter. Empirical research concerning CRP and DJs was not found after an extensive search of the literature. From the literature review, the researcher concluded that a need exists to examine the relationship that DJs and a young-adult novel guided by CRP may have with students' empathy and academic ability.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Introduction

This convergent mixed methods study (Creswell, 2015) aimed to investigate the relationship between using DJs in a ninth-grade English language arts classroom and empathy and students' academic skills. A convergent mixed methodology occurs when the researcher concurrently conducts the quantitative and qualitative elements in the same phase of the research process, weighs the methods equally, analyzes the two components independently, and interprets the results together (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). The quantitative method investigated students' level of empathy before, and after reading the novel, *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2017) through inferential statistics using each level's mean and standard deviation. Also, it investigated if there was a relationship between reading the novel and the empathy levels in the IRI questionnaire. The study examined the levels of empathy using a pre- and post-IRI questionnaire through a one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with students in the experimental and non-experimental classrooms.

In addition, this study analyzed the DJs through thematic analysis. The basic qualitative analysis investigated if students used empathetic statements and if they showed academic ability, measured through inductive and deductive coding of students' responses. The data from the survey and DJs were collected and analyzed during the same period in alignment with the convergent mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). The data from the DJs and the IRI questionnaire were utilized to compare

each other to confirm the findings (Meriam & Tisdell, 2016). The classes in which the study took place were divided by course level so that each class engaging with DJs represented a different ELA course level. Each student in the experimental classrooms had a virtual DJ with formatted pages and prepared questions. The question prompts that were created by the teacher-researcher were created to address state standards in reading and with the intention to make students reflect on their lives with the hope of inducing empathy in students. Furthermore, the questions were also created with CRP in mind in order to elicit student learning, cultural awareness or competence, and critical consciousness in students' responses. The teacher responded to the students' ideas in the journal, and other students also responded to each other's journals. Students in experimental and non-experimental classrooms read the same novel, *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2017). The study aimed to analyze the relationship between participating in the DJ intervention on ninth graders' level of empathy and academic ability.

This chapter describes the convergent mixed methods used for this study. The first section provides an overview of the study and reasons for the methods used. The second section includes information about the participants and the selected classes that were the control and treatment groups. The third section explains the sampling procedures of this study. Finally, the fifth and sixth section of this chapter describes the quantitative method design and the basic qualitative design.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study will seek to answer the following questions:

1. Does reading *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2017) increase self-reported empathy using the Interpersonal Reactivity Index questionnaire with ninth-grade students?

    a. Does empathy increase in classrooms that use dialogue journals?

2. How is students' empathy expressed through dialogue journals?

3. How does participating in dialogue journals affect academic ability?

    a. How do dialogue journals influence the depth of written discussion based on thematic analysis?

    b. How do dialogue journals influence the level of reading comprehension based on thematic analysis?

Specific Hypotheses

1. Ninth-grade students who read *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2017) will show an increase in empathy on the post-IRI questionnaire.

1a. Ninth-grade students who used dialogue journal will show an increase in empathy on the post-IRI questionnaire.

Null Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no relationship between empathy and reading the novel, *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2017), as measured by the scores of the IRI.

Ho2: There is no relationship between empathy and using the dialogue journals while reading *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2017) as measured by the scores of the IRI.

Participant Information

The study participants were ninth-grade students between the ages of 14-15 (*n*=164) enrolled in three classrooms (English 1 Gifted Honors, English 1 Honors, and

English 1 Regular) at an urban high school in Southeast Florida where the researcher was employed. The students in this study are multiethnic and multilingual and generally reflect the overall demographics of this district. For confidentiality and the participants' privacy, the participating high school is referred to as SE Urban High School (SEUHS). Because of the COVID-19 pandemic during this study, some students participated solely online and used virtual platforms during their assigned class time. Others participated in person with the teacher and their peers.

Participating teachers (*n*=3) were all experienced secondary language arts teachers. The teachers were established teachers in the school system. Each teacher had more than ten years of teaching experience at the time of the study. The teacher-researcher was the third teacher participant in the study. The three classrooms that were part of the intervention were one English 1 Gifted Honors class, one English 1 Honors class, and one English 1 Regular class. The teachers that participated in the study were teachers with ninth-grade English language arts students. The primary duties of the teachers were to assign the weekly chapters and prompts to the students in their classes. Two teachers (including the teacher researcher) were tasked with providing the virtual DJs to students and allowing the students time to write in the journals, where they answered the prompts and responded to each other and the teacher's comments. One teacher did not have students who participated in the treatment group, so she assigned the chapters to read and assigned the prompts for the students to answer but did not have DJs to read or respond to.

The demographics of the school population are as follows: 70% Hispanic, 15% White, 10% Black, 3% Asian, 1% two or more races, and .2% Native American Indian,

Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander. The school population demographics generally reflect the classrooms that participated in this study. However, demographics were not directly collected from participants.

The total number of students that received the consent and assent forms was 168. Of the 168 students who received the form, there was a 97% response rate (164 students) who returned the assent and consent forms; initially, 54 became part of the treatment group; they were asked to read the novel and complete the pre- and post-IRI questionnaire. They used the DJs with their teacher and classmates while reading *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2017). Not all students *(N*=164) who returned the consent and assent forms completed the pre- and post-IRI, and not all of them completed the DJs during the study. Therefore, while the number of students started at 164, 137 students completed both the pre- and post-IRI, and of the 137 students, 34% completed the DJs (Table 1). Furthermore, of the 54 students that were part of the treatment group, 47 completed the journals, so the treatment group became 47 instead of the initial 54. The classes that were part of the treatment group represented one section of English 1 Gifted Honors, one section of English 1 Honors, and one section of English 1 Regular. Therefore, each level offered at the school was represented in the study.

Table 1

Participants in the treatment and control group by Course Level

Course Level	N	Used DJ	Did not use DJ
Regular	30	14	16
Honors	45	14	31
Gifted Honors	62	19	43
Total	137	47	90

Note. The table shows the number of students per grade level who completed the pre and post-IRI.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher was an English language arts teacher at the study's school at the time of the study. This teacher-researcher is certified to teach Elementary K-5, ELA 6-12, and holds a Reading and Gifted Endorsement with the state of Florida. She is originally from Latin America, fluent in English and Spanish, and grew up in an urban setting in a large city. Additionally, she studied in the United States from kindergarten to the collegiate graduate level. Her cultural and ethnic background informs her view of biases against minority groups since she is part of a minority population that has experienced discrimination. The researcher was also the teacher for one class participating in the study. Her experience also impacts her views on teaching and learning as an ELA teacher and with young adults. Additionally, a quote that reflects her philosophy on education is, "The purpose of education…is to create in a person the ability to look at the world for

himself" (Baldwin, 1963). Because of the teacher researcher's role in this study, she followed the steps with fidelity to the procedures as opposed to the other teachers, who were more flexible with their time and the DJs.

Procedure

The recruitment phase took two weeks, and implementation took five weeks during the regular school year. All students obtained a copy of The *Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2017) as part of the already-planned curriculum. All students in the treatment group received the DJs as a Google Slides deck, with the first slide mimicking a marble composition book. The second slide of the slide deck had established guidelines. The slides after that presented the questions to which the student would respond, along with space for the student to answer, and a blank slide was added after each question slide so that classmates and the teacher could write a response to the initial response. There were no more instructions for students to add their answers and respond to others.

The initial participants (*N*=164) were those students who returned the assent and consent forms that were distributed after providing a letter of interest to the students and providing time for the teacher-researcher to answer any questions. The teacher-researcher went to physical classrooms and Zoom meetings to explain and give copies of the interest letter to the teachers so they could distribute them to the students and parents. Because some classes were solely online, teachers communicated with students through Zoom. All teachers provided the letter to parents and students on their online platform and through email. The teacher-researcher waited one week before sending parents the consent and assent forms. After students expressed their interest, the consent and assent forms were

given to students physically or through online platforms/emails. The signatures from online students and parents were collected through electronic signature.

The control classes represented different levels of ninth-grade English language arts. The classes that took part in the study but were not in the treatment group read the novel and completed the pre- and post-IRI questionnaire. They were asked to answer the questions but did not engage in DJs. The control group's classes are two sections of English 1 Gifted Honors, two sections of English 1 Honors, and two sections of English 1 Regular.

All student participants (N=164) were asked to complete the IRI questionnaire using Google Forms. Students chose the answer that they felt was more like them on a five-point Likert Scale from "does not describe well" to "describes me very well." All students who completed the questionnaire on the first day of the study provided data to establish an empathy baseline. On the last day of reading the novel, students completed the same questionnaire to show if there was an increase in empathy scales.

The novel, *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2017), is aligned with the school district's curriculum. The novel centers around a young girl, Starr, who witnesses her childhood friend, Khalil, shot and killed by a police officer. This novel was chosen with the critical literacy theory in mind because it helps students become "border crossers" (Lewison et al., 2002, p. 384; Giroux, 1992) by learning about different cultures or cultural practices. It also provides multiple perspectives centered around justice and uses language to encourage "social critique" (Knoblauch & Brannon, 1993, p.152).

Students in both groups were assigned chapters from the book based on the sections every week. The book is divided into five parts. Therefore, the schedule for reading the book was the following:

Week 1- Part 1, chapters 1-7

Week 2- Part 1, chapters 8-15

Week 3- Part 2, chapters 16-19

Week 4- Parts 3, 4, 5, chapters 20-24

Students in the initial treatment group (n=54) had a journal prompt twice a week based on the readings from that week. The discussions alternated between the teacher and classmates.

Prompts included in the dialogue journal were the following:

Week 1

- In chapters 1-7, the author creates tension. How does the author's decision to slow down the pace after the tension affect the meaning of the text? Compare your neighborhood to Star's neighborhood, how are they the same, and how are they different?

- Select two sentences from the text that show how Star feels in the different settings she lives in. How would you feel when you need to act a different way depending on the setting you are in? Why do you need to speak or act differently?

Week 2

- On page 122, Thomas writes, "funerals aren't for dead people. They're for the living." What does Thomas mean by that? In what ways are your rituals the same or different to Starr's?

- What are some ways that Starr is trying to cope with what happened to Khalil? What does this reveal about Starr? How would you handle what she is going through in these chapters?

Week 3

- In parts 1 and part 2, Angie Thomas revealed many details about Starr, her family, and Khalil. What is something that surprised you? What is something that you could relate to?

- Identify a central idea of part 2. Then, explain how the author uses details to develop this central idea. Connect it to something happening in the real world.

- In chapters 16 and 17, Angie Thomas reveals how the news can influence a story. Do you agree or disagree with her? Why or why not?

Week 4

- What is a theme of the novel? How does the author use details to develop this theme? How is this theme reflected in real life?

- In Chapter 24, Starr says, "I'm the one who saw what happened to Khalil" (Thomas 411). Why is this a significant turning point for Starr? How does this show how her character is changing? Reflect on Starr's choices, how might someone in her position have acted differently?

The control group read the novel on the same schedule and answered the same questions; however, they did not use DJs. Instead, they answered the questions as classwork, and the teacher participants had discretion over other activities they wanted the students to work on. After both groups finished reading the novel, they completed the IRI questionnaire.

Sampling Procedures

Nine ninth-grade classes were selected for this study. Three classes were English 1 Gifted Honors, three classes were English I Honors, and three classes were English 1 Regular. Students enrolled in the Gifted Honors program receive a rigorous curriculum due to the placement of students deemed eligible for gifted education. Students who are in the Honors classes are typically students who have a teacher recommendation or parent request. Students in Regular English classes do not have a recommendation or parent request. The Regular English class requires that the teacher use "texts of high complexity…and integrate…reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language for college and career preparation and readiness" (CPALMS, 2019b), although academic rigor is not as high compared to the Honors classes. Of the nine classes, three were selected to be the treatment group. One class was English 1 Honors Gifted, which was solely online; one was English 1 Honors, which was physical students in school; and one was English 1 Regular, which had a mixture of online and in-person students. The treatment group dialogued through written journals with the teacher and their classmates. The control group read the novel and answered questions independently without using

DJs to discuss the book. The teacher-researcher taught one class entirely online through the online platform for meetings, Zoom.

Students in the English 1 Gifted Honors course qualified to receive Gifted Education based on criteria established by the school district. The only level provided at the school for Gifted students is Honors. Students have an education plan updated yearly by the counselor and with the parent's consent and signature. Gifted students receive gifted services, and the teacher must be endorsed to teach gifted students or be on a waiver until they finish the endorsement (Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 2022).

Quantitative Design

Quantitative analysis was used to answer research questions 1 and 1a:

1. Does reading *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2017) increase self-reported empathy using the Interpersonal Reactivity Index questionnaire with ninth-grade students?

    a. Does empathy increase in classrooms that use dialogue journals?

The data were collected using: (a) IRI, a 28-item questionnaire (Davis, 1980).

This study was conducted with a sample of the ninth-grade English language arts classes that took part in this study.

Instrument

The instrument that was used for this study is the IRI questionnaire. It is a 28-item questionnaire that reflects four empathy subscales. The subscales are perspective taking (PT), fantasy scale (FS), empathic concern scale (EC), and personal distress scale (PD). Students indicated how well each item describes them using a five-point Likert scale: 0= does not describe me well, 1= sometimes describes me well, 2= neutral, 3=sometimes describes me well, 4=describes me very well (Davis et al., 2016). This instrument has

been validated through large populations and across different age groups in other

languages. According to Hawk et al. (2013), "the IRI also appears to be a

psychometrically and theoretically appropriate instrument for examining empathy-related

processes between youths" (p. 103). In evaluating the four-factor model, the researchers

found that the factor loadings were from .42 to .90, and the internal reliabilities of late

adolescent individuals ranged from .74 to .84 (Hawk et al., 2013, p. 100). The

adolescents in the study by Hawk et al. (2013) ranged from 13 to 18 years old (Hawk et

al., 2013). Additionally, the scale was submitted to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

and showed that the comparative fit indices ranged from .956 to .962 (Keaton, 2018). It

falls within the CFA model fit analysis to indicate that the model is a good fit.

This instrument assesses empathy's cognitive and affective components (Davis,

1980; Hawk et al., 2013). The instrument is not intended to give an overall empathy

score; instead, it measures the different components. A high level on a scale signifies

high empathy in that scale (Konrath, 2013). The PT scale is intended to measure

cognitive empathy and how a person can see a situation from someone else's viewpoint

(Hawk et al., 2013). A prompt used to measure this subscale is, "I sometimes find it

difficult to see things from the 'other guy's point of view'" (Davis, 1980). The EC scale

assesses affective empathy because it measures the feelings of compassion towards

someone in distress. An example of a prompt is, "I often have tender, concerned feelings

for people less fortunate than me" (Davis, 1980). The PD scale also measures affective

empathy because it measures the negative emotions that occur because of a person's

personal distress. An example of a prompt is, "In emergency situations, I feel

apprehensive and ill at ease" (Davis, 1980). Finally, the FS scale is a cognitive measure of empathy because it relates to feeling empathy for a fictional character in a book or movie. An example of a prompt is, "I get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel" (Davis, 1980). To measure the scales, the questionnaire uses a Likert scale that individuals use to self-report if the statement describes them well or if it does not describe them well. Within this instrument, there are two reversed score items for FS, three reversed score items for the EC scale, two reversed score items for the PT scale, and two reversed score items for the PD scale (Davis, 1980; Konrath, 2013). Internal consistency of the IRI questionnaire for each scale was evaluated using Chronbach's alpha.

Data Analysis for Quantitative Data

To analyze the data collected from the IRI and to answer the quantitative questions that are part of this convergent mixed methods study, inferential statistics were used to show the answer to research question number 1: Does reading *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2017) increase self-reported empathy using the Interpersonal Reactivity Index questionnaire with ninth-grade students? A paired samples *t*-test was used to compare means for each IRI level in this study for each scale. To determine if students' empathy increased after reading the novel and using DJs, ANCOVA was conducted to answer research question 1a: Does empathy increase in classrooms that use dialogue journals?

Qualitative Design

Qualitative analysis was used to answer research questions 2 and 3, 3a, and 3b.

2. How is students' empathy expressed through dialogue journals?

3. How does participating in dialogue journals affect academic ability?

   a. How do dialogue journals influence the depth of written discussion based on thematic analysis?

   b. How do dialogue journals influence the level of reading comprehension based on thematic analysis?

To allow for a better understanding of the relationship between reading the novel, *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2017) and using DJs, with students' empathy and academic skills, a convergent design allowed for a bridging of the quantitative analysis of the results from the pre and post empathy scales within the IRI and students' writing that allows for an understanding of how the students made sense of their lives and experiences (Merriam, 2009, p. 23). This bridge of the two methods meant that interpretive analysis of each dataset informed the other. A basic qualitative design was used to explore how students exhibited empathy and to compare the data collected from the DJs with the analysis of data from the IRI questionnaire. A basic qualitative study was used that focused on "(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 24). Specifically, a basic qualitative approach focused on students' personal reactions to what the novel's characters experienced and how those events related to their own lives. Thematic analysis was used to analyze students' emotional responses to the novel's circumstances and characters and interpret academic ability through students' responses to the DJs. The teacher-researcher analyzed the data and reported it (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The journals were read, coded with the theoretical frameworks, generated inductive and deductive themes based on coding, interpreted with the new knowledge,

and reported following the frameworks and the themes gleaned from the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Data Analysis for Qualitative Data

The DJs were analyzed using thematic analysis to compare the results derived from the quantitative analysis. Thematic analysis was also helpful in analyzing students' emotional responses to the novel's circumstances and characters and interpreting academic ability through students' responses to the DJs, assuming students engaged in deeper analysis through writing. Using thematic analysis, the researcher analyzed data and reported findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To engage in thematic analysis, the researcher followed the following phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Xu & Zammit, 2020): Phase 1. familiarizing herself with the data,

Phase 2. generating initial codes,

Phase 3. initial theme generation,

Phase 4. reviewing themes,

Phase 5. defining and naming themes, and

Phase 6. producing the report

Thus, the DJs were first collected by the researcher and analyzed using NVIVO following the phases for thematic analysis. The phases in the thematic analysis are not recursive; therefore, the researcher did not follow the phases in a linear form. The phase before coding involved the researcher becoming familiar with the data set. Before coding, the researcher first read through all the journals to determine the completed journals that

would be used for analysis purposes. The researcher also familiarized herself with the students' responses to the questions the researcher created.

The journals were then coded utilizing the theoretical frameworks described previously, CRP, to create deductive codes. Next, the researcher generated inductive and deductive themes based on coding, interpreted with the new knowledge, and reported the themes gleaned from the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Based on the students' responses to questions created by the researcher, themes appeared that showed empathic statements and academic ability.

The next phase involved two cycles of coding initiated by the researcher. The first cycle used inductive coding and focused on the words and phrases, such as "I relate to this" and "justice," in the responses from both the teacher and the students to the questions and each other. The second cycle used deductive coding with the framework of CRP to "provide a lens through which the researcher interpret[ed] and made sense of the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 57). After determining codes, codes were grouped to determine the themes that appeared from the codes (Saldana, 2013). The themes were derived from the lens of the CRP framework. The deductive coding was centered around evidence of student learning, evidence of cultures or learning of cultures, and evidence of developing "critical consciousness" (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2017, p.142).

After coding, the researcher began stage three of the thematic analysis process to generate themes. The researcher identified shared patterns in the students' responses that would help answer research questions 2, 3, 3a, and 3b. This theme development process

started to show themes, like "empathy words" to "seeing yourself in someone else's shoes" that overlapped each other and created a way to see "clustered patterning across" the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 79). After the theme development process, the researcher re-engaged with the codes to see if there were any other codes through deductive analysis of the dataset. The codes added more words and phrases that could be clustered within themes derived from the theme development process.

Next, during phase four, the researcher reviewed the "viability of the initial clusterings and explored whether there is any scope for better pattern development" (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 87). In this phase, the researcher noticed overarching themes like "empathic statements" and subthemes like "about self." Phase four was also done with the research questions in mind.

Phase five refined and established themes from the data set. This phase combined some initial themes and found subthemes across the data set. Finally, during phase six, the researcher wrote the findings from the analysis for reporting. Throughout this process, the research questions and theoretical framework served as a guide for generating and developing themes from the richness of the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Summary

This chapter provided the methods for the present convergent mixed-methods study. The first section provided an overview of the study, research questions and hypotheses, and reasons for methods used. The second section provided information about the participants and information about the classes that were selected. The third section explained the sampling procedures of the study. Also, the fourth section explained

the procedures of this study. Finally, the fifth and sixth sections explained the design of

the method for both quantitative and qualitative formats.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The results section is divided into three parts. The first part consists of explanatory data analyses, which examine whether the novel *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2017) shows an increase in the four levels of empathy found in the IRI. It also looks if using DJs had an impact on student empathy. The next part addresses the results of the general and specific research questions. To examine the hypotheses, a *t*-test was conducted to determine if students' empathy levels changed after reading the novel. ANCOVA was conducted to determine if the dialogue journal treatment (*n*=47) was statistically significant in the level of empathy students had after reading and dialoguing about the novel. The ANCOVA was conducted for each subscale: Perspective Taking (PT), Fantasy (FS), Empathic Concern (EC), and Personal Distress (PD). The third part discusses the basic qualitative study results using thematic analysis (*n*=47). The journals were deductively and inductively coded, and thematic analysis was conducted. The analysis results were compared to explore the relationship between empathy, the novel, using DJs, and academic ability.

Quantitative Analysis

Research Question 1

In this study, research question 1 under investigation was:

1. Does reading *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2017) increase self-reported empathy using the Interpersonal Reactivity Index questionnaire with ninth-grade students?

A paired samples *t*-test with pre-test score means was compared to post-test score means for one sample size (*n*=137) to answer the research question. Additionally, the means for empathy from the pre and post-test were explored by course level to analyze the change in mean for students in each course level.

More specifically, to answer the research question, a paired samples *t*-test and a comparison of means were conducted for each subscale: Perspective Taking (PT), Fantasy (FS), Empathic Concern (EC), and Personal Distress (PD) (Hatcher et al., 1994).

The questionnaire was employed to measure different underlying constructs. Each construct consisted of seven questions. The scale had an acceptable level of internal consistency, as determined by Cronbach's alpha (Table 2). The measure of internal consistency is similar to Davis (1980), who reported Cronbach's alpha between .70 and .79.

Table 2

Measure of Internal Consistency on Pre-Test and Post-Test

Scale	*M*	*SD*	Range	Cronbach's α
Pre-Test				
Fantasy total score	2.47	0.30	2.06-2.83	.78
Empathic Concern total score	2.82	0.30	2.46-3.32	.74
Perspective Taking total score	2.57	0.41	1.99-2.98	.71
Personal Distress total score	1.92	0.44	1.28-2.55	.73
Post-Test				
Fantasy total score	2.692	0.25	2.30-2.99	.78
Empathic Concern total score	2.940	0.29	2.46-3.38	.77
Perspective Taking total score	2.679	0.37	2.11-3.07	.76
Personal Distress total score	1.797	0.39	1.27-2.21	.77

Note. The Interpersonal Reactivity Index questionnaire has four empathy scales (Fantasy, Empathic Concern, Perspective Taking, and Personal Distress). Each scale is measured by seven questions in the 28- item questionnaire.

Perspective Taking Scale

Figure 2

Changes in PT from the self-reported IRI questionnaire
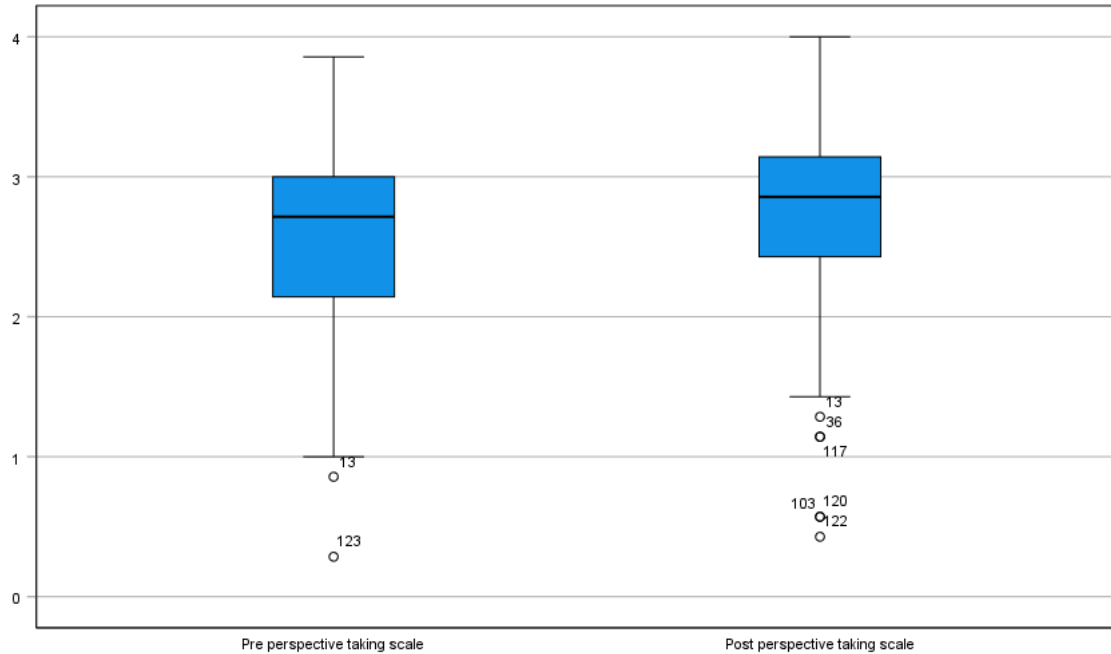
A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to evaluate whether students' self-reported perspective taking scale before and after reading the novel, *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2017) increased or decreased. The results indicated that the mean for the pre-test of the IRI for perspective taking scale (*M*=2.57, *SD*=.67) was not significantly different from the mean for post-test of the IRI for perspective taking scale (*M*=2.67, *SD*=.67), $t(136)$=-1.90, *p*=.059. The standardized effect size index, *d*, was .16, with considerable overlap in the distributions for the 5-point Likert ratings of PT, as shown in Figure 2. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference between the two ratings was -.221 to .004.

There was no statistically significant difference between the means ($p=.059$), and therefore, we can accept the null hypothesis.

Fantasy Scale

Figure 3

Changes in FS from the self-reported IRI questionnaire
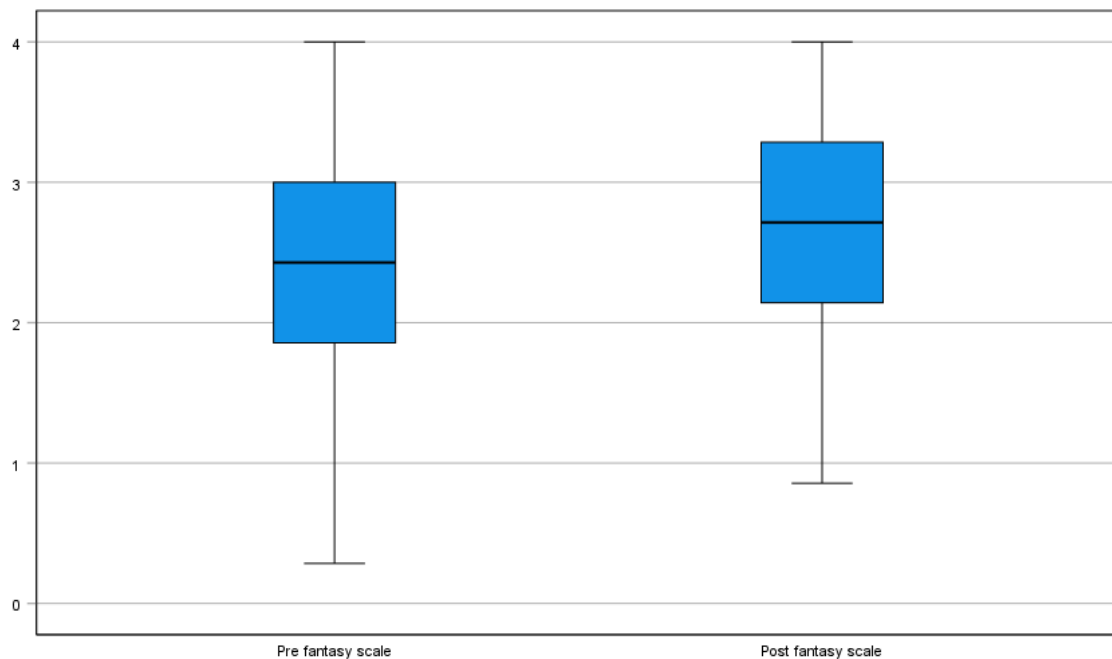
A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to evaluate whether students' self-reported fantasy scale before and after reading the novel, *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2017) increased or decreased. The results indicated that the mean for pre-test of the IRI for the fantasy scale ($M=2.47$, $SD=.81$) was significantly different than the mean for the post-test of the IRI for the fantasy scale ($M=2.69$, $SD=.06$), $t(136)=-3.57$, $p<.001$. The standardized effect size index, *d*, was .31, with some overlap in the distributions for the 5-point Likert ratings of FS, as shown in Figure 3. The 95% confidence interval for the

mean difference between the two ratings was -.34 to -.09. There was a statistically

significant difference between the means (*p*<001), and therefore, we can reject the null

hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis.

Empathic Concern Scale

Figure 4

Changes in EC from the self-reported IRI questionnaire
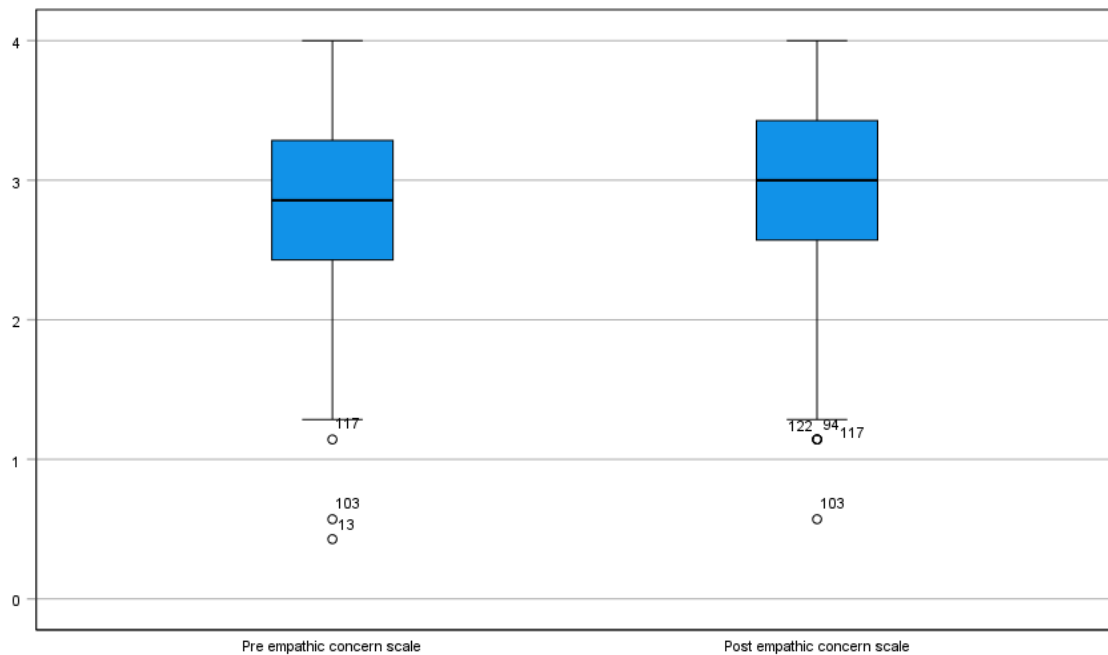
A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to evaluate whether students' self-reported

empathic concern scale before and after reading the novel, *The Hate U Give* (Thomas,

2017) increased or decreased. The results indicated that the mean for the pre-test of the

IRI for the empathic concern scale (*M*=2.82, *SD*=.69) was significantly different than the

mean for post-test of the IRI for the empathic concern scale (*M*=2.93, *SD*=.68), *t*(136)=-

2.132, *p*=.035. The standardized effect size index, *d*, was .18, with some overlap in the

distributions for the 5-point Likert ratings of PT, as shown in Figure 4. The 95%

confidence interval for the mean difference between the two ratings was .01173 to

.24270. There was a statistically significant difference between the means (*p*=.035), and

therefore, we can reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis.

Personal Distress Scale

Figure 5

Changes in PD from the self-reported IRI questionnaire
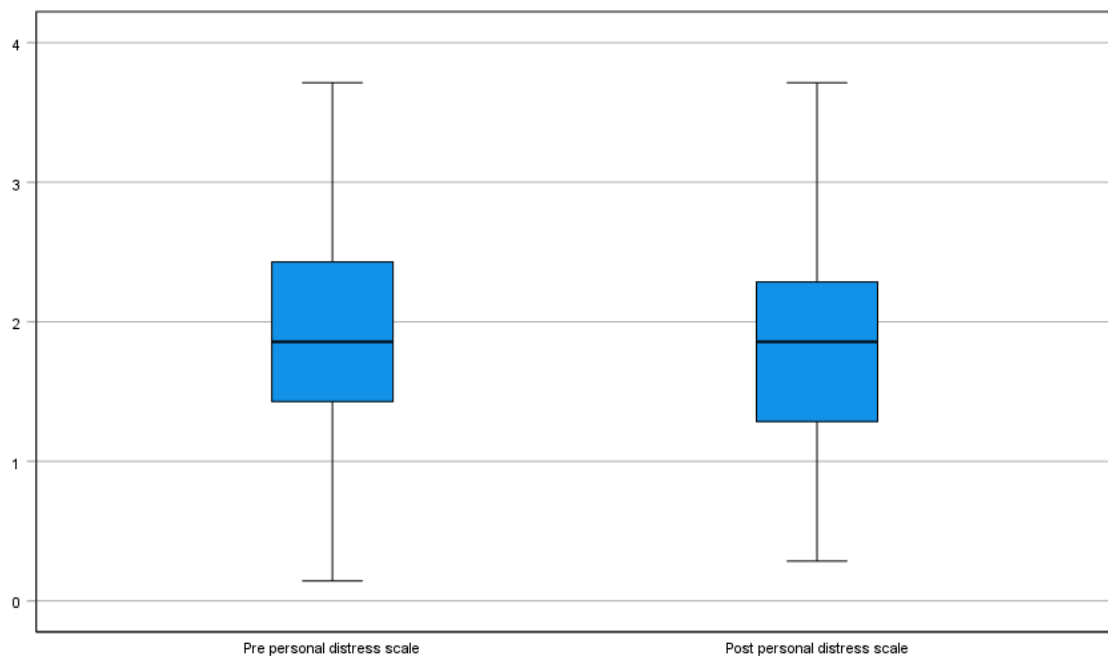
A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to evaluate whether students' self-reported

personal distress scale before and after reading the novel, *The Hate U Give* (Thomas,

2017) increased or decreased. The results indicated that the mean for the pre-test of the

IRI for personal distress scale (*M*=1.92, *SD*=.73) was significantly different than the

mean for post-test of the IRI for personal distress scale (*M*=1.79, *SD*=.74), *t*(136)= 2.17,

$p=.031$. The standardized effect size index, d, was .17, with considerable overlap in the

distributions for the 5-point Likert ratings of PD, as shown in Figure 5. The 95%

confidence interval for the mean difference between the two ratings was .01173 to

.24270. There was a statistically significant difference between the means ($p=.031$), and

therefore, we can reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. There

was a significant difference, however, where the mean decreased from the pre to the post-

test.

To further analyze the change in empathy, a comparison of means by course level

was conducted to analyze if there was a change in empathy between students in different

course levels. Table 3 shows the means by course level for each scale ($n=137$) and the

change in the means.

Table 3

Means based on course level

Course Level	Fantasy Scale			Empathic Concern Scale			Perspective Taking Scale			Personal Distress Scale		
	Pre	Post	Change in mean	Pre	Post	Change in mean	Pre	Post	Change in mean	Pre	Post	Change in mean
Regular	2.05	2.37	0.32	2.55	2.71	0.16	2.50	2.51	0.01	1.64	1.55	-0.09
Honors	2.57	2.72	0.15	2.87	2.93	0.06	2.72	2.79	0.07	1.90	1.78	-0.12
Gifted Honors	2.59	2.82	0.23	2.92	3.05	0.13	2.49	2.67	0.18	2.67	1.92	-0.75

Note. $N=137$ (Regular $n= 30$, Honors $n=45$, Gifted Honors $n=62$)

Table 3 shows that the students in the Regular English courses had the highest

positive change (.32) in FS and EC. In comparison, the students in the Gifted Honors

English course had the highest positive change (.18) in PT. Overall, the negative change in PD is consistent with the results of the *t*-test on PD.

Research Question 1a

In this study, the research question 1a under investigation was:

1a. Does empathy increase in classrooms that use dialogue journals?

An Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) statistic with pre-test scores as the covariate was conducted to test for significant differences between the treatment and control groups on the post-test.

To answer the research questions, ANCOVA was conducted for each subscale: Perspective Taking (PT), Fantasy (FS), Empathic Concern (EC), and Personal Distress (PD) (Hatcher et al., 1994).

Perspective Taking Scale

Before conducting an ANCOVA, the homogeneity-of-slopes assumption was tested. The interaction is labeled treatment*pretestpt. The interaction is not significant. $F(1,133)=.102$, $p=.749$. The tested null hypothesis is that the population slopes are homogeneous. Based on the nonsignificant test results, an ANCOVA could be conducted, assuming homogeneity of slopes.

Based on the nonsignificant test results, an ANCOVA could be conducted, assuming homogeneity of slopes.

ANCOVA was conducted, and the independent variable DJs included two levels: used DJs and did not use DJs. The dependent variable was the post-test on perspective taking. A preliminary analysis evaluating the homogeneity of slopes assumption

indicated that the relationship between the covariate and the dependent variable did not

differ significantly as a function of the independent variable, $F(1,133)=.10$, $p=.74$,

MSE=.33, partial $\eta 2$=.001. The ANCOVA was not significant, $F(1,134)=2.82$, *MSE*=.02,

$p=.09$. The strength of the relationship between the dialogue journals and the dependent

variable was not strong, as assessed by partial $\eta 2$=.021.

Figure 5

Differences in slopes and between-group means on post-test scores for values on the covariate.

Fantasy Scale

Before conducting an ANCOVA, the homogeneity-of-slopes assumption was

tested. The interaction is labeled treatment*pretestFS. The interaction is not significant.

$F(1,133)=.064$, $p=.801$. The tested null hypothesis is that the population slopes are

homogeneous. Based on the nonsignificant test results, an ANCOVA could be conducted, assuming homogeneity of slopes.

ANCOVA was conducted, and the independent variable DJs included two levels: used DJs and did not use DJs. The dependent variable was the post-test on the fantasy scale. A preliminary analysis evaluating the homogeneity of slopes assumption indicated that the relationship between the covariate and the dependent variable did not differ significantly as a function of the independent variable, $F(1,133)=.06$, $p=.80$, $MSE=.02$, partial $\eta 2=.000$. The ANCOVA was not significant, $F(1,134)=.004$, $MSE=.39$, $p=.948$. The strength of the relationship between the DJs and the dependent variable was not strong, as assessed by partial $\eta 2=.000$.

Figure 6

Differences in slopes and between group means on post-test scores for values on the covariate.
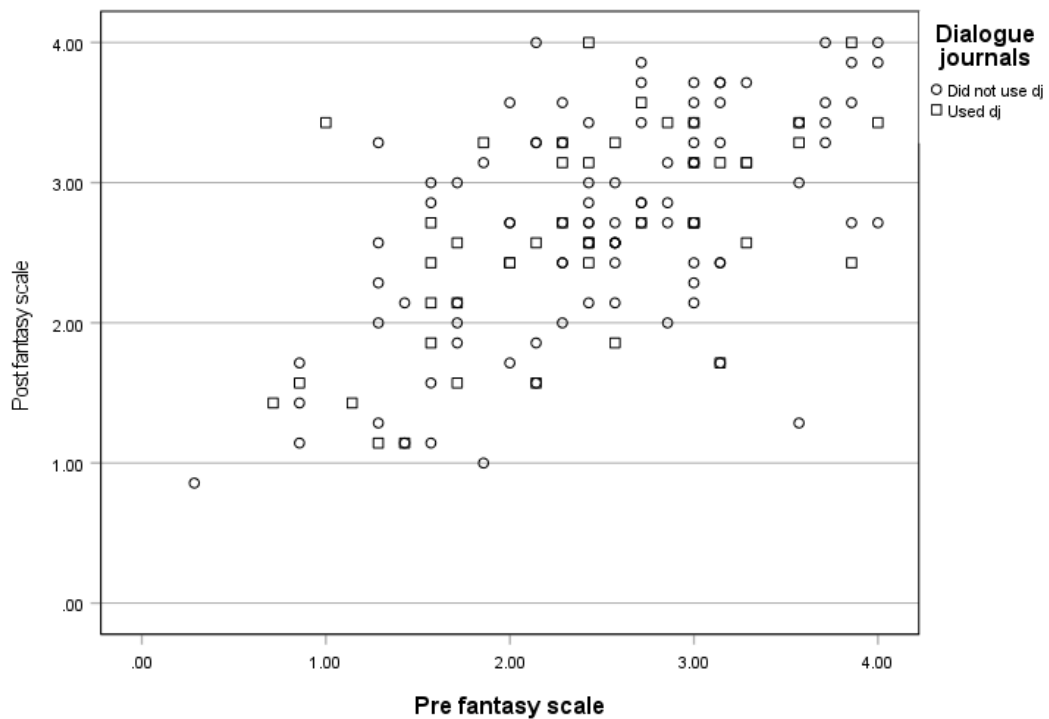
Empathic Concern Scale

Before conducting an ANCOVA, the homogeneity-of-slopes assumption was tested. The interaction is labeled treatment*pretest. The interaction is not significant. $F(1,133)=.008$, $p=.92$. The tested null hypothesis is that the population slopes are homogeneous. Based on the nonsignificant test results, an ANCOVA could be conducted, assuming homogeneity of slopes.

ANCOVA was conducted, and the independent variable DJs included two levels: used DJs and did not use DJs. The dependent variable was the post-test on the empathic concern scale. A preliminary analysis evaluating the homogeneity of slopes assumption indicated that the relationship between the covariate and the dependent variable did not differ significantly as a function of the independent variable, $F(1,133)=.008$, $p=.92$, $MSE=.30$, partial $\eta 2=.000$. The ANCOVA was not significant, $F(1,134)=.045$, $MSE=.298$, $p=.83$. The strength of the relationship between the DJs and the dependent variable was not strong, as assessed by partial $\eta 2=.000$.

Figure 7

Differences in slopes and between group means on post-test scores for values on the covariate.
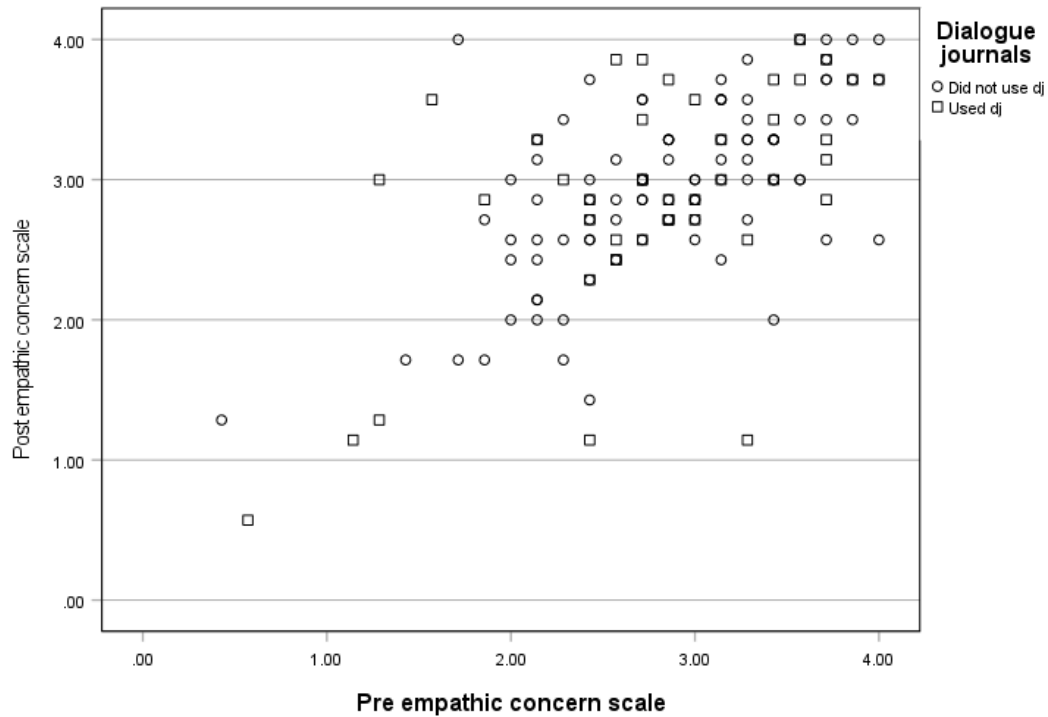
Personal Distress Scale

Before conducting an ANCOVA, the homogeneity-of-slopes assumption was tested. The interaction is labeled treatment*pretest. The interaction is not significant. $F(1,133)=.25$, $p=.61$. The tested null hypoth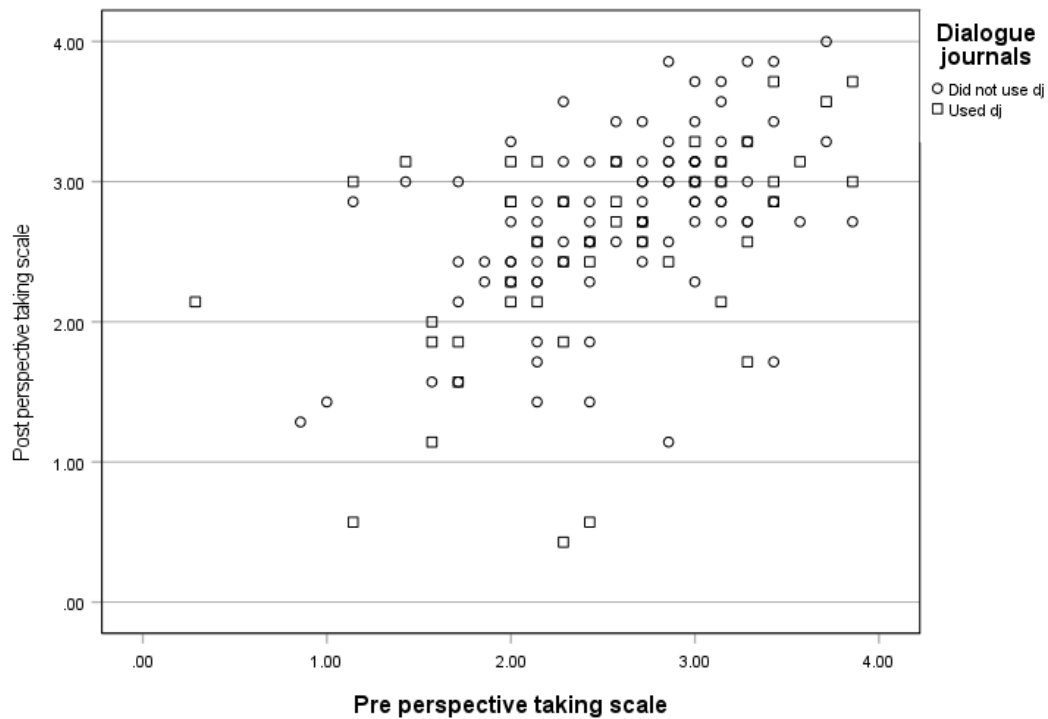esis is that the population slopes are homogeneous. Based on the nonsignificant test results, an ANCOVA could be conducted, assuming homogeneity of slopes.

ANCOVA was conducted, and the independent variable DJs included two levels: used DJs and did not use DJs. The dependent variable was the post-test on the personal distress scale. A preliminary analysis evaluating the homogeneity of slopes assumption

indicated that the relationship between the covariate and the dependent variable did not

differ significantly as a function of the independent variable, F(1,133)=.25, *p=.61*,

MSE=.37, partial η2=.002. The ANCOVA was not significant, F(1,134)=.009, *MSE=.37*,

p=.924. The strength of the relationship between the DJs and the dependent variable was

not strong, as assessed by partial η2=.000.

Figure 8

Differences in slopes and between group means on post-test scores for values on the covariate.
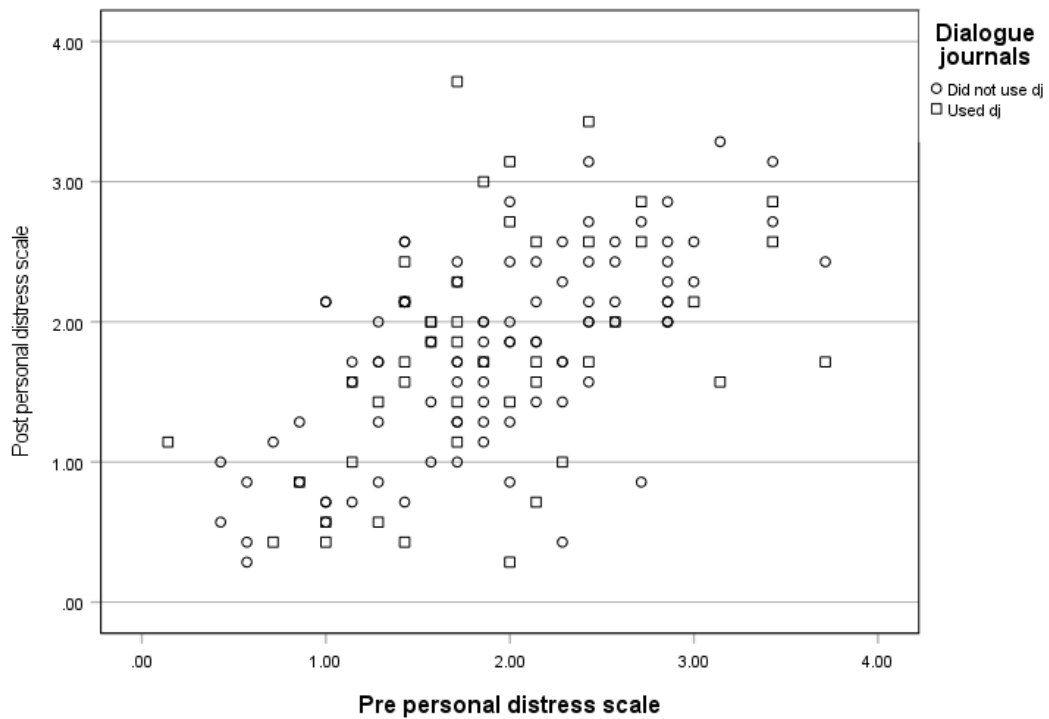
To answer research question 1, the quantitative analysis using the paired samples

t-test showed a significant difference in means for the FS, EC, and PD scales. However,

the PD scale means decreased from the pre to post-test. The PT scale did not show a

significant change.

To answer research question 1a, ANCOVA was used to determine if there was a significant difference between students who used DJs and those who did not. Across all four scales, there was no significant difference between the two groups. To add to the statistical analysis of the relationship between empathy and using DJs, the basic qualitative design gives another layer of data to show that while students' use of DJs did not have a significant difference in students' empathy, it did show through thematic analysis that students made sense of their lives and their experiences by expressing empathy for the characters in the novel (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Qualitative Analysis

To explore research questions two and three (a and b), the journals used in the classrooms *(n=47)* were deductively and inductively coded, and thematic analysis was conducted. Out of the 54 students who were initially part of the study, 47 completed the journals; therefore, the journals that were analyzed were the journals that the students completed (*n=47*). The researcher decided only to analyze the DJs that students completed. Students' journals that had unanswered questions were not analyzed. A CRP framework (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 2017) was used to deductively code the DJs (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2020; Saldana, 2013; Xu & Zammit, 2020). CRP conveys the following: "(a)focus on student learning, (b) developing students' cultural competence, and (c) supporting their critical consciousness" (Ladson-Billings, 2017, p. 142). Table 4 shows the codes that were used to arrive at the themes presented in these results. Student learning encompasses high expectations and higher-order responses to questions posed to students, cultural competence is shown through empathy and learning about other

cultures or seeing their own cultures represented in the novel, and critical consciousness is characterized by standing up to others or making connections in the text to societal issues.

Through the thematic analysis, four major themes emerged from the data. The analyzed DJs showed a conversation with their teacher and classmates. The DJs where the students only answered the questions or dialogued in the first one or two questions were not used for this study. Table 5 shows the themes derived from the thematic analysis process.

Table 4

Examples of inductive codes, deductive codes, and CRP framework codes

Inductive Codes	Deductive Codes	CRP Framework Codes	Example Quotes

1. About Self
2. Empathetic Statements
3. Thinking about Characters
	1. About Self
	  1a. Fitting in
	  1b. Opinion
	2. Empathetic Statements
	  2a. Connections to self
	  2b. Connections to the world
	  2c. I am fortunate
	  2d. Perspective taking
	  2e. Stand up for others
	  2f. Ways others feel
	3. Thinking about Characters
	  3a. Character Change
	  3b. Starr's Family
	  3c. Unlike Character
		1. Developing empathy
		2. Critical Consciousness
		3. Evidence of cultures or learning of cultures
			"I relate to this because I have a sister and sometimes I get protective over her because I don't want her to get caught up in relationship problems."
			
			"When the author slows the pace of the novel down after Khalil is shot, the reader is placed in Starr's shoes in a way. The reader is experiencing what Starr's world feels like after watching her best friend die."
			
			"but I share her desire for justice in unjust situations like these. I always try to spread awareness of these injustices and social problems to my friends by informing them or posting on social media my thoughts on the situation."

1. Academic Comments
2. Answers questions posed by teacher in DJ
3. Challenge Thinking
4. Conversations with others
5. Support Ideas with evidence
6. Teacher Interaction with student
7. Thinking about characters
	1. Support Their Ideas with Evidence
	  1a. Supports a claim
	  1b. Supports Conclusions
	2. Answers questions posed by teacher in DJ
	  2a. Come to conclusions
	  2b. Makes a claim
	3. Academic Comments
	  3a. Found your response interesting
	  3b. Suggestions for writing better.
		1. Student learning
		2. Developing critical consciousness and/or empathy
			"This reflects in real life because when saying the truth it will mostly likely rub off onto other kids making them tell the truth and which then breaks the chain of T.H.U.G L.I.F.E."
			
			"demonstrating how media influence influenced people's prejudices towards Khalil as they did not want to work out how he was as an individual but then judged him for becoming a drug dealer instead of discovering the true reason he did so, that was to be able to finance his family."
			
			"If we go back to the Khalil's "thugshot", back to the drug dealing narrative newscasters portrayed Khalil to be, back to the words that officer 115's father had shared about his son, they are all examples of how the news can twist a story around and make it seem one sided."

Table 5

Major themes and subthemes in response to research questions two and three

Major theme	Subthemes
Expressing empathy	Relating to how others feel
	Exercising Perspective taking
Reflecting on the characters	Reflecting on the character's change
	Reflecting on self-comparisons with Starr's family
Exhibiting reading comprehension	Supporting their ideas with evidence
Engaging in dialogue	Suggesting ways to improve writing

The following paragraphs describe the major themes that were found in the DJs, and examples of them are given as they relate to research questions two and three.

Research Question 2:

How is students' empathy expressed through DJs?

Expressing Empathy

Students expressed empathy in a variety of ways through their writing. Empathy is defined by George Mead as the ability to "understand other person's situation," also "as a willingness or tendency to put one-self in another person's place and to modify one's behavior as a result" (as quoted in Bošnjaković & Radionov, 2018, p.125). Indicators of this theme occur when the respondents make connections to their own lives

and use words like "if it was my case," "many of us," or "I would." The sub-themes also depicted empathy in other ways by students connecting the events in the novel with real life and how they would react in a situation that the main character was in. In addition, students could put themselves in the characters' shoes and state that they would "handle it similarly." In all, utilizing these conceptualizations of 'empathy,' participants made 281 references to empathy about the characters in the book and putting themselves in the characters' shoes.

Students showed empathy in different ways for the characters in the novel. Students have empathetic statements when they reflect on the novel's events in their own lives. For example, in response to the question "Compare your neighborhood to Star's neighborhood, how are they the same and how are they different?" posed in the DJ. Students responded by looking at the character's situation and how they would feel in that situation:

>"I feel more accepted in the environment I am in if i(sic) adapt my behaviors to fit in."

Another response from a student shows that the student was able to see the difference between their life and that of the character in the book.

>"Garden Heights deals with many different crimes and issues whereas I feel very safe in my neighborhood and do not have a fear of a crime being committed"

Students reflected on their own lives and were able to learn about other ways of life, which can connect to cultural competence (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Because they learned about how others who are not like them live and how they were able to relate. In

the first quote, the student was able to connect to the character and realize that code-switching is something that others do to "feel more accepted," so, in that way, the student was able to show that they were able to see themselves in the text.

Relating to how others feel

Another subtheme that supports expressing empathy is relating to how others feel. On death, some students could not relate to the character because they had not experienced loss, but others did. For example, the following student response was able to empathize with how the main character and others felt and apply it to their own life.

> "It hurts that the person will only be a memory, but that memory will last you your entire life. Everyone is bound to die at one point and so when it happens i(sic) just have to accept it."

Although other students did not discuss experiencing loss directly, they could see the event through the eyes of the character Starr. One student was able to empathize with the main character, Starr, by adding the following response:

> "She's had to witness 2 deaths of her bestfriends(sic) yet she's still trying to cope in her own way and fight for justice in her own way too."

These comments show that through this novel and answering the questions posed in the DJ, they could put themselves in the character's shoes and have a window into what she was going through.

Exercising Perspective Taking

Another sub-theme of the "expressing empathy" theme is exercising perspective taking. Some students could relate what was happening in the novel to their own lives and either make connections to something they know or, again, see the situation from someone else's perspective. For example,

"Someone else in Starr's position might have been too nervous or scared to speak out,"

This shows that students could see the situation from the main character's perspective. Another reference where a student was able to see the problem from the character's viewpoint is the following quote, where they use the words, If I were to be in Starr's shoes:

"If I were to be in Starr's shoes I would most likely start a blog as well."

One student wrote:

"but I share her desire for justice in unjust situations like these. I always try to spread awareness of these injustices and social problems to my friends by informing them or posting on social media my thoughts on the situation."

Another student wrote:

"While this is obviously on a much smaller scale, I always strive to stand up for my friends and family when someone has wronged them in any way. I would even consider a career relating to it."

These comments reflect critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995a) along with empathy (Mirra, 2018). Students were able to relate to the current society and reflect

on how they can impact the injustices in society. These quotes support the idea that students could express empathy by seeing the events happening in the characters' lives through their eyes and by relating to their own lives by providing examples or responses of what they would do if or when they were in a similar situation.

Reflecting on the characters

Another major theme that answers research question two is reflecting on the characters in their writing. There were 91 references to different ways that students reflected on what the characters were going through and on their actions. In doing so, they made claims about the characters and reflected on their own lives to make connections. There were many instances where students spoke of justice and how they agreed with the characters. The subthemes that derived from the thematic analysis were reflecting on the character's change and reflecting on self-comparisons with Starr's family. The subthemes reflected different aspects of empathy.

Reflecting on the character's change

For example, they could see that the main character, Starr changed and why she changed. Some examples of that are:

"Her character is changing because she's realizing(sic) what she's doing by not speaking up for Khalil and making justice."

Although the student speaks about the character, they also show that they agree with the character by using words like "she's realizing" and "speaking up for Khalil and making justice." Seeing that the main character changed and why she changed through actions,

feelings, and rationalization, students could appreciate the events that changed the character and her motivations. The participants see the character's growth based on her ability to speak up against injustice and her willingness to say what happened to her friend because of the realization that unless she told the world what happened, the media would control the message. These words have a positive connotation that represents the student's approval of the character's actions.

Another response from a student shows that they are not only understanding what they are reading, but they are making inferences while also reflecting on how the character changed. For example,

> "At first, Starr was trying to hide that she was a witness but after she comes public that she was the witness it changes everything. It is turning point because it shows she is not afraid anymore."

This student was able to discern the reasons why Starr was acting the way that she was and why she wanted to hide. However, they were able to determine the turning point for the character that caused the change in her. This shows that students were able to take multiple steps in answering the questions and also reflecting on why the character has changed. Another example,

> "This is a significant point for Starr because she went from being in fear of what happened to her for speaking up to becoming fearless. She made up her mind that speaking up and getting justice for her friend was well worth the risk of what would happen to her. She chose to be selfless and put Khalil in front of her and her family's well being."

This student further elaborates on why the character has changed. These ideas were not explicitly stated in the novel; however, the student was able to come to these conclusions based on their understanding of the character. Furthermore, the student was able to use words that show she approved of the character's change by saying she was "getting justice" and "chose to be selfless" to convey that the way the character changed was a positive one. An inference can be made that the student sees the character's actions as a positive thing by their word choice.

Reflecting on self-comparisons with Starr's family

Students also showed through their writing that they were able to compare their lives to Starr's life and family. While there were 53 references on how the character's life and the neighborhood she lived in were not like theirs, students could connect to the character's family life. The following example showed that through this novel, students could gain cultural competence about others (Ladson-Billings, 1995a).

"Something I could relate to is the way that they are all a tight-knit family, and they have family sports nights."

Another student wrote,

"Throughout the book the details the family helps each other get out of certain situations just like how communities help each other."

These two quotes show how they could relate Starr's family to the community and, in turn to their own lives. While the second quote is not directly showing empathy, an inference can be made that the student is able to understand the character's life by noting that communities help each other. It could be inferred that the student knows or has

experienced what that looks like in their life. These statements provide examples of how empathy was expressed by the DJs.

Expressions of empathy were significant in students' responses. Although the questions were created to intentionally solicit an empathetic response, students elaborated and showed their ability to see the world through someone else's eyes and to make connections to the characters even if their lives did not resemble the character's life. Their word choice showed that their critical consciousness was developing as well as their empathy toward the fictional characters in the novel.

Research Question 3:

How does participating in dialogue journals affect academic ability?

  a. How do dialogue journals influence the depth of written discussion based on thematic analysis?

  b. How do dialogue journals influence the level of reading comprehension based on thematic analysis?

Academic ability is shown in the students' responses through several themes: exhibiting reading comprehension and engaging in dialogue. These themes also support the student learning aspect of the CRP framework. While students were able to demonstrate their cultural competence and caring about others, and their understanding of critical consciousness by connecting the events in the novel to the real world through empathetic statements and reflecting on a character in their writing, they were also able to show that through the academic ability in understanding the text, supporting their claims and conclusions, and supporting their ideas with evidence from the text. The thematic

analysis allows the researcher to decide on the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Therefore, based on the CRP framework, academic ability encompassed students' ability to make connections, and claims and support them with evidence they synthesized from the text and their lives. In this study, the academic ability was not determined by grammar or spelling; instead, it was based on the conclusions they made in their writing that related to the events in the novel and that exhibited inferencing of the events and characteristics of the characters.

Exhibiting reading comprehension

The first sub-question: How do dialogue journals influence the depth of written discussion based on thematic analysis? It is answered through student responses. The depth of written discussion is represented by the students' ability to relate to the text and make claims, come to conclusions, and support their ideas with evidence from the text. In addition to reflecting on reading comprehension, it also demonstrates the depth of their thinking.

The second sub-question: How do dialogue journals influence the level of reading comprehension based on thematic analysis? It is answered through student responses. Reading comprehension is evident in students when they can show that they understand what they are reading and can make inferences based on the text. One of the ways to see that is through written response. The questions posed to the students were created with that idea in mind by the researcher. By answering the questions that were posed by the DJs, students showed their understanding of the text. There were 109 references to reading comprehension found in the DJs that students completed. In this case, the depth

of discussion and the level of reading comprehension were reported together because the depth of discussion is tied to reading comprehension. Many of the student responses that are evidently related to reading comprehension and depth of discussion could fall within both themes and, in some cases, were double-coded. The researcher made a decision based on what the quote mostly reflected about students' academic skills. The themes were able to answer both questions. The following statements show that students understood the text and were able to answer the questions that were posed to them fully. One participant responded to the question, "In chapters 16 and 17, Angie Thomas reveals how the news can influence a story. Do you agree or disagree with her? Why or why not?" with the following answer:

> "Thomas ties the novel in very accurately, including the fact that media can sway public opinion in an (sic) way because of all the power they hold."

Another question that was posed to students about the theme of the novel showed that students were able to understand the question and what was happening in the text with the following response:

> "The theme of the novel is societies (sic) hate and violence against the black community and the effects of police brutality and justice."

Another example of reading comprehension is when a student answers a question about the turning point for the main character. This kind of question relates to students' knowledge of the character and the events that have occurred. This student was able to embed evidence into their response:

"Starr stating "I'm the one who saw saw (sic) what happened to Khalil" is a significant turning point because she is standing up for him publicly. At first, she was very careful and scared if people viewed her differently".

Again, another question that was given to students asked them to reflect on what the character goes through when she is trying to be two different people in different settings. The students had to understand that the character was doing that, reflect on it, and then make up their minds on what they thought of it. Those are multiple steps in their thinking. To show reading comprehension, another student stated the following:

"Starr shouldn't have to alter her persona when she's around white people just because she would be judged for saying certain things due to her race. When she is in Garden Heights she doesn't necessarily feel like she fits in so she more so "reads the room" and kind of plays along with what is happening."

Supporting their ideas with evidence

The subtheme supporting their ideas with evidence shows the depth of the students' responses. For example, one student wrote

"This reflects in real life because when saying the truth it will mostly (sic) likely rubbed off onto other kids making them tell the truth and which then breaks the chain of T.H.U.G L.I.F.E.."

This quote shows that the student came to a conclusion by connecting the novel to the world and by logical thinking by putting premises together to go to a viable conclusion. The student took many steps in their thinking to conclude what they posed in their response. Another example is,

"There are honestly more than one theme in the novel but the one that I really

liked and felt more connected to was the of how in a community if one person is

going through a rough patch everyone in that community will always be there to

help."

This quote also shows the discrete choice that the student made as to the theme that they

felt was more important and made a claim that "community will always be there to help."

In supporting their ideas with evidence, students explained why they felt the way they

did. The example shows that students can defend their ideas. For example,

"By chanting "Khalil lived" she emphasized that his life was meaningful and that

just because he was in the dealing business doesn't mean his death was justified."

This student not only used evidence from the text, but the student was able to elaborate

on how it connects to the idea of the theme. Another example is

"Just like Khalil's situation when they painted him to be a thug and how he

deserved to be murdered when they didn't even know who Khalil truly was. That

is why Starr wanted to get justice for Khalil and show who the real Khalil was."

Again, the student referenced additional evidence from the text to synthesize their

response to Starr's need to "get justice for Khalil."

This sub-theme reflects that students can use evidence to support their ideas. It

also correlates with the Florida Standard RL.910.1.1: Cite strong and thorough textual

evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly, as well as inferences drawn

from the text (CPALMS, 2019a). An example of meeting the standard shows that the

student was able to evaluate the events that occurred in the text and infer how the news media may influence society. The student wrote the following:

> "In the news, they did not include that the cop had mistaken a hair brush (sic) for a gun, or that he shot him more than one time, and that he had also pointed his gun at Starr while she was making sure to see if Khalil was okay."

Another student synthesizes many events that occur in the novel to support the idea that the main character is coping with what happened to her friend.

> "Starr opens up a blog to help her cope. She posts pictures of Khalil portraying him as the Khalil she knew. She also bonds with her family (since they're all grieving) and she finally opens up to her boyfriend, Chris about everything."

Another student was able to also support their reasoning with evidence from the text to show that they understood the text and could think critically about what is happening to the main character.

> "During the book the author used details to develop this theme because star is having a hard time finding out who she really is. She had two separate lives one at Garden heights and the other at Williamson Prep. Garden Heights star was surrounded by mainly black people while Williamson Prep star was surrounded by mainly white people. While reading the book we the reader can see star figure out her true identity and who she really is".

Overall, the DJs were able to show more elaborately how students were able to empathize with the main character and other characters in the novel. This is not reflected in the quantitative analysis of this study; however, the DJs were able to show that

students did think about the characters and did put themselves in the characters' shoes. Additionally, the DJs were able to show the effect that the novel and the DJs had on their academic ability, more specifically, how they showed their understanding of the text and their depth of written discussion.

Engaging in dialogue

Another major theme that reflects the depth of the students' writing is engaging in dialogue. This theme encompasses how students dialogued with each other and, in some cases, the teacher's interaction with the students. In some cases, the students spoke directly to each other but did not continue the conversation; instead, they moved on to the next question. Another aspect of this theme is students reflecting on their classmate's responses and giving suggestions to improve their writing. This theme not only showed that students were engaging in dialogue with each other but that they were also reflecting on the events in the novel and conversing with others about them, which also showed their level of reading comprehension. The following quote is a student reacting to their partner's answer and agreeing with the student while using evidence from the text. Again, the student had to meet different steps to give the following answer cognitively:

"OMG YESS!! The media only shows half a story, and majority of the time like

shown in the book, it's from someone who was not even there or witnessed it."

The following example not only reflects on what their classmate said but evaluates why the author decided to add something to the novel.

"I definitely agree when you say Thomas wanted us to feel like we were in her shoes. After seeing someone so close to you pass away, and right in front of you, you(sic) world does feel like it has taken a big pause."

Another example of their depth of writing is shown in the next quote. The student responds directly to what their classmate wrote but also used his or her own lived experience to show the differences in how each of their lives.

"At my mom's house I can agree with half of the circumstances you experience when you are with your dad. Many people in my neighborhood tend to steal or break into other people's property. Because of this it is almost nearly impossible to feel safe a majority of the time I am there."

The following quote also shows the depth of discussion in that the teacher modeled for a student to push the conversation further. The teacher directly addresses what the student said but also brings in her own lived experience to the topic at hand. This may have influenced the students' response; however, the student did not continue the conversation. Instead, the student moved on to the next question in their journal.

"I don't think that many people can say that they don't act differently depending on who is with them. I have noticed though that older people don't care. They are who they are no matter who is around. That makes me wonder if with age we stop caring and embrace who we are more. Still, I feel like I have to code switch depending on who my audience is. I can see why you would feel stronger in certain situations."

The examples above show that students had to answer the questions in multiple steps and use higher-order thinking skills to make their claims, use inferencing, and support their thinking with evidence from the novel.

Suggesting ways to improve writing

Students also gave other students their opinion on their writing as they responded to the text. This was not something that was asked of students; however, it also shows that students are engaging with each other and that they are thinking about others' writing. For example, the following example shows that the student was able to show that he or she understood their classmate's response, but they also evaluated the response:

"You did a great job explaining how the author's decision on slow the pace but make sure to further explain your reasoning. You also repeat yourself in the first sentence. Instead of using the word "decrease" you can use the word "decline." So just make sure to type a bit more!"

In this quote, students were able to evaluate their peer's responses and also, and they were able to acknowledge that the author slowed down the pace of the events in the novel. This is also important because in the suggestions they are giving to their peer, they are also noticing that there was more reasoning that would help the answer to that question.

Another student wrote:

"A little difficult to understand what you are trying to say, please fix punctuation. You did not include how the central idea relates to what is happening in today's world."

In this instance, the student let the writer know that by not using the correct punctuation, it was more difficult to understand, and they also pointed out what was missing from the response. This is surprising because students were not asked to write in standard English or worry about grammar or spelling, yet in some cases, students still addressed that as part of the writing process.

Another student wrote:

> "I agree with your response but I'm not sure if you responded to the second question. You could also elaborate more on what you would do if you were in Starr's situation."

This is another example of students evaluating each other's writing and also making suggestions on how they can make it better. By asking the writing to elaborate more, one can infer that the peer who is editing the writer's work knows that something is missing from the response and is asking for more. This suggests that while students are not explicitly asked to help their peers, in some cases, they may feel compelled to make suggestions and ask for clarification in written responses.

Summary

This chapter presented the quantitative and qualitative findings of this study. These quantitative findings found that there was a significant difference in means using a paired samples *t*-test for FS, EC, and PD. In the case of the PD scale, the paired samples *t*-test showed that the significant difference was in students' PD scores decreasing after reading the novel. On the other hand, there was not a significant difference in means for PT. Therefore, reading the novel *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2017) did help show a

significant change in three of the four empathy scales measured with the IRI

questionnaire. However, the use of DJs while reading the novel did not show a significant

difference in students' empathy in any of the scales. To compare scores between control

and treatment groups, a four-one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted

for each subscale: Perspective Taking (PT), Fantasy (FS), Empathic Concern (EC), and

Personal Distress (PD) (Davis, 1980; Hatcher et al., 1994). The results indicated there

was no difference in empathy scores between students who participated in DJs and read

the novel and those who read the novel without DJs.

A comparison of the quantitative data and the qualitative findings revealed that

while using the DJs does not show a relationship with the development of empathy in the

quantitative data, the qualitative data shows that students' responses show that they were

empathetic towards the characters and events. The data also illuminated the students'

academic ability through their responses to the questions given and to each other's

responses. More specifically, the qualitative findings show that the students that took part

in this study and used DJs along with the novel were able to show empathy and

demonstrate their academic ability. The major themes derived from the thematic analysis

were expressing empathy, reflecting on the characters, exhibiting reading comprehension,

and engaging in dialogue.

The results and implications of these findings for research and practice are

presented in chapter 5.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This convergent mixed-methods study aimed to investigate the relationship between reading a young-adult novel, *The Hate U Give,* by Angie Thomas (2017), and students' reported empathy and academic skills in ninth-grade English language arts. This novel contains social justice themes and uses the perspective of a young high school student trying to make sense of her environment and find a way to use her voice to speak truth to power. Social justice is embedded in critical consciousness and may help students develop civic empathy that encourages students to seek civic action (Mirra, 2018). This study provides insight into how using a young-adult novel with social justice themes may relate to students' development of both empathy and academic ability. To better consider the results of this study, the current chapter gives an overview of the quantitative and the qualitative data, an interpretation of the findings for each, a description of the implications and applications, and the limitations of this study. The chapter ends with suggestions for future research.

Research Question One

Does reading *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2017) increase self-reported empathy using the Interpersonal Reactivity Index questionnaire with ninth-grade students?

Response to Research Question One

The findings showed that after reading *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas (2017), there was a difference between pre and post-test mean scores in three scales from the IRI questionnaire: Fantasy Scale (empathy towards fictional characters and

situations), Empathic Concern (feeling sympathetic towards others who are experiencing challenges), and Personal Distress (feeling anger towards others). On the other hand, students' pre and post-IRI scores did show a change in Perspective Taking (being able to see a situation from a person's perspective).

Research Question One (a)

Does empathy increase in classrooms that use dialogue journals?

Response to Research Question One (a)

Compared to classrooms that did not use the DJs, there was not a substantial increase in empathy for students who did use the DJs in their classrooms.

Discussion of Findings

By comparing the pre and post-questionnaire responses for all students who read the book, their scores do show that there was an increase in their empathy toward fictional characters and in feeling sympathy towards challenges others go through in their lives. However, when the pre and post-IRI questionnaire results of the students who read the novel and engaged in DJs were compared with students who read the book but didn't engage in DJs, there was no increase in their empathy. The results derived from the IRI survey show that using DJs does not have an impact on empathy.

Although the journals that were analyzed showed many qualitative instances of development of empathy, the questionnaire results did not support that the journals had an impact on empathy. The lack of impact may be because students self-reported their empathy based on a five-point Likert scale that they may not have fully understood. The students in the Regular English classroom included students who were reading below

grade level and who may also have a disability that affects reading comprehension. Some items may have been challenging to understand for some students, so their reporting may not have accurately captured students' empathy levels. The same factor may also be why students in the Regular English classroom had lower baseline scores for both empathy towards fictional characters and sympathy towards people experiencing challenges compared to the Honors and Gifted Honors students. Additionally, there were 28 items that students had to read, understand, and self-reflect on, which may have been too many items to keep the students' attention span. It is supported by the data that reflects that most students answered "neutral" as opposed to "does not describe me well" or "describes me very well." Therefore, the empathy that students reported may have been hindered by their comprehension level and by the number of items they were asked to answer. Therefore, this may be why the hypothesis was not supported by the results of the pre and post-questionnaire responses. Using a different measure, such as capturing teacher observations of student behavior or limiting the scales to two instead of four from the IRI, may have elucidated a more accurate depiction of the relationship between the DJs and empathy.

There is indeed limited research on the relationship between using DJs and increased student empathy. However, research suggests that when teachers develop positive relationships with students, students will exhibit positive behaviors that could increase academic ability (Anderson et al., 2011). One way students and teachers may develop a positive relationship are through DJs. The DJs may be a safe space where students and teachers may write freely and engage in conversation that may be significant

to students and their emotional development (Anderson et al., 2011). In the case study by Anderson et al. (2011), DJs were used to develop a positive relationship between the students and the teacher; while students showed positive responses in writing, they did not consistently demonstrate positive behavior in the classroom towards the teacher. One consideration is that the teacher used prompts to engage students in conversation, and this may have encouraged students to think about positive responses because their teacher prompted them. However, students did not consistently exhibit positive behaviors in the classroom. In this present study, the DJs also had prompts that the students needed to answer, which may have encouraged their expression of thoughts and emotions on the events and topics in the novel. The novel, *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2017) not only attracted students because it was written from the perspective of a teenager to who they can relate, but it also brought to light current societal issues centered around race, discrimination, and police brutality after a summer where students were witnesses to the Black Lives Matter movement and violence from hate groups in the United States. Choosing novels that students can relate to and that reflect society may also elicit more responses that show a connection between the characters in the novel and their own lives and show their critical consciousness, which may also lead to civic engagement toward social justice (Mirra, 2018; Savitz et al., 2022). The student interaction with the questions, the text, and each other was not something that could have been captured with the IRI questionnaire. Therefore, adding another layer of teacher observation of behaviors may have given a complete picture of how the DJs played a role in the classroom.

In another study that used DJs with students that exhibited emotional and behavioral disorders, the researchers also used prompts with students. In Regan et al.'s (2005) study, the measures were centered around students' attention to the task of writing, how much they wrote, and the quality of their work that was assessed with an 8-point scale that looked at grammar and conventions. Additionally, they used a satisfaction survey to find out what students thought of the activity. In addition, observations of the students and teacher were collected. Regan et al. (2005) measured academics differently than in this study. In this present study, the academic ability was derived from students' apparent thought processes in their writing. In CRP, academic excellence is not measured by test scores, rubrics, or standard English measures, which are essential but do not signify critical thinking. Even though the collection of the data and focus were different, the research by Regan et al. (2005) is supported by the qualitative data in this present study. A reason for that could be that the prompts used in this present study elicited empathy and asked students to base their responses on support from the text. Students were asked to take multiple steps to answer the questions and to reflect on their own lives. While the IRI questionnaire results did not show an increase in empathy in relation to the DJs, the DJs could capture the development of empathy in students and academic ability. It's not clear that it is because of the journal because students also develop empathy at higher levels during adolescence (Hawk et al., 2013). The social justice aspect of the novel may have also impacted their development of empathy, which is supported by the results of the IRI questionnaire for all students regardless of DJs. Therefore, the use of the novel with themes of social justice and expressing their thoughts in the DJ may have aided in

the students' development of empathy at a time when their development of empathy is occurring (Hawk et al., 2013). The DJ prompts used questions that targeted empathy development and allowed students to fully express their feelings as they related to their own lives and the lives of the characters in the novel. Additionally, as past research has shown, students express themselves more to adults they trust (Anderson et al., 2011). In this present research, the students may have felt comfortable enough with the teacher to express their feelings and unpack feelings that others may not know. Therefore, the emotional development was more apparent through the DJs.

Additionally, previous research shows that novels may increase empathy in students (Mirra, 2018). While the study does not show precisely what about the book helps develop empathy, the age range impacts students' development of empathy (Eisenberg et al., 1991). Students in adolescence start to develop global empathy, which is empathy for others of different cultures and ethnicities that may or may not look like them, and that presents an opportunity to see an increase in students' empathy (Eisenberg et al., 1991). Studies have also shown that students who read fiction and are transported into the characters' lives have increased their empathic concern (Davis, 1980) for the characters (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013). These findings are consistent with the findings from this present research. The students who read the novel *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas (2017) also showed an increase in sympathy for others and an increase in empathy towards the fictional characters. Therefore, the data showed increased affective and cognitive empathy (Konrath, 2013). Participants who showed higher empathy on the fantasy scale were able to have an emotional response to fictional characters, which

coincides with the research by Bal and Veltkamp (2013), where empathy increased because students were able to transport themselves into the lives of the characters. The students may have been transported into the main character's lives, and the students may have been able to put themselves in the shoes of the character, therefore increasing their empathy for fictional characters. This also ties to empathic concern because as the students were able to transport themselves into Starr's fictional world, their empathic concern also increased. The students were able to sympathize with what the main character went through in the novel and understand her feelings and actions. Since the main character was also in high school, students may have found it easier to empathize with her and her emotions. This present data may add to the research on the importance of selecting young-adult novels that students can relate to so that their empathy toward fictional characters and their sympathy may increase. It is also notable that the students that had the most positive change in empathy towards fictional characters and situations and sympathy and concern towards people and events were the students in the Regular English classroom. Participants that demonstrated improvements on these scales showed a stronger understanding of the fictional characters and their experiences within the novel. They also demonstrated a heightened awareness of what others are going through and elicited compassion towards individuals in difficult situations. Another notable distinction is that students in the Gifted Honors classes exhibited a greater positive change in being able to see situations through a different perspective. Individuals who can see situations from other perspectives are able to see that there are many factors that may affect an individual's decision. Perspective taking may lead to higher critical

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consciousness in individuals (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). The data suggests that when students can understand the motivations and learn the circumstances surrounding an event, they are more willing to see events and people from different perspectives. On the other hand, participants' ability to feel distressed and emotions towards others decreased. The reason for that may lie in that the participants were able to feel empathy for what the characters were going through and to also see the situations in the novel from different perspectives. Personal distress is tied to an inability to regulate negative emotions towards events and people, so it is expected that if the other scales have shown an increase, personal distress will go down. Individuals who exhibit personal distress would be tied to aggressive behavior toward others (Hawk et al., 2012).

While the analysis from the thematic analysis conducted on the data set for the basic qualitative design of this research does not directly answer 1a, it does provide insight into how students showed their empathy through writing. It does not, however, answer the question if there is a relationship between empathy and DJs. Still, it does show students' development of empathy towards the characters and events in the novel.

Research Question Two

How is students' empathy expressed through dialogue journals?

Response to Research Question Two

The findings showed that students used empathetic statements in their DJs more than any other theme derived from the data. Through thematic analysis, a major theme that answers this question is expressing empathy which had subthemes of relating to how others feel and exercising perspective taking. Another major theme that answers this

question is reflecting on the characters, which contains the following subthemes: reflecting on the character's change and reflecting on self-comparisons with Starr's family.

The themes that answer this question also add to research question 1a because it shows how students expressed empathy in the dialogue journal. They showed a development of empathy towards the characters and the events that occurred in the novel. While adolescents are developing more global empathy and perspective taking (Eisenberg et al., 1987, 1991), literature may increase "empathic reactions" (Koopman et al., 2018, p. 170). The thematic analysis results suggest that the literature may have also increased empathy in students. This goes in line with past research on empathy and literature (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Mirra, 2018). One of Ladson-Billings's (1995b) tenets of CRP is cultural competence. Within cultural competence, caring takes root because students and teachers use care when they are thinking of others. This may be evident through the care and compassion that participants exhibited by indicating compassion and understanding of the characters in the novel. While cultural competence was not measured directly, the care and thinking of others may be tied to empathy. While Ladson-Billings (2019a) speaks to teachers in her framework, this question about empathy brings about the caring that the students feel in their classrooms. Students were free to discuss and gave many responses that may not follow the status quo, which shows that they are gaining cultural competence in learning about others through the characters of the book.

Based on the major themes that were derived from the data set, this research supports that through books that represent students and that they can connect to, students

may develop empathy (Mirra, 2018). Students showed through their statements that they saw the characters as if they knew them. Therefore, the idea of "other" is not present in the journals. Instead, the idea of caring and seeing the world through others' eyes who may not be like them is what is seen in their responses. This supports Bishop's (1990) claims that students need to see themselves through literature and also see others that are not the same ethnicity or that may not look like them. Through the thematic analysis, empathic statements had 281 references. Therefore, although the quantitative data did not show a change in empathy, the qualitative analysis reveals that students were exhibiting a development of empathy through DJs about the literature that they were reading. The data that was analyzed through thematic analysis showed that reading and discussing the literature may be an effective way to teach empathy to students (Meek, 1957; Mirra, 2018). While the discussion in this study was carried out in written form, it was still a way for students to express themselves about the characters and events in the novel. Therefore, it is not clear if the novel increased student empathy, but students showed that they were developing empathy through their responses in the DJs.

Research Question Three

How does participating in dialogue journals affect academic ability?

Response to Research Question Three

The findings showed that after using DJs, the major themes derived from the data were exhibiting reading comprehension and engaging in dialogue.

Research Question Three(a)

How do dialogue journals influence the depth of written discussion based on thematic analysis?

Response to Research Question Three(a)

The analysis showed that students used a depth of written discussion by responding to prompts that involved synthesizing events and other materials in their responses and connecting the text to their lives.

Research Question Three(b)

How do dialogue journals influence the level of reading comprehension based on thematic analysis?

Response to Research Question Three(b)

One of the major themes found in the data set was exhibiting reading comprehension with a sub-theme of supporting their ideas with evidence.

Discussion of Findings for Questions Two and Three

Another tenet of the CRP framework used as a lens of the thematic analysis is student learning. This also involves high expectations and providing students with rigorous activities (Ladson-Billings, 2021). The questions that are part of the dialogue journal were written with this goal in mind. The researcher created the questions based on the language arts Florida Standards (LAFS). Students had to respond to questions that contained multiple parts (see Chapter III). For example, they had to answer a question: On page 122, Thomas writes, "funerals aren't for dead people. They're for the living." What does Thomas mean by that? In what ways are your rituals the same or different to

Starr's? This question asked students to make inferences about what Thomas means and compare the character's rituals to theirs. To answer the question, students needed to think about the text and their own lives and connect the two. Through thematic analysis, their responses showed the major themes that provide evidence of the depth of written discussion and the level of reading comprehension, which are exhibiting reading comprehension and engaging in dialogue. These two themes show students' academic ability through their written discussions. While standardized testing is a measure used to determine students' learning across the state, in this study, the academic ability was not measured with a multiple-choice test. However, the Florida Standards Assessment uses different levels of cognitive ability to ascertain students' critical thinking (CPALMS, 2019a). Therefore, the ability to think critically and to arrive at ideas on their own showed that students had complex thought processes when thinking of the novel in their responses. So, the hope is that students will be able to transfer those skills to the high-stakes testing that they will need to participate in.

Reflecting on the characters shows critical thinking and reflection in students. By doing this, students were able to relate the text to their own lives. This supports the research that the text chosen, along with being able to disagree, may serve as a catalyst for independent thought (Knoblauch & Brannon, 1993). Additionally, reflection is a high-level thinking skill and supports the research by Bean & Rigoni (2001) with college students who used DJs to discuss a multicultural young-adult novel where students showed that, as a result, they were able to reflect on their own biases and each other's

perspectives. Therefore, the DJs showed that the students applied their reasoning and came to their conclusions.

Exhibiting reading comprehension was also a theme in this study. Reading comprehension was evident in students' responses by their ability to defend their ideas and claims with evidence from the text. The control group did not participate in DJs, so there is no comparable data to inform how they showed reading comprehension skills as opposed to the treatment group. In addition, the students who participated in the dialogue journals showed that they understood the text when dialoguing with their classmates through writing. They also synthesized information from the text to make claims about what is right and wrong in today's society. This aspect of the DJs also applies to critical consciousness because, on more than one occasion, students mentioned that they would like to do something to help people. It is not clear if the DJs or the novel- or a combination of both impacted that decision, but the students were able to connect that idea to something they answered referring to the text. In the control classroom, where the DJ was not used, the students still answered the questions given to the treatment group. Students were also tasked by their teacher to complete a project on the novel. In completing the project, some students created blog posts about the events surrounding the novel using current events. While that was not part of the study, it may suggest that the novel impacted students that did not use the DJs.

The themes derived from the deductive coding and thematic analysis of the DJs supported previous research by Staton et al. (1982) because the themes derived from those journals also reflected a higher level of thinking. However, in that study, the

teacher did not create questions for the students. That differs from the present study because the teacher-researcher created questions for the students. Still, the teacher-researcher could derive themes that showed a higher level of comprehension in students about the text. Additionally, the present study also indicates that teachers should be intentional in the text that is chosen for adolescent students so that students can find a connection with the characters (Bean & Rigoni, 2001). The themes derived from the data set in this present study imply that students benefit from reading and writing about the text.

Applications and Implications

Based on the data acquired through this study, teachers should engage students in reading and writing about what they are reading. DJs are an avenue to achieve that in the classroom. It is recommended that teachers spend time answering their students and encourage them to reply to the teacher in the journals to have a conversation. Although the quantitative data does not show a significant change in empathy, the qualitative data showed a lot of empathy in the discussion of the events that occurred in the novel. Teachers should also choose texts that will be rigorous for students and will be interesting to students. The novel *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2017) provided the students with a plethora of character development and nuances that allowed students to dig deep into their responses.

In the findings, it was clear that students could not only express empathy but also demonstrate academic ability through their responses. Additionally, they responded to each other and, in some cases, provided suggestions for improving their classmate's

writing. Compared to the control group, participants did not engage in written discussion, and they were instead confined to answering the questions without an audience other than their teacher. Even though the teacher reported that students enjoyed the novel and did have in-class verbal discussions of the novel, the teacher was also focusing on other skills during that time, so it is difficult to ascertain how much time she devoted to the novel and the themes surrounding it. While these findings are not generalizable in a traditional sense, they may be helpful overall. The quantitative findings showed that students' empathy for the fictional characters and concern for the characters increased, which suggests that the novel had an impact on students' empathy. Also, the findings show that students were able to demonstrate student learning, care for others, and critical consciousness in their responses to the novel (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). These findings may provide a way that teachers can conceptualize CRP in their classroom and a way to aid students in their empathy development. These tenets of CRP are what guided the work and the research of this dissertation.

The timing of current events around police brutality and social justice provided a clear connection between students and this novel. However, in today's political environment, teachers are finding it to be more difficult to talk about issues relating to social justice, and Florida House Bill 7, also known as the Florida Individual Freedom Act (2022), makes it more difficult for teachers to exercise freedom in the classroom because it is ambiguous in providing specific examples of violations of the law. However, it is important to note that the bill does not preclude teachers from teaching historical facts, such as segregation, slavery, or the Holocaust. While it is a bill that does

not offer clear definitions, teachers may still embed historical context to encourage critical consciousness and empathy in students.

Limitations

Some limitations of this study involve the participants and the societal impacts of the study. In the quantitative aspect of the study, the IRI instrument was self-reported, which may lend itself to having some answers skew towards what the student thought the teacher or researcher wanted to know about them. Additionally, in past studies involving the IRI, researchers used one or two constructs; therefore, a limitation of this study may also be that too many scales were used to measure empathy. Perhaps, being more intentional about the scales that would inform the research questions would have been more specific and contributed more information about students. Another limitation of the data is that teachers did not report what they saw in the classroom. Adding the teachers' perspective may have provided another layer of data showing more about the relationships and trust in the classroom.

Another limitation was that the researcher did not collect demographic information from the students regarding their background and gender. This information could have provided yet another layer of data analysis that could add to this study. Additionally, qualitatively one of the teachers did not follow the steps with fidelity and did not engage the students in their DJs. The teacher provided the students time to exchange with each other, but she did not participate in the work dialoguing aspect. The lack of dialoguing with students may have been because of multiple reasons, such as

teachers being overworked, overwhelmed, and not feeling comfortable letting the students know what they thought.

Additionally, this study's length of time may be considered a limitation. The study was four to six weeks during a time when students were preparing for the Florida Standards Assessment. The amount of attention to the novel may not have been enough or not fully maximized in the classroom, along with the time for writing in the journals because of the short amount of time dedicated to it. Students may have benefited from more time journaling with each other and developing relationships with their classmates. By having more time, students and teachers may have been able to unpack the emotions that the novel may have provoked in them and connect at different levels. Also, the different levels of the classes could be considered a limitation because students are not comparable in their reading abilities.

Another limitation was the context in which this study was conducted. This study took part during a school year where some students were solely online and taking classes through Zoom, and others were in person because of a global pandemic. In one teacher's classroom, she had students on Zoom and in person simultaneously. Sometimes the teacher was also quarantined and had to teach from home to students still in the physical classroom and online. These limitations could also explain why the teacher did not engage with fidelity in the DJs. In addition, the study began when the state high-stakes testing began. For some weeks, the teachers held class, and students were missing because they were testing. These limitations may have affected the results of the research.

Future Research

It is recommended that there be a study on teachers' practice as it relates to using DJs and reading a young-adult novel that addresses societal issues in the United States. It is also suggested that the study focuses on students in secondary remedial language arts classes. Another recommendation is to use multiple novels and compare the results of empathy levels for fictional characters and empathic concern for others. Additionally, reading comprehension scores would add more data to inform academic ability.

Follow-up studies on the perspective of the teacher and of the students as they engage with each other in this way and dialogue about controversial issues could provide another point of view for this research in this dissertation. These follow-up studies should interview teachers as the process is happening and ask the teachers to keep a journal of their experience. It would also be interesting to survey how students feel about their teachers and peers (Anderson, 2011).

It is also recommended that research would center around the school culture. How does the school culture affect teachers' ability to use controversial text in the classroom and DJs? Interviews with the teachers and administrators could also provide a bigger picture of the impact of journaling in the classroom and dialoguing about controversial issues.

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter concludes this study. This chapter presented a discussion of the applications, implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research. Future research could focus on the teachers' perspective through the process. Additionally,

interviewing the administrators to determine the school culture could provide more information about the effects that it may have on teachers' choices of the texts used and the topics they choose to explore with their students.

Conclusion

This study provides information that teachers can use to operationalize CRP and encourage student empathy development. The outcomes suggest that teachers should be intentional in selecting a book that explores social justice and that writing may provide a space for students to express themselves and analyze how the book may or may not relate to their lives. In today's political climate, it has become more difficult for teachers to choose books centered on social justice themes due to the passage of laws such as HB 7 in Florida. The ambiguity in the law may cause teachers to shy away from books that may elicit an emotional response in students. However, this research suggests that books and teachers do not indoctrinate people; instead, they make them aware of important issues integral to society and serve as ways for today's diverse population of students to see themselves represented in the books they read in school. Further, reading literature exposes students to the world. This research provides valuable insight for teachers to apply CRP in their choices to help students learn, explore other cultures, and develop their critical consciousness as well as empathy for groups of people.

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Appendix

Before and After Reading IRI Questionnaire questions

Before Reading THUG

The following statements inquire about your thoughts and feelings in a variety of situations. For each item, indicate how well it describes you by choosing the appropriate number on the scale at the top of the page: 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5. When you have decided on your answer, fill in the letter on the answer sheet next to the item number. READ EACH ITEM CAREFULLY BEFORE RESPONDING. Answer as honestly as you can. Thank you.

ANSWER SCALE:

1	2	3	4	5
DOES NOT				DESCRIBES ME
DESCRIBE ME				VERY
WELL				WELL

cguti005@fiu.edu (not shared) Switch account

I daydream and fantasize, with some regularity, about things that might happen to me. (FS) *

1 2 3 4 5

Does not describe me well ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Describes me very well

I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me. (EC) *

1 2 3 4 5

Does not describe me well ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Describes me very well

I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other guy's" point of view. (PT) (-) *

1 2 3 4 5

Does not describe me well ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Describes me very well

Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems. (EC) (-) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	○	○	○	○	○	Describes me very well

I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel. (FS) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	○	○	○	○	○	Describes me very well

In emergency situations, I feel apprehensive and ill-at-ease. (PD) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	○	○	○	○	○	Describes me very well

I am usually objective when I watch a movie or play, and I don't often get completely caught up in it. (FS) (-) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	○	○	○	○	○	Describes me very well

I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision. (PT) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	○	○	○	○	○	Describes me very well

When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them. (EC) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	○	○	○	○	○	Describes me very well

I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional situation. (PD) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	○	○	○	○	○	Describes me very well

I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective. (PT) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	○	○	○	○	○	Describes me very well

Becoming extremely involved in a good book or movie is somewhat rare for me. (FS) (-) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	○	○	○	○	○	Describes me very well

When I see someone get hurt, I tend to remain calm. (PD) (-) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	○	○	○	○	○	Describes me very well

Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal. (EC) (-) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	○	○	○	○	○	Describes me very well

If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments. (PT) (-) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	○	○	○	○	○	Describes me very well

After seeing a play or movie, I have felt as though I were one of the characters. (FS) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	O	O	O	O	O	Describes me very well

Being in a tense emotional situation scares me. (PD) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	O	O	O	O	O	Describes me very well

When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them. (EC) (-)
*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	O	O	O	O	O	Describes me very well

I am usually pretty effective in dealing with emergencies. (PD) (-) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	O	O	O	O	O	Describes me very well

I am often quite touched by things that I see happen. (EC) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	O	O	O	O	O	Describes me very well

I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both. (PT) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	O	O	O	O	O	Describes me very well

I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person. (EC) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	○	○	○	○	○	Describes me very well

When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of a leading character. (FS) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	○	○	○	○	○	Describes me very well

I tend to lose control during emergencies. (PD) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	○	○	○	○	○	Describes me very well

When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while. (PT) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	○	○	○	○	○	Describes me very well

When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me. (FS) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	○	○	○	○	○	Describes me very well

When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces. (PD) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	○	○	○	○	○	Describes me very well

Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place. (PT) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	○	○	○	○	○	Describes me very well

Submit   Clear form

After Reading THUG

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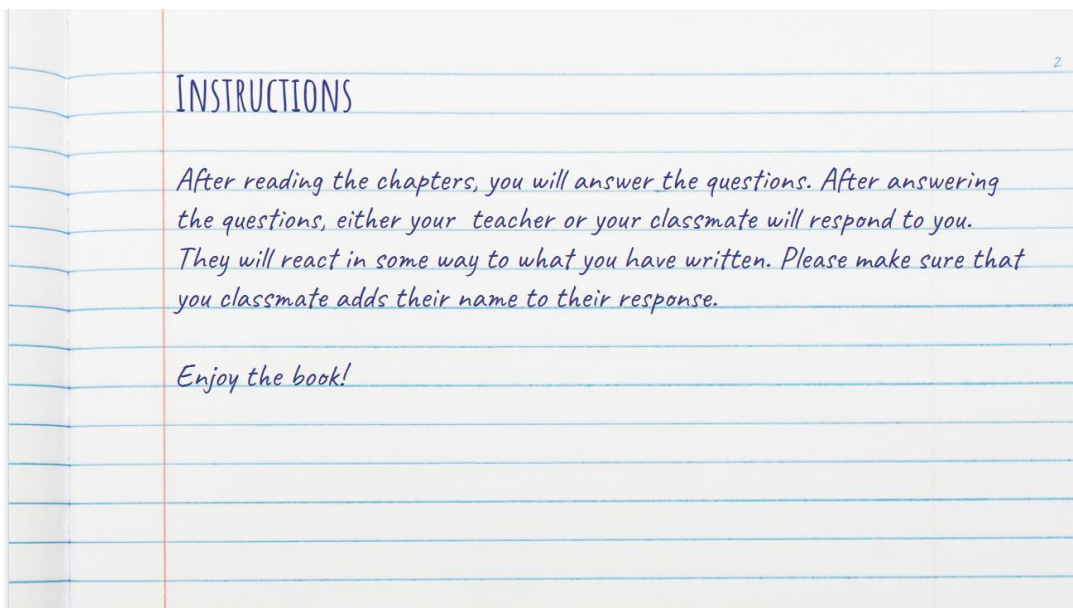|	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not describe me well	○	○	○	○	○	Describes me very well

Submit   Clear form

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Sample of Journal

Instructions

After reading the chapters, you will answer the questions. After answering the questions, either your teacher or your classmate will respond to you. They will react in some way to what you have written. Please make sure that you classmate adds their name to their response.

Enjoy the book!

Chapters 1-7

In chapters 1-7, the author creates tension. How does the author's decision to slow down the pace after the tension affect the meaning of the text? Compare your neighborhood to Starr's neighborhood, how are they the same and how are they different?

Respond

The author between creates a large amount of tension between paragraphs 1-2 leading up to the shooting and death of Khalil however, after the shooting in Chapter 2 and all through Chapter 3, the book decreases in speed and the tension drops. The beginning of the story immediately brings tension and the events leading up to Khalil's death make the tension almost unbearable because the readers can sense something is about to happen. When the tension is ended and Starr is trying to cope with her recent trauma, we can see through the text how important Khalil was to her. The meaning of the text changes from c. In Starr's neighborhood, we can see that it is not a great neighborhood and when she has attempted to have sleepovers with her friends, they decide to leave because of the sounds throughout her neighborhood such as gunshots. Contrasting to Starr's neighborhood, I have always felt a sense of safety knowing that I would not have to experience something like those events. However, both Starr and I have neighborhoods with a sense of community where we both are familiar with our neighbors.

Dialogue:

I disagree with you when speaking about the community in our neighborhoods. Unlike Garden Height's, my neighborhood isn't much of a community, although, we know most of each other, my neighbors wouldn't look after one another the way the community in Garden Height's does by caring for grieving families and acting like a community and family more than just "a neighborhood." However, I do agree with the points made about the tension of the story and how and when tension was introduced. I also think that the mention of the story being, "traumatic in Chapter 2 to impactful as Starr is reflecting in Chapter 3" was a very agreeable point. The story's transition between before and after the accident was very smooth, it helped create a deeper understanding on how Starr was feeling and how the story progressed. I think that transition created more of a significance to everything that was happening in the story.

- Student b

VITA

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1998-2007	B.A. Business Administration Florida International University Miami, Florida
2008-2010	M.S. English Education Nova Southeastern University Miami, Florida
2008-2022	Teacher Miami-Dade County Public Schools Miami, Florida
2010	Reading Endorsement Miami, Florida
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PRESENTATIONS

Aguila, E.M., Lino, S., Rodino, G., Marroquin, C., Valle, V., (2017,December). Developing the Early Stages of Literacy through Dialogic Reading with Bilingual Students. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Reading Forum, Sanibel, Florida.

Marroquin, C. (2018, 2019 December). End the Silence of Human Trafficking. Unit presented at the meeting of Ideas with IMPACT, Miami, Florida.

Fine, J.C., Rodino, G., Marroquin, C., (2019, October). A University/High School Partnership: Using a Problem-Solving Approach to Move Candidates and Students to Higher Literacy Performance. Presented at the Meeting of the Organization of Teacher Educators in Literacy, New Orleans, Louisiana.

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