Developing Empathetic Learners

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine implications for teaching empathy among high school-aged adolescents. The study utilized primarily quantitative methods via electronic pre and post-questionnaires with supplemental informal interviews. In the spring of 2017, high school seniors from two small schools (public and private) in the Southeastern United States participated in interactive, student-centered exercises designed to promote empathy. University faculty and teachers from nearby high schools worked collaboratively to develop and implement lessons on controversial topics. The pre and post-questionnaires were then examined to assess whether these interactive controversial lessons led to greater student empathy. Empathy promoting exercises were embedded in the lessons and discussions on the following "controversial" topics: genocide, LGBTQA+, and privilege. The researchers examined the following question: can teaching controversial topics lead to greater student empathy? Findings suggest that students are more likely to express empathy toward those who are different from themselves in classroom environments that explicitly foster openness to diverse views. Implications for understanding the development of empathetic classroom practice and practices on effectively teaching empathy are discussed.

Keywords: empathetic learners, controversial issues, social studies education, civic education

Historical Empathy

Historical empathy is the process of students' cognitive and affective engagement with historical figures to better understand and contextualize their lived experiences, decisions, or actions; and involves understanding how people from the past thought, felt, made decisions, acted, and faced consequences within a specific historical and social context (Endacott & Brooks, 2013). Over the past two decades, the fostering and display of historical empathy has received significant attention by scholars concerned with the teaching and learning of history in Kindergarten-12 classrooms.

Empathy is critically important to collaborative and inclusive systems and approaches in a democratic society. It is by and through empathy that individuals are capable of developing shared experiences that create environments of inclusivity and tolerance for diverse experiences and perspectives. Children thrive in learning environments where their opinions and perspectives are respected. Creating empathetic classrooms may not only yield immediate outcomes for improved self-esteem, motivation, and academic performance (Lynch & Simpson, 2010; University of Eastern Finland, 2015; and Wilson, 2016), but may also foster development of the life-long skills necessary for critical, reflective, and compassionate thinking. Further, Barton & Levstik (2004), posited that "if students are going to take part in meaningful public discussion, they need to understand that differing perspectives are a normal part of social interaction, not an aberration to be suppressed or overcome" (p. 219).[1]

To encourage the development of empathetic experiences among students, teachers must merge creative instructional strategies with objectives specifically designed to promote empathy among learners. In social science education, the presentation of controversial topics in lessons developed for high school students has been widely supported (Harwood & Hahn, 1990). This literature is mostly positive as "scholars have continuously noted that the use of controversial issues and contemporary points of contention in the classroom has some benefits which, when implemented effectively, will help teachers achieve the aims of social studies education" (Tannebaum, 2013, p. 100).

Within academic circles, the discussion of controversial topics in the classroom assists with:

> the elimination of idiocy; the increasing likelihood for student-engagement; the development of autonomous students who think critically… [and, the development of] students who are more likely to vote in elections, follow political news, take part in discussions on politics, have confidence in their views and develop an interest in processes of a democratic society. (Tannebaum, 2013, p. 100)

Further, research suggests that teachers are more inclined to provide added opportunities for collaborative dialogue and discourse in classrooms where students are capable of articulating a number of diverse perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds (Fecho & Botzakis, 2007; Moore, 2012; Parker, 2012). Consequently, empathy driven curricula nurture opportunities for deeper learning experiences.

By utilizing controversial dialogue in instructional practice, teachers may be able to create multiple opportunities for perspective taking among students. The element of perspective taking, "understanding another's prior lived experience, principles, positions, attitudes, and beliefs to understand how that person might have thought about the situation in question" (Endacott and Pelekanos, 2015), can be an essential instructional tool for fostering empathy among high school students.

Developing Empathetic Learners

Teaching empathy is critical in today's K-12 classrooms. In the southeastern United States with its history of inequality, and emphasis on traditionalism—where children may be more vulnerable to developing less empathetic ideologies—the need for instruction in empathy is particularly relevant. In classrooms where historical empathy is taught, the students are able to create a collaborative forum for the exchange of ideas, motivate one another through cooperation, and serve as peer models (Colby, 2008) while developing the ability to think critically, reflect, and develop compassion in order to create an empathetic society. The current social and political climate across the United States is markedly divisive. Opposing points of view are commonly met with little to no empathy while an increasing intolerance for diverse perspectives appears to take center stage. School-aged children are not immune to this phenomenon where lack of empathy and intolerance can be most apparent in schools. Utilizing historical contexts provide a viable context whereby students may understand diverse experiences and develop empathetic perspectives.

Teaching Historical Empathy

Endacott and Brooks (2013) contended that any attempt at "historical empathy" must include historical contextualization, perspective taking, and effective connection. Historical inquiry that does not encompass all three of these aspects cannot be called "historical empathy" but may, instead, be more accurately described as "historical perspective taking" or "effective connection to history" (p. 43-44).

Yilmaz (2007) posited that engaging in historical empathy is both demanding and challenging for students even at the lowest rank of educational objectives, 'Knowledge' as outlined in Bloom's Taxonomy

(1956), or 'Remembering' per Anderson and Krathwohl's (2002) new revised Bloom's Taxonomy. The author also asserted that students must first know historical facts, concepts, and interpretations in order to practice empathy. Cowan and Maitles (2012), however, contended that actively engaged students who can voice their opinions develop empathy through active learning. The authors also suggest that pedagogical practices like "role play can be used to develop empathy by, for example, giving students a choice of scenarios or allowing them to devise their own scenario where they can apply what they learned…" (p. 125). Along similar lines, Tannebaum (2013) perpetuated the educational vision and argued that students need to (a) work in a classroom that reflects "a functional democratic society" (p. 99), and for (b) "…the necessity for teachers who incorporate controversial social issues into their lessons through various forms of discourse" (p. 99).

Further, Healey (2012) looked at controversial topics in higher education and argued the importance of teaching controversial topics through debate and reflection for students to develop critical thinking skills. Specifically, Healey argued that the skill "…of 'thinking on your feet' which forms a central part of the debate…" is an essential element in critical thinking (p. 240). Misco (2014) argued, "Controversies constitute a normative anchor within citizenship education curriculum, and the degree to which they are subjected to reflection has profound implications for the vibrancy of democracy" (p. 48), and that "Engaging controversial issues pay a democratic dividend for student-citizens by increasing civic participation, critical thinking skills, interpersonal skills, content understanding, and political activity" (p. 48). The research is clear that teaching historical empathy is a crucial tool available to teachers in the development higher order thinking of their students (Cowan & Maitles, 2012; Endacott & Brooks, 2013; Endacott & Pelekanos, 2015; Healey, 2012; Tannebaum, 2013; Yilmaz, 2007).

Barriers to Teaching Empathy

According to Brooks (2009), empathy is difficult to achieve because it runs counter to intuitive ways of thinking. Researchers have identified several obstacles that can prevent students from displaying empathetic regard for people of the past, e.g., students' tendencies to explain unfamiliar practices as the result of a moral or intellectual deficiency, a lack of technology, a lack of intelligence or assumptions of ignorance, or being old-fashioned (Lee & Ashby, 2001; Barton & Levstik, 2004, as cited in Brooks, 2009). In other words, students struggled to recognize that practices that now seem outdated were at one time seen as the norm.

When students generate reasons to explain the past that are not

grounded in evidence, they are in danger of what Wineburg, 2001 (as cited in Brooks, 2009) labels "presentism," or the act of viewing the past through the lens of the present, or a reliance on assumptions of ignorance (Brooks, 2011). Wineburg explained that this approach is not simply a bad habit that some fall into, but a "psychological condition at rest, a way of thinking that comes quite naturally" (p. 221). Further, the presentist assumptions that students frequently draw upon detract from their ability to contextualize past actions and inhibit their ability to recognize the worth of other perspectives—two essential components of historical empathy.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine how teachers may develop empathetic students.

By creating a collaborative partnership between university faculty and high school teachers to develop and co-facilitate interactive United States Government lessons to promote empathy, the researchers sought to answer the following question, 'can teaching controversial topics lead to greater student empathy?' The premise of this research study was that teaching controversial topics is the foundation for dialogue in building a democratic society, fostering critical thinking, and empathy. This study took place in the Southeastern United States and utilized its history of racial and socioeconomic inequality and deep traditionalist views as a historical context for the lesson designs.

Methodology

This study consisted of primarily quantitative methods. The quantitative data is from a pre and post-questionnaire (Appendix A) administered by the researchers. The pre-questionnaire served as the baseline for the study and the post-questionnaire provided an understanding of whether participants perceived they were more empathetic from participating in discussions surrounding controversial topics. The qualitative data is from informal interviews with the two teachers the lessons (topics: Genocide, LGBTQA+, and privilege) were co-developed and co-taught with and high school participant's responses during lesson discussions. The qualitative data served to enrich the quantitative data. This approach was designed to triangulate the findings and provide a more thorough understanding of the effects of co-teaching controversial topics on developing empathy. Facilitators included university-based faculty and high school teachers co-teaching controversial topics using interactive student-centered ap-

proaches to answer the research question: Can teaching controversial topics lead to greater student empathy?

Sample and Participant Selection

The research sample consisted of a multi-layered site selection based on the school district, social studies course, high school, and teacher. The researchers did not have a role in selecting the high school students. The students were assigned by the school based on whether the students needed United States Government to graduate. There is one exception. At School A the high school teacher requested two additional students be added to the study. The teacher explained that she believed the students would benefit from this experience. Those students voluntarily attended and participated in the co-taught controversial lessons during their free time.

At the school district level, the researchers selected a district based on convenience; it was in close proximity to the university. In this district, the Assistant Superintendent informed the researchers of an incident with a previous high school teacher who had mistaught controversial topics, and it caused concern. This led the researchers to be especially transparent in explaining the research intentions to the four high schools (one private and three public) in the surrounding area. It also led the researchers to select United States Government as the preferred course because it is a required twelfth grade course. Since there was a school district concern about teaching controversial topics, the researchers wanted to ensure the students were mature to discuss controversial topics. The researchers' intention was to select two high schools whose administrators were interested in having a United States Government teacher co-teach controversial topics with a teacher education faculty member. There needed to be a teacher who was interested and committed to participating. Also, the schools needed to offer a United States Government class at times the researchers were available to co-teach the class. There was no sample preference based on the schools being private or public or on student characteristics.

To select the high schools, the researchers sent an email to the four high school head administrators explaining the research project and requesting a meeting to explain the activities further. One public school administrator did not respond to three email requests and this school was eliminated. Thereafter, the researchers conducted initial visits to the three high schools in the vicinity. Another school was eliminated based on the course scheduling conflict (the United States Government classes were not scheduled during a time the researchers was available). The remaining two schools were selected based on their administrators stated interest to have their United States

Government teacher co-teach interactive controversial topics with a university faculty member.

When meeting with the school administrators, the researchers re-iterated the goal of the study, which was to build community relations, foster critical thinking, and gauge the effect of co-teaching controversial topics on student empathy. School administrators selected the teacher the researchers would work with. Thereafter, the researchers met with the teachers to ensure their interest and commitment. At both schools, the United States Government teacher expressed interest in participating in the study. After explaining the research, there was another meeting at each school to invite the teachers and administrators to contribute in the topic selection, pedagogical strategies, and co-teaching activities.

Data Collection

The quantitative data consists of a pre and post-questionnaire (see Appendix A) electronically administered through Survey Monkey to a total of 42 spring 2017 seniors in School A (27 participants) and School B (15 participants). Appendix A depicts the questions on the pre and post-questionnaire that relate to this research. The other questions are redacted because they are part of a separate study. Based on the research objectives and using the literature review, these questionnaire questions were developed by the researchers. To check validity, the pre/post-questionnaire was shared with the school administrators and teachers at the two schools. At School A, the teacher provided feedback on language to ensure content would be easily understood by the high school students. School B provided no feedback. To ensure reliability, the researchers went to each school and administered the pre/post-questionnaire to both sets of students. The pre and post-questionnaires were analyzed using Microsoft Excel. At both schools, the first day was focused on introducing and explaining the research to the students and included explaining the controversial topics with an emphasis on teaching empathy. After, the students completed the pre-questionnaire.

Summary of Two Schools

The two high schools were uniquely different, and their approach to this research varied. School A was a public school whose demographic is 99% African-American and a middle to low-income school as deter-mined by the percent of students receiving free or reduced lunch (CSD). Although it is not clear why there was a gender imbalance in School A, 21 of the 27 students were female. In contrast, School B was a private school with a student population of 99% white and was a middle to high-income school. There was also a gender imbalance where only four of the

15 students were female. School B was comparatively more disorganized. For example at the start of the semester, there was not a clear indication of the number of students in the class, and it appeared that a special class was created to accommodate sporting activities. The class assignment process for athletes may also explain the gender imbalance.

School A

The researchers worked closely with the Assistant Superintendent and school administrators at School A to develop lesson plans and address initial concerns that the lessons would not be controversial enough to disrupt the educational process. Consequently, the researchers worked closely with school personnel to ensure that the planned topics fit the needs of the students, school, and district. The researchers visited School A three times before conducting the pre-questionnaire with the students. The first time was to meet with the teacher and administrator to approve the controversial topics. The next two times were to detail the specifics of the three co-taught lessons. During this time, the teacher and researchers went over each lesson to ensure the lesson fit the contextual needs of the class.

The researchers presented various sub-topics and adapted materials to make the content more relevant to the students. For example, a precursor activity for the privilege lesson had students complete a community analysis worksheet. After discussions between the faculty and teacher, the researchers added "natural" hair as a controversial topic in the African American community. Lesson development was a process that included changes up to the day the lesson was co-taught and even during the lesson facilitation. Post-lesson discussions also took place and revolved around how the lesson progressed, then the co-facilitators looked ahead to the next lessons and made further changes. Reflection on student performance and contextual considerations led to adaptation within the lessons.

School B

The private school administration was mainly concerned that the lessons fit with its conservative Christian values. The researchers visited School B twice before conducting the pre-questionnaire with students. The administrator met with the researchers and requested the guidance counselor at the school serve as a liaison. A follow-up meeting was held with the counselor, and teacher agreed to the controversial topics. No concerns were expressed about any of the topics selected. The teacher indicated the students were from a conservative background but did not provide further input. The teacher indicated he did not want to be

involved in the lesson development and that whatever topics researchers suggested was fine. The teacher in the area of United States Government initially began the school year on staff but resigned before the completion of the study.

Data Analysis

The pre and post-questionnaire were analyzed using Microsoft Excel. The findings were mixed. To ensure participants understood the meaning of empathy, question 19 on the pre-questionnaire and questions 11 and 14 on the post-questionnaire (see Appendix A) requested participants explain and provide and example of empathy. There were no major differences in the pre and post-questionnaire. Participants were able to clearly articulate and provide examples. For example, participant 17 stated in the pre-questionnaire, "Empathy means to be able to understand or share the same emotion as someone else. Its being able to put yourself in someone else's shoes." Similarly, participant 6 stated on the post-questionnaire, "Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another." For the above questions, there was no change noted from the pre to post-questionnaire, but there were themes that emerged from the informal interviews with the collaborating teachers and participants responses to post-questionnaire questions 12, 13, 16, and 18 (see Appendix A). These questions pertain to the perceived benefits of participating in co-teaching controversial topics.

Themes

Findings in this study indicate similarities and differences between participants at School A and School B. In response to the question driving this research, "can teaching controversial topics lead to greater student empathy?" two thematic categories emerged from the quantitative data. The two themes were teacher engagement and student engagement. Also, general observations concerning teaching controversial topics emerged.

Teacher Engagement

From the schools there were clear differences between the involvement of the two teachers. Ironically, School B initially expressed greater interest in the project, but then did not follow through with any practical involvement. urther, at School B the number of students in the class was unclear. The teacher looked at the class sheet of names (the school counselor provided) and checked off names that were present and crossed off two that were no longer in the class (the counselor had already crossed off one of these names). There seemed to be a general confusion of who

was in the class. The teacher and administration requested no further meetings.

This is in contrast to the teacher at School A where the teacher knew the number of students in the class and sought to bring in additional students. Further, at School A, the administrator insisted on sitting in on the initial meeting and there were pre lesson and post-lesson meetings with the teacher. The pre-lesson meetings pertained to reflecting on the general characteristics of students in the class and how the content of the lessons related to them. These discussions related to specific students (updated discussions on students who will no longer be in the class, example transferred to another school) and general ideas about the content and its connection to the larger community (incorporating information on the substance of a local Walmart). The post-lesson reflection discussions surrounded things that went well, things that could have changed, and how these things may alter the future lessons.

In general, although student engagement was high in both participating schools, actual completion of assigned student tasks was much lower in School B. For example, when students at School B were asked to complete an exit ticket on LGBQTA+ lesson only 3 of the 15 students present completed the task. At School B, there was no follow up or push from the teacher assigned to the class for the students to complete the assignment. In contrast, at School A, the teacher walked around the room and vocally asserted for the students to complete the task. At School A, 27 of the 27 students completed the exit ticket. This drastic difference in student completion of tasks is credited to an actively engaged teacher. Further, at School A, there were no instances during any of the lessons where students refused to complete tasks.

This is in contrast to School B where participants openly refused to complete tasks. For example, one assignment requested participants visit the local Walmart and explain the types of dolls they sell. The assignment was to understand if the products they sold were equally geared to the racial diversity of the community. Interestingly, none of the School B participants completed the assignment, but, in class, seven of the students vocally complained about how 'terrible' Walmart is and that Walmart 'probably discriminated' based on race. Their lack of assignment completion seems attributed to the lack of teacher engagement rather then their political views.

Student Engagement

To determine student engagement, a variety of factors were analyzed. For example, attendance for participating in this study was high at both the schools. School A had 90% attendance and School B had 85%. Also,

the post-questionnaire was completed by 34 of the 42 participants (86.56 percent return rate). Specifically, School A had higher return rate with an 88.8% return rate compared to 66% at School B. Overall, the interest to participate in this study was high at both schools. Further, question 18 from the post-questionnaire asked participants to judge whether they benefitted from this experience and an overwhelming 87.88% stated yes with 12.12% declaring no.

Additionally, from the post-questionnaire, overwhelmingly students at both schools agreed the teaching of controversial topics made them more empathetic. For example, question 12 on the post-questionnaire asked, 'do you believe that you are more empathetic because of the topics discussed?' 33 of the 34 participants answered the question with 75.76% answering yes and 24.24% stating no. Further supporting this response was post-questionnaire question 13 that asked, 'should empathy toward those who are different from you (a different race, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, etc.) be taught in school?' Overwhelmingly, 78.79% replied yes with 21.21% stating no. These responses reveal participants' interest in participating in controversial lesson topics to enable discussion and learn from diverse views.

Furthermore, this study sought to determine whether the participants enjoyed discussing controversial topics, question 16 on the post-questionnaire asked, did you like discussing the topics presented to you? Similarly, an overwhelming, 90.91% of participants responded yes, with only 9.09% responding no. This result also revealed an interest to engage in non-traditional topics. This finding is particularly relevant because this study takes place in the Southeastern United States that is known for its traditional views. Participants cited the following explanations as to why they enjoyed discussing controversial topics: "I just liked how we were able to discuss them and see both sides"; "I liked the fact that we got to talk about them, which we don't get to do much"; "During the discussion of the different topics, I liked that information was presented to me that I did not know of"; and "I liked discussing these topics because most teachers avoid topics such as these and in small debates with my peers, I'm never fully able to access my thoughts." Regardless of the political point of views of the students, almost 91% of participants enjoyed discussing and exploring diverse views.

Results and Discussion

In general, participants at both schools clearly understood and could define empathy (pre-questionnaire question 19 and post-questionnaire questions 11 and 14). This is significant when comparing participants.

At both schools, students were less likely to express empathy toward individuals who were different from them. For example, the week before teaching the lesson on LGBTQA+ in School B, President Trump emphasized states should decide the policy for bathroom usage. This led to a heated in-class discussion on transgender individuals and bathroom regulations. At School B, during the LGBTQA+ lessons, three students were extremely hostile towards transgender people. Participants expressed confusion as to why the individuals were transgendered and wondered if the parents were forcing them to behave this way. Participants also expressed a fear of their bathroom space being invaded by those they did not understand. School A also had students who exhibited discomfort when discussing the LGBTQA+ community. At School A students expressed discomfort around 'flamy' or openly gay individuals.

Other controversial topics invoked similar responses, but with a different rationale. For example, the genocide lesson responses were similar. Overwhelmingly, School B 10/13 and School A 22/23 participants declared Genocide Awareness a significant event that should be part of the calendar. Interestingly, although both groups overwhelmingly thought genocide awareness was significant, the rationales were different. At School A participant responses included, 'honoring the dead; respect for those who died; social justice; how we moved forward as a society; remember those who fell; the importance of identifying discrimination; pointing out different cultures discriminated against and help prevent it from happening again.' In contrast, at School B participants stated, 'the importance of discussing history, remember those killed, and remember those no longer with us.'

Regardless of student's political leanings, the findings indicate students benefitted from discussing controversial topics because it allowed them to engage new dialogue topics. These dialogues fostered critical thinking. For example, while discussing whether women should take their husband's last name on marriage, one student (School B) responded, 'I have never honestly thought about that.' He went on to explain, that he had never questioned or thought of a contrary view.

Limitations

A limitation of this study is the small sample population (27 at School A and 15 at School B, totally 42 participants) and that it is confined to two high schools in the Southeastern United States. Generalizations about the two schools (one public and one private) are difficult to apply outside this community because the study size. Similarly, another limitation of the small sample size is the inability to determine statistical consequences. For example, for the scaled 1-10 questions, pre-question-

naire question 16 and 17/post-questionnaire 9 and 10 (see Appendix A), the average score of participants was 7 in the pre and post-questionnaire. There was no change.

Furthermore, the teacher at School B, resigned before the semester concluded. Consequently, high school participants at School B were at a disadvantage due to the absence of a certified teacher to engage them in the controversial topics. In addition, this may have had an effect on the lack of completed assignments from School B.

Conclusion

This study examined teaching empathy in K-12 classrooms and is particularly relevant in our fractured country. This study is particularly relevant because there is a need to create empathetic learners who think critically, reflect, and have compassion. The findings suggest that students are more likely to express empathy toward those who are different from themselves in classroom environments that explicitly foster openness to diverse views. The findings also suggest that teachers should engage students in controversial topics to enable them to understand different perspectives. As demonstrated by the post-questionnaire responses, students were interested to learn about ideas that were different from their own. This is an essential component to fostering empathy.

Overwhelmingly, as demonstrated by post-questionnaire responses to questions 12, 13, 16, and 18, participants perceived benefits from their engagement in the controversial topics. The significance of this study is in understanding effective teaching practices for promoting student empathy. Further research should delve into the benefits for the co-facilitators, the university faculty and high school teachers who co-taught the controversial topics using interactive student-centered approaches to promote empathy. Further research could also delve into the varied student-centered approaches used to promote empathy.

Note

[1] See Brooks (2009).

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Appendix A

Questionnaire (pre/post test) to Students

TEACHING CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS
IN THE HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Please answer only the questions with which you are comfortable. The information from individual surveys will be kept confidential and will only be analyzed as a group.

1. What is your email address?

2. What school do you currently attend?

3. Grade Level:
    Freshmen
    Sophomore
    Junior
    Senior

4. What is your sex?
    Male
    Female

5. Which ethno-racial/origin categories best describe you?
    Select all choices that apply. Note: you may select more than one group.

    Black or African American (For example, African American, Jamaican,
        Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, etc.)

    White (For example, German or German-American, Irish, English,
        Italian, Polish, French, etc.)

    Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin (For example, Mexican or Mexican
        American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, etc.)

    Asian (For example, Chinese or Chinese-American, Filipino, Vietnamese,
        Korean, Japanese, etc.)

    American Indian or Alaskan Native (For example, Navajo, Blackfeet,
        Mayan, Aztec, Cherokee, Creek, Inupiat, etc.)

    Middle Eastern or North African (For example, Syrian or Syrian-American,
        Iranian, Egyptian, Lebanese, Moroccan, Algerian, etc.)

    Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (For example, Native Hawaiian,
        Samoan, Tongan, Fijian, etc.)

    Some other race, ethnicity, or origin (please specify): _____

6. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being "not important" and 10 being "very important," how important is learning about empathy in your high school social studies classes?

7. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being "not much" and 10 being "a lot," how much does learning about controversial topics influence your overall level of empathy?

8. In your own words, provide a brief statement about what empathy means to you.

Post-Questionnaire

What is your email address?

9. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being "not important" and 10 being "very important," how important is learning about empathy in your high school social studies classes?

10. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being "not much" and 10 being "a lot," how much does learning about controversial topics influence your overall level of empathy?

11. In your own words, provide a brief statement about what empathy means to you and provide an example.

12. Do you believe that you are more empathetic as a result of the topics discussed? YES/NO

13. Should empathy toward those who are different from you (a different race, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, etc.) be taught in school? YES/NO

14. Provide an example of how you are empathetic towards people who are different from you (someone of a different race, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic income, etc.)

15. Did you like discussing the topics presented to you? YES/NO

16. Did you benefit from this experience? YES/NO. If yes, explain and provide an example of how you benefited from this experience.