

MARYWOOD UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

Exploring the Cascade Effect of Cultural Competency on Empathy among College Students in
Northeastern Pennsylvania: A Quantitative Case Study

By

Larissa Schwass

A Dissertation in Administration and Leadership

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The increasing cultural diversity in the United States necessitates a deeper understanding of how cultural competency influences empathy. This study explores the relationship between cultural competency and empathy, emphasizing the role of education and lived experiences in fostering a more inclusive society. Literature suggests that increasing knowledge of diverse cultures enhances empathy, leading to improved communication, conflict resolution, and collaboration in multicultural environments. Recent global conflicts, such as the war in Ukraine and the Israeli-Palestinian tensions, highlight the consequences of cultural misunderstanding and the absence of empathy. Furthermore, instances of xenophobia and racial discrimination underscore the need for a more culturally competent society. College students, at a formative stage of moral and ethical development, present a critical opportunity to enhance cultural awareness and empathetic engagement. This study evaluates the correlation between cultural competency and empathy among college students, finding a weak positive association. The findings suggest that while cultural knowledge contributes to empathy, other factors such as emotional intelligence and adaptability play a significant role. The study highlights the importance of integrating emotional and experiential learning into educational and professional programs to cultivate a more empathetic and culturally competent society. Additionally, demographic factors such as gender and age influence empathy and cultural competency, suggesting the need for tailored interventions. These findings provide valuable insights for curriculum development and professional training, aiming to promote cultural understanding and empathy in diverse settings.

Key Words: Cultural competency, Empathy, Diversity, Education, Global conflicts, Conflict Resolution, Emotional intelligence, Inclusion, Higher education, College students, Ethical development, Interpersonal relationships.

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Chapter One

The Problem and Its Setting

Introduction

The United States continues to welcome newcomers, immigrants, and refugees from many regions of the world. As a result, the United States population is increasingly diverse and includes a wide variety of racial, ethnic, language, and religious groups, as well as socioeconomic levels, giftedness, disabilities, gender, and sexual orientation (Sandel & Tupy, 2015). As cultural diversity continues to increase, it is essential to embrace, learn, and understand one another's differences and to respond empathically to them. Without understanding and empathy, there can be a lack of tolerance and disregard for basic human rights due to these cultural differences. Therefore, it is necessary to understand how cultural understanding influences people's responses.

The literature that provides evidence supporting the need for this study includes research on the cause for increased cultural competency and the relationship with the benefits of fostering empathy through cultural competency. This research shows that increasing education about different cultures fosters empathy, leading to greater cultural competence and, consequently, kinder behavior towards those who are different. Demonstrating how nurturing empathy and understanding for others' differences may not only promote personal development but also enhance overall well-being and satisfaction in interpersonal connections. The idea of understanding how empathy is gained and the possibility of increasing empathetic understanding across different cultures may lead to more effective communication, improved conflict resolution, and enhanced collaboration in diverse environments. In the United States, we are all operating in an increasingly culturally diverse environment where we need to be able to interact,

communicate, build relationships, and work effectively with people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Empathy often leads us to not only experience the feelings of others, but it is often a reflection of those feelings. Generally speaking, empathy refers to the consequences of perceiving the feeling state of another as well as the capacity to do so accurately (Spreng et al, 2009).

In recent years, the world has continued to witness a surge in aggressive conflicts and tensions, manifesting in various forms across different regions. The ongoing war in Ukraine exemplifies this trend, where the lack of empathy and cultural understanding has significantly exacerbated the conflict. The war in the Ukraine is deeply rooted in a cultural confrontation between globalist and nativist ideologies and this cultural clash is fundamental to understanding the motivations behind the conflict (Dias, 2022). Lack of mutual understanding between conflicting parties and global actors contributes to the perpetuation of violence and hinders the prospects for a peaceful resolution. Similarly, the intensification of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict highlights how deeply ingrained cultural and historical misunderstandings can fuel aggression. Both sides have developed narratives of victimhood and betrayal, which perpetuate a cycle of hostility. Long-standing grievances, territorial disputes, and cultural narratives have created a volatile environment where empathy is often overshadowed by entrenched biases and prejudices (Gelvin, 2014). On a different scale, the rise in xenophobic rhetoric and hate crimes globally reflects a broader trend of cultural insensitivity and lack of empathy. Instances of violence against minority communities, including attacks on Asian Americans in the United States and the systemic discrimination and ongoing struggles highlighted by the Black Lives

Matter movement, show the deeper issues related to cultural ignorance and intolerance.

Addressing these issues requires an understanding and appreciation of diverse cultural perspectives in order to mitigate aggression and promote global harmony.

A great starting point for transforming a culture of aggression into one of empathy is to engage with college students, as they are at a pivotal stage of developing their ethical and political beliefs (Schwartz and Kivlighan, 2008). College students are often deeply influenced by their evolving understanding of justice and human rights, making them particularly attuned to conflicts and political strife. College students are often in a transitional phase between the conventional and post-conventional levels of moral reasoning. As they progress to higher stages of moral development, they become more concerned with universal ethical principles and social justice issues. This progression can make students more likely to engage in activism that challenges injustices and advocates for broader societal change (Schwartz & Kivlighan, 2008). The energy and idealism of college students can serve as a catalyst for fostering a more empathetic and culturally aware society, ultimately contributing to improving cultural understanding. As students continue to develop their moral and ethical frameworks, their activism can drive meaningful change, paving the way for a culture that values empathy and cultural competence over hostility and division. Cultural competency can be learned naturally, perhaps during lived experiences such as experiencing friendships, classmates, or other working relationships (DeAngelis, 2015). The ability to empathize can also be enhanced by these lived experiences, although everyone is born with a certain level of empathy by nature.

In a world where cultural understanding is crucial, universities and colleges have the opportunity to impact our future. Institutions of higher education can not only offer students the opportunity to experience interactions and education about diversity but also provide a context

for understanding empathy toward cultural differences. By examining how an increased awareness of cultural influences may be related to emotional responses, we can better grasp the intricate dynamics at play.

The intention of this study is to ask the questions, what is the relationship between cultural competency and empathy. By delving into these intersections, this study seeks to provide valuable insights that can inform practice and curriculum development. Professionals in education and related fields can benefit from understanding how cultural competency and empathy intertwine, enhancing their ability to provide effective support to diverse populations. Ultimately, the findings of this study have the potential to influence those committed to fostering positive attitudes toward cultural diversity. This study will synthesize and expand upon the growing body of knowledge around empathy, and how it relates to cultural competency. Understanding how individuals' perceptions of cultural understanding with their empathetic responses can provide valuable insights into relationship dynamics and societal interactions.

Theoretical Framework

Two theories guide this research: Ethnocultural Empathy (Rasoal et al., 2011) and Campinha-Bacote's Process Model developed by Dr. Josephine Campinha-Bacote (CampinhaBacote, J. (2007a). Ethnocultural empathy is a framework that helps understand interactions between people from different ethnic groups and studies the relationship in terms of the presence or absence of empathy (Rasoal et al., 2011). Ethnocultural empathy specifically refers to empathy between people from different cultures. Rasoal et al. (2011) suggest that a built framework surrounding ethnocultural empathy should be defined as feeling, understanding, and caring about what someone from another culture feels, understands, and cares about. Ethnocultural empathy can be compared to empathy for the opposite sex in the end it is about

empathy for another group. One can feel, understand, and care about what a person from another ethnic culture cares about, in the same way as one can feel, understand, and care about what someone of the opposite sex cares about (Rasoal et al., 2011). This theory explains how individuals' emotional experiences and expressions can be influenced by societal norms and expectations. Cultural norms dictating emotional expression may differ impacting how they perceive and respond to positive and negative emotions (Rasoal et al., 2011) Additionally, using Ethnocultural empathy examines several types of empathy such as intellectual empathy, emotional empathy, and relationship empathy.

Figure 1: Figure of Ethnocultural empathy (Perez- Fuentes et al, 2020).

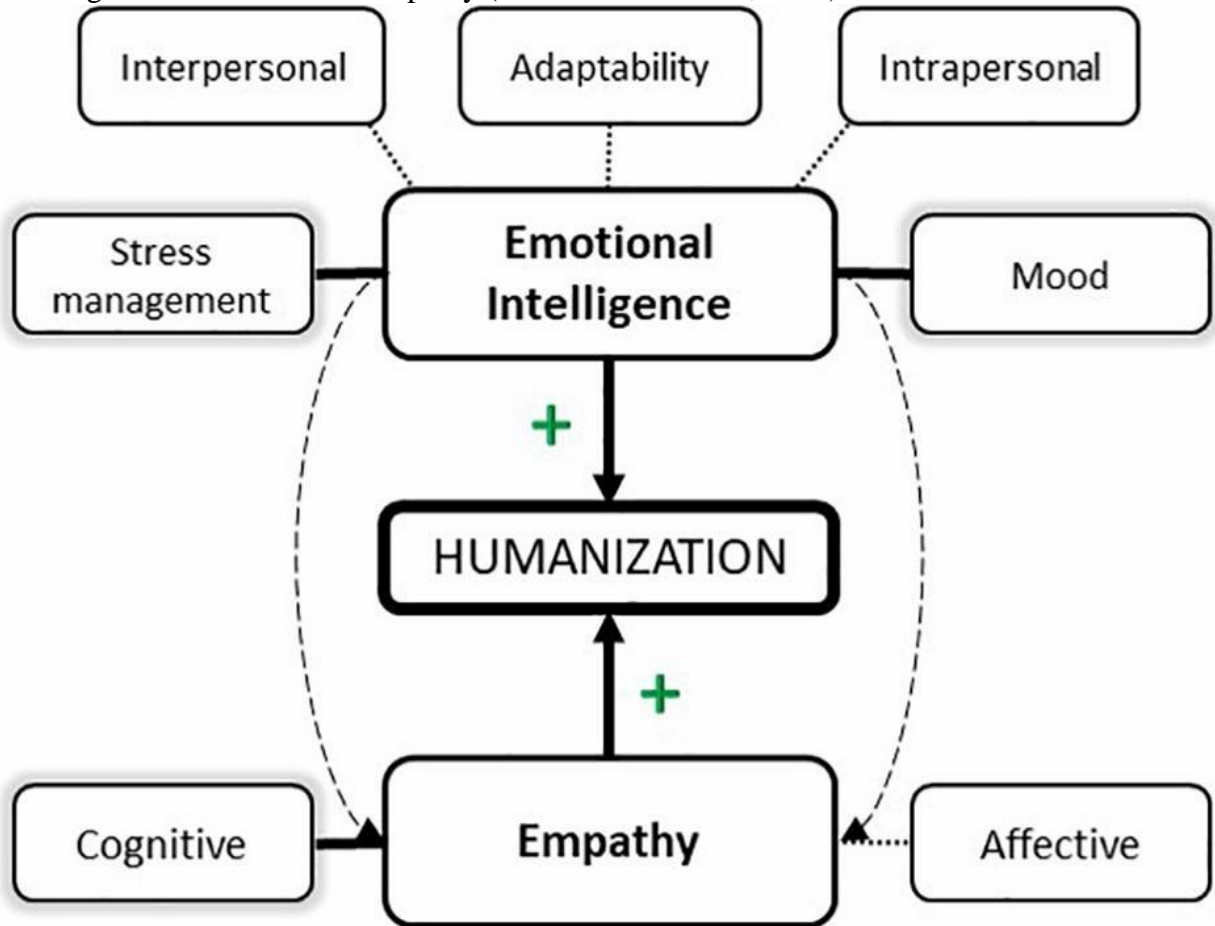


Figure 1 examines how positive and negative cognitions and social contacts of culture affect positive and negative emotions. This figure examines the role of both variables (emotional intelligence) and (empathy) in the development of humanization in health. The objectives shown examine the explanatory value of emotional intelligence and cognitive empathy in humanization. In examining the 5 areas of emotional intelligence; interpersonal, adaptability, intrapersonal, stress management, and mood there can be a connection between the two areas of empathy; cognitive and affective. This humanistic approach analyzes the value of emotional intelligence and empathy.

Campinha-Bacote's Process Model developed by Dr. Josephine Campinha-Bacote proposes that cultural competence is a dynamic and ongoing process that involves five stages: cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural skill, cultural encounters, and cultural desire. It emphasizes the importance of self-reflection, cultural humility, and interpersonal interactions in developing cultural competence (Campinha-Bacote, 2007). Campinha-Bacote (2011) emphasizes cultural competence not as a static skillset but as a dynamic process evolving over time. Campinha-Bacote (2011) highlights the evolving nature of cultural competence, arguing that it progresses through six stages: cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, cultural blindness, cultural pre-competence, basic cultural competence, and advanced cultural competence. This developmental model suggests that individuals advance along a continuum toward enhanced cultural competence through ongoing learning and reflection.

Campinha-Bacote's (2011) emphasizes self-reflection and personal transformation. The author specifies the importance of engaging in introspection to recognize one's own biases, assumptions, and limitations in understanding cultural differences. By acknowledging and addressing these biases, individuals can progress towards higher levels of cultural competence.

Campinha-Bacote (2011) stresses in this model the role of cultural encounters in the development of cultural competence. These encounters involve meaningful interactions with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, allowing healthcare professionals to gain firsthand experience and insight into different worldviews, values, and practices. Through these encounters, individuals confront their biases, challenge stereotypes, and cultivate empathy and understanding. This model speaks to the significance of active engagement in cultural encounters rather than passive exposure to diversity, aligning with research emphasizing the importance of experiential learning in cultural competence training. Campinha-Bacote's Process Model emphasizes the dynamic and interconnected nature of cultural competence development, with each stage building upon the previous one. By progressing through these stages, individuals can enhance their ability to provide culturally responsive care and promote health equity for diverse populations (Maňhalová & Tóthová, 2016).

The Five Stages: cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural skill, cultural encounters, and cultural desire

Cultural Awareness: This stage involves recognizing and acknowledging one's own cultural biases, beliefs, and values. It entails becoming conscious of how one's cultural background influences perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. Cultural awareness prompts individuals to reflect on their assumptions about diversity and recognize the importance of understanding and respecting differences. Dynamics within this stage include introspection, self-reflection, and recognition of cultural biases.

Cultural Knowledge: Cultural knowledge refers to the acquisition of information about diverse cultural backgrounds, including beliefs, practices, customs, and communication styles. This stage

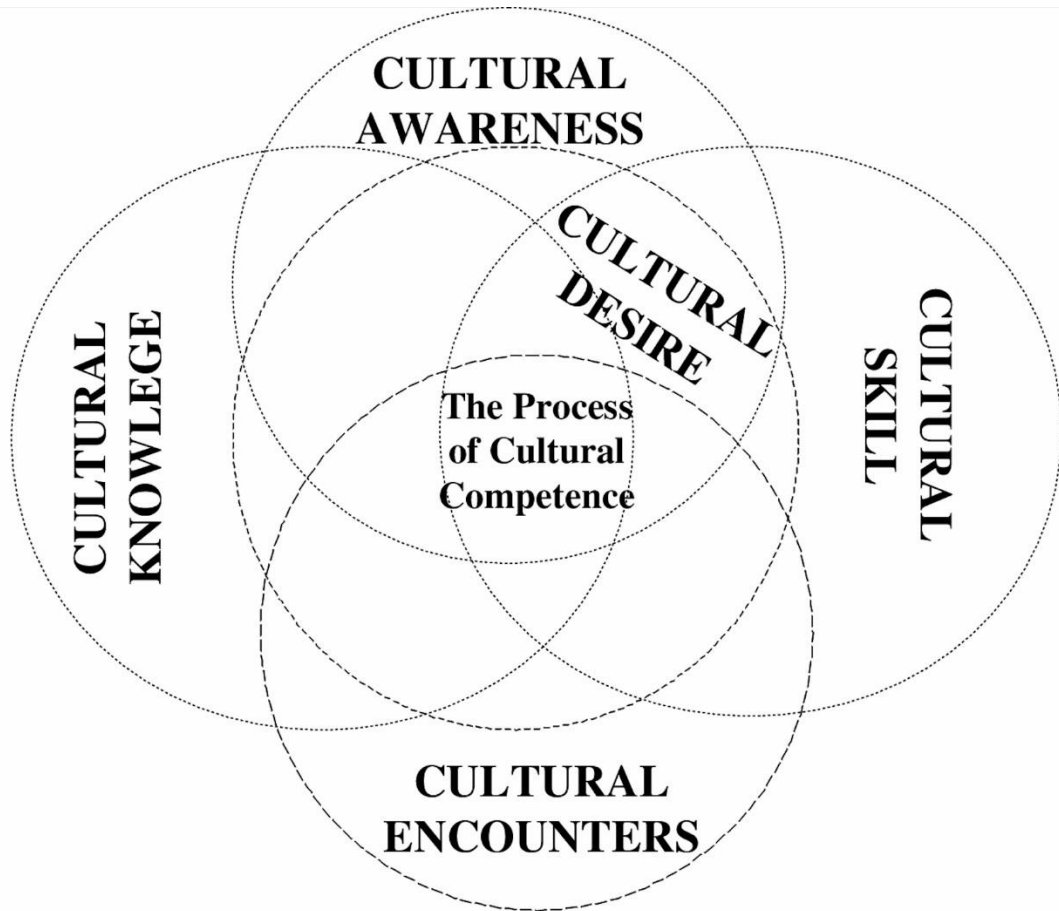
involves actively seeking out information and resources to gain a deeper understanding of different cultural groups. Dynamics within this stage include research, education, and exposure to diverse cultural perspectives through various channels such as books, articles, training programs, and interactions with individuals from different backgrounds.

Cultural Skill: Cultural skill involves the ability to apply cultural knowledge effectively in interactions with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. This stage requires the development of communication techniques, interpersonal skills, and cultural sensitivity to navigate cross-cultural encounters respectfully and effectively. Dynamics within this stage include practicing active listening, empathy, non-verbal communication, and adapting communication styles to accommodate cultural differences.

Cultural Encounters: Cultural encounters involve meaningful interactions with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. This stage provides opportunities to apply cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills in real-world settings. Cultural encounters enable individuals to engage with people from different cultures, challenge stereotypes, and broaden their perspectives. Dynamics within this stage include exposure to diverse cultural experiences, cross-cultural communication, and building rapport with individuals from different backgrounds. Cultural

Desire: Cultural desire is the intrinsic motivation or inclination to engage with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds in a respectful, empathetic, and culturally sensitive manner. This stage reflects a genuine commitment to cultural competence and a willingness to learn from and connect with people across cultural boundaries. Dynamics within this stage include fostering curiosity, empathy, and humility, as well as maintaining a lifelong commitment to learning and growth in cultural competence (Campinha-Bacote, 2011).

Figure Two: The Process of Cultural Competence (Campinha-Bacote, 1999).



As seen in Figure two, Dr. Josephine Campinha-Bacote reflects the interdependent relationship between the five constructs, cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural skill, cultural encounters, and cultural desire. At the center of these elements' cultural skill and cultural awareness there is cultural desire, which drives the process of developing cultural competence. This process involves ongoing learning, self-reflection, and active engagement with diverse cultures. The overlapping circles suggest that these elements are interconnected and all contribute to achieving cultural competence.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is built from both the concepts of Ethnocultural Empathy and Campinha-Bacote's Process Model. Using the concepts of ethnocultural empathy and how it interconnects with Campinha-Bacote's model in this study, the researcher will explore the relationship between cultural competency scores and empathy scores for those who identify as college students. The researcher will look at four areas of cultural competency to compare to empathy. Cognitive measuring an individual's ability to understand and learn about different cultures, including their values, norms, and beliefs. Motivational, which measures an individual's ability to adapt to different physical environments, such as different climates, foods, and living conditions. Metacognitive which measures an individual's ability to manage and regulate emotions in cross-cultural interactions. Behavioral which measures an individual's ability to adjust their behavior in culturally appropriate ways.

Figure Three: Conceptual Framework

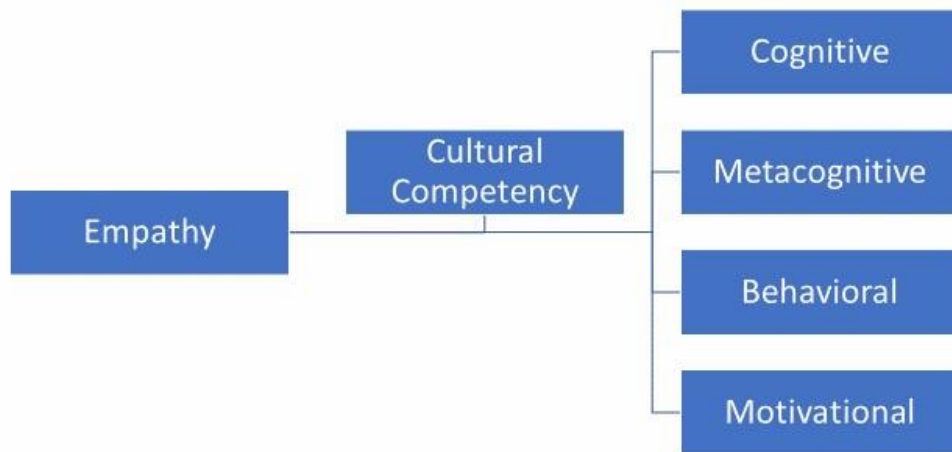


Figure 3: Conceptual Framework: This figure reflects the relationship between four areas of cultural competency; Cognitive, metacognitive, behavioral, and motivational and how they lead to the understanding of empathy between people from different cultures.

Purpose Statement:

The purpose of this quantitative study using a regression analysis was to test the theory of cultural change that explains the relationship between cultural competency, gender, human service major identification, and empathy among students at a University in Northeast Pennsylvania. The independent variable of cultural competency will be defined as the ability to understand, appreciate, and interact with people from cultures or belief systems different from one's own. The dependent variable, empathy will be defined as experiencing the emotional state of another.

Research Question:

How do cultural competency, gender, and human service major identification predict empathy among students attending college in Northeast Pennsylvania?

Sub Problems:

SP 1) What are the levels of cultural competency, gender, and human service major identification among students attending college in Northeast Pennsylvania?

SP 2) What are the empathy scores of students attending college in Northeast Pennsylvania?

SP 3) What is the relationship between cultural competency and empathy among students attending college in Northeast Pennsylvania?

SP 4) How do cultural competency, gender, and human service major identification predict empathy among students attending college in Northeast Pennsylvania?

Hypothesis:

Null Hypothesis: Cultural competency, gender, and human service major identification do not predict empathy among students attending college in Northeast Pennsylvania.

Alternative Hypothesis: Cultural competency, gender, and human service major identification predict empathy among students attending college in Northeast Pennsylvania.

Definitions:

Empathy: Empathy is the capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing from within their frame of reference, i.e., the capacity to place oneself in another's position (Coutinho et al., 2014). In this study, empathy will be defined as experiencing the emotional state of another. Empathy will be measured by the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ).

Cultural Competency: Cultural competency is the ability to understand, appreciate and interact with people from cultures or belief systems different from one's own (DeAngelis, 2015). In this study cultural competence will be defined as the ability to understand, appreciate and interact with people from cultures or belief systems different from one's own. Cultural competency will be measured by the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQE).

NEPA (Northeast Pennsylvania): Northeast Pennsylvania encompasses fifteen counties. These counties are Bradford County, Carbon County, Lackawanna County, Luzerne County, Lycoming County, Monroe County, Pike County, Schuylkill County, Snyder County, Sullivan County, Susquehanna County, Tioga County, Union County, Wayne County, and Wyoming County. In this study, Northeast Pennsylvania will be defined as Lackawanna County.

College Students: The traditional vision of college readiness, which has typically meant an exclusive focus on improved academic performance for in-school youth, may fail to fully capture

the developmental process required for all young people to complete high school and enter, succeed in, and graduate from postsecondary education and training (Hooker & Brand, 2010). In this study college students will be defined as those students that are attending an institute of higher learning.

Gender: Researchers have defined two of the many steroid molecules more commonly referred to as hormones: testosterone and estrogen. These molecules have assumed a place in both scientific and general discourse as determining factors of "gendered behavior." The definition of gendered behavior of "masculine" and "feminine" refers to the degree to which a woman's and man's behavior is more 'masculine' or more 'feminine' for those behaviors that typically differ (Kennelly et al., 2001). In this study, the gender of females and males will be defined as the gender that the student identifies as.

Human Service Major: Human service majors: a focus of study encompassing several majors that relate to helping individuals, families, and communities improve their quality of life. This interdisciplinary field integrates principles from psychology, sociology, social work, public health, and education to prepare students for careers in roles that support social and individual well-being (National Organization for Human Services, 2024). In this study, human service major identification will be defined as those students who are registered as psychology, sociology, social work, public health, and education majors.

Attending University: Attending means going to an event or place, whereas a University is defined as a large and diverse institution of higher learning created to educate for life and for a profession and to grant degrees (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). For the purpose of this study, Attending University will refer to being enrolled in an institute of higher learning.

Delimitations:

This study is delimited to part-time and full-time undergraduate and graduate students. This study is delimited to students at one college campus in NEPA. This study is delimited to the scores on the instruments measuring cultural competency and empathy.

Limitations:

This research might be limited due to a lower response rate. This research might be limited due to the generalizability of the school being a small, private, catholic institution in NEPA.

Assumptions:

The assumptions of this study include: that all participants will be honest, that all participants have the ability to read and understand the material they are being presented, and that all participants are who they say they are.

Significance

In today's interconnected and diverse world, the ability to understand and empathize with others from different cultural backgrounds is becoming increasingly vital. This is especially true in the realm of higher education, where colleges and universities can serve as exposure moments of diverse perspectives and experiences. Cultural competence and empathy are both important components of effective communication and relationship-building, especially in a diverse setting.

People find themselves in increased contact with individuals who are culturally different. Neither knowledge nor language alone is sufficient for the development of intercultural competence (Deardorff & Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017). It is therefore imperative for people to think interculturally. The changing world requires individuals and organizations to begin the journey toward intercultural competence (Iseminger, S. et al., 2020). There are many benefits to empathizing with cultures that differ from one's own such as improving teamwork, collaboration, and productivity by viewing perspectives from multiple sides. Getting a better understanding of cultural differences can also improve communication and reduce misunderstandings in both personal and professional relationships.

Empathy and cultural competency are both essential skills for college-age students to develop and help foster understanding and respect for the diverse perspectives and experiences of others (Hooker, & Brand, 2010). In improving empathy in college-age students there can be assumed importance of increasing cultural education in universities nationwide. Empathy is a critical skill for college-age students because it can help them develop deeper and more meaningful relationships with others. It can also help them to better understand their own emotions and the emotions of those around them, which can lead to improved communication, conflict resolution, and overall well-being (Hooker, & Brand, 2010). Cultural competency involves understanding and respecting different cultural norms, values, beliefs, and behaviors. College-age students who are culturally competent can better navigate diverse social situations with ease and sensitivity, and they can work effectively with people from different backgrounds. In today's globalized world, empathy and cultural competency are increasingly important skills for college-age students to develop. These skills can help them succeed academically, socially, and professionally by enabling them to navigate diverse situations with confidence and

sensitivity. Additionally, developing empathy and cultural competency may help college-age students become more engaged and responsible members of their communities, promoting mutual respect and understanding across different cultures and backgrounds (DeAngelis, 2015). In the realm of healthcare, the importance of cultural competence in delivering effective and equitable services has been widely recognized. Healthcare and social services providers are deemed culturally competent when they offer culturally appropriate care to the populations they serve (Lekas, Pahl, & Lewis, 2020).

Gender also plays a crucial role in the development and application of empathy and cultural competency. Understanding how gender shapes individuals' experiences, perspectives, and societal expectations can enhance college-age students' ability to empathize and engage meaningfully with others. Gender-based norms and biases often influence how people express emotions, communicate, and relate to one another, which makes it vital to address these dynamics in educational settings (Deng, et al, 2023). By incorporating discussions about gender equity and sensitivity into cultural competency training, students can develop a more inclusive perspective that values and respects diverse gender identities and expressions. This awareness fosters healthier relationships, reduces gender-based conflicts, and contributes to creating equitable environments on campus and beyond (Christov-Moore et al., 2014). Likewise, human services majors are uniquely positioned to contribute to the study of empathy and cultural competency due to their focus on helping individuals and communities thrive. These programs emphasize understanding human behavior, social systems, and the needs of diverse populations, making them essential in fostering these skills among college-age students (Harton and Lyons, 2003).

While there is extensive research examining the connection between cultural empathy in healthcare settings, there is a scarcity of studies investigating the impact of how empathy relates to cultural competency among college students. Enhancing our comprehension of the complexities of empathy and its influencing factors may lead to more impactful implications for professionals in helping fields such as teachers, counselors, and educators, as well as those in supportive educational roles like occupational and speech therapists. Understanding how cultural competency influences empathy among college students can enhance the effectiveness of interventions and support strategies implemented by these professionals. Exploring this relationship opens the opportunity for interventions and programs that foster a more inclusive environment and reduce instances of cultural ignorance and intolerance, leading to decreased violence and discrimination. Ultimately, this research has the potential to contribute to a more equitable and harmonious society by promoting mutual respect and understanding among future generations.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

Introduction

Within this literature review is an anthology of research that centers around the nuances of empathy, its relation to cultural competency, and the impact of empathy on cultural understanding. The literature gathered aids with understanding the significance of empathy for cultural competency and highlights how these essential concepts contribute to fostering a more inclusive and harmonious society.

Empathy

Empathy is the moral glue that holds civil society together; unless humans have robust habits of mind and reciprocal behavior that lead to empathy, society as we know it will crumble. Empathy can reduce intolerance, conflicts, and discrimination, and increase understanding, respect, and tolerance between people with similar as well as different ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Wang et al., 2003, as cited in Rosal et al., 2011). According to Rosal et al, (2011), they note that Kitwood in his book, *Concern for Others* (1990) gives one of the, most concise reasons why empathy matters:

“our countless small and unreflective actions towards others, and the patterns of living and relating which each human being gradually creates. It is here that we are systematically respected or discounted, accepted or rejected, enhanced or diminished in our personal being” (p.149; qtd, in Vetlesen, 1994, p.9).

Deardroff & Arasaratnam-Smith (2017) describe the complex term for empathy as a difficult concept to grasp and is an explanatory concept for understanding why people behave the way that they do with certain consequences. When it comes to recognizing and appreciating the beliefs, values, traditions, and practices of other cultures there needs to be an empathetic

understanding. This often requires the ability to put oneself “in the shoes” of individuals from different cultural backgrounds and view the world through their perspectives. Empathy plays a crucial role when it comes to understanding multiple and different cultures from one’s own, there must be a certain level of empathy in order to follow through with full understanding and acceptance. Without empathy, it can become much more challenging to understand and appreciate the nuances and complexities of different cultures. The authors emphasize that empathy is essential in building meaningful connections with people, regardless of their cultural background, and is a vital component of cultural competency. Of all the sentiments that have the potential to alter what we do interculturally and especially in higher education, none is more important than empathy (Deardroff & Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017).

Grasping the concept of empathy can be challenging. Greenberg et al. (2001) define empathy as a multi-dimensional construct that encompasses affective, cognitive, and behavioral components (Greenberg et al., 2001). Gallese et al, (2004) identified mirror neurons, a type of brain cell that responds both when an individual performs an action and when they observe the same action performed by another. These neurons, located primarily in the premotor cortex and inferior parietal lobule, are thought to be crucial for active understanding, imitation, and the development of social cognition. The discovery of mirror neurons supports the notion that empathy involves a form of neural stimulation. When we see someone else experiencing an emotion or performing an action, our mirror neurons activate in a similar way to how they would if we were experiencing that emotion or performing that action ourselves. This mirroring process provides a neural basis for understanding others' emotions and actions, suggesting that empathy is deeply rooted in our brain's functioning. Gallese et al. (2004) report that these findings suggest that the brain's empathic response involves both affective and cognitive components, as

individuals not only understand the pain of others but also share in the emotional experience to some extent. This overlap in neural activation emphasizes the idea that empathy is a complex process involving both shared and distinct neural pathways (Gallese et al. 2004).

Hodges, et al. (2010), explore the influence of shared experiences on the empathic processes and examine how having a similar experience to someone in need might affect empathic accuracy, empathic concern, and perceived empathy. In this research, the authors conducted a series of experiments to investigate the impact of shared experiences on empathy. They hypothesized that individuals who had undergone a similar experience as another person would exhibit higher levels of empathic accuracy, empathic concern, and perceived empathy towards that person. To test their hypotheses, the researchers recruited participants and manipulated their experiences to create a condition of shared experience. In one experiment, a group of participants were led to believe that they shared a particular personal experience (e.g., a challenging academic task) with someone who needed assistance. The other a control condition where participants did not share the specific experience with the person in need. The study revealed that participants in the shared experience condition exhibited heightened empathic accuracy, assessed through their ability to accurately discern the needs, thoughts, and feelings of the person. In another experiment by the authors, they explored the effect of shared experience on empathic concern which they defined as the emotional response to another person's distress. Participants who believed they shared a personal experience with another reported higher levels of empathic concern compared to those in the control condition, suggesting that shared experiences enhance emotional empathy. Hodges et al. (2010) reported that when examining perceived empathy, or the perception of one's own empathic abilities participants in the shared experience condition rated themselves as more empathic compared to those in the control

condition. They reported that this finding indicates that shared experiences may influence individuals' self-perceptions of their empathic capacities. The authors further discuss the potential mechanisms underlying these effects. They propose that shared experiences increase the salience of one's own emotions and cognitions related to the experience, leading to a stronger emotional connection and a better understanding of the other person's perspective. Hodges et al. (2010) reported that the study suggests that shared experiences can facilitate a deeper understanding of others' emotions, foster greater emotional responsiveness, and shape individuals' self-perceptions of their empathic abilities (Hodges et al., 2010).

Expanding upon Hodges et al. (2010) and the potential implications for cultural dynamics suggests a pathway to promote empathy, this extends beyond merely understanding others' emotions, encompassing the cultivation of heightened emotional responsiveness. Experiences may also play a role in shaping individuals' self-perceptions concerning cultures that differ from their own. In essence, engaging with Hodges et al. (2010) research could contribute to fostering a more comprehensive and empathetic cultural perspective, fostering mutual understanding, and bridging gaps in intercultural interactions.

Hollan (2017) explains that empathy is culturally contingent, meaning it can be understood and expressed in various ways depending on societal norms and values. The author emphasizes that what one culture perceives as empathetic behavior might be considered inappropriate or intrusive in another. This variability arises because cultures differ in their communication styles, social structures, and emotional norms. The author describes collectivist cultures such as cultures that prioritize group harmony and interdependence, such as many East Asian cultures, empathy often involves aligning oneself with the group's needs and maintaining social harmony. Here, empathy may be demonstrated through indirect communication and non-verbal cues to

avoid conflict and preserve relationships. In contrast, he describes individualist cultures as those that value individual autonomy and self-expression, such as in many Western societies, empathy might be shown through direct communication and verbal expressions of understanding and support. Personal boundaries are more explicitly respected, and emotional sharing is encouraged.

Hollan (2017) also explains high-context vs. low-context cultures. He explains that in high context cultures, where communication relies heavily on context and non-verbal cues, empathic responses are often subtle and inferred from behavior and situational understanding. Explicit verbalization of empathy may be less common and sometimes seen as unnecessary or even insincere. In contrast in low-context cultures, they depend more on explicit verbal communication, and may place a higher value on directly expressing empathy through words. In these settings, clear and open discussions about feelings and support are more prevalent. He gives examples of these ideas such as Japanese culture, empathic understanding (known as *omoiyari*) often involves anticipating the needs of others without explicit communication. The author states that expressing too much verbal empathy might be perceived as insincere or embarrassing. In contrast, in American culture, empathic responses often involve openly discussing emotions and offering verbal support, with an emphasis on individual feelings and experiences.

Hollan (2017) emphasizes the importance of ethnographic research in understanding empathy within its cultural context. Ethnography involves immersive observation and participation in the daily lives of people, allowing researchers to capture the subtleties of how empathy is expressed and experienced in different cultural settings. He expressed the importance that by examining everyday social interactions, ethnographic studies reveal how cultural norms shape empathetic behavior. For instance, how family members care for each other, how friends offer support, and

how communities respond to collective events provide rich insights into cultural empathy.

Ethnographic research enables comparisons across different cultures, highlighting both universal aspects of empathy and unique cultural variations. This comparative approach helps identify the underlying principles that guide empathic behavior in diverse cultural contexts. It also shows how people adapt their empathetic responses when interacting with individuals from different cultural backgrounds, revealing the dynamic nature of empathy as it is negotiated across cultural boundaries (Holland, 2017).

Jami, et al. (2024) define empathy as the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, a crucial component for effective social interaction and cooperation. They express that empathy is multidimensional, encompassing both affective (emotional) and cognitive (perspective-taking) elements. In their review, they describe neuroscientific studies that reveal that cultural differences can shape the neural processes underlying empathy. For example, brain imaging studies show that people from different cultural backgrounds activate distinct neural circuits when empathizing with others, highlighting the role of cultural learning in shaping our empathic responses. They describe that neuroscientific research has provided compelling evidence that cultural contexts can significantly influence the neural mechanisms underlying empathy. This research utilizes brain imaging techniques such as fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) and EEG (electroencephalography) to explore how people from different cultural backgrounds process empathic experiences. Jami, et al. incorporate findings from Cikara et al. (2011, 2014) to explore how intergroup biases affect empathic responses. Cikara et al. (2011, 2014) discovered that when individuals observed out-group members in pain, there was reduced activation in the anterior insula and anterior cingulate cortex compared to when observing in-group members. This reduction in neural activation suggests that cultural and social

group dynamics can influence the neural circuitry of empathy, potentially leading to empathic failures in intergroup contexts.

Jami et al. (2024) references this research to highlight how empathy is influenced by social and cultural group dynamics, with a particular focus on intergroup biases. The studies provide insights into how people's empathic responses vary depending on whether the distressed individual is perceived as an in-group or out-group member. Cikara et al. (2011, 2014) found that reduced empathy for out-group members is associated with lower neural activation in areas related to empathy, such as the anterior insula and anterior cingulate cortex. This reduced activation suggests that intergroup biases can impact the neural mechanisms of empathy, leading to less empathic concern for those considered different or outside one's social or cultural group. Overall, Cikara et al. (2011, 2014) imply that cultural and social group dynamics can result in empathic failures, where individuals may not fully engage with or respond to the emotional states of those outside their social or cultural group (Jami, Walker, & Mansouri, 2024; Cikara, Eberhardt, & Fiske, 2011, 2014).

Jami et al. (2024) highlight the profound impact of understanding the interaction between empathy and culture on global interactions, conflict resolution, and multicultural societies. Their research emphasizes that enhancing cultural empathy can significantly improve interpersonal and international relations by fostering a deeper understanding of diverse cultural perspectives. This improved understanding helps to dismantle stereotypes and misconceptions, contributing to a more inclusive and respectful global environment. Furthermore, practicing cultural empathy promotes open and effective communication, which can lead to more meaningful exchanges and collaborations across borders, thereby enhancing international cooperation and partnerships. They state that empathy also enables individuals to view conflicts from multiple perspectives,

including those of other parties involved, leading to more nuanced and equitable solutions. By demonstrating empathy, individuals and nations can build trust and goodwill, crucial for resolving conflicts and negotiating agreements (Jami et al., 2024).

Jami et al., (2024) emphasize that in multicultural societies, empathy bridges cultural divides and fosters social cohesion. When individuals from different backgrounds empathize with one another, it promotes greater social harmony and reduces tensions caused by cultural differences. This cooperative spirit can enhance community development and address social issues more effectively. Overall, Jami et al. (2024) emphasize that understanding the interplay between empathy and culture has significant implications for navigating the challenges and opportunities of globalization and multiculturalism. Enhancing cultural empathy not only strengthens interpersonal relationships but also contributes to more effective conflict resolution and the development of stronger, more inclusive communities (Jami et al., 2024).

Cultural Competence

Cultural competence can be defined as the ‘constant attempt to understand the values, beliefs, traditions, and customs of diverse groups’ (McCabe, 2006). Flaskerud (2007) explains what the term, cultural competence means as well as the relevance of cultural competence in our world. Over the last 15 years, cultural competence in practice and research has become accepted as the standard when working with diverse ethnic and racial populations. It replaced notions of cultural sensitivity, cultural responsiveness, or cultural relevance, none of which is considered to be as comprehensive and affirmative as cultural competence. Flaskerud (2007) writes that for the individual, it entails being capable of functioning effectively in the context of cultural differences (Flaskerud, 2007).

Recent literature points towards an emerging concept within the body of knowledge related to Cultural Competency; that of Cultural Humility. This evolution reflects a broader shift in perspectives within academia and professional practice regarding how best to approach intercultural interactions and understanding. Cultural humility as defined by Tervalon and Murray-Garcia (1998) is a dynamic and lifelong process focusing on self-reflection and personal critique. Tervalon & Murray- Garcia (1998) discuss that Cultural competence, rooted in the work of Campinha-Bacote (1999, 2011) initially gained prominence as a framework for healthcare professionals to acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for effectively interacting with diverse patient populations. It emphasizes the acquisition of cultural knowledge and understanding, alongside the development of culturally appropriate communication and clinical skills. Cultural humility emerged as an alternative paradigm, proposed by Tervalon and Murray-Garcia (1998). Cultural humility emphasizes self-reflection, openness, and lifelong learning in cultural encounters. Lekas, Pahl, and Fuller Lewis (2020) acknowledge cultural competence traditionally emphasizes acquiring knowledge about different cultures and applying it to clinical practice. However, for Lekas et al. (2020) cultural humility, involves recognizing one's own biases and limitations while actively seeking to understand and respect the unique experiences and perspectives of others. However, understanding where people situate themselves within their current understanding of cultures is essential for effective engagement and communication in diverse contexts. Cultural competence provides a structured framework for assessing an individual's level of knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to cultural diversity (Liu et al., 2021).

Liu et al. (2021) argue that cultural competence should extend beyond a superficial understanding of different cultural practices and beliefs. They advocate for a more nuanced

approach that integrates several critical components. The authors stress the importance of continuous self-reflection which involves regularly examining one's own cultural biases, assumptions, and the impact these have on interactions. The authors highlight the necessity of critical thinking in understanding and addressing cultural issues and engaging in thoughtful analysis of cultural situations, questioning established norms and practices, and considering how systemic issues affect these interactions (Liu et al., 2021).

Kirmayer (2012) expresses the importance of viewing cultural competence as an ongoing process rather than a fixed set of skills. This process involves engaging in continuous self reflection, learning, and adapting. He suggests that cultural competence should involve understanding how cultural factors influence individuals. The author emphasizes the importance of considering multiple aspects of identity, including race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and other factors, which intersect and influence individual experiences. He argues that cultural competence should recognize the complexity and fluidity of identities rather than treating cultural differences as discrete categories (Kirmayer, 2012).

Mercer and Mitzen (2015) delve into the culture of conflict and offer a comprehensive exploration of how cultural differences and misunderstandings contribute to conflicts along with how cultural competence can be improved to enhance conflict resolution efforts. They explore one of the central themes in the role of cultural differences in exacerbating conflicts and argue that misunderstandings rooted in cultural diversity often lead to or intensify disputes. Cultural norms, values, and practices can lead to misinterpretations and miscommunications between conflicting parties. In examining the direct versus indirect communication styles such as Western cultures favoring direct, explicit communication, while many Asian cultures might use more indirect, context-dependent communication they express how these misinterpretations can

occur when one party perceives another's indirectness as evasiveness or dishonesty, leading to increased suspicion and tension (Mercer & Mitzen, 2015).

Mercer and Mitzen (2015) explain how high-context cultures rely on non-verbal cues and shared understanding to convey meaning, whereas low-context cultures emphasize verbal clarity. Misunderstandings can arise when high-context communicators feel that their nuanced messages are ignored or misunderstood by low-context counterparts. Cultural approaches to negotiation can also create misunderstandings. Some cultures view negotiation as a competitive and aggressive process aimed at maximizing individual gain, while others see it as a cooperative effort to reach a mutually beneficial agreement. Conflicts can escalate when these differing tactics clash, leading to perceived hostility or unfairness. Expectations regarding compromise and flexibility can vary greatly between cultures. In some cultures, compromise is seen as a necessary and respected part of the process, while in others, it may be viewed as a sign of weakness or concession. Cultural differences in conflict resolution approaches, such as formal arbitration versus informal mediation, can contribute to misunderstandings. Some cultures might prefer formal, legalistic approaches to conflict resolution, while others may rely on informal, community-based methods. The involvement of authority figures in conflict resolution varies across cultures. In some cultures, decisions made by elders or leaders are highly respected and expected to be final, while others may emphasize egalitarian approaches where all parties have equal input (Mercer and Mitzen, 2015).

Cultural Conflict

In recent years, the world has continued to witness a surge in aggressive conflicts and tensions, manifesting in various forms across different regions. The lack of mutual understanding between conflicting parties and global actors contributes to the perpetuation of

violence and hinders prospects for a peaceful resolution. Long-standing grievances, territorial disputes, and cultural narratives have created a volatile environment where empathy is often overshadowed by entrenched biases and prejudices (Gelvin, 2014).

The conflict between Palestine and Israel is deeply rooted in historical and territorial disputes. Gelvin (2014) describes how deep-seated historical grievances contribute to the ongoing aggression between Israelis and Palestinians. He delineates how both sides have developed narratives of victimhood and betrayal, which perpetuate a cycle of hostility. Historical memories of conflict and displacement shape the current antagonism, with each side viewing the other through the lens of historical injustice. Gelvin (2014) describes how each act of aggression from one side is often met with retaliatory measures from the other, perpetuating an ongoing cycle of violence and emphasizes that the pattern of retaliation and counterretaliation creates a dynamic where both sides are trapped in a cycle of aggression, with each side's actions fueling further hostility (Gelvin, 2014).

Similarly, Wilson (1997) compares the conflicts between Israel and Palestine and the war between Ukraine and Russia and how these two conflicts illustrate the complex history of grievances, territorial disputes, and geopolitical interests, demonstrating how regional conflicts can be deeply rooted in a combination of historical, cultural, and political factors. In both Ukraine and Russia, national identity plays a crucial role. In Ukraine, there is a strong sense of national identity and resistance to Russian influence, while in Russia, the conflict is often framed in terms of protecting ethnic Russians and Russian speakers. Political developments have further complicated inter-ethnic relations. The annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine have intensified nationalist sentiments among Ukrainians while fostering sympathy for Russian

interests among ethnic Russians. This polarization has led to a fractured national identity, with different groups aligning themselves with opposing political ideologies (Wilson, 1997).

Dias (2022) describes the war in the Ukraine as not merely a territorial dispute but as a conflict deeply rooted in a cultural confrontation between globalist and nativist ideologies and that this cultural clash is fundamental to understanding the motivations behind the conflict. Dias (2022) frames this conflict as part of a broader cultural war that pits global pluralism against nativist ideologies. These cultural conflicts manifest in the political and social arenas of both Russia and Ukraine, affecting international relations and internal dynamics. Diaz (2022) uses the term cultural war and describes how this involves a struggle between liberal democratic values such as pluralism, multiculturalism, minority rights, and gender equality and a rightist agenda focused on national identities, traditional religious values, and opposition to political correctness. This divide is evident in recent world events that include U.S. presidential politics pitting liberal democratic ideas vs republican autocratic and authoritarian perspectives and Brexit. Putin's policies, particularly anti-LGBT laws, affirm Russia's identity as a Christian nation against liberal Europe, where supporters of these values face persecution. These cultural wars now pervade the West, shifting ideological divisions from material to post-material issues involving morality, social, national, and religious values (Diaz, 2022).

In exploring the trajectory of research concerning cultural competence and its interplay with empathy in the context of the future, various instances have highlighted the adverse effects of hostile attitudes and aggressive behaviors on society at large. Rasoal, Eklund, and Hansen (2011), examine cultural competency and how this can impact empathy. The authors developed a theoretical framework of ethnocultural empathy. Rasoal et al. (2011), examine the many ways that empathy can counteract hostile attitudes and behaviors and thus improve relations between

different ethnic groups and subcultures (Litvack-Miller, MacDougall, & Romney, 1997). Davis (2006) explores the relationship between a lack of empathy and negative attitudes and aggressive behavior. Davis (2006) explains dispositional empathy that refers to stable individual differences in the capacity to experience and respond to the emotions of others. These differences are relatively consistent over time and across various situations, suggesting that some people are naturally more empathetic than others. This concept is important in understanding how empathy influences behavior, including aggression. Davis (2006) explains that individuals with high dispositional empathy are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors and less likely to exhibit aggressive behaviors because they are more attuned to the feelings and needs of others. This attunement promotes understanding and reduces the likelihood of harm or conflict (Davis, 2006). Other studies have shown that a lack of empathy leads to hostility toward ethnic groups (Stephan & Finlay, 1999), homosexuals (Johnson, Brems, & Alford-Keating, 1997), and to child abuse (Letourneau, 1981; Rosal et al, 2011).

The Importance of Empathy in Culture

Decety and Jackson (2006), conducted a comprehensive review of existing research to examine the influence of culture on empathy. They proposed that empathy is not a universal trait but rather influenced by cultural factors. The authors argued that different cultures might prioritize and foster different components of empathy due to the modularity of the human brain. The modularity hypothesis suggests that the brain is composed of specialized modules, each responsible for specific cognitive processes. The authors found evidence that cultural differences influence empathetic responses in domains such as emotional experience, perspective-taking, and empathic accuracy. They also found that cultural norms and values played a significant role in shaping the expression and experience of empathy. When the authors examined the neural basis

of empathy, they proposed that cultural influences on empathy may be attributed to the modularity of brain systems involved in empathetic responses. They suggested that different cultures might prioritize the activation of different neural networks, leading to variations in empathetic processing. The authors found cultural differences in emotional responses such as the cultural norms that influence how individuals express and regulate their emotions, perspective-taking, empathic accuracy, neural modularity, and cultural influence. When looking at emotional experiences, they found that cultural variations in emotional expression impact empathetic responses, as individuals from different cultures may interpret and respond to emotional cues differently. When looking at perspective-taking, they saw the importance of the ability to adopt another person's viewpoint. The authors discussed studies showing that individuals from collectivistic cultures tend to prioritize the perspective of the group, while individuals from individualistic cultures focus more on individual perspectives (Decety & Jackson, 2006).

According to Decety and Jackson (2006), when looking at empathic accuracy, which they described as the ability to accurately understand and predict others' emotions, the authors proposed that cultural differences in socialization practices and interpersonal communication styles contribute to variations in empathic accuracy. Lastly, when describing neural modularity and cultural influence, the authors suggested that cultural variations in empathy may arise from the modularity of brain systems involved in empathetic responses. They proposed that cultural norms and values shape the activation and modulation of these neural networks, leading to cultural differences in empathetic processing (Decety & Jackson, 2006).

To understand the role of empathy in cultural influences, it is essential to examine how cultural factors shape, mold, and impact individuals. Chan and Chung (2010), explore the

different influences of culture on affective empathy, specifically focusing on cultural and bicultural differences. The authors investigated how cultural factors shape empathetic responses and how individuals with a bicultural background exhibit unique patterns of empathy compared to individuals from a single cultural background (Chan & Chung, 2010). Cassels et al. (2010), examine empathy and its various components, emphasizing the affective dimension that involves sharing and experiencing emotions with others. They highlight the role of cultural factors in shaping emotional responses and propose that cultural influences can lead to variations in empathetic responses across different cultural contexts. They discuss how individualistic cultures, such as Western cultures, tend to prioritize personal goals and autonomy, which can lead to a greater focus on individual emotions and self-oriented empathy. On the other hand, collectivistic cultures, like many Asian cultures, emphasize group harmony and interdependence, fostering a greater emphasis on other-oriented empathy and concern for social relationships (Cassels et al., 2010).

Cassels, Chan, and Chung (2010), conducted a series of experiments comparing individuals from single-cultural backgrounds (mono-cultural) and individuals with a bicultural background (bi-cultural) to investigate the impact of culture on empathy. The experiments assessed both explicit and implicit measures of empathy, including self-report measures, facial expression recognition, and physiological indicators. Individuals from different cultural backgrounds exhibited variations in empathetic responses. Mono-cultural participants displayed culturally specific patterns of empathy, aligning with the predominant empathetic norms within their respective cultures. Specifically, the bicultural participants showed a unique pattern of empathy that differed from both mono-cultural groups. The authors found that biculturalism demonstrated flexibility in their empathetic responses, exhibiting a blend of empathetic

tendencies from their two cultural backgrounds. They displayed an ability to adjust their empathetic responses based on the situational demands and cultural contexts, suggesting the influence of both cultures on their empathetic tendencies. The authors, discussed the implications of their findings, emphasizing the importance of recognizing cultural variations in empathy and the potential benefits of biculturalism in enhancing empathetic flexibility. These findings emphasize the importance of considering cultural factors when examining empathy and the potential benefits of biculturalism in fostering empathetic flexibility (Cassels et al., 2010).

How Gender Plays a Role in Empathy

Gender is an important aspect when it comes to the study of empathy and cultural competence due to its possible influences on the way individuals perceive, understand, and respond to others. Gender can play a significant role in empathy as far as how individuals express and perceive emotions. Understanding these gender differences can help develop strategies to enhance empathy and interpersonal understanding when it comes to promoting positive communication with those from different cultures. Gender often intersects with culture as both factors shape perceptions and behaviors. Recognizing and understanding these cultural variations is crucial for developing cultural competence, as it allows individuals to navigate and interact respectfully in diverse cultural contexts.

In considering the role of cultural empathy and gender Cundiff, Nadler, and Swan's (2009) study explored the influence of cultural empathy and gender on individuals' perceptions of diversity programs. The authors found that cultural empathy was positively associated with support for diversity programs. This finding suggests that individuals who are more empathetic towards individuals from diverse backgrounds may be more likely to support initiatives aimed at promoting diversity and inclusion. Additionally, the authors found that gender moderated the

relationship between cultural empathy and support for diversity programs. Specifically, women who scored high on cultural empathy were more supportive of diversity programs than men who scored high on cultural empathy (Cundiff, Nadler, and Swan, 2009).

Deng et al. (2023) investigate gender differences in empathy, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving ability among nursing students. In their research, they aim to explore whether gender differences exist in these three constructs and to provide insights into the potential implications for nursing education and practice. The results of the study show that there were significant gender differences in empathy and emotional intelligence but not in problem-solving ability. Female nursing students scored higher than male nursing students in empathy and emotional intelligence. These findings are consistent with previous research indicating that women tend to score higher than men in empathy and emotional intelligence. However, the lack of gender differences in problem-solving ability is somewhat surprising, as previous research has suggested that men tend to outperform women in this area (Deng, et al, 2023).

Delving into the intricate manifestations of empathy between genders, an exploration of how males and females demonstrate, express, and evaluate feelings involves a comprehensive examination of both brain processes and behavioral patterns. Christov-Moore et al. (2014), explore the influence of gender on empathy-related processes, focusing on both neurobiological and behavioral aspects. The authors examine various studies investigating the neural mechanisms underlying empathy and how these mechanisms may differ between males and females. The researchers also explore gender differences in behavioral measures of empathy, such as self-report questionnaires and behavioral tasks (Christov-Moore et al., 2014). Christov-Moore et al. discuss four factors in their research; neurological gender differences in empathy, hormonal influences on empathy, behavioral gender differences in empathy, and sociocultural

factors in gender. The authors discuss the neuroimaging studies that suggest gender differences in brain regions associated with empathy. They shared that several studies have reported greater activation in brain regions that are involved in affective empathy in females compared to males. They stated that males have shown greater activation in brain regions associated with cognitive empathy, including the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex. These differences may reflect variations in the way males and females process and respond to emotional information (Christov-Moore et al., 2014).

When examining the role that hormones play in gender and empathy they looked at oxytocin and testosterone, in modulating empathy. They found that Oxytocin, often referred to as the "bonding hormone," has been found to enhance empathy and prosocial behavior, with some evidence suggesting stronger effects in females. Conversely, testosterone, which is generally higher in males, has been associated with reduced empathy, although the exact mechanisms are still unclear. When investigating gender differences in self-report measures of empathy, such as the Empathy Quotient (EQ) and Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) they found that females tend to score higher on these measures, indicating higher levels of empathy. The authors acknowledge that gender differences in empathy may not solely arise from biological factors but could also be influenced by sociocultural factors. Socialization processes, gender stereotypes, and societal expectations regarding emotional expression may shape empathy-related behaviors differently in males and females. Overall, the authors speak to the importance of gender differences in empathy and of considering both biological and sociocultural factors when examining empathic processes in males and females (Christov-Moore et al., 2014).

Harton and Lyons, (2003) examine why psychology as a field disproportionately attracts women compared to men and whether differences in empathy can partially explain this gender

imbalance. The study situates itself within the broader discussion of gendered academic and career choices, contributing to understanding why certain disciplines are more appealing to one gender. The study found that women, on average, scored higher on measures of empathy than men. This aligns with their broader research suggesting that women are more likely to exhibit traits traditionally associated with nurturing and caregiving roles, which are congruent with psychology's emphasis on understanding and helping others. This study also found that empathy levels were found to significantly predict the likelihood of choosing psychology as a major, independent of gender. This suggests that the field's focus on interpersonal understanding and emotional intelligence naturally attracts individuals who score higher in empathy (Harton and Lyons, 2003)

In their study, Harton and Lyons (2003) delve into the reasons behind psychology's reputation as a female-dominated field, analyzing historical trends and societal influences. The authors point to the following key factors that contribute to this phenomenon. In its early days, psychology was predominantly male-dominated, particularly in research and academia. Over time, as the field expanded to include clinical and applied roles, it began attracting more women, partly due to its alignment with caregiving professions like nursing and teaching. Through their research, they found that barriers to higher education for women decreased in the 20th century, and psychology emerged as an appealing option. Its focus on interpersonal relationships, emotional understanding, and helping others resonated with gender norms that encouraged women to pursue caring professions.

The authors also found that Psychology was often perceived as a "helping" profession, which aligned with traditional societal expectations of women as nurturing, empathetic, and supportive. From an early age, girls are often socialized to value emotional intelligence, empathy, and

interpersonal skills—traits that are central to psychology. In contrast, boys may be socialized to prioritize fields that emphasize technical, mathematical, or physical skills, such as engineering or computer science (Harton and Lyons, 2003).

Student Insight and Perspective

College students are often in a stage of life where they are developing their ethical and political beliefs. Many are driven by strong feelings about justice and human rights, which makes several conflicts, and political strife a compelling issue for activism. Students are often exposed to diverse viewpoints and global issues through their coursework and campus activities. In many cases, these exposures come through collaborative projects, group discussions, and campus events that bring together individuals with varying perspectives. This shared exposure can lead to heightened awareness and a desire to act on perceived injustices. College education encourages critical thinking and the examination of complex issues. During college years, students are forming their identities and values, and activism related to global issues often becomes a way to express and shape their personal and collective identities (Schwartz & Kivlighan, 2008). This period is crucial for students to expand their perspectives beyond their immediate environments and embrace diverse viewpoints. Learning to understand and empathize with people from different cultures is vital during this formative time. Such skills enable students to navigate a globalized world with greater sensitivity and respect (Sandell & Tupy, 2015). By actively seeking to understand cultural differences, students can build more inclusive communities, challenge biases, and foster meaningful connections with individuals from various backgrounds and also create a foundation for positive change. Uher, et al. (2024) found that empathy is not only a personal trait but also a skill developed through human service programs and departments on college campuses. These programs often include training in emotional

intelligence, cultural competency, and active listening to help students better understand and respond to clients' needs. Their research indicated that coursework and experiential learning, such as internships and community service, significantly enhance empathetic abilities in students (Uher, 2024). Students who are drawn to these programs have found that empathy is a cornerstone for building trust and rapport with clients. Human service professionals who demonstrate empathy can better navigate the complexities of client interactions, particularly in counseling, social work, and community advocacy roles. This underscores the value of empathy as a professional skill (Miller, 2024).

Sandell and Tupy (2015) emphasize that exploring the connection between empathy and cultural competency emerges as a crucial focus for future research, particularly within the demographic of college students, who find themselves in a pivotal stage of developmental shaping. Cultural competence is highly important for college students, as it plays a significant role in shaping their personal growth, academic success, and future professional endeavors. The authors discuss several reasons for this important area of study such as the increasingly diverse population of the United States including a wide variety of racial, ethnic, language, and religious groups, as well as socioeconomic levels, giftedness, disabilities, gender, and sexual orientation. Changing student characteristics include home language, participation in English language programs, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and participation in education for students with special needs (Sadnell & Tupy, 2015).

Schwartz and Kivlighan (2008) examine why college students are particularly active in social and political movements and explore the developmental stages and psychosocial factors that contribute to this high level of engagement. The authors explore how the college years are a critical period for identity development. During this stage, students explore their values, beliefs,

and social identities, which can lead to a heightened awareness of social and political issues. This period of self-exploration and identity formation often drives students to engage in activism as they seek to align their personal values with their actions. Schwartz and Kivlighan (2008) integrate Erik Erikson's (1963) theory of psychosocial development, focusing on the stage of "identity vs. role confusion" that is prominent in emerging adulthood. The process of forming a coherent identity often involves questioning societal norms and advocating for change, contributing to increased activism. The influence of social and peer networks often shapes college students' involvement in activism. The college environment often fosters a sense of community and shared purpose, which can amplify students' engagement in collective actions and social causes (Schwartz and Kivlighan, 2008; Erikson, 1963).

Schwartz and Kivlighan (2008) use Lawrence Kohlberg's (1981) stages of moral development to address the cognitive and moral development of college students. The move towards higher stages of moral reasoning can lead students to become more concerned with social justice and ethical issues, further fueling their activism. College students are often in a transitional phase between the conventional and post-conventional levels of moral reasoning. As they progress to higher stages of moral development, they become more concerned with universal ethical principles and social justice issues. This progression can make students more likely to engage in activism that challenges injustices and advocates for broader societal change. Students at the post-conventional level are particularly motivated by principles of fairness, human rights, and equality. They are more likely to recognize and address systemic issues and injustices, which fuels their involvement in activism. As students develop more sophisticated moral reasoning, they become more aware of ethical issues and the complexities of social justice. This increased awareness can drive them to advocate for causes related to human rights,

environmental sustainability, and social equity. Higher stages of moral development often involve questioning and challenging the status quo. Students may engage in activism as a way to address perceived moral and ethical failings within existing systems and to advocate for reforms that align with their evolving values. The college environment often provides opportunities for intellectual and moral growth. Exposure to diverse perspectives, critical thinking opportunities, and discussions on ethical issues can further enhance students' moral development and activism. A campus culture that promotes ethical reasoning and encourages students to engage in social issues can support the development of higher stages of moral reasoning. Such environments nurture students' capacity to tackle complex social problems and advocate for meaningful change (Schwartz & Kivlighan, 2008; Kohlberg, 1981).

The literature reviewed offers valuable insights into the roles of empathy and cultural competency, highlighting their critical intersection in fostering a more inclusive and understanding world. This review specifically focuses on college students, recognizing that this developmental stage is ideal for cultivating these attributes. Students at this age are not only at a pivotal point in their personal growth but are also often driven by a strong sense of passion and idealism.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Research Design

This quantitative study using a regression analysis will examine whether cultural competency, gender, and human service major identification predict empathy among students attending college in Northeast Pennsylvania. The predictor variables will be cultural competency, gender, and human service major identification whereas the outcome variable will be empathy.

Sample:

A census of undergraduate (N= 1,857) and graduate (N= 872) students at one religious-based University in NEPA will be asked to be participants in this study via email (See Appendix A).

Inclusion Criteria: Part-time and full-time undergraduate and graduate students. Students at one college campus in Northern Pennsylvania.

Exclusion: Students who will be excluded from this study are those who do not currently have a computer. Students who will be excluded from this study will be those who do not have enough of a grasp of the English language to complete the survey.

Recruitment: The students will be recruited using a series of emails with information on the study as well as informed consent will be obtained prior to any data collection (See Appendix A).

Instruments:

There will be three instruments that will be used in this study, The Demographics Questionnaire (Appendix C), The Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (Appendix D), and the Cultural Intelligence Scale (Appendix E). The demographic questions of this survey will include gender, age, race and ethnicity, the distinction between human services majors and those not human service majors, and year in college.

The Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ) is a self-report style, uni-dimensional, 16item, five-point Likert-type scale developed to assess the empathy levels of individuals. (Totan, et al., 2012). The Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ) 16-item, five-point item responses are scored according to the following scale for positively worded items 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 13, 16. Never = 0; Rarely = 1; Sometimes = 2; Often = 3; Always = 4. The following negatively worded items are reverse scored: 2, 4, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15. Scores are summed to derive the total for the TEQ, which can range from 0 to 64, with a higher score equating to higher empathy levels. The Toronto empathy questionnaire (TEQ), developed by Spreng et al. (2009) is a unidimensional, brief, and valid instrument for the assessment of empathy. The TEQ was created to mainly assess empathy as an emotional process but still captures variance associated with cognitive measures of empathy (Kourmoussi et al., 2017). The TEQ developers aimed to create a measure to suitably assess an individual's general capacity for empathy as a central process covering various levels, which other measures of empathy might fail to achieve because of their heterogeneity of concepts and constructs (Ickes, 1997).

Spreng et al. (2009) followed up with a study for the test and re-test validity. In developing the TEQ, the parsimonious scale was created to allow for short, clear, and homogenous items and has strong psychometric properties including a robust single-factor

structure, high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .85), construct validity (convergent validity $r = .72$), and test-retest reliability ($r = .78$). Spreng et al concluded that inconsistent gender differences, with effect sizes ranging from trivial to moderate, will need to be addressed in larger sample sizes (Spreng, 2009).

The Cultural Intelligence Scale (Ang et al., 2007) is designed to measure an individual's ability to adapt to a culturally unfamiliar environment. Studies using the CQS have mixed results regarding its dimensionality, construct validity, and its distinctness from other intelligence. Despite these mixed results the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) continues to be used in various research settings for several key reasons. First, the CQS offers a comprehensive framework for measuring cultural intelligence (CQ), an increasingly important skill in a globalized world. While some studies have raised concerns about how well the four sub-scales are distinct yet related, the CQS continues to demonstrate strong reliability and internal consistency in many studies. Its continued use can be attributed to its practicality, as it's easy to administer (typically through self-report questionnaires), and its broad applicability across different cultural settings and groups. There is a distinct focus on cultural adaptability that is not captured as effectively by other intelligence measures, which often focus on general cognitive or emotional intelligence without the specific cultural component (Ang et al. 2006). Other intelligence scales, such as general IQ or emotional intelligence tests, were not designed with the same cultural focus, which limits their relevance in research that aims to understand how individuals navigate cultural diversity. Additionally, while the CQS may not be perfect, it still serves as one of the few scales specifically developed to measure cultural intelligence, thus providing valuable insights that other tools do not offer (Ang, et al., 2008).

The CQS was developed by Soon Ang and Linn Van Dyne in 2003 and consists of four sub-scales:

1. Cognitive CQ: This sub-scale measures an individual's ability to understand and learn about different cultures, including their values, norms, and beliefs.
2. Physical (Motivational) CQ: This sub-scale measures an individual's ability to adapt to different physical environments, such as different climates, foods, and living conditions.
3. Emotional (Metacognitive) CQ: This sub-scale measures an individual's ability to manage and regulate emotions in cross-cultural interactions.
4. Behavioral CQ: This sub-scale measures an individual's ability to adjust their behavior in culturally appropriate ways.

The scoring approach used by Ang et al. (2007) in the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) involves a 7-point Likert scale, which enhances the granularity and precision of the assessment. This method allows participants to express varying degrees of agreement or disagreement with each statement, resulting in a more detailed understanding of their cultural intelligence. Each item on the CQS is rated on a 7-point Likert scale, with the following options: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neutral, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree.

Each subscale within the CQS measures a distinct dimension of cultural intelligence (Metacognitive, Cognitive, Motivational, and Behavioral CQ). As per Ang et al. (2007): Metacognitive CQ has 4 items (with scores ranging from 4 to 28), Cognitive CQ has 6 items (scores from 6 to 42), Motivational CQ has 5 items (scores from 5 to 35), Behavioral CQ has 5 items (scores from 5 to 35). The score for each subscale is calculated by summing the item scores, and higher subscale scores reflect higher levels of that particular dimension of cultural intelligence. The wider scoring range (from 4 to 28 for a 4-item subscale) allows for more

detailed differentiation between participants, which makes it easier to identify those with varying degrees of cultural competence (Ang et al., 2007).

Ang et al. (2007) performed a study of validity and reliability in 2007. The factor structure of the initial 40 items was examined with a sample of undergraduates in Singapore. 20 items with the strongest psychometric properties were retained: 4 metacognitive CQ, 6 cognitive CQ, 5 motivational CQ, and 5 behavioral CQ items, which are rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Corrected item-to-total correlations for each subscale (0.46–0.66) demonstrated strong relationships between items and their scales, supporting internal consistency. Reliabilities exceeded 0.70 (metacognitive CQ = 0.77, cognitive CQ = 0.84, motivational CQ = 0.77, and behavioral CQ = 0.84). (Ang et al., 2007)

Procedures:

As required, the researcher requested a review from the Exempt Review Committee of the Institutional Review Board at Marywood University to approve the study. Permission was granted from the Dean of Students, Ross Novak to use Marywood undergraduate and graduate students (See Appendix F). The request was approved on March 19, 2024. The data collection was initiated through an online survey. Qualtrics was utilized to create the survey. The recruitment email was sent via Academic Affairs Coordinator on March 22, 2024, with follow-up on April 1, 2024, and April 4, 2024. After these initial requests, there was an additional email sent by Academic Affairs on April 16, 2024. The recruitment email contained eligibility criteria as well as the link for the online survey. After clicking on the link, participants completed the informed consent which was embedded into the first page of the survey. After informed consent was signed the participants were prompted to three different surveys; the demographic survey, the Toronto scale survey, and the Cultural competency scale survey. Qualtrics, the official

survey platform for Marywood University, was used for data collection. There was a total of 100 participants for this study. From March 22 to April 3 there were 47 responses collected. An additional 28 responses were received between April 4 and April 16. Due to the low response rates, a follow-up email was sent on April 26, yielding an additional 7 responses. Given the continued decline in response rates, no further emails or requests were sent. The records of this study were confidential. Participants were not identifiable through any information used and access to the research records were only available to the principle investigator and was stored in a password protected server. Once the survey was completed, all of the information was then analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS®) v.28.

Data Analysis

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS®) v.28 software was used to conduct an analysis of the data collected and cleaned by the principle investigator in order to answer the following questions.

SP 1) What are the levels of cultural competency, gender, and human service major identification among students attending college in Northeast Pennsylvania will be analyzed using frequency distribution and other descriptive statistics.

SP 2) What are the empathy scores of students attending college in Northeast Pennsylvania will be analyzed using a frequency distribution and other descriptive statistics.

SP 3) What is the relationship between cultural competency and empathy among students attending college in Northeast Pennsylvania will be analyzed using a Pearson Correlation.

SP 4) How do cultural competency, gender, and human service major identification predict empathy among students attending college in Northeast Pennsylvania will be analyzed using multiple Regression procedures.

Chapter Four

Data Analysis

Introduction

This study investigated the extent to which cultural competency, gender, and human service major identification predict empathy among students attending college in Northeast Pennsylvania. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS®) v.28 software was used to analyze the data related to student empathy and levels of cultural competence.

Response Rate

The target participants for this study were undergraduate and graduate college students. A total of 2,789 students were identified. A census of undergraduate (n= 1,916) and graduate (n= 873) students at one religious-based University in NEPA were asked to be participants in this study via email. There was a total of 100 cases that were collected, however, 16 cases were removed due to having missed data. Ultimately 84 usable responses were received. Studies on response rates in small colleges often report variation based on survey method, length, and participant engagement. Generally, response rates for online college surveys can vary significantly, often between 5% and 30% depending on these factors. This means a lower response rate can still yield valid results if the sample accurately reflects the diversity of perspectives within the target population. For example, personalized or mission-driven survey invitations, and multiple follow-ups, tend to improve response rates (Lin, et al., 2017). This small sample size is less likely to generate significant results as smaller sample sizes produce larger standard errors (Urdan, 2017).

A power analysis was conducted to assess the ability to detect statistically significant effects given the sample size of 84 responses obtained from a population of 2,789 undergraduate and graduate students at a religious-based university. Using an assumed medium effect size of

0.5, an alpha level of 0.05, and a final sample size of 84, the power analysis indicates that the statistical power is likely below the conventional threshold of 0.80, which suggests an 80% probability of correctly rejecting a false null hypothesis. Consequently, this low power may restrict the ability to generalize findings to the broader population. Furthermore, the modest response rate of 3% from the census invites consideration of alternative strategies, such as follow-up invitations, to enhance both the response rate and the overall statistical power of the study. Ultimately, improving the sample size will strengthen the validity and reliability of the research outcomes.

Data Preprocessing

To begin, data was examined to ensure all missing data was removed. Using a regression analysis of a step-wise approach will examine the predictor variables, cultural competency, and gender on the outcome variable, empathy.

Demographics

Below, tables one and two provide an overview of the demographics of the participants involved in this study. The age distribution shows a predominance of younger individuals, with a majority (61.9%) under 23 years old, and over half of the participants identifying as female (65.5%). The vast majority of respondents identify as White (89.3%), with smaller proportions identifying as Asian (7.1%) or Black (3.6%), the population was predominantly Non-Hispanic (90.5%) with only (9.5%) identifying as Hispanic.

Table One: Diversity Profile

Variables	N	%
Gender		
Male	28	33.3%
Female	55	65.5%
Non-Binary	1	1.2%
Age		
18-20 Years	35	41.7%
21-22 Years	17	20.2%
23-25 Years	10	11.9%
25-30 Years	7	8.3%
31 and Older	15	17.9%
Race		
Asian	6	7.1 %
Black	3	3.6 %
White	75	89.3%
Ethnicity		
Hispanic	68	9.5%
Non-Hispanic	16	90.5 %

More than half of the participants (65.4%) identified as undergraduate students. The majors in human services were equally distributed with non-human services majors, each comprising 50%. First-year (32.1%) and graduate students (34.5%) comprised the highest school year groupings.

Table Two: Academic Profile

Variables	N	%
Human Service Major		
No	42	50.0%
Yes	42	50.0%
School Year		
Undergrad First Year	27	32.1%
Undergrad Second Year	7	8.3%
Undergrad Third Year	13	15.5%
Undergrad Forth Year	8	9.5%
Graduate	29	34.5%

Sub Problem One

Sub problem one, what are the levels of cultural competency, gender, and human service major identification among students attending college in Northern Pennsylvania, was analyzed using a frequency distribution and other descriptive statistics. The mean cultural competency score was 93.93 (SD=14.08), while the median score was 93.50 (Range= 52-119). The frequency distribution for empathy scores may be found in Appendix(B). The cultural competency scores consisted of 4 subscales; Metacognitive (measures an individual's ability to manage and regulate emotions in cross-cultural interactions), Cognitive (measuring an individual's ability to understand and learn about different cultures, including their values, norms, and beliefs), Motivational (measures an individual's ability to adapt to different physical environments, such as different climates, foods, and living conditions), and Behavioral (measures an individual's ability to adjust their behavior in culturally appropriate ways). Frequency distributions for each subscale can be found in Appendix (C).

Metacognitive Subscale

The mean metacognitive subscale score was 21.67 (SD=3.56), while the median score was 22.00 (Range= 12-28). The top items that participants endorsed as strongly agree or agree were: I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from a culture that is unfamiliar to me (59.5%); I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from different cultures (56.0%); I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from different cultures (56.0). Conversely, the items that were endorsed with disagree or somewhat disagree were: I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I apply to cross-cultural interactions (7.2); I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from a culture that is

unfamiliar to me (4.8%). No participants endorsed a strongly disagree on any of the item questions. See Table 3 for a complete listing of results.

Table Three: Metacognitive Subscale Items

Variable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from a culture that is unfamiliar to me.	–	1 (1.2%)	3 (3.6%)	15 (17.9%)	15 (17.9%)	39 (46.4%)	11 (13.1%)
I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I apply to cross-cultural interactions	–	2 (2.4%)	4 (4.8%)	11 (13.1%)	26 (31.0%)	35 (41.7%)	6 (7.1%)
I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from different cultures	–	–	4 (4.8%)	16 (19.0%)	17 (20.2%)	35 (41.7%)	12 (14.3%)
I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from different cultures	–	–	4 (4.8%)	16 (19.0%)	17 (20.2%)	35 (41.7%)	12 (14.3%)

Cognitive Subscale

The mean cognitive subscale was 22.64 (SD=6.35), while the median score was 24.00 (Range= 10-42). The top two items that participants endorsed as Strongly agree and agree were: I know the cultural values and religious beliefs of other cultures (53.6%) and I know the arts and crafts of other cultures (45.5%). Conversely, fewer participants endorsed as strongly disagree or disagree were: I know rules (e.g., vocabulary, grammar) of other languages (29.7%) and I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures (28.6%). See Table 4 for a complete listing of results.

Table Four: Cognitive Subscale Items

Variable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures	5 (6.0%)	19 (22.6%)	21 (25.0%)	21 (25.05)	15 (17.9%)	1 (1.25)	2 (2.4%)
I know the cultural values and religious beliefs of other cultures	–	10 (11.9%)	10 (11.9%)	19 (22.6%)	34 (40.5%)	10 (11.9%)	1 (1.2%)
I know rules (e.g., vocabulary, grammar) of other languages	8 (9.5%)	17 (20.2%)	13 (15.5%)	14 (16.7%)	26 (31.0%)	4 (4.8%)	2 (2.4%)
I know the marriage systems of other cultures	6 (7.1%)	18 (21.4%)	22 (26.2%)	18 (21.4%)	17 (20.2%)	2 (2.4%)	1 (1.2%)
I know the arts and crafts of other cultures	2 (2.4%)	7 (8.3%)	19 (22.6%)	18 (21.4%)	30 (35.7%)	6 (7.1%)	2 (2.4%)
I know the rules of expressing non-verbal behaviors in other cultures	2 (2.4%)	16 (19.0%)	18 (21.4%)	14 (16.7%)	29 (34.5%)	4 (4.8%)	1 (1.2%)

Motivational Subscale

The mean motivational subscale score was 26.25 (SD=4.16), while the median score was 26.00 (Range= 17-35). The top two items that participants endorsed as strongly agree or agree were: I enjoy interacting with people from other cultures (88.1%) and I am sure that I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me (46.4%). The top two items that participants endorsed as strongly disagree, disagree, or somewhat disagree were: I am sure that I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me (9.5%) and I enjoy living in cultures that are unfamiliar to me (14.3%). See Table 5 for a complete listing of results.

Table Five: Motivational Subscale Items

Variable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I enjoy interacting with people from other cultures	–	–	1 (1.2%)	3 (3.6%)	6 (7.1%)	43 (51.2%)	31 (36.9%)
I am confident that I can socialize with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to me	–	1 (1.2%)	6 (7.1%)	17 (20.2%)	26 (31.0%)	23 (27.4%)	11 (13.1%)
I am sure that I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me	–	1 (1.2%)	7 (8.3%)	19 (22.6%)	18 (21.4%)	28 (33.3%)	11 (13.1%)
I enjoy living in cultures that are unfamiliar to me	2 (2.4%)	4 (4.8%)	8 (9.5%)	22 (26.2%)	25 (29.8%)	14 (16.7%)	9 (10.7%)
I am confident that I can get accustomed to the shopping conditions in a different culture	–	1 (1.2%)	5 (6.0%)	19 (22.6%)	29 (34.5%)	24 (28.6%)	6 (7.1%)

Behavioral Subscale

The mean behavioral subscale score was 23.37 (SD=4.93), while the median score was 24.00 (Range= 10-33). The top two items that participants endorsed as strongly agree or agree were: I vary the rate of my speaking when a cross-cultural situation requires it (40.4%) and I change my non-verbal behavior when a cross-cultural situation requires it (38.1%). The top two items that participants endorsed as strongly disagree, disagree, or somewhat disagree were: I vary the rate of my speaking when a cross-cultural situation requires it (10.7%) and I alter my facial expressions when a cross-cultural situation requires it (16.7%). The highest endorsement rate from participants was in the "Neither" column for the statement "I use pause and silence

differently to suit different cross-cultural situations" (35.7%). See Table 6 for a complete listing of results.

Table Six: Behavioral Subscale Items

Variable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I change my verbal behavior (e.g., accent, tone) when a cross-cultural interaction requires it	4 (4.8%)	5 (6.0%)	7 (8.3%)	22 (26.2%)	25 (29.8%)	20 (23.8%)	1 (1.2%)
I use pause and silence differently to suit a different cross-cultural situations	2 (2.4%)	4 (4.8%)	7 (8.3%)	30 (35.7%)	25 (29.8%)	15 (17.9%)	1 (1.2%)
I vary the rate of my speaking when a cross-cultural situation requires it	–	6 (7.1%)	3 (3.6%)	21 (25.0%)	20 (23.8%)	28 (33.3%)	6 (7.1%)
I change my non-verbal behavior when a cross-cultural situation requires it.	2 (2.4%)	3 (3.6%)	3 (3.6%)	23 (27.4%)	21 (25.0%)	29 (34.5%)	3 (3.6%)
I alter my facial expressions when a cross-cultural situation requires it	2 (2.4%)	5 (6.0%)	7 (8.3%)	26 (31.0%)	14 (16.7%)	26 (31.0%)	4 (4.8%)

Note that the frequency distribution for gender and human service major identification can be found in Table One and Table Two, respectively in the demographics section.

Sub Problem Two

Sub problem two, what are the empathy scores of students attending college in Northern Pennsylvania, were analyzed using a frequency distribution and other descriptive statistics. The mean total empathy score was 65.30 (SD= 6.11), while the median score was 66.0 (Range= 48-78). The frequency distribution for total empathy scores may be found in Appendix (A).

The top three items that participants indicated often or always feeling were: I enjoy making other people feel better (97.6%); It upsets me to see someone being treated disrespectfully (91.7%); and When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards him/her (81.0%). Conversely, the top three items that participants endorsed never or rarely were: When I see someone being treated unfairly, I do not feel very much pity for them (92.8%); I find it silly for people to cry out of happiness (86.9%); When a friend starts to talk about his/her problems, I try to steer the conversation towards something else (79.7%). Two items where participants expressed a low level of empathy were: Other people's misfortunes do not disturb me a great deal (50%); and I do not feel sympathy for people who cause their own serious illness (45.1%). See Table 7 for a complete listing of results.

Overall, a majority of participants frequently or always engage in emotional contagion, sharing others' excitement and feeling upset by witnessing disrespect or misfortune. Notably, many participants derive enjoyment from helping others and demonstrate a strong inclination to provide support when others are distressed, indicating a proactive stance in emotional caregiving. However, there are significant variations in responses: while most respondents remain sensitive to others' emotions and express concern for those facing adversity, a minority rarely or never experience emotional reactions to others' happiness or remain indifferent to their emotions. Some

extreme responses include a substantial proportion never feeling bothered by crying, consistently being upset by disrespect, and always considering it frivolous when people cry out of happiness.

Table Seven: Empathy Items

Variable	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
When someone else is feeling excited, I tend to get excited too.	–	1 (1.2%)	22 (26.2%)	49 (58.3%)	12 (14.3%)
Other people’s misfortunes do not disturb me a great deal	8 (9.5%)	34 (40.5%)	36 (42.9%)	6 (7.1%)	–
It upsets me to see someone being treated disrespectfully	–	1 (1.2%)	6 (7.1%)	31 (36.9%)	46 (54.8%)
I enjoy making other people feel better	–	–	2 (2.4%)	24 (28.6%)	58 (69.0%)
I remain unaffected when someone close to me is happy	15 (17.9%)	53 (63.1%)	14 (16.7%)	2 (2.4%)	–
I have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me	–	–	12 (14.3%)	50 (29.5%)	22 (26.2%)
When a friend starts to talk about his/her problems, I try to steer the conversation towards something else	29 (34.5%)	38 (45.2%)	17 (20.0%)	–	–
I can tell when others are sad even when they do not say anything	–	3 (3.6%)	20 (23.8%)	50 (59.5%)	11 (13.1%)
I find that I am “in tune” with other people’s moods	1 (1.2%)	5 (6.0%)	19 (22.6%)	49 (58.3%)	10 (11.9%)
I do not feel sympathy for people who cause their own serious illnesses	19 (22.6%)	28 (33.3%)	32 (38.1%)	5 (6.0%)	–
I become irritated when someone cries	31 (36.9%)	33 (39.3%)	19 (22.6%)	1 (1.2%)	–
I am not really interested in how other people feel	34 (40.5%)	32 (38.1%)	13 (15.5%)	4 (4.8%)	1 (1.2%)
I get a strong urge to help when I see someone who is upset	–	3 (3.6%)	15 (17.9%)	36 (42.9%)	30 (35.7%)
I find it silly for people to cry out of happiness	53 (63.1%)	20 (23.8%)	7 (8.3%)	2 (2.4%)	2 (2.4%)
When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards him/her	–	–	16 (19.0%)	47 (56.0%)	21 (25.0%)
When I see someone being treated unfairly, I do not feel very much pity for them	37 (44.0%)	41 (48.8%)	2 (2.4%)	3 (3.6%)	1 (1.2%)

Sub Problem Three

Sub problem three, what is the relationship between cultural competency and empathy among students attending college in Northern Pennsylvania, was analyzed using a Pearson correlation. The correlation coefficient calculated for the relationship between participants' overall cultural competency and empathy scores showed a weak to moderate positive correlation ($r(81) = .276, p = .01$), indicating a significant linear relationship between the two variables. Participants who scored higher on cultural competency also scored higher on empathy. The effect size was moderate ($r^2 = .08$). Thus, only eight percent of the variance between cultural competency and empathy is shared.

A series of Pearson correlations were used to examine the relationships between the various subscales of cultural competency and empathy scores. As per the Bonferonni correction, the .05 alpha level was reduced to .01 to account for possible inflation of the type I error. The correlation coefficient calculated for the relationship between participants' empathy score and metacognitive subscale score showed a moderate positive correlation ($r(81) = .394, p < .001$), indicating a significant linear relationship between the two variables. Participants who scored higher on the metacognitive subscale, measuring an individual's ability to manage and regulate emotions in cross-cultural interactions also scored higher on empathy. The effect size was moderate to large ($r^2 = .16$).

The correlation coefficient calculated for the relationship between participants' empathy score and behavioral subscale score showed a weak to moderate positive correlation ($r(81) = .308, p < .01$), indicating a significant linear relationship between the two variables. Participants who scored higher on the behavioral subscale, measuring an individual's ability to adjust their

behavior in culturally appropriate ways also scored higher on empathy. The effect size was moderate ($r^2 = .095$).

The correlation coefficient calculated for the relationship between participant's empathy score and motivational subscale score showed a moderate positive correlation ($r(81) = .346, p = .001$), indicating a significant linear relationship between the two variables. Participants who scored higher on the motivational subscale, measuring an individual's ability to adapt to different environments also scored higher on empathy. The effect size was moderate ($r^2 = .12$).

The correlation coefficient calculated for the relationship between participants' empathy score and cognitive subscale score, measuring an individual's ability to understand and learn about different cultures showed a very weak negative correlation ($r(81) = -.074, p > .05$), indicating no significant linear relationship between the two variables. The effect size was negligible ($r^2 = .005$).

Sub Problem Four

Sub problem four, how do cultural competency, gender, and human service major identification predict empathy among students attending college in Northeast Pennsylvania was examined using multiple regression analysis. Variables were assessed for univariate outliers by examining skewness, kurtosis, Shapiro-Wilk for normality, stem and leaf, box plots, normal Q-Q plot, detrended normal Q-Q plot. Additionally, multivariate analysis was examined, as well as other assumptions for multiple regression. No issues were identified.

A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict participants' empathy score based on their metacognitive subscale score, cognitive subscale score, motivational subscale score, behavioral subscale score, gender, and Human Service enrollment. A significant regression equation was found ($F(6,78) = 8.546, p < .001$), with $R^2 = .406$). Cognitive subscale scores ($p =$

.012), motivational subscale scores ($p = .030$), gender ($p = 0.001$), and human service major ($p = 0.008$) were significant predictors. Participants predicted empathy score is equal to $44.194 + 21.65$ (metacognitive subscale score) $+ 22.54$ (cognitive subscale score) $+ 26.28$ (motivational subscale score) $+ 1.66$ (gender) $+ 1.50$ (human service major), where gender is coded as 1 = male, and 2 = female, and human service major is coded as 1 = no and 2 = yes. The ability to learn about different cultures (cognitive subscale score), the ability to adapt to different physical environments (motivational subscale score), gender, and human service majors were all predictors of empathy. The ability to adapt behavior in cultural situations (behavioral subscale score) and the ability to manage emotions in a cultural situation (metacognitive subscale score) were not predictors of empathy. However, the metacognitive subscale did show a trend ($p = .053$).

Thus, the null hypothesis; There is a relationship between cultural competency, gender, human service major identification, and empathy among students attending college in Northeast Pennsylvania was partially accepted. Whereas, gender, human service majors, a person's ability to learn about and understand different cultures (cognitive subscale), and their motivation to adapt to diverse environments (motivational subscale), were predictors of empathy.

Chapter Five

Discussion

Summary

This study examined the relationship between cultural competency, gender, human service major identification, and empathy among college students in Northern Pennsylvania. Thus, the null hypothesis states that there was not a relationship between cultural competency, gender, human service major identification, and empathy among students attending college in Northeast Pennsylvania, which was partially accepted. Whereas, gender, human service majors, a person's ability to learn about and understand different cultures (cognitive subscale), and their motivation to adapt to diverse environments (motivational subscale), were predictors of empathy. Overall cultural competency was not, thus null hypothesis was partially rejected.

Discussion

Sub Problem One

In Sub Problem One, "What are the levels of cultural competency, gender, and human service major identification among students attending college in Northeast Pennsylvania?", the results indicated that a majority demonstrated awareness and adjustment in cultural interactions, significant variability exists in knowledge and adaptive behaviors. The data suggests that respondents generally have a positive attitude towards interacting with people from other cultures and adapting to new cultural environments. A majority of participants reported enjoying cultural interactions and feeling confident in socializing and dealing with the stresses of adjusting to unfamiliar cultures. This indicates a relatively high level of openness and adaptability among the respondents. The respondents generally possess a strong awareness and active management of their cultural knowledge during cross-cultural interactions. Similarly,

Hodges, et al. (2010), in their study found that participants exhibited heightened empathic accuracy, assessed through their ability to accurately discern the needs, thoughts, and feelings of the person along with a desire to learn from people in other cultural settings.

This study found that a large number of the respondents will adjust their cultural knowledge, being conscious of the cultural knowledge they apply, and checking the accuracy of that knowledge during interactions. This suggests that many participants are not only aware of the cultural frameworks they use but are also actively engaged in refining and verifying their understanding as they interact with people from different cultures. Likewise, Hollan (2017) outlines the concept of intercultural competence, emphasizing that effective intercultural communication requires more than just knowledge, it demands the ability to adapt, engage in reflection, and critically assess one's own cultural biases.

Participants generally exhibited a strong understanding of cultural values and religious beliefs, and many report being adept at adjusting verbal and non-verbal behaviors in cross-cultural situations. However, knowledge gaps were evident, particularly in the cognitive subscale, which assesses understanding of the legal and economic systems of other cultures. Participants demonstrated lower perceived proficiency in this area, with responses indicating limited familiarity with the legal systems and language rules of other cultures. There were varying levels of knowledge among respondents regarding different aspects of other cultures. In the Metacognitive Subscale (the subscale that reflects participants' awareness and adjustment of cultural knowledge during cross-cultural interactions) the majority of respondents demonstrated strong agreement with statements about adjusting and applying cultural knowledge in interactions: *"I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from a culture that is unfamiliar to me"* had 46.4% agreeing and 13.1% strongly agreeing; *"I am conscious of the*

cultural knowledge I apply to cross-cultural interactions" showed 41.7% agreeing and 7.1% strongly agreeing. These responses suggest an overall self-awareness and adaptability when interacting with unfamiliar cultures. There was notable disagreement (17.9%) and neutrality (17.9%) in the statement about adjusting cultural knowledge. Similarly, 13.1% remained neutral on being conscious of their cultural knowledge. This suggests a gap where individuals might benefit from training in dynamic cultural adaptation. In the Cognitive subscale (the subscale that assesses knowledge of cultural, legal, and economic systems) relayed the significant knowledge gaps that were observed in legal and economic systems: *"I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures"* had 6% strongly disagreeing, 22.6% disagreeing, and 25% somewhat disagreeing, only 2.4% strongly agreed and limited knowledge of language rules was also apparent, with 9.5% strongly disagreeing, 20.2% disagreeing, and 15.5% somewhat disagreeing. These results highlight a need for greater emphasis on structured learning about legal and linguistic frameworks in cross-cultural contexts.

On the Motivational Subscale (the subscale that explores participants' confidence and enjoyment in cross-cultural situations) there was a strong willingness and enjoyment of cross-cultural interaction observed: *"I enjoy interacting with people from other cultures"* showed 51.2% agreeing and 36.9% strongly agreeing, *"I am confident that I can socialize with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to me"* had 31% agreeing and 13.1% strongly agreeing. The Behavioral Subscale (the subscale that evaluates changes in behavior to accommodate cross-cultural interactions) participants exhibited adaptability in non-verbal and verbal communication: *"I change my verbal behavior (e.g., accent, tone) when a cross-cultural interaction requires it"* had 29.8% agreeing and 23.8% strongly agreeing. *"I change my non-verbal behavior when a cross-cultural situation requires it"* had 34.5% agreeing. For most items, a large portion of

respondents were not aware of specific knowledge such as legal and economic systems, marriage systems, and rules of non-verbal behaviors. There were ongoing gaps in their understanding of these cultural elements, which could hinder their ability to effectively navigate cross-cultural interactions. While some respondents indicate an adequate grasp of cultural values, religious beliefs, and the arts and crafts of other cultures, a substantial number still lack confidence in their knowledge.

Interestingly, there wasn't a notable preference for either agreeing or disagreeing with statements regarding the use of pause and silence in cross-cultural interactions, indicating a cautious approach or uncertainty in this aspect of communication. There was a mixed approach among respondents regarding their adaptability in cross-cultural interactions. The majority of respondents reported that they alter their behavior, such as verbal adjustments, use of pauses, and changes in non-verbal behavior when interacting across cultures. This indicates that many individuals are aware of and practice the necessary behavioral changes to communicate effectively in diverse cultural settings, demonstrating a level of behavioral flexibility that is crucial for successful cross-cultural communication. The uncertainty around using pauses and silence in cross-cultural communication suggests a need for more focused training on non-verbal communication skills. Similarly, Ang et al., (2007) found that individuals with higher levels of cultural intelligence were more likely to adjust their behavior, such as modifying their speech patterns, using pauses, or changing their body language, to accommodate different cultural contexts. In their study participants with high cultural competency often reported being aware of the need to adapt their non-verbal communication, which includes managing silence and pauses. One significant insight from Ang et al., (2007) was the difficulty participants had in interpreting and using non-verbal cues such as silence which parallels the present research findings. The

mixed responses and uncertainty surrounding the use of pauses and silence in cross-cultural interactions highlight both the complexity of non-verbal communication and its critical role in fostering effective intercultural understanding. This finding suggests that while many of these students possess a degree of behavioral flexibility, there is still a significant gap in their ability to interpret and appropriately use nuanced non-verbal cues like silence.

Sub Problem Two

In Sub Problem Two, “What are the empathy scores of students attending college in Northeast Pennsylvania?”, key findings revealed that empathy scores among participants were moderately high, with students frequently endorsing behaviors that reflect emotional sensitivity and concern for others. Notably, 97.6% of respondents agreed that they enjoy helping others feel better, highlighting a strong inclination toward prosocial behaviors. Similarly, 91.7% reported feeling upset when others are treated with disrespect, as well as 81.0% felt protective when witnessing others being taken advantage of. These findings suggest that students are likely to engage in pro-social behaviors and are attuned to others’ emotional states, particularly in situations involving injustice or distress. However, there were notable exceptions in empathy responses. Items such as “I do not feel sympathy for people who cause their own serious illnesses” and “Other people’s misfortunes do not disturb me a great deal” revealed a lower level of empathy, with about 45.1% and 50% of participants endorsing neutral or low empathy. Similarly, participants showed indifference toward expressions of happiness, as 86.9% found it silly for people to cry out of happiness. This suggests a potential disconnect in understanding or valuing certain emotional expressions, particularly positive ones. The variability in responses also highlights distinctions in emotional engagement. While many participants reported being “in tune” with others' moods (70.2% often or always), a smaller group displayed less interest in how

others feel, with 40.5% and 38.1% rarely or never interested in others' emotions. This difference emphasizes the importance of context and individual differences in empathy expression.

Empathy was less evident in responses to items such as being unaffected by others' misfortunes, where 50% of participants indicated they were not significantly impacted. This mixed pattern suggests that while students demonstrate empathy in relational and justice-oriented contexts, their empathetic responses may vary depending on the nature and proximity of others' hardships.

Sub Problem Three

In Sub Problem Three, "What is the relationship between cultural competency and empathy among students attending college in Northeast Pennsylvania?", the correlation between cultural competency and empathy indicated a positive relationship. This suggests that as cultural competence increases, empathy levels tend to increase slightly as well. However, the correlation is relatively weak, suggesting that although cultural competence is related to empathy, it is not the primary factor accounting for empathy among college students. Cultural competency often requires specific education and experiences related to cultural diversity, while empathy may be more influenced by general social and emotional experiences. This distinction suggests that while cultivating cultural competence may improve empathy to some extent, it is not the primary pathway for developing empathy. Decety and Jackson (2006) similarly found that cultural differences impact empathetic responses, including emotional experience, perspective-taking, and empathic accuracy. They also found that cultural norms and values played a significant role in shaping the expression and experience of empathy (Decety & Jackson, 2006).

Sub problem Four

In Sub problem Four, “How do cultural competency, gender, and human service major identification predict empathy among students attending college in Northeast Pennsylvania?”, it became evident how specific aspects of cultural competency are influenced by several aspects of cognitive, motivational, emotional, and behavioral understanding. The results provide insights into how different components of cultural competency such as showing the ability to manage and regulate emotions (meta-cognitive), showing the ability to understand and learn about other cultures (cognitive), showing the ability to adapt in different physical environments (motivational), and showing the ability to adjust behavior in cultural situations (behavioral) are associated with empathy, as measured by the Total Empathy Score.

Among the independent variables, the metacognitive subscale and the motivational subscale scores had a moderate positive correlation with empathy, suggesting that individuals who have a higher ability to manage and regulate their emotions along with the ability to adapt in different physical environments also exhibit higher levels of empathy. Likewise, Hollan (2017) brings attention to cultural specificity, suggesting that empathy may manifest differently across cultures, implying that the correlation between motivational subscales and empathy could vary depending on the cultural context. This is vital for developing interventions aimed at enhancing emotional intelligence to improve empathy, particularly in fields where empathy is essential, such as healthcare, education, or counseling. Additionally, understanding these factors can guide the development of educational programs that focus on fostering empathy through the enhancement of emotional regulation and adaptability skills. Individuals seeking to improve their empathy might benefit from focusing on emotional regulation and adaptability, which could enhance their social interactions and relationships. These findings contribute to the broader

understanding of the psychological factors that influence empathy, offering a potential pathway for future research.

The cognitive subscale score has a weak negative correlation with empathy, indicating that a higher ability to understand and learn about other cultures does not necessarily predict higher empathy. This insight is essential because it suggests that purely cognitive approaches to cultural competence, such as education or training focused on knowledge acquisition, may not be sufficient to enhance empathy. This could inform the design of more holistic programs that integrate emotional and experiential components to better foster empathy across different cultural contexts. Similarly, Crowne (2013) found that while cognitive CQ (the ability to understand and learn about other cultures) is crucial for effective cross-cultural interactions, it does not necessarily correlate with higher levels of empathy. Crowne (2013) suggests that while individuals may possess strong cognitive abilities related to understanding different cultures, this does not automatically translate into greater emotional attunement or empathetic responses toward others. Empathy requires emotional intelligence and affective engagement, which are not necessarily aligned with the cognitive skills involved in cultural knowledge. This analysis shows that empathy is influenced by certain cognitive and motivational factors, rather than by behavioral adaptability or emotional regulation in cultural situations. The ability to understand and learn about cultural differences and the drive to engage in intercultural experiences significantly predict empathy levels. Empathy is not just about managing emotions or adapting behaviors in specific cultural settings, but more about understanding and being motivated to engage with others across cultures.

In examining gender and human service enrollment, there was more variation in empathy scores, indicating that these factors also play a role. Female students generally exhibit higher

levels of empathy and cultural competency compared to male students. Specifically, females tend to excel in emotional regulation, behavioral adaptation in cross-cultural contexts, and overall cultural competency. The findings imply that gender may play a significant role in these areas, with females demonstrating stronger abilities. However, when it comes to cognitive aspects of cultural competency, such as understanding and learning about different cultures, there is no significant difference between genders, indicating similar cognitive capabilities in this area. Similarly, Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven (2000) suggest that women tend to score higher on emotional empathy and social initiative, which they express are key components of intercultural sensitivity. They argue that this makes females more adept at navigating the social nuances and emotional complexities inherent in cross-cultural interactions, potentially leading to more successful and meaningful engagements with people from diverse backgrounds (Vander Zee and Van Oudenhoven,(2000). However, in this research, when it comes to cognitive aspects of cultural competency, such as understanding and learning about different cultures, there is no difference between genders. These findings are important in learning how cultural competency is taught and practiced in diverse settings, such as education, healthcare, and global business highlighting the importance of fostering empathy among all genders.

Human services enrolment and gender of the participants were also statistically significant and explained 40.6% of the variance in empathy scores. The cognitive subscale, motivational subscale, gender, and human services enrollment emerged as significant predictors of empathy. This indicates that empathy is influenced by a person's ability to learn about and understand different cultures (cognitive subscale), their motivation to adapt to diverse environments (motivational subscale), as well as gender and educational factors. The behavioral subscale and metacognitive subscale were not significant predictors, though the metacognitive

subscale approached significance, suggesting a potential weak relationship. These findings highlight that empathy is shaped by specific facets of cultural competency and contextual factors. Gender and Human Services enrollment consistently predict higher empathy, pointing to the potential influence of socialization, a predisposition towards these characteristics among this population, or training within these contexts. Furthermore, the cognitive and motivational aspects of cultural competency appear central to fostering empathy, while behavioral and emotional regulation skills may play a lesser role. These results continue to highlight the importance of focusing on intellectual and motivational development in cultural competency training to enhance empathy, particularly in fields like Human Services, where understanding and adapting to diverse perspectives is essential.

Implications for Practice

This study has significant implications for the design and implementation of educational and professional development programs aimed at enhancing cultural competency and empathy. Future programs should integrate emotional intelligence training, focusing on emotional regulation and adaptability, alongside traditional cultural competency education. By emphasizing these components, educators can better equip individuals to navigate diverse cultural contexts with greater empathy and effectiveness.

Establishing a structured approach to cultural intelligence development would be beneficial to students. By implementing continuous improvement programs such as establishing a long-term program that regularly updates training materials and offers ongoing learning opportunities. This ensures that students' cultural intelligence remains relevant and effective. By using metrics and feedback systems to track the progress of participants over time, this can continue to be monitored and evaluated. Regular assessments can help identify areas where

further improvement is needed and can also highlight the successes achieved through the training. Another way to ensure ongoing changes that are culturally appropriate would be to create a mentorship program where participants with higher levels of cultural intelligence guide others to foster a collaborative learning environment and promote the sharing of best practices.

Educational institutions, workplaces, and community organizations can play a pivotal role by implementing structured programs that combine theoretical learning with experiential opportunities. Using an experiential approach can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application. Incorporating intercultural competence training into existing curricula or professional development initiatives can be transformative. This training should emphasize the importance of adaptability, reflection, and the critical evaluation of one's cultural biases (Hollan, 2017). Activities such as role-playing, scenario analysis, and facilitated discussions on cross-cultural dilemmas can help participants practice adjusting their behaviors and deepen their understanding of non-verbal communication norms. Fostering a culture of continuous learning and openness to diversity within educational institutions, workplaces, organizations, and communities can ensure that these efforts are sustained. By addressing both the knowledge and the practical skills needed for effective intercultural communication, these strategies can help close the identified gaps and empower individuals to navigate cross-cultural interactions with confidence and competence.

Enhancing cultural intelligence and non-verbal communication skills could profoundly impact globalized workplaces, international diplomacy, and community interactions. As educational institutions, businesses communities, and organizations increasingly operate in diverse cultural contexts, the ability to navigate subtle aspects of communication like silence and pauses can become a key differentiator for effective leadership and teamwork. Training

programs that emphasize these skills could help mitigate miscommunication, reduce conflict, and foster inclusivity, ultimately leading to more cohesive and productive environments. Addressing these gaps and uncertainties offers a pathway to stronger, more meaningful connections between individuals and communities, laying the groundwork for a more empathetic and collaborative global society.

The weak positive correlation between cultural competency and empathy emphasizes the need to better understand of these concepts and their development. The fact that cultural competence and empathy are not strongly correlated suggests they arise from distinct influences and require different developmental approaches. This insight carries significant implications for individuals, organizations, and future societal trends. For individuals, this finding emphasizes that while cultivating cultural competence can slightly enhance empathy, it should not be viewed as a comprehensive strategy for developing empathetic skills. Cultural competence training should be paired with initiatives aimed at enhancing emotional intelligence and empathy to create truly inclusive and compassionate environments.

Educational institutions, especially those serving diverse populations, can also benefit from this dual approach. Programs that integrate lessons on cultural diversity with activities that promote emotional and social learning could better prepare students for success in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world. This approach ensures that students develop both the knowledge needed to navigate cultural differences and the empathetic skills required to form authentic, supportive relationships. The finding that cultural norms and values significantly shape empathy suggests that as societies become more multicultural, empathy could be influenced in new and complex ways. As people are exposed to a wider range of cultural norms, they may develop a more nuanced understanding of empathy, potentially leading to greater

interpersonal harmony. By recognizing and addressing the distinct pathways for cultivating these traits, we can create a more empathetic and culturally intelligent future.

To address these gender differences in empathy concerning cultural competency, targeted strategies should be employed to foster these skills across all genders, ensuring equitable growth and effectiveness in diverse settings. Since females generally excel in emotional empathy and behavioral adaptation, efforts should be aimed to leverage these strengths while simultaneously addressing areas where male students might require additional support, particularly in emotional regulation and behavioral adaptation in cross-cultural contexts. In human service-related majors, such as education, healthcare, social work, counseling, psychology, and public administration, where cultural competency is vital, it is crucial to implement inclusive training programs that integrate emotional, social, and cognitive learning dimensions. Recognizing and addressing these gendered differences ensures that cultural competency training is both equitable and impactful, promoting inclusivity and effective collaboration in increasingly diverse environments.

Universities and professors could address the development of cultural competence and empathy by integrating these topics into the curriculum, offering experiential learning opportunities, and providing workshops and training. Educational programs could benefit from incorporating gender-sensitive and age-appropriate strategies, ensuring that all participants have the tools and support needed to develop both cultural competence and empathy. This approach will help create more inclusive and responsive learning environments, ultimately fostering a more empathetic and culturally aware society.

Limitations

Several limitations emerged over the course of this study. The sampling was conducted on students from a small Catholic university, and specific cultural, religious, and demographic characteristics of this group might not reflect those of students from other regions or institutions. Due to the size of the university, the sample size was limited, reducing the statistical power of the study. Along with the sample size limitations, the small number of students from certain racial and ethnic backgrounds led to a lack of response variation. Ultimately, improving the sample size would strengthen the validity and reliability of future research outcomes.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research may focus on refining training and educational programs aimed at increasing cultural competence by identifying the components that effectively enhance empathy. This could lead to the development of more comprehensive approaches that combine cognitive understanding with emotional engagement, leading to better outcomes in fields such as healthcare, education, and global business. Future research can contribute to the broader psychological understanding of how empathy develops and functions across different domains, including cultural contexts. By exploring the nuances of how cognitive and emotional factors interact in the development of empathy, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of what drives empathetic behavior and how it can be nurtured in diverse settings.

Conclusion

This study evaluated the relationship between cultural competency and empathy among college students, revealing that while cultural competence is associated with a slight increase in empathy, it is not the primary determinant. The weak positive correlation underscores that empathy is influenced by a variety of factors beyond cultural knowledge and skills. These

findings show the need for a more integrated approach to developing cultural competency, one that combines cognitive understanding with emotional regulation and adaptability. Educational and professional programs should focus not only on enhancing cultural knowledge but also on fostering emotional intelligence and adaptive skills to effectively cultivate empathy.

Additionally, demographic factors such as gender and age interact with empathy and cultural competency. The higher empathy and cultural competency observed in female students, and the moderate increase in cultural competency with age, suggest that targeted interventions could benefit from considering these demographic variables. By incorporating emotional and experiential components into cultural competency training and addressing the distinct needs of different demographic groups, educational and professional practices can be better tailored to enhance empathy and cultural competence across diverse settings. These findings offer directions for future research and practical applications aimed at fostering a more empathetic and culturally competent society.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Email

Subject Line: Exploring the Effect of Cultural Competency on Empathy among College Students

Dear Student:

My name is Larissa Schwass, and I am a doctoral student at Marywood University. I am conducting a research study with the purpose of determining if cultural competency has any influence on empathy. You are invited to participate if you qualify. To qualify, you must be a student at Marywood, be 18 years or older or of legal adult age in your jurisdiction. The research will take place via an online survey using Qualtrics. It will take about 20 to 30 minutes to complete.

Benefits may include assisting student affairs administrators, as well as college and university faculty, in changing racial attitudes and prejudices. These findings may lead to future research in the areas of intergroup contact and student affairs administration.

This study has been approved by Marywood University's Exempt Review Committee.

Survey Link: https://marywood.iad1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bBCyVgIW1sJs06O

Sincerely,
Larissa Schwass
lschwass@m.marywood.edu

Follow up Emails

Subject Line: Exploring the Effect of Cultural Competency on Empathy among College Students

Dear Student:

My name is Larissa Schwass, and I am a doctoral student at Marywood University. I am conducting a research study with the purpose of determining if cultural competency has any influence on empathy. You are invited to participate if you qualify. To qualify, you must be a student at Marywood, be 18 years or older or of legal adult age in your jurisdiction. The research will take place via an online survey using Qualtrics. It will take about 20 to 30 minutes to complete.

Benefits may include assisting student affairs administrators, as well as college and university faculty, in changing racial attitudes and prejudices. These findings may lead to future research in the areas of intergroup contact and student affairs administration.

This study has been approved by Marywood University's Exempt Review Committee.

Survey Link: https://marywood.iad1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bBCyVgIW1sJs06O

Sincerely,
Larissa Schwass
lschwass@m.marywood.edu

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Title: Exploring the Cascade Effect of Cultural Competency on Empathy among College Students in Northeastern Pennsylvania - A Quantitative Case Study

Principal Investigator (PI): Larissa Schwass, Student at Marywood University

Principal Investigator Contact Information: 570-348-6245 lschwass@m.marywood.edu

Research Advisor: Dr. Alan Levine, Marywood University

Research Advisor Contact Information: alevine@maryu.marywood.edu

Invitation for a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study about the impact of multicultural education on undergraduate and graduate university students. You were chosen because you are a currently enrolled college student in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Please read this form. Ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

Additional participant inclusion criteria:

- Undergraduate and graduate student
- An adult over the age of 18 or the legal age in your jurisdiction.

Purpose – About the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine if multicultural competency has any impact or influence on the empathy of college students.

Procedures - What You Will Do

You will be asked to participate in three online surveys on empathy, cultural competence, and demographic information. The survey will ask about your feelings about social and emotional issues as well as demographic information. The survey should take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. You are asked to complete the survey only once.

Risks and Benefits

The risks are no greater than the risks in daily life or activities.

A risk may be that participation could cause mental or emotional distress; in this case, you are encouraged to contact Marywood University's Counseling & Student Development Center at (570) 348-6245, or by visiting 1017 McGowan Building.

A benefit may be that it may help student affairs administrators, as well as college and university faculty, in changing racial attitudes and supporting and retaining racially diverse students at Universities. These findings may lead to future research in the areas of intergroup contact and student affairs administration.

Confidentiality

The records of this study will be kept private. Information used in any written or presented report will not make it possible to identify you. Only the investigator and research advisor will have

access to the research records. Minimal data points will be collected. No IP Addresses, location data, or contact information will be recorded. Records will be kept on a password-protected computer. Records will be kept for one year. Then they will be destroyed by deleting the electronic record on which it is stored. No web-based action is perfectly secure. However, reasonable efforts will be made to protect your transmission from third-party access.

Taking Part is Voluntary

Participation is voluntary. Your decision on whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the investigator[s]. It will not affect your relationship with Marywood University. There will be no penalty. You may withdraw at any time prior to submission by closing the browser.

Contacts and Questions

If you have questions about this study at any time, contact the principal investigator or the PI's advisor. their contact information appears at the top of this form.

If you have questions related to the rights of research participants or research-related injuries (where applicable), please contact the Institutional Review Board at (570) 961-4782 or irbhelp@marywood.edu.

You may print a copy of this form for your records.

Statement of Consent

By proceeding:

- You understand what the study involves.
- You have asked questions if you had them.
- You agree to participate in the study.

Appendix C: Demographic Questionnaire

Demographics:

1. What is your gender?

Female Male Non-Binary Prefer Not to Disclose

2. What is your age?

3. What is your race (select all that apply)?

American Indian
Alaska Native
Asian
Black
African American
Native Hawaiian
Other Pacific Islander
White

4. What is your ethnicity?

Hispanic or Latinx or Spanish
Origin Not Hispanic or Latinx or Spanish Origin

5. Are you in a Human Services major?

Yes
No

6. What year are you in college?

Undergraduate First year
Undergraduate second year
Undergraduate third year
Undergraduate fourth year
Graduate

Appendix D: The Toronto Empathy Questionnaire

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. When someone else is feeling excited, I tend to get excited too.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Other people's misfortunes do not disturb me a great deal.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. It upsets me to see someone being treated disrespectfully.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I remain unaffected when someone close to me is happy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I enjoy making other people feel better.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. I have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. When a friend starts to talk about his/her problems, I try to steer the conversation towards something else.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. I can tell when others are sad even when they do not say anything.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. I find that I am "in tune" with other people's moods.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. I do not feel sympathy for people who cause their own serious illnesses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. I become irritated when someone cries.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. I am not really interested in how other people feel.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. I get a strong urge to help when I see someone who is upset.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I do not feel very much pity for them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. I find it silly for people to cry out of happiness.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards him/her.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix E: Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQE)

Read each statement and select the response that best describes your capabilities. Select the answer that BEST describes you AS YOU REALLY ARE. (1=strongly disagree; 7= strongly agree). For the “other cultures” think about Australian culture. If you are from Australia, think about Asian cultures.

1. I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people with different cultural backgrounds
2. I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from a culture that is unfamiliar to me.
3. I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I apply to cross-cultural interactions.
4. I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from different cultures.
5. I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures.
6. I know rules (e.g., vocabulary, grammar) of other languages
7. I know the cultural values and religious beliefs of other cultures.
8. I know the marriage systems of other cultures
9. I know the arts and crafts of other cultures
10. I know the rules of expressing non-verbal behaviors in other cultures.
11. I enjoy interacting with people from other cultures
12. I am confident that I can socialize with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to me
13. I am sure that I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me
14. I enjoy living in cultures that are unfamiliar to me
15. I am confident that I can get accustomed to the shopping conditions in a different culture
16. I change my verbal behavior (e.g., accent, tone) when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.
17. I use pause and silence differently to suit a different cross-cultural situations.
18. I vary the rate of my speaking when a cross-cultural situation requires it.
19. I change my non-verbal behavior when a cross-cultural situation requires it.
20. I alter my facial expressions when a cross- cultural situation requires it.

CQ Metacognitive (Statements 1-4)	Total _____/28 x 100 = _____ %
CQ Cognitive (Statements 5-10)	Total _____/42 x 100 = _____ %
CQ Motivational (Statements 11-15)	Total _____/35 x 100 = _____ %
CQ Behavioural (Statements 16-20)	Total _____/35 x 100 = _____ %

Appendix F: Permission from the Dean



Dean of Students Office | Room 101, Liberal Arts Center March

Exempt Review Committee
Marywood University
2300 Adams Avenue
Scranton, PA 18509

Re: *Exploring the Cascade Effect of Cultural Competency on Empathy among College Students in Northeastern Pennsylvania: Moderating Role of Gender - A Quantitative Case Study*

Dear Exempt Review Committee:

This letter confirms that as an authorized representative of Marywood University, I am aware of Larissa Schwass's research project and protocol.

I will allow the investigator to recruit potential student participants at Marywood University. Specifically, I will grant authorization to have the investigator's email recruitment message posted to the "students" email distribution list, with assistance from Adrienne Mullikin at ajmullikin@marywood.edu. **However, activities may commence only after the investigator provides evidence of final approval from Marywood University's ERC for the proposed project.** Per Office of Information Technology policy, recruitment messages may be posted a maximum of three separate occasions during an academic semester.

If you have any questions, please contact me at rnovak@marywood.edu or 570-348-6246.

Sincerely,



Ross Novak
Dean of Students
Marywood University 2300
Adams Ave.

Scranton, PA 18509 (570)
348-6246
rnovak@marywood.edu

2300 Adams Ave., Scranton, PA 18509-1598 | phone: (570) 348-6246 | fax: (570) 961-4790 |
rnovak@marywood.edu