THE COMPLEXITY OF TEACHER EMPATHY: A COMPLEX DYNAMIC SYSTEMS ROLE-IN-CONTEXT PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Teacher empathy is important for students and teachers. However, this complicated construct has varying, non-linear consequences. For instance, teacher empathy can improve grades (Gehlbach et al., 2022), reduce school-based discipline (Okonofua et al., 2016) improve teacher interpersonal decision making (Aldrup et al., 2022), but also increase stress and emotional exhaustion (Kliś & Kossewska, 1998; Wróbel, 2013). Thus, it is paramount that education researchers examine the patterns of teacher empathy in teachers' lived contexts (Gehlbach et al., 2022). Yet, while some have sought to explore teacher empathy in context, none have explicitly investigated the motivational mechanisms that are part of teacher empathy's adaptive and maladaptive forms using a complex dynamic systems approach. As discussed, role-in-context sensitive complex dynamic systems methods are apt to capture teacher empathy phenomena, as well as identity, motivation, and emotions (Marchand & Hilpert, 2024). Thus, this study aimed to fill this gap in the literature through explication of teacher empathy by attending to teachers' identity, motivations, and context using a role-in-context complex dynamic systems approach that utilized the Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity framework (DSMRI; Kaplan & Garner, 2017). This convergent mixed methods (QUAL, quan) design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) addressed the motivations and role identities of teacher empathy by collecting qualitative and quantitative data in parallel, analyzing these types of data separately, and finally merging understandings from the analysis of these two data types. I recruited four teachers and collected data over three time points: (a) a pre-interview survey, (b) a 90-minute narrative inquiry interview, and (c) a 90-minute video stimulated recall interview. I analyzed the data using DSMRI protocols,

calculating survey psychometrics, nonmetric multidimensional scaling, state space landscapes, and cross-case analyses. Analysis from the qualitative and quantitative data suggested that teacher empathy is a context and role sensitive social phenomenon that emerged from role identity contents, structures and processes, which were framed by dispositional, social, and contextual factors. Therefore, teacher empathy is not a single construct that can be easily captured but is a highly situated and dynamic social phenomenon, whose expressions manifested adaptively and maladaptively. This work has implication for theory, methodologies, and practices. I conclude with limitations and recommendations for those who seek to support teachers express adaptive forms of empathy and mitigate the negative forms of teacher empathy that are associated with emotional exhaustion and burnout.

I dedicate this dissertation to my teachers, professors, camp counselors, and youth advisors who demonstrated empathy and care, especially at a time when others told me I would never achieve any academic success. They motivated me throughout my life.

I also dedicate this dissertation to Julie Alexander, an inspiring and caring teacher who inspired the development and creation of this project. Her dedication to producing well rounded and socially engaged students through art makes her a paragon of an experiential educator. Her deep compassion and concern for her students influenced much of this work.

Finally, I dedicate my dissertation to my original teachers, my family, who taught me to never ever ever quit.

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This dissertation would not be possible without the scholarship and dedication of many. While I cannot enumerate all, I want to share my gratitude and sincere appreciation to those that supported me—in numerous forms—throughout the development of my dissertation and graduate studies.

First, I want to thank the members of my committee, Drs. Avi Kaplan, Timothy J. Patterson, Benjamin M. Torsney, Joanna K. Garner, and Chezare A. Warren. I came to Temple University to work with Avi, where he pushed me to think deeply and critically about my ontological beliefs about the world and psychological science, my self-perceptions as a burgeoning scholar, goals to conduct meaningful and useful research, and action possibilities to produce and advocate for complexity-informed research. I am forever grateful and look forward to continuing our stimulating conversations and sharing his words of wisdom with others. Tim quickly became an unofficial mentor and collaborator. His trust in my abilities to produce theoretical and empirical research became my source of self-efficacy that I, too, am a productive member of the educational scholarly community of practice. From our many conversations, I learned the need for social studies education and that I was a social studies teacher all along. Also, Tim has great taste in music. Ben, too, has great music recommendations and was a constant resource for methodological answers, teaching suggestions, and stimulating conversations. His advocacy and trust propelled me to do more. Like others, Joanna and I pondered interesting theoretical and practical questions on a variety of topics using a complex dynamic systems lens. She also demonstrated her belief in me as the chair of the AERA Complexity Theories in Education SIG under her and my ideas. Finally, Dr.

Warren showed me kindness when we met at AERA in 2023 in Chicago. I told Dr. Warren how his work influenced and guided me, and I thanked him for inspiring me to consider the costs, benefits, and practical applications of teacher empathy. Relatedly, I want to thank Dr. James Earl Davis for recruiting Dr. Warren to my committee.

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Finally, I want to thank the teachers who shared their stories with me.

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פִּרְקֵי אָבוֹת א:טז

רַבָּן גַּמְלִיאֵל הָיָה אוֹמֵר, עֲשֵׂה לְךָ רַב, וְהִסְתַּלֵּק מִן הַסָּפֵק, וְאַל תַּרְבֶּה לְעַשֵּׂר אֹמֶדוֹת:

Ethics of our Ancestors 1:16

Rabban Gamaliel used to say: Accept a teacher upon yourself and remove yourself from doubt; and do not make a habit of tithing by guesswork.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Imagine yourself as a teacher. You enter your classroom with students with which you feel a deep connection, but know very little about their hopes, dreams, and aspirations. Nonetheless, you want to motivate them to do their best! You want them to leave your classroom as more mature, thoughtful, and critically engaged citizens. Some of your students like you and some cause you distress. Some students stopped trying and some, you know, are struggling due to issues at home. But ever persistent, you are committed to them. You are committed to their learning.

You introduce the same topic you discussed last week, and you scan the room to see several students roll their eyes or put their heads down. You attempt to facilitate a discussion based on yesterday's material with the same four hands shooting up to monopolize the conversation. You call on one student whose answer superficially touches on the topic. You let out an audible exhale before moving on.

Could you imagine the situation in the classroom? What did you feel? What did you think? What would you have done immediately after the exhale? Something to engage your students? Lecture to them? Reprimand them?

This scenario I just asked you to imagine inspired me and framed this dissertation project—issues surrounding empathy and teachers' actions, beliefs, decisions, emotions, goals, and self-perceptions, i.e., their motivations. However, instead of empathizing with

a teacher, this project aims to explore teachers' empathy, which is especially relevant following the recent global pandemic.

Students returned to schools amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and were met with concern from administrators, educators, parents, and policymakers who feared the students experienced undue trauma from two years of online education. Concomitantly, the public called for teachers and school leaders to be more caring and empathetic (Bosetti & Betts, 2022; Kim et al., 2022; Yong & Kong, 2021), which coincided with national teacher shortages that found teachers stressed and burnt-out (Nguyen et al., 2022; Walker, 2022). Teachers reportedly experienced higher levels of anxiety during the pandemic than health care workers (Kush et al., 2022) and are leaving the profession at a high rate because they are emotionally exhausted (Edsall, 2022). Thus, there is a tension between our expectations that teachers be empathetic caregivers with uninhibited vigor, and the reality that they experience overwhelming fatigue (Will, 2021) possibly brought on by our hope that they fulfill every role for our students—polemically portrayed by Al Abbazia's (2021) illustration "The American Teacher" (Figure 1.1).

In this parody of Norman Rockwell's (1943) Liberty Girl (Rosie to the Rescue), we can see that Abbazia is suggesting that the American teacher is expected to physically protect students with her first-aid kit and, albeit controversial, automatic rifle; function as a content expert in multiple fields, as demonstrated by the textbooks; and risk her own well-being while wearing personal protective equipment in order to achieve multiple competing goals. Additionally, the teacher's body language indicates burdensome requirements that may also be unknown to the public, like empathizing with students.

Yet, we see her perseverance as she trudges forward. The subtext, like Rockwell's (1943) illustration, is that this is the new reality for teachers, regardless of its absurdity.

Figure 1.1.“The American Teacher” by Al Abbazia (2021). Reprinted with permission (see Appendix I).

The shift in calling for empathic educators encouraged teachers to not only be pedagogues, but also literate in the emotional expressions of their students. For example,

China's curriculum reformation declared that teachers be attuned to their students' emotions (Huang, 2004) and be empathetic (X. Wang et al., 2022).

In general, I believe this is advantageous. Teacher empathy supports teachers' abilities to understand their students, express concern, and demonstrate care (Meyers et al., 2019; Tettegah & Anderson, 2007; X. Wang et al., 2022). However, this seemingly advantageous disposition, process, and behavior can also lead to stress and burnout in teachers (Kliś & Kossewska, 1998; Wróbel, 2013). Thus, teacher empathy can be conceived of as a metaphorical double-edged sword, including both positive and negative elements. Therefore, it is imperative that education researchers attend to this elusive phenomenon to better understand its varying outcomes. In doing so, researchers can develop improved theoretical and practical perspectives that aim to promote the benefits of teacher empathy and prevent its costs—like teachers from leaving the profession.

My personal experiences, and stories from friends and colleagues, have highlighted how different forms of empathy can cause teachers to feel overwhelmed, anxious, and concerned during and after school. The opening scenario described in this chapter is a compilation of these stories that have, in part, inspired this dissertation. This has caused me to rethink my own assumptions and led to new questions. Included in these questions are the following:

1. What does teacher empathy look like in a classroom?
2. What personal and social factors support and thwart teacher empathy?
3. What cultural factors support and thwart teacher empathy?

These questions frame this study, which aimed to describe the emergence of teachers' perceptions of their empathy by innovatively attending to their identities,

motivations, and context, and backgrounding others' perceptions, including the intended recipients of the empathetic expressions (e.g., students' views of teacher empathy). Grounded in a complex dynamic systems paradigm, I used a convergent mixed methods design, where I collected and analyzed qualitative and quantitative data separately before merging. Interview data and open-ended survey responses constituted the qualitative data, which captured the teachers' actions, beliefs, decisions, emotions, goals, and self-perception (i.e., teacher motivations). The quantitative data in this study was the Interpersonal Reactivity Index scale (Davis, 1980, 1983), which provided a profile of teachers' self-perceived dispositional empathy.

This study has theoretical, methodological, and practical implications for school administrators, educators, policymakers, and researchers. Of primary importance to administrators, educators, and policymakers is a better understanding of teacher empathy's adaptive and maladaptive forms. Therefore, this research may serve their interests and offer guidance on how to support teachers and their students. Affective psychology, educational psychology, and social psychology researchers will also benefit from this research by providing a complex dynamic systems view of empathy, which is thought to capture holistic, authentic teacher empathy more accurately. This view, which is currently absent from the literature, is grounded in context and subsumed in the identity of the teacher.

In the following section, Chapter 2, I review empathy scholarship from education, neuroscience, philosophy, and psychology. Throughout, I detail gaps in empathy approaches and methods that would be resolved by taking a role-in-context perspective, and I describe the theoretical framework guiding my work—the Dynamic Systems Model

of Role Identity (Kaplan & Garner, 2017)—before concluding with research questions. In Chapter 3, I outline the study research methodology and design. Chapter 4 includes results, and the discussion and conclusion, which includes implication and limitations, are found in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

An Introduction to Teacher Empathy

Teacher empathy—the effortful process by teachers to understand and care for their students (Meyers et al., 2019) —can positively influence teacher-student relationships (Barłożek, 2015; Gehlbach et al., 2022), is theorized to elevate teacher quality (Nieto, 2006), encourages responsive teaching practices (Jaber et al., 2022), and promotes culturally and socially appropriate practices (Abacioglu et al., 2020) that may support student motivation (Kumar et al., 2018). However, teacher empathy may also lead to deficit beliefs about students (Warren & Hotchkins, 2015) and maladaptive empathy expressions (e.g., empathic overarousal[1]; Hoffman, 1978; empathy-based stress; Rauvola et al., 2019) that result in physical and emotional exhaustion that is akin to compassion fatigue. Thus, teacher empathy is a "double edged sword"—having both benefits and costs.

Benefits of Teacher Empathy

Teacher empathy can lead to positive social, behavioral, and academic outcomes. For example, teacher empathy may support peer relationships (Schutz & DeCuir, 2002) and teachers who are more empathetic develop culturally meaningful and engaging classroom materials (McAllister & Irvine, 2002; Warren, 2018). Furthermore, Cooper showed that empathetic teachers can improve student perceived sense of belonging and

[1] A Star Trek fan (i.e., Trekkie) may be familiar with this experience by recalling Star Trek the Next Generation's Commander Deanna Troi's over-emotional empathic responses.

school-based relationships (2010) and theorized a positive association with student self-efficacy (2004).

Interested in the relationship between teacher self-beliefs and empathy, Goroshit and Hen (2014) surveyed 273 teachers from ten schools in Israel using adapted psychometric scales capturing dispositional empathy (Davis, 1983); emotional self-efficacy, a self-belief that a person can correctly process emotional information (Kirk et al., 2008); and teaching self-efficacy, for classroom communication, relationships, and tasks (Friedman & Kass, 2002). Goroshit and Hen (2014) found that empathy was statistically significantly and positively correlated with emotional self-efficacy ($r(271) = .56$, $p < .001$) and teaching self-efficacy ($r(271) = .38$, $p < .001$). Structural equation modeling (SEM) demonstrated that emotional self-efficacy predicted teaching self-efficacy ($\beta = .51$; $p < .001$) and empathy ($\beta = .55$; $p < .001$). Interested, in part, in empathy's influence on teacher beliefs, I conducted an SEM analysis using the published correlation matrix from the study. I examined the direct effect of empathy on teaching self-efficacy, with the covariates from the original study. SEM Path Analysis (Figure 2.1) suggested the teacher's dispositional empathy significantly and positively predicted teaching self-efficacy ($\beta = .45$; $p < .000$) —demonstrating an important predictive relationship between teacher empathy and teachers' self-beliefs. However, it is important to note that the post-positivist paradigm employed by Goroshit and Hen (2014) is reductive, using a linear design, and further study on the topic is needed to clarify the relationship between these constructs. A complex dynamic systems approach may prove useful as the constructs are most likely interdependent.

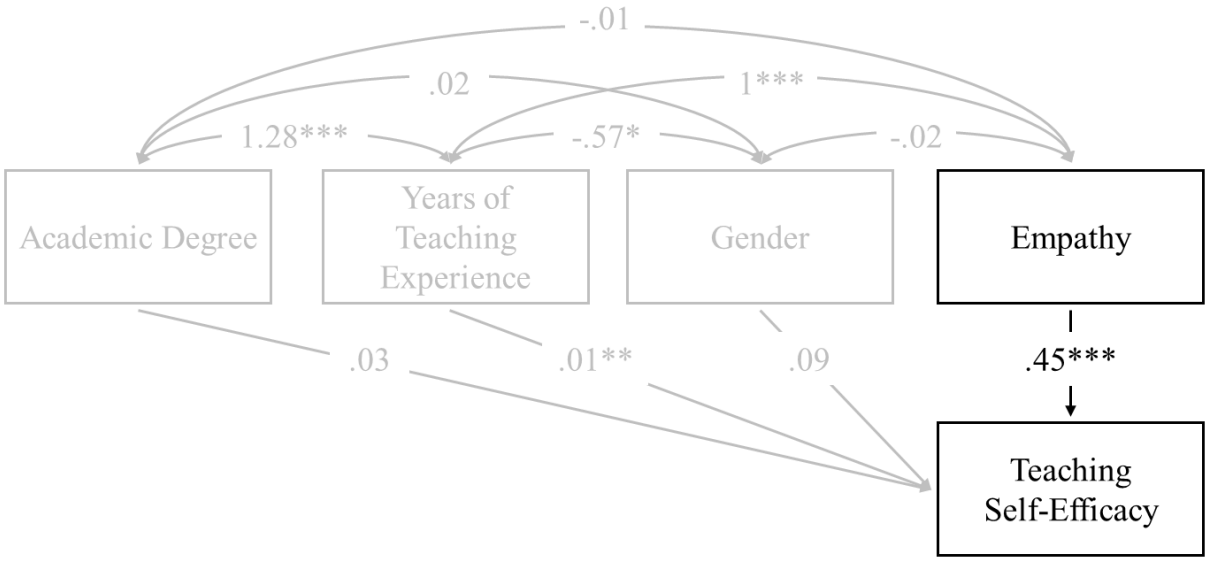

Figure 2.1. Path Analysis Model of Associations Between Empathy and Teaching Self-efficacy with Covariates. The path analysis shows associations between dispositional empathy and teaching self-efficacy, controlling for three covariates (academic degree, years of teaching experience, and gender). Coefficients presented are standardized linear regression coefficients.

***$p < .000$, **$p < .001$, *$p < .05$.

Teacher empathy can also indicate classroom quality; evaluated by teachers' awareness, sensitivity, and support of student social and emotional capacities and experiences (Pianta & Hamre, 2009). Specifically, teacher cognitive empathy—the cognitive ability to understand students' emotional experience—can help teachers assess their students' emotional expressions by reading non-verbal cues (e.g., a frown, head on a desk; Aldrup et al., 2022). These empathy-related assessments may motivate teachers to shift their actions and decisions (Eisman & del Calvo, 2022). Teachers may also be motivated when engaged in affective empathetic pathways (Batson, 2009; Weisz et al.,

2021), i.e., feeling what another is feeling. In sum, teacher empathy can include social benefits, like how to support students, but also more pragmatic ones, such as influencing classroom instruction and classroom management—like instructional support (Pianta & Hamre, 2009).

However, it is important to consider that teacher empathy is bi-directional, suggesting a relational aspect, i.e., students can influence teacher empathy. Thus, teacher empathy is context sensitive implying that teachers may not empathize unless motivated to do so (Aldrup et al., 2022; Zaki, 2014). Related, Frenzel and colleagues (2009, 2021) showed that students can also influence teacher emotions, which can affect instructional practices (Schutz, 2014; Sheppard & Levy, 2019) and teaching quality. For example, teachers who ascribe positively valenced affective classroom experiences may employ better instructional practices (Sheppard & Levy, 2019).

Costs of Teacher Empathy

Empathy's many benefits may come at a price as teachers experience significant effort and emotional cost (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020), where they experience negative affective and psychological consequences while attempting to be empathetic. These costs can be deleterious. For example, studies (e.g., Wrobel, 2013) suggest that teacher empathy may be associated with emotional exhaustion because it promotes emotional labor—the effort to regulate one's outward emotional expressions to be compliant with professional norms (Hochschild, 1983), which can produce stress (e.g., Grandey, 2003).

In their review of teacher empathy scholarship, Aldrup and colleagues (2022) underscored this issue by describing empathy as a risky venture that can cause suffering to the teacher. For example, they noted that some teachers experience sadness when they

witness bullying in their school (Sokol et al., 2016). In response, some teachers may attempt to become emotionally unattached and create a dissociation between themselves and their students (Aldrup et al., 2022), which may prove problematic as teachers can be important contributors for student social and emotional development (e.g., Klusmann et al., 2016). Thus, it is not only the assumed low levels of empathy that may prove maladaptive but "both low and extremely high levels of teacher empathy might be problematic potentially causing a nonlinear relationship with the quality of teacher-student interactions and student outcomes" (Aldrup et al., 2022, p. 1206).

In summation, empathy can influence teacher emotions, teaching quality, and the classroom experience. A persistent and ubiquitous challenge for researchers is a need to understand the dimensions of teacher empathy that support and thwart teaching. In this pursuit, theorists have aligned, elaborated, and adapted current definitions of empathy from psychology. Whereas defining and describing empathy continues to evade researchers, there is a general agreement that empathy includes cognition, emotion, and care for the 'other.'

Conceptualizing and Defining Empathy

Global Definitions of Empathy

Empathy is difficult to define and measure (Batson, 2009; Murphy & Algoe, 2022; Olderbak & Wilhelm, 2020; Preston & Hofelich, 2012; Zaki & Ochsner, 2012), leading to different fields defining empathy for different purposes (e.g., cognitive science, Barnes & Thagard, 1997; humanism, Rogers, 1975; social-neuroscience, Decety & Jackson, 2006; social psychology, Hatfield et al., 1993). Generally, theorists characterize empathy as a social emotion, along with feelings like pride or shame

(Mlodinow, 2022); however, many debate the attributes that characterize the empathetic experience. Some argue that empathy is an emotional, *affective* experience – feeling what another feels (e.g., Batson et al., 2002; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987; Hatfield et al., 1993), while others view empathy from a *cognitive* perspective (e.g., Wispé, 1986). For example, Nightingale and colleagues (1991) argue that empathy is a mostly cognitive exercise, while Galinsky and colleagues (2008) view empathy as an "other-focused emotional response that allows one person to affectively connect with another" (p. 378). Further, adding to its confusion, some hold that empathy is distinct from concepts like compassion and sympathy (Bloom, 2016; Hojat et al., 2001; Malbois, 2022; Ngo et al., 2022). Others contend that sympathy is related to specific forms of empathy (empathic concern; Batson, 2023, Chapter 6). Neff remarked about this difficulty in conceptualizing, understanding, and even discussing empathy when she said "that the problem with this whole area [of empathy research] is that people can be talking across purposes. They mean the same thing, but they are using different terms" (Rutsch, 2011).

Most modern views of empathy bypass the aforementioned debate by theorizing that empathy includes both affective and cognitive components (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004; Davis, 1983; Decety & Jackson, 2004; Preston & de Waal, 2002), which prompted contemporary theorists to reinterpret and redefine empathy. For example, Lane and Schwartz (1987) saw empathy as a skill[2], while Wondra and Ellsworth (2015) applied an appraisal theory approach (e.g., Frijda, 1988) to narrowly describe the empathetic experience as when an empathizer—referred in the literature as an *observer*—matches the emotional appraisal of another person—referred in the

[2] Bateson (2004) believed that empathy was an "uncomfortable skill" (p. 253).

literature as a *target*, (i.e., the person to whom the observer observes and responds; Zaki, 2014). Wondra and Ellsworth (2015) argued that empathy is thus in a special category of vicarious emotional experiences. A mismatch between the observer's and target's appraisals, as when a target feels sad and the observer appraises the target's emotions as angry, would be characterized as "empathy failure" (Cikara et al., 2011). While this definition is theoretically and phenomenologically grounded, I believe it is reductive and does not benefit the layperson who may never know if their emotions and appraisals match their targets. Additionally, Wondra and Ellsworth (2015) did not take a traditional multidimensional approach to empathy and only considered affective empathy.

Other definitions include Zaki and Ochsner's (2012) broad definition grounded in a neuroscience perspective: empathy is when an observer relates to a target. Nested under the word 'relates' are three dynamic constructs: cognition, affect, and prosocial behaviors. Interested in the prosociality of empathy, Main and Kho (2020) emphasized and examined empathy through a relational framework that highlighted context and dynamics and offered recommendations for studying empathy through close relationships. Similarly, Barnes and Thagard (1997) posited a relational examination of empathy and, from a cognitivist perspective, argued that empathy is an analogical process. Specifically, grounded in Holyoak & Thagard's (1997) multiconstraint theory of analogy, Barnes and Thagard (1997) suggest that empathy is a simulation—similar to self-other overlap (see Table 2.1). Applied to a mental health provider context, they speculate that a therapist will attempt to take the role of her patient.

The aforementioned empathy definitions do not offer an exhaustive list but provide insight into the various ways scholars understand empathetic experiences.

However, how do laypeople understand empathy? Hall and colleagues (2021) sought to explore this idea by recruiting undergraduate students and an online sample in two experiments. The researchers coded the student sample's definitions of empathy and found the most common aspects of empathy were *perspective taking*, understanding someone's perspective; *emotion sharing*, vicariously embodying another's feelings; *prosocial action*, motivations to act on another's behalf; and *relating-connecting-bonding*, processes of developing relatedness. The researchers also performed factor analysis on a survey battery given to both samples and found four factors: *prosocial emotional response*, similar to prosocial action that describes feelings of sympathy and compassion; *interpersonal perceptiveness*, ability to judge another's internal state; *other perspective*, synonymous with perspective taking; and *anxious reactivity*, which describes distress experienced by the observer. The authors concluded that these overlapping dimensions provide the structure of what laypeople call empathy, but also recognized significant between-person variability in defining empathy.

In sum, and as demonstrated in this last definition, contemporary global definitions of empathy appear to be composed of lower-order dimensions of empathy, which I detail next.

Lower-Order Dimensions of Empathy

Neuroscientists, philosophers, and psychologists have examined the phenomenon of empathy by describing the empathizer's affect, cognition, and motivation to help others (Batson et al., 2002; Decety & Jackson, 2004; Preston & de Waal, 2002; Zaki, 2014; Zaki & Ochsner, 2012). While it is generally accepted that empathy is a multidimensional construct (e.g., Davis, 1980, 1983), there is still significant

disagreement regarding the lower-order dimensions of empathy. Generally, researchers agree that, unlike the global definitions described above, empathy includes two major dimensions: (a) affective empathy, *feelings* associated with an empathetic experience; and (b) cognitive empathy, the ability to *understand* and *take another's perspective.*

Beyond affective and cognitive empathy, other examples of lower-order empathy dimensions are phenomenological (e.g., emotional contagion, empathic concern, empathy-based stress, empathy gap, empathic overarousal, experience sharing, mentalizing, theory of mind, perspective taking, parochial empathy, self-other overlap), behavioral (e.g., empathetic listening, prosocial empathy, radical empathy), and domain specific (e.g., teacher empathy, historical empathy). See Table 2.1 for a glossary.

Table 2.1. Glossary of Empathy Related Terms

Term	Description
Affective Empathy	"feeling what another person is feeling while remaining aware of the self-other distinction and that one's feelings are the other's" (Malbois, 2022, p. 7).
Cognitive Empathy	"the ability to intentionally adopt or imagine another person's perspective, to gain a better understanding of their experience" (Decety, 2020, Table 1).
Compassion Fatigue	"physical and mental exhaustion and emotional withdrawal experienced by individuals who care for sick or traumatized people over an extended period of time" (Decety, 2020, Table 1).
Emotion Sharing	"feeling what another feels" (Hall et al., 2021, p. 18).
Emotional Contagion	"tendency to automatically mimic and synchronize facial expressions, vocalizations, postures, and movements with those of another person and, consequently, to converge emotionally'' (Hatfield et al., 1992, p. 153-154).
Empathic Accuracy	"ability to accurately infer the specific content of another person's thoughts and feelings" (Ickes, 1993, p. 588).

Table 2.1. (continued)

Term	Description
Empathic Concern	"an other-oriented motivation congruent with the perceived welfare of someone in need. It is characterized by feelings of warmth, concern, and care for the other, as well as a strong motivation to improve the other's wellbeing." (Decety, 2020, Table 1).
Empathic Listening	"Reflecting what a person feels and says in your own words to their satisfaction so they feel listened to and understood." (Covey, 2004, p. XX).
Empathic Overarousal	"an involuntary process that occurs when an observer's empathic distress becomes so painful and intolerable that it is transformed into an intense feeling of personal distress, which may move the person out of the empathic mode entirely" (Hoffman, 2000, p. 198).
Empathy Failure	"…feel no pain, no sadness, and no motivation to help. Failures of empathy are especially likely if a sufferer is socially distant-for example, a member of a different social or cultural group" (Cikara et al., 2011, p. 149).
Empathy-Based Stress	" a process of trauma exposure (i.e., a stressor) combined with the experience of empathy (i.e., an individually- and contextually-driven affective reaction) that results in empathy-based strain, adverse occupational health reactions, and other work-relevant outcomes" (Rauvola et al., 2019, p. 298).
Epistemic Empathy	"the teachers' tuning into and appreciating another's cognitive and emotional experiences in constructing, communicating, and critiquing knowledge." (Jaber et al., 2022, p. 241).
Experience Sharing	"Experience sharing is often tied to a mechanism known as 'neural resonance': perceivers' tendency to engage overlapping neural systems when they experience a given internal state and when they observe (or know that) targets (are) experiencing that same state" (Zaki & Ochsner, 2012, p. 675).
False Empathy	"False empathy is thinking of one's self as more empathetic than can actually be confirmed by the intended beneficiary of empathy's application" (Warren, 2018, p. 176).

Table 2.1. (continued)

Term	Description
Historical Empathy	"Historical empathy therefore requires the following three interrelated and interdependent endeavors: • Historical Contextualization — a temporal sense of difference that includes deep understanding of the social, political, and cultural norms of the time period under investigation as well as knowledge of the events leading up to the historical situation and other relevant events that are happening concurrently. • Perspective Taking — understanding of another's prior lived experience, principles, positions, attitudes, and beliefs in order to understand how that person might have thought about the situation in question. • Affective Connection — consideration for how historical figures' lived experiences, situations, or actions may have been influenced by their affective response based on a connection made to one's own similar yet different life experiences." (Endacott & Brooks, 2013, p. 43).
Historical Empathy Gap	"disparities on how students of diverse racial affiliations, English language proficiency, gender identities, and learning abilities impact demonstration of historical empathy" (Perrotra, 2018, Abstract).
Imagine-Other (Perspective Taking Orientation)	"imagining how the other feels" (Lamm et al., 2007, p. 43).
Imagine-Self Orientation (Perspective Taking Orientation)	"imagining how [one] would feel if they were in the place of the other" (Lamm et al., 2007, p. 43).
Mentalizing	"mentalizing—usually examined by asking perceivers to draw explicit inferences about targets' states — engages a system of midline and superior temporal structures broadly involved in 'self-projection': the ability to represent states outside of a perceiver's 'here and now' including the future, past, counterfactuals and targets' perspectives" (Zaki & Ochsner, 2012, p. 675).

Table 2.1. (continued)

Term	Description
Motor Mimicry	"Motor mimicry has been conceptualized as primitive empathy, as a reflex based on cues previously conditioned to one's own direct experience, as an expression of vicarious emotion, and as a manifestation of a trait (e.g., empathic ability) or of a cognitive operation (e.g., taking the role of the other…" (Bavelas et al., 1986).
Neural Resonance	"Neural resonance accompanies the experience and observation of motor intentions, sensory experiences and visceral states such as pain and disgust" (Zaki & Ochsner, 2012, p. 675)
Parochial Empathy	"feeling more empathy for in-group than out-group members" (Bruneau et al., 2015, Abstract).
Pedagogical Empathy	"The consideration and use of emotional data as a process embedded in adaptive expertise…" (Munson & Baldinger, 2023, p. 626)
Personal Distress	"an aversive self-focused emotional reaction (e.g., anxiety, discomfort, worry) to the expression of another's situation" (Decety, 2020, Table 1).
Perspective Taking	"Imagining how another person feels and how one would feel in a particular situation" (Lamm et al., 2007, p. 43).
Perspective Divergence	"Perspective divergence (PD) represents the disparity in social and cultural perspectives two or more person groups employ to interpret ideas, actions, and behaviors associated with a particular condition or situation. In essence, it is the difference in the lenses of interpretation individuals use to make sense of a particular problem, issue, or circumstances, and these lenses are formed by the intersection of our subjective identities (e.g. age, gender, race, religion, class, position of authority, etc.)" (Warren, 2014, p. 136)
Prosocial Concern	"expressing motivation to improve targets' experiences (for example, by reducing their suffering)" (Zaki & Ochsner, 2012, p. 675).
Radical Empathy	" Radical empathy involves radical acceptance of vulnerability, an openness to being affected by one another" (Jordan & Schwartz, 2018, p. 28).
Self-Other Overlap	"the notion that others can be incorporated into the self" (Collyer & Marcovitch, 2019, p. 321).

Table 2.1. (continued)

Term	Description
Teacher Empathy	"Teacher empathy is not empathy experienced by people who happen to be teachers; it is an integral part of the role of teaching. More specifically, teacher empathy is the degree to which instructors work to deeply understand students' personal and social situations, feel caring and concern in response to students' positive and negative emotions, and communicate their understanding and caring to students through their behavior" (Meyers et al., 2019, p. 161).
Theory of Mind	"In saying that an individual has a theory of mind, we mean that the individual imputes mental states to himself and to others (either to conspecifics or to other species as well)" (Premack & Woodruff, 1978, p. 515).

Note. This glossary provides an overview of terms used in empathy scholarship; however, this list is not exhaustive nor demonstrates differences in defining similar terms.

Researchers often examined the phenomenon of empathy using lower-order dimensions as proxies for the global experience (e.g., Zaki & Ochsner, 2012). Falling along the affective and cognitive dimensions of empathy, some empathy-related constructs define affective processes, while others describe cognitive phenomena. For example, some lower-order affective empathy dimensions include *emotional contagion*, where a target's perceived emotional experiences produce a similar experience in the observer (e.g., you perceive someone as being sad and you become sad); and *empathic concern*[3] and *empathy-based stress*, both describe distress and anxiety produced from empathizing with a target.

[3] Here I am aligning with Olderbak and Wilhelm (2020).

Cognitive forms of lower-order empathy dimensions include *perspective taking*, *self-other-overlap*, the perception that you are similar or dissimilar to another; and related, I believe that *parochial empathy* is a cognitive form of empathy, which is the tendency to share more empathetic resources with people whom you believe you share group membership (Bruneau et al., 2015) (i.e., intergroup empathy bias; (Cikara et al., 2014). *Theory of Mind* (ToM; Premack & Woodruff, 1978) is another well-studied component of cognitive empathy (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004; Zaki & Ochsner, 2012) and is the ability to ascribe mental processes onto another person, acknowledging that others have their own thoughts, feelings, and motivations.

Social neuroscience has analogues to the described constructs, with a few additions. For example, cognitive empathy is analogous with *mentalizing*, affective empathy is similar to *experience sharing*, and empathetic motivation or sympathy is *prosocial concern* (Zaki & Ochsner, 2012). These definitions are operationalized within the field of social neuroscience. Specifically, *experience sharing* describes how an observer assumes the affective, motor, and sensory states of a target and is associated with *neural resonance*, an "overlapping of neural systems" (Zaki, 2013, 2014; Zaki & Ochsner, 2012, p. 675). *Mentalizing* focuses on the observer's ability to make inferences about a targets' actions, beliefs, emotions, goals, and perceptions (Zaki, 2013; Zaki & Ochsner, 2012). Zaki (2014) argued that *mind perception*, the ability of an observer to identify an internal state of a target (Epley & Waytz, 2010), is an antecedent to the empathetic experience.

Other lower-order dimensions of empathy describe behaviors, like helping others. Interestingly, Batson (2009) contended that the motivation to help another is incumbent

on affective empathy, suggesting affective processes are the mechanism undergirding prosocial behaviors. This is intuitive when considering that we may be more motivated to help another if we can vicariously feel distress for the target. Other behavioral forms of empathy include *empathic listening*, which is a method of listening that employs empathy to demonstrate attention.

Let's consider an example of a teacher in her classroom to illustrate the utility of defining lower-order dimensions of empathy to describe phenomena for research purposes. Imagine a White social studies teacher facilitating a discussion about the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the history of slavery in the United States to a classroom of mostly Black students. During the discussion, one White student makes an insensitive comment that aroused the class and appeared to have offended most of the Black students. The teacher quickly reacts and assures everyone that the student made the comment accidentally without forethought and comforts the upset Black students by encouraging them to leave the classroom if they need a break.

From the perspective of the teacher, we can argue that she experienced empathy in different ways. For example, her parochial empathy may have directed her action to jump in and inform everyone that the insensitive comment was accidental—without evidence to support her decision. She may have inferred how her Black students felt when noticing their facial expressions and attempted to take their perspective and mentalize, and simultaneously experienced emotional contagion when she felt the distress of her Black students. Finally, she decided to excuse her upset students following her empathic concern and motivation to support her students based on what she thought would be advantageous and needed in the moment.

While this example is not comprehensive, it does demonstrate how researchers interested in affective, cognitive, and behavioral forms of empathy can describe any situation using the wealth of empathy related constructs. However, a major challenge for empathy literature is knowing which term best fits the described phenomenon as there is significant overlap (Olderbak & Wilhelm, 2020). For example, above I suggested that parochial empathy may be why the teacher rushed to quell a possible feud and support the White student, but it is possible that it was ToM, empathic concern, or another lower-order dimension of empathy that led to her actions.

Included in empathy scholarship aimed at conceptualizing this obscure construct, researchers aligned empathy with other concepts to better describe the presuppositions and mechanisms of the empathic experience. Here I discuss the theoretical alignments between empathy and motivation, and empathy and identity.

Empathy and Motivation

In Zaki's (2014) preeminent article illustrating empathy's automatic, effortful, and context-dependent processes, he declared empathy models must center motivational processes. Inspired by traditional motivation frameworks that include approach and avoidant motives (e.g., Elliot & Hulleman, 2017; Weiner, 1972), Zaki (2014) suggested three phenomena that may encourage people to empathize—approach affiliation, approach capitalization, and approach desirability—and three that would demotivate an empathetic response—avoid pain, avoid cost, avoid interfering with competition. He argued that interpersonal interactions are the main sources of empathy avoidant or approach motives, including caring for one's progeny, ingroup membership, and outgroup segregation. For example, *approach affiliation* motives describe an observer

choosing to empathize with a friend or family member, even if it is distressful. This type of empathy improves social bonds and deepens perceptions of relatedness. By contrast, *avoid interfering with competition* motives would predict that an observer is demotivated to empathize with someone who holds outgroup membership and with whom the observer may be in competition. For example, in one study, researchers found that prison guards did not empathize with death row inmates and minimized the inmates' suffering because, in part, they did not share group membership (Osofsky et al., 2005). Interestingly, we also see that, paradoxically, paternalistic behaviors may demotivate imagine-self orientations (see Table 2.1) that have the potential to hinder proper decision making – a process that may be important to teachers.

Similarly, Gehlbach and Mu (2023) argued that social perspective taking, a related construct to empathy, included motivation as a component in a non-linear process. Some of the processes led to seeking out information via social perspective taking (i.e., a detective) or making generalized assumptions (i.e., a judge). They argued that empathetic motivation included propensity, or disposition; contextual factors, like shifting power or prior experience; and confidence and effort. Gehlbach et al. (2015) found a positive relationship between confidence and effort; and perceptions of high effort from another may motivative reciprocation. This may prove advantageous in a classroom where students may empathize more with their teacher if they believe their teacher is effortfully empathizing with them. Like Zaki (2014), Gehlbach and Mu (2023) also identified demotivating factors: cognitive load and low-pressure, for example.

In sum, empathy includes motivational dimensions, which are related to and emergent from a teacher's identity (see Kaplan & Garner, 2017).

Empathy and Identity

Grounding this inquiry in identity literature harkens back to common beliefs that an observer's identity is a necessary antecedent to the empathetic process. Simply, the empathetic experiences—like parochialism or personal distress—would be impossible without observer self-awareness (Decety & Jackson, 2004; Gallup & Platek, 2002). However, we know that we can never completely take the perspective of another (Eyal et al., 2018; Rogers, 1975; VanSledright, 2001), we can only attempt to understand another's perspective through our own. John Stuart Mill (1865) exemplified this point when he wrote "that Things [sic] in themselves are to us altogether unknowable, and that all we can know of any thing is its relation to us, composed of, and limited to, the Phænomena [sic] which it exhibits to our organs" (p. 90). I believe this sheds light onto a new conceptualization of empathy—grounded in the identity system of the observer. Therefore, it stands to reason that empathy requires the identity system of the observer—including their beliefs, goals, perceived action possibilities, self-perceptions, an assumed shared context, and prior knowledge. Mary Catherine Bateson (2004) made a similar argument when she said that empathy is "a product of self-knowledge" (p. 4) that emerges from analogies of human experience, which is important in teaching (Palmer, 1998). Frazier and colleagues (2021) said it plainly when they wrote "People make sense of their experiences through the lens of the self" (p. 300).

In summary, consistent definitions of empathy prove illusive, complicated, and different scholars representing different fields favor different dimensions. To resolve these many limitations, researchers can use context and role sensitive approaches that situate the empathetic experience.

A Shift Toward a Role-in-Context Sensitive Approach to Empathy

The last several sections demonstrated a variety of ways to conceptualize and define empathy. My goal was to help you, the reader, empathize with me and experience the mess that is empathy scholarship. This mess is underscored by Olderbak and Wilhelm's (2020) assertion that lower-order empathy dimensions overlap, producing jingle jangle fallacies during measurement. For example, they noted that the phenomenon of "Inferring What Another Person Thinks or Feels" is described by the following related but theoretically distinct constructs: cognitive empathy, empathic accuracy, mentalizing, mind reading, perspective taking, and ToM. Murphy and Algoe (2022) believe this is due to "functionally incoherent and excessively narrow definition[s of empathy, which] may be a case of "the tail wagging the dog," with empathy being re-defined to better align with trending concepts (e.g., mirror neurons) and methodologies (e.g., brain scans)" (p. 190). Recognizing this reality, I advocate for situated role-in-context specific conceptualizations of empathy that favor certain dimensions over others. This aligns with recent calls for context-sensitive empathy approaches (Aldrup et al., 2022; Stellar & Duong, 2023; Weisz & Zaki, 2018) and recommendations and conceptualizations for context-dependent, profession specific empathy (e.g., therapist empathy; Rogers, 1975; physician empathy; Hojat et al., 2001; social work, Segal; teacher empathy, Aldrup et al., 2022).

Role-in-context specific definitions of empathy are distinct from layperson definitions (Hall et al., 2021) and call for actions that benefit the empathizer in their context, occupying a specific role. For example, we anticipate that a parent parental empathy for a child to be distinct from teacher empathy for the same child. Therefore,

empathy dimensions that are suitable in one role and context, may not benefit a different role or context, like with teaching. Following, Ngo and colleagues (2022) argue that profession specific conceptualizations and training of empathy (e.g., physician versus mental health empathy) warrant different investigations. Thus, it is paramount that we understand which dimensions of empathy are more or less desirable in different contexts and roles.

Carl Rogers (1975) and others (e.g., Truax, 1967) advocated for a specific form of empathy employed by therapists, which is an important element in therapy (Freire, 2007). Rogers shifted his perspective from empathy as a state (1959) to a process (1975) and in doing so re-envisioned the value of empathy in a therapist-patient relationship, which previous research substantiated by demonstrating empathy's role in supporting positive therapy outcomes (Barrett-Lennard, 1962). Unique from other definitions of empathy, Rogers (1975) argued that therapist empathy included withholding judgement, checking for empathic accuracy, and to "lay aside your self" (p. 4).

Hojat and colleagues (2001) defined and developed measures for physician empathy, which is an crucial component of medicine (e.g., Spiro et al., 1993) and can influence patient care (Choshen-Hillel et al., 2022). Hojat and his team (2001) developed the Jefferson Scale of Physician Empathy which is unique because it promotes cognitive empathy over affective forms of empathy (Stansfield et al., 2016), following research suggesting that affective empathy can hinder physicians' diagnoses and treatment plans (Aring, 1958; Blumgart, 1964; Spiro, 1992). This delineation and promotion between affective and cognitive empathy follows recommendations for physicians to not become

emotionally attached to their patients out of fear of fatigue and burnout (e.g., Jensen, 1994)

By focusing on role-in-context sensitive forms of empathy, researchers can more appropriately capture empathy dimensions that are desirable in real-world contexts. I believe this is important in exploring teacher empathy, which is also a complex construct that is difficult to measure and define. However, by explicitly exploring teacher empathy, we can hope to understand the positive and negative outcomes of the various forms of empathy. Following, this study explored and described the motivational processes that undergird teacher empathy's costs and benefits as a complex dynamic system. Additionally, I provided a set of recommendations for improving adaptive forms of teacher empathy that may support student learning and mitigate the negative forms of teacher empathy that cause stress, emotional exhaustion, and burnout.

A History of Empathy

You fall and break your leg. To survive you need to rely on others around you. This requires that community members can understand you, your pain, and your needs. This "understanding" is a basic consequence of empathy, and a defining component of the birth of civilization; or so anthropologist Margaret Mead is reported to have said (Byock, 2012). While expressions and forms of empathy can be found throughout recorded human history (e.g., Hammurabi's Code, the Torah[4]).

[4] The most common value mentioned in the Torah is the reminder to show kindness and empathy to others, which appears 36 times, including this line from Exodus 23:9: וְגֵר לֹא תִלְחָץ וְאַתֶּם יְדַעְתֶּם אֶת־נֶפֶשׁ הַגֵּר כִּי־גֵרִים הֱיִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם "You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt."

The modern examination of empathy grew out of the philosophical traditions of the Scottish Enlightenment when Adam Smith[5] (1790/2002) described a "fellow-feeling" by writing, "As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation" (p 10). In this section of *Sympathy*, he continued by eloquently describing a group fellows-feeling as a "mob, when they are gazing at a dancer on the slack rope, naturally writhe and twist and balance their own bodies, as they see him do, and as they feel that they themselves must do if in his situation" (p. 12). Haakonssen (2002) reinterpreted Smith's (1790/2002) sympathetic experience as an imaginative process that allows us to intuit what our fellow feels.

Later, the German philosopher Robert Vischer (1873) coined the term *einfühlung*—feeling into—to capture a person's automatic and unconscious experience viewing art by projecting ourselves into an 'other.' This "imaginary bodily perspective taking" attempts at understanding life from a different point of view or setting (Ganczarek et al., 2018, p. 141), though it should be noted that it is not possible to fully embody and wholly understand another person (e.g., VanSledright, 2001). Vischer (1873) delineated between *sensitive einfühlung* (sensory feeling into) and *motorische einfühlung* (motor feeling into), foreshadowing contemporary views of empathy as a multidimensional construct. Theodore Lipps (1903), a favored philosopher of Sigmund Freud, later extended Vischer's term to describe a person's response to viewing another's emotions. In Germany today, people use the term *einfühlungsvermögen* to refer to an

[5] Adam Smith is most known in Western Society as the patron of free-market capitalism and was a good friend of famed empiricist David Hume (Dubner, 2022)

individual's capacity to metaphorically "step into the shoes of another person" (S. Wasenitz, personal communication, October 26, 2022).

It was in 1909 that British Psychologist Edward Titchner translated *einfühlung* into the English word *empathy* (Ganczarek et al., 2018; Zaki, 2014) that we use today – paving the way for psychologists to examine, define, and redefine this complex construct to describe various empathy phenomena in the world.

The Phenomenon of Empathy

Many factors influence the experience of empathy. A common characteristic is associated with social distance (Preston & de Waal, 2002) or psychological distance (e.g., Trope & Liberman, 2010)—the more conceptually abstract a person is, the greater the distance between you and the less empathy you may feel (e.g., Eisman et al., 2022). In one experiment, Eisman et al. (2024) asked participants to read an excerpt from a story adapted from Herrera et al. (2018) about a person experiencing housing insecurity. In the story, a person is evicted from their home after not paying $700 to their landlord. Without a home, the person briefly lived with a friend, moved into their car, and ultimately found shelter in an unsafe public bus at night.

A participant in the study perceived the protagonist's situation as psychologically distant and described feeling forced to assume the identity of the main character. The participant said, "...I didn't really imagine that I was that person [in the story], it just felt like I was kind of reading about, like, about situations that happen to other people. ...I feel like [knowing more details of the protagonist's emotional experience] would help me feel, I guess, more sympathetic, I'm not sure empathetic, because I just haven't been in a situation like that." Thus, the abstractness and lack of familiarity of the story limited the

participant's empathy. However, in contrast to the first participant, a formerly unhoused participant discussed how her ontological beliefs about the protagonist and personal experience with homelessness allowed her to have more empathy: "I mean, I was invested because it was, it was my story in the sense. So again, it was just relatable. It was something that was familiar with me. …I was completely captivated by it, because it was, it was my story." She later acknowledged that without her familiarity with housing insecurity she may not have been motivated to empathize with the protagonist: "...I've been in that situation. I honestly, you know, to be really, really, honest, until I got into that situation... I probably would have been, you know, more, I probably would have had less empathy."

In Stanley Milgram's (1974/2009) infamous obedience studies, Milgram noted that the more abstract a person's pain, the less empathy an abuser experienced. Milgram's experiment invited subjects into a lab under a false pretense – they believed their participation was part of a learning task and instructed to apply a shock to another subject, the "learner." Each time the learner misremembered a word-pair, the subject would apply an even stronger shock to the learner. However, the learner was a confederate and simulated the pain and displeasure of each subsequent shock. During the "remote" and "voice-feedback" variations of Milgram's experiments, participants heard but not saw the confederate pretend screaming in agony with every shock. More than half of the participants proceeded to the full shock level, compared to less than half when the subjects were in the room with the confederate. Milgram suggested that "[d]iminishing obedience, then, would be explained by the enrichment of empathic cues in the successive experimental conditions" (p. 38), where the subject was physically close to or

touching the confederate. Thus, Milgram asserted that experiments with more abstractions of a person's pain hindered the empathetic experience. Research since Milgram's experiment has tended to incorporate more neuroanatomical and biophysiological data, as it became available.

Empathy in Neuroanatomical and Biophysiological Processes

Weisz and Zaki (2018) detailed how empathy-related phenomena differentially activate portions of the brain. See Figure 2.2. For example, experience sharing—akin to affective empathy—activates the anterior cingulate cortex, anterior insula, inferior parietal cortex, lobule, and premotor cortex; areas of the brain associated with movement and feeling pain (Lamm et al., 2011; Singer et al., 2004; Zaki & Ochsner, 2018). Mentalizing, which requires mental projecting oneself into facsimile environments, activates the temporoparietal junction, temporal pole, medial prefrontal cortex, and precuneus (Mitchell et al., 2006; Saxe & Kanwisher, 2003; Zaki & Ochsner, 2012). Finally, prosocial empathy activates reward circuitry (i.e., the medial orbitofrontal cortex, nucleus accumbens, ventral striatum, and ventral tegmental area; Singer & Klimecki, 2014) with positive feelings promoting a person to do good deeds. First-person perspective taking activates experience sharing and mentalizing brain regions, which supported by an observer's ability to perceive a target's state (Zaki & Ochsner, 2012).

Neuroscience research also suggests that mirror neurons activate when viewing another performing a task or expressing an emotional state (di Pellegrino et al., 1992; Enticott et al., 2008) indicating a neurological component of self-other overlap, experience sharing, emotional contagion, and other social cognitive processes. Research from behavioral neuroendocrinology demonstrated similar phenomena of when viewing

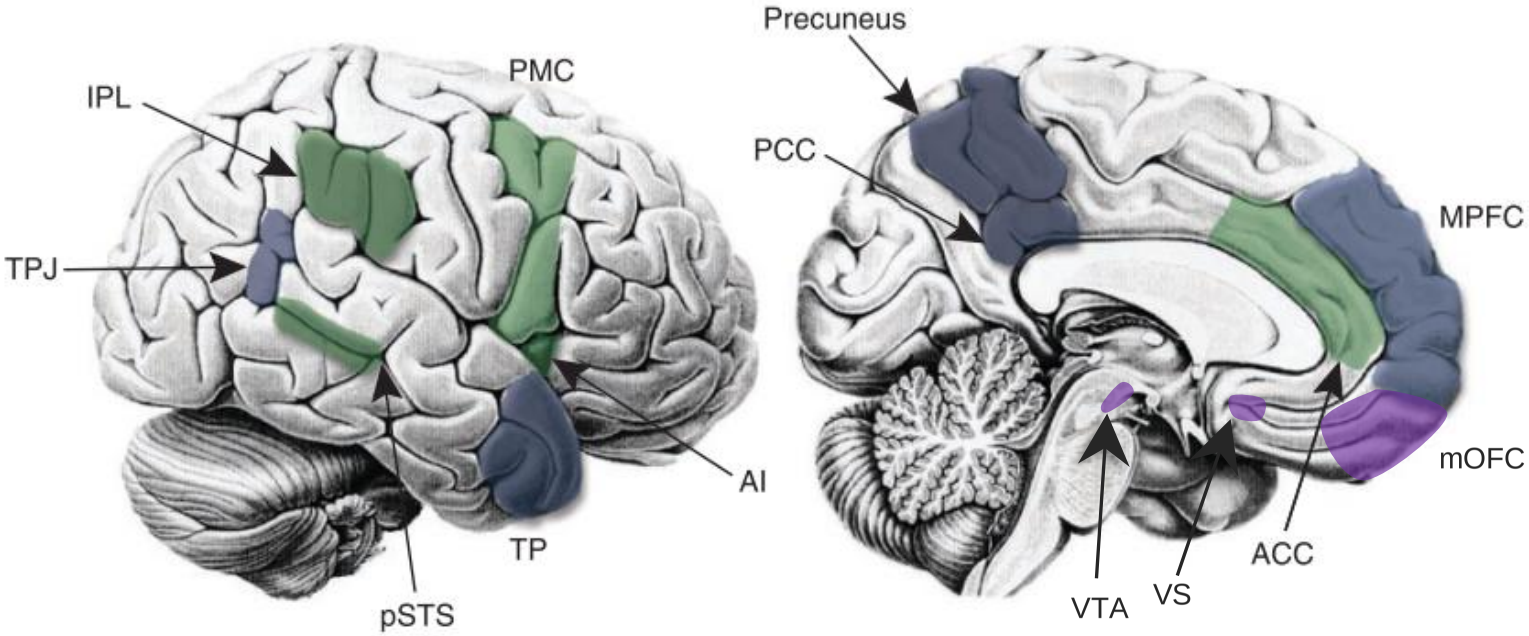

Figure 2.2. Neuroanatomical Regions Associated with Empathy Processes (adapted from Weisz & Zaki, 2018; Zaki & Ochsner, 2012). Green shading = experience sharing, Blue shading = mentalizing, Purple shading = empathic concern, ACC = anterior cingulate cortex, AI = anterior insula, IPL = inferior parietal lobule, mOFC = medial orbitofrontal cortex, MPFC = medial prefrontal cortex, PCC = posterior cingulate cortex, PMC = premotor cortex, pSTS = posterior superior temporal sulcus, TP = temporal ole, TPJ = temporoparietal junction, VS = ventral striatum, and VTA = ventral tegmental area. Reprinted with permission (see Appendix J).

another vicariously influences a person's biology. For example, fans' testosterone levels increased when their team won a basketball game, mimicking the experience of the players' hormones increasing after winning (Bernhardt et al., 1998).

Empathy and Morality

Empathy is a prerequisite of prosocial actions (Preston & de Waal, 2002), a behavioral expression of morality. The contemporary psychological study of morality has its roots in the work of Jean Piaget (1932) and Lawrence Kohlberg (1958, 1963, 1969, 1984); the latter of whom developed the stages of moral development. Kohlberg (1969) posited people construct morality schemata through perspective taking, a component of empathy. Carol Gilligan (1977) updated Kohlberg's work to appropriately capture female morality as implicitly centering empathy-related dimensions: care and concern.

More recently, in his book, *Empathy and Moral Development: Implication for Caring and Justice*, Hoffman (2000) explicitly discussed the relationship between empathy and morality in five situations: (a) bystandership, (b) self-blame, (c) harming another, (d) helping a few over many, and (e) tensions between caring and justice. The book offers insights on teaching morality and considers empathy's influence on related constructs: altruism, compassion, and prosocial behaviors. In her book, Barrett (2018) described empathy as a counterbalance to a courtroom judge's possible indignation or antagonism felt toward a defendant. She suggested that empathy in this context is encouraging a moral, impartial, and objective approach—maintaining an "unbiased" assessment of the facts of the case, which many teachers attempt when managing their classroom and resolving issues between students.

Yet, while many argue for a positive association between morality and empathy, others suggest that empathy can inhibit moral behavior and decision making (Batson et al., 1995; Bloom, 2016; Decety & Cowell, 2014), which is problematic considering that some people believe empathy is synonymous with morality (Bloom, 2016). In an antithetical view to Barrett (2018), Decety (2021) discussed how empathy can cause biases that corrupt moral acts that favor some over another—referred to as parochial empathy (Bruneau et al., 2015). For example, a registered Democrat in the United States may be more willing to understand and excuse immoral behavior of a fellow Democrat but chastise a Republican for the same behavior. In a more perniciously, racially, and historically authentic example, parochial empathy may have been a cause of the riots that resulted when a mostly White jury returned an acquittal and no verdict for the four White police officers who beat Rodney King. Similarly, a mostly Black jury acquitted O.J. Simpson of his murder charges, which reportedly caused a celebration in Black communities and agitated White communities. Indeed, empathy can promote parochialism, but also racism, immorality (Bloom, 2016), and schadenfreude (Cikara & Van Bavel, 2014).

Continuing to demonstrate contradictory influence of empathy, while empathy can result in favoritism, Galinsky and colleagues (Galinsky et al., 2005; Todd & Galinsky, 2014) demonstrated that empathy can also improve group-relations and unlearn biases. In proper settings, teachers can employ literature as a conduit to deliver similar results (Ntoulia, 2022).

Literary Empathy

Perspective-taking is a natural part of reading. Gerrig (1993) and Green & Brock(2002) described how readers transport themselves into rich stories by building imagined environments in their minds, called situation models (van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983; Zwaan & Radvansky, 1998) or mental models (Johnson-Laird, 1983). In these mentally imagined worlds readers often take the perspective of the characters (Özyürek & Trabasso, 1997; Rall & Harris, 2000), developing simulations of the characters' attributes, beliefs, and emotions (Gernsbacher et al., 1992; Oatley, 1999; Rapp et al., 2001). Some argue that processing real-world social situations and similar fictional narratives are subsumed by the same cognitive (Gerrig, 1993) and neural functions (Zwaan, 2004); aligning with Bruner's (1986) theory that people think in and through narratives.

Mar et al. (2006) were interested in the difference in social skills and empathy between readers who read fiction—affectionately called "bookworms"—and "nerds" that read expository texts. The research team found that reading fiction positively predicted social abilities, while the tendency to *transport* into a story predicted empathy. The authors argued that "bookworms" develop social skills by reading fiction and mentally simulating social experiences. In an update to this experiment, Mar et al. (2009) controlled for the Openness dimension from the Big 5 personality types and found that frequent reading of fiction still predicted empathy. Djikic et al. (2013) sought to explore the same question reading an expository essay or a fictional short story. The team found that, like others before them, participants with high fiction exposure also had high levels

of empathy. Interestingly, participants in the fiction condition who were low in Openness saw increases in cognitive empathy, but not affective empathy.

In another example, Bal and Veltkamp (2013) examined the relationship between fiction, empathy, and feeling transported into a story (i.e., emotional transportation). In their first experiment, participants in the fiction condition read a short story with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes as the protagonist. Participants in the control condition read a non-fiction newspaper with interviews of people from a Libyan riot and a nuclear disaster in Japan. The authors found that reading about Sherlock Holmes investigations improved empathy at high levels of emotional transportation, while non-fiction led to an objective reading of the text and saw no increase in empathy. Bal and Veltkamp suggested that transportation into fictional text moderated empathy, which reflected the findings in Mar et al. (2006). As demonstrated, the research on empathy and literature is extensive and has direct implications for inviting empathy into the classroom.

Empathy in Education

Many have operationalized and utilized elements of empathy in a variety of educational settings including democratic education (Andolina & Conklin, 2021), nursing education (Levett-Jones et al., 2019), and teacher preparation (Eisman & Patterson, 2024). Yet, while teeming with new research, empathy in education is still misunderstood and under-explored. Below, I discuss this concept more, but here I detail empathy in history education and social and emotional learning.

Historical Empathy

Historical inquiry requires that historians utilize empathy to "view historical phenomena from the perspective of the people of the past, to view and understand their

world as they themselves viewed and understood it" (Kohut, 2020, p. 4) potentially made possible by historians' imagination (Collingwood, 1946). Shemilt (1983) made a similar claim when he described his three "portraits" of an empathizing historian (VanSledright, 2001): the psyche snatcher, necromancer, and time-traveller. Of interest, the time-traveller is a projection of the self into the past that continues to adhere to contemporary norms and social mores, an expected consequence of historical inquiry (Eisman & Patterson, 2022b; Miles & Gibson, 2022). Scholars refer to this empathetically laden historical inquiry as historical empathy, which, like empathy broadly, is a contested and complex multidimensional construct that includes affective and cognitive dimensions, as well as historical contextualization (Endacott & Brooks, 2013). Historical empathy is assumed to help students identify with historical actors, enhance engagement with the content, and expose affective opportunities to connect with the historical actors' actions, decisions, and motivations (Endacott, 2010; Endacott & Brooks, 2018).

Researchers operationalized historical empathy using various components. Common features include developing historical background knowledge, interpreting and contextualizing the historical event under investigation, understanding and coordinating multiple perspectives, and application of the historical event to the current context (Ashby & Lee, 1987; Barton & Levstik, 2004; Downey, 1995; Lévesque, 2008; Yeager et al., 1998). Today, teachers use historical empathy as an educational tool to engage in myriad contexts on a variety of topics in history and social studies education. For example, one study explored historical empathy by asking secondary students to write first- or third-person essays about the Dutch Iconoclasm (De Leur et al., 2017), while another explored role-playing simulations grounded in the events during the Finnish Civil

War (Rantala et al., 2016). Others have employed Socratic Seminars (Perrotra, 2018) and virtual reality experiences (Patterson et al., 2022) to create enriching historical empathy experiences. Eisman and Patterson (2022a) and Yancie and Nunez (2022) developed historical empathy frameworks that support mindfulness practices and social and emotional development in students.

Social and Emotional Learning

According to Osher and colleagues (2016) Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is a process and set of skills to self-regulate, prosocially manage interpersonal situations, and engage in adaptive and recursive planning. They suggest that SEL is rooted in progressive education, ecological and transactional models of development, Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1991), cognitive behavioral therapy, and other developmental approaches.

The leaders in SEL scholarship and practice, Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), identified five SEL competencies that are subsumed in a Brofenbrennian (1977) stylized ecological system that support positive academic, personal, and social: self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, and social awareness (CASEL, 2020). CASEL (2020) defined social awareness as the skills and abilities to understand and empathize with people from diverse backgrounds. SEL interventions can foster empathetic development in young children and adolescents of varying abilities (Cheang et al., 2019; Espelage et al., 2016; Soliman et al., 2021), which may enhance positive academic and social outcomes for students (Durlak et al., 2011) that permeate into adulthood (Taylor et al., 2017). Amongst other interventions, empathy interviews, which are measurable structured conversations

that promote and practice listening, are one way to build empathy and trust in schools (Woolf, 2022), which is believed to be an important element in teaching.

Teacher Empathy: A Double-Edged Sword?

Teacher empathy can support academic outcomes like better grades (Gehlbach et al., 2022) and reduced suspension rates (Okonofua et al., 2016); and foster positive social benefits like improved student-teacher relationships (McAllister & Irvine, 2002), perceived sense of belonging in school (Cooper, 2010), and assist neurodiverse students (Ha & Park, 2014). However, a systematic literature review by Aldrup and colleagues (2022) demonstrated that evidence for teacher empathy's alleged benefits are inconsistent and scant. The authors suggest that a major issue is the use of self-report and global measures. Like my advocation in this chapter, subsection *A Shift Toward a Role-in-Context Sensitive Approach to Empathy*, Aldrup et al. (2022) recommended developing situated and context-sensitive measures for the classroom setting. However, like empathy, generally, a perpetual challenge in this scholarship is the need to define teacher empathy to measure it.

Like empathy, teacher empathy is an ill-conceived and confusing construct. Tettegah and Anderson's (2007) definition—"the ability to express concern and take the perspective of a student, and it involves cognitive and affective domains of empathy" (p. 50)—and Wang and colleagues' (2022) definition—"the ability of teachers to understand and share students' emotional states in the educational context, in which the teacher is the empathizer and the student is the empathized" (p. 2)—rely on automatic and deliberate empathetic processes (Decety, 2021; Zaki, 2014) that are assumed to benefit students. Meyers and colleagues (2019) developed a well-theorized model of teacher empathy in

higher education that centered on student outcomes, not teachers. Inspired by the work of Batson (2009) and Segal's (2011) respective explorations of interpersonal and social empathy, Meyers et al. (2019) defined teacher empathy "as the degree to which instructors work to deeply understand students' personal and social situations, feel caring and concern in response to students' positive and negative emotions, and communicate their understanding and caring to students through their behavior" (p. 161). Their model includes three components: (a) cognitive, which includes attempting to understand students' personal and contextual situations; (b) affective, highlighting the benefits of not matching students' feelings; and (c) behavioral, recognizing that teacher empathy can influence teachers' decisions and actions (e.g., instruction). Meyers and colleagues theorize that teacher empathy is unique and distinct from layperson conceptualizations of empathy and that empathy is a fundamental element of teaching. However, the authors held an idealized and quixotic view of teachers high in teacher empathy; a view that I believe is not genuine. For example, when discussing the behavioral component of teacher empathy, the authors suggest that teachers who are high in teacher empathy "set boundaries so they do not become overwhelmed by the intensity of students' negative experiences and experience compassion fatigue" (p. 161). While this behavior is admirable and beneficial to the longevity of the teacher, I contend that authentic, dynamic teacher empathy includes playing multiple roles, including as a therapist—ostensibly not setting the recommended boundaries. This does not mean that Meyers and colleagues' definition is incorrect, but it suggests a possible gap between how teachers enact empathy in their classroom versus demonstrate teacher empathy, explicitly (Warren, 2018).

Warren (2018) offers an important critique on idealized forms of teacher empathy, cautioning that teacher empathy can lower expectations for students of color. Theoretically, teacher who believe themselves to be empathetic, sympathetic, compassionate, and caring, risk reducing their standards, which may be important for Black student academic achievement (Cohen et al., 1999). However, while Warren (2018) provided an important caveat to the teacher empathy debate, he does argue that teacher empathy can promote culturally responsive pedagogy—a practical blend between culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2018) and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2014). In line with his thinking, Warren (2018) references many scholars who argue that empathy is a tool for teachers who are conscious of and responsive to cultural and ethno-racial differences. He recommends that perspective-taking is an effective tool to cultivate teacher candidates' knowledge about their marginalized students and consequently inform their actions and values, potentially mitigating *perspective divergence*, the consequence of being unable to understand another's world views due to a lack of shared context (Warren, 2014). He explicitly identifies the imagine-other orientation (see Table 2.1) as being advantageous. Imagine-self orientations can produce personal distress (Lamm et al., 2007) or induce false empathy (Delgado, 1996), a self-perception that one is more empathetic than is experienced by others (Warren & Hotchkins, 2015).

Warren (2018) argues that empathy is a professional disposition that develops through an iterative process. This process relies on acquiring new knowledge, constructing and updating mental models, and utilizing information to make appropriate decision and actions (Warren, 2014). Thus, motivational processes—such as actions and

decisions—influence the cultivation of appropriate, adaptive, and beneficial forms of teacher empathy.

Measuring Teacher Empathy

Recognizing the benefits of teacher empathy, many are interested in measuring and promoting the construct. However, like empathy generally, which is measured in a variety of ways (e.g., perspective-taking, behavioral measures, self-report surveys), surveys dominate teacher empathy research. Many use global and context-insensitive surveys to measure teacher empathy, like the Self-Rated Emotional Intelligence Scale (Brackett et al., 2006) and BarOn Emotional Quotient scale (Bar-on, 1997), which both measure the capacity to perceive others' emotions. However, Davis' (1980, 1983) Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) scale has dominated the field for the past 40 years. The IRI is traditionally viewed as a multidimensional dispositional empathy scale that includes two affective empathy subscales (empathic concern and personal distress) and two cognitive empathy subscales (perspective-taking and fantasy). Empathic concern measures affect associated with compassion and concern for others. Example items include: "Sometimes I don't feel sorry for other people when they are having problems," and "I am often quite touched by things that I see happen." The personal distress subscale measures anxiety from perceiving a distressing experience of another. Example items are: "In emergency situations, I feel apprehensive and ill-at-ease," and "When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces." The perspective-taking subscale looks at how the respondent naturally takes the perspective of another—a feature of cognitive empathy. Example items from this subscale include: "I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision," and "When I'm upset at

someone, I usually try to ‘put myself in his shoes’ for a while.” Finally, the fantasy subscale measures how well the respondent takes the perspective of a character in fictional work (e.g., a book or movie). Example items include: “I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel,” and “After seeing a play or movie, I have felt as though I were one of the characters.” The IRI uses a five-point Likert scale (1 = *Does Not Describe Me Well*, 5 = *Describes Me Extremely Well*), with high scores indicating higher levels of empathy. Hen (Goroshit & Hen, 2014; Hen, 2010) utilized the IRI to measure teacher empathy by updating relevant items—for example, adjusting “I often see things from the perspective of the other” to “…from the perspective of the student.”

Other self-report teacher empathy survey measures include the Teacher Empathy Scale (TES; Bouton, 2014) and Empathy Scale for Teachers (EST; X. Wang et al., 2022). The TES (Bouton, 2014) measures empathy by examining teacher cognitions, emotions, and behaviors. Wang and colleagues (2022) developed the EST based on their criticism of TES’s (Bouton, 2014) inclusion of items they believed did not characterize teacher empathy (e.g., “If non-English speaking students are placed in my classroom I get frustrated because my current curriculum will have to be adapted”). Like most empathy scales, the EST includes cognitive and affective empathy items; however, the EST is unique in its ingenious bifurcation of negative and positive affective empathy. Examples of cognitive, negative affective empathy, and positive affective empathy subscale items are, respectively, “I can tell when a pupil is nervous, even if her or she tries to hide it,” “Pupils’ bad mood affect me a lot,” and “Seeing the pupils happy makes me very happy.”

Positive and negative affective empathetic experiences and abilities are distinct from one another (Andreychik & Lewis, 2017; Lamm et al., 2007, 2015), with negative

affective empathy including an emotional cost (Zaki, 2014) that may lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout (Wróbel, 2013). Thus, administrators, researchers, and policymakers must be attuned to the emotional consequences of teaching and appropriately support teachers. Therefore, it is important to distinguish negative from positive affective teacher empathy.

In an ingenious design, Vomund and Miller (2022) developed the Student Perceptions of Teacher Empathy Scale (SPTES), which measures students' perceptions of their teacher's empathy. SPTES was grounded in the work of Warren and colleagues (2013, 2014; Warren & Hotchkins, 2015) and the Teaching Through Interactions framework (Hamre & Pianta, 2007). Unique among empathy scales, SPTES centers students' experience of teacher empathy through their instructional, organizational, and interpersonal interactions with their teacher. Following this tripartite structure, example items include "Our lessons are taught in ways that help me learn," "My teacher sets up routines in our classroom that help me do my best work," and "My teacher understands my feelings." Vomund (2024) conducted a follow up qualitative thematic analysis and found similar results with elaborations on the ways in which students perceived instructional and organizational means, including emailing and time-management help, respectively.

A Shift Toward a Role-in-Context Sensitive Approach to Studying Teacher Empathy

Teacher empathy scholarship often employs traditional survey tools that foreground beliefs and perceptions about teachers across multiple contexts; neglecting the situatedness of teacher actions or goals (see Kaplan & Garner, 2017; Nolen, 2020).

Additionally, these measures utilize linear approaches that mask possible relationships due to their reductive nature and focus on direct effects between discrete constructs instead of capturing the interactions between elements. This is important when recognizing that lower-order dimensions of empathy may be interdependent. Therefore, there is a significant limitation in traditional teacher empathy scholarship methodologies, which ignore context, roles, time, and situatedness. Thus, aligning my advocation for role-in-context sensitive views of empathy, we must utilize paradigms and methods that are role-in-context sensitive like complex dynamic systems (CDS) approaches.

Complex Dynamic Systems: A Role-in-Context Sensitive Paradigm

The ontological assumptions and concepts that guide CDS paradigms include the following terms:

- *autopoiesis*, ongoing system self-organization in favor of self-preservation; *complexity*, which can be viewed as changes between chaos and rigidity in a system but can also depict a hierarchy;
- *dynamics* that describe the processes and interactions by the interdependent elements in the system over time;
- *emergence*, which is the appearance of a complex behavior that develops from the interacting, dynamic components of a system;
- *feedback loops*, cyclical system dynamic processes that promote or inhibit changes in a system; *interdependence*, the components of the systems are assumed to be interconnected and can therefore influence each other;
- *irreducibility*, the system is subsumed in a nested hierarchy that is more than the sum of its parts;

- *non-linearity*, change to a system may result in an unproportional outcome; and
- *self-organization*, a process where sudden or gradual perturbations in a system foster shifts in the interdependent elements that become systemized and able to respond to stimuli (Heino et al., 2022; Hilpert & Marchand, 2018; Kaplan & Garner, 2020; Koopmans, 2020).

Koopmans (2017, 2020) noted that these and other assumptions are appropriate for quantitative and qualitative methods that examine processes, changes in behaviors over time, and theory building and validation. CDS approaches are flexible, adaptable, and prioritize explanatory methods that triangulate multiple data points, instead of common linear designs (e.g., significance testing; Marchand & Hilpert, 2020), which is advantageous in capturing complex social phenomena (Hilpert & Marchand, 2018; Marchand & Hilpert, 2024), like teacher empathy.

Theoretical Framework: The Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity

The Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (DSMRI; Kaplan & Garner, 2017; Figure 2.3) is a metatheoretical framework that conceptualizes action as emergent from a person's socioculturally constructed and context-dependent role identity. Like other role theories that situate a person in a socially mediated context (e.g., Mead, 1934), the DSMRI specifies that roles are expressed idiosyncratically, affording variability between individuals exhibiting the same role. Thus, two people may hold and experience different actions, beliefs, emotions, goals, and self-perceptions while taking up the role of a 'teacher,' indicating their teacher-identity—owing to the term role identity.

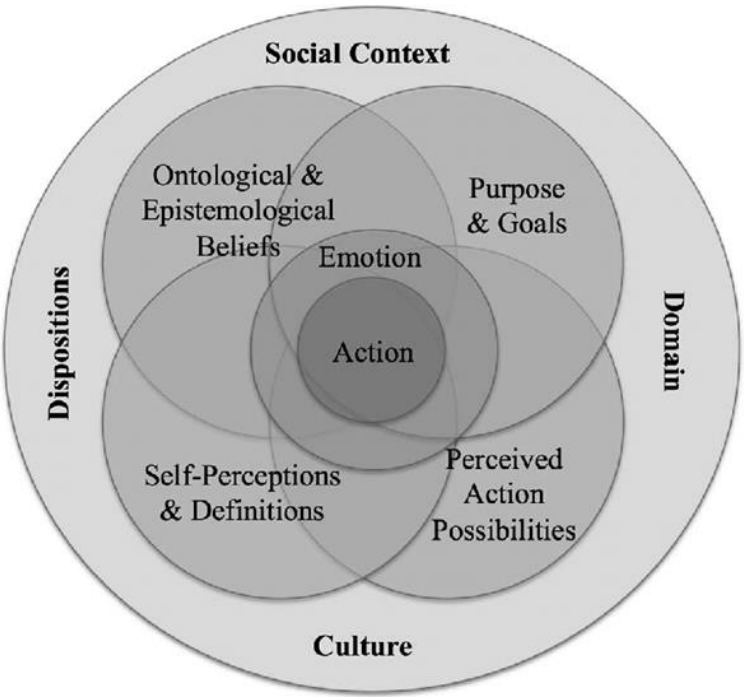

Figure 2.3. Schematic Representation of the Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (adopted from Kaplan & Garner, 2017). Reprinted with permission (see Appendix K).

The DSMRI describes a role identity as reflecting a dynamism between four interdependent role-related factors that have their roots in motivational psychology: ontological and epistemological beliefs, which describe perceptions and assumptions about the world; purpose and goals, which express objectives and goals; perceived action possibilities, which represent behaviors; and self-perceptions and self-definitions, which indicate self-referential beliefs, including abilities, attributes, interests, and values (Kaplan & Garner, 2022). Social identities—like gender, race, ethnicity—are captured in the self-perceptions and self-definitions components of the DSMRI, which are associated with particularized role identities that may demonstrate the interconnectedness of professional and social identities (e.g., female teacher, White teacher). Any momentary decision is assumed to reflect a person's explicit or implicit choice among actions that

they perceive to be available to them in order to pursue a currently salient goal, considering their interpretation of the situation, and of themselves in said situation. This approach stands in contrast to traditional views of motivation and identity that hold these constructs as separate, distinct, and measure linearly (e.g., situated expectancy value theory, Eccles & Wigfield, 2020; attribution theory, Graham, 2020). Yet, new research using traditional approaches highlight the non-linear relationships between components and larger influence of identity (e.g., Caybas et al., 2024).

Guided by CDS ontologies, the DSMRI conceptualizes the four role-related factors to be continuously, dynamically, and contextually emerging in non-linear patterns that reflect systemic internal and external influences framed by four control parameters: the domain, social context, cultural mediating means, and the person's dispositions. Reverberations among the interdependent role-related factors produce the non-linear emergence of systemic patterns, which support, or thwart emergent actions based on coherence or tension between the factors, respectively (Kaplan & Garner, 2022). For example, we anticipate the emergence of an empathetic action when there is coherence among a teacher's empathy-based action, belief that empathy is important in education, goal to be caring and compassionate in the classroom, and an empathetic self-perception. However, while alignment between an action, belief, goal, and self-perception may encourage an appropriate empathic action, some teachers may become demotivated when tension between factors arise. Continuing from the example above, the same teacher may have a new, emergent ontological belief that her students are misbehaving, which creates tension with her goal and her motivation to display care diminishes.

The DSMRI is an *interaction dominant* system (Richardson et al., 2014) due to its focus on the structures between the factors; highlighting the role of dynamic and interdependent parts of the system that give rise to complex behavior. This stands in contrast to traditional *component dominant* systems (Holden et al., 2009) that focus on individual elements. Theoretically, emotions emerge within the structure of a system. For instance, a teacher may have a goal to try to understand students' perspectives but become frustrated when he is unable to achieve his goal due to a tension between the goal and his inability to understand his students. Eisman and del Calvo (2022) described this phenomenon when examining the emotions and motivations of early career teachers using the DSMRI.

Since its first conference presentation in 2015 (Kaplan et al., 2015) and publication in 2017 (Kaplan & Garner, 2017), scholars have used the DSMRI to guide and analyze their research in varying contexts. This includes empirical research that examined teacher identity development in professional learning contexts (Garner & Kaplan, 2019) and describing profiles of early, mid, and late career Chinese English as Foreign Language teachers (R. Wang et al., 2021). Recently, the DSMRI guided the analyses exploring the relationship between identity and emotions in Chinese teachers (Yang et al., 2021) and academics (Yang et al., 2022).

The DSMRI: A Novel Framework for Describing Teacher Empathy

I theorize empathy to emerge across the contents of DSMRI's identity system: a teacher can have a goal to be more empathetic, hold ontological beliefs about their students' emotional experiences, consider action possibilities that they view as empathetic (e.g., perspective taking), and hold a self-belief that they are empathetic.

Furthermore, the DSMRI can capture the emergence of empathetic-informed actions and affective experiences at the structural level. For example, ontological beliefs about an other and self-perceptions, like race and ethnicity, may also influence teacher empathy by highlighting possible in-group/out-group relations (e.g., parochial empathy). Warren (2018) made a similar assertion by positing that teacher empathy can bridge ontological beliefs about a student with appropriate classroom action possibilities. The DSMRI guided my analysis to look for structural relations across all role identity components.

The DSMRI is beneficial in this proposed research because it centers motivation and identity, which are significant constructs in empathy theory, as described in this chapter, subsections *Empathy and Motivation* and *Empathy and Identity*. However, while important, motivation and identity are often overlooked using traditional empathy theoretical frameworks and measures. Related, the DSMRI is context sensitive and comprehensive. For example, the unit-of-analysis for the DSMRI can be a person in their context. Moreover, the DSMRI integrates lower-order empathy dimensions into a single and comprehensive framework that would have been studied separately, and thus missed, in traditional empathy research approaches.

Here I argue that the DSMRI is an appropriate framework to capture the empathy-related motivations and role identities of a teacher in context—aligning the DSMRI framework with empathy motivation and identity theory. Theoretically, it is possible that the DSMRI can also describe other empathetic processes like the mechanism of how an observer understands a target. Specifically, I theorize that the observer constructs the identity system of a target, including the target's actions, beliefs, goals, and self-perceptions—ostensibly developing a facsimile of an identity system of the target.

However, this is beyond the scope of this dissertation and is presented here as conceptual speculations for future consideration and study.

The following research questions guided my inquiry:

1. How does teacher empathy manifest in a teacher role identity in an authentic learning environment?
2. What are the alignments and tensions that emerge from a teacher role identity during an empathetic experience in an unfolding classroom situation?
3. What is the role of context in the dynamics of teacher empathy?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Current Study

Teacher empathy is important for students and teachers. However, this complicated construct has varying, non-linear consequences. For instance, teacher empathy can improve grades (Gehlbach et al., 2022), reduce school-based discipline (Okonofua et al., 2016) improve teacher interpersonal decision making (Aldrup et al., 2022), but also increase stress and emotional exhaustion (Kliś & Kossewska, 1998; Wróbel, 2013). Thus, it is paramount that education researchers examine the patterns of teacher empathy in teachers' lived contexts (see Gehlbach et al., 2022). Yet, while some have sought to explore teacher empathy in context, none have explicitly investigated the motivational mechanisms that are part of teacher empathy's adaptive and maladaptive forms using a CDS approach. As discussed, role-in-context sensitive CDS approaches are apt to capture teacher empathy phenomena, as well as identity and motivation (Marchand & Hilpert, 2024). Thus, this study aimed to fill this gap in the literature through explication of teachers' perceptions of their empathy by attending to their identity, motivations, and context using the Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (DSMRI; Kaplan & Garner, 2017).

Methodology

This convergent mixed methods (QUAL, quan) design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Figure 3.1) addressed the motivations and role identities of teacher empathy by collecting qualitative and quantitative data in parallel, analyzing these types of data

separately, and finally merging understandings from the analysis of these two data types. However, following the DSMRI primary unit-of-analysis, each participant in the study was treated as an individual case. Case study research can vary in practice, scope, and focus (Yazan, 2015), but generally the methodology can highlight emergent patterns from diverse data (Gruber, 1989; Hanchett Hanson et al., 2023; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018).

I recruited four teachers and collected data over three time points: (a) a pre-interview survey, where participants completed a survey battery (see Appendix A) that included personal, student, and school demographic information, and the IRI (Davis, 1980, 1983), which provided a profile of participants' self-perceived dispositional empathy; (b) a 90-minute *narrative inquiry* interview (see Appendix B), using an adapted version of Seidman's (2006) three-part structure and (c) a 90-minute *video stimulated recall* interview (Lyle, 2003; see Appendix D). Both interviews captured the coherence and tensions of teachers' actions, beliefs, emotions, goals, and self-perceptions regarding teacher empathy, which I describe in more detail below.

The reason I collected both quantitative and qualitative data was to capture observed and unobserved phenomena that highlight dimensions of teacher empathy that may support and thwart teachers' motivations to empathize with their students. It is important to note that mixed methods designs are suitable for CDS paradigms (Koopmans, 2017; Marchand & Hilpert, 2024; Poth, 2018). Table 3.1 demonstrates alignment between my research questions, data types, and analyses.

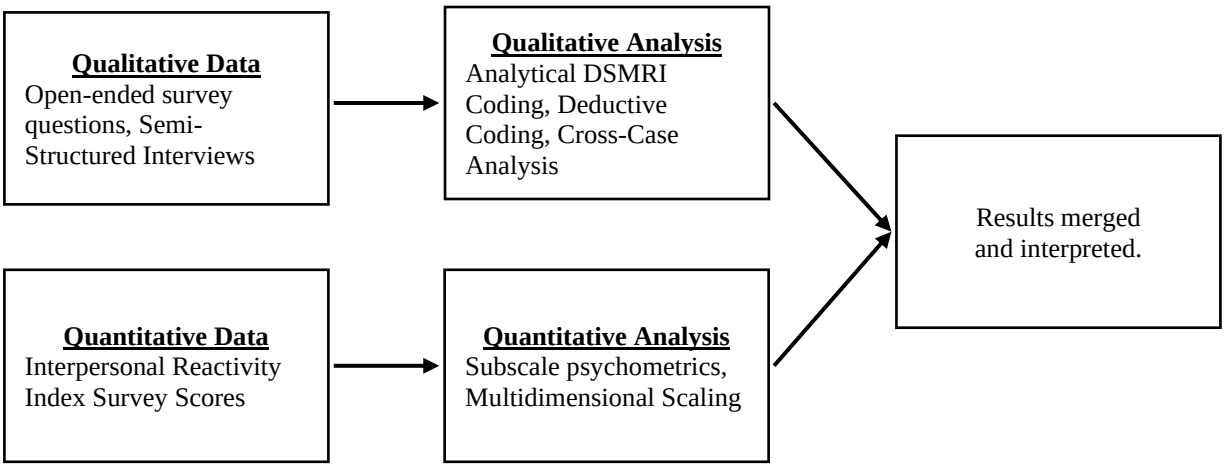

Figure 3.1. Schematic representation of convergent mixed methods research design.

Table 3.1. Research Questions and Research Design Alignment

Research Question	Data Type	Analysis
How does teacher empathy manifest in a teacher role identity in an authentic learning environment?	Narrative inquiry interview, video stimulated recall interview data, and Interpersonal Reactivity Index scores.	Analytical DSMRI coding, deductive coding, item level and subscale psychometrics, and multidimensional scaling, cross-case analysis.
What are the alignments and tensions that emerge from a teacher role identity during an empathetic experience in an unfolding classroom situation?	Narrative inquiry and video stimulated recall interview data.	Analytical DSMRI coding and deductive coding, cross-case analysis.
What is the role of context in the dynamics of teacher empathy?	Narrative inquiry and video stimulated recall interview data.	Analytical DSMRI coding and deductive coding, cross-case analysis.

Positionality Statement

Following Darwin Holmes' (2020) recommendation for revealing social position and accompanied biases ahead of conducting research, I reflected on my identities and beliefs; detailed here. Since 2018 I studied empathy in educational spaces as part of my master's and doctoral studies research. For example, my master's thesis reported on the relationship between dispositional and literary empathy. That and other projects afforded me many opportunities to examine positive aspects of empathy from constructivist, post-positivist, and pragmatic paradigmatic stances. Prior to and concurrent with my research, I have employed empathy and empathy related constructs in my work as an educator. Most recently, I grounded a short-term summer camp curriculum in SEL principles, including empathy. It is important to note that most of my career in education is in out-of-school settings, suggesting I bring an analogous but outside perspective to my future participants. In summary, my researcher and educator identities find favor in empathetic abilities. This may be due, in part, to my socio-economic position, political views, religion, race, and gender.

My family reared me in a politically liberal upper middle-class household in ethno-racially diverse suburban metro Detroit, Michigan as a practicing Conservative Jew. These early life experiences imparted beliefs, values, and virtues that elevated empathy as a positive attribute, which I should embody, enact, and exude in all aspects of my life. Moreover, my father and mother own and operate a chiropractic clinic in the city of Detroit, where I learned about social and racial inequities at a young age. Those experiences and a shift in the cultural zeitgeist—the raising of the country's consciousness to social, political, racial, and religious inequity, antagonism, and apathy—

became motivating factors for wanting to explore how empathy can paradoxically detract from Black and Brown students and teachers. My positionality as a White cisgender, heterosexual male provides me privilege. Thus, I strive to identify and consider how race, ethnicity, gender identity, age, religion, disability, national origin, and sexual orientation inform and are informed by the phenomena I study.

Married with my multiple overlapping role identities (e.g., student, researcher, educator), I recognize the desire to explore and find ways to improve empathy for teachers and students, who look like me and do not. Therefore, I continually checked my assumptions and biases as I conducted my research and performed analyses, in part, by reviewing this statement.

Design

This study included three collection time points: (a) a pre-interview survey, (b) narrative inquiry interview, and (c) a video-stimulated recall interview. As detailed above, the survey provided important background information on the teacher, their students, and their school. The semi-structured interviews afforded me the opportunity to develop a conversational rapport with the participants, shifting from an 'I-Thou' to 'We' relationship between me and the participating teachers (Seidman, 2006).

The first 90-minute interview followed a narrative inquiry design where participants described past experiences in narrative form. Narrative inquiry is a prominent qualitative research tool that centers on a participant's experience, which may inform and interact with future events in a coordination of temporal, situational, and inter- and intrapersonal forces (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Dewey, 1938). Thus, while acknowledging that the interviews are limited and biased to the participants' onto-

epistemological beliefs, the narrative constructed by the participants served to clarify salience, meaning-making, and possibly inform future actions.

This first interview included three parts: (a) life story, (b) detailed experience with students, and (c) reflection on the meanings made during the interview (Seidman, 2006). Consequently, I asked the participants about their experience becoming teachers and then examined their emotional experiences with students, which triangulated around lower-order teacher empathy dimensions. However, I never named the constructs directly unless stated by the participating teachers, first. Finally, I asked the participants to reflect and find meaning in what they shared. You can find the narrative inquiry interview protocol in Appendix B.

Next, the teachers recorded a 10-minute segment of a class session where they directly and meaningfully interacted with students (e.g., facilitating a classroom discussion). This excluded during a test or lecture. I then conducted a second 90-minunte video stimulated recall interview that situated the participating teachers in their classroom context to investigate which and how lower-order dimensions of teacher empathy emerge within a naturalistic setting and their influence on teacher actions, beliefs, emotions, goals, and self-beliefs. The interviews occurred soon after the participants recorded their class session, which improved the trustworthiness of this method (Lyle, 2003). I watched and familiarized myself with the recorded segment prior to the interview, but intentionally bracketed that knowledge during the interview. This interview also included three parts: (a) understanding context, where the teacher explained the setting of the recorded video segment; (b) participant directed video recall, where the teacher explicated their momentary actions, beliefs, decisions, and emotions; and (c) the final

section mirrored the first interview, where the teacher reflected on meaning made during the interview. You can find the video stimulated recall interview protocol in Appendix D.

Participants

I used convenience (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) and purposeful (Patton, 2015) sampling methods to construct my diverse sample based on personal and contextual characteristics that highlighted different control parameters that frame the teacher empathy experience. Participants in this study were secondary teachers in a large, urban school district in the northeast and acted as mentors in a teacher preparation program at a local university. Staff at the university sought out the four teachers based on the purposeful sample: teachers that (a) spans career stages (i.e., self-identified early versus later career teachers) and (b) vary in their match and mismatch with their students demographically, along demographic characteristics gathered in the survey. Specifically, I aimed to recruit two teachers who are ethno-racially like their students and two teachers who are ethno-racially dissimilar to their students. This purposeful sampling of ethno-racial similarity and differences reflects a common dimension of interest in empathy scholarship, due to the assumption that sharing group membership impacts empathetic experiences (i.e., parochial empathy, perspective divergence, and social and psychological distance).

I chose to investigate teacher empathy among secondary school teachers because I anticipated secondary school teacher empathy to include perceived action possibilities and ontological beliefs that differ from those in primary school teacher empathy, and to involve higher empathic over-arousal and emotional exhaustion that are more likely to

highlight the benefits and costs associated with teacher empathy that serve as the focus of this study.

Like most of the United States, the urban school district in this study is publicly concerned with the social and emotional wellbeing of their students but do not include teacher's social and emotional wellbeing in their stated goals (SDP, 2020), making the teachers in this investigation somewhat representative of larger issues discussed in the beginning of Chapter 1. However, this does not suggest that the findings from this study are generalizable. On the contrary, each case study is distinct and unique. My goal was to develop principles and recommendations on how teacher empathy benefits but also disadvantages teachers, students, and schools.

Analysis

DSMRI protocols (Kaplan & Garner, 2022) guided analysis of the qualitative interview and open-ended survey data, highlighting patterns that surfaced from the participants' salient identities' (a) contents, (b) structures, and (c) processes. Analysis of contents involve coding for the four interrelated identity components in the DSMRI: ontological and epistemological beliefs, purposes and goals, self-perceptions and self-definitions, and perceived action possibilities. Structure codes indicate coherence or tension between contents: harmony, disharmony, alignment, misalignment. Harmony codes indicate a positive reciprocal relationship between the same role-related factors (e.g., two goals), while disharmony suggests tension. Alignment and misalignment codes specify a coherence and tension, respectively, between different role-related factors (e.g., ontological beliefs and self-perceptions). Finally, analysis of processes codes represents changes to content or structure, representing identity growth, regression, or stagnation. I

coded the interviews by capturing stories, which indicated the level of the participants' assumed meaning unit, as stories and recounting social episodes are a powerful mode of thinking and meaning-making (Bruner, 1986; Harré & Moghaddam, 2003)

I inductively identified patterns to produce an analytical summary for each participant, which retold and reconceived the qualitative data using DSMRI analytical terminology. In addition, I deductively coded the interviews using a priori empathy constructs previously documented in the second chapter (e.g., perspective taking, emotional contagion, empathic concern; see Table 2.1), which are recommended for assessing empathy, rather than global measure (Ayache et al., 2024). Thus, I aligned empathy constructs with the DSMRI analytical terminology, highlighting the various ways empathetic constructs emerged as actions, beliefs, goals, self-perceptions, or combination thereof (e.g., perspective taking action possibilities, empathic concern self-perceptions). Such alignment assisted in answering all three research questions and highlighting how teacher empathy emerged from the teacher role identity, identification of tensions and alignments, and the role of context.

It is important to note that I coded discrete emotion labels at both the content and structure levels as role-related factors can have affective value and emotions often emerge at the structural level, between role-related factors. Specifically, a teacher may feel positive when there is alignment between action possibilities, beliefs, goals, and self-perceptions. For example, teacher jubilation may occur when a teacher has a goal to understand her students, takes their perspective, believes she was successful, and that she is an empathetic teacher.

Originally, I intended to foreground teacher emotions in examining teacher empathy; however, the data did not support this approach. Doing so would have prevented a holistic, authentic view of teacher empathy that highlighted emotions over other relevant constructs. Gehlbach et al. (2022) made a similar assertion when discussing their holistic orientation to exploring a social perspective taking intervention. They said, "targeting constructs that are too narrowly defined may risk developing interventions whose effectiveness are too easily drowned out by noisy, complex settings (such as classrooms) to impact other outcomes of interest" (p. 332). My initial plan included developing a codebook and deductively code the interviews using a priori emotion labels (e.g., anxiety, joy, relief, sadness) from control-value theory (Pekrun, 2006, 2019; Pekrun & Stephens, 2012) and then collapse the emotions along their valence (pleasantness to unpleasantness) and arousal (activated to deactivated states) (e.g., happiness = pleasant-activated emotion, sadness = unpleasant-deactivated emotion) (i.e., the circumplex model of affect; Barrett & Russell, 1999; Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., 2016).

I analyzed the quantitative IRI scores to derive aggregate scores for each subscale for each participant (i.e., mean scores) using RStudio (2021). This included reverse coding specified items and averaging items to produce a score for each latent construct represented by the respective subscale. This method, which is paradigmatically antithetical to the role-in-context approach I employed in this study, provided important insight into the teachers' self-perceived dispositional empathy, that I was not able to capture without the tool. I also conducted multidimensional scaling (MDS) using the raw data to produce visual maps of each participating teacher's meaning of their dispositional

empathy; to triangulate with the qualitative interview data. The choice to not reverse code IRI items led to examination of the item's meaning, and not their assumed underlying construct. The visual maps represented item level proximities—items that are close together on the map have a stronger relation—from which participating teachers' meaning-making among the items can be interpreted (Bergey et al., 2019; Stalans, 1995).

I conducted MDS using SPSS Statistics (IBM Corp, 2023) by plotting the 28 IRI items, with the four subscales demarcated by color and connected by lines. The items were transformed into nominal scales, then I used the Multidimensional Scaling (ALSCAL) function and measured distances using squared Euclidean distances with 100 maximum iterations. I determined model fit by reviewing the stress value. According to Clarke (1993) stress below 0.05 indicated good fit and "excellent representation" with little chance of "misunderstanding" the map (p. 126). Stress less than 0.1 is acceptable and below 0.2 may not be reliable. Guided by Facet Theory (Guttman & Greenbaum, 1998), I analyzed (a) the maps through visual inspection of the visual space of the latent factors – empathic concern, fantasy, personal distress, and perspective taking – and (b) grouping of items, which suggested participating teachers' meaning-making of their IRI items. Specifically, I attended to the visual space of the latent factors, which highlighted relationships between constructs (Kaplan et al., 2009). For example, latent factors that were nested inside other latent factors suggested important relationships among the lower-order dimensions captured within the IRI items and subscales (Kaplan et al., 2009). Additionally, the size of the visual space indicated scope of meaning—narrow constructs suggested narrow meaning and larger visual space indicated richer, broader meanings. Next, I reviewed the grouping of items to suggest possible new factors understood by the

participants and described the relationships among the items and in relationship with the latent constructs (e.g., circular, linear, orthogonal). I summarized the interpretivist analysis to produce profiles of the teachers' self-perceived empathy based on the IRI subscales. To produce this analysis, I described the IRI item prompts through the lens of the DSMRI, which characterized the IRI prompts role identity contents and structures. See Table 3.2. Some item prompts were situated within a role identity, such as a book reader or friend, while most of the IRI items were de-contextualized, which is a limitation of the tool in capturing situated empathy. Overall, there was variation in the content and structures within each latent construct, yet general patterns suggested that empathic concern included ontological beliefs about others and personal distress documented more self-perception in relation to others. The two cognitive empathy subscales included the most role identities, where fantasy highlighted many action possibilities and self-perceptions, and perspective tasking emphasized action possibilities and implicit goals associated with trying to learn from others' point of view. Of course, all prompts innately included self-perceptions as the scale is self-reported.

The choice to describe the IRI items using DSMRI analytical terminology and use of raw data afforded a more accurate interpretation of the MDS visual maps and representation of role identity contents and structures. It is through this process that I efficiently and effectively integrated and triangulated the MDS interpretivist analysis with the qualitative interview data that I analyzed using DSMRI protocols. To improve the trustworthiness and the rigor of this study, I performed member checking of the interview data, which constituted an ongoing process throughout my analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). After my final interview, I invited teachers to provide feedback on

respective analyses, where I introduced participating teachers to the aim of the study and obtained their perspective, which served to provide additional data that informed my analysis (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). Thus, where appropriate I integrated member checking data into my overall interpretations. The member checking protocol appears in Appendix F. Additionally, I recruited an auditor to independently review case summaries. The auditor and I met to compare coding, perspectives, and update analyses.

Following initial analysis of the individual cases, I conducted cross-case study analysis, which explicated common patterns and themes across the cases. Common themes emerged through iterative analysis of the individual cases and memoing, where I noted common language or shared experiences. Following, I reviewed the cases for the shared themes to produce a final list of themes. I used state space landscapes to visualize common themes that emerged from the qualitative data for each case, with the entire case as the unit-of-analysis. State space landscapes are conceptual models commonly used in complex dynamic systems approaches that describe all possible states and patterns of the system (Abraham et al., 1992; Heino et al., 2022). Behavioral change in a landscape is defined by valleys and hills, which represent conceptual potential energy required to move in and out of a state/behavior (Vallacher & Nowak, 2000).

A valley is deep and requires energy (i.e., more effort) to move and change a state/behavior—this is an *attractor*. An attractor is defined as "the irreducible limit set to which all nearby trajectories tend. Attractors may be static, periodic, or chaotic" (Abraham et al., 1992, p. 132). Shallow valleys are easier to overcome than deep valleys. Hills, by contrast, may represent unstable *repeller* states, which are "irreducible limit sets from which all nearby trajectories depart" (Abraham et al., 1992, p. 135)

Table 3.2. DSMRI Analysis of Interpersonal Reactivity Index Item Prompts

Latent Construct	Item	Item Prompt	Role Identity	DSMRI Coding
Perspective Taking	Perspective Taking 1	I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the “ other guy’ s” point of view.		Misalignment of self-perceived low efficacy with the action possibility of perspective taking and the implied perspective taking goal.
	Perspective Taking 2	I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.		Alignment of the implied self-perceived value of perspective taking with the action possibility of perspective taking and the implied perspective taking goal.
	Perspective Taking 3	I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their	Friend	Alignment of self-perception to occasional take a perspective with the action possibility of perspective taking and the implied perspective
	Perspective Taking 4	If I’ m sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's	Listener	Misalignment of self-perceived accuracy with the action possibility to listen to others.
	Perspective Taking 5	I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both.		Alignment of self-perceived belief about questions with the action possibility of perspective taking and the implied perspective taking goal.

Table 3.2. (continued)

Latent Construct	Item	Item Prompt	Role Identity	DSMRI Coding
Perspective Taking	Perspective Taking 6	When I' m upset at someone, I usually try to " put myself in his		Alignment of self-perception to engage in perspective taking for a long duration with the action
	Perspective Taking 7	Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel	Criticizer	Alignment of self-perceived efficacy with the action possibility of perspective taking.
Fantasy	Fantasy 1	I daydream and fantasize, with some regularity, about things that might		Alignment of the action possibility of imagining with the self-perception consistency characteristic.
	Fantasy 2	I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel.	Reader	Self-perceived emotional transportation into a story.
	Fantasy 3	I am usually objective when I watch a movie or play, and I don' t often	Play/ Movie Go-er	Self-perceived emotional transportation into a story.
	Fantasy 4	Becoming extremely involved in a good book or movie is somewhat rare	Reader/ Movie watcher	Misalignment of action possibility to be transported into a book with the self-perception inconsistency

Table 3.2. (continued)

Latent Construct	Item	Item Prompt	Role Identity	DSMRI Coding
Fantasy	Fantasy 5	When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of	Movie Watcher	Alignment of ontological belief about a movie with a self-perceived high efficacy and action possibility
	Fantasy 6	After seeing a play or movie, I have felt as though I were one of the	Play/ Movie Go-er	Self-perceived emotional transportation into a story.
	Fantasy 7	When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would	Reader	Alignment of ontological belief about a story with action possibility/self-perception of fantasy
Empathic Concern	Empathic Concern 1	I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than		Alignment of self-perceived compassion with ontological beliefs about others.
	Empathic Concern 2	Sometimes I don’t feel sorry for other people when they are having		Misalignment of self-perceived apathy with ontological beliefs about others.
	Empathic Concern 3	When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective toward		Alignment of self-perceived protective characteristic with the ontological belief about others and

Table 3.2. (continued)

Latent Construct	Item	Item Prompt	Role Identity	DSMRI Coding
Empathic Concern	Empathic Concern 4	Other people' s misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal.		Misalignment of self-perceived apathy with ontological beliefs about others.
	Empathic Concern 5	When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don' t feel		Misalignment of self-perceived apathy with ontological beliefs about others.
	Empathic Concern 6	I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.		Self-perceived tenderness.
	Empathic Concern 7	I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.		Self-perceived tenderness.
Personal Distress	Personal Distress 1	In emergency situations, I feel apprehensive and ill-at-ease.		Self-perceived anxiety.
	Personal Distress 2	I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional		Alignment of self-perceived helplessness characteristic with ontological beliefs about a situation.
	Personal Distress 3	When I see someone get hurt, I tend to remain calm.	Viewer	Alignment of an ontological belief about an other with a self-perceived calm characteristic.

Table 3.2. (continued)

Latent Construct	Item	Item Prompt	Role Identity	DSMRI Coding
Personal Distress	Personal Distress 4	Being in a tense emotional situation scares me.		Alignment of an ontological belief about a situation with a self-perceived concerned characteristic
	Personal Distress 5	I am usually pretty effective in dealing with emergencies.		Alignment of self-perceived moderate efficacy with the ontological belief about a situation.
	Personal Distress 6	I tend to lose control during emergencies.		Misalignment of self-perceived low efficacy with the ontological belief about a situation.
	Personal Distress 7	When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces.	Viewer	Alignment of an ontological belief about a situation with a self-perceived anxiety.

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDY ANALYSES RESULTS

I conducted DSMRI and MDS interpretivist analysis to produce four case studies that captured teacher empathy. Each case includes a description of the teacher role identity system—the contents, structures, and process—with a focus on teacher empathy. I combined DSMRI contents with a priori empathy constructs to explicate empathetic actions, beliefs, goals, and self-perceptions that emerged from reflecting on the teacher role identity.

I begin each case with a brief overview and a description of the context framing the teacher role identity—an approximation of the control parameters framing the teachers' empathetic experiences. Next, I describe the role identity system by foregrounding a general profile of the teacher and emergent teacher empathetic actions, beliefs, goals, and self-perceptions. I then depict the quantitative data and MDS interpretivist analysis to highlight teacher meaning-making of the IRI survey items. Finally, I conclude each case with a brief analytical summary. I end the chapter with a cross-case analysis that highlights shared and unique themes about empathy in the participants' teacher role identities.

Case Summary of Eric:

The Familiar and Emotionally Intelligent Teacher

Eric was an alum of and Spanish teacher at Atlantic Spear High School. A main feature that characterized Eric's empathy was an alignment between his self-perception as a Latinx male who attended Atlantic Spear and his ontological beliefs about his

students as sharing these characteristics. This alignment manifested self-other overlap beliefs, which indicates a structural relationship—in this case alignment—between teacher self-perceptions and ontological beliefs about students. Self-other overlap is the lower-order empathy dimension that describes perceived connectedness between the 'self' and an 'other.' Aron et al. (1992) visually depicted self-other overlap as two circles in a Venn diagram—greater overlap captured higher perceptions of similarity. Eric's overall perceptions of self-other overlap or similarity with his students were aligned with his ontological beliefs that he is familiar with, and therefore understood, their lived experiences, and, in turn, with his goals and action possibilities towards building meaningful relationships, holding students accountable, and ensuring that they do not waste their potential.

In addition to this central feature, Eric also demonstrated other forms of empathy (e.g., cognitive empathy), with aligned ontological beliefs about the importance of emotional intelligence, self-perceptions as emotionally intelligent, goals to be emotionally intelligent, and action possibilities of employing emotionally intelligent—and thereby empathetic—teacher moves.

These main features manifested during the interviews in a process that integrated many of Eric's role identities in his professional identity system, which included the salient and relevant role identities of "[past] teacher," "high school alum," "adult educator," "colleague," "employee," "Fulbright Fellow," "gym goer," "high school student," "language learner," "master's graduate student," "preservice teacher," "teacher training program participant," "tutor," and "undergraduate student."

The Context Framing Eric's Teacher Role Identity

Eric was a second-year Spanish teacher and alum of Atlantic Spear High School, a public high school in an urban environment that received Federal Title I dollars. Atlantic Spear had a military ethos with army informed guiding values and philosophies, including duty, good citizenry, honor, leadership, patriotism, and respect. Generally, the school reported positive student behaviors and acceptable attendance rates but scored poorly in math and English language arts on the statewide assessment (SDP, 2023b). An overwhelming majority of the students graduated Atlantic Spear within four years, but less than one-third of the students matriculated to college after graduation (SDP, 2023b).

At the beginning of the academic year, Atlantic Spear had 320 enrolled students across ninth through 12th grade (SDP, 2023a), which decreased annually since the COVID-19 pandemic (SDP, 2023b). Most of the student population identified as male and Black/African American. The next most populous ethno-racial group was Hispanic, then multiracial, White, and Asian last (SDP, 2023a). Twelve percent of the students were English language learners, and 37% had an individualized education plan, which increased steadily since 2020 (SDP, 2023a, 2023b). Full demographic information can be found in Table 4.1.

Eric taught Spanish 1 for ninth grade native and non-native speakers in a classroom decorated with colorful world flags and Spanish vocabulary. Like the full student body, the ninth grade student population was also majority identifying as male and Black/African American. Compared to the whole school student population, a larger percentage of the ninth grade students had individualized education plans (43% vs. 37%), while a smaller percentage were labeled English language learners (9% vs. 12%).

Table 4.1. Atlantic Spear Demographic Information

Demographic Characteristics	9th Grade		10th Grade		11th Grade		12th Grade		Full School	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Gender Identity										
Female Identifying	48	43	22	26	24	36	25	43	119	37
Male Identifying	63	57	63	74	42	64	33	57	201	63
Student Status										
English Language Learner	10	9	11	13	10	15	6	10	37	12
Individualized Education Plan	48	43	32	38	26	39	11	19	117	37
Ethno-racial Identity										
Asian	1	1	2	2	0	0	1	2	4	1
Black/African American	68	61	53	62	42	64	39	67	202	63
Hispanic/Latinx	34	31	24	28	17	26	16	28	91	28
Multiracial	6	5	2	2	3	5	2	3	13	4
White	2	2	4	5	4	6	0	0	10	3

Note. School Enrollment = 320, 9th Grade Enrollment = 111, 10th Grade Enrollment = 85, 11th Grade Enrollment = 66, 12th Grade Enrollment = 58.

Eric's Role Identity System

Eric's self-perceptions and self-definitions included being Puerto Rican, male, gay, and Christian. His past role identities as a peer tutor, and Fulbright Scholar, in which he taught English in Andorra, reflected positive emotions indicative of role identity alignments. For example, alignment between ontological belief that someone needed and sought his help, his available action possibilities to help them, and his implicit purpose and goals in teaching: "I just always got really excited when someone came in for help and I got to teach them…," "[I enjoyed
helping students] understand something that was difficult for them before, it was just such a nice feeling."

At the time of the study, Eric was in his second year at Atlantic Spear High School. He held a self-perception that he grew as a teacher from the first to second year, as indicated by his ontological beliefs and self-perceptions that these two years were very different, with the first involving role identity tensions and the second reflected more role identity alignment: "I started here at [Atlantic Spear], and last year was really intense but there was a lot of growth. And the second year is night and day compared to last year."

In the second interview, Eric focused on one of his classes, his fourth period honors Spanish class, on which he had the ontological belief that its student body was ethnically "fairly diverse." He said, "There's certain students of Puerto Rican, Dominican, Asian, Jamaican descent, African Americans. [There is] one white student.," He also believed that his students were very participatory. He said, "they're always very eager," "they say what's on their mind," and "they just want to be able to voice their opinion about whatever…"

As a teacher, an implicit goal of Eric's was to demonstrate utility and interest in what he taught his students. An action possibility aligned with this goal was making the utility explicit to his students: "If you learn Spanish, Portuguese will be really easy. If you learn Spanish, Italian will be really easy. French can even be easy." These goals and action possibilities aligned with his ontological belief that "Spanish can open doors to other languages," and, furthermore, that Spanish can be useful in everyday life:

> [I had] a whole unit on ordering food at the *papi*[6] store in Spanish, and [my students] know how to order a cheesesteak in Spanish. That's something that they literally do right then and there. Right after school, just go and do that…. And they're always surprised when they either get food for free or get a discount.

Eric believed his students require a lot of structure (e.g., setting expectations/ predictable routines) which was in harmony with his belief that structures support his classroom management of poor behavior. These beliefs were aligned with several goals and action possibilities that he employed to create predictable classroom structures and routines: (a) a point system for being on task, (b) a sticker system for behavioral improvements, and (c) a traffic light system for directing student behavior. The point system action possibility included a grid with a possible 20 points that a student can gain or lose (5 = assigned seats, 5 = participation, 5 = being on task, 5 = good behavior). By contrast, the sticker system was "not based on actual good behavior…" Eric said, "you get a sticker at the end of the day, if you were better today than you were yesterday, or if you just behaved well." This action possibility was also aligned with his ontological beliefs associated with providing praise. He said, "So that way even those who are struggling to get themselves together still get some form of praise and they fight for them

[6] A papi store is synonymous with bodega, corner store, and convenience store.

stickers[7].” Finally, he described the traffic light system action possibility and the relevant goal to telegraph clear behavioral expectations. He said,

> If it’s red, it is laptops are closed and I have your complete attention and we’re not talking. Yellow is, I have your complete attention, but you can have your laptop open, that's what we get if we're going over work, for example. And then green is you can talk responsibly, not shouting across the classroom but you can talk.

In general, Eric’s teaching action possibilities, goals, ontological beliefs, and self-perceptions demonstrated care for his students’ social wellbeing and academic outcomes, but it was largely teacher-centered, and teacher controlled. Related to academic outcomes, Eric said during the member checking interview that he also had a goal to not lower his standards: “when it comes to academic stuff, no, in that case it’s just like, ‘I’m holding you to your potential.’” However, this teacher role identity and its teacher empathy manifestations were aligned with ontological beliefs and self-perceptions that he and his students shared demographic group membership.

Aligned Self-Other Overlap Beliefs

Eric believed he was similar to his students and, therefore, that he understood their lived experiences and cultural background. These self-other overlap beliefs[8] emerged from alignment between Eric’s ontological beliefs about his students’ backgrounds and his self-perceptions as an alum of Atlantic Spear and as a Latino. For example, he noted that growing up in the same location provided him with affordances in the classroom that other teachers did not have. He said,

> I think also a big part of it’s just being from [the same city], I’m not going to lie, I feel like just also me being from here, I went to this school, I have

[7] Eric perceived the stickers to be cool. He said, “Honestly, yeah, actually I try to... They're not just little stars or anything like that. I give fun stickers, and they're usually pretty big.”
[8] I use “beliefs” to highlight the emergence of self-other overlap between self-beliefs (i.e., self-perceptions) and ontological beliefs.

> so much in common with them and it works. I know how is it that they play around. I know how is it that they act and whatever. I'm just familiar with this and I know what the teachers are like that they've had. So, I feel like that plays a big part...

In addition, he also believed that this similarity was also meaningful to the students, that they perceive him more positively because of that. For example, he said that that when students learn that he is an Atlantic Spear alum "it makes [him] more interesting to them in a good way." Or, that his Latinx students like it that his family is from Puerto Rico and they "are happy to have a Hispanic teacher…someone that they can culturally bond with." He believed that Latinx students' perceptions of their similarity make them relate to him better: "They find someone that they feel comfortable with because we have shared cultural experiences." During the member checking interview, Eric elaborated on his beliefs regarding his and his students shared cultural knowledge and ethnicity: "just having those ways to connect with them just makes things a lot easier, and they get so excited when they hear it."

Eric's high perception[9] of self-other overlap beliefs with his students were in alignment with his goals and high self-perceived efficacy of taking their perspective. Specifically, he believed that he could easily understand students with whom he shared ethnic group membership and culture. Eric said,

> I've lived this perspective, so it's just like the shoe fits better. And even better if they grew up Latino. It's just like I get where you're coming from. If they tell me something's it like, yes, I know what this is.

His aligned ontological beliefs and self-perceptions about his shared lived experiences and cultural familiarity with his students were aligned with ontological

[9] Self-other overlap exists on a continuum from high perceptions of overlap (i.e., similar/familiar) to low perceptions of overlap (i.e., dissimilar/unfamiliar).

beliefs and self-perceived efficacy to build relationships with them. He said, “The more things we have in common, the more things we’re able to bond on, the better able to build that relationship.”

In Eric’s description of one specific instance of a meaningful relationship, he held a self-other overlap belief that he and one student were similar; best exemplified when he stated, “I just saw a lot of her and a lot of me.” His high perception of self-other overlap was aligned with high self-perceived efficacy that she was easy to understand. He said,

> there was never a situation where I had to really put myself in her shoes or at least I didn’t find the need to do so. I mean with her, I guess, putting myself in her shoes would be no different than just— She was just very easy to understand just because she reminded me so much of myself, so it was like everything was just immediate.

His high perceptions of self-other overlap were also aligned with a goal and action possibilities to not let the student squander potential opportunities. For example, he pursued this goal by the action possibility of encouraging her to attend college, relying on ontological beliefs about the reasons that might prevent her and entice her, including findings a social group of likeminded people and friends. He said,

> she was so, so bright and I would tell her because she didn’t like being in high school and she just didn't like being in school, period. And she wasn’t sure whether or not she wanted to go to college, and I wasn't trying to be one of those teachers where it was like, oh, you have to go to college, but I was in her case, I was just, ‘I feel like you would absolutely love it. I feel like you would thrive. The way you act and see things and whatever, the people that you will find at these colleges and universities are your type of people, the type of people that you have been wishing that you would meet and make friends with. You will find them there.’

This student unenrolled at Atlantic Spear. This caused Eric to feel distress (i.e., empathy-based stress), which was associated with his ontological belief that she may have wasted

her potential, which was aligned with his ontological beliefs that the reasons are her internal struggle. He said,

> I'm just worried that she won't give learning another chance, that she won't give school another chance, and that she will not follow her potential when she has so much. I'm afraid that her fears and her demons will win and prevent her from progressing. She's supposedly doing— Was it a virtual? So, she's at school, but just doing it on her own. But yeah, I'm just really hoping that she moves forward.

It is important to note that while recalling this experience, Eric referred to his distress in the present tense, suggesting that this emotion emerged within his current role identity while sharing this experience with me. Here, Eric's deep care for and identification with the student and the tensions between his ontological beliefs about her and his goals for her, elicited negative emotions, highlighting the double-edged nature of teacher empathy.

Misaligned Self-Other Overlap Beliefs

While generally Eric believed that he was similar to his students, he also indicated his experience of not always being able to take his students' perspective. That is, his ontological beliefs that some students' lived experiences were unfamiliar to him were misaligned with his self-perceptions that he is unlike some of his students. These instances of low perception of self-other overlap were associated with self-perceived inability to engage in perspective taking action possibilities. For example, Eric said of a "bright" male student who publicly insulted him,

> he's difficult to understand. I still don't get where things are coming from, and I feel like it's a lot more complicated than from what I can imagine. …I really don't know, and I haven't been able to really understand why he acts the way he does or be able to understand, put myself in his shoes.

Similarly, he shared a story of another student who was "probably the most disrespectful student." In this instance, Eric's role identity involved beliefs and self-perceptions that

the student's very difficult life experiences made him unable to comprehend her perspective, which lowered his self-perceived ability to set goals and act. Eric said that his principal informed him that "she [had] some home issues." He also described her as having, "talked about seeing someone get shot and the way she talked about it, it was really blasé like it was matter of fact." He continued, "So it's just like there's so much that happens in our student lives…" This tension between his ontological beliefs of the student, his goal to take the student perspective, and his self-perceptions that he cannot understand this student led him to powerfully state, "How can I put myself in their shoes if I don't see their shoes?"

Alignment Between Emotional Intelligence Ontological Beliefs and Perspective Taking Action Possibilities

Eric believed that emotional intelligence was associated with perspective taking action possibilities, which allowed him to understand his students and make emotionally intelligent informed actions and decisions. Additionally, his beliefs about emotional intelligence included also the assumption that emotionally intelligent people simply know what others feel without the need to interact with them or hear their explicit perspective. He said,

> being able to put yourself in someone else's shoes. When you're emotionally intelligent, you understand that different people have different emotional needs, and being able to know and understand that, and know those needs without having to really ask them...

His beliefs about emotional intelligence involved deep self-knowledge, possibly identification, and possibly comparison between oneself and the other. He stated,

> when you put yourself in someone else's shoes, you are able to understand—It's one thing knowing what someone else needs in a certain situation. It's also important for you to know what you would also want in

> that situation. Treat others as you would want to be treated. It's the same thing. So, when you're able to put yourself in someone else's shoes and think how they would think, but also thinking how would you feel in this situation? You are able to have better judgment for how you react to certain situations and how you treat people.

Eric's self-perceived ability to take someone's perspective was aligned with his self-perception that this ability emerged during his adolescence while reflecting on social interactions. He said, "[Stepping into others' shoes is] something that I've been doing since late adolescence, probably around my first time going to college."

While reflecting on his past role as participant in a teacher preparation program, Eric highlighted a self-perceived value of learning about the concept of emotional intelligence. He said, "I also learned a lot more about emotional intelligence…," which he was still integrating into his teacher role identity and reflecting upon. Referring to his own growth and learning as a teacher, he said,

> there's the reward you get from seeing your students improve and whatever, and just the impact you have on them. But that also does impart so much growth to you as well, and just so much that you learn in terms of emotional intelligence, classroom management skills, being able to learn more about yourself in terms of what is it that you're willing to tolerate and not tolerate.

While reflecting on his teacher role identity, he believed that emotionally intelligent school practices (i.e., de-escalation) informed his action possibilities (i.e., to not scold students). For example, he recalled an instance in which one teacher struggled to manage her class and it erupted into "complete chaos." Eric described an action possibility in which he "pulled out three students," and based on beliefs about these students' characteristics, needs, and wants, chose not to scold them or act as an authoritative figure, but just listened, thus deescalating. This configuration of beliefs,

goals, and actions that led to successful de-escalation, Eric attributed to his self-perceived emotional intelligence. He said,

> They need a calming voice, someone to just deescalate the situation, and also, I know them. It's just like they won't react to that either. They don't want an authority figure. They want someone to listen to them, and I was able to really help and deescalate the situation and just get them to understand, but you have to be able to have that emotional intelligence to do that.

In part, Eric believed that his successful enactment of his emotional intelligence was associated with his beliefs that his students know that he cares for them. This seemed to reflect a sense of role identity alignment among his beliefs, goals, and self-perceptions, manifesting in positive emotions. He said, "They know that I care, and I've heard them say it. That means so much to me. I've heard them say…I'm nice and I do care. So, I'm glad that they know that because I do care about them."

Self-Perceived Dispositional Empathy Using Quantitative Data

Quantitative data suggested a meaningful relationship between Erics' perceptions of his perspective taking and empathic concern. His responses on the IRI empathy scale suggested that his self-perceived highest lower-order dimension of empathy was perspective taking (M = 4.14; cognitive dimension), followed by empathic concern (M = 4.00; affective dimension), fantasy (M = 2.71; cognitive dimension), and lastly, personal distress (M = 2.14; affective dimension). These scores indicate that Eric's other-oriented lower-order forms (i.e., perspective taking and empathic concern) of his self-perceived dispositional empathy were greater than forms of empathy that characterize egoistic and self-protective action possibilities (i.e., fantasy and personal distress).

The MDS plot (Stress = .004; Figure 4.1) illuminated centrality and complete overlap between perspective taking and fantasy that occupied large portions of the visual

space. The empathic concern construct occupied a smaller portion of the plot and did not overlap with the personal distress latent construct, which represented a simplex shape, implying narrow meaning. Additionally, Eric's meaning of the items suggested five factors (Table 4.2) of meaning captured in a circumplex along a continuum of self-perceived low to high efficacy during the action possibility of perspective taking, which was orthogonal to an other-orientation of his perspective taking to an egoistic self-orientation or no perspective taking. *Factor 1*—in the no/self-orientation and self-perceived low efficacy region—represented Eric's meaning of self-perceived low efficacy and apathy that was associated with ontological beliefs about events and people in distressing situations. *Factor 2* generally characterized self-perceived low efficacy of transportation into a story that was other-oriented. Overall, *Factor 3*—in the opposite region of Factor 1—characterized alignment of self-perceived compassion and sympathy toward others in alignment with the action possibility of other-oriented perspective taking. Similarly, *Factor 4* captured other-oriented perspective taking. By contrast, *Factor 5*, characterized self-perceived high efficacy during self-oriented perspective taking.

MDS analysis suggested that the perspective taking construct was related and associated with all five factors. Empathic concern was only associated with the Factors generally

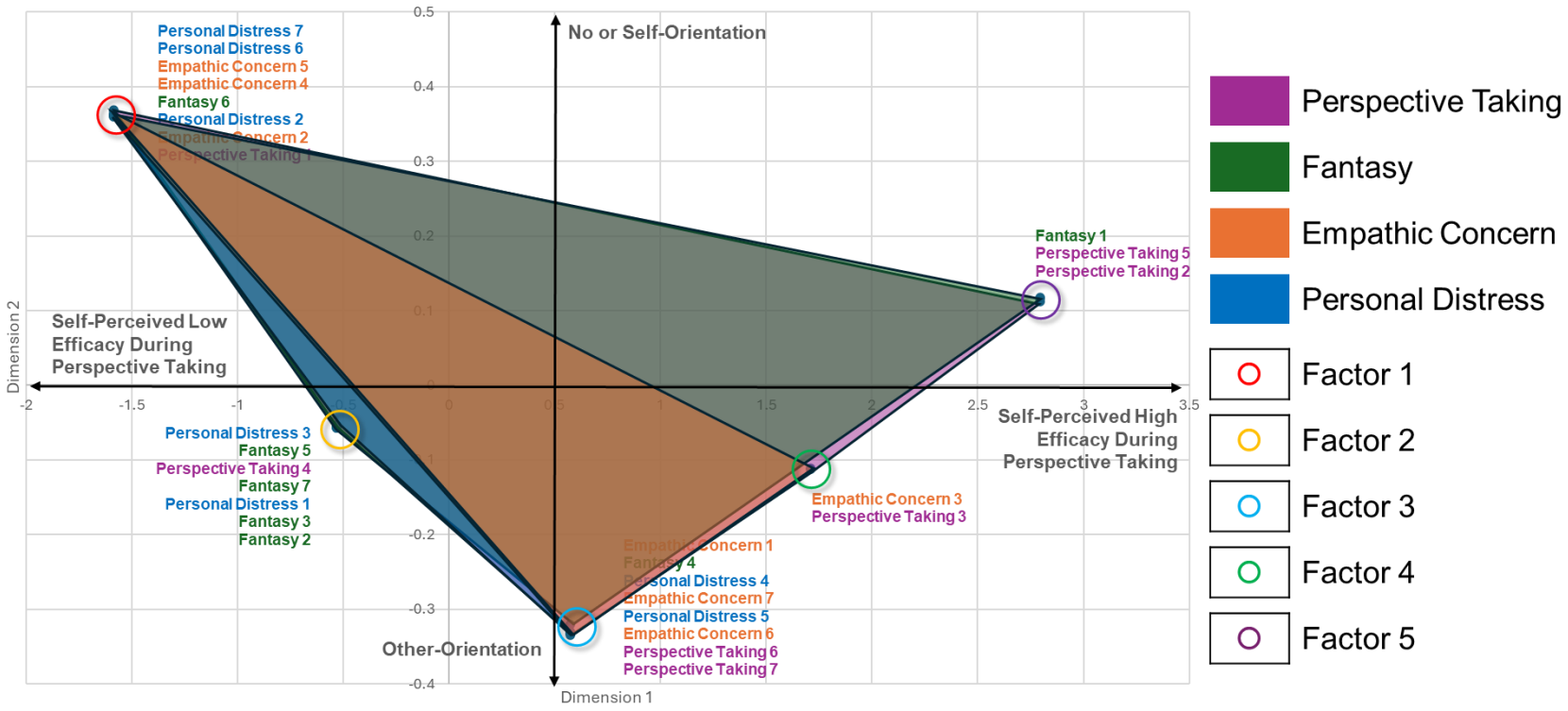

Figure 4.1. Nonmetric Multidimensional Scaling Plot of Eric's Meaning-Making on the Interpersonal Reactivity Index Survey Items.

Table 4.2. Eric's Interpersonal Reactivity Index Items and Interpreted Multidimensional Scaling Factors

Factor	Item	Item Prompt
1	Perspective Taking 1	I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other guy's" point of view.
	Fantasy 6	After seeing a play or movie, I have felt as though I were one of the characters.
	Empathic Concern 2	Sometimes I don't feel sorry for other people when they are having problems.
	Empathic Concern 4	Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal.
	Empathic Concern 5	When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them.
	Personal Distress 2	I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional situation.
	Personal Distress 6	I tend to lose control during emergencies.
	Personal Distress 7	When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces.
2	Perspective Taking 4	If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments.
	Fantasy 2	I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel.
	Fantasy 3	I am usually objective when I watch a movie or play, and I don't often get completely caught up in it.
	Fantasy 5	When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of a leading character.
	Fantasy 7	When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me.
	Personal Distress 1	In emergency situations, I feel apprehensive and ill-at-ease.
	Personal Distress 3	When I see someone get hurt, I tend to remain calm.
3	Perspective Taking 6	When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while.
	Perspective Taking 7	Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.
	Fantasy 4	Becoming extremely involved in a good book or movie is somewhat rare for me.
	Empathic Concern 1	I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.

Table 4.2. (continued)

Factor	Item	Item Prompt
	Empathic Concern 6	I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.
	Empathic Concern 7	I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.
	Personal Distress 4	Being in a tense emotional situation scares me.
	Personal Distress 5	I am usually pretty effective in dealing with emergencies.
4	Perspective Taking 3	I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.
	Empathic Concern 3	When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective toward them.
5	Perspective Taking 2	I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.
	Perspective Taking 5	I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both.
	Fantasy 1	I daydream and fantasize, with some regularity, about things that might happen to me.

characterizing self-perceived compassion, or lack thereof. Similarly, personal distress was also related to Factors that highlighted self-perceived sympathy, compassion, and apathy that were aligned and misaligned with ontological beliefs about people in distressing circumstances and traumatic settings.

Case Synthesis for Eric: High Perceptions of Self-Other Overlap and Emotional Intelligence

Eric taught Spanish at his former high school, which he believed gave him insight into his students' lived experiences and culture. Specifically, his high perception of self-other overlap with his students aligned with his belief that matching his students ethnically or socioculturally afforded him unique and deep personal, social, and pedagogical insight into their needs even without asking them, and he felt comfortable making assumptions about his students. This self-other overlap, overall, characterized Eric's teacher empathy. Eric believed that his high empathetic ability is based on his emotional intelligence, which he self-perceived to have developed early on in life. While reflecting on his preservice teacher role identity, Eric noted that emotional intelligence was an important aspect of his education, which he integrated into his teacher role identity. Alignment between emotional intelligence action possibilities to take students' perspective and his self-perception as a kind and caring teacher led to the emergence of action possibilities to build meaningful teacher-student relationships. However, for the students with whom he felt no shared group membership or understanding, he was unable to take their perspective.

Quantitative MDS analysis suggested that Eric's self-perceived low efficacy during perspective taking was in disharmony with self-perceived apathy and disregard,

which was in alignment with ontological beliefs about people in distressing situations and concerning events. This mirrors DSMRI analysis that suggested Eric's low perceptions of self-other overlap for students who experienced trauma (e.g., witnessing a shooting) were associated with self-perceived inability to engage in perspective taking action possibilities. However, MDS analysis also captured the inverse: self-perceived high efficacy during perspective taking was in harmony with self-perceived compassion, sympathy, and care for others, and ontological beliefs about non-emergency situations. Taken together with the DSMRI analysis, Eric's self-perceptions of his perspective taking abilities (high versus low efficacy) were interrelated with his ontological beliefs about others (traumatic versus non-traumatic circumstances) and self-perceived compassion versus apathy.

In summary, Eric's teacher empathy was characterized by self-perceived high emotional intelligence and by his beliefs about high self-other overlap with his students and that he understood their perspective and their unique points of view. This manifested in a coherent sense of role identity that aligned these ontological beliefs and self-perceptions with beliefs about the importance of perspective taking and empathic concern, self-perceptions as caring, empathy goals, and action possibilities that included employing emotionally intelligent practices like de-escalation, responding to students, and perspective taking. However, Eric experienced role identity tensions when this aligned configuration was not able to address students with whom he did not perceive high self-other overlap.

Case Summary of Marcia:

The Changing and Dissimilar Teacher

Marcia was a veteran teacher, but new to Atlantic Spear. In contrast to Eric, Marcia believed herself to be dissimilar to her students. Her self-perceptions as an African American woman from the Southern United States was misaligned with her ontological beliefs about her students' cultural background. This misalignment characterized her teacher empathy and emerged as low perceptions of self-other overlap; indicating distance between herself and her students. Marcia's overall low perceptions of self-other overlap beliefs were aligned with action possibilities to not make presumptions about her students. Marica also exhibited other forms of teacher empathy, like cognitive empathy, which were aligned with action possibilities to support students' individual needs.

Salient role identities that manifested during the interview included "[past] teacher," "elementary school teacher," "middle school teacher," "high school teacher," "mentee teacher," "adult educator," "volunteer teacher," "English language point teacher," "service-learning point teacher," "school club sponsor," "information technology network technician," "university student," "study abroad participant," "church goer," and "mother."

Context Framing Marcia's Teacher Role Identity

Marcia was an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher at Atlantic Spear High School, where Eric also taught. ESOL classes provide English language instruction for non-native English speakers. Like Eric, Marcia's classroom had colorful world flags over head and the walls adorned with posters, classroom norms and

procedures that Marcia created (Figure 4.2). At the front of the room, behind Marcia's horseshoe desk was a small refrigerator where she kept snacks for her students.

Marcia taught 10th grade English language arts class and a 12th grade capstone class. Her 10th grade class included a diverse set of learners, including students who met English language proficiency benchmarks and students with individualized education plans. Like the school, most of the 10th grade and 12th grade students identified as male and Black/African American. 38% of the 10th grade class had an individualized education plan, compared to only 19% of the twelfth-grade class (SDP, 2023a). Similarly, 13% of 10th graders were categorized as English language learners and only 10% of 12th grade (SDP, 2023a). Full demographic information for Atlantic Spear can be found in Table 4.1

Figure 4.2. Posters on Marcia's Classroom Walls Documenting Classroom Procedure and Norms.

Marcia's Role Identity System

Marcia self-identified as an African-American woman who taught K-12 education for the last decade, primarily in a suburban middle school in the Southern United States. She held self-perceptions as "an enthusiastic, skills based, no-nonsense teacher" that may

“have a little touch of ADD” and her “classroom [was] light, airy, and full of laughter!” She also enjoyed interacting with her students. She said, “I like the interactions.” She also had a self-perception that she had a well-managed classroom: “I’m a big fan of classroom management…I don’t have a lot of behavior problems in my classroom because I use processes and procedures, and I go over those at the beginning of the school year.”

She held an ontological belief that, “Teaching is what you bring to it and push out to your students.” She also held a self-perception that her success was dependent on her students’ success. She said about her students, “If you’re successful, I’m successful. And if you’re not successful, that means I’m not successful.” She elaborated and said, “student progress is how I value myself.”

Marcia also held a self-perception that she was the authority figure in the classroom, i.e., the “adult” in the room. This self-perception was misaligned with her ontological beliefs about her students’ beliefs that they also had authority in the classroom. For example, she had a student who wanted to be treated like an adult. Marcia explained, “She wanted to be an adult. No. No. There’s only one adult in my classroom, and that’s me. There’s only one person that's making the rules, and that’s me. We’re going to follow the rules, period.” She also said, “I am the one that’s most responsible for what takes place in our classroom, good and bad.”

Misaligned Self-Other Overlap Beliefs

Marcia[10] had low perceptions of self-other overlap beliefs that emerged from misalignment between her cultural self-perceptions and her ontological beliefs about her students’ background: “I walk in this knowing the huge cultural differences between my

[10] James Marcia is the eponym for Marcia’s pseudonym due to her identity processes and moratorium identity status.

experience and teaching here with my students' background." These self-other overlap beliefs were misaligned with action possibilities, implicit goals, and self-perceptions to make meaningful connections with her students: "I can say that the challenge that I've had is making that deep connection like I made back in [the South] with my students here [at Atlantic Spear]. A lot of that is cultural." Additionally, her low self-other overlap beliefs were related with her teacher self-perceptions. Her self-perception that she was in her "first-year teaching again" in an unfamiliar cultural context was in disharmony with her veteran teacher status self-perception:

> this is my second year [at Atlantic Spear]. It's very hard for me to move myself into a veteran by any means because teaching is very much continuously learning. And last year when I came, I told everyone I was indeed a first-year teacher again because everything that I knew about teaching was wiped away completely when I came here. …The culture was different. Of course, the district, the school, everything, the city. So, I still feel like I'm a new teacher in that respect.

She also said,

> I am an experienced teacher. You know what I'm saying? However, where I had to grow since I've been here these last two school years, is in my cultural awareness, in what this looks like, and then being able to successfully find strategies to include and to be successful among that. And in that respect, I am still a baby teacher, because there's a lot more to this cultural aspect that my students have yet to teach me that I am still learning.

Her "baby teacher" self-perception indicated a change to her teacher role identity in response to her new social and cultural context at Atlantic Spear. Relatedly, Marcia also acknowledged that student poverty and trauma were foreign and new concepts: "what I've come to learn is that there are even levels of poverty. That looks different from [Atlantic Spear] to [the South," and "Trauma, I didn't have to really, really work to understand the impact that trauma and what that even looks like…"

During the member checking interview, Marcia delineated herself from Eric through an ontological belief that he had deep cultural knowledge of this students, which was advantageous, and affirmed her self-perception that she is dissimilar to her students. She said, "[Eric] came from the school. He was a product of the school. …But what that means is he's closer to the students culturally than I am…"

Alignment with Action Possibilities to Not Make Assumptions about Students' Lived Experiences. Aligned with Marcia's low perception of self-other overlap beliefs were action possibilities to not make assumptions about her Atlantic Spear students' lived experiences, perspectives, and opinions. She said, "You don't know what struggles they've been through. You don't know what they're bringing into the classroom. …I can't assume…"

This action possibility to not make assumptions developed in response to her new social context. In one instance, a student challenged her assumptions about meritocracy and her ontological beliefs about students, which was associated action possibilities as a teacher to not make assumptions. She said,

> One of my seniors did his senior project on a condition called meritocracy. And meritocracy is the assumption that hard work equals success. If we all just work hard, because you've heard that, just work hard. If you're not doing it, just work harder. Whereas this student challenged that in saying that if we don't take into account a student's background, and this, a lot of teachers would've probably known it. I mean, and we all know it, but it hit me right in the heart because I needed to now practice it. …Well, his assertion was when a student comes into your classroom, you don't know their home life.

In another example, Marcia's self-perceptions that her students do not share her experiences aligned with action possibilities to review an analogy using the Baskin-Robbins ice cream company. She realized that her students were unfamiliar with Baskin-

Robbins and thus she had to elaborate. She said, “I can’t assume that they would know or have had a three-scoop ice cream cone in order to make this analogy something for them. …So, at the very least, if they haven't experienced it, then they could visualize it.”

Overall, Marcia’s self-other overlap beliefs promoted identity change and action possibilities to not presume her students’ knowledge and lived experiences. However, Marcia was attuned to her students’ internal states (e.g., emotions, motivations), which she demonstrated through cognitive empathy actions and beliefs.

Cognitive Empathy Action Possibilities and Ontological Beliefs

While Marcia did not make assumptions about her students’ lived experiences, she was sensitive to their social, emotional, and physical needs. This social awareness of her students is a hallmark of cognitive empathy, which manifested as ontological beliefs about her students and action possibilities (e.g., adapting praxis in response to social and contextual factors). For example, Marcia’s cognitive empathy action possibilities to learn about her students’ background were aligned with ontological beliefs that empathy aids her relationship development with students and self-perceptions about her efficacy to connect with students. She said, “it’s that empathy that allows me to connect with the person. It’s that understanding their background that allows me to either have same or similar or comparable experiences.”

Marcia’s cognitive empathy ontological beliefs within her new context led to adaptations to her practices; she “had to adjust in [her] practice,” which also highlighted further identity change. Examples of new classroom action possibilities included (a) social and emotional check-ins, (b) catered snacks, and (c) gamification of her class following the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, Marcia held a cognitive empathy

ontological belief that her Atlantic Spear students enter class in a variety of emotional states, compared to her Southern students who did not:

> One of the cultural differences that I found between [this city] and [the South] was the kids here come into class in a wide array of moods… [Atlantic Spear students are] not able to turn off their emotions connected to where they are…

This belief that her students experienced the carryover affective phenomenon—where a person "carries" their emotions from one context to another—was aligned with an action possibility and goal to check in with her class and self-perception that the action was necessary. She called this strategy a "temperature check." She said,

> …what had happened before I made this change was, I would not acknowledge that, and I would go into instruction, and then I will be hitting brick walls. ...so, it wasn't until I realized that I had to give a whole lot of thought and action to the beginning of the class. ...I see a need there where my students need to express themselves.

Her "temperature check" action possibility was aligned with an ontological belief that positive emotions improve instruction: "If everyone is feeling good in the classroom, then it just makes instruction that much better."

Marcia also adapted her teaching practices to her new context by supplying her students with snacks. This action possibility was aligned with her cognitive empathy ontological belief that snacks energize students. She said, "…I have the snacks out. They come in, they get their snacks, they're eating while we are learning. …and they're snacking. And so, by the time I get ready to ask them for some input, they've come alive."

Related to the COVID-19 pandemic, Marcia held ontological beliefs that virtual instruction negatively affected her students' maturity and work ethic: "just clear as the light of day this year was the effects of the pandemic on our kids' maturity," and "so

now, I have students that are very *laissez-faire* about skill development, about instruction." Marcia's cognitive empathy ontological beliefs about the influence of the pandemic on students was aligned with employing novel gamification action possibilities to enhance student engagement:

> …gamifying it for them really brought in the engagement. And I saw the difference, because one day I had the passage, and the next day, I had the monster quiz. And the difference, it was just like you could not make a mistake on knowing which one they prefer.

Marcia also had another action possibilities aligned with cognitive empathy ontological beliefs to accommodate students based on their various needs

> I have to give a lot of grace… I have to understand how in this melting pot of students in my classroom, how am I going to meet all of their needs based upon what I know that they need?

However, this was in tension with her self-perception that she still held students accountable. She said, "teacher love is holding [students] accountable." She elaborated, "Because if I don't hold you accountable, then you'll never do anything."

Aligned cognitive empathy beliefs and action possibilities led to adaptive classroom strategies that, overall, were unique to the Atlantic Spear context, compared to her Southern context. However, her new context also promoted maladaptive forms of empathy associated with distress.

Empathy-Based Stress Self-Perceptions

Marcia held ontological beliefs that cognitive empathy afforded her the opportunity to learn about her students and respond to their needs. However, this affordance was in tension with her self-perception that affectively empathizing with students can be emotionally costly—called empathy-based stress (Rauvola et al., 2019). She said, "I do hold onto [the heaviness of my students' trauma] probably more than I

should…I don't make it my own, but I do empathize. I do feel some kind of way." She continued,

> Do I internalize their situations? Probably. No doubt that I do. I try not to let it— I try to keep a balance on it in terms of keeping my life positive, doing my extracurriculars in my personal life and things like that. Going to the arts. That's the one thing I can say about [this city] is the culture here with the arts, the music and the plays. I've never done so much artistic things in my life. Love it. Does it weigh on me? Yes. But I try to find balance. I try.

Here, she highlighted alignment with emotion regulation action possibilities and goal to stay "positive" considering the empathy-based stress she experienced from teaching. Relatedly, she noted an ontological belief that empathy must be managed but that empathy is also a necessity for teaching:

> I think it has to be managed, okay. Yes, empathy, I dare say you can't teach without it, but there is such a thing as too much empathy. And so, you have to manage it. You have to be aware of when you're internalizing a student's circumstance or plight or environment…

Marcia elaborated on these beliefs during the member checking interview. She shared an ontological belief that maladaptive forms of teacher empathy are associated with relaxing standards, reducing rigor, and coddling students. About "over-empathizing" with students she said, "It can really hurt our students if we're not careful with it." She also said, "it's very harmful for students if we're not aware of where our empathy is and how we can overdo it by relaxing standards, relaxing student effort." She added, "over-empathizing is…doing for the students the things that the students should be doing for themselves."

Marcia held an aligned goal to not coddle her students, action possibility to hold her students to a high standard, and self-perception that she does not over-empathize. This self-perception was aligned with an ontological belief her students may think she is

a bad teacher She said, “But when I have to choose which one do I want, do I want to be the favorite teacher in the building, or do I want my kids strong intellectually and academically, I will always choose that. And so that makes me the different teacher.” She also said, “So what happens is when they come into my class and they still have that pattern of being told how to think and what to do, literally, and I’m not that teacher. …And they're like, ‘What?’ So that makes me the bad teacher because I won't simply answer their question.”

Self-Perceived Dispositional Empathy Using Quantitative Data

Regarding her IRI scores, Marcia’s self-perceived highest lower-order dimensions of empathy were perspective taking (*M* = 4.43; cognitive dimension) and empathic concern (*M* = 4.43; affective dimension), then fantasy (*M* = 4; cognitive dimension), and she scored very low on personal distress (*M* = 1.71; affective dimension). Like Eric, Marcia’s scores for empathy in response to others were higher than self-oriented forms of empathy. However, she still scored high on the fantasy construct, which may be associated with her love of fiction and language. It is important to note to wide range between her two affective forms of empathy: empathic concern and personal distress. This may illuminate her concern and care for her students with less concern for herself.

The MDS plot (Stress = .009; Figure 4.3) highlighted breadth of empathic concern and fantasy across all regions of the visual space, which slightly overlapped. By contrast, perspective taking and personal distress overlapped and occupied a thin portion of the plot in simplex shapes.

Marcia’s grouping of the items suggested five personal factors of meaning (Table 4.3) that—like Eric—were in a circumplex along two orthogonal dimensions: other- to

self-orientation and self-perceived high efficacy during perspective taking to self-perceived low efficacy. *Factors 1* and *2* characterized overall self-perceived high efficacy during perspective taking and self-perceived compassion and sympathy. Opposite Factors 1 and 2 was *Factor 4*, which depicted self-perceived low efficacy during perspective taking and apathy that was associated with ontological beliefs about people in distressing situations. *Factors 3* and *5*, which only included one item each, characterized the action possibility of fantasizing and the self-perception of soft-heartedness, respectively.

Generally, all latent constructs were associated with each Factor in a simplex shape. The circumplex representing the Factors emerged from the position Factors 3 and 5 in the plot, which had one item, each. This overall, simplex may highlight Marcia's negotiation between herself (self-oriented) and her students (other-oriented).

Case Synthesis for Marcia: Low Perceptions of Self-Other Overlap

Marcia was a new ESOL teacher at Atlantic Spear. Moving to Atlantic Spear from her suburban Southern United States context led changes in her identity system. Particularly, manifesting from her new social, contextual control parameters were action possibilities to not make assumptions about her students' backgrounds and low perceptions of self-other overlap beliefs, suggesting that she did not perceive herself as like her students. Yet, while she did not perceive cultural similarity with her students, she did share a racial minority identity with them.

Marica's cognitive empathy ontological beliefs about her students' internal states were aligned with pedagogical action possibilities to support her students' needs. Although Marcia also had a self-perception that she held students accountable and was the

authority figure in her classroom. These self-perceptions were associated with her goal for student success, which evidenced her own.

Her MDS analysis suggested that perspective taking and personal distress were closely related, which were subsumed in the empathic concern latent construct. Like Eric, these constructs were in harmony with self-perceived high efficacy during perspective taking and self-perceived compassion. Conversely, self-perceived low efficacy was associated with self-perceived apathy that was misaligned with ontological beliefs about people in distressing situations. Combined with the DSMRI and IRI mean score analyses, this analysis suggested that her self-perceived dispositional perspective taking and empathic concern were highly interrelated and associated with aligned caring action possibilities, empathic concern goals, ontological beliefs about care and concern, and self-perceptions as caring and concerned for others.

In summary, Marcia's low perceptions of self-other overlap characterized her teacher empathy, which manifested from her sociocultural context. Her cognitive empathy was also a prominent feature of her teacher empathy that was related to her perspective taking self-perceptions and action possibilities. Additionally, Marcia's care toward others included high and low emotional arousal, which is indicative of her double-edged sword ontological beliefs of teacher empathy.

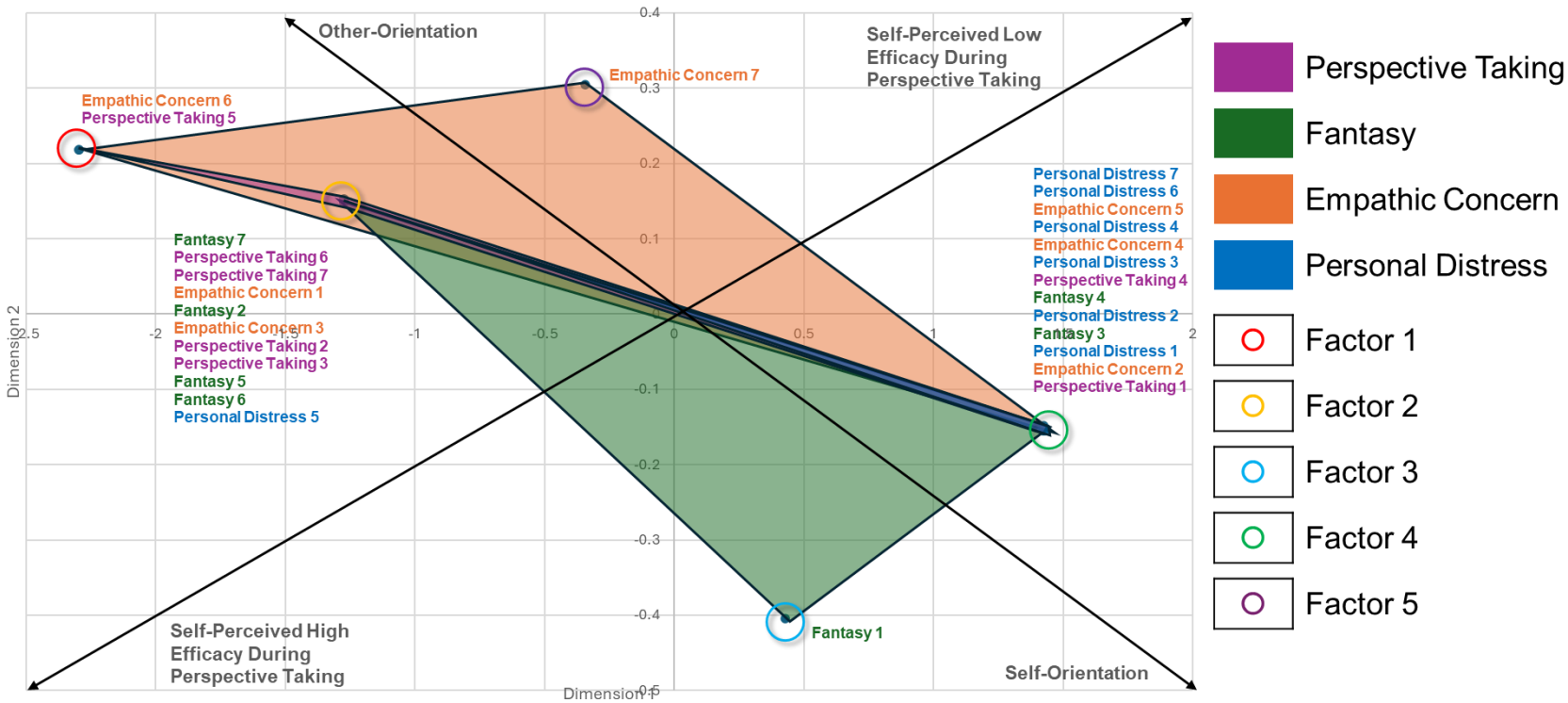

Figure 4.3 Nonmetric Multidimensional Scaling Plot of Marcia's Meaning-Making on the Interpersonal Reactivity Index Survey Items.

Table 4.3. Marcia's Interpersonal Reactivity Index Items and Interpreted Multidimensional Scaling Factors

Factor	Item	Item Prompt
1	Perspective Taking 5	I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both.
	Empathic Concern 6	I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.
2	Perspective Taking 2	I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.
	Perspective Taking 3	I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.
	Perspective Taking 6	When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while.
	Perspective Taking 7	Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.
	Fantasy 2	I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel.
	Fantasy 5	When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of a leading character.
	Fantasy 6	After seeing a play or movie, I have felt as though I were one of the characters.
	Fantasy 7	When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me.
	Empathic Concern 1	I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.
	Empathic Concern 3	When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective toward them.
	Personal Distress 5	I am usually pretty effective in dealing with emergencies.
3	Fantasy 1	I daydream and fantasize, with some regularity, about things that might happen to me.
4	Perspective Taking 1	I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other guy's" point of view.
	Perspective Taking 4	If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments.
	Fantasy 3	I am usually objective when I watch a movie or play, and I don't often get completely caught up in it.
	Fantasy 4	Becoming extremely involved in a good book or movie is somewhat rare for me.

Table 4.3. (continued)

Factor	Item	Item Prompt
	Empathic Concern 2	Sometimes I don't feel sorry for other people when they are having problems.
	Empathic Concern 4	Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal.
	Empathic Concern 5	When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them.
	Personal Distress 1	In emergency situations, I feel apprehensive and ill-at-ease.
	Personal Distress 2	I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional situation.
	Personal Distress 3	When I see someone get hurt, I tend to remain calm.
	Personal Distress 4	Being in a tense emotional situation scares me.
	Personal Distress 6	I tend to lose control during emergencies.
	Personal Distress 7	When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces.
5	Empathic Concern 7	I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.

Case Summary of Kevin:

The Compassionate and *Judging* Teacher

Kevin was an English language arts teacher at Windsor Tech, a technical and vocational school in an urban environment. Cognitive empathy ontological beliefs, empathic concern action possibilities, and social perspective taking ontological beliefs primarily characterized Kevin's teacher empathy. Most prominent was Kevin's *judging* social perspective taking. Traditionally, perspective taking is nested under cognitive empathy (Davis, 1980, 1983). However, Gehlbach and Mu (2023) argued that social perspective taking is a unique construct that is distinct, but related to, cognitive empathy. I borrow from their perspective to describe Kevin as a judge: someone who simplifies social experiences by using available knowledge to come to conclusions. They argue that judges "[risk] incomplete information gathering, inaccurate or biased inferences, and overconfidence" (p. 285). Plainly, Kevin made assumptions about his students without substantial evidence. These assumptions were associated with Kevin's empathic concern action possibilities—traditionally associated with pity and sympathy—and goal for his students to be happy, cared for, and needs met.

During the interviews, salient role identities included "[past] teacher," "student," "son," "mentor," "university student," and "spouse."

Context Framing Kevin's Teacher Role Identity

Kevin was a 10th grade English teacher at Windsor Technological and Vocational High School (Windsor Tech). Windsor Tech was a public high school in an urban environment that was eligible for Title I federal funding. Students at Windsor Tech attended traditional academic courses (e.g., English language arts, math, science, social

studies) and also received intensive instruction in technical education. Vocational programming included automotive technology, carpentry, culinary arts, graphic design, plumbing technology, sports marketing, and more. The mission of Windsor Tech was to welcome their students and nurture their learning to create a clear path toward future employment and/or higher education.

At the beginning of the 2023-2024 academic year, Windsor Tech had 591 students, with a majority of the students identifying as male (56%) and a large percentage of the student body identifying as Hispanic (45%) and Black/African American (43%) (SDP, 2023a). The 10th grade class mirrored the full student body population with more male identifying students (52%) than female (48%) and 45% of the 10th grade identified as Hispanic and 43% identified as Black/African American (SDP, 2023a). Additionally, 14% of the 10th grade were characterized as English language learners, while 24% had individualized education plans (SDP, 2023a). Full demographic information for Windsor Tech can be found in Table 4.4. 73% of Windsor Tech students graduated within four years and only 20% continue onto a two- or four-year higher education institution (SDP, 2023b). The school reported relatively good student behavior but scored poorly in math and English language arts on the statewide assessment (SDP, 2023b).

Kevin's Role Identity System

Kevin presented as a White male and identified as a "father, husband, teacher, friend, cousin." He said

> I am an easygoing, relatively comfortable teacher who doesn't draw hard lines. I've been teaching forever, close to 35 years and I think I have been and am doing a pretty good job and being fair and measured while holding my students to a high standard.

He also held harmonious self-perceptions that he was a good teacher with high self-perceived efficacy. Additionally he commented on growth in his abilities that indicated identity change: “I’ve become a really good teacher. I’m really good at it and I know exactly how to do stuff, but it took a long time to figure it all out.” Kevin held an ontological belief that teaching was similar to social work, which was his initial career of choice. He said, “it’s an absolute connection [with social work] You’re not just trying to cultivate or nurture someone’s brain; you’re also cultivating some kind of relationship.”

He described his classroom as “bright and full of artwork on the walls. There [weren’t] many inspirational posters on the walls, just paintings of landscapes, seascapes, cities, etc.” which he and his mother painted. Kevin had a goal to keep his room clean for his students. He said, “I want the kids to come into a place that looks like it’s orderly, it’s neat.” His goal for a clean room was aligned with his ontological belief that his students were happier and more productive in tidy classrooms: “I want [my students] to come into a [clean] room that feels like a place where learning should be done…” and “People are happier when you’re in a nice clean place.”

Kevin’s overall self-perceptions as a good teacher were aligned with his ontological beliefs about his students’ emotional, social, and academic needs. However, these ontological beliefs were not always verified by evidence.

Table 4.4. Windsor Technological and Vocational High School Demographic

Demographic Characteristics	9th Grade		10th Grade		11th Grade		12th Grade		Full School	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Gender Identity										
Female Identifying	85	38	76	48	55	47	44	46	260	44
Male Identifying	137	61	81	52	61	53	51	54	330	56
Student Status										
English Language Learner	48	22	22	14	18	16	17	18	105	18
Individualized Education Plan	61	27	37	24	31	27	19	20	148	25
Ethno-racial Identity										
Asian	2	1	4	3	0	0	4	4	10	2
Black/African American	90	40	68	43	55	47	42	44	255	43
Hispanic/Latinx	108	48	70	45	46	40	41	43	265	45
Multiracial	12	5	11	7	8	7	3	3	34	6
White	11	5	4	3	7	6	5	5	27	5

Note. School Enrollment = 591, 9th Grade Enrollment = 223, 10th Grade Enrollment = 157, 11th Grade Enrollment = 116, 12th Grade Enrollment = 95.

Judging Social Perspective Taking Ontological Beliefs

Kevin believed his students, collectively, experienced social and emotional anguish. For example, he said,

> The students at [Windsor Tech] come from all over the city but many come from [the Windsor Tech neighborhood], many from difficult circumstances. Many of the students face tremendous hardships and most have experienced a wide range of traumas, impacting their emotional development, their social development and obviously their outlook on life.

However, these ontological beliefs were often unsubstantiated and unfounded. Thus, Kevin held judging social perspective taking ontological beliefs about his students. For example, Kevin held a judging ontological belief "that every adult in [his students'] lives yells at them," which was connected to a low level of uncertainty epistemological belief. He said,

> My principal…screams like a madman in the hallway at these kids. Then they go to the corner store and I'm sure that the manager at the corner store is yelling at them. The bus driver…those guys are yelling, "Sit down, move back." All that kind of stuff. The cop is definitely down on the corner, is definitely not saying nice things to him either. Maybe they do. I don't know. I just, I don't know.

Emergent from his judging ontological beliefs that all his students experience trauma was an aligned implicit goal and self-perception to be a responsive, authoritative figure who did not yell.

He said,

> The baggage and the things these kids come with to school with seems insurmountable to me thinking of what the stuff they go through. But just being a friendly guy and a person authority figure, like I said, authority figure that's going to cajole or support rather than be angry or tear down.

Aligned with his judging ontological beliefs that his students experience hardship were empathetic action possibilities to lower his standards and a goal to improve their sense of self-worth and wellbeing: "…if [providing a smack of success by giving good grades]

moves the needle just a tiny bit with their own self-image, with their own who they are, with their own way they feel about themselves…I'm one million percent down…" Furthermore, he also said,

> occasionally you get an email that'd be like, "So-and-so's house burned down and they're in a shelter or whatever." And I'm like, this dude gets, he passed. They passed for the year. I don't care. There's no question. If they do work, that's just icing on the cake. So, I think that…sometimes you know the trauma, sometimes you don't, but I go in just knowing that there is, or just expecting that there is.

From this example, we see alignment amongst his judge ontological beliefs, goals and action possibilities to be flexible, self-perceptions as a compassionate teacher, and an uncertainty epistemological belief about student trauma. These alignments manifested an aligned goal and action possibility to be indiscriminately kind to all students. Kevin said, "So I just try to be I guess as open or kind as I can be. …I just go in the same way to everybody."

In one illustration of alignment between his judging ontological beliefs and empathetic action possibilities, Kevin spoke about a "loner" student who he believed did not satisfy all his academic requirements. Here, Kevin's empathic concern action possibility to pass the student was aligned with a goal to help the student experience positivity. Kevin said,

> I allowed him to be successful with less productivity that I was like, I would be happy if he did a quarter of the work at the beginning and be like, okay, I'm going to give him credit for this because I want him not to look at a 25 in his paper, but like a 75 or something like that…To even approach success, you have to start with positive things…

Kevin remarked about a positive emotion that emerged from alignment amongst his action possibility to be academically flexible, self-perception that he was successful, an

ontological belief that his student developed confidence, a judging ontological belief, and an implicit goal to spread positivity. He said,

> I felt great, man. I felt really good. I mean, Jesus, I felt that I…I felt good that he had felt confident enough and felt good enough to produce in the class…So those things, how can you not feel good about seeing a kid blossom a bit after certain trauma, certain hell that he went through.

While reflecting as an ethical/kind human, Kevin noted that his goal to shower positivity on his students was in harmony with a goal for the world to feel positive and aligned with a self-perception that he valued humanity experiencing goodness: "I want the whole world to be happy. I want the whole world to be successful…I think that if I can provide something that's a little bit smacks of success or smacks of positivity…I'm all in." These goals and self-perceptions for humanity were aligned and in harmony with a self-perception and negative emotion that human suffering was difficult for him: "It weighs on my soul that there's people out there that are living difficult and challenging lives."

Cognitive Empathy Ontological Beliefs

Many of Kevin's judging social perspective taking ontological beliefs were in harmony with his cognitive empathy ontological beliefs, which can be delineated by attending to their foci. Judging beliefs exemplified ontological and epistemological beliefs about students' personal lives. While cognitive empathy ontological beliefs are general understandings of his students in his classroom and are often aligned with pedagogical action possibilities. For example, Kevin held cognitive empathy ontological beliefs that his students easily disengaged from instruction due to social media shortening students' attention span and altering neuroanatomy. This belief was aligned with pedagogical action possibilities to condense his instruction: "…it's not only changing

behavior but also almost like rearranging brains. And therefore, to try to break through that idea of very small pieces, very small, little, give them tidbits or whatever."

Aligned with his cognitive empathetic beliefs about his students' emotions was his pedagogical action possibility to employ humor, which was aligned with a goal to make his students feel comfortable. He said, "99% of the things I say are somehow humorous. …I think that I want the kids to be at ease and not to feel like there's some pressure…"

Kevin's attunement to his students' internal states via his cognitive empathy were aligned with pedagogical action possibilities to alter his instruction and employ humor. These aligned beliefs and actions may be indicative of his care and compassion for his students.

Self-Perceived Dispositional Empathy Using Quantitative Data

Unlike the other teachers in the sample, Kevin's highest lower-order IRI dimension of empathy was fantasy (M = 4.29; cognitive dimension), then empathic concern (M = 3.86; affective dimension), perspective taking (M = 3; cognitive dimension), and personal distress (M = 2.57; affective dimension). Like the rest of the sample, Kevin's empathic concern was high, which aligned with his concern for his students based on his assumptions about their traumatic lives. However, unlike the rest of the sample, Kevin scored moderately on his perspective taking construct, which may shed light on his, seemingly, adequate perspective taking action possibility.

Kevin's meaning of the IRI scales from the MDS plot (Stress = .004; Figure 4.4) suggested the fantasy construct centrally overlapped with the other constructs and occupied a substantial portion of the visual space. Empathic concern and perspective

taking mostly overlapped the fantasy construct. However, perspective taking and personal distress did not overlap.

Kevin's meaning of the IRI items suggested five factors (Table 4.5) that existed in two regions: (a) self-perceived no or low efficacy during perspective taking and (b) self-perceived high efficacy during perspective taking. *Factors 1* characterized self-perceived no efficacy during perspective taking associated with ontological beliefs about media. Relatedly, *Factor 2* described self-perceived low efficacy during perspective taking that associated with ontological beliefs about distressing circumstances. *Factor* 3 represented the self-perceived ability to engage in perspective taking in a variety of scenarios. *Factor 4* was associated with a blend of self-perceived compassion and apathy, while *Factor 5* characterized self-perceived tenderness and high-efficacy during perspective taking. Perspective taking was associated with Factors in the region of self-perceived high efficacy during perspective taking. Otherwise, all Factors occupied both regions. However, the empathic concern latent construct was not associated with Factor 3, which characterized general self-perceived perspective taking.

Case Synthesis for Kevin: The Judge

Kevin was a compassionate, veteran English language arts teacher. Kevin often made assumptions about his students without evidence. Particularly, his judging social perspective taking ontological beliefs about his students suggested he used general knowledge about his students as a monolith. His victimhood belief that his students experienced trauma and difficult homelives was aligned with action possibilities to show kindness and academically accommodate students, which was aligned with a goal to

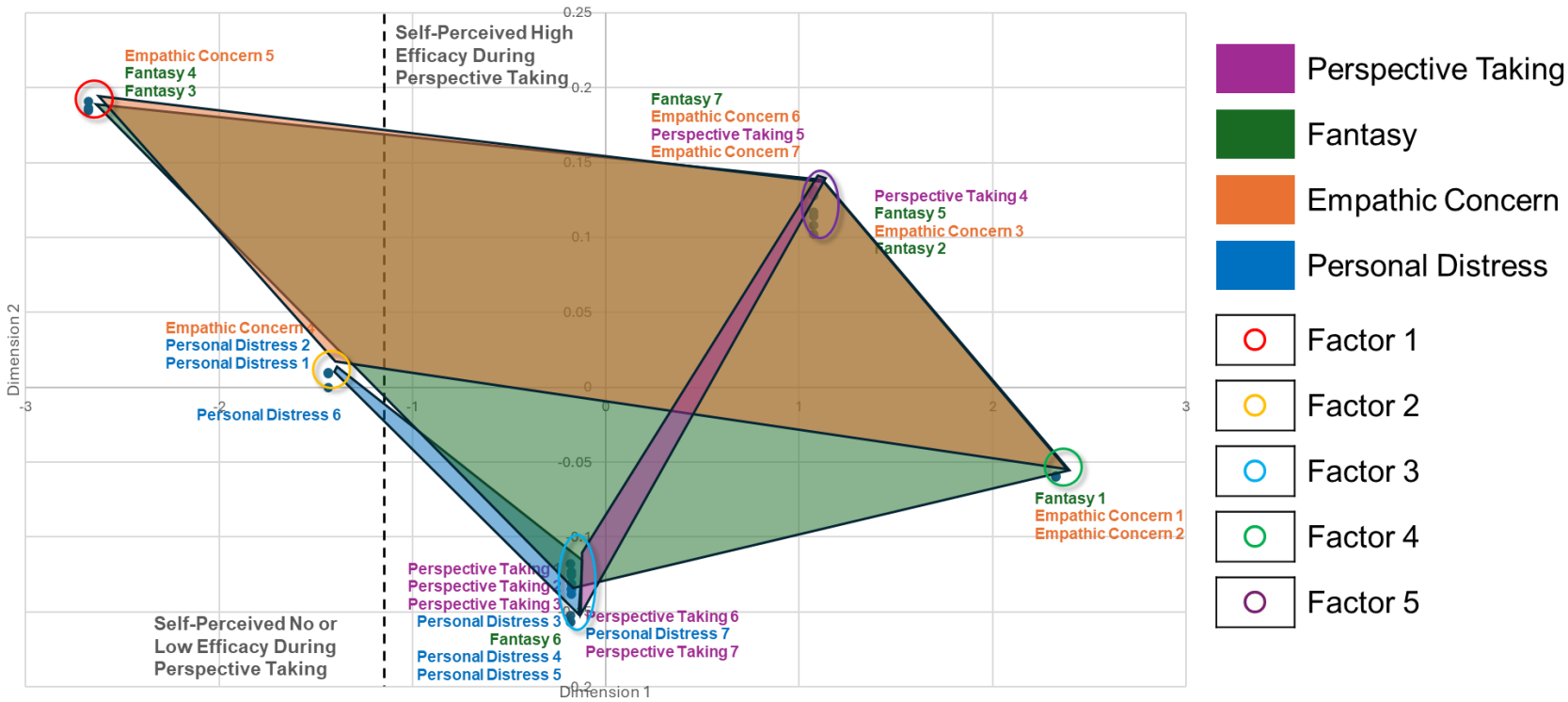

Figure 4.4. Nonmetric Multidimensional Scaling Plot of Kevin's Meaning-Making on the Interpersonal Reactivity Index Survey Items.

Table 4.5. Kevin's Interpersonal Reactivity Index Items and Interpreted Multidimensional Scaling Factors

Factor	Item	Item Prompt
1	Fantasy 3	I am usually objective when I watch a movie or play, and I don't often get completely caught up in it.
	Fantasy 4	Becoming extremely involved in a good book or movie is somewhat rare for me.
	Empathic Concern 5	When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them.
2	Empathic Concern 4	Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal.
	Personal Distress 1	In emergency situations, I feel apprehensive and ill-at-ease.
	Personal Distress 2	I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional situation.
	Personal Distress 6	I tend to lose control during emergencies.
3	Perspective Taking 1	I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other guy's" point of view.
	Perspective Taking 2	I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.
	Perspective Taking 3	I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.
	Perspective Taking 6	When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while.
	Perspective Taking 7	Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.
	Fantasy 6	After seeing a play or movie, I have felt as though I were one of the characters.
	Personal Distress 3	When I see someone get hurt, I tend to remain calm.
	Personal Distress 4	Being in a tense emotional situation scares me.
	Personal Distress 5	I am usually pretty effective in dealing with emergencies.
	Personal Distress 7	When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces.
4	Fantasy 1	I daydream and fantasize, with some regularity, about things that might happen to me.
	Empathic Concern 1	I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.

Table 4.5. (continued)

Factor	Item	Item Prompt
	Empathic Concern 2	Sometimes I don't feel sorry for other people when they are having problems.
5	Perspective Taking 4	If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments.
	Perspective Taking 5	I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both.
	Fantasy 2	I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel.
	Fantasy 5	When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of a leading character.
	Fantasy 7	When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me.
	Empathic Concern 3	When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective toward them.
	Empathic Concern 6	I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.
	Empathic Concern 7	I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.

make his students experience positivity and success. This teaching goal was in harmony with a general goal Kevin had for humanity. He said, “I want the whole world to be happy,” which was aligned with action possibilities and self-perceptions “to be nice.”

Analogous to Kevin not seeking out information about his students’ personal lives, he also used cognitive empathy to anticipate his students’ internal states, which was aligned with shifting his pedagogical action possibilities. For instance, he shortened instruction in line with his beliefs that adolescent attention span shrunk in response to social media usage.

Taken together, Kevin’s judging social perspective taking ontological beliefs about the ubiquity of trauma in his students’ lives were related to action possibilities and goals to lower his academic standards and promote positive social and emotional wellbeing. These alignments emphasized his empathic concern action possibilities and self-perceptions that are related to his care and compassion for his students and others.

Case Summary of Kelly:

The *Detective* Teacher-Coach

Kelly was a science teacher and athletic director at Windsor Tech, but also a crew coach at Horace High. Unlike Kevin, Kelly was not a judge and did not make assumptions about her students. She engaged in *detective* social perspective taking action possibilities. “Detectives continually collect evidence, going beyond the readily available data” and “perceivers who behave like detectives may be rewarded with greater accuracy in their [social perspective taking] attempts” (Gehlbach & Mu, 2023, p. 285). In addition, Kelly’s demonstrated epistemic empathetic ontological beliefs. Epistemic empathy is a process of “teachers’ tuning into and appreciating another’s cognitive and emotional

experiences in constructing, communicating, and critiquing knowledge" (Jaber et al., 2022, p. 241). Jaber and colleagues (Jaber, 2021; Jaber et al., 2018, 2022, 2024) explored this highly specific and situated form of teacher cognitive empathy in mostly science and science related educational settings, and is thus appropriate to apply to Kelly as she aimed to explain difficult science topics to her students. Beyond her detective social perspective taking and epistemic empathy, Kelly demonstrated cognitive empathy and perspective taking that were unique to her two contexts: Windsor Tech and Horace High.

During the interviews, salient role identities included "[past] teacher," "coach," "athletic director," "assistant athletic director," "athlete," "undergraduate student," "master's student," "intern," "mentee," "daughter" "niece," and "hospital volunteer."

Context Framing Kelly's Teacher Role Identity

Kelly was a science teacher at Windsor Tech, the same school where Kevin taught. She taught "two sections, one a day of biology, which [was] primarily 10th grade." Full demographic information for Windsor Tech can be found in Table 4.4. Only 12% of Windsor Tech students scored proficient or advanced on the statewide biology exam, but this score increased since 2017 (SDP, 2023b).

Kelly was also the athletic director of Windsor Tech. Windsor Tech, like many United States high schools, had three athletic seasons and many sports teams. Beyond her athletics responsibilities at Windsor Tech, Kelly was also a crew coach for another high school, Horace High School, which informed her teacher role identity. Horace High was in a different district than Windsor Tech, with a noticeably different student body and context. For example, unlike Windsor Tech, Horace High was not a Title I school and in 2023 a large portion of the students excelled in the statewide assessment: 92% of the

students scored proficient or advanced on the English language arts section, 79% on math, and 75% on the science/biology portion of the assessment (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2024). In 2022, 87% of the students attended school and close to 100% graduated (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2024). Compared to Windsor Tech, Horace High had a large population of White identifying students and a smaller percentage of students had individualized education plans or labeled as English language learners (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2024). Full demographic information for Horace High can be found in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6. Horace High School Demographic Information

Demographic Characteristics	Full School	
	n	*%*
Gender Identity		
Female Identifying	622	49
Male Identifying	639	51
Student Status		
Economically Disadvantaged	187	15
English Language Learner	13	1
Special Education	236	19
Ethno-racial Identity		
American Indian/Alaska Native	3	0.2
Asian	142	11
Hawaiian Pacific Islander	1	0.1
Black/African American	92	7
Hispanic/Latinx	61	5
Multiracial	78	6
White	884	70

Note. School Enrollment = 1,261

Kelly's Role Identity System

Kelly identified as "female; multiethnic/multiracial…; military child who attended Catholic schools; athletic, ambidextrous, ambivert individual with a relativistic view of the world." She held aligned self-perceptions and action possibilities that she was a relatively easy teacher. She said,

> In my class, I let them know it is hard to fail. You'll spend more time trying to fail this class, meaning cut the class, not doing assignments. Because on that perspective, I am super hyper flexible, very accommodating, and in some ways, I am like a softie.

Kelly also held an aligned self-perception and ontological belief that she was an autonomy-supportive teacher (e.g., Cheon et al., 2018): "I give them the freedom to help each other, but I don't force them…," and "I say 'I'm not the authority, I'm not the authority,' I give my students a lot of freedom to do things their way to make it meaningful to them."

Kelly's action possibility to become a teacher was misaligned with her goal to work in collegiate athletic administration. She said, "I had no intention of becoming an actual teacher at any level. I thought I was going to go into athletic administration." Relatedly, she held an ontological belief that her mentor/principal encouraged her to be a teacher. Kelly said, "he was like, 'I think you'd make a great high school teacher.' And I was like, 'What?' Because I was really there during my internship, not necessarily as a teacher, but as an athletic administrator."

She integrated her teacher identity into her coach identity after her principal told her that coaching and teaching were related: "he is also the one who pointed out to me that, and I'd never thought of rowing and coaching to be synonymous with teaching, but it very much is synonymous to teaching. And sports is just another content area." She

also said, “you have a body of knowledge, again in terms of it’s just a different content. You’re trying to impart information about a particular subject or topic to another person. It’s either science here, biology…or in my case, rowing.”

She described her classroom as being “decorated with various science posters, motivational placards…[and] required instructional postings (regarding rules, norms, and expectations).” She noted that most of her students are from the “U.S., Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic” and that she taught ninth grade, 10th grade, and 12th grade in one class. A significant portion of her 48 students are English language learners (23%), have special education status (40%), or both[11] (10%).

Detective Social Perspective Taking Action Possibilities

Kelly’s detective social perspective taking manifested as action possibilities to actively seek out information about her students. She said, “If you tell me your dog ate [your work], I’m going to believe that the dog ate it. If you’re saying with a silly smirk on your face, I might go ask the counselor, ‘Hey, did Charlie Brown's dog eat this thing?[12]’” In another example, Kelly identified alignment between her detective social perspective taking action possibilities and self-perception to improve her teaching:

> …in terms of that for the parents, I was like, “Hey, is there anything I should know that will help me become a better teacher for your child?” And sometimes they do open up. A lot of times it’s like I’ve had things like, “Oh, please know that my son or my child really likes to move around,” or, “My child might seem disengaged, but they really are listening even when their head is down.”

[11] Kelly referred to this group as “double-flaggers.” She said, “When we get our material in the school district, there’s a red flag if they are special ed, and there’s another flag if they are English language learners. And obviously, there’s a double flag if they are English language learners and they're special ed.”
[12] Kelly referred to this detective social perspective taking action possibility as “trust-but-verify.”

In harmony with her detective action possibilities was her action possibility to integrate knowledge about students into her classroom instruction and a self-perception that learning about her students was fascinating. She said, “And it’s interesting to get to know them personally, and then, tie it back to what we’re trying to do.”

In harmony with her detective social perspective taking action possibility was Kelly’s action possibility to encourage her students to self-advocate by sharing personal news in service of her academic flexibility (i.e., “grace”) actions: “I try to let them know, ‘If I do not know your circumstance, I cannot afford you that extra grace.’” She also said, “[I] push them to self-advocate more, and to share more, or to share what they want so that I can understand. That, “Help you help me.” If you’re having issues at home, I need to know.” However, her flexibility action possibility was misaligned from her self-perception that she was flexible and accommodating: “I am super hyper flexible, very accommodating…” This tension highlighted identity processes associated with accommodating students and holding them accountable. She said, “It’s hard because a lot of times I’m like, ‘Okay, this is your last chance. [No,] This is your last chance.’”

Association with Self-Other Overlap Beliefs. Kelly’s detective action possibilities manifested from an early career experience that indicated role identity change. This change was associated with low self-other overlap beliefs, which highlighted misalignment between a self-perception that she could not understand her students’ lived experiences and ontological beliefs about her students, and a goal to not make assumptions and action possibilities to seek out information. She said,

> For me, I don’t want to jump to hasty, judgmental things all at once. I know for me, that stems from one of my first teaching experiences…I remember there was a young man in my class. He had his head down and I was just so irritated. I had had enough. This kid’s lazy…I went up to him

> and I was just like, "What is your problem?" I didn't explode at him per se, but I really was like, "Why are you asleep? Why?" He just was like, "I just got back from work," …I'm just like, "Oh, you just got back from work," which I found incredulous. I was like, yeah, this kid's telling me a load of poop…I reached out to a counselor…[who] said, "Oh yeah, this kid is going to work. His father's no longer in the picture and he is supporting 100% of his family, which is basically him, his four sisters and his mom." He is working out by the airport, and he also does, what is it, FedEx or UPS, just like the packaging bit. So literally this kid would go to school, go to work, do a whole night shift…Because of that initial experience my first teaching year, I try not to jump to conclusions because I remember how I felt when I realized like, oh my gosh, I thought that this kid was totally making up stuff and he had a for real circumstances and reason for his lethargic, head down, non-participatory stuff. So, because of that, I try to get the full picture.

Kelly's detective action possibilities to "get the full picture" and self-other overlap ontological beliefs dovetail in a way supports her perspective taking in two contexts: Windsor Tech and Horace High.

Alignment with Cognitive Empathetic Perspective Taking Self-Perceptions. Kelly had an ontological belief that Windsor Tech and Horace High were diametrically distinct. She said, "[Horace High's district], it's a fundamentally different school district. Their challenges are everything from socioeconomics to racial demographics to academic achievement, and even athletics are vastly— They're polar opposite in terms of that." Her ontological belief that the schools are distinct was aligned with a self-perception that she was familiar with both schools, and thus advantageously able to take multiple perspective: "having one foot in both [schools] kind of keeps me in the middle…So, I guess that's what I mean by it keeps me grounded." This self-perception that holding multiple perspectives was beneficial aligned with her detective action possibilities:

> Well, every child in [in this city is] not traumatized, and once you talk to them, I think in terms of perspective, it's kind of forced me to take a pause and try to get to know my students as actual people, even before attempting to teach them anything in terms of content. …But being in two

> different worlds has really pushed me to really try to get to know my students better in terms of trying to maximize not just their academic success, but to help them out with their goals in life…Not every kid is a product of trauma, not every child.

Kelly elaborated during the member checking interview and said, "[The school districts] say[s] every child's different, but then they paint this very narrow brush [to create a monolith]."

Thus, Kelly's diverse experiences afforded her unique action possibilities to not make assumptions about her students and learn about them. During the member checking interview she exemplified her detective action possibilities by stating, "Who am I to judge?," which denoted a self-perception that is antithetical to judging social perspective taking. These types of actions, beliefs, goals, and self-perceptions also transferred to classroom instruction.

Epistemic Empathetic Ontological Beliefs

In this subsubsection I focused on a particular moment when Kelly reviewed gene transcription with her class. Kelly held an ontological belief that this class was varied: "there is such a broad range of linguistic ability, and in terms of academic intellectual ability." While working with two Spanish speaking students, Kelly experienced tension across her teacher role identity system: tension due to self-perception that she is not a Spanish speaker, a self-perception and epistemological belief that she was not effectively teaching the science concept, an epistemic empathetic ontological belief that one of her Spanish speaking students was struggling to understand the scientific concept, pedagogical action possibilities to instruct, and an implicit goal to teach the concept of gene transcription. Particularly, Kelly had an epistemic empathetic ontological belief about a "bright" student who was struggling to understand nucleotide base pairings (i.e.,

A with T and C with G), which was misaligned with her analogue pedagogical action possibility. She said, I was "saying, 'Apples in a tree, cars in a garage.'…But then she's actually making faces at me with that look of why is she talking about *manzanas*? …she understood the words, but she wasn't understanding that apple starts with an 'A.' 'T,' tree." Kelly had a self-perception that she was struggling to effectively instruct in Spanish: "I'm definitely struggling… I could tell, you can't see [the student's] face, but this young lady here is giving me the look like, I don't know what you're saying…" and "I really don't know a way to say this in Spanish."

While reflecting on this experience, Kelly noted negative emotions that manifested from her struggle to teach the science concept and her students' inability to understand it: "it can be very challenging, sometimes, frustrating, a little bit stressful…" She added an aligned *surface acting emotional labor* action possibility—which describes changing emotional expressions to fit a context that may not match an internal experience (e.g., smile when feeling sad; Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983)—to not let the students see her flounder. She said, "it's a little bit, not frustrating, but that helpless or that terror of I can't let [the student] know that I am internally having this freak out that I can't explain this concept." Aligned, Kelly also shared an action possibility and self-perception to emotionally regulate—here response modulation (Gross, 2014)—in service of her instruction. Kelly said, "It's a mental pause for me…It's self-soothing… It's self-affirming…what I meant by self-soothing in terms of it helps me feel better trying to communicate."

Alignment with Vulnerability Action Possibilities. Aligned with her epistemic ontological beliefs while teaching science concepts to her students were aligned action possibilities to assuage student fears by showing humor and vulnerability. She said,

> When I first meet the kids, I try to allay their fears. I joke around. I really don't speak Spanish that much, but my go-to sentence is *no habla mucho Espanol pero yo intento*, 'I don't speak a lot of Spanish, then, I try.' And sometimes with this, when I'm trying to teach this, I ask them, like *como se dice*, whatever we're trying to learn. So, it'd be like *como se dice* transcription, transition. And it kind of opens them up to a certain, I guess, recognition.

In harmony with her action possibilities to use humor in her classroom and show vulnerability to her students was an implicit action possibility to have her students take her perspective. Kelly said,

> They recognize that I am trying to help them and that I am showing them my lack of better word, a vulnerability, or my ability to show them that, no, just because I am the teacher and I'm an authority doesn't mean that I know everything.

She also said,

> I think that by letting down your guard, showing that you're vulnerable, that again, there is that concept of productive struggle, that it's okay for you not to understand. And in turn it's, again, help me help you. …But I think showing vulnerability. Also, be patient. Be flexible. Be kind…And if you allow yourself to be vulnerable and allowed your see students to do that, see that, but not break down and that kind of vulnerable, but to be, "Hey, I'm human. I get it. You're struggling. I'm struggling. Let's figure it out."

Kelly acknowledged during the member checking interview that encouraging her students to persist with her comes "from an athletic mindset, like 'we will do this together.'"

Cognitive Empathy Ontological Beliefs

Kelly's action possibilities to structure her classroom in the service of student physical and psychological safety was aligned with her cognitive empathetic ontological beliefs about her students' internal states. She said,

> safety not only in terms of them feeling safe, one, it's physical safety so that they feel like that nobody's going to get them if they're arguing with some peer that nobody's going to bum rush the door and all that, in terms of physical safety. In terms of emotional safety…in terms of feeling safe, they are able to articulate that they feel okay. They don't feel judged.

Aligned with her aforementioned action possibility of encouraging student to self-advocate was Kelly's ontological belief that safety was associated with self-advocation, and a low credibility epistemological belief. She said, "I guess I equate safety also in terms of self advocation."

In a different example, Kelly recalled one instance where siblings were dealing with home issues and "Their present situation [was] distracting them from their academics so much so where they feel great anxiety." During a class transition, one of the students did not return to class. Kelly's imagination (i.e., cognitive empathy) of the student produced a distressing mental model. She said, "In my mind, I'm envisioning this child roaming around the hall, finding some hallway, curled up in a ball crying." This was aligned with an empathic concern (i.e. affective empathy) goal to help the student. Kelly said, "So from my emotional perspective, I kind of am like, crap, I don't want to overstep. I want to find out what is going on." Kelly then noted that her cognitive empathy ontological beliefs and affective empathy goal were misaligned and interfered with her teaching, i.e., she knew she had students to teach but was also concerned about

the missing student. She said, “So it was a lot of stuff but then not wallowing in that moment because there were like 25 plus other kids in there.”

Self-Perceived Dispositional Empathy Using Quantitative Data

Her highest self-perceived IRI dimension was perspective taking (*M* = 4.71; cognitive dimension), then empathic concern (*M* = 4.57; affective dimension), fantasy (*M* = 3.43; cognitive dimension), and lastly personal distress (*M* = 1.29; affective dimension). This pattern, which was a similar pattern to Eric and Marcia, characterizes self-perceived concern for others and abilities to take their perspective and less concern places on the self.

Kelly’s MDS plot (Stress = .003; Figure 4.5) suggested an overall simplex structures for each construct. All constructs overlapped on a continuum from a self-orientation + self-perceived low efficacy during perspective taking to a region representing other-orientation + self-perceived high efficacy during perspective taking. Kelly’s meaning of the IRI items suggested five factors (Table 4.7). *Factor 1* and *2* represented self-perceived low efficacy during perspective taking and apathy associated with ontological beliefs about distressing situations. These Factors were also self-oriented and highlighted Kelly’s concern for herself. By contrast, *Factors 4* and *5* were other-oriented and characterized self-perceived compassion and concern for other that was aligned with the action possibility of perspective taking. Finally, *Factor 3* included only fantasy subscale items and represented self-perceived high-efficacy of imagination.

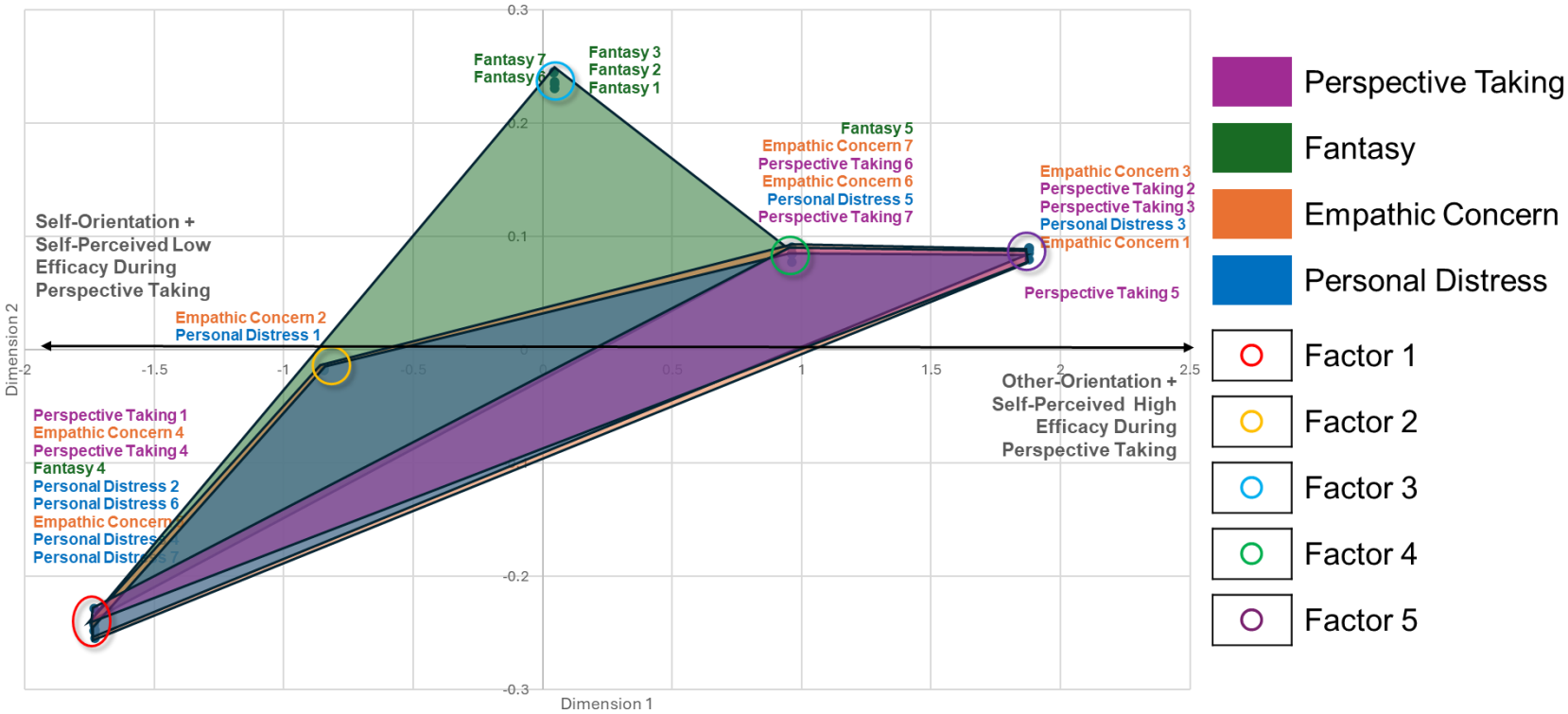

Figure 4.5. Nonmetric Multidimensional Scaling Plot of Kelly's Meaning-Making on the Interpersonal Reactivity Index Survey Items.

Table 4.7. Kelly's Interpersonal Reactivity Index Items and Interpreted Multidimensional Scaling Factors

Factor	Item	Item Prompt
1	Perspective Taking 1	I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other guy's" point of view.
	Perspective Taking 4	If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments.
	Fantasy 4	Becoming extremely involved in a good book or movie is somewhat rare for me.
	Empathic Concern 4	Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal.
	Empathic Concern 5	When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them.
	Personal Distress 2	I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional situation.
	Personal Distress 4	Being in a tense emotional situation scares me.
	Personal Distress 6	I tend to lose control during emergencies.
	Personal Distress 7	When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces.
2	Empathic Concern 2	Sometimes I don't feel sorry for other people when they are having problems.
	Personal Distress 1	In emergency situations, I feel apprehensive and ill-at-ease.
3	Fantasy 1	I daydream and fantasize, with some regularity, about things that might happen to me.
	Fantasy 2	I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel.
	Fantasy 3	I am usually objective when I watch a movie or play, and I don't often get completely caught up in it.
	Fantasy 6	After seeing a play or movie, I have felt as though I were one of the characters.
	Fantasy 7	When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me.
4	Perspective Taking 6	When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while.
	Perspective Taking 7	Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.
	Fantasy 5	When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of a leading character.

Table 4.7. (continued)

Factor	Item	Item Prompt
	Empathic Concern 6	I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.
	Empathic Concern 7	I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.
	Personal Distress 5	I am usually pretty effective in dealing with emergencies.
5	Perspective Taking 2	I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.
	Perspective Taking 3	I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.
	Perspective Taking 5	I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both.
	Empathic Concern 1	I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.
	Empathic Concern 3	When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective toward them.
	Personal Distress 3	When I see someone get hurt, I tend to remain calm.

Case Synthesis for Kelly: The Detective

Kelly, a science teacher and athletic director, held disharmonious self-perceptions that she was flexible to meet her students' needs when she had knowledge about them. Otherwise, she did not provide them grace. She held many epistemic empathetic ontological beliefs, including her beliefs that a student was struggling to understand a difficult science topic, which was associated with a self-perception that she was also struggling to teach the material. Her classroom context—that included English language learners—framed these beliefs and self-perceptions. Emergent from these beliefs and low self-efficacy self-perception was an action possibility to demonstrate vulnerability and humor in service of decreasing student emotional arousal and encouraging them to persist. Kelly did not believe she was like her students ethnically or socioeconomically. This low perception of self-other overlap belief was associated with her action possibility to actively seek out information and learn about her students as a detective. This detective social perspective taking action possibility to actively learn about her students' lived experiences and personal lives was in harmony with an action possibility to build relationships, and in alignment with perspective taking self-perception that being a coach in one context and teacher in another "grounded" her and gave her a unique point of view. Finally, Kelly's cognitive empathy while imagining a student in distress, for whom she had accurate prior knowledge, was associated with affective empathetic concern for the student. This specific instance of teacher cognitive and affective empathy appeared to distract Kelly from her class instruction.

DSMRI analysis characterized Kelly as employing detective social perspective taking action possibilities that were aligned with goals to demonstrate concern, cognitive

empathetic self-perceptions, and ontological beliefs about her students and their learning. Somewhat mirroring the DMSRI, MDS analysis demonstrated a strong relationship between perspective taking and empathic concern, which had the highest mean scores. Visual inspection demonstrated complete overlap and analysis suggested that, like the other teachers in the sample, self-perceived low efficacy during perspective taking was in harmony with self-perceived apathy and neglect, while self-perceived high efficacy aligned with compassion and care. This interpretation aligned with the DSMRI analysis that suggested Kelly's self-perceived care and concern for her students was aligned with her social perspective taking. However, she did not afford them the same "grace" and care when she was not able to take their perspective.

In summary, Kelly's detective social perspective taking action possibilities characterized her teacher empathy, where she sought out information to make accurate assessments of her students, which, in turn, led to pedagogical action possibilities. Her epistemic empathy, which emerged while teaching, also demonstrated Kelly's attention to her students' external and internal processes.

Cross-Case Study Comparisons

Exemplified in the first section of this chapter were many identity system content interactions which led to lower-order forms of empathy. Some expressions of teacher empathy were explicitly situated within the role of a teacher and context of a classroom. Others forms of empathy transcended the classroom context to include actions, beliefs, goals, and self-perceptions for extracurricular activities. Yet, while all four cases highlighted phenomenologically different forms of teacher empathy, shared patterns and themes emerged. For example, the sample of teachers valued action possibilities to build

meaningful relationships with students. Additionally, the teachers demonstrated care and concern for their students and shared personal emotional regulation techniques and beliefs, or lack thereof. In this section, I focus on common patterns and themes from the individual cases through cross-case study comparison and aggregation of quantitative data.

Across the sample, three themes emerged that represented dimensions framing a landscape of possibilities from which teacher empathy emerged: adaptive and maladaptive. The first theme was self-perceived *familiarity* with students' lived experiences, cultural knowledge, ethno-racial views, and personal lives. Teachers presented a continuum from high (i.e., self-perception of being very familiar with students' backgrounds and worldviews), medium, and low (i.e., self-perception of being unfamiliar with students' lived experiences). Lower-order forms of teacher empathy associated with the dimension of familiarity included cognitive empathy, [social] perspective taking beliefs and action possibilities, and self-other overlap beliefs. Operationally, perceptions of familiarity are highly interconnected with self-other overlap cognitive empathy, i.e., I am likely to perceive overlap with another when there is familiarity. For example, Eric, who held self-perceptions that is he like his students and shared cultural knowledge and ethnicity membership said, "I've lived this perspective, so it's just like the shoe fits better." Perceptions of similarity (i.e., self-other overlap) is strongly, positively associated with empathy (Davis, 2006; Erle & Topolinski, 2017; Gehlbach & Mu, 2023; Zaki, 2014) and motivation (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1991; Chen & Rosenzweig, 2024; Graham, 2020; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

The second theme that emerged from the sample was a *responsiveness* action possibility to the students. Here, responsiveness is borrowed from Baumrind's (1966, 1967, 1971, 1989, 1991; Baumrind & Black, 1967) parenting styles theory. Baumrind characterized parenting styles as being high or low on two orthogonal dimensions: demanding versus responsiveness. Demanding represents the degree to which parents control child behaviors. Responsiveness indicates warmth and adaptability to a child's needs. Elaborations of Baumrind's theory demonstrated four parenting styles that align with teaching styles (Wentzel, 2002). These include authoritarian (high demand, low responsiveness), authoritative (high demand, high responsiveness), permissive (low demand, high responsiveness), and neglectful (low demand, low responsiveness) (e.g., Baumrind, 1989). In this sample, all teachers appeared demanding, however responsiveness did vary. Thus, the teachers existed on a responsiveness continuum from high = authoritative, medium, and low = authoritarian[13]. It should be noted that the data suggests all teachers in the sample were warm and responsive to their students. Thus, this is a relative expression of responsiveness. For example, while compassionate, Marcia held a self-perception that she was the authority in her room: "I am the one that's most responsible for what takes place in our classroom, good and bad." Kevin believed the opposite: "But just being a friendly guy and a person authority figure, like I said, authority figure that's going to cajole or support rather than be angry or tear down." Teacher empathy related to responsiveness included cognitive empathy, epistemic empathy, perspective taking, and empathic concern.

[13] The teachers often referred to their preferred levels of authority in their class, which led to the emergence of this theme.

Finally, the third theme was a *flexibility* goal in accommodating students' academic needs in response to personal and other contextual factors. Teachers high in flexibility gave grace and accommodated students, while teachers low in flexibility held their students accountable to complete their work to the best of their ability. Teachers with medium flexibility indicated a hybrid of accommodation and accountability. Flexibility can be synonymous with empathetic teachers. For example, Ross et al. (2023) identified flexibility[14] as a subtheme in their thematic analysis of university student perceptions of teacher empathy and teacher empathetic practices. By contrast, Lauermann and Karabenick (2011) noted that holding students accountable was a contemporary action associated with teacher responsibility, instead of parental responsibility. They, and others, argued that this shift occurred following the No Child Left Behind policies. Drawing on the sample, Eric held his students to their potential, not accommodating them. He said, in reference to speaking with his students, "I'm holding you to your potential." Conversely, Kevin was very flexible and foregrounded this practice as a standard to create success and positivity in a traumatic world. When describing a hypothetical student whose house burnt down, he indicated he would accommodate the student: "he passed." Marcia shared her ontological beliefs about accommodating students as a form of "over-empathizing." She believed this form of teacher empathy to be maladaptive. Lower-order forms of teacher empathy associated with flexibility that emerged from the data analysis included empathic concern action possibilities, self-other overlap beliefs, and judging social perspective taking actions and beliefs.

[14] Ross et al. (2023) did not explicitly define "flexibility."

To demonstrate the emergence of teacher empathy from these dimensions, I highlighted overall trends from the individual cases and conducted cross-case analysis. I used the two schools—Atlantic Spear and Windsor Tech—as an organizing scheme. However, it should be noted that the school context does not, in and of itself, suggest the context produced the emergent themes.

It is also important to reestablish that the emergence of teacher empathy in the following subsection may be maladaptive or adaptive. Additionally, the common themes across the sample represent descriptive dimensions, upon which teacher empathy may be characterized. Relatedly, as these themes emerged from this sample, other dimensions may merge from a different sample.

State Space Landscape of Possibilities

I used state space landscapes to visualize the aforementioned themes, for each case, which constituted the dimensions framing the state space landscapes. I represented the entire case in the landscapes, providing a conceptual overview of the case narrative. State space landscapes offer a conceptual model describing all possible role identity structures in valleys and hills. Hills are associated with repeller states and valleys with attractor states (Abraham et al., 1992). Conceptually, change in a landscape is defined by the valleys and hills, which represent conceptual potential energy required to move in and out of a state (Vallacher & Nowak, 2000). Consider a ball on a hill: it is easier for a ball to move down the hill and settle in a valley, than to summit.

Ashwin et al. (2012) described, and Heino et al. (2022) elaborated for social science, two ways that landscapes can change: gradual and abrupt. Abrupt, or critical, transitions in landscapes are related to developmental change. *Bifurcation-induced*

tipping is one abrupt change that occurs following a change in the attractor landscape and a new landscape of possibilities emerges, with previous attractors disappearing. For example, Marcia moving to a new context led to a shift in her state space of possibilities associated with her teacher role identity change. *Noise-induced tipping* describes an event that causes an immediate perturbation of the landscape and a shift to a new attractor (e.g., social pressure).

I used a three-dimensional model to describe the state space landscape framed by the three dimensions: familiarity, responsive, and flexibility. All dimensions are on a continuum from high, medium, to low, with low scores closest to the origin. The x and z axes define teacher responsiveness and flexibility, respectively. See Figure 4.6 for an example highlighting x and z axes overlapping. The color of the landscape describes teacher familiarity. Dark blue colors indicate higher perceptions of familiarity and pink represents low perceptions of familiarity. I determined teacher scores using the interview data; creating a conceptual composite of the teacher empathy illustrated in the case. Finally, the y axis represents energy, with valleys indicating stable, attractor states that require more energy to overcome. Hills are the opposite, representing repeller states. Energy is conceptually akin to the strength of a commitment within the identity system (Van Der Gaag et al., 2020). The deeper the valley, the more stable and stronger the identity commitment to actions, beliefs, goals, and self-perceptions. I describe the landscapes below and the associated identity system contents and general structures.

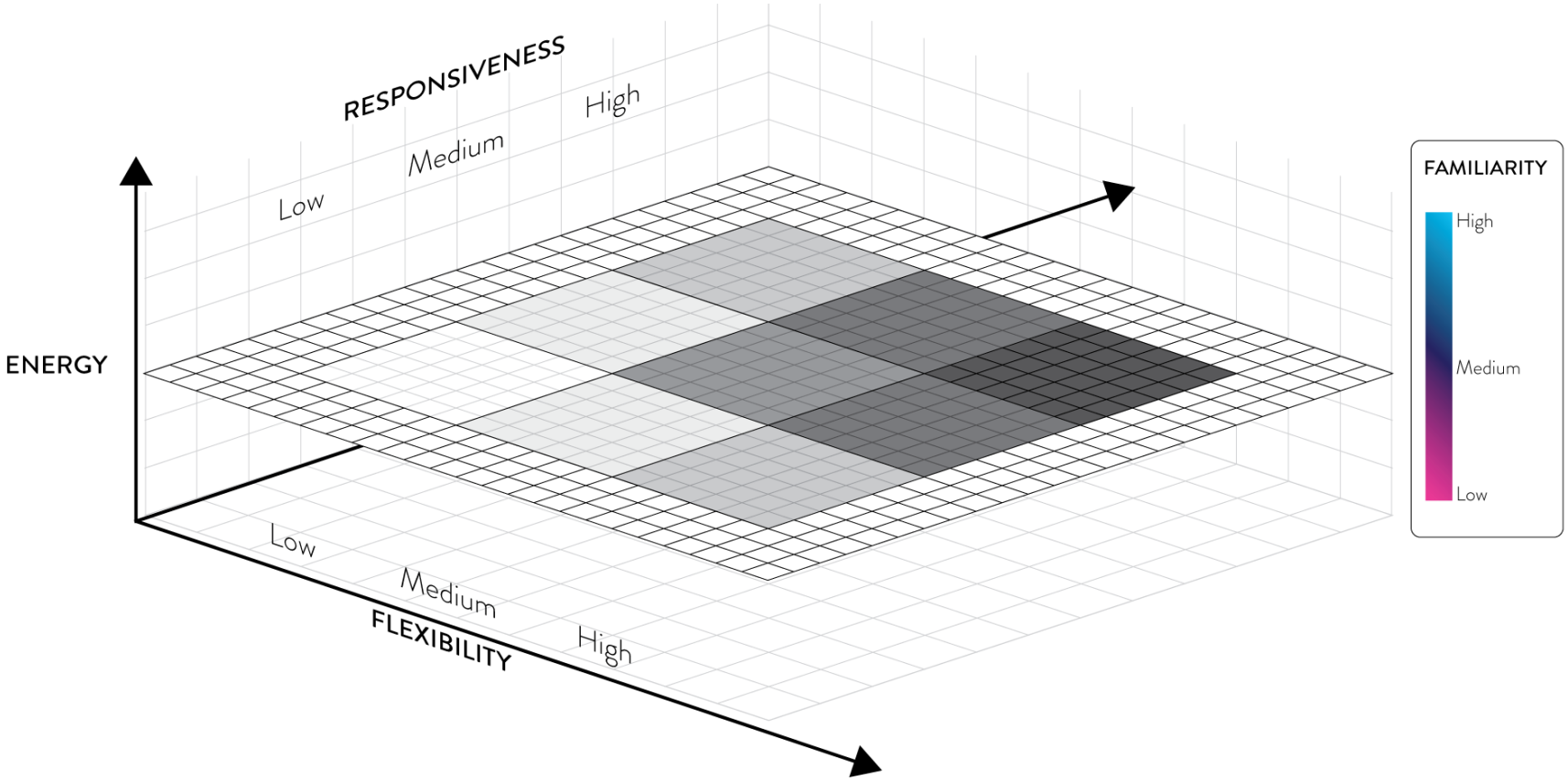

Figure 4.6. Example of State Space Landscapes (Zero State).

Atlantic Spear Case

Familiarity Dimension

Marcia and Eric taught at the same school and shared minoritized identities with their students. For example, Eric identified as Puerto Rican and 28% of the school identified as Hispanic/Latinx and he is an alum of Atlantic Spear. About familiarity with his students, he said,

> I've noticed a lot of them, especially at the beginning of school year, were just surprised when we have things in common. It makes me more interesting to them in a good way. But they're just always surprised to hear. They ask me where I'm from. It's like, "I'm born and raised [here], but my family's from Puerto Rico." Firstly, you know there's the Hispanic students who are happy to have a Hispanic teacher. That's someone that they can culturally bond with. …The more things we have in common, the more things we're able to bond on, the better we're able to build that relationship.

Marcia, like Eric, also shared ethno-racial identity with many of her students. She identified as African-American and 63% of Atlantic Spear students identified as Black/African-American. However, while Marcia may have superficially resembled her students, she held low perceptions of self-other overlap beliefs which emerged from misalignment between an ontological belief about her students and a self-perception that she was unfamiliar with her students cultural and their lived experiences. For example, Marcia said, "I walk in this knowing the huge cultural differences between my experience and teaching here with my students' background," and "I can say that the challenge that I've had is making that deep connection like I made back in [the South] with my students here [at Atlantic Spear]. A lot of that is cultural."

Both Eric and Marcia elaborated on their familiarity during member checking procedures. For example, when sharing this finding Eric said, "that's pretty spot on, just

having those ways to connect with them just makes things a lot easier, and they get so excited when they hear it." Marcia agreed with Eric's sentiment and said,

> [Eric] came from the school. He was a product of the school. ...But what that means is he's closer to the students culturally than I am, so the amount of growth that he has to do is not the same or even as wide as the amount of growth that I have to do to make sure that I am correctly...connecting...with my students in where they are. Because I'm not a teacher from the suburbs. I'm a teacher at [Atlantic Spear].

Thus, while Marcia and Eric may have shared ethno-racial group membership with their students, it was their self-other overlap beliefs and perceived familiarity which framed their teacher empathy. Specifically, Marcia was unable to properly take her students' perspective because she held an ontological belief that their context is foreign. By contrast, Eric was familiar, comfortable taking students' perspective, and made assumptions about students because of his self-perception that he and his students and from the same neighborhood, school, and ethnicity.

Responsiveness Dimension

While Eric's high perception of self-other overlap beliefs afforded him high self-perceptions of familiarity with his students' lived experiences, he also held a self-perception that he was not an authoritarian but demonstrated warmth and responsive listening action possibilities for students, which was aligned with an ontological belief that students appreciated responsive listening. He said, "They don't want an authority figure. They want someone to listen to them, and I was able to really help and deescalate the situation and just get them to understand…"

Marcia shared an antithetical view. While she also demonstrated concern and warmth, she held a self-perception that she was the authority in her classroom, upon which she did not waver. For example, she referred to herself as the "adult" in her

classroom and said, “There’s only one person that's making the rules, and that’s me. We’re going to follow the rules, period,” and “I am the one that’s most responsible for what takes place in our classroom, good and bad.”

Flexibility Dimension

Eric and Marcia held their students to high standards, an indication of low flexibility. They both held ontological beliefs that they—and other teachers—should hold students accountable, which they explicitly discussed during the third member checking interview. Eric elaborated and said,

> I make it more difficult, just like, “I know what you can do, and I want you to do this. It will benefit you more in the future.” …when it comes to academic stuff, no, in that case it's just like, “I’m holding you to your potential.”

Marcia referred to high flexibility and accommodating to students as “over-emphasizing.” She said, “[Over-empathizing is] very harmful for students if we’re not aware of where our empathy is and how we can overdo it by relaxing standards, relaxing student effort.”

State Space Landscape Analysis

Both Marcia and Eric described more empathy for their students when they shared cultural knowledge and lived experiences. Marcia, a Black woman from the Southern United States, held a self-perception that teaching in the South did not require as much effort because she understood her students. Moving to Atlantic Spear shifted her social context and cultural control parameters, initiating a perturbation in her identity system contents and structures. Emergent from her adaptative actions, beliefs, goals, and self-perceptions were new ontological beliefs that she was unfamiliar with her students’ background, which included a shallow attractor state, indicative of a changing and

adaptive identity state (Van Der Gaag et al., 2020) (i.e., moratorium identity status; Marcia, 1966). See Figure 4.7. Overall, her self-other overlap beliefs were misaligned with some action possibilities that she employed in the South, self-perception that Marcia is different than her students, and implicit curricular goals that she transferred from her Southern context, which was framed by a new teaching context. Thus, Marcia's landscape may be characterized as noise-induced tipping from shifting contexts may lead to a bifurcation-induced tipping, where the state space landscape permanently changes. However, more longitudinal data is required to substantiate that claim.

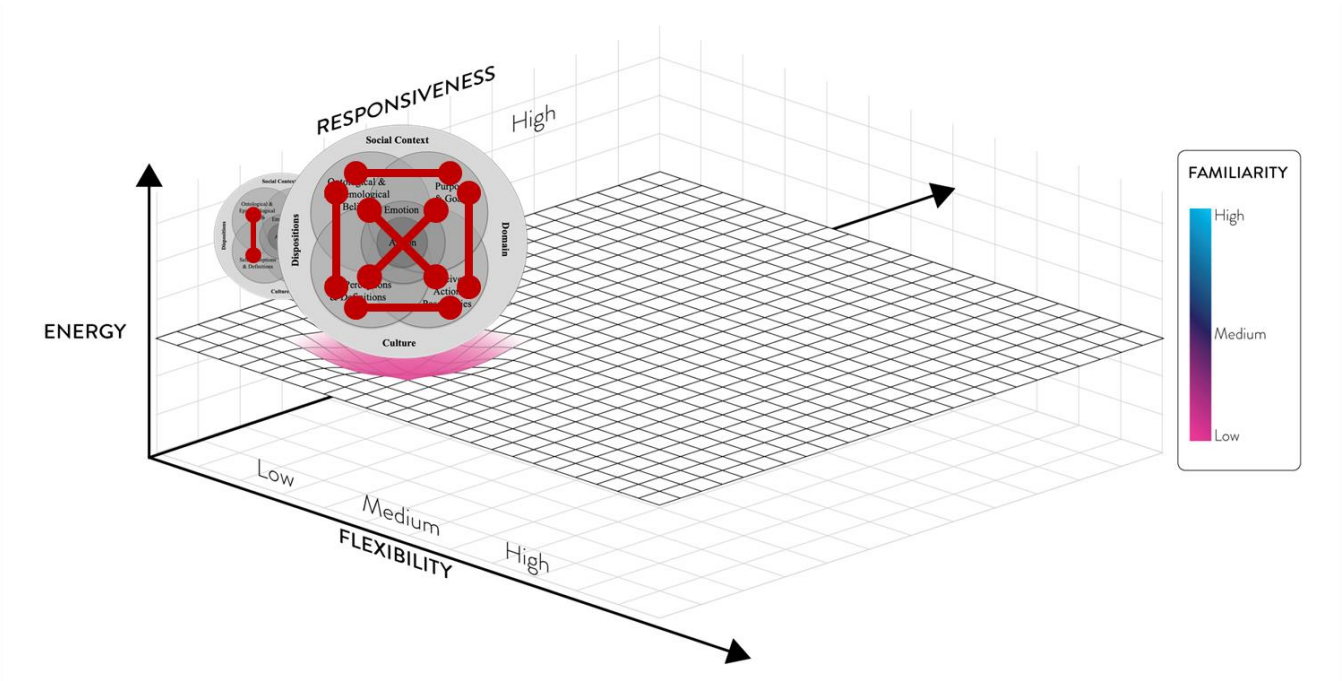

Figure 4.7. Marcia's State Space Landscapes**.** Red lines indicate identity system structural misalignments.

Eric had the opposite pattern. Overall, his high perceptions of familiarity with his students led to a deep valley and strong commitments in his landscape of possibilities. For example, he said, “I’ve lived this perspective, so it’s just like the shoe fits better.” This valley was associated with alignments among his identity system framed by his social context and culture, which acted to stabilize his identity system: self-other overlap beliefs (i.e., alignment between ethno-racial group membership and cultural self-perceptions and ontological beliefs about students ethno-racial group membership and culture), self-perceptions as being similar to students, ontological beliefs about students lived experiences, and curricular goals and action possibilities. See Figure 4.8.

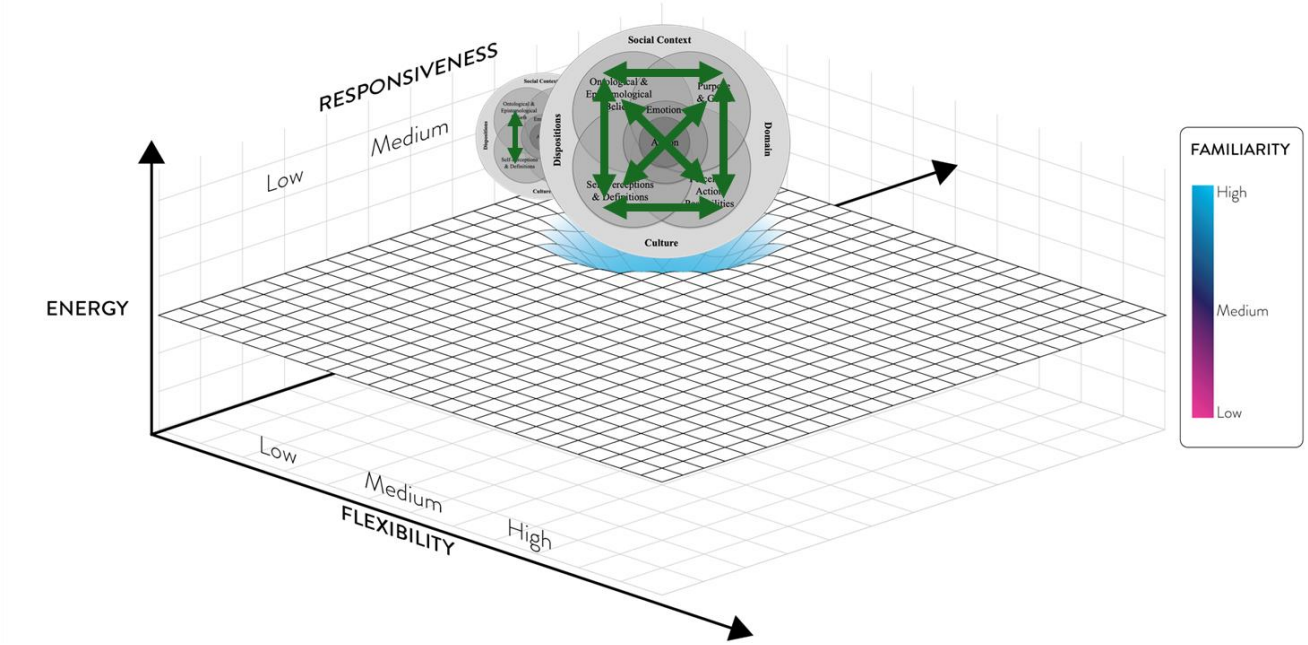

Figure 4.8. Eric’s State Space Landscapes. Green double-sided arrows indicate identity system structural alignments.

Windsor Tech Case

Kelly and Kevin had similar levels of familiarity, responsiveness, and flexibility, but their emergent patterns in their state space landscape illuminated idiosyncratic experiences. They differed in their social perspective taking action possibilities and ontological beliefs. Kelly used detective social perspective taking action possibilities to learn about her students, which informed her actions, beliefs, goals, and self-perceptions. Kevin, on the other hand, was a judge, making assumptions about his students' lived experiences.

Familiarity Dimension

Kevin and Kelly held self-perceptions that they had low levels of familiarity with their students' cultural knowledge and personal lives. Kelly, for instance, said,

> I try not to jump to conclusions because I remember how I felt when I realized like, oh my gosh, I thought that this kid was totally making up stuff and he had a for real circumstances and reason for his lethargic, head down, non-participatory stuff.

This aligned self-perception and action possibility to "not jump to conclusions" was associated with her detective social perspective taking action possibilities. Relatedly, she said, "For me, I don't want to jump to hasty, judgmental things all at once."

Kevin held self-perceptions that he was not like his students, but still made assumptions about them. In particular, Kevin used judging social perspective taking action possibilities on his students in service of their social and emotional wellbeing, related to his assumptions about their homelives. For example, Kevin said,

> My principal…screams like a madman in the hallway at these kids. Then they go to the corner store and I'm sure that the manager at the corner store is yelling at them. The bus driver…those guys are yelling, "Sit down, move back." All that kind of stuff. The cop is definitely down on the

> corner, is definitely not saying nice things to him either. Maybe they do. I don't know. I just, I don't know.

Responsiveness Dimension

Kelly and Kevin were both very responsive to their students and mentioned aligned goals to not be an authority, self-perceptions that they are not the authority in their classroom, ontological beliefs about students' desire to be responsive and less demanding, and action possibilities to provide autonomy and freedom to students. For example, Kelly said, "I give them the freedom to help each other, but I don't force them…" And "I say 'I'm not the authority, I'm not the authority,' I give my students a lot of freedom to do things their way to make it meaningful to them." Similarly, Kevin commented,

> The baggage and the things these kids come with to school with seems insurmountable to me thinking of what the stuff they go through. But just being a friendly guy and a person authority figure, like I said, authority figure that's going to cajole or support rather than be angry or tear down.

Flexibility Dimension

Kevin was more flexible than Kelly. He identified action possibilities to lower his standards and pass students that were aligned with goals to bring positivity to his students, self-perceptions of being a nice guy, and judging ontological beliefs about his students. These alignments were associated with positive emotions. He said the following, regarding his flexibility action possibilities:

> …if [providing a smack of success by giving good grades] moves the needle just a tiny bit with their own self-image, with their own who they are, with their own way they feel about themselves, and it moves it a teeny, little bit, that I'm one million percent down there… I don't want them just to feel good. I would love it globally to mean something to them, and hopefully that that will, feeling good is one thing I've got to be or whatever.

These sentiments were aligned with a judging ontological belief about his students' experiencing trauma. "So those things, how can you not feel good about seeing a kid blossom a bit after certain trauma, certain hell that he went through."

Kelly, on the other hand, had medium flexibility, denoting disharmony between her self-perception that she is flexible with a self-perception that she will not blindly give "grace." Instead, she will seek out information as a detective. She said, "I am super hyper flexible, very accommodating, and in some ways, I am like a softie." She also said, "If I do not know your circumstance, I cannot afford you that extra grace'"

State Space Landscape Analysis

Kevin had a dynamically stable identity system with strong commitments that were aligned with his judging social perspective taking ontological beliefs (Figure 4.9). He, specifically, had aligned self-perceptions that he was a kind, authoritative person; action possibilities to bring positivity and success to his students; goals to make his students experience positive, and ontological beliefs about his students' traumatic lived experiences. For example,

> occasionally you get an email that'd be like, "So-and-so's house burned down and they're in a shelter or whatever." And I'm like, this dude gets, he passed. They passed for the year. I don't care. There's no question. If they do work, that's just icing on the cake.

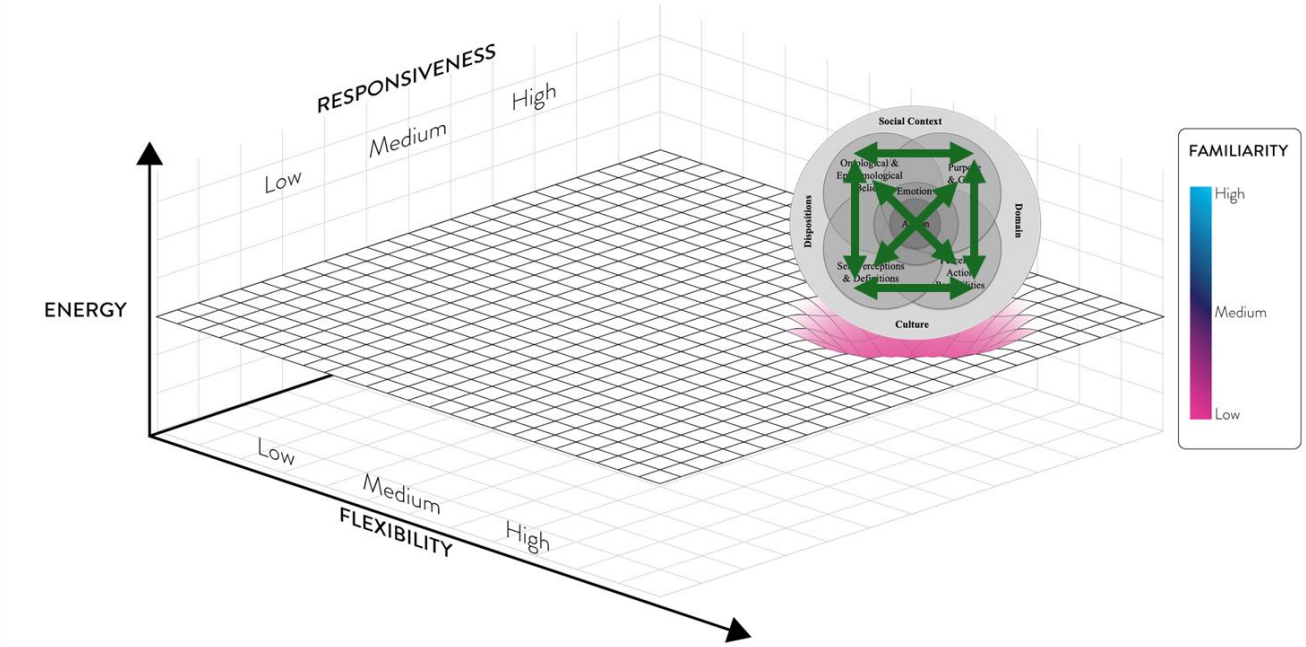

Figure 4.9. Kevin's State Space Landscapes. Green double-sided arrows indicate identity system structural alignments.

On the other hand, Kelly's detective action possibilities and ontological beliefs created a dynamic landscape of possibilities that shifted in response to deficit in her knowledge about students. In her conceptual state space landscape (Figure 4.10), lack of awareness (i.e., low familiarity) was associated with a relatively unstable repeller state that quickly shifted to a lower, stable attractor state, following detective actions. Like she said, "I don't want to jump to hasty, judgmental things all at once." This noise-induced tipping point was also associated with a shift from a repeller state with more tension to an attractor with alignments in her teacher role identity system that was associated with greater flexibility. She said, "I try to let them know, 'If I do not know your circumstance, I cannot afford you that extra grace.'"

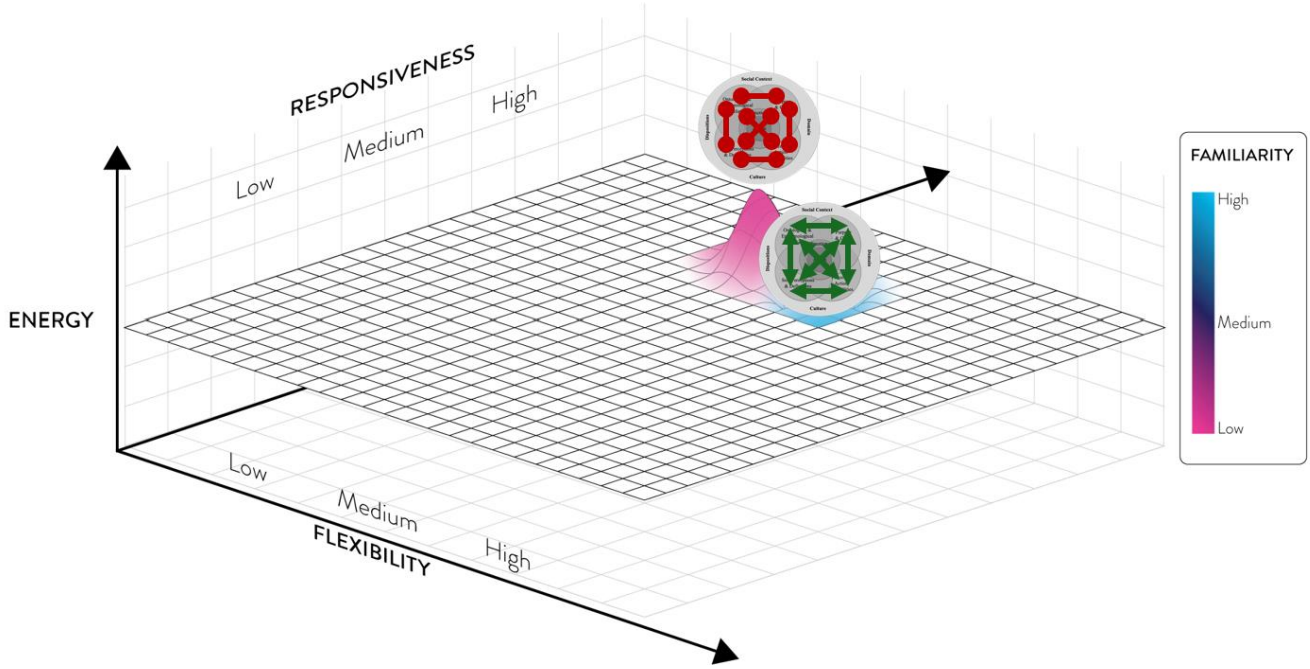

Figure 4.10. Kelly's State Space Landscape. Green double-sided arrows indicate identity system structural alignments. Red lines indicate identity system structural misalignments.

Quantitative Data

Quantitative data from the IRI scale suggested that each teacher experienced and held idiosyncratic self-perceptions of their dispositional empathy. However, major patterns emerged that paralleled the qualitative data: a focus on perspective taking and empathic concern. Across the cases, empathic concern and perspective taking emerged as the highest lower-order of empathy. See Table 4.8. Relatedly, visual inspection of the MDS plots highlighted overlap between empathic concern and perspective taking (Figure 5.11), suggesting teacher empathy may include perceptions of care and compassion for students and taking their perspective. Generally, teacher self-perceived high efficacy

during perspective taking was in harmony with self-perceived concern and compassion. Conversely, self-perceived low efficacy during perspective taking was in harmony with self-perceived apathy or neglect.

MDS analysis across the sample indicated some IRI items factored together. Common items are included in Figure 4.11 and Table 4.9. For example, personal distress 1 and perspective taking 7, fantasy 4 and personal distress 4 characterized self-perceived low efficacy during a perspective taking task in alignment with ontological beliefs about people in distress situations. Empathic concern 5 and personal distress 2, and empathic concern 4 and personal distress 6 characterized self-perceived low efficacy and ontological beliefs about distressing situations. Personal distress 5 and perspective taking 6 and 7; fantasy 2, 5, and 7; and empathic concern 3 and perspective taking 3 was associated with self-perceived high efficacy during perspective taking. Finally, Empathic concern 6 and 7 represented self-perceived tenderness.

In summation, perspective taking and empathic concern may be overlapping and interrelated latent constructs that may emerge entangled as a self-perception element of teacher empathy. Thus, from this view, perspective taking may innately include feelings of care, compassion, concern, and tenderness towards students.

Summary

Taken together, teacher empathy manifested from (a) role identity contents—actions, goals, self-perceptions, and ontological and epistemological beliefs—and (b) structural alignments and tensions within the teacher roles and context. For example, self-perceived familiarity with students' lived experiences comprised of ontological beliefs

Table 4.8. Sample Interpersonal Reactivity Index Means

	Dispositional Empathy Mean	Cognitive Empathy Mean	Affective Empathy Mean	Perspective Taking Mean	Fantasy Mean	Empathic Concern Mean	Personal Distress Mean
Eric	3.25	3.43	3	4.14	3	4	2.1
Marcia	3.64	4.21	3	4.43	4	4.4	1.7
Kelly	3.5	4.07	3	4.71	3	4.6	1.3
Kevin	3.43	3.64	3	3	4	3.9	2.6

Table 4.9. Commonly Factored Interpersonal Reactivity Index Items from the Multidimensional Analyses from the Case Studies

IRI Item	Factors			
	Eric	Marcia	Kelly	Kevin
Empathic Concern 3	4	2	5	
Empathic Concern 4	1	4	1	2
Empathic Concern 5	1	4	1	3
Empathic Concern 6	3		4	5
Empathic Concern 7	3		4	5
Fantasy 2	2	2	3	5
Fantasy 4	3	4	1	
Fantasy 5	2	2		5
Fantasy 7	2	2	3	5
Personal Distress 2	1	4	1	3
Personal Distress 4	3	4	1	
Personal Distress 5	3	2	4	3
Personal Distress 6	1	4	1	2
Personal Distress 7	1	4	1	3
Perspective Taking 1	1	4	1	3
Perspective Taking 3	4	2	5	
Perspective Taking 6	3	2	4	3
Perspective Taking 7	3	2	4	3

Note. IRI = Interpersonal Reactivity Index.

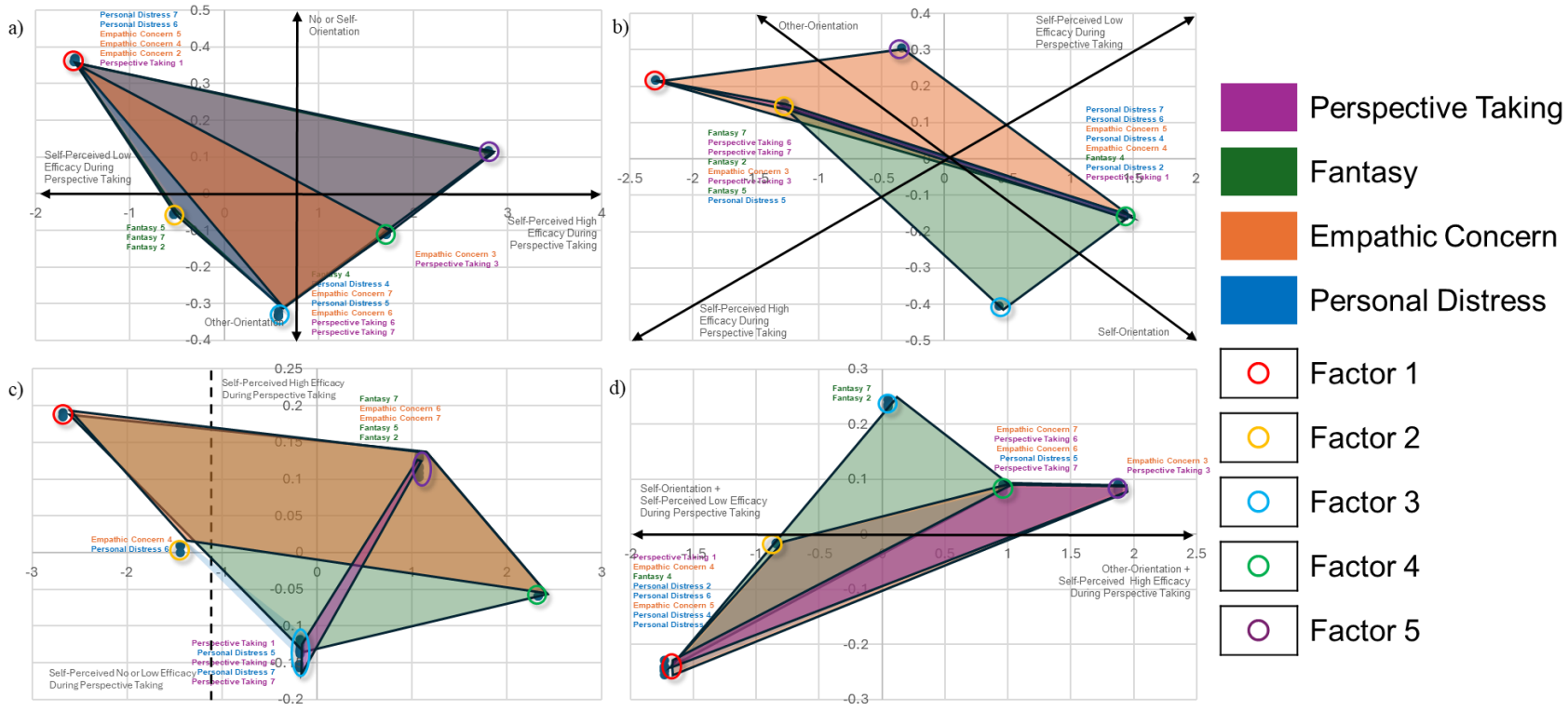

Figure 4.11. Full Sample Multidimensional Scaling. Plot. a) = Eric. b) = Marica. c) = Kevin. d) = Kelly. The personal distress and fantasy constructs were lightened from the original plots to highlight the overlapping relationships between perspective taking and empathic concern.

about students and self-perceived available knowledge, related to self-other overlap. Responsive action possibilities and flexibility goals both characterized self-perception and action possibilities. Additionally, many teachers enacted empathetic action possibilities to learn about students (i.e., judging social perspective taking) or adapted their instruction to aid student academic, emotional, physical, psychological, and social wellbeing. Complementary to these action possibilities were cognitive empathy ontological beliefs, where teachers attempted to understand their students' point of view.

Understanding students and taking their perspective was associated with self-other overlap beliefs, which emerged at the structural level between ontological beliefs and self-perceptions. Misaligned ontological beliefs and self-perceptions led to low perceptions of self-other overlap between the teacher and their students, while the inverse was associated with high perceptions of self-other overlap. Additionally, some lower-order forms of empathy interacted and led to the emergence of new actions, beliefs, goals, and self-perceptions. For example, aligned empathetic concern goals and judging social perspective taking beliefs led to empathically informed action possibilities. Conversely, a cognitive empathy ontological belief and an affective empathetic goal were misaligned and interfered with teaching action possibilities.

Across the cases and the cross-case study comparison, all teachers demonstrated care and compassion. However, the expression of care and compassion was specific to each teacher, their students, and their context. For instance, ontological beliefs about student trauma may have informed teacher goals and action possibilities. In one illustration, teachers who viewed their students as consumed by trauma aimed to

ubiquitously spread positivity, while teachers who did not hold that ontological belief were more guarded with their action possibilities to support students.

These analyses—which foregrounded teachers' authentic empathy experiences by attending to the role, context, and motivations of the teacher—highlighted the various interactions, states, and processes that led to the emergence of teacher empathy within a situated context and landscape of possibilities. In the next and final chapter, I will explicate these patterns and describe the importance of roles, contexts, and motivations in teacher empathy experiences.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this mixed-methods study, I explicated teacher empathy using a role-in-context complex dynamic systems view that employed multiple analytical tools (i.e., DSMRI, MDS, state space landscape, and mean scores) framed by the DSMRI. The research questions that guided this study included the following:

- How does teacher empathy manifest in a teacher role identity in an authentic learning environment?
- What are the alignments and tensions that emerge from a teacher role identity during an empathetic experience in an unfolding classroom situation?
- What is the role of context in the dynamics of teacher empathy?

Analysis from the qualitative and quantitative data suggested that teacher empathy is a context and role sensitive social phenomenon that emerged from role identity contents, structures and processes, which were framed by dispositional, social, and contextual factors. Therefore, teacher empathy is not a single construct that can be easily captured but is a highly situated and dynamic social phenomenon.

These expressions of teacher empathy manifested from each teachers' role identity and motivation and framed by their context. Thereby emphasizing the sensitivity to sociocultural context, where teacher empathy reflected and shifted in response to the moment-to-moment actions, decisions, beliefs, goals, self-perceptions, and emotions of the teacher, their students, their context. The context-sensitivity of teacher empathy also highlighted the role of teachers mis/matching ethno-racial identities with their students,

thus calling attention to the unique ways by which self-perceptions in the form of social identities may influence teacher empathy.

Finally, this study brought attention to the diverse ways that empathy can help teachers, but also hurt them. The adaptive and maladaptive forms of teacher empathy highlight a double-edged sword characterization. However, appraisals of empathy as adaptive and maladaptive were situated in the context and identity of the teacher.

In the following sections I expound on the major findings I just discussed and answer the three research questions. Next, I discuss theoretical, methodological, and practical implications from this study; detail limitations; and conclude with recommendations for administrators, educators, policymakers, and researchers interested in teacher empathy.

Teacher Empathy is Dynamic, Complex and Anchored in Teacher Role Identity

Teacher empathy in this study was not one thing, but represented a collection of self-perceived caring, compassion, apathy, and high and low efficacy during perspective taking; action possibilities of perspective taking and classroom practices; goals of compassion and accountability; and finally, ontological beliefs about the students and their lived experiences. These were reflective of and in response to alignments and tensions within the identity system, including social and contextual factors. Thus, teacher empathy manifested as role identity contents. For example, epistemic empathy emerged as an ontological belief about student learning. However, empathy, a multidimensional and multifaceted social phenomenon, also manifested as multiple role identity contents: empathic concern emerged as a goal and action possibility, while perspective taking emerged as self-perceptions and action possibilities. Additionally, as displayed in Table

5.1, most forms of empathy emerged as ontological beliefs and perceived action possibilities, which may telegraph a role-in-context conceptualization of teacher empathy as an active process and as knowledge about students. A complete list of the quotes and DSMRI analysis for Table 5.1 can be found in Appendix G, which answers research question one.

Generally, empathetic actions, beliefs, goals, and self-perceptions were aligned with other role identity contents (see Table 5.1). However, tensions were present in the sample and often associated with epistemic empathy when Kelly, for instance, self-perceived a struggle with her instruction.

Quantitative data suggested that, among the participants in this study, teacher empathy was generally associated with and emerged from teachers' ontological beliefs about their students and was aligned with action possibilities, goals, and self-perceptions of care, compassion, and concern. Specifically, the IRI mean scores indicated that the teachers perceived themselves as having high perspective taking and empathic concern toward others. Moreover, the MDS analyses suggested a relationship between perspective taking and empathic concern: self-perceived high efficacy during perspective taking was, generally, aligned with self-perceived compassion and in alignment with the action possibility of perspective taking. However, self-perceived low efficacy during perspective taking was in harmony with self-perceived neglect or apathy. Thus, perspective taking efficacy may be highly interrelated with self-perceived prosociality and the ability to engage in perspective taking. For example, Kelly's state space landscape analysis exemplified this relationship employing her detective social perspective taking action possibilities.

Table 5.1. Sample Empathetic Role Identity Contents and Alignments

	Ontological and Epistemo-logical Beliefs	Purposes and Goals	Self-Perceptions and Self-Definitions	Perceived Action Possibilities
Ontological and Epistemological Beliefs				
Cognitive Empathy		Alignment		Alignment
Epistemic Empathy				Mis/alignment
Judge Social Perspective Taking	Harmony	Alignment	Alignment	Alignment
Purposes and Goals				
Empathic Concern	Alignment			
Self-Perceptions and Self-Definitions				
Empathy-Based Stress		Alignment		Alignment
Perspective Taking	Alignment			
Perceived Action Possibilities				
Cognitive Empathy	Alignment		Alignment	
Detective Social Perspective Taking			Alignment	Harmony
Empathic Concern	Alignment	Alignment		
Perspective Taking	Alignment		Alignment	
Aligned Ontological Beliefs and Self-Perception				
Self-Other Overlap	Alignment	Alignment	Alignment	Alignment
Misaligned Ontological Beliefs and Self-Perception				
Self-Other Overlap		Mis/alignment	Misalignment	Mis/alignment

Note. Full data are available in Appendix G.

Qualitative state space analysis of Kelly's data demonstrated how changes in her ontological beliefs about her students (i.e., familiarity) were aligned with perspective taking action possibilities and greater flexibility to accommodate students' needs. However, teacher empathy did not always manifest from changes in the familiarity dimension. For instance, Kevin's teacher empathy was dynamically stable and did not necessarily change based on new information. Instead, Kevin's judge social perspective taking ontological beliefs were aligned with his goal to imbue his students with positivity, action possibilities of showing success, and self-perceived kindness.

Social perspective taking primarily characterized Kevin and Kelly's teacher empathy. As noted, according to Gehlbach and Mu (2023), there are two forms of social perspective taking: judging and detecting. As a judge, Kevin held ontological beliefs that were not associated with self-perceptions that he knew his students or goals and action possibilities to learn about them. Instead, Kevin was comfortable making assumptions about his students. By contrast, Kelly did the opposite. Inspired by an early career experience, alignments across her identity system led to detective social perspective taking action possibilities. Within her science classroom context, her detective social perspective taking was associated with her epistemic empathy for her students, low perception of self-other overlap ontological beliefs, and action possibility to have her students take her perspective, which was in alignment with a goal to have her students persist through challenges, like she was. These opposite expressions of teacher empathy shed light on a possible challenge with detective versus judge social perspective taking: how to appropriately and efficiently make meaning of students' perspective in service of their learning. Detective social perspective taking is laborious and requires extra effort

that teachers may need to preserve and allocate to other classroom practices. However, seeking out information will lead to more accurate information. By contrast, judging is a useful heuristic that teachers can employ to quickly assess situations and focus on student learning and achievement. Yet, it may also be associated with false empathy. “False empathy is the failure of the empathizer to see eye-to-eye with the individual for whom they aim to empathize” (Warren, 2024). This inability to understand a student’s perspective may have deleterious effects as teachers’ attempt to make assumptions about students. While Warren (2015, 2018) advocated for teachers to take their students’ perspective, he acknowledged limitations in this pedagogical practice. For instance, in one study he conducted on White female teachers empathizing with their students, Warren (2015) described one teacher who inappropriately made meaning of her student’s marginalized racial identity through her own marginalization by virtue of her sexual orientation. As Warren (2024) states, “These White anti-racists really thought of themselves as more empathetic than they really were. In fact, the people of color they aimed to help did not receive their benevolence and charity as help at all. And in turn, these White anti-racists developed feelings of discontent and frustration…”

While teacher empathy manifested as identity contents, empathy also emerged from structural alignments and tensions between contents, which answered research question two. For instance, high perceptions of self-other overlap beliefs emerged from the aligned ontological beliefs about students and self-perceived similarity, while low perceptions of self-other overlap beliefs were associated with misaligned ontological beliefs and self-perceptions. For instance, Eric’s high perceptions of self-other overlap manifested from his ontological beliefs about his students ethno-racial group membership

and cultural background with his self-perceptions as an Atlantic Spear alum and Latino—emphasizing the role of his social identity in his teacher empathy. Eric's self-other overlap aligned with action possibilities to take his students' perspective and make assumptions about them, regardless of age. Eric's self-perceived low efficacy during perspective taking occurred when he was unfamiliar with his students' lived experiences. This may highlight a possible manifestation of parochial empathy, where Eric responded to and treated his perceived similar students differently. This does not suggest that Eric showed favoritism but does highlight his ability in sharing more empathetic resources with those whom he believed he shared group membership. By contrast, Marcia, who did share ethno-racial group membership with her students, still identified low perceptions of self-other overlap and did not showcase parochial empathy. She appeared generally concerned with her students and their ability to academically succeed in her class, which was aligned with action possibilities unique to her classroom context and a self-perception that her success is determined by her students' success.

Teacher Empathy is Socioculturally Contextually Dependent

Context, like role identity, was a very important factor in determining the form and function of empathy—answering research question three. Most notably from the DSMRI and state space landscape analyses, Marcia's changing contexts led to new forms of empathy and even action possibilities that she had not considered. This included checking in with her students at the beginning of every class and making snacks available to her students during a class session. However, Eric, who intimately knew his teaching context, was able to make inferences about his students that he did not perceive would be available in a different school. Thus, I argue that race and ethnicity are not the sole

mediating factors in Marcia and Eric's teacher empathy, but their shared culture: Eric sharing culture with his students and Marcia not. Denzel Washington relayed a similar sentiment when he explained why he directed a movie about an African-American family. He said "It's not color, it's culture" (SiriusXM Editor, 2016).

Unlike Eric and Marcia, Kelly's ability to engage with two contexts simultaneously—Windsor Tech and Horace High—afforded ontological beliefs about students that aligned with her self-perceived consciousness and conscientiousness, and detective social perspective taking action possibilities. She noted that her context—straddling two different schools—highlighted opportunities and weaknesses at both schools, which included her ontological belief that not all students at Windsor Tech experienced trauma.

Unique to this sample was the inclusion of trauma in all cases. Kevin, in particular, spoke about his students' trauma, which aligned with action possibilities to demonstrate positivity and accommodate his students. While Kevin would most likely still show the same type of empathy in a different context, Kevin's ontological beliefs about student trauma were associated with the empathy expressed in the data.

Teacher Empathy is Adaptive and Maladaptive

While often touted as a best practice in education, teacher empathy is a double-edged sword. For example, Marcia held disharmonious ontological beliefs that empathy is required for teaching, but too much can be a problem (i.e., lead to empathy-based stress). She also mentioned that over-empathizing with students can reduce rigor and lower academic standards. Similarly, Kelly's epistemic empathy supported her inferences

about her science student's learning. Yet, she also discussed how affectively and cognitively empathizing with one student distracted her from teaching.

Specific dimensions of teacher empathy can also be evidence of simultaneous adaptive and maladaptive empathetic expressions. A paragon of this dual dichotomic experience was social perspective taking. For example, Kevin's judge social perspective taking may appear maladaptive when he made unfounded assumptions about students. Yet, judge social perspective taking can be adaptive if a teacher does not have time to learn about each student. Conversely, detective social perspective taking may appear adaptive—like when Kelly actively sought information about students to effectively shift her teaching practices—but it is also costly. Thus, the expressions of teacher empathy and their adaptive versus maladaptive nature must be viewed through the lens and context of the situated nature of the empathetic experience. This criticism of perspective taking—more specifically judge social perspective taking—is not a call for eliminating the practice. Instead, we must be conscious of the forms of empathy that are adaptive and maladaptive. However, the explicit evaluation is, like teacher empathy, dependent on role identity and context.

Summary of Findings

Overall, teacher empathy is complex, dynamic, multidimensional, context-sensitive, and is adaptive and maladaptive. From this study I demonstrated the value of using a role-in-context complex dynamic systems approach to capture authentic teacher empathy that is grounded in a teachers' motivations, identity, and context. This novel approach pushes the theoretical, methodological, and practical boundaries of teacher empathy, which is often captured and described using reductive paradigms.

Research Implications

Theoretical Implications

I argue that a role-in-context conceptualization of teacher empathy using the DSMRI is advantageous because it integrates the many overlapping empathy dimensions into a cohesive framework that grounds teacher identity, motivation, and context, which are often absent from teacher empathy theory. This view, thus, emphasizes profession specific forms of empathy that may benefit a person occupying a role in one context, but not another (e.g., teacher versus parent). This view challenges general, decontextualized conceptualizations of empathy (e.g., dispositional empathy) that rarely describe the complex dynamics of teacher identity and motivation that are framed with specific social context (cf. Barnes & Thagard, 1997; Gehlbach & Mu, 2023; Mill, 1865; Zaki, 2014).

Also unique to teacher empathy scholarship, a role-in-context approach assumes a complex dynamic systems paradigmatic view, which undergirds the DSMRI framework and analysis. Teacher empathy from a complex dynamic systems view manifests from multiple interacting components and emerges in non-linear dynamics that are greater than the sum of their parts. Thus, complex dynamic systems are well suited to capture the socially distributed and dynamic empathetic experience in the classroom. This view is substantiated by the cyberneticist, Gregory Bateson (2000), who claimed that social phenomenon need to be described differently than physical sciences. Relatedly, Bateson also contended that patterns of meaning (i.e., mind) are distributed among people within a system. Thus, I argue this meaning-making within the system is made through each other's lenses, and mediated by empathy dimensions (e.g., perspective taking, self-other overlap).

In summary, my role-in-context complex dynamic system approach to conceptualize teacher empathy integrated empathic motivation and identity scholarship to more effectively capture authentic empathy in its context. The approach suggests a new set of methods required to conduct research.

Methodological Implications

Aligned with a new theoretical approach to conceptualizing teacher empathy are new approaches for studying teacher empathy. In this study, I primarily used DSMRI methods to capture teacher empathy. In particular, DSMRI protocols combined all empathy constructs in the role identity system, instead of backgrounding contextual components common in traditional teacher empathy measures. These measures are usually in the form of self-report surveys that may include self-biasing (Aldrup et al., 2022) and reduce the empathy phenomenon to linear assumptions that do not properly fit the data. Moreover, these linear methods often employ mean scores, which are not representative of any participant.

Practical Implications

Teacher empathy scholarship aims to support teachers, students, and education in a variety of domains. However, as discussed, traditional teacher empathy research backgrounds components in a system, often in the form of holding a variable constant in a linear model. However, this study, which sought to examine and explicate authentic teacher experiences by emphasizing the interactions of role identity, motivation, and context, provided a set of recommendations that are not generalizable, but may be adapted to fit any context. This includes teaching, teacher wellbeing, and teacher preparation.

Teacher empathy emerged throughout the study in different role identity contents and from role identity structures. Thus, empathy is not one thing but is a banner term representing many phenomena. Therefore, my primary recommendation for administrators[15], teachers, and teacher educators is to be clear when advocating that teachers demonstrate empathy to their students (Eisman & Patterson, 2024). I recommend reflecting on the following questions:

What type of [profession specific form of] empathy may benefit teachers and students in their context? What are the related empathetic action possibilities? Goals? Ontological beliefs? Self-perceptions? And what are the maladaptive forms that we want to eschew?

The constructive and critical self-reflection for which I advocate may promote self-aware conceptions of empathy that are intertwined and framed by biased beliefs about students, situated self-perceptions, goals, and action possibilities. Such reflections captured within the data showcased the variety of ways teachers employ and conceive teacher empathy. For example, while Marcia implicitly acknowledged the role of cognitive empathy to change her pedagogical practices to better support her students in her new Atlantic Spear context, she also discussed the negative impact of teacher empathy on herself and her students: "I do hold onto [the heaviness of my students' trauma] probably more than I should…I do feel some kind of way." and "It can really hurt our students if we're not careful with [over-empathizing]." She added, "it's very harmful for students if we're not aware of where our empathy is and how we can overdo it by relaxing standards, relaxing student effort." She concluded that empathy is necessary, but must be navigated: "Yes, empathy, I dare say you can't teach without it,

[15] Kelly mentioned during her member checking interview that her school district encourages teachers to show empathy, but did not define or expand on their conceptualization of empathy in the classroom.

but there is such a thing as too much empathy." Eric also reflected on his empathetic experiences and held fervent ontological beliefs that sharing cultural connections with students aided him in the classroom. He said, "I think also a big part of it's just being from [the same city]…I feel like just also me being from here, I went to this school, I have so much in common with them…" Such sociocultural contextual factors may prevent perspective divergence and false empathy. This was not the case with Kevin. Kevin, who did not explicitly share a cultural background with his students, suggested that his implicit goals promoted his interest to provide his students with success: "…if [providing a smack of success by giving good grades] moves the needle just a tiny bit with their own self-image, with their own who they are, with their own way they feel about themselves…I'm one million percent down…"

Profession specific forms of empathy prioritize certain dimensions over others. For example, physician empathy (Hojat et al., 2001; Stansfield et al., 2016) emphasizes cognitive forms of empathy over affective. While this may be a useful rule for teacher empathy, placing constraints and limitations on teacher empathy may not benefit anyone. Instead, I recommend teachers be conscientious and intentional about their empathy and how it makes them feel and how it supports their students. Thus, adaptive and maladaptive forms of teacher empathy are unique to each teacher role identity and their context. This includes, but is not limited to, when teacher empathy leads to empathy-based stress, which Marcia experienced, that overwhelms and emotionally taxes teachers.

While many teachers discussed the emotional and psychological cost of teaching (Appendix H), teacher empathy is also related to stress and burnout (Kliś & Kossewska, 1998; Wróbel, 2013). Examples of teacher empathy leading to negative emotional

experiences includes Eric's concern for a student with whom he held high perceptions of self-other overlap beliefs and Kelly's empathic concern for a student that distracted her from effectively teaching. Thus, administrators must be conscious and aware of their teachers' emotions (Floman et al., 2024) and teacher educators must prepare future teachers to emotionally regulate (Eisman et al., under review). Some forms of teacher regulation can improve teacher wellbeing and instruction (Aldrup et al., 2024), which may benefit teachers who take on their students' emotions and demonstrate concern for their lives outside of school.

Research Limitations

Like all research, this study included limitations that I enumerate here. One limitation from this research was allowing teachers to choose what video segment to record. Teachers may opt for a session that is atypical and that favors their self-perceptions and egoism (i.e., self-biasing; Aldrup et al., 2022). Related, recording a class session may cause a Hawthorne effect (e.g., Landsberger, 1958), meaning that the students and teachers may act differently than if the camera were absent. Another major limitation is the use of interview data. Many have examined how verbal data can be unreliable (e.g., Ericsson & Simon, 1980), particularly as interviews occur in non-naturalistic settings, are shaped by the interviewee's perspectives, and influenced by the presence of the interviewer (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Relatedly, this research foregrounded teachers' perceptions of their empathy and backgrounded the intended recipients of the empathetic experience (e.g., students, parents). Future studies should build on this study by conceptualizing and investigating the target's perceptions of teacher empathy. Another possible limitation, and thus a fruitful avenue for future

research, is the absence of explicit data collection and analysis of the teachers' contextual control parameters. Like the previous limitation, data collection only included teachers' perceptions of their context, domain, culture, and dispositions, but lacked perceptions by others. Finally, while I used checks on my analyses to improve the trustworthiness of my results (i.e., a data auditor and member checking), interpretivist analysis may still include my biases.

Conclusion

In this study, I explored teacher empathy using a role-in-context complex dynamic systems view that employed the DSMRI. Overall, teacher empathy emerged as a collection of actions, beliefs, goals, self-perceptions, or combination thereof. These expressions of teacher empathy manifested from each teachers' role identity and motivation and framed by their context. MDS suggested that, generally, self-perceived efficacy to take a student's perspective was aligned with self-perceptions of care and concern. Conversely, self-perceived low efficacy was aligned with self-perceptions of apathy.

The major forms of empathy that characterized the four teachers included their beliefs about their self-other overlap with their students and social perspective taking. In particular, teachers who identified high perceived self-other overlap had alignment between ontological beliefs about their students' background and self-perceived shared background with their students. Tension between ontological beliefs about students' lived experiences and self-perceived similarity manifested as low perceptions of self-other overlap. Additionally, detective social perspective taking action possibilities manifested as seeking information about students, while judge social perspective taking emerged as

ontological beliefs about students related to assessments and judgements about students. While generally perceived as useful, not all empathic expressions were advantageous in the classroom context.

A central challenge describing adaptive teacher empathy is that empathy is difficult to define and even harder to measure. My solution to this problem is to use a role-in-context complex dynamic systems approach that advocates for profession specific and intentional forms of empathy that may be different from lay-person conceptualizations (Hall et al., 2021). Thus, teachers must be thoughtful of the ways in which they enact and demonstrate empathy, as teacher empathy alone cannot be the answer to all problems because it does not always produce the right results (Bloom, 2016; Boler, 1997; Breithaupt, 2018). Yet, it is still associated with student achievement and classroom practices and goals and should be encouraged between students and teachers.

While empathy is a relational process, I argue that teachers must be the ones to make the first step, as they hold the power in their classroom, which may be associated with positive change (Clark, 1971). This, in turn, becomes a cyclical process as power and empathy are related: “I now believe that one cannot fully understand the fundamental nature of power as a key element in social interaction without at the same time seeking to understand the concept of empathy as a counter force to power” (Clark, 1980, p. 188).

This issue of power is exacerbated when considering the current social, political, and economic milieu, and contemporary focus on anti-racist and diversity, equity, and inclusion programs (SDP, 2020). However, the intersection of race, power, and empathy is not simple. Indeed, empathy expressions like self-other overlap, parochial empathy, false empathy can be related to race and ethnicity. That is, understanding the person’s

cultural knowledge, lived experiences, and worldviews. While race and ethnicity may be treated as monoliths, teacher empathy in schools is sensitive to individuals and context. As Du Bois (1935) wrote

> The proper education of any people includes sympathetic touch between teacher and pupil; knowledge on the part of the teacher, not simply of the individual taught, but of his surroundings and background, and the history of his class and group; such contact between pupils, and between teacher and pupil, on the basis of perfect social equality, as will increase this sympathy and knowledge; facilities for education in equipment and housing, and the promotion of such extracurricular activities as will tend to induct the child into life. (p. 328).

But I do not believe that teachers should necessarily match their students ethno-racially. While self-perceived racial and ethnic identities did influence teacher empathy in the four cases, social positioning, alone, did not account for the varied ways empathy emerged. The data demonstrated that perspective taking and understanding students' cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds informed teacher empathy, too. But, as discussed, teachers must also safeguard themselves and not maladaptively take on their students' emotions. Though, this may be facilitated by sharing ethno-racial group membership between teachers and students.

In conclusion, teachers must be conscientious of how they enact teacher empathy in their classrooms, with their students, and how they take those experiences home. Through these practices, teachers will improve their practice, develop more meaningful relationships with their students, and even improve their wellbeing, thereby preventing burnout and decreasing teachers leaving the profession.

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APPENDIX A

SURVERY BATTERY

Part 1

The following statements inquire about your thoughts and feelings in a variety of situations. For each item, indicate how well it describes you by choosing the appropriate number on the scale at the top of each question. READ EACH ITEM CAREFULLY BEFORE RESPONDING. Answer as honestly as you can. (1= does not describe me well, 5 = describes me very well)

1. I daydream and fantasize, with some regularity, about things that might happen to me.
2. I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.
3. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other guy's" point of view.
4. Sometimes I don't feel sorry for other people when they are having problems.
5. I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel.
6. In emergency situations, I feel apprehensive and ill-at-ease.
7. I am usually objective when I watch a movie or play, and I don't often get completely caught up in it.
8. I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.
9. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective toward them.
10. I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional situation.
11. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.
12. Becoming extremely involved in a good book or movie is somewhat rare for me.
13. When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of a leading character.
14. When I see someone get hurt, I tend to remain calm.
15. Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal.
16. If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments.
17. After seeing a play or movie, I have felt as though I were one of the characters.
18. Being in a tense emotional situation scares me.
19. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them
20. I am usually pretty effective in dealing with emergencies.
21. I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.
22. I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both.
23. I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.
24. I tend to lose control during emergencies.
25. When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while.

26. When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me.
27. When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces.
28. Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place?

Part 2: Personal, Student, and School Information

Please describe yourself, your students, and your school of employments with as much detail as possible and relevance to this study.

Please describe yourself (e.g., how you identify).

Please describe yourself as a teacher. Please include how long you have been teaching.

Please describe your students. Please include personal and demographic information. Do not include names or other personal identifying information.

Please describe your classroom.

Please describe your school.

APPENDIX B

NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introduction

Interviewer: *Hello! My name is Joey Eisman and I am completing my doctorate in Educational Psychology at Temple. I am interested in social and emotional factors in the classroom. For today, I would love to learn more about you and your experiences. In this first interview, our purpose is to understand your story of becoming and being a teacher. My goal is to follow along as an active listener with the meanings you offer. If I do my job well, and you feel comfortable sharing and exploring your story, you may even explore new meanings or insights for familiar stories. Also, please know that I will be taking notes, so when I look down, I am not disengaging from you. Is it okay to continue the interview and recording?*

Part 1: Life Story

Interviewer: *Please tell the story of how and why you became a teacher.*

Interviewer Note: Where appropriate, probe for

- Specific events and details, and
- Clarification.

Part 2: Emotional Experience with a Student

Interviewer: *Please tell me about an emotional experience with a student.*

Interviewer Note: Where appropriate, probe for

Emotional terminology and expressions,
Empathy terminology and expressions (e.g., emotion sharing, perspective-taking)
Motivational terminology (e.g., actions, beliefs, costs, goals, self-efficacy),
Specific events and details, and
Clarification.

Interview Note: If story is not related to the current teach context, probe for

- Additional context information,
- Additional student information, and
- How the story relates to the current teaching context.

Part 3: Reflection on the Meaning

Interviewer: *Given what you have said, what do you value and not value about such experiences as a teacher?*

Conclusion

Interviewer: *Thank you very much for this conversation. Before we adjourn, is there anything we spoke about that you want to add, elaborate, or change?*

[HOLD]

If you recall other things you wish to share, or would like to clarify issues, please don't hesitate to contact me. Thank you again!

APPENDIX C

NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTERVIEWER NOTES PAGE

Part _____		
NOTES	**Follow Up Questions**	**Insights**

Post Interview Reflection/Notes:

APPENDIX D

VIDEO STIMULATED RECALL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introduction

Interviewer: *In this second interview, we will watch a video segment of your teaching. My goal is to be an active listener and follow the meaning and interpretations you offer. I will ask a few framing questions at the start, but most of today's interview will consist of watching and discussing your video. During that time, we will play sections of your video and ask you to share what you were thinking at that moment in time.*

Is it okay to continue the interview and recording?

Part 1: Context

Interviewer: *Before we watch the video segment, can you tell me about the context?*

- *What is happening?*
- *What is the classroom material?*
- *Who are your students?*

Part 2: Video Stimulated Recall

Interview Note: SHARE video link in chat.

Interviewer: *Now we will watch and discuss the video of your teaching. As we watch, I'm interested in your memory of your experience, observations, decisions, emotions, and aims teaching this lesson, as best as you can recall. Please pause whenever you remember something about your experience, observations, decisions, emotions, and aims while teaching this lesson.*

Would you please share your screen with me? As you share the screen, please click the box for "share computer sound"
When you are ready, please press play.

Interviewer: *As best as you can recall, what were you thinking? Why did you do what you did?*

- *How did you show compassion? Did it work?*
- *How did you take your students perspective? Did it work?*
- *How did you feel what your students felt?*

Interviewer Note: Where appropriate, use the following probes:

- *What did you do?*
- *What did you notice about your students responses? How do you understand their responses?*
- *Did this go as you expected?*

- *What were you trying to achieve? (with learning, with students?)*
- *What were you feeling at this point?*
- *What were your students feeling at this point? How do you know?*

Part 3: Reflection on the Meaning

Interviewer: *Now that we have watched this segment of your classroom, is this typical? Why or not?*

Conclusion

Interviewer: *Thank you very much for this conversation. If you recall other things you wish to share, or would like to clarify issues, please don't hesitate to contact me. Thank you again!*

APPENDIX E

VIDEO STIMULATED RECALL INTERVIEWER NOTES PAGE

Part _____			
Video Timestamp	**NOTES (when possible include classroom context)**	**Follow Up Questions**	**Insights**

Post Interview Reflection/Notes:

APPENDIX F

MEMBER CHECKING PROTOCOL

Introduction

Interviewer: *Thank you, again, for joining me and for your participation in this study. I am pleased to share my initial analysis from our interviews. Before I do, I want to share with you the overall goal of this study: to understand teacher empathy. Your participation has proven meaningful in the development of a theoretical understanding of teacher empathy – its benefits and costs – but also in developing a set of recommendations of administrators, educators, researchers, and policymakers who can encourage the good forms of empathy and discourage the bad ones.*

I am going to share with you my initial analysis in narrative form. I am interested in your opinion of my interpretation. As I share my analysis, please keep note of interpretations that you feel are inaccurate, correct, and missing details.

Interview Member Checking

Interview Note: SHARE initial interview analysis.

Interviewer: *What do you feel is inaccurate, correct, missing details, or anything else?*

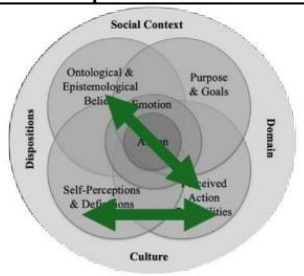
Interview Note: PROBE for additional detail where appropriate.

Conclusion

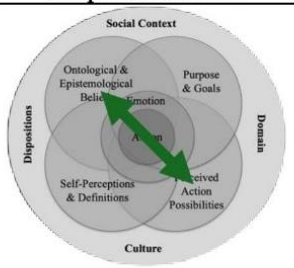
Interviewer: *Thank you very much for this conversation. If you recall other things you wish to share, or would like to clarify issues, please don't hesitate to contact me. Thank you again!*

APPENDIX G

DSMRI ANALYSIS OF EMPATHY FROM THE CASE STUDIES

Lower-Order Empathy Dimension	DSMRI Coding	DSMRI Schematic Representation	Teacher	Relevant Quote
Cognitive Empathy	Cognitive empathy action possibilities were aligned with ontological beliefs and self-perceptions.		Marcia	it's that empathy that allows me to connect with the person. It's that understanding their background that allows me to either have same or similar or comparable experiences.
	Cognitive empathy ontological beliefs were aligned with action possibilities and goals.		Kevin	99% of the things I say are somehow humorous. …I think that I want the kids to be at ease and not to feel like there's some pressure…
			Marcia	…what had happened before I made this change was, I would not acknowledge that, and I would go into instruction, and then I will be hitting brick walls. ...so, it wasn't until I realized that I had to give a whole lot of thought and action to the beginning of the class. ...I see a need there where my students need to express themselves.

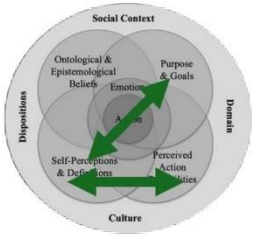
Appendix G. (continued)

Lower-Order Empathy Dimension	DSMRI Coding	DSMRI Schematic Representation	Teacher	Relevant Quote
Cognitive Empathy	Cognitive empathy ontological beliefs were aligned with action possibilities.		Eric	safety not only in terms of them feeling safe, one, it's physical safety so that they feel like that nobody's going to get them if they're arguing with some peer that nobody's going to bum rush the door and all that, in terms of physical safety. In terms of emotional safety…in terms of feeling safe, they are able to articulate that they feel okay. They don't feel judged.
			Kevin	…it's not only changing behavior but also almost like rearranging brains. And therefore, to try to break through that idea of very small pieces, very small, little, give them tidbits or whatever.
			Marcia	"…I have the snacks out. They come in, they get their snacks, they're eating while we are learning. …and they're snacking. And so, by the time I get ready to ask them for some input, they've come alive. I have to give a lot of grace… I have to understand how in this melting pot of students in my classroom, how am I going to meet all of their needs based upon what I know that they need?

Appendix G. (continued)

Lower-Order Empathy Dimension	DSMRI Coding	DSMRI Schematic Representation	Teacher	Relevant Quote
Cognitive Empathy + Empathic Concern	Cognitive empathy ontological beliefs were aligned with empathic concern goal.		Eric	So from my emotional perspective, I kind of am like, crap, I don't want to overstep. I want to find out what is going on
Detective Social Perspective Taking	Detective social perspective taking action possibilities were in harmony with action possibilities and in alignment with self-perceptions.		Kelly	And it's interesting to get to know them personally, and then, tie it back to what we're trying to do.

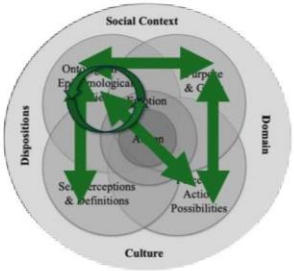
Appendix G. (continued)

Lower-Order Empathy Dimension	DSMRI Coding	DSMRI Schematic Representation	Teacher	Relevant Quote
Detective Social Perspective Taking + Perspective Taking	Detective social perspective taking action possibilities were aligned with self-perceptions.		Kelly	I see kids here who are stressed out, and of course you go to so many [professional develop sessions]…it's like, "Trauma, trauma, trauma, trauma." Well, every child in [in this city is] not traumatized, and once you talk to them, I think in terms of perspective, it's kind of forced me to take a pause and try to get to know my students as actual people, even before attempting to teach them anything in terms of content. …But being in two different worlds has really pushed me to really try to get to know my students better in terms of trying to maximize not just their academic success, but to help them out with their goals in life…Not every kid is a product of trauma, not every child."
Empathy-Based Stress	Empathy-Based stress self-perceptions were aligned with action possibilities and goals.		Marcia	I try to keep a balance on it in terms of keeping my life positive, doing my extracurriculars in my personal life and things like that. Going to the arts. That's the one thing I can say about [this city] is the culture here with the arts, the music and the plays. I've never done so much artistic things in my life. Love it. Does it weigh on me? Yes. But I try to find balance. I try.

Appendix G. (continued)

Lower-Order Empathy Dimension	DSMRI Coding	DSMRI Schematic Representation	Teacher	Relevant Quote
Epistemic Empathy	Epistemic empathy ontological beliefs were aligned with action possibilities.		Eric	When I first meet the kids, I try to allay their fears. I joke around. I really don't speak Spanish that much, but my go-to sentence is no habla mucho Espanol pero yo intento, 'I don't speak a lot of Spanish, then, I try.' And sometimes with this, when I'm trying to teach this, I ask them, like como se dice, whatever we're trying to learn. So, it'd be like como se dice transcription, transition. And it kind of opens them up to a certain, I guess, recognition.
	Epistemic empathy ontological beliefs were misaligned with action possibilities.		Eric	saying, 'Apples in a tree, cars in a garage.'…But then she's actually making faces at me with that look of why is she talking about manzanas? …she understood the words, but she wasn't understanding that apple starts with an 'A.' 'T,' tree."
Judging Social Perspective Taking	Judging social perspective taking ontological beliefs were aligned with action possibilities, [implicit] goals, and self-perceptions, and in harmony with ontological beliefs.		Kevin	I felt great, man. I felt really good. I mean, Jesus, I felt that I... It's not so many cliches... But there was a little bit of a, I felt good that he had felt confident enough and felt good enough to produce in the class…So those things, how can you not feel good about seeing a kid blossom a bit after certain trauma, certain hell that he went through.

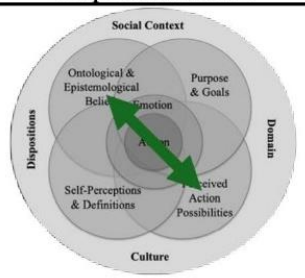
Appendix G. (continued)

Lower-Order Empathy Dimension	DSMRI Coding	DSMRI Schematic Representation	Teacher	Relevant Quote
Judging Social Perspective Taking	Judging social perspective taking ontological beliefs were aligned with [implicit] goals and self-perceptions.		Kevin	The baggage and the things these kids come with to school with seems insurmountable to me thinking of what the stuff they go through. But just being a friendly guy and a person authority figure, like I said, authority figure that's going to cajole or support rather than be angry or tear down.
	Judging social perspective taking ontological beliefs were aligned with action possibilities, epistemological beliefs goals, and self-perceptions.		Kevin	occasionally you get an email that'd be like, "So-and-so's house burned down and they're in a shelter or whatever." And I'm like, this dude gets, he passed. They passed for the year. I don't care. There's no question. If they do work, that's just icing on the cake. So, I think that…sometimes you know the trauma, sometimes you don't, but I go in just knowing that there is, or just expecting that there is.
	Judging social perspective taking ontological beliefs were aligned with action possibilities.		Kevin	…if [providing a smack of success by giving good grades] moves the needle just a tiny bit with their own self-image, with their own who they are, with their own way they feel about themselves…I'm one million percent down…

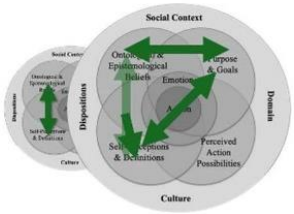
Appendix G. (continued)

Lower-Order Empathy Dimension	DSMRI Coding	DSMRI Schematic Representation	Teacher	Relevant Quote
Judging Social Perspective Taking	Judging social perspective taking ontological beliefs were in harmony with epistemological beliefs.		Kevin	My principal…screams like a madman in the hallway at these kids. Then they go to the corner store and I'm sure that the manager at the corner store is yelling at them. The bus driver…those guys are yelling, "Sit down, move back." All that kind of stuff. The cop is definitely down on the corner, is definitely not saying nice things to him either. Maybe they do. I don't know. I just, I don't know.
Judging Social Perspective Taking + Empathic Concern	Judging social perspective taking ontological beliefs were aligned with empathic concern action possibilities, and goals.		Kevin	I allowed him to be successful with less productivity that I was like, I would be happy if he did a quarter of the work at the beginning and be like, okay, I'm going to give him credit for this because I want him not to look at a 25 in his paper, but like a 75 or something like that…That's a technique I use a lot…To even approach success, you have to start with positive things…
Perspective Taking	Perspective taking action possibilities were aligned with ontological beliefs.		Eric	being able to put yourself in someone else's shoes. When you're emotionally intelligent, you understand that different people have different emotional needs, and being able to know and understand that, and know those needs without having to really ask them...

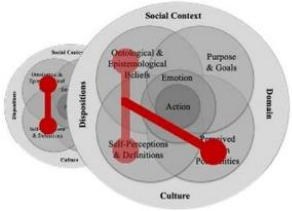
Appendix G. (continued)

Lower-Order Empathy Dimension	DSMRI Coding	DSMRI Schematic Representation	Teacher	Relevant Quote
Perspective Taking	Perspective taking action possibilities were aligned with ontological beliefs		Eric	when you put yourself in someone else's shoes, you are able to understand—It's one thing knowing what someone else needs in a certain situation. It's also important for you to know what you would also want in that situation. Treat others as you would want to be treated. It's the same thing. So, when you're able to put yourself in someone else's shoes and think how they would think, but also thinking how would you feel in this situation? You are able to have better judgment for how you react to certain situations and how you treat people.
	Perspective Taking action possibilities were aligned with self-perceptions.		Eric	[Stepping into others' shoes is] something that I've been doing since late adolescence, probably around my first time going to college."
Self-Other Overlap (Aligned)	Self-other overlap beliefs were associated with aligned self-perceptions and ontological beliefs.		Eric	The more things we have in common, the more things we're able to bond on, the better able to build that relationship.

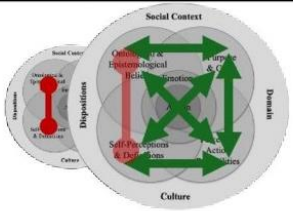
Appendix G. (continued)

Lower-Order Empathy Dimension	DSMRI Coding	DSMRI Schematic Representation	Teacher	Relevant Quote
Self-Other Overlap (Aligned)	Self-other overlap beliefs were associated with aligned action possibilities and goals		Eric	she was so, so bright and I would tell her because she didn't like being in high school and she just didn't like being in school, period. And she wasn't sure whether or not she wanted to go to college, and I wasn't trying to be one of those teachers where it was like, oh, you have to go to college, but I was in her case, I was just, 'I feel like you would absolutely love it. I feel like you would thrive. The way you act and see things and whatever, the people that you will find at these colleges and universities are your type of people, the type of people that you have been wishing that you would meet and make friends with. You will find them there.'
	Self-other overlap beliefs were associated with aligned goals and self-perceptions.		Eric	I've lived this perspective, so it's just like the shoe fits better. And even better if they grew up Latino. It's just like I get where you're coming from. If they tell me something's it like, yes, I know what this is.

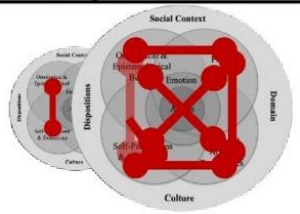
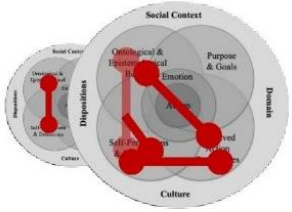
Appendix G. (continued)

Lower-Order Empathy Dimension	DSMRI Coding	DSMRI Schematic Representation	Teacher	Relevant Quote
Self-Other Overlap (Aligned)	Self-other overlap beliefs were associated with self-perceptions.		Eric	there was never a situation where I had to really put myself in her shoes or at least I didn't find the need to do so. I mean with her, I guess, putting myself in her shoes would be no different than just— She was just very easy to understand just because she reminded me so much of myself, so it was like everything was just immediate.
Self-Other Overlap (Misaligned)	Self-other overlap beliefs were associated with action possibilities.		Marcia	You don't know what struggles they've been through. You don't know what they're bringing into the classroom. …I can't assume… I can't assume that they would know or have had a three-scoop ice cream cone in order to make this analogy something for them. …So, at the very least, if they haven't experienced it, then they could visualize it.

Appendix G. (continued)

Lower-Order Empathy Dimension	DSMRI Coding	DSMRI Schematic Representation	Teacher	Relevant Quote
Self-Other Overlap (Misaligned)	Self-other overlap beliefs were associated with emergent aligned action possibilities and goals.		Kelly	For me, I don't want to jump to hasty, judgmental things all at once. I know for me, that stems from one of my first teaching experiences…I remember there was a young man in my class. He had his head down and I was just so irritated. I had had enough. This kid's lazy…I went up to him and I was just like, "What is your problem?" I didn't explode at him per se, but I really was like, "Why are you asleep? Why?" He just was like, "I just got back from work," …I'm just like, "Oh, you just got back from work," which I found incredulous. I was like, yeah, this kid's telling me a load of poop…I reached out to a counselor…[who] said, "Oh yeah, this kid is going to work. His father's no longer in the picture and he is supporting 100% of his family, which is basically him, his four sisters and his mom." He is working out by the airport, and he also does, what is it, FedEx or UPS, just like the packaging bit. So literally this kid would go to school, go to work, do a whole night shift…Because of that initial experience my first teaching year, I try not to jump to conclusions… So, because of that, I try to get the full picture.

Appendix G. (continued)

Lower-Order Empathy Dimension	DSMRI Coding	DSMRI Schematic Representation	Teacher	Relevant Quote
Self-Other Overlap (Misaligned)	Self-other overlap beliefs were associated with misaligned action possibilities [implicit] goals, and self-perceptions.		Marcia	"I can say that the challenge that I've had is making that deep connection like I made back in [the South] with my students here [at Atlantic Spear]. A lot of that is cultural.
	Self-other overlap beliefs were associated with misaligned action possibilities and self-perception.		Eric	he's difficult to understand. I still don't get where things are coming from, and I feel like it's a lot more complicated than from what I can imagine. …I really don't know, and I haven't been able to really understand why he acts the way he does or be able to understand, put myself in his shoes. How can I put myself in their shoes if I don't see their shoes?

APPENDIX H

ADDITIONAL DSMRI ANALYSESE OF THE CASES

Additional/Elaborated DSMRI Analysis for Eric

Alignment Between Eric's Self-Perceptions as a Caring Teacher and Action Possibilities to Build Positive Relationships

Building relationships with students was important to Eric as a teacher. He held numerous interconnected harmonious beliefs about rapport, respect, and student motivation. Specifically, he believed that cultivating relationships was associated with appropriate classroom behavior and also in harmony with his belief that students behave because teachers cultivate relationships and from which students develop care for their teachers. He said, "when you build rapport, at the very least they'll behave well, but it's because they want to do it for you because they actually care about you." His actions to cultivate respect and build rapport with students was aligned with his student behavior ontological beliefs, teaching goals, and self-perception as a caring teacher. One specific action aligned with cultivating respect is his form of detention.

> I don't like doing group detentions because then I'm not able to have a nice one-on-one personal intimate talk. And when I have a talk with them, I tell them to be free as— I tell them, I was like, "You want to say something to me? Go ahead. If you're upset, you want to curse me out? Go ahead, go ahead, go ahead, let it all out. Tell me, I just want to know what's the issue. I'm not going to be offended." None of them have ever done that and sometimes they don't even talk, but I'll just tell them. They'll be in my detention and my detentions aren't long. I'll just have them clean, it takes less than five minutes and then I talk to them and then they're gone, which is also good, and in that they don't want to have detention, but they'll still come if they do have detention. So, it's like they know my detentions aren't the end of the world, but students I had last year, that were difficult, I have strong positive relationships with them.

Related, he said, “when you build rapport, at the very least they’ll behave well, but it’s because they want to do it for you because they actually care about you.” This was aligned with his beliefs that his students know he was a caring teaching and his self-perception as a caring teacher, from which the emotion of gladness emerged, suggesting alignment between his goal to be a caring teacher, action possibility associated with his goal, and the aforementioned ontological beliefs and self-perceptions that he and his students think he is a caring teacher. He said,

> They know that I care, and I’ve heard them say it. That means so much to me. I’ve heard them say that I don't mess around, I don’t play around, but I'm nice and I do care. So, I’m glad that they know that because I do care about them.

Disharmony Between Teaching Beliefs: Rewards and Costs

In disharmony with his belief that teaching is rewarding is his belief that teaching is also physically and emotionally taxing. He said,

> I value knowing that I’ve made a difference, it’s very fulfilling. But the things I don’t value is because of the lack of support, how much this takes from you as a person, as a living being, from your mental health, which can eventually lead to deterioration of your physical health. It’s a lot, and you have to be emotionally prepared to deal with certain things.

In alignment with his beliefs that teaching is psychologically costly are his action possibilities to engage in emotional regulation through physical activity (i.e., response modulation, which refers to altering an existing emotional response through behavior; Gross, 2014), which was in harmony with his perspective taking action possibility. He said,

> I went to the gym, I was just reliving the whole day and thinking about my actions. So, it was like I’m just constantly putting myself in other shoes and just reanalyzing myself, and I just think that that's such an important skill for a person to have. Being able to be objective about your own self, which is hard to do because at the end of the day it's still subjective, but

> striving as hard as you can to be able to admit that you're wrong, be able to admit that, all right, I handled this situation incorrectly and it should be done differently.

Additional/Elaborated DSMRI Analysis for Marcia

Cognitive Empathy Ontological Beliefs

While Marcia did not make assumptions about her students' lived experiences, she was sensitive to their individual needs and tried to understand them. Specifically, she held cognitive empathy ontological beliefs about her students and used cognitive empathy action possibilities to recognize their idiosyncratic dispositions and internal states (e.g., emotions, motivations). Relatedly, she held a cognitive empathy ontological belief that she could not know her students' internal states. In reference to the efficacy of a think-aloud action, she said, "it's an internal process, so you don't always see a physical reaction." In another example, she held cognitive empathy ontological beliefs that her diverse students require differentiated attentions. Regarding her tenth-grade English language class, she said, "This is what the district calls an EL friendly class, meaning it composes gen ed students, my English learners, because I am ESOL teacher, and our special ed students…the class is a very, very diverse and mixed level class." However, she also believed that having a "mixed level class" was in harmony with her ontological beliefs that instruction was difficult. She said,

> On the flip side, it can make instruction a challenge because now you're trying to strive to meet the needs of each one of those very diverse and very different levels of literacy...it presents a challenge when…it is a heterogeneous group.

Marcia's cognitive empathy ontological beliefs about her diverse classroom was aligned with action possibilities to support their individual needs. She said, "So considering all of

these diverse learners…I model it myself with a short paragraph…gives my audio learners and gives my lower-level special ed students a chance to connect with it as well."

Marcia also employed cognitive empathy action possibilities to learn about her students, which was aligned with her belief that empathy is a process that supported her self-other overlap ontological beliefs. She said, "it's that empathy that allows me to connect with the person. It's that understanding their background that allows me to either have same or similar or comparable experiences."

Another action possibilities aligned with cognitive empathy ontological beliefs was accommodating students based on their various learning statuses. However, she held a self-perception that she still held students accountable. She said,

> I have to give a lot of grace, I have to understand, and, this is where my support person comes in, I have to understand how in this melting pot of students in my classroom, how am I going to meet all of their needs based upon what I know that they need? And that trauma base.

She elaborated and said,

> It is a balancing act. I do, yes. The level of grammatical accuracy that I like to see in my students' writing, I do have to base that upon my students' ability and giving them grace and giving them that flexibility that allows them to not have to meet that…stringent guideline. It is hard. It's tough because we need good readers and good writers, but I can't be so rigid as to try to demand that you do every single thing like I want it to be done. That's not realistic. And they're going to resist that if it is not in their purview. So that's a part of connecting and knowing them. I have to know when I'm looking at these papers that I'm grading, giving consideration to that flexibility that I need to be able to grade the student based on their effort and not where I feel they should be.

In addition, in alignment with her cognitive empathy ontological beliefs were an action possibility to learn about her students, and teaching self-efficacy self-perceptions. She said connections with students "affords [her] the ability to be able to teach effectively

because [she doesn't] believe in...dartboard teaching, just throwing content out there and hoping it sticks." She continued,

> If I don't know you, in addition to your levels, your proficiency level, your content level, if I don't know your background, if I don't know what you like and dislike, then I won't know how to tailor the instruction to suit your needs, and therefore I won't get back what I want, which is your success. And remember, that's how I measure myself. So, I would say that would be the first thing that getting to know, connecting with my students, afford me is the ability to do instruction.

Empathy-Based Stress Self-Perceptions

Marcia's self-other overlap ontological beliefs emerged from a self-perception that she is dissimilar from her students and ontological beliefs about her students' cultural contexts. She said, "What the students come [to Atlantic Spear] with is very different than what the students came with in [my school in the South]." She also had ontological beliefs that cognitive empathy afforded her the opportunity to learn about her students. However, this affordance was in disharmony with her ontological belief that affectively empathizing with students can be costly, which was in alignment with emotional regulation action possibilities. She said, I do hold onto [the heaviness of my students' trauma] probably more than I should…I don't make it my own, but I do empathize. I do feel some kind of way." She continued,

> Do I internalize their situations? Probably. No doubt that I do. I try not to let it— I try to keep a balance on it in terms of keeping my life positive, doing my extracurriculars in my personal life and things like that. Going to the arts. That's the one thing I can say about [this city] is the culture here with the arts, the music and the plays. I've never done so much artistic things in my life. Love it. Does it weigh on me? Yes. But I try to find balance. I try."

She also said, “I’m exhausted. I'm tired from giving thought to, and not only giving thought to, but negotiating all of that in the classroom, all of these different histories and backgrounds.”

She noted an ontological belief that empathy must be managed but that empathy is also a necessity for teaching. She said,

> I think it has to be managed, okay. Yes, empathy, I dare say you can’t teach without it, but there is such a thing as too much empathy. And so, you have to manage it. You have to be aware of when you're internalizing a student’s circumstance or plight or environment…

Additional/Elaborated DSMRI Analysis for Kevin

Ontological Beliefs about Psychological Costs of Teaching

Emerging from his role identity as a mentor to early career teachers at Windsor Tech, he held a self-perception that he encouraged “three major things:” (a) organization (“organized and ability to craft a classroom with expectations and activities that are well-defined.”), (b) “literally never” engage confrontationally with students (“It’s all about de-escalation and stepping back.”), and (c) disengage from school (i.e., have a life outside of school) (“You cannot bring it home and think about it and stew about it.”). Aligned to the last recommendation to self-regulate by disengaging from school was an ontological belief that teaching in an urban environment, like Windsor Tech, was difficult. Kevin said,

> This teaching in an urban setting is very, very difficult. And it can take your ego and crush it and throw it out the window and it’s just, you’ve got to recover from that. So, I think having a life and having outside interests is paramount.

Kevin transferred these recommendations from his mentor teacher role identity to teacher role identity. Evidenced was his action possibility and self-perception of separating his

personal and professional lives for his well-being. He said, about this separation, "[it's] just my sanity, my ability to have a fun life." These beliefs were associated with harmonious ontological beliefs that teaching can include "dark moments" that can lead some teachers to "feel like a failure." Kevin's ontological belief that teaching was emotionally taxing was in harmony with a belief that many teachers struggle, and an aligned goal for more teachers to persist. He said, "I see teachers struggling…if [they] can just get over this hump, things can work out. And I think that the emotional toll, it just can be difficult. And I hope that people stick with it."

Additional/Elaborated DSMRI Analysis for Kelly

Her action possibility to pursue a science certification and become a biology teacher was aligned with her self-perception that she had a biology degree from her pre-medical undergraduate studies, which was harmonious with her self-perception that she came from a family of doctors. Kelly said,

> I have a degree in biology...I was pre-med. I come from a large family that are medical based. Actually, my father's sister-in-Law is actually the, she's like the president of the Filipino Medical Association, which is essentially equivalent to the surgeon general. And in terms of that, I have an uncle who's a neurologist in Chicago, I have three aunts and uncles who are in California, and they're doctors. My mom is a nurse…So, logically, it was a comforting thing. And my brain said, "Oh, this is familiar. Let me study biology…"

APPENDIX I

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Joseph I. Eisman
Ritter Annex, Room 223
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Monday, March 25, 2024

Dear Al Abbazia

I am completing a doctoral dissertation at Temple University entitled " The Complexity of Teacher Empathy: A Complex Dynamic Systems Role-In-Context Perspective." I would like your permission to reprint in my dissertation a digital copy of your artwork titled *The American Teacher*. In a current draft of my dissertation I wrote:

"Thus, there is a tension between our expectations that teachers be empathetic caregivers with uninhibited vigor, and the reality that they experience overwhelming fatigue (Will, 2021) possibly brought on by our hope that they fulfill every role for our students – polemically portrayed by Al Abbazia's (2021) illustration "The American Teacher" (Figure 1)."

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