Evaluating Interactive Social Justice Education:
The Relationship between Responsive Fiction and Social Empathy

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JUMP

11:29am

"You can't blame the kids! Their parents came here for a better life." Robbie is indignant.

Caroline snaps back. "When did being illegal become okay?" Her comment elicits a combination of groans and nods of agreement.

Liza lets out a sigh of frustration, but her students don't hear. She hadn't intended for the debate to turn into a fight. "Come on, let's all cool down."

Her classroom door flies open, making Liza jump. Four students rush inside.

"Ms. Cutler, we need to talk to you."

Liza can see that two of the students are in tears. As her classroom falls into silence, all eyes on the interruption, Liza checks the clock. Class will be over in 15 minutes.

LIZA TALKS WITH
THE FOUR STUDENTS >

LIZA ASKS THE STUDENTS TO
WAIT UNTIL END OF CLASS >

The Workshop: "*Tomorrow*"

- Choose-Your-Own Adventure Social Justice Story
- Silencing of mental health and suicide in high schools
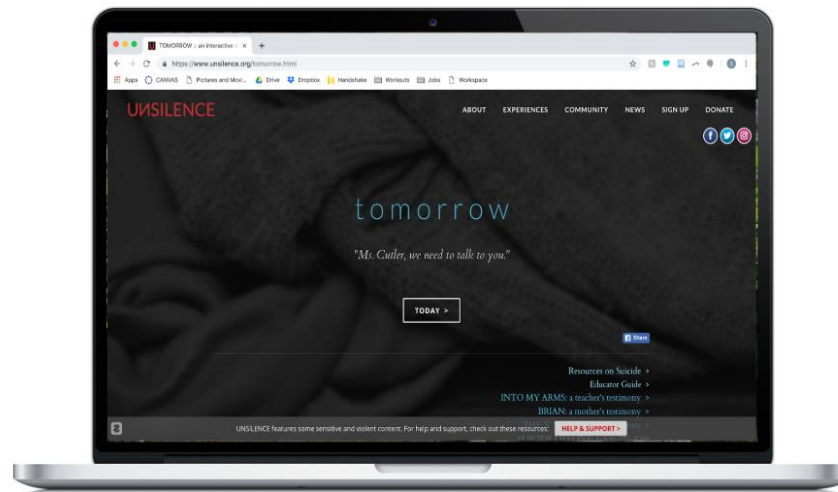
What is Social Justice Education?

- Awareness & understanding of social oppression and its systemic manifestations

- Harness empathy, and respect for others. Create a culture of individual accountability

- Commit to work for lasting change

In what ways do learners demonstrate **social empathy** after participating in interactive social justice education?
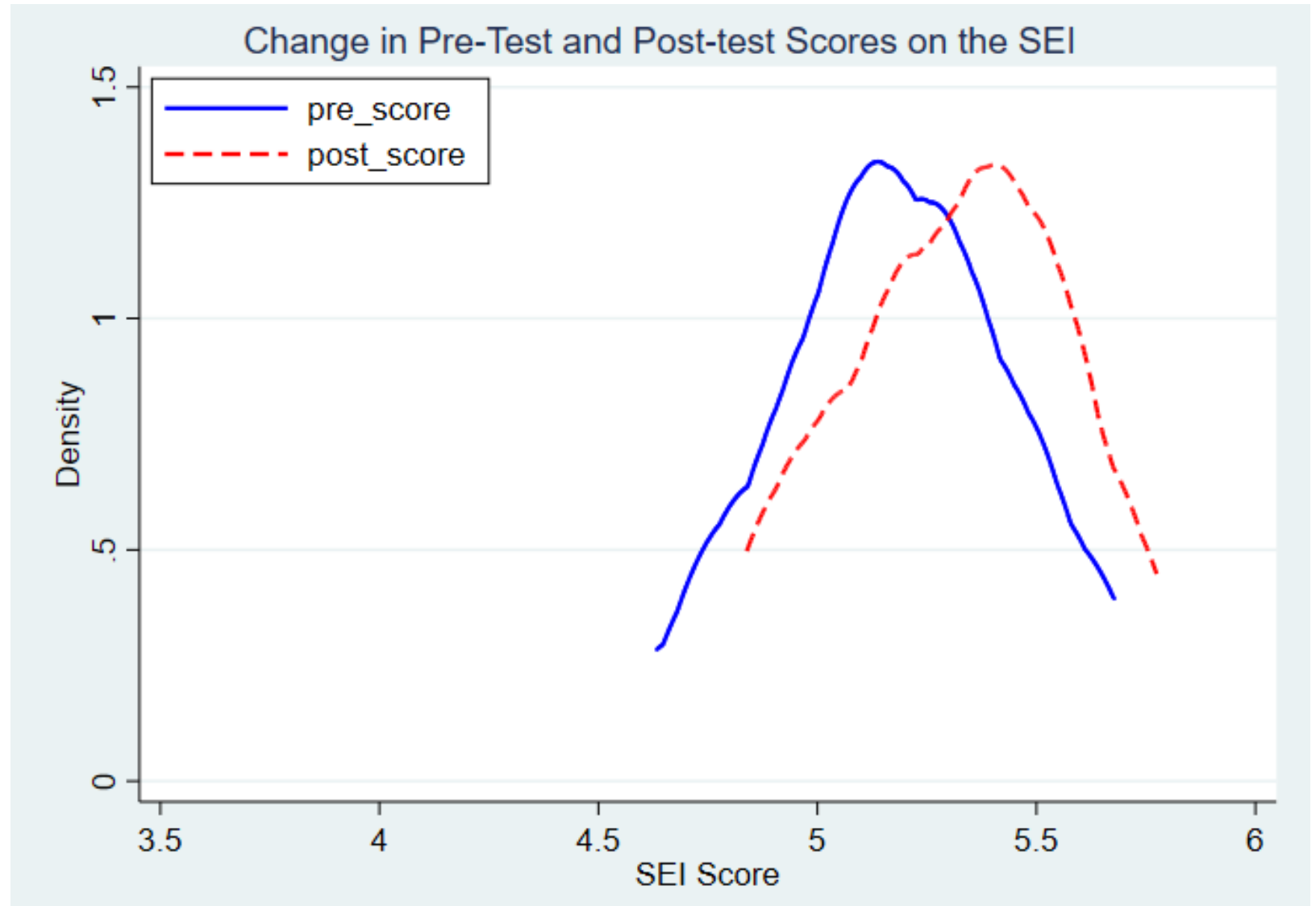
How does social empathy relate to **learning outcomes** of the program?

Why Social Empathy?

- Application of empathy on larger systems and groups
- Combines **interpersonal empathy**, **contextual understanding** and **social responsibility**
  - "I believe there are barriers in the United States' educational system that prevent some groups of people from having economic success."
- Social Empathy Leads to **Social Justice Action**

Social Empathy Index Distribution

- Statistically significant increase in social empathy from pre-test to post-test

- 0.14 point increase

- n=21

Change in Pre-Test and Post-test Scores on the SEI

- pre_score
- post_score

(x-axis: SEI Score, y-axis: Density)

Investment in Characters

- Interpersonal Empathy & Engagement
  - Affective mentalizing and Perspective Taking

- "I liked the **different perspectives** … **I felt overwhelmed**. The characters really went through how everybody was feeling, **everybody was feeling overwhelmed and that translated to me**." – Vivian

- "I think that's what a lot of people like about **choose your own adventure,** it really puts you in that **moment,** it puts you in a situation that **you might not otherwise have felt that connection**" – Frannie

Social Justice Learning

- Social Empathy & Conceptual Knowledge
  - Contextual Understanding of Systemic Barriers

- "[Silencing] goes back to having **negative stigmas** attached to mental health… It builds high rates of people feeling like they're not heard, and **creates this barrier**. So, it is a social issue, because there is a population who's not being heard, who are **not getting their needs met**." – Naomi

Connection to Self

- 6 participants shared personal stories of suicide or attempted suicide
- Every group shared their personal experiences without being asked
- "I think for me **personally dealing with similar trauma in the past** this is a good reminder of the importance of open communication and just **reaching out to people that are close to you** who you might think are going through a tough time." – Travis

Main Takeaways

Engagement and Perspective Taking

Education Design should include Interactive storytelling

Social Justice Learning

More research on the relationship between conceptual knowledge and social empathy

Teacher Preparedness

Students will share their personal experiences even when they're not asked

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Thank you for your time!

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