

FICTIONAL WRITING: THE ROLE OF  
POSITIVE AFFECT AND  
EMPATHETIC CONCERN

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine fictional writing, the positive moods produced by fictional writing, and the ability to empathize and fantasize as predictors of helping behavior. Forty-four female student participants (ranging in age from 18- 26) at Texas State University-San Marcos were randomly assigned to write about either a positive or negative fictional character. Moods were measured before and after the writing exercise. The Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) measured the ability to empathize and fantasize, and was administered after the writing exercise. Subsequently, participants were asked to help create sympathy cards for the Children's Hospital. The time spent on the cards, number of cards produced, and the average time spent on each card was measured. Our results showed that condition and individual differences in empathy, as expected, significantly predicted helping as measured by the time spent on each card. Those with gains in positive moods spent less time on each card, but attempted to produce more cards. These findings, their implication and the future directions of this research are addressed.

*Keywords: fictional writing, empathic concern, helping behavior, fantasy*

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### Fictional Writing: the Role of Positive Affect and Empathic Concern

Over the years studies have indicated the positive benefits of writing for an individual, influencing areas such as health, accomplishment, and well-being. Some positive outcomes of writing include fewer doctor visits, improved grades, fewer symptoms of depression, and a better immune system in general (Lepore & Smyth, 2002; Smyth, 1998). Expression through writing promotes both positive social effects and health benefits. Social psychologist James Pennebaker states these social effects stem from the assumption that confronting thoughts and emotions can assist in social interactions (Pennebaker, 2006).

Pennebaker conducted a longitudinal study that looked at writing as a predictor of reemployment. Participants who wrote about losing their job were significantly more likely to find a job in the following months (Pennebaker, 1994). Positive social effects of writing have also been demonstrated through already established romantic relationships. In a study conducted by Slatcher and Pennebaker (2006), participants who wrote about their relationships were significantly more likely to be dating their partner three months after the writing experience. This research indicates that writing not only can benefit health, but also interactions with others.

According to psychologists, Pennebaker, Solan, and Marx, after a writing experience an individual's mood can progress into a more positive state. In turn, this positive state helps reduce stress, anxiety, and depression (Pennebaker, Kiecolt-Glase, & Glaser 1988; Sloan & Marx, 2004). A study that examined students who wrote about an emotional topic for two hours for three consecutive days, found that the students became

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more optimistic than the students in the control group who did not write. Positive-affect words, such as “happy”, “strong”, and “inspired”, increased in the students’ essays while negative-affect words, such as “hard”, “angry”, and “unfair”, decreased (Soliday, Garogalo, & Rogers, 2004). Another study showed that college students who wrote about a stressful experience over a time span of four days not only had an improved all around mood from the first to the last day of writing, but their grades improved as well (Lumley & Provenzano, 2003). A study that asked participants suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to write about a traumatic experience found no changes in the PTSD symptoms after the writing exercise; however, significant improvements in the participants' mood were observed (Smyth, Hockemeyer, & Tullock, 2008). Though self reported questionnaires, these studies indicate that writing can serve as a predictor of an individual’s mood.

According to Suzanne Keen (2006), author of the book *Empathy and the Novel*, an individual’s mood can be further altered if the writer has the ability to empathize with the written characters. Empathy is defined as experiencing thoughts, attitudes, and feelings of another. Character identification occurs when the writer can see themselves in the character they are writing about. Character identification is often seen in writers who are able to empathize, even when the fictional character differs significantly from them. The interaction between an individual’s mood and ability to empathize with characters indicates that a relationship may be altered. Writers who are able to empathize with the characters are more vulnerable to mood changes as they explore the story than writers low in their ability to feel empathetic concern.

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Since writing and feeling empathetic concern influences moods, I intend to look at the interaction between moods and pro-social behavior, specifically helping behavior. Yale Psychologist, Michael Cunningham (1979) found that people asked to participate in a survey outside of a New York restaurant regarding social opinions were more likely to answer questions when it was sunny rather than cloudy outside. He then moved his study inside the restaurant, where the atmosphere was unaffected, to see if there was a difference in tipping behavior on sunny versus cloudy days. Cunningham found that the sunnier the day the more generous tips were left by the customers at the restaurant. He observed that people are more positive on sunny days, in general. People are more negative on cloudy days, thus having the opposite effect. In both studies, he found that mood affects our willingness to be generous or offer extra time for a cause, which are both pro-social behaviors of helping.

Another example of mood influencing helping behavior is demonstrated by research psychologist, Robert Baron. He found that pleasant smelling environments push people into a more positive state. Baron and his team placed a confederate outside a bakery, an establishment with pleasant smells, requesting change for a dollar from people passing by. Baron compared these responses with those of people who were asked for change for a dollar from a confederate standing outside of a clothing store, a neutral smelling establishment. Baron found that people were more willing to give change if they were in front of a bakery, smelling the pleasant aroma. He noted that this increase in willingness to help was due to the participants being in a better mood from the pleasant smells of the bakery (Baron, 1997). This study suggests that being in a positive mood leads to being more likely to help a stranger in need.

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According to psychologists Kassin, Fein, and Markus, the “good mood effect” happens when people are already in a positive mood, which encourages helping behavior (Kassin, Fein, Markus, 2008). Sometimes being in a good mood leads to helping behavior because of the hope to keep our good mood intact. Once a positive mood is achieved there is a desire to maintain it. In general, helping other people makes people feel good which can help maintain a positive mood. It can be noted that this is not true for everyone. However, the majority of the population would rather maintain a positive mood than digress into a negative one.

Another reason we tend to help when in a positive mood is the expected rewards, gains, and benefits received by helping others. Those who expect to be rewarded compared to those who do not expect to be rewarded for helping are more likely to help others in need. An example of a reward for helping others can be as minute as a stranger giving a smile of acknowledgement. Also, positive moods can increase positive thinking. In general, if we think positive thoughts about others it is easier to like them. It is easier to help someone we like than it is to help someone we do not care for. This research indicates that helping behavior is encouraged by social rewards and positive thinking (Kassin, Fein, Markus, 2008).

In addition to positive moods being a predictor of helping behavior, individual differences in the ability to feel empathic concern has been shown to be a predictor of helping behavior. Those with high empathic concern tend to focus on pro-social thoughts that relate to other’s wellbeing (Penner, 1995). Psychologists have documented that perspective taking is key to experiencing empathy toward others and to the altruistic helping of those others (Batson, 2007). Thus, it is important to also test whether certain

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individuals in our study will be more likely to help than others due to their ability to empathize. Of particular importance in the empathy literature and to this study is the construct of fantasy, elaborated by Davis (1980). Davis indicates that the ability to fantasize along with the ability to take others' perspectives is an integral part of experiencing empathic concern for others.

In a study conducted by psychologist Marjorie Taylor, established fiction writers were given Davis' Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) to measure their ability to fantasize and feel empathic concern for others. The ability to fantasize is defined by Davis (1980) as imaging oneself being a part of a story or character. Davis argues that fantasy is a component of empathy. The difference is that one is imagining themselves in their fantasized story, rather than feeling what others feel which is defined as empathy. Taylor found that as a group, the fiction writers scored higher than the general population in their ability to feel empathetic concern. The writers also scored extremely high in their ability to fantasize (Taylor, 2003). Taylor's study suggests, the ability to fantasize and to feel empathetic concern is a component for successful fictional writers.

This study examines how fictional writing affects a person's mood which influences willingness to help someone in need, as the literature indicates. Participants will be randomly assigned to write a fictional short story about either a positive or negative character. It is hypothesized that mood changes will arise from pre to post measures of mood after the writing exercise. The hypothesis predicts that those writing about a positive character will report more positive moods than those writing about a negative character. Thus, those writing about a positive character will be more likely to help when given the opportunity.



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Moreover, the Davis Interpersonal Reactivity Index will measure the participant's ability to fantasize and feel empathetic concern. It is predicted that these scores will play a role in the dependent variable helping; those with greater ability to empathize and fantasize being more likely to help a stranger in need.

### Methodology

#### *Participants*

The sample was comprised of female students ranging from ages 18 to 26 in two upper division psychology class and two introduction psychology classes at Texas State University, San Marcos. Since the participants were required to complete two questionnaires and write a short story, adequate reading and writing skills in the English language were required. Participants received extra credit points in their psychology classes for participating in this study. Students who did not participate or were not qualified to participate were given an alternative opportunity to earn the same amount of extra credit points. Male students were given the opportunity to make sympathy cards for the Children's Hospital at Austin as their alternative extra credit activity. Volunteers were given written informed consent for participation in the study. All participants were assigned a research number that substituted for their name on all documents, except for the consent form. Guidelines and procedures for human subjects were approved by the Institutional Review Board at Texas State University- San Marcos which can be viewed in Appendix F.

#### *Questionnaires*

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The Positive Affect Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) developed by research psychologists Watson, Clark, and Tellegan (1988), measures mood affect in participants (see Appendix A). The scale is a two-dimensional model composed of ten positive affect (PA) words and ten negative affect (NA) words. Examples of positive affect words include, "interested", "strong", "enthusiastic", and "inspired." Examples of negative affect words include, "ashamed", "nervous", "hostile", and "guilty." Each participant was asked to think about how they felt right now, in the present moment. Based off of those feelings, participants were instructed to rate each affect word on a 1 (very slightly or not at all like me) to 5 (extremely like me) scale. PANAS has been used frequently in the literature of multiple disciplines. In the field of psychology, the PANAS has received over 1,600 citations. Internal reliabilities of the PA and the NA subscales are adequate with a correlational significance of .89 to .92. Internal reliability is the extent to which items within a scale are correlated. Validity was established by correlating the scale to other mood and affect scales. The PANAS correlates .72 with the established scale, The Mood Scale developed by Diener (Diener & Emmons, 1985). These tests indicate that the PANAS is both valid and reliable (Watson, 1988).

The 28 item Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) is composed of four subscales, tendency to fantasize (F), empathetic concern (EC), perspective taking (PT), and personal distress (PD) (Davis, 1980) (see Appendix B). Each subscale consists of seven items. According to Davis, the empathetic concern scale assesses the tendency to experience sympathy and compassion for others. Davis states that the fantasy scale measures the tendency to imaginatively put oneself into situations that are fictional. Davis argues that fantasy is an essential part of empathetic concern. However, it is important to

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acknowledge these subscales are different in nature. A participant must be able to see themselves in a storyline in order to have a high fantasy score (Davis, 1980).

Participants were asked to indicate the degree to which the items describe them by choosing the appropriate point on a five-point Likert scale running from 0 (not like me) to 4 (very much like me). An example of a question that measures empathetic concern is, "I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me." An example of a question that measures the participant's tendency to fantasize is, "I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel." Another example of a question that measures the tendency to fantasize is, "When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of a leading character" (Davis, 1980). In this study the participant's ability to fantasize and to experience empathetic concern were the only variables of interest, as addressed in the literature review.

### *Design and Procedure*

Participants completed the IRI questionnaire to determine their ability to fantasize and feel empathetic concern. After completing the IRI scale, participants were randomly assigned to write a fictional story about either a positive or negative character. Participants also completed the PANAS mood questionnaire before and after writing about a character to determine changes in positive affect (pre- affect and post- affect score).

Participants randomly assigned to write about a positive character were given this description of the character: "Jane is humble, hard-working, and fair. She is open to others ideas, thoughts, and feelings even if they are different from her own. She has been

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known to put others needs before her own. How much better could this character possibly be? Please write a short story about the character.” Participants randomly assigned to write about a negative character were given this description of the character: “Jane is arrogant, dishonest and inconsiderate. She does not like to be involved with people of the opposite gender or with ethnicities other than her own. She has been known to hurt people to get what she wants. How much worse could this character possibly be? Please write a short story about the character.”

After writing the fictional story about Jane, the participants were asked to rate how positive their character was on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, with 5 indicating the strongest positive evaluations of the character. The PANAS moods questionnaire, as previously mentioned was administered again to measure post changes in positive and negative mood.

As the participant was leaving the study, a same sex accomplice associated with the experiment asked the participant for help in making cards for the Children’s Hospital in Austin. The participant had the choice to help the confederate make cards or leave. The length of time the participant stayed, the number of cards made, and the average time spent on cards was measured for each participant who decided to help. After completing the task or declining to help the confederate, the participants were debriefed about the purpose, hypotheses of the study, and the role of the confederate in the study.

## Results

### *Preliminary analyses*

The data were analyzed in SPSS version 18. Out of the 44 participants, two participants were identified as outliers and taken out of the data set. Their scores were well above or below the average scores, which could skew the results. This left a total of 42 participants, 21 in each condition.

Participants were asked to rate their character after the writing exercise. This rating reflected how positive they perceived their character to be. The participants who wrote about a positive character on average rated their character significantly more positive ( $M = 4.24$ ,  $SD = .89$ ) than participants who wrote about a negative character ( $M = 2.38$ ,  $SD = 1.28$ ),  $F(1, 40) = 29.70$ ,  $p < .01$ .

The first hypothesis predicted that those writing about a positive character would report more positive moods than those writing about a negative character. To test this hypothesis, the positive items in the PANAS scale were summed and averaged to create pre-test and post-test mood scores for each participant. The pre-test moods were then subtracted from the post-test moods to establish a difference score for each participant. Scores above zero indicated an increase in positive mood and scores below zero indicated a decrease in positive mood. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to test for differences in positive mood between conditions. The ANOVA showed that there was not a significant difference in positive mood between the conditions.

Differences in negative mood were also calculated and tested between conditions using the procedure outlined above for determining differences in positive mood.

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Composite pre-test and post-test scores and their differences were calculated for each participant, with scores above zero indicating an increase in negative mood, and scores below zero indicating a decrease in negative mood. The second one-way ANOVA showed significant differences between conditions in regards to participants' negative mood. Participants who wrote about a negative character reported an increase in negative mood ( $M = .152$   $SD = .496$ ), compared to those who wrote about the positive character ( $M = -.186$   $SD = .331$ ),  $F(1, 40) = 6.76, p < .05$ .

### *Dependent variables: Helping behavior*

One dependent variable used to measure helping behavior was the time a participant gave to help the confederate. The time was documented in minutes. The mean time for all participants to help was 11.31 minutes, with a minimum of zero and a maximum of 36 minutes. The second dependent variable used to measure helping behavior was the number of cards the participant produced. The mean number of cards made by each participant was 1.3, with a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 5 cards. Lastly, the average time each participant took to construct each individual card was used as a dependent variable as well. The average was calculated by dividing the amount of time participated by the number of cards produced (time/number of cards made) for each participant. This indicated how much time each participant devoted to each card. The average had a mean of 7.4 minutes, with the minimum of 0 and a maximum of 30. These results are summarized in Table 1.

### *Regression analyses: Empathic concern and fantasy hypotheses*

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It was predicted that participants who scored high on ability to feel empathic concern on the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) would be more likely to help the confederate than those with a lower score. It was also hypothesized that those who scored high on the ability to fantasize subscale of the IRI would have a greater likelihood to help the confederate in need. Composite scores of empathic concern and fantasy were created for each participant. The seven items of empathic concern and the seven items representing fantasy were summed and averaged.

Three regression analyses using a backward solution, in which variables that do not add meaningfully or significantly to the prediction are eliminated (Kerlinger & Pedhazur, 1973), were used. The regression analyses were conducted for each of the dependent variables: amount of time, the number of cards produced, and average time spent on cards (time / number of cards). In each of regression analyses, condition, differences in positive mood, differences in negative mood, empathic concern, and fantasy entered into the equation as predictors of helping behavior. Only one of the regression analyses showed significant results as shown in Table 2. Differences in positive mood, condition, and empathic concern significantly predicted helping as measured by average time spent on cards produced  $F(3, 37) = 4.59, p < .01$ . These three variables combined explained 27% of the variance.

Condition, differences in positive mood, and empathetic concern were expected predictors of helping behavior. However, the relationship between differences in positive moods and the average time spent on each card was unexpected. The standardized beta coefficient (-.361) indicated a negative relationship between the two variables.

Participants who felt more positive after the writing of the character spent less time on

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average on each card. The difference in positive mood was examined more carefully to account for this phenomenon. A possible explanation for this finding is those who spent less time on each card actually produced more cards overall. The number of cards produced from those whose post-test scores were greater than their pre-test scores were compared to those participants whose post-test scores were less than their pre-test scores. While the finding was not significant  $t(39) = -.88, p > .38$ , those with gains in positive mood produced more cards ( $M = 1.5, SD = 1.37$ ) than those with losses in positive mood ( $M = 1.16, SD = 1.07$ ), suggesting that participants were spending less time on each card because they were attempting to produce more of them.

### Discussion

This study examined fictional writing, the positive mood produced by fictional writing, and the ability to feel empathetic concern and fantasize as predictors of helping behavior. These predictors were regressed on three separate dependent variables of helping behavior: time spent helping, cards produced, and the average time spent on each card. Only one regression analysis showed significant findings in helping behavior. Specifically, condition, empathic concern and differences in positive affect predicted the average time spent on each card. Those writing about a positive character spent more time on average on each card they produced. Moreover, participants whose empathic concern for others was greater also spent more time on each card produced. Ability to fantasize was not a strong predictor of helping behavior.

Paradoxically, a decrease in positive affect was linked to an increase in time spent per card produced. As a participant's positive affect score decreased, the participant



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spent more time on each card produced. A possible explanation is that participants who felt more positive attempted to make more cards, thus having a lower average score (time / number of cards).

Writing about a positive character did not make people feel better; thus an increase in positive affect was not predictive of helping behavior. These findings demonstrate that moods alone may not be enough to understand helping behavior. Perhaps, writing about a positive character may be triggering a “Good Samaritan” norm of helping a stranger in need, independent of the influence of moods.

In addition, empathic concern proved to be a predictor of the amount of time spent on each card, as expected. Regardless of the condition, individuals who scored high on the IRI empathic concern subscale were more likely to help the confederate. This finding supports previous research on empathic concern and helping behavior. However, ability to fantasize was not found as a strong predictor of helping. According to Davis’ literature (1980), ability to fantasize has not been a key predictor of helping behavior in past research, which may explain why this study did not find a trend in fantasy as a predictor.

It was noted that participants assigned to write about a negative fictional character had a tendency to resist the writing exercise. Half of participants assigned to the negative condition (11 participants), wrote about *why* the character was negative, instead of writing a fictional story about a negative character. These participants wrote a story about an experience the character had that turned them negative. They did not fault the character as much as they faulted situations to explain why the character was negative.

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The most common theme found in the stories was abuse. Participants associated the abuse with why the character became negative. All of these stories centered on an injustice fostered by society that caused the character to have a negative outlook. The following excerpts from three examples are provided.

*Excerpts from participants writing exercise*

Participant number 248922 resisted writing about a negative character. Below are excerpts of her story. The full story can be found in the appendix C.

Jane is a young 19 year old and has experienced a life no individual should ever have to. As a child, she was abandoned by her mother and until CPS picked her up (at 10 years old), she was forced to do whatever necessary to keep herself alive.

When released from the system at 18, she had experienced so much pain and abuse- she had learned that trusting anyone was not an option and she could only look out for herself (even if it means hurting others in the process).

This participant's fictional story highlights the common theme of abuse in those that resisted the prompt. This story was not about the character, as much as *why* the character is negative. By the participant expressing that society has taught Jane that, "trusting anyone was not an option and she could only look out for herself," she is showing the common theme of identifying society as the cause of this character's negativity.

Another participant, number 248929, also resisted the prompt to write about a negative character. Below are excerpts from her original fictional story. The full story can be found in appendix C.

Jane grew up in an unstable home. Her parents were always fighting and abusive toward each other. Sometimes they even took out their aggression on Jane.

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Jane was dealt with a bad hand, and it severely affected her personality, her beliefs, and attitudes, and just her life in general.

She abuses others, just like how she was abused.

It is sad to see and sad to know that she doesn't know any better and that the life she is living is all she knows of. It's only obvious of what her future holds. A jail cell is all she will soon ever know.

This excerpt indicates that the fictional character, Jane, does harmful acts against society because of the abuse she endured when she was a child. The statement, "She abuses others, just like how she was abused," shows that the character was *made* to be this way due to the way she was treated. This story reiterates the common theme of abuse as a cause of the character becoming negative. This fictional story also represents the notion that society is responsible for the character's deviant behavior.

Participant number 248916 also resisted writing about a negative character.

Below are excerpts of her story that highlight a common theme. The full story can be found in appendix C.

As Jane grew up she saw her parents go through a terrible custody battle where her father would do anything to get what he wanted from her mother. Over time Jane grew to believe that this behavior was acceptable and would start trying to manipulate her friends.

What Jane came to realize is that her behavior was a product of the way her parents raised her because she had never known anything different.

This story shows the emotional turmoil that the character experienced during her parent's divorce, an event which caused the character to become negative. Like previous examples, this story shows how society influenced the character's negativity and perception of the world.

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Compared to these three stories are those that wrote about negative characters, instead of why the characters became negative. Approximately half of the stories were about characters that were manipulative, and did everything they could to get what they wanted. An example of this story would be one written by participant number 248933, who wrote the excerpts below. The full story can be found in appendix D.

Jane has cheated her way through life. Never one for hard work, Jane has achieved everything by forcing others through manipulation to get where she wants to be.

Professors and administrators were just as content to let her cheat as long as she made considerable donations to their department.

When assigned a paper in Litany's upper level advertising class, Jane went to her usual pushover student and asked for a simple paper. When she turned it in next week, Professor Litany couldn't help noticing the similarities it had to an article he had read on the internet. Upon investigation, Professor Litany found the paper to be plagiarized.

When Litany confronted Jane, she did what she did best. The next morning, Jane filed a sexual harassment suit against Professor Litany and had him fired.

This story clearly shows how the negative character took advantage of people to get what she wanted. The character lied and manipulated others in order to be successful. This highlights a common theme of manipulation in the stories written about a negative character.

Those writing about a positive character did not resist the prompt like those writing about a negative character. The most common theme in those writing about a positive character was their willingness to help someone in need. Two examples of this common theme follow. Below is a short story written by participant number 248906, whose full story can be found in the appendix D.

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Jane knew she had to leave, but she also knew that this boy, about 5 years old was in a lot of pain. She walked behind the counter, put her belongings down and walked over to the boy. Asked him a few questions and knew he needed help. She picked up him and told his mother to come back to a room so that she could treat him as soon as possible.

This story shows the sacrifice the positive character had to make in order to help someone in need. Like this story, many of the stories written about a positive character had this theme in common.

Another common theme found in the stories written about a positive character was loyalty to a team or group. These characters made sacrifices to help the greater good of their community. An example of this would be participant number 248905, whose full story can be found in the appendix E.

On her way to her appointment, her co-worker from the office calls her, even though she was on her way to get her hair done. As soon as she was off the phone with the coworker, she called to see if she could reschedule her appointment to a later time.

Although she takes the appointment anyways, and decides to blow off her errands, she helps the friend, cleans her house, and got her hair done in time for her date.

These excerpts show the common theme of having loyalty to the group instead of thinking of the individual's needs.

*Methodological limitations*

A methodological limitation is the small sample size. Out of the 82 students who signed up to participate in the study, only 51 participated. After entering the data into SPSS version 18.0, seven participants had to be taken out of the sample because of inappropriate bubbling, answering the scales out of order, and not writing a short story. Better instructions about how to use the answer sheet, how to complete the questionnaire

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and about the writing exercise could have prevented these mistakes by participants. Two outliers were also taken out to prevent skewed results. With only 42 participants, 21 in each condition, our ability to generalize is limited. Moreover, the students participating for extra credit, and may not have been as invested in the research.

*Future research and benefits to society*

A future study could assess the link between the past experiences of the participants and their tendency to resist the prompt to write about a negative fictional character. In our study, it was observed that approximately half of those in the negative writing condition wrote about *why* the character was negative, instead of writing about a negative character. It is possible that this resistance to write about a negative character is encouraged by a past experience that helps the participant empathize with these characters, who lash out because of a traumatic past. A questionnaire of the participant's life experiences could be taken to determine a possible trend in those resisting and their background. The participant's past experiences could explain the source of resisting the prompt to write about a negative character.

In summary, this study's findings can be beneficial to society by acknowledging the influence empathic concern and fictional writing has on helping behavior. These findings could be used to help promote helping behavior in various situations.

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Table 1

*Predictors of Helping Behavior*

Variable	n	M	SD
Time	42	11.30	9.57
Number of cards	42	1.30	1.23
Average (Time/Number made)	42	7.43	6.92
Condition	41	1.48	0.50
Difference in positive mood	41	-0.22	0.73
Empathetic Concern	41	4.11	0.57
Fantasy	41	3.74	0.69

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Table 2

*Summary of Backwards Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Helping Behavior*

Variables	$\Delta R^2$	B	SE	$\beta$
Step 1	.299			
Fantasy		-1.66	1.49	-.163
Empathic Concern		3.65	1.74	.298
Difference in Negative Mood		1.36	2.42	.089
Difference in Positive Mood		-3.85	1.43	-.402
Condition		-5.82	2.28	-.420
Step 2	.292			
Fantasy		-1.51	1.45	-.149
Empathic Concern		3.59	1.74	.293
Difference in Positive Mood		-3.71	1.39	-.387
Condition		-5.29	1.99	-.382
Step 3	.271			
Empathic Concern		3.55	1.73	.291
Difference in Positive Mood		-3.46	1.37	-.361
Condition		-5.01	1.98	-.361

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Table 3

*Correlation Matrix*

		Correlations					
		Condition	DiffPositive	DiffNegative	Empathic Concern	Fantasy	Average
Condition	Pearson Correlation	1	-.160	.380*	.073	-.106	-.274
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.312	.013	.652	.509	.079
	N	42	42	42	41	41	42
Difference in Positive Moods	Pearson Correlation	-.160	1	.058	.063	-.154	-.279
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.312		.717	.694	.336	.073
	N	42	42	42	41	41	42
Difference in Negative Moods	Pearson Correlation	.380*	.058	1	-.011	.095	-.115
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013	.717		.943	.555	.470
	N	42	42	42	41	41	42
EmpathicConcern	Pearson Correlation	.073	.063	-.011	1	-.003	.242
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.652	.694	.943		.986	.128
	N	41	41	41	41	41	41
Fantasy	Pearson Correlation	-.106	-.154	.095	-.003	1	-.049
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.509	.336	.555	.986		.760
	N	41	41	41	41	41	41
Average Time Spent per Card	Pearson Correlation	-.274	-.279	-.115	.242	-.049	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.079	.073	.470	.128	.760	
	N	42	42	42	41	41	42

\*.

\*  $p < .05$

Appendix A

The PANAS scale

Read each item and then circle the appropriate answer based on how you feel from 1 (very slightly or not at all) to 5 (extremely). Indicate to what extent you feel this way right now, that is, at the present moment.

33. Interested

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

34. Distressed

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

35. Excited

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

36. Upset

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

37. Strong

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

38. Guilty

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

39. Scared

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

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or not at all

40. Hostile

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
or not at all				

41. Enthusiastic

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
or not at all				

42. Proud

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
or not at all				

43. Irritable

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
or not at all				

44. Alert

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
or not at all				

45. Ashamed

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
or not at all				

46. Inspired

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
or not at all				

47. Nervous

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
or not at all				

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48. Determined

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

49. Attentive

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

50. Jittery

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

51. Active

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

52. Afraid

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

## Appendix B

### Davis Interpersonal Reactivity Index

Respondents are asked to indicate the degree to which the items describe them by choosing the appropriate point on a five-point scale running from 1 (not like me) to 4 (very much like me). The subscales are the Fantasy (FS) scale, the Perspective Taking (PT) scale, the Empathic Concern (EC) scale, and the Personal Distress (PD) scale. Each subscale consists of seven items; thus, scores on each subscale can range from 0-28. Items indicated by an (R ) are first reversed (0=4, 1=3, 3=1, 4=0), and then responses to the items making up each subscale are separately summed.

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

1	2	3	4
Not like me		Very much like me	
  
2. I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me. (EC)
 

1	2	3	4
Not like me		Very much like me	
  
3. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the “other guy’s” point of view (PF) (R )
 

1	2	3	4
Not like me		Very much like me	
  
4. Sometimes I don’t feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems. (EC) (R)
 

1	2	3	4
Not like me		Very much like me	
  
5. I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel. (FS)
 

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

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Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me



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12. Becoming extremely involved in a good book or movie is somewhat rare for me.

(FS) (R)

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

13. When I see someone get hurt, I tend to remain calm. (PD) (R)

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

16. After seeing a play or movie, I have felt as though I were one of the characters.

(FS)

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

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1	2	3	4
Not like me			Very much like me

19. I am usually pretty effective in dealing with emergencies. (PD) (R)

1	2	3	4
Not like me			Very much like me

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

1	2	3	4
Not like me			Very much like me

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

1	2	3	4
Not like me			Very much like me

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

1	2	3	4
Not like me			Very much like me

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

1	2	3	4
Not like me			Very much like me

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

1	2	3	4
Not like me			Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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. (FS)

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

## Appendix C

## Samples of Stories Written in the Negative Character Condition that Resisted

Research number: 248922

Jane is a young 19 year old and has experienced a life no individual should ever have to. As a child, she was abandoned by her mother and until CPS picked her up (at 10 years old), she was forced to do whatever necessary to keep herself alive. After CPS found her, she bounced from one foster home to the next, witnessing more abuse a week than the average person sees in a lifetime. When released from the system at 18, she had experienced so much pain and abuse- she had learned that trusting anyone was not an option and she could only look out for herself (even if it means hurting others in the process.)

Research number: 248929

Jane grew up in an unstable home. Her parents were always fighting and abusive toward each other. Sometimes they even took out their aggression on Jane. Jane grew up with parents who had no money. She watched her mom do drugs and her dad was considered a known criminal among the town. He was arrested several times for breaking and entering. Jane was dealt with a bad hand, and it severely affected her personality, her beliefs, and attitudes, and just her life in general. Now Jane is arrogant, dishonest, and inconsiderate. She abuses others, just like how she was abused. Violence is now something she has acquired herself as well as being involved in crime. She steals from stores, pick pockets, and now she is becoming more confident and has started breaking into people's houses. Jane also does drugs and can't live without her fix on a daily basis.

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Jane is slowly going down the paths in which her father and mother had once taken. It is sad to see and sad to know that she doesn't know any better and that the life she is living is all she knows of. It's only obvious of what her future holds. A jail cell is all she will soon ever know.

Research number: 248916

Jane was born to a proud mother and father in September. She already had an older sister and a younger brother was born 3 years after her. Shortly after her parents divorced, leaving Jane and her siblings to be raised by her mother. Jane's older sister was much like her mother, quite and shy, but very loveable and social, while Jane's brother, well he was a typical boy, like to rough house, play outside and would eat pretty much anything. Jane on the other hand was much different, she spent a lot of time at her dad's house and with her step-mother. Jane's step-mother grew up in a wealthy upper class household, and was determined that Jane would one day also have the same privileges that she did. As Jane grew up she saw her parents go through a terrible custody battle where her father would do anything to get what he wanted from her mother. Over time Jane grew to believe that this behavior was acceptable and would start trying to manipulate her friends. Eventually by college Jane had only two of her group of girlfriends that would still be her friend. But they too got tired of dealing with her so they eventually cut all ties between them. By Jane's senior year of college she realized that she was all alone and that her behavior was unacceptable for her. She eventually began seeing a psychologist and is currently in therapy. What Jane came to realize is that her behavior was a product of the way her parents raised her because she had never known anything different.

## Appendix D

A Story Written in the Negative Character Condition that did not resist the Prompt

Participant number: 248933

Jane has cheated her way through life. Never one for hard work, Jane has achieved everything by forcing others through manipulation to get where she wants to be.

Jane came from money, so choosing a college was easier for her than most people. She easily conned her way through her first years of her undergraduate studies and spring semester of her senior year was beginning just like she had expected. Jane had always found it easy to manipulate her fellow students into doing her work, and she would just as easily pay someone for a term paper rather than put in the work herself. Professors and administrators were just as content to let her cheat as long as she made considerable donations to their department.

When Professor Litang accepted a teaching position at Jane's ivy league school, he was unaware of the university's special treatment for Jane. When assigned a paper in Litang's upper level advertising class, Jane went to her usual pushover student and asked for a simple paper. When she turned it in next week, Professor Litany couldn't help noticing the similarities it had to an article he had read on the internet. Upon investigation, Professor Litany found the paper to be plagiarized.

When Litany confronted Jane, she did what she did best. The next morning, Jane filed a sexual harassment suit against Professor Litany and had him fired. The end.

## Appendix E

## Samples of Stories Written in the Positive Character Condition

Research number: 248906

Jane works at a hospital on the west side of Austin, Texas. It was her last shift of the week before her and her husband were going on a weeklong trip to Panama City, Florida. They were supposed to leave at 4:00pm promptly when she got off work so they could get a head start on the trip. Jane was walking out of the hospital to leave around 3:30pm when she noticed a young boy holding his arm forcefully and his mother trying to get him into the ER immediately. Jane knew she had to leave, but she also knew that this boy, about 5 years old was in a lot of pain. She walked behind the counter, put her belongings down and walked over to the boy. Asked him a few questions and knew he needed help. She picked up him and told his mother to come back to a room so that she could treat him as soon as possible.

Research number: 248905

Jane wakes up early one Saturday morning. She decides that today she is going to get her hair done before her big date that evening. She leaves the house with about 5 hours til her boyfriend shows up. On her way to her appointment, her co-worker from the office calls her, even though she was on her way to get her hair done. As soon as she was off the phone with the coworker, she called to see if she could reschedule her appointment to a later time. The only other appointment that was available was an hour before her date. The problem is, she wanted to clean her house before he got there and she had some

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errands to do. Although she takes the appointment anyways, and decides to blow off her errands, she helps the friend, cleans her house, and got her hair done in time for her date.



Appendix F

IRB Application

IRB SYNOPSIS OF PROPOSAL

Every application submitted for review and approval shall have attached to it a page organized in numerical brief paragraph form as outlined below.

Fictional Writing: Creating a Mood that Leads to Helping Behavior

**IRB #- 2010C2485**

2010C2485
-----------

1. Identify the sources of the potential subjects, derived materials or data. Describe the characteristics of the subject population, such as their anticipated number, age, sex, ethnic background, and state of health. Identify the criteria for inclusion or exclusion. Explain the rationale for the use of special classes of subjects, such as fetuses, pregnant women, children, institutionalized mentally disabled, prisoners, or others, especially those whose ability to give voluntary informed consent may be in question.

**The subject population will be drawn from psychology majors taking an upper level psychology course. The anticipated number of participants is approximately eighty with an age range from nineteen to twenty five. Only females will be asked to participate in this study. The population will be diverse in ethnic background. The participants state of health will not be known or of concern. Participants will be required to read and sign a consent form (attached).**

2. Describe the procedures for recruitment of subjects and the consent procedures to be followed. Include the circumstances under which consent will be solicited and obtained, who will seek it, the nature of information to be provided to prospective subjects, and the methods of documenting consent. (Include applicable consent form(s) for review.) If written consent is not to be obtained, this should be clearly stated and justified.

**Participants will be recruited by classroom announcements and by e-mail. Written consent will be obtained.**

3. Describe the project's methodology in detail. If applicable, detail the data collection procedures, the testing instruments, the intervention(s), etc. If using a survey, questionnaire, or interview, please provide a copy of the items or questions.

**The participant will complete the Davis Interpersonal Reactivity Index and a Mood Rating Scale (attached). The participants will then be randomly assigned to write about either a negative or positive character with the following descriptions:**

**Negative character: Jane is arrogant, dishonest, and inconsiderate. She does not like to be involved with people of the opposite gender or other ethnicities than her own. She has been known to hurt people to get what she wants. How much worse could this character possibly be? Please write a short story about the character.**

**Positive character: Jane is humble, hard-working, and fair. She is open to others ideas, thoughts, and feelings even if they are different from her own. She has been known to put others needs before her own. How much better could this character possibly be? Please write a short story about the character**

**After fifteen to twenty minutes of writing, the participant will be asked to rate their character on a Likert continuous scale ranging from 1 to 5, how negative to how positive they believe their character to be. The participant will then take the Mood Rating Scale again. As the participant is leaving a confederate of the same sex will ask her to help make cards for the children's hospital. The participant may choose to either help the confederate make cards or leave. The length of time stayed and the number of cards made will be scored for those participants who decide to help the confederate. The participants will be debriefed after interacting with the confederate, at which time the participants will be informed that the confederate is actually part of the study.**

4. Describe any potential risks — physical, psychological, social, legal or other — and state their likelihood and seriousness. Describe alternative methods, if any, that were considered and why they will not be used.

**The risks to participants are minimal. Deception by a confederate may cause participants to feel uncomfortable or guilty for not helping. However, there is no pressure used beyond an initial request for help. In requesting help the confederate will**

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**say: Thank you for filling out the forms and for writing the story. We are making cards to take to the children's hospital, and we would like to know if it would be possible for you to help us make some cards? The task would involve decorating cards with markers and cutouts.**

5. Describe the procedures for protecting against or minimizing any potential risks and include an assessment of the likely effectiveness of those procedures. Include a discussion of confidentiality safeguards, where relevant, and arrangements for providing mental health or medical treatment, if needed.

**Answering surveys and writing a short story is of nonthreatening nature. To assure anonymity, participants will be assigned a research number. Names will only appear on the consent form which will not be attached to the surveys. All participants will be debriefed at the end of the study.**

6. Describe and assess the potential benefits to be gained by the subjects, as well as the benefits that may accrue to society in general as a result of the proposed study.

**The participant benefits from this research project in a number of ways. They will gain an understanding of how research is done by participating in research. They may gain an appreciation of research by knowing that their participation is contributing to the advancement of psychology and science. Extra credit will also be given regardless of their participation. Finally, the cards a participant makes will be given to the children at the Children's Hospital after the study is completed.**

7. Clearly describe any compensation to be offered/provided to the participants. If extra credit is provided as an incentive, include the percentage of extra credit in relation to the total points offered in the class. Also, if extra credit is provided, describe alternatives to participation in your research for earning extra credit.

**Participants will be receiving extra credit points as an incentive to participate. Students who do not participate or male will have an alternative opportunity to get the same amount of extra credit points.**

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8. Discuss the risks in relation to the anticipated benefits to the subjects and society.

**On a scale of 1-10 the risks to participants and society is at maximum (2) while the anticipated benefits to participants and society are above minimal (8). It is our belief that the benefits of this research outweigh the risks.**

9. Identify the specific sites/agencies to be used as well as approval status. Include copies of approval letters from agencies to be used (note: these are required for final approval). If they are not available at the time of IRB review, approval of the proposal will be contingent upon their receipt.

**No agents or agencies, other than Texas State University students and facilities will be used.**

10. If you are a student, indicate the relationship of the proposal to your program of work and identify your supervising/sponsor faculty member.

**My supervisor is Dr. Roque Mendez, Texas State University Psychology department.**

11. In the case of student projects, pilot studies, theses, or dissertations, evidence of approval of Supervising Professor or Faculty Sponsor should be included. Thesis and dissertation proposals must be approved by the student's committee before proceeding to the IRB for review.

**Not applicable**

12. If the proposed study has been approved by another IRB, attach a copy of the letter verifying approval/disapproval and any related correspondence. If the proposed study has not been reviewed/approved by another IRB, please state this explicitly.

**Not applicable**

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13. Identify all individuals who will have access, during or after completion, to the results of this study, whether they be published or unpublished.

**Katy Leigh (student investigator), Dr. Roque Mendez (Research supervisor), and The Honors Program**

### Consent Form

**IRB #- 2010C2485**

2010C2485

Psychology undergraduate Katy Leigh (e-mail: [KL1223@txstate.edu](mailto:KL1223@txstate.edu)) and Professor Roque V. Mendez of Texas State University, Department of Psychology (e-mail [RM04@txstate.edu](mailto:RM04@txstate.edu), 512-245-2526) are conducting a research investigation. The purpose of this research is to examine how writing about a particular character affects your mood in either a positive or negative way while looking at your ability to fantasize and be empathetic. You are being asked to participate because you and other participants bring diverse moods and writing abilities to this research. Also, to participate in this study you must be of the female gender. After completing the study, you will receive extra credit points that will be applied to your upper division psychology class. Students who do not participate in this study will be given an alternative opportunity to receive extra credit points.

This research study requires 40-45 minutes. There are two questionnaires to complete for this study. The first is the Davis Interpersonal Reactivity Index which is a total of 28 questions. The other is The Mood Rating Scale which has a total of 14 questions. These are anonymous questionnaires and individual responses will not be disclosed to anyone. Nor will your name appear on any of the questionnaires. You will be asked to write a short story about a particular character for 15-20 minutes, which will also be anonymous. Your name will not be matched with your short story or questionnaires.

You are not under any obligation to participate and can withdraw yourself from the study at any time. Since your participation is purely voluntary, refusing to participate will involve no penalty. You may choose to not answer any question(s) for any reason. You may choose to discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

In the event that any participant might experience unanticipated distress, the contact information for the University counseling Center is <http://www.counseling.txstate.edu/intro.html>. The e-mail address is [counselingcenter@txstate.edu](mailto:counselingcenter@txstate.edu). As a registered Texas State University student, mental health services at the counseling center are free, though the number of sessions allowed is limited. Any questions about the research, research participants' rights, and/or research-related injuries to participants should be directed to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) chair, Dr.

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Jon Lasser (512-245-3413, [Lasser@txstate.edu](mailto:Lasser@txstate.edu)) or to Ms. Becky Northcut, Compliance Specialist (512-245-2102).

At the conclusion of the study, you will be debriefed and informed about the hypotheses of the study. A summary of the results will be made available to you via e-mail, if requested.

We believe that there are minimal risks in doing this research. As a participant you may be deceived by someone in the study. Nevertheless, your participation has benefits. These benefits include practicing your writing skills while contributing to research that contributes to the field of psychology.

If you have any questions, please contact undergraduate student Katy Leigh: e-mail: [KL1223@txstate.edu](mailto:KL1223@txstate.edu) or the research supervisor Dr. Roque V. Mendez: e-mail [RM04@txstate.edu](mailto:RM04@txstate.edu) or at 512-245-2526. You will be provided with a copy of this signed consent form.

Thank you,

Katy Leigh

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature

I have read and understand this consent form. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Your Name (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Your Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Demographic questions:**

1. Age:  
A. 18 and below      B. 19      C. 20      D.21      E. 22 and up
2. Ethnicity:  
A. Black-American      B. Asian-American      C. Latino      D. Anglo/white      E. Other
3. Classification:  
A. Freshman      B. Sophomore      C. Junior      D. Senior      E. Other
4. Number of writing classes taken at the college level:  
A. 2 or less      B. 3      C. 4      D.5      E. 6 or more

RUNNING HEAD: FICTIONAL WRITING: THE ROLE OF POSITIVE AFFECT AND EMPATHIC CONCERN

**Character Rating:**

How negative is the character you created?

1            2            3            4            5

Not at all negative

Very negative

How positive is the character you created?

1            2            3            4            5

Not at all positive

Very positive

**Davis Interpersonal Reactivity Index**

Respondents are asked to indicate the degree to which the items describe them by choosing the appropriate point on a five-point scale running from 0 (not like me) to 4 (very much like me). Items indicated by an (R) are first reversed (0=4, 1=3, 3=1, 4=0), and then responses to the items making up each subscale are separately summed. Each subscale consists of seven items; thus, scores on each subscale can range from 0-28. The subscales are the Fantasy (FS) scale, the Perspective Taking (PT) scale, the Empathic Concern (EC) scale, and the Personal Distress (PD) scale.

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

1            2            3            4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1            2            3            4

Not like me

Very much like me

31. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the “other guy’s” point of view (PF) (R)

1            2            3            4

Not like me

Very much like me

32. Sometimes I don’t feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems. (EC) (R)

1            2            3            4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4



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Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

41. When I see someone get hurt, I tend to remain calm. (PD) (R)

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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47. I am usually pretty effective in dealing with emergencies. (PD) (R)

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1                      2                      3                      4

Not like me

Very much like me

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

1	2	3	4
Not like me		Very much like me	

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

1	2	3	4
Not like me		Very much like me	

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

1	2	3	4
Not like me		Very much like me	

**The Mood Rating Scale developed by Diener and Emmons**

Subjects are asked to indicate the degree to which they are experiencing each of the moods on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (extremely much) at the moment.

**Pleasant affect words**

1. Happy

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Extremely much			

2. Joy

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Extremely much			

3. Pleased

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1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						Extremely much

4. Enjoyment/fun

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						Extremely much

5. Glad

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						Extremely much

6. Delighted

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						Extremely much

7. Contented

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						Extremely much

**Unpleasant affect words**

8. Angry

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						Extremely much

9. Fear/anxiety

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						Extremely much

10. Frustrated

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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Not at all

Extremely much

11. Depressed

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

Not at all

Extremely much

12. Annoyed

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

Not at all

Extremely much

13. Sad

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

Not at all

Extremely much

14. Gloomy

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

Not at all

Extremely much

## CHANGED TO PANAS

**Read each item and then circle the appropriate answer based on how you feel from 1 (very slightly or not at all) to 5 (extremely). Indicate to what extent you feel this way right now, that is, at the present moment.**

53. Interested

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
 very slightly    a little            moderately       quite a bit       extremely  
 or not at all

54. Distressed

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
 very slightly    a little            moderately       quite a bit       extremely

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or not at all

55. Excited

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
or not at all				

56. Upset

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
or not at all				

57. Strong

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
or not at all				

58. Guilty

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
or not at all				

59. Scared

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
or not at all				

60. Hostile

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
or not at all				

61. Enthusiastic

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
or not at all				

62. Proud

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
or not at all				

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63. Irritable

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

64. Alert

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

65. Ashamed

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

66. Inspired

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

67. Nervous

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

68. Determined

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

69. Attentive

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

70. Jittery

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

71. Active

1	2	3	4	5
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very slightly    a little                    moderately    quite a bit    extremely  
or not at all

72. Afraid

1                                    2                                    3                                    4                                    5  
very slightly    a little                    moderately    quite a bit    extremely  
or not at all

**Question before debriefing:**

Participants will be asked to what extent they felt pressed for time. This variable is measured to determine its effects on helping. To the extent that it is influencing helping, it will be controlled statistically.