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READING BUILDS EMPATHY: PILOTING A LITERACY TOOL TO MEASURE READING'S IMPACT ON KIDS' EMPATHY DEVELOPMENT

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READING BUILDS EMPATHY: PILOTING A LITERACY TOOL TO
MEASURE READING'S IMPACT ON KIDS' EMPATHY DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

READING BUILDS EMPATHY: PILOTING A LITERACY TOOL TO
MEASURE READING'S IMPACT ON KIDS' EMPATHY DEVELOPMENT

Valerie L. Williams-Sanchez

Culturally Relevant Pedagogical (CRP; Ladson-Billings, 1995) and textual strategic approaches to reading development are gaining acceptance and broader usage among students of all ages and walks of life. With this shift, quantitative measures of efficacy can confirm, bolster, and source new policies and strategies for implementation in new and existing learning frontiers that engage at-home reading and family literacy practices. To this end, the Reading Builds Empathy literacy study seeks to develop and pilot a new instrument to be used in future intervention studies. Focusing on the active ingredient of culturally relevant pedagogy, empathy and its three dimensions (affective, cognitive, and ethnocultural empathy) this instrument adapts proven methods for assessing early readers aged 6-8 on affective learning measures, namely Marinak's (2015) Me and My Reading Profile, to construct a new tool to help reading researchers, educators, and families better measure and understand the power of early readers' engagement with picture books. Outcomes from this study offered suggestions for future interventions to advance the use of picture books, development and use of empathy in a CRP context, for students' reading and writing development, academic success, and lifelong learning.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Empathy is a complex construct that plays an important role in living and learning. It is the lifeblood of civil society, and central to becoming a successful literacy learner. Multifaceted empathy is developed early on and expands as we grow and nurture it through various implicit and explicit, socio-cognitive exchanges, and experiences (Vygotsky, 1979). Facets of this construct that are of interest to this study are:

- *Affective Empathy*, related to the ability to feel what others feel

- *Cognitive Empathy*, related to the ability to understand the ways others think

- *Ethnocultural Empathy*, related to the ability to relate to others of different ethnocultural groups

Empathy is also at the heart of Ladson-Billings' (2015) Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, a learning philosophy rooted in Freire's (1970) Pedagogy of the Oppressed, and is a worldview that has taken root and is fast becoming a dominant teaching approach in America's schools (Muniz, 2019).

Increased attention and interest in adopting this learning framework and its tools, specifically culturally relevant text and books, means the ability to effectively define and measure efficacy across empathy subscales is important to optimize, replicate, monitor, and control its utilization. Part of the Reading Builds Empathy Literacy Study, the present study seeks to pilot two quantitative instruments. They are the Parents Say and Kids Say Surveys.

Making the Case for Earlier Childhood Empathy Development

Children's ideas of self, begin to form during the 'sensitive periods' in early brain development, through age 4. By age 5, children are becoming increasingly more independent, eager to get facts about the world around them. Their internal landscape is actively being shaped by their imagination. Much is going on in the child's developing mind that will establish the child's capacities for learning, building knowledge, and understanding themselves, others, and their future experiences. For this reason, it is important to seize the opportunity to provide mind-expanding activities that will develop and exercise the elasticity of young minds. And in this regard, it is never too early to start introducing activities, implicit and explicit that teach empathy in all of its facets.

Figure 1: Sensitive Periods in Early Brian Development.

Source: Council for Early Child Development. (ref. Nash 1997, Early Years Study, 1999, Shonkoff, 2000)

Picture Book reading is that sort of activity. Operating with visual and textual messaging

and informational cues, picture books engage readers in multimodal exchanges. Such engagements operate on multiple levels and layers to communicate.

Picture Books. Picture Books can also show children that they are seen and valued. When all aspects of them—including attributes related to race and culture—are reflected, it is a critical step toward helping them feel welcome and connected to their world, teachers, and peers. This feeling of trust is crucial because it sets the stage for liberated exploration and to engage freely in exploration and learning, (NAEYC, 2016). Learnings aren't limited to textual lessons. Social-emotional learning (SEL) can also be achieved with picture books which are increasingly being used for just this purpose.

Figure 2: Picture Books for Social Emotional Learning -- Empathy

Empathy Reading Lists. "Mommy" bloggers, librarians, early childhood educators, and literacy organizations increasingly offer reading lists around this construct.

A selection of a few from the past three years that have been created and used to teach

empathy alone are listed and included in Appendix O. This list totals 77 picture books

that are broken out by content and main character type (A = Animal/Fantasy, B =

Diversity, and C = Control), and that address explicit and implicit empathy along

affective, cognitive, and ethnocultural subscales referenced by these groups and others.

Figure 3: Social Emotional Learning Reading Lists (Empathy)

EMPATHY BOOK LISTS

Publishers:

scholastic.com	penguinrandonhouse.com	leeandlow.com
amazon.com	sonlight.com	

Teachers, Bloggers & Home Schoolers:

homegrownfriends.com	whatdowedoallday.com	happydaysinthefirstgrade.com
mommyevolution.com	pragmaticmom.com	whimsyworkshopteaching.com
proudtobeprimary.com	themodernsavy.com	meaningfulmama.com
artsymoma.com	dadsuggests.com	librarymom.com
getepic.com	kidsmoneylessons.com	beebalm.com
childrenslibrarylady.com	thebarefootmommy.com	ourjourneywestward.com
amightygirl.com	juliennecunningham.com	toppsta.com
tinybop.com	teachthougt.com	

Book Clubs & Literacy Organizations:

coloursofus.com	childrenswi.org	fcbg.org.uk
huffpost.com	bookroo.com	

Efforts in this regard are picking up as a result of social outcries, the need for

heightened empathy, and the increased recognition and awareness that multimodal and

language-based mediatory tools and activities, like picture books and reading build

empathy.

Ethnocultural pictures books. And while interest is growing around the use of multimodal text as a means of supporting early reader's development, the dearth of their availability remains. This is a critical factor in optimizing the mirroring benefit and cognition expansion properties of picture books for early readers, gains that will be included and explored as the ethnocultural subscale of the RBE study. Figure 4. demonstrates a somber reality at play in current levels of main character representation in children's literature. That is, that Black and people of color are underrepresented in children's literature. Illustrated by the numbers shown, the figure shows the majority of

Figure 4: Main Characters in Kids' Literature (Lee & Low)
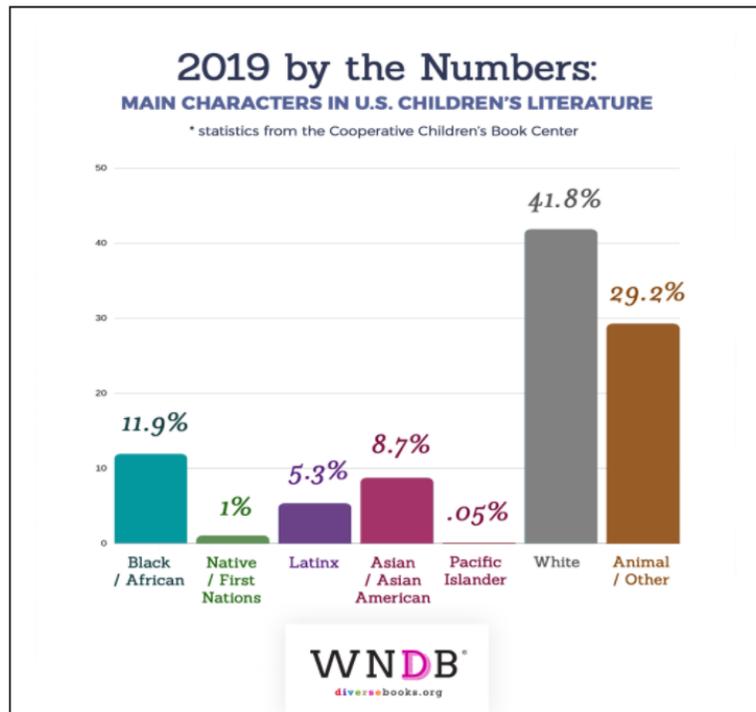
Kids' titles feature white kids, then animals of fantasy characters. Last, the balance of titles features a collective 26.95% that represents ALL BPOC. These numbers are

significant because of representation matters in literacy learning (Hughes-Hassell, Barkley, & Koehler, 2009).

Positionality. Further, I have seen the need for increased representation first-hand in my own experience as a woman of color and in my practice teaching diverse learners including the vision impaired, emotionally challenged, and "at-risk" learners in early childhood as well as among K-12-aged, girls and boys, in residential, therapeutic treatment facilities, native Spanish-speaking, native English and English Language Learners of various ages and walks of life. Most importantly, it has been through my creative work and literacy practice as the author/illustrator of a children's picture book series that aims to teach prosocial behaviors and literacy development that further grounds my awareness and fuels my exploration of this topic. I have seen the effects of these dynamics first hand.

Empathy and Education Standards

Empathy is a hot topic and learning construct of recent growing interest. More and more, home and traditional schools, publishers, and literacy advocacy organizations are looking to traditionally and independently published multimodal and picture books to teach facets of empathy in order to support teaching national, Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Common Core Standards (CCSS), (Lain, 2019).

Common Core Standards

The following are CCSS standards for second-grade learners, children who are typically aged 7–8, which are further evidence of this shift.

- Reading - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.6

Acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters, including by

speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud.

- Writing Instruction - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.1

Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply reasons that support the opinion, use linking words (e.g., because, and, also) to connect opinion and reasons, and provide a concluding statement or section.

- Speaking/Listening Processes - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.1.B

Build on others' talk in conversations by linking their comments to the remarks of others.

On the social emotional learning front, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is considered a trusted source of knowledge and high-quality, evidence-based social and emotional learning.

CASEL 5

These Social Emotional Learning (SEL) standards include core competencies that address five broad and interrelated areas of competence and highlights examples for each: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Among these competencies, social awareness considers empathy. Specifically, this cluster is concerned with cultivating the ability to empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts, and to understand others perspectives.

The text and timing of these grade-specific standards illustrate how important empathy attributes are to literacy development and early childhood education. it is

through these standards that the need for such work is acknowledged. Moreover, given the earlier discussion regarding the arch of brain development. The standards also highlight the need to optimize earlier opportunities to affect empathy growth and development.

Research in cognitive and behavioral sciences echoes the reality that children notice differences in themselves and others as early as age 5. This means that opportunities to impact an individual's cognitive capabilities and learning capacities can be cultivated at younger and younger ages and developmental stages. In my practice as a children's book author, I have seen that picture books offer an effective multimodal tool for teaching children of all ages and provide unique opportunities for socio-cognitive and constructivist engagements that can help developing readers better understand their world and their part in it. Armed with this knowledge, and awareness of the need to move our collective social discourse into a more equitable space, my research and practice regarding children's picture books seek to better understand and utilize this important literary genre toward enhanced literacy development. These are the critical factors that motivate my pursuit of this degree, my study, and present research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the Reading Builds Empathy (RBE) literacy study is to develop and pilot an instrument that is able to effectively determine the relationship between parent's assessments of their child's reading behaviors and related levels of affective, cognitive, and ethnocultural empathy, with the child's self-reports for the same construct along the three subscales described. Simply put, the goal of this study is to develop an instrument of this type because, to my knowledge, nothing like it exists.

The ability to identify and ultimately affect relationships between and among parents and kids related to these facets of empathy and reading behaviors is critical. Outcomes from this instrument are intended to help educators better understand early readers' use and implementation of culturally relevant literature and pedagogy and the dynamics of at-home literacy practices. This includes a review of the reader's content choices, reading takeaways, and reading behaviors' impact on early readers' empathy development. The resultant data and analysis are intended to vet a feasible process and to assess the reliability and validity of the instrument as an effective construct. Findings in this regard will have important implications for literacy learner's development, including reading, writing, and lifelong learning.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its forward-looking conceptualization to provide a means for current and future literacy pedagogical innovation that is to be measured, evaluated, and subsequently replicated. Included in this inquiry, current iterations of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) which explore the combined effects of affective, cognitive, and ethnocultural empathic development will be studied and considered. A conflation of these attributes, have only recently been considered together and/or studied in the composite and context of early childhood education and literacy development. Further distinct to this study's purview, this instrument is interested in at-home family literacy, a future that also distinguishes the work. Finally, by focusing on picture books as a pedagogical modality, this study and the resultant instrument will also serve as a contribution to the body of research related to children's literature.

Research Questions

The research questions driving this project are these:

(1) Is the RBE survey an effective instrument to measure affective, cognitive, and ethnocultural empathy for early readers, aged 6-8?

(2) How correlated are parents' reports of children's empathy, and children's reported perceptions of the child's empathy?

(3) How do family book reading practices relate to affective, cognitive, and ethnocultural empathy?

Definition of Terms

Empathy, the construct and its subscales. In her 2019 essay, Lain characterizes empathy as a feeling, one that is evocative of love, kindness, tolerance and forgiveness. This facet of empathy is known as affective empathy.

Affective empathy is useful to the learning process in as much as it promotes the development of character and civil behavior. Important attributes for the classroom, affective empathy is about feeling what others feel. In contrast, cognitive empathy is the ability to understand the perspectives of others, or, in other words, thinking about how others think.

Cognitive empathy is concerned with the ways in which we understand others' thinking.

Ethnocultural empathy, finally, is the ability to understand others of diverse ethnicities and cultures specifically, the ability to understand the feeling and perspectives of those of distinct ethnocultural groups.

Figure 5: Empathy Study Dimensions

Empathy		
Affective	*Cognitive*	*Ethnocultural*
Emotional connection	Rational understanding	Ability to understand the feelings of those who are ethnically and/or culturally different than us.
Ability to feel what another feels	Ability to take someone else's perspective	
A visceral attribute	An intellectual attribute	

Affective empathy growth fosters socio-emotional learning; cognitive empathy development develops critical thinking and perspective-taking, as does ethnocultural empathy development.

It is with these three subscales with which this study is concerned: The affective ability to feel; the cognitive ability to understand different perspectives; and the ability to do these things as relates to people across cultural boundaries. These, too, are the active ingredients at play in the tools and theoretical framework upon which this study is scaffolded.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

    Theoretical Framework

Building on sociocultural pedagogies that leveraged students' unique perspectives and cultural make-up, Ladson-Billings' observations in the early '90s of the ways in which hip-hop culture uniquely captured and retained student's attention, inspired her to approach learning in what was then a revolutionary, new way. In writing *Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy* (1994), Ladson-Billings articulated a culture-changing pedagogical master concept, a theory of a culturally relevant pedagogy. In its original manifestation, Ladson-Billings' (1994) idea of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy was described as "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes."

    Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, the Brand

Since its naming, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy has risen in acceptance to become an institutionalized brand, one that has permeated professional development offers for educators at every level, including thousands of K-12 teachers and hundreds of school districts in the U.S. and Canada (Muñiz, 2019). Now a household term, the moniker "culturally relevant" has been tied to and applied for use with everything from marketing consumer products to branding cultural events and promoting current trends. In its broadest sense culturally relevant denotes something that echoes today's culture, reflects social perspectives, while ostensibly remaining true to and upholding a fidelity to a demographic of origin. Building on this broader notion and brand identity, cultural

relevance in modern parlance means "keepin' it real." In educational practice, culturally

relevant pedagogy has been nicknamed to include culturally compatible teaching,

culturally connected teaching, culturally competent instruction, culturally responsive

learning, culturally appropriate, and now culturally sustaining pedagogy (Hollie,

2019). More than a simple name game, variations in the theory's name also reflect the

iterative evolution of the pedagogy.

50 Years of Evolution

For more than 50 years, academics, practitioners, and scholars have discussed and

debated concepts that have led to the current array of culturally relevant pedagogy

varietals. Pedagogies leading to and beyond Ladson–Billings' (1994) iconic work in

which the pedagogy was first named, are the result of theoretical consideration that have

over time shaped theorists thinking in significant ways which we will now explore.

Critical pedagogy. The evolutionary trajectory that led to our modern-day

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy is grounded in Freire's philosophy and seminal

work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970) that sounded the social wake-up

call regarding the oppressive illiteracy of Brazil's working class. Freire (1970)

advocated for a critical awareness he believed could be attained through his five-

point critical praxis that included a.) Identification of a problem, b.) Analysis of a

problem, c.) Creation of an action plan to meet or resolve the problem, d.)

Deployment of the action plan, and finally, e.) Evaluation of the plan. hooks

(1994) described this praxis as a means for taking action and using critical

reflection on the world in order to bring about change. Freire (1985) eschewed

transactional "banking" education, which treated students like empty accounts to

be filled with information. Instead, Freire advocated for "pedagogy for freedom" to affect a problem-posing style of learning in which teachers interact with students to deconstruct and solve issues. Freire's worldview embodied a critical pedagogy that was transformational, impacting global and national educational discourses.

      Culturally relevant teaching. Nationally, Ramirez and Castañeda were among the early pioneers in education theoretical practice that looked at the intersection of culture and pedagogy. In their signature text, *Cultural Democracy, Bi-cognitive Development, and Education* (Ramirez & Castañeda, 1974*)*, the theorists echoed Freire's belief that schools robbed students of their individuality and forced minorities to conform to assimilationists philosophies (Hollie, 2019). Their argument was couched in the experiences of Mexican American students.

      Culturally appropriate pedagogy. Au and Jordon's (1981) study of Hawaiian teachers introduced new methods of cultural inclusion in learning. In *Teaching Reading to Hawaiian Children: Finding a Culturally Appropriate Solution* (Au & Jordan, 1981), their reading-centric and culturally appropriate pedagogy also advanced Freire's praxis. In the duo's micro-ethnographic study, four requisite pedagogical components (epistemology, process, context, and personal) were considered and integrated into learning in ways that honored culture-specific knowledge, behaviors, attitudes, and skills.

      Culturally congruent pedagogy. Moving from the Pacific Island cultural context to that of indigenous Americans, in Mohatt and Erickson's (1981) *Cultural Differences in Teaching Styles in an Odawa school: A Sociolinguistic*

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Approach, a culturally congruent pedagogy was named for the approach in which language patterns and practices used at-home were embraced in the classroom to help students achieve school success.

Culturally responsive education. Also looking at the linguistic interactions between and among student groups, Cazden and Leggett (1981) recommended a four-point research and education policy in *Culturally Responsive Education: A Response to Remedies* that included (a) inclusion of multisensory teaching approaches to bilingual-bicultural education (BBE), (b) research into the dependence/independence dynamics of culturally responsive pedagogy, (c) monitoring and formal evaluation of class participation in BBE programs, and last, (d) the call for heightened cultural visibility through the effective engagement of families, diversity hiring, and school-wide multicultural in-service training.

Radical pedagogy. Years later, Giroux (1983), looking beyond BBE, took a more aggressive posture to education pedagogy in his *Theory and Resistance in Education: A Pedagogy for the Opposition*. Citing Freire (1968), Giroux's argument called for a critical pedagogy rooted in the cultural capital of the learner. Giroux's radical pedagogy emphasized resistance and the reproduction of social structure to be fueled by student's supplemental education to become more than laborers, to become agents capable of resistance and production of alternative works (Ryan, 1984).

Cultural compatibility. Delving deeper into earlier micro-ethnographic work with Au (1981), Jordan (1984) posited in *Cultural Compatibility and the*

Education of Hawaiian Children: Implications for Mainland Educators the theory
of cultural compatibility, a pedagogy in which culture was repositioned as a
guidepost to inform choices and practice including curriculum, materials and
educational element curation and development to ensure cultural alignment and
best academic outcomes.

Cultural congruence pedagogy. Also seeking a more harmonious
alignment, Singer (1988) advocated a learning environment that considered the
larger communities in which students lived and learned in order to minimize
differences in speaking and styles of social interaction. This was the big idea
behind cultural congruence pedagogy as explicated in *What Is Cultural
Congruence, and Why Are They Saying Such Terrible Things about It?
Occasional Paper No. 120* (Singer, 1988). Those who said the theory "blamed the
victim" without breaking the cycle stymied this short-lived theory.

Empowering education pedagogy. This was the next big idea leading to
Ladson-Billings' theoretical milestone. A discursive, student-centered, and
democratic approach, Shor (1992) put forth *Empowering Education: Critical
Teaching for Social Change*. In it, personal growth through public life was the
catalyst to relate skills development and academic knowledge, with habits of
inquiry and critical investigation of society, inequality, power, and change.

Cultural synchronization theory. Opposing Au & Jordan's (1981)
micro-ethnographic studies, Irvine (1990) took a macro-ethnographic approach,
asserting that it was the incongruence of student and teacher's culture and
communications that were the source of educational and academic discord. Their

theory sought reconciliation.

Culturally relevant pedagogy. As previously stated, Ladson-Billings (1994) published *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teaching of African American Students*, articulating the culture-changing pedagogical master concept, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Its original manifestation included tenets of (a) academic success, (b) cultural competence, and, (c) critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This is the theoretical baseline to which the pedagogical category refers.

Figure 6: Timeline -- 50 Years of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

1970 Critical pedagogy, (Freire)	**2000** Culturally Responsive Teaching, (Gay)
1974 Culturally Relevant Teaching, (Ramirez & Castañeda)	**2005** Funds of Knowledge, (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti)
1981 Culturally Appropriate Pedagogy, (Au & Jordan)	**2007** Culturally Responsive Teaching, (Villegas & Lucas)
1981 Culturally Congruent Pedagogy, (Mohatt & Erickson)	**2014** CRP 2.0 Remix, (Ladson-Billings)
1983 Culturally Responsive Education, (Cazden & Leggett)	**2015** Culturally Relevant Teaching and the Brain, (Hammond)
1983 Radical Pedagogy, (Giroux)	**2016** Reality Pedagogy, (Emdin, 2016)
1984 Cultural Compatibility, (Au & Jordan)	**2018** Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, (Paris & Alm, 2018)
1988 Cultural Congruence Pedagogy, (Singer)	
198? Cultural Synchronization Theory, (Au & Jordan)	
1994 Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, (Ladson-Billings)	
1994 Engaged Pedagogy, (hooks)	
1995 Other People's Children, (Delpit)	

Engaged pedagogy. Concurrently, hooks (1994) published *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* which reinforced Freire's pedagogy and explicated her theory of a progressive and holistic pedagogy that envisioned education as part of a holistic and healing process that merged

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physical, mental, and spiritual reconciliation. hooks' (1994) further asserted the need to link theory with a practice including intentional multiculturalism, student empowerment, and the incorporation of passion and rigor toward a more meaningful learning experience.

Other people's children. In *Other People's Children: Culture Conflict in the Classroom*, Delpit's (1995) theory advocated that students become adept at "code-switching," the practice of alternating between two or more languages, academic or social codes, to better navigate how students move, live, and learn. Delpit (1995) wrote "Education at its best, hones and develops the knowledge and skills each student already possesses while at the same time adding new knowledge and skills to that base" (p. 67-68).

Culturally responsive teaching. Gay's (2000) *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice* captured among the most influential iterations of culturally relevant response. Gay's (2000) theory included: cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to, and effective for them. This pedagogy teaches *to and through* the strengths of these students. It is culturally validating and affirming. (p. 31)

Funds of knowledge. Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti (2005) named the theory that sought to acknowledge and source students' "funds of knowledge." In their book, *Funds of Knowledge: Theorizing Practices in Households, Communities, and Classrooms*, theorists explicated how students of all walks of life have experiences with which they enter the classroom. Taking this notion further, this

book explores the trio's first-hand research experiences with families that enabled them to document this competence and intellectual grounding, exchanges that similar pedagogical actions.

Culturally responsive teaching. Villegas & Lucas' (2007) highly utilized framework for pre- and in-service teachers' six training attributes included (a) knowing how learners construct knowledge, (b) understanding students' lives, (c) having a sociocultural consciousness, (d) promoting affirming ideas of diversity, (e) incorporating relevant learning strategies, and (f) supporting student advocacy for all. (Hollie, 2019).

Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0 remix. A decade after her culture-changing theory was published, Ladson-Billings (2014) called for next-generation "remixes" and continued development of dynamic cultural-based scholarship which ushered in hybrid models like culturally sustaining pedagogy, which allows for a fluid cultural understanding and teaching practices that engage questions of equity and justice.

Culturally relevant teaching and the brain. In *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigour Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students,* Hammond (2015) drew cognitive connections between teaching methods, learning, and cultural tools for processing information utilized by our brain's memory systems, like music, repetition, metaphor, recitation, physical manipulation of content, and ritual. These approaches rely on organic, at-home cultural learning practices and "ways of knowing" that help students scaffold in-school learning (Gonzalez, 2017).

Reality pedagogy. In his book, *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood…and the Rest of Y'all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education*, Emdin (2016) described a pedagogy in which teacher has an awareness of "the spaces in which [Indigenous and urban youth] reside, and an understanding of how to see, enter into, and draw from these spaces" (p. 27) without projecting their own fears onto the students whom they serve.

Culturally sustaining pedagogy. Finally, the current, *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing* World (Paris & Alim, 2018) offered a critique of earlier theories and provided a new vision to re-engage and sustain critical thinking around asset-based pedagogies. Paris and Alim (2018) suggested methods of engagement perpetuate and foster cultural, linguistic, and literacy pluralism.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, Today

Each of the theories reviewed focused on, represented, and reflected a distinct facet of culturally relevant pedagogy, which collectively form the tapestry of the ongoing multidisciplinary conversation. Perhaps most noteworthy, particularly to this discussion, are elements which are grounded and informed by Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), in which Vygotsky posited:

A. Children construct knowledge personally.

B. Learning is mediated and cognitive development is the result of interaction between the learner and mediatory tools (like picture books) that facilitate learning.

C. Language, the most significant socio-cultural tool, plays a central role in cognitive

development and is used to teach higher psychological functions.

D. Learning surfaces in two stages: 1) *inter-psychologically*, between people, and 2) *intra-psychologically*, within the child.

E. Development is inextricable from its social context. This includes the learning environment and the type of people who would use similar concepts, language, and symbols as the learner.

For this reason, the knowledge developed as a result of children's interactions with their parents, families, and communities is equally critical as the knowledge they develop independently is to learning and to the two-part instrument being developed.

Perhaps most important to this pedagogical reflection, Vygotsky's idea that development is inextricable from its social context is the grounding from which a culturally relevant pedagogy is born. Educators looking to tap leverage learners' cultural contexts, increasingly understand its importance and seek to harness it rather than alienate it and to distinguish it from the in-school learning environment to build a more expansive pedagogical approach. In this way, Hammond's (2015) CRT and the Brain distinguishes itself as a teaching theory that not only considers learners' homegrown learning context but also the methods employed in dimensions of affect, cognition, and ethnocultural experience.

Another critical feature of this pedagogical category, culturally relevant pedagogies are, together, consistent inasmuch as their purview, past, and present, recast culture and attempt to rewrite deficit models that view differences as deficiencies that education, schools, and teachers need "to be fixed." Instead, most of the theories aspire to establish asset-based frameworks of cultural diversity to recast students' individual and in

newer versions, collective cultures as something to be embraced and engaged. In this way, these pedagogies seek to ensure that students see themselves and their communities reflected and valued in the content and context of what and how they are taught in school. These pedagogies answered students' age-old questions: "Why do we need to know this stuff?" and demonstrated explicitly and implicitly how the curriculum is relevant to their lives. With each new theory, another unique facet, perspective, and voice has been considered, adding to the pedagogical choir. And yet, clearly, none has as yet proven to be a definitive voice able to answer these questions. Increasingly, the discussion is not confined to the ivory tower of academia; rather, it is open to new voices and perspectives evidenced by emerging theories and diverse theorists who reimagine education's rules of engagement, implemented teaching standards, and education policy. For these reasons, as well, an instrument to measure efficacy is called for.

Related Research

Culturally relevant literature has shown efficacy in measures of reading engagement and intrinsic motivation in young readers' literacy development (Ebe, 2010; Tatum, 2018; Unrau & Schlackman, 2006). This means books in which kids see themselves through characters of the same culture and ethnicity as their own, are more likely to hold the reader's interest (Tatum, 2019), and are the reading materials that kids are more likely to select when given the opportunity (Scholastic, 2019). Another well-touted benefit of CRP text is its ability to expose readers to new and different lived experiences through narratives told by those with the same worldview as the stories they tell. In this way, reading and literacy open doors for readers to new exposures and experiences to narrative lives, worldviews, and cultures they may otherwise never

encounter (Iwai, 2015). In doing so, such texts have been qualitatively and quantitatively proven to expand readers' perspectives and abilities to understand with those unlike themselves (Souto-Manning; 2009).

The mere capacity to recognize that those who are different culturally and ethically than us can have distinct perspectives and ways of making sense of the world is a function of cognitive and ethnocultural empathy, attributes which can also be developed and refined through the reading at early points in human development when our ideas and interactions are shaped through socio-cognitive processes (Alsup, 2013). These processes, as described in Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory of Reading and Writing (1994), inform our ways of knowing and constructing meaning. These qualities of picture book reading have been proven in readers from older age groups. However, less is documented for readers aged 6-8, in this regard, and less so with measures of early readers' primary data. Ironically, it is this age group for which this self-reporting is important. That's because, as Vygotsky theorized, it is in these early stages, when readers are aged 6-8 that social cognition and self-identity are first taking shape, forged through interactions in their everyday lives or on the pages of books they read (Gee, 2001; Tatum 2014; Unrau & Alvermann, 2013).

Relationship Between Prior Research and Present Study

Recent studies suggest students reading culturally relevant picture books demonstrate statistically significant increases in measures of affective, cognitive, and ethnocultural empathy (Alsup, 2013; Boon & Lewthwaite, 2015; Dever, Sorenson & Broderick, 2005; Dissanayake Mudiyanselage, 2014; Iwai, 2015; Lain, 2019; Louie, 2005: Nikolajeva, 2013; Scholastic, 2019). And while these studies have drawn positive

findings in this regard for in-school learning practices related to various dimensions of empathy among students ages 8 through 12, little research has studied similar measures in at-home, family literacy applications. Looking to bridge and build in-class successes with student's at-home activities, new questions emerge. Do these in-school gains benefit from at-home and family literacy practices, the new frontier for culturally relevant pedagogies development? Moreover, how -- if at all -- do parents' observations of their kids' empathy and the children's own self-reports of their picture book informed sensibilities in this regard correlate and support these research findings? Also, with the noted increased use of culturally relevant pedagogies that look (a) to harness the benefits of diverse literature and text previously enumerated, (b) to scaffold at-home culturally inspired learning, and (c) to bridge cause-related lessons and literacy practices within classrooms, there is a growing interest in applying these processes as soon as possible, as well as to validate the resources and outcomes of the processes.

How does at-home, family reading of culturally relevant picture books impact affective, cognitive, and ethnocultural empathy learning for early readers? It is hoped that in the composite, answers to the series of items will answer these questions. However, there are many smaller questions to be answered that will shade and contour our responses, to create a more robust answer, one that is designed to help address the gap in understanding of what works. Specifically, what has shown efficacy in the realm of culturally relevant, at-home family literacy practices and empathy development using a rich mix of multimodal book content for early readers aged 6-8? Other of the associated smaller questions include how do at-home reading behaviors differ within the sample group? How do subgroups' distinct and culturally grounded family literacy environments

shape literacy behavior? Also, most importantly, how congruent are parents' and their children's reported perceptions of the child's empathic sensibility? Do these groups' lived experiences afford opportunities for inductive reasoning about the broader culture and general population? Last, and not least, how does reading picture books impact affective, cognitive, and ethnocultural empathy learning? To answer these questions, the RBE has as its source one core conceptual guide and three model studies, as follows:

Core Concepts

Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain (CRT&B; Hammond, 2015) represents the convergence of CRP and the construct subscales of affective, cognitive, and ethnocultural empathy in new ways. CRT&B looks at culture as a trust-builder and cognitive scaffold to cultivate the unique gifts and talents of every student by:

- Focusing on improving the learning capacity of diverse learners
- Centering around the cognitive aspects of teaching and learning and the affective, socioemotional aspects that facilitate cognitive development

Concerning itself with building cognitive and social-emotional learning capacity in diverse students that academic mindset to push back on the dominant narratives about people of color. Building brain power by increasing capacity improves information processes skills.

Study Models

The **Me and My Reading Profile** (MMRP; Marinak, et al., 2015) is a tool for assessing early reading motivation, with subscales:

(1) **Self-concept**,

(2) **Value of Reading**, and

(3) **Literacy Out Loud,** or subscale social aspects of literacy commonly seen and heard in primary classrooms.

MMRP also serves as a model for the RBE inasmuch as it has demonstrated reliability and validity in young children's ability to self-report on affective learning measures and assessed based on measures of affective expression, cognitive understanding, and ethnocultural difference.

Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis, 1980), is a 28-items survey answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Does not describe me well" to "Describes me very well". The measure has 4 subscales, each made up of 7 different items, taken directly from this source. IRI identified empathy as a multidimensional construct with four subscales:

1) Perspective Taking – the tendency to spontaneously adopt the psychological point of view of others

2) Fantasy – taps respondents' tendencies to transpose themselves imaginatively into the feelings and actions of fictitious characters in books, movies, and plays

3) Empathic Concern – assesses "other-oriented" feelings of sympathy and concern for unfortunate others

4) Personal Distress – measures "self-oriented" feelings of personal anxiety and unease in tense interpersonal settings.

The Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy (SEE; Wang, 2009) - The SEE self-report instrument on measures of empathy toward people of racial and ethnic backgrounds different from one's own, in an exploratory factor analysis yielded 4 factors:

1) Empathic Feeling and Expression,

2) Empathic Perspective Taking,

3) Acceptance of Cultural Differences, and

4) Empathic Awareness

SEE was correlated in the predicted directions with general empathy and attitudes toward people's similarities and differences. High internal consistency and test-retest reliability estimates were found. A confirmatory factor analysis provided evidence for the stability and generalizability of this 4-factor solution.

Study Limitations

This study is limited and shaped by COVID-19 viral global pandemic limitations, and considerations for method. More, it is situated in a specific period that is unique in history, where human interactions are necessarily online, forcing many including the unskilled in online, distance learning to work in the digital space. These mandated shifts in social interaction and behavior impact methods and results in ways positive and negative that are yet to be fully understood. Positive, recent changes include a global increase in reading. From increased pleasure reading -- on screens and in print -- to practical reading and beyond, more people are doing more reading during this time. This includes school-aged children who must now conduct and take part in their schooling using online platforms.

Conversely, a negative, the strength of the MMPR as I have experienced it, is revealed in the discussion that can happen as a result of the child's participation. Having the opportunity to be heard is a gratifying experience for anyone at any age, but specifically for young children whose world is dominated by the normative experiences related to school, the opportunity to have their perspectives honored rather than to give

"the right answer," is empowering. It is also one of the strongest attributes of the MMRP, which is designed to be an in-person test/survey experience. How a shift to a digital environment will impact this experience is yet to be seen, and an important, anticipated takeaway that RBE data may elucidate.

The COVID-19-based migration to digital learning platforms also impacts this study inasmuch as it meant there has been an increase of digital devices and tech resources distributed among children, nationwide, to ensure access to public education. As a result, it is hoped that the same children, by the time of recruitment, will not only have access to equipment but that they will also be better prepared to participate and more experienced in online instruction, reading, and learning engagement. Notwithstanding, it is also clear that the availability of technology resources is not the sole obstacle to online learning. In anecdotal accounts, it has been determined that the dearth of resources like the electricity and band-width that power technology devices, and most essentially student interest, pose far greater challenges to online learning. It is hoped that this study will shed light on these phenomena.

CHAPTER 3

Methods

The main objective of this project was to develop and pilot a new measure of affective, cognitive, and ethnocultural empathy for early readers, aged 6-8, called the Reading Builds Empathy Survey (RBE).

Hypotheses and Research Questions

The research questions driving this literacy study were:

(1) Is the RBE survey an effective instrument to measure affective, cognitive, and ethnocultural empathy for early readers, aged 6-8?

(2) How correlated are parents' reports of children's empathy, and children's reported perceptions of their empathy?

(3) How do a family's book reading practices relate to affective, cognitive, and ethnocultural empathy?

It was hypothesized that there would be a positive correlation between parents' and children's self-reports of empathy, which would indicate that on construct subscales, early readers' empathy development aligned with their parents' estimates. From this, it was hypothesized that on measures of reading behaviors, respondents who scored higher on questions about at-home reading behaviors, such as time spent reading, number of books in the home, and overall frequency of reading in the home, would also show higher empathy scores.

Research Design

Parent and child dyads were recruited to participate in this quantitative study which included survey research as a data-collection strategy. Specifically, a pair of cross-

sectional survey instruments and a data collection questionnaire were developed for which the child-focused, *Kids Say!* survey was deployed as a proctored activity, and the parent-focused, *Parents Say! survey* was self-administered. The children's survey had 27 items, and a 41-item survey was developed for their parents/caregivers. To gather additional data, an eleven-question enrollment questionnaire was created and included as part of the battery of data collection tools which together made up the instruments of the Reading Builds Empathy Study.

Participants and Sampling

The goal of the present study was to recruit as many parent and child dyads to participate as possible. Ultimately, twenty-one dyads enrolled from four states (California, Delaware, New York, and Texas). Nineteen such pairs successfully completed the study. Participants were recruited through a combination of organic, word-of-mouth promotion, social network referrals, and posted and distributed flyers that lead interested participants to enroll through an online project page (www.ReadingBuildsEmpathy.Info). Initial efforts were targeted to a predetermined, recruitment population array that drew from the 187,860 borrowers in the Rockland specific swath of the Ramapo Catskill Library System (RCLS) in upstate New York. A majority of the study participants resulted from this activity, and a total of 15 pairs came from New York. The remaining participants were recruited through ad hoc efforts and invitations to participate generated by the Principal Investigator (PI) through direct invitations.

The inclusion criteria for recruitment included respondents who were early readers, a child between the ages of 6- and 8-year-olds, able to read and speak English,

along with a participating custodial parent or caregiver who was also able to read and speak English, and who was willing and able to complete and sign the consent form for themselves and the child. Dyads were also required to have access to a computer and internet access to participate in the study. Taking this approach, more than 450 unique visits to the study website were registered during the recruitment period.

Procedures

Study participants were identified by their response to the study recruitment flyer which was distributed digitally and as hard copy. This electronic and paper flyer distribution was deployed in two ways. First, as a digital campaign to mobilize cardholders in the library system, digital flyers (pdf file attachments) were sent out to introduce the study to all of the children's librarians and directors in the library system via internal email under a cover letter signed by the director and a member of the Board of Trustees (the PI herself) from one of the 16 system library branch locations. This was a targeted approach that also included, as a second wave, the deployment of a note that asked respective children's library directors from each of the member libraries to also distribute the flyer to all of its members of their respective children's services directors and their listservs. A total of four rounds of such correspondence was distributed. This repeated effort was also reinforced by the distribution of a reminder brief with a link to the study that was included in the monthly e-newsletter, distributed by the main RCLS Administrative office.

Other recruitment efforts included a mention in a nationally distributed newsletter published by the We Need Diverse Books organization, and promotion through a literacy festival podcast interview. Printed flyers were also posted in churches, post offices, and

many local storefronts in the study area. The PI's social media network of teacher

educators in Delaware, and parenting groups in New York and California, as well as

other respondents who learned of the study through word of mouth also proved to be

particularly rich sources of study promotion, as were contacts made to members of the

Nyack Basics, a community-based group of parents who are part of the national

campaign (www.thebasics.org) that seeks to get all students reading by third grade.

Participants Demographic Data

Participants in the pilot group came from multiple states, the majority of whom

were residents in New York State. Rockland County residents numbered the most (12) as

identified by their zip codes, with the remaining five being New York City residents. All

parent respondents (N=21) were mothers, of whom 24% were aged 26 to 39, 53% were

40-50 years old, and roughly 10% were between the ages 51 and 60.

Most of those in the study reported having completed at least some amount of

college-level education, including many who had completed a bachelor's degree (5). The

majority, however, reported they had completed a master's degree (9). Further, three also

reported having post-graduate or doctoral degrees. Only one parent reported not having

completed a college-level degree. (See Table 1). Parents' occupations were varied and

ranged from Administrative Assistants, Arts Administrator, Fundraising Professional,

Graphic Designer, Homemakers (3), Innovation Strategist for a Consumer Goods

Company, Nonprofit Volunteer, Occupational Therapist, Paralegal/Interpreter (2),

Teacher/Educator (6), and Translator. The majority of participating households reported

dual income-earning parents. Further and beyond the two respondents who declined to

state, household incomes for others included 4.8% at $30,000; 4.8% at $80,000; 9.5% at

$100,000, and 57.1% at $100,000 or more.

Table 1: Parents Say! Results: Parents' Demographic Characteristics

Baseline Characteristic	N	%
State of residence		
CA	1	5%
DE	2	10%
NY	15	75%
TX	2	10%
Age		
to 39	5	23.8%
to 50	11	52.4%
to 65	2	9.5%
Missing	3	14.3%
Highest educational level		
AA	1	4.8%
BA, BS	5	23.8%
MA, MS	9	42.9%
Grad, post grad or PhD	3	14.3%
Missing	3	14.3%
Occupation		
Homemaker	2	9.5%
Office worker	1	4.8%
Trade	10	47.6%
Certified professional (i.e., MD, Esq. CPA, etc.)	3	14.3%
Other professional	1	4.8%
Missing	4	19.0%
Household income		
Decline to state	2	9.5%
to $30K	1	4.8%
to $80K	1	4.8%
to $100K	2	9.5%
$100+	12	57.1%
Missing	3	14.3%

Note. N=21. All parent participants were women.

Parents also provided demographic information about their children for the

Parents Say! survey which included data about children's age, ethnicity, gender, type of

school attended, and grade. See Table 2.

Table 2: Parents Say! Results: Kids' Demographic Characteristics

Baseline Characteristic	n	%
Age		
6 years-old	6	28.6%
7 years-old	7	33.3%
8 years-old	4	19%
Missing	4	19%
Ethnicity		
Latin	1	4.8%
Mixed	2	9.5%
White	15	71.4%
Missing	3	14.3%
Gender		
Male	9	42.9%
Female	9	42.9%
Missing	3	14.3%
School types		
Home Schooled	1	4.8%
Public Schooled	15	71.4%
Private Schooled	2	9.5%
Missing	3	14.3%
Grade		
Kindergarten	1	4.8%
First grade	3	14.3%
Second grade	9	42.9%
Third grade	4	19%
Missing	4	19%

Note. N=21. Data is from parents' reports.

Participating children were on average, 6.8 years old (mean=.82, standard deviation=.18). All but two child respondents were white, one of whom was Latino and the other child was an adoptee of mixed race and ethnicity who was a member of a white family. An equal number of boys and girls participated in the study. Finally, the majority of respondents attended public schools, while two were home-schooled or attended

private schools, respectively. There were more second-graders in the studies than from any other grade with one Kindergartener, three first-graders, four third-graders, and four from whom a grade was not indicated.

Instruments

Three data gathering tools were used for this study, including 1.) an **Enrollment Form**, 2. **The *Parents Say!* survey** and 3. **The *Kids Say!* survey.** All three data collection tools were accessed through an online survey platform and relied only on digitally administered, cross-sectional questionnaires made up of closed and open-ended questions.

The Enrollment Form included the first set of eleven questions posed to gather contact information for prospective participants and to vet and enroll participants in the study. The questionnaire administered through an online survey platform gathered data from parents about the participant's online contact data including parent and child's names, mailing and email addresses, phone and text contacts as well as the name of participants' home library. The RBE Study consent was the final question in this form and included study participation details and requirements. Participants were asked to indicate their understanding and to confirm with their electronic signature their consent to be contacted further by the study. Once the form was signed, enrollment was complete.

Parents Say! survey After participants were enrolled and consented, links and the password to the *Parents Say!* survey was forwarded to them in a Welcome email (appendix A). The *Parents Say!* survey was administered online using an online survey platform to parents in order to gather data about the dyad's a) demographics, b) reading behaviors and environments, and c) parent's perspective of children's empathy. This

included 41 survey items that were either created and or curated from other sources. Demographic data as shared above collected parents' and children's ages, gender, ethnicity, grade level, and general academic performance in school.

Through the *Parents Say!* survey, parents/caregivers were able to share their education level, occupation, and income. Questions regarding Reading Behaviors were posed, i.e., reading frequency and volume, as well as questions about the at-home reading environment. For items related to parents' perspective of children's empathy, items, and language from the Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy (SEE; Wang et al., 2003) were adapted for this study. The SEE is a self-report instrument that measures empathy toward people of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds than one's own. This model has shown high validity and strong measures in factor analysis for acceptance of cultural differences, empathic awareness, empathic feeling and expression, and empathic perspective-taking. For this portion of the survey, a number of these questions were echoes of the modified versions used in the *Kids Say!* survey and were included to better determine the correlation between kids and their parent's scores on empathy. Not wholly the same, *Kids Say!* survey choices were three: "yes," "maybe/sort of," or "no." Whereas *Parents Say!* survey questions were answered using a five-point scale of responses ranging from 1) definitely true, 2) probably true, 3) neither true nor false, 4) probably false, through to 5) definitely false, was used to enable parents to better reflect their nuanced understanding of their children's perspectives on this socioemotional construct.

It was requested that the parent's questionnaire be completed and submitted electronically before the child-focused, final survey session, the *Kids Say!* survey was scheduled. This was to ensure that the parent's answers were not influenced by their

children's responses. These questions were important also inasmuch as they reveal much about the home literacy environments of the study participants (Bracken & Fischel, 2008; Puglisi, Hulme, Hamilton, & Snowling, 2017). See Table 3 for Study Construct Dimensions.

Table 3: RBE Study items Adaptation by Construct Dimensions

Study Dimensions	# of Items	Adapted from Existing Instrument
Parents Say! survey		
Demographics	13	None
Reading Behaviors	16	None
Empathy	12	Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy, (Wang, et Al. 2003)
Kids Say! survey		
Affective Ethnocultural Empathy	6	Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy, (Wang, et Al. 2003)
Cognitive Empathy	12	Interpersonal Reactivity Index, (Davis, 1983)
Cognitive Ethnocultural Empathy	5	Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy, (Wang, et Al. 2003)

Parents were asked to log onto the online survey platform, use their study ID and password, created to ensure no errant data from unconsented participants, to complete their survey. It is estimated to take fewer than 20 mins.

The final step in the study and data collection included 23 items, which measured five constructs to include a.) reading selection and b.) empathy data on subscales of i.) affective empathy, ii.) cognitive empathy, and iii.) ethnocultural empathy.

For the third and final step in the Study, the *Kids Say! survey* instrument was administered to participating children. This instrument was created by the researcher for

educators and others concerned with early readers' literacy growth to use with kindergarten through second-grade children. It is a 23-item multiple-choice instrument comprised of three subscales: one that assesses the child's cognitive empathy development (6 items), one that the child's ethnocultural affective empathy development (12-14 items), and one that assess ethnocultural cognitive development (5 items). Tactically, the *Kids Say! survey* seeks to gather self-reports on children's subscales of empathy.

This instrument's survey procedures were modeled after those of another instrument, the Me and My Reading Profile (MMRP; Marinak, Malloy, Gambrell, & Mazzoni, 2015) that is intended to be administered in-person, in a classroom environment. While Me and My Reading Profile's seeks to interrogate whether student's reading motivation is extrinsic and intrinsic, the tool's methodology for framing the inquiry (i.e., the scripted directives, use of child-friendly queuing icons instead of a numbering system, and the simplified Likert-like scale responses) are the procedural details that were replicated and adapted for my study. Further, and unique to this study that was situated during the coronavirus global pandemic, the vastly distinct needs and engagement required for an online, versus an "in real time" research survey, this survey was necessarily administered through the Zoom video conferencing platform.

Piloting this instrument for the first time, I acknowledge that there was a need to make in-the-moment adjustments to the instrument, its administration and the proctoring process. Such adjustments included changes to the "script" and means of introducing the study to the youth respondents. Over the course of the pilot, an approach was developing in which the notion of reading research was explained as a form of "ice breaker"

conversation. Such engagement not only provided an opportunity for the kids to speak and share their ideas, but also reinforces that for the survey it is their honest response that is the only "right" answer.

The consent process was included as the first step in an online survey proctoring process in which the PI read the child assent script (as included in the appendix) to the children and gave their approval to proceed. Each participating child needed to have given a verbal response of "yes" following the reading of that agreement to proceed. Once consented, each child was read the 23 questions given the opportunity to respond with one of the three response options, "yes," "maybe/sort of," or "no."

The *Kids Say! survey* was designed to be administered in a single sitting. The entire survey is intended to take 20 minutes to complete. Twelve to fifteen questions about participants' affective ethnocultural empathy, six cognitive empathy, and five cognitive ethnocultural empathy questions were asked. A full list of the survey questions for each instrument that were posed are included in the proposal appendix. A breakout of dimensions and the models used to create them for the parent and child-focused instruments are shown in the following table.

Finally, the children's survey included items posed to the children from the construct subscales. These questions reflect a cross-section of adapted items from instruments used to measure similar constructs for older children, adolescents, and adults. Conceptually, the questions were the same but the vocabulary and sentence structure were changed to create a more age-appropriate adaptation. Examples included in Table 4.

As an example of the changes made, the table above, illustrates the adaptations made to sample questions for each subscale. An example of each instrument is included

in the appendix.

Table 4: Items Adaptation Samples

Dimension	Original	Adaptation
Affective Ethnocultural Empathy (*i.e. Empathic Feeling and Expression*)	"I don't care if people make racist statements against other racial or ethnic groups."	"I don't care if people say mean things about people who don't have the same skin color as me or who don't look like me."
Cognitive Empathy (*i.e. IRI* Perspective Taking*)	"Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place."	"Before I say something that might be mean about someone, I ima- gine how it would feel if I were in their place." **Interpersonal Reactivity Index, (Davis, 1994)*
Cognitive Ethnocultural Empathy (*i.e. Empathic Perspective Taking*)	"It is difficult for me to relate to stories in which people talk about racial or ethnic discrim- ination they experience in their day to day lives."	"It is hard for me to imagine myself in stories about the daily life of people who don't look like me."

As an example of the changes made, the table above, illustrates the adaptations made to sample questions for each subscale. An example of each instrument is included in the appendix.

With the contact data participants provided, the principal investigator created the participant ledger record that was used to track the participants' progress through the three survey studies and the communications from the PI to the Participants.

To administer the two instruments, separate processes were developed. For the parents, all were asked to complete the *Parents Say!* survey as a self-administered survey about their perceptions of their at-home reading behaviors, and their child's empathy. Parents were asked to complete the survey at a time of their choosing by accessing it through the RBE's online survey platform. Parents were instructed to complete the digital

survey form and to advise the principal investigator prior to scheduling the child's sitting

for the *Kids Say! survey* and the video-conference survey.

Figure 7: Reading Builds Empathy Process Map
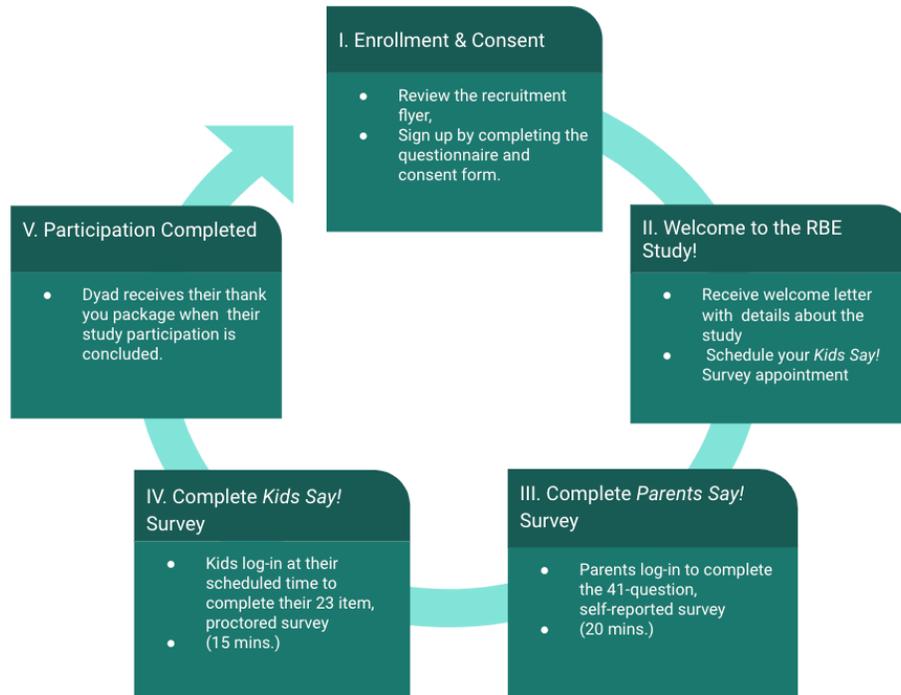
For children, the *Kids Say! survey* was designed to allow the investigator to

proctor the series of questions vis-à-vis a read-aloud approach for the children. Looking

to replicate this important facet of the survey data gathering exchange in a digital

environment, the study was administered to the child of each dyad, one-at-a-time, via the

Zoom video conference platform. Parents were asked to be present during the Zoom call;

however, they were not asked to answer questions during this portion of the study.

Rather, they were simply asked to be present to oversee their child's participation in the

online conference, including to ensure that the proctor was made aware of any questions

the child may have. Also, if any of the children had asked to leave the study, the parent was present to help the child exit the survey session.

One practice item was provided to acquaint each child with the instrument format. One child at-a-time was taken through the series of questions each session. The PI read the question, then read the answer choices. If the child could answer, he/she did. If there was a question or the child needed more time, the question was re-read. Once decided, the child spoke his/her response and the PI recorded it on a digital survey. The image of the live document was visible to both the PI and the child using the screenshare feature in Zoom. The PI filled out the child's responses, concurrently.

Thank You Gifts. In exchange for participant's willingness to participate, each dyad was offered and sent a letter of appreciation, certificate of participation, free eBook, and 2-inch round Cocoa Kids Collection™ button. After the battery of surveys were completed, all participants who completed the Reading Builds Empathy Survey received the thank you items which were sent via post to addresses participants provided during enrollment. This gesture of appreciation marks the completion of participants' involvement with the study.

Ethical Considerations

Permissions to conduct this study were obtained from the St. John's University, Institutional Review Board. Study participants who completed the surveys were made aware that their privacy is protected and their identities will remain anonymous. This was ensured through the use of Study ID numbers, that served as identification in lieu of participants' names. None of the results, which have been stored through the Qualtrics online survey system, are traceable to any unique individual or dyad.

Data Analysis

In order to address the research questions, the study data analysis plan was to create aggregated totals as well as a set of segmented sub-scales of the responses. With these sets of scores, in addition to the frequencies and descriptives shown above that speak to the dyad's demographics, reliability tests were conducted. First and foremost, a series of Cronbach's Alpha's were calculated to measure how closely related a set of items were as a group and to determine the scale reliability and internal consistency of the data collected.

To address research question 2, empathy scores reported by parents and children reported empathy from the Reading Builds Empathy score were analyzed to assess correlations between parents and children's reports on subscales and on the total empathy scores. To address research question 3, parents' reports of children's reading habits were used to assess whether there was a correlation with children's reported empathy.

Researcher's Notes

In addition, additional data was gathered around the Kids Say! survey process regarding the children's interview sessions. The data included details that are worth note regarding the actual instrument, the participants, and the overall spirit of the survey and its intentions. These notes are described in Chapter 4.

Reliability. Reliability testing was conducted using SPSS statistical software. Reliability analyses (Cronbach, 1951) indicated subscale alphas for the kids scores ranging from -.830 to .444, and parents' subscores ranging from .68 and .75, with all items contributing to the overall scale reliability. For *Kids Say! survey* data, scores were broken out along the three subscales (cognitive, affective, and ethnocultural empathy) in

order to address the dimensionality of the study construct and the participants' self-reported beliefs.

For *Parents Say!* survey, items were selected and included that were considered key performance indicators of early readers' reading development. This array included scaled measures of the at-home reading environment, based on established metrics like on the number of books in the home, parent's estimates of reading ability, and literacy behaviors and practices including the amount of time spent reading, as well as parent's overall perceptions of their children's empathy profile. Dimensions included Behaviors, Kids Profile, and Parents' perceptions of kids' empathy profiles (Parents on Empathy).

CHAPTER 4

Results

The Reading Builds Empathy Literacy Study generated results in terms of instrumentation development. In this way, the first research question of this study addressed the overarching utility of a tool such as the RBE and is discussed in its fullness in the following chapter. For the study's second and third questions, which provided quantitative answers, results are presented, as follows. First, descriptive statistics are presented in Table 5 for each of the two instruments and internal reliability was calculated for each of the two instruments (i.e., The *Parent's Say!* and *Kids Say! survey*s) and their respective subscales. As noted in the methods section, the parent's scales had moderate to high internal consistency, however the kid say scales did not show internal consistency and may not hold together as scales as planned.

Table 5: RBE Psychometric Properties Subscales: Parents Say! And Kids Say!

RBE Psychometric Properties Subscales: Parents Say! and Kids Say!

Scale	M	SD	Range	Cronbach's α
Parent's Say! Total	3.5	6.6	3.6	.62
Behaviors	43.5	6.2	18	.75
Parent's on Kids' empathy	49.7	3.1	13	.68
Kids Say! Total	1.24	2.8	1.4	-.55
Affective empathy	16.7	2.0	7	-.83
Cognitive empathy	7.7	1.7	5	-.04
Ethnocultural empathy	4.6	2.2	8	.44

Note: N=18 (The Reading Builds Empathy, Parents Say! survey had four sub-scales with 39 total items; while, the Kids Say! survey had three subscales, with 23 total items.)

The *Parents Say! survey* Data Collected

Results analyzed the demographics, behaviors, and empathy perceptions of participating parents. This included habits around participants' at-home reading practices, as well as parents' reported beliefs about their children's empathy. Table 6 shows data on measures of family literacy and reading behaviors consisting of 15 items, had high internal reliability when combined (α=.749). In order to determine correlations for subsequent research questions, composite scores were created, which were then used to compare similar scores derived from *Kids Say!* scores.

Table 6: Parents Say! Survey - Behaviors

Item	M	SD
Books at home	3.9	.52
Screens at home	3.5	.92
Device type	3.2	.68
System type	1.4	.51
Child's reading skill	2.6	.51
When you read	1.6	.74
Amount read	2.9	.74
Weekly reading	4.4	.63
Daily Reading	3.8	1.20
Weekly Screens	3.7	1.20
Type of reading	3.7	.62
Favorite book	1.3	.96
Re-reading	1.7	.70
Source of books	4.5	.74
How you read	2.8	1.50

Note. N=18

The subscale data on Parents' reports on kids' empathy consisted of 12 items, all

of which are shown in Table 7, and was found to have high internal reliability when

combined (α=.675).

Table 7: Parents Say! Survey - Empathy

Item	M	SD
Sad when you are sad	3.9	.76
Others' mood	4.4	.61
Sadness & TV, movies	4.0	.91
I'm OK when you are not	2.8	1.11
No one to play with	3.7	.91
Pets have feelings	4.6	.61
Feels sorry for another	4.5	.62
Anyone's presents are fun	4.3	.69
I hurt when you hurt	4.7	.46
I laugh when you laugh	4.4	.60
I hurt when animals hurt	4.9	.32
Sad for the disabled	3.4	.51

Note. N=18

For *Kids Say!* survey data, scores were broken out along the three subscales (cognitive, affective, and ethnocultural empathy) in order to address the dimensionality of the study construct and the participants' self-reported beliefs. However, as noted above, these scales lacked internal consistency so were not used individually in subsequent analyses.

Research Question 2

As noted above the empathy categories for *Kids Say!* did not fit into the dimensions of affective, cognitive, and ethnocultural empathy as anticipated. This information directly relates to the second research question: How correlated are parents' reports of children's empathy, and children's reported perceptions of the child's empathy?

Overall, on measures of parents' reports on their children's empathy, across 12 measures, the data was found to have high internal reliability when combined (α=.675; see Table 5). However, *Kids Say!* scores failed to demonstrate high internal consistency. Given this, individual items on the *Kids Say!* survey were correlated with the overall parents say empathy scale. There was no statistically significant correlation with the individual items.

Table 8: Correlation of Parents' and Kids' Total Empathy Score

Variable	M	SD	1	2
1. Parents Say! Total Score	125.6	8.4	---	-0.169
2. Kids Say! Total Score	28.94	3.13	-0.169	---

Notes. N=18, Sig (2-tailed) =.503

Research Question 3

To respond to the study's third research question: How do Family Book Reading practices relate to affective, cognitive, and ethnocultural empathy? A correlation analysis was conducted. No statistically significant correlation was shown between family reading behaviors and parents measured levels of empathy. In addition, a correlation test was performed with *Parents Say!* Behaviors and each individual *Kids Say!* empathy item, which revealed that only one, Understanding Characteristics, was found to be strongly positively correlated with empathy, $r = .69, p < .002$.

Table 9: Correlation of Parents' Reports on Kids Empathy and Behaviors

Correlation of Parents' Reports on Kids Empathy and Behaviors

Variable	M	SD	1	2
Kids Empathy	49.7	4.0	--	-.280
Behavior	43.5	6.2	-.280	--

Notes. N=18, Sig (2-tailed) =.260

Instrument Revisions

In the early sessions of proctoring the *Kids Say!* survey, feedback was gathered from a few participating parents. The information shared was very insightful and comments addressed ways to improve the study. Parents suggested more interactive approaches to data gathering including using answer panels (i.e., a hand paddle with "yes" one side, and "no" on the other that kids would hold up and turn to give their answers). Such changes, according to the parent, would be more engaging for their child who prefers a kinetic instruction style.

Another parent suggested that a pre-survey narrative could be provided to help respondents better contextualize the survey questions, as she felt her child, one of the younger participants would be better able to understand the questions. Other challenges that came up during the *Kids Say!* survey, were evident in two items, #8 and #9. These

questions included an overly challenging sentence structure (a double negative was used ineffectively) that may have led to confusion and confusing results on the item response. In a survey revision, these questions would be restated to eliminate the double negative structure.

Other parents also mentioned that the survey media and medium could be more "Kid friendly." Specifically, a few parents noted that their children typically responded better to learning approaches that integrate more sensory stimulating experiences. To achieve this effect, the survey screen could be redesigned to include a more vibrant color palette.

Also, food emojis were used to call out new questions instead of a linear numbering system (to minimize kids' attention being drawn to counting questions versus being thoughtful about the survey questions) was used. Mothers asked why junk foods, rather than healthier fruit and vegetable icons were used. For a future version of the survey, the icons will be mixed-up (other icons will be used, including animals, books and vehicles) to include broader diversity to address this suggestion.

Overall feedback from parents suggested that they appreciated the experience and the resulting insight they gained about their children from hearing their first-hand responses. This effect was essentially similar to what I had observed in an earlier experience with the model survey, the Me and My Reading Profile (Marinak, 1995) survey. For at least three of the kids, it was not their first time to participate in a research study, indicating that this was a savvy bunch. Also, worth note, while it was speculated that the study would also do well to follow a qualitative format. However, in that regard, it is my belief such a change would yield a different data. This is because it was observed

that when children discussed questions with their parents, the kids' answers changed. Particularly with the ethnocultural items, parents' efforts to help children understand questions, invariably included the parent explaining concepts and or identifying individuals with whom the children may have known or have been friendly. This approach, in some ways undermined the intent of the study inasmuch as it drew understanding from a lived experience not a reading-based activity. Consideration will be given to this outcome, and these categories of questions may be redrawn in the future.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

The results of the Reading Builds Empathy (RBE) study's statistical analyses

represented only part of the discussion that emerged from the research. Learnings

included findings generated from the overall development and implementation of novel

instruments and procedures formed to collect data that would answer the study's three

research questions. And while statistically significant correlations were not found,

substantive findings were made, as follows.

Study Achievements

The milieu in which the study unfolded presented unprecedented challenges, and

ultimately framed its more significant successes. Specifically, the study instrumentation,

its process for preparing and collecting data, was conceptualized and operationalized

during the height of a global pandemic.

Situated Instrumentation

Over the three months of the RBE study recruitment, more than 1,359 residents of

New York state, alone, lost their lives to the viral disease first identified by the World

Health Organization less than a year ago. The strain of coronavirus known as COVID-19

originated in Wuhan, the most populous city in the central region of the People's

Republic of China. The virus, which originated in bats, is known to cause severe acute

respiratory syndrome in humans which causes a hyper-inflammatory response that can

lead to death. At the date of this publication, COVID-19 had claimed the lives of more

than 360,000 U.S. citizens and with a total of 87.9 million cases reported worldwide.

And so, it is no wonder, that myriad COVID-19-related challenges emerged

during the study ranging from the primary epidemiological and health risks, to all forms

of challenges that came from efforts to manage and mitigate overarching public health

risks and identified health disparities that fueled the spread of the disease. In the absence

of a treatment, vaccine, or viable cure, nationally implemented behavior modifications

like affected individuals' quarantine and halted social interactions were widely accepted

as the only and best treatments and mitigation options. Measures implemented as a

primary means of disease management and included municipal and state mandates for

interpersonal social distancing, prohibition of broad scale co-location, mitigation of

public assembly, required use of personal protective equipment including everyday use of

surgical and N95-grade face masks and other face coverings by average citizens and

diligent sanitation efforts (i.e., hyper-diligent hand hygiene, etc.). In many cases, these

measures were made legal requirements punishable by tickets and fines. In places where

not, many institutions implemented similar policies. Such restrictions and grounding

efforts to normalize new behaviors and social safety, had a major impact and near

existential threat to the study that ultimately necessitated the almost exclusive utilization

of online and digital resources and solutions for the study.

Processes

From reconfiguring the recruitment process to completion of the study

implementation, the RBE drew on new technology and engaged audiences and resources

in ways that evolved over the study.

Recruitment

This was true of all phases of the study, beginning with the announcement process

which was handled almost completely online and through social media. Flyer

announcements were disseminated on digital bulletin boards, deployed en masse to

contacts in and among the PI's personal and professional network. Relying entirely on

electronic forms of letters, text, and posts, word of the study spread. The study sought to

harness the recruitment population array that pulled from the 187,860 borrowers in the

Rockland County specific swath of the Ramapo Catskill Library System (RCLS). RCLS

card-holding patrons, particularly patrons with kids utilizing the children's services and

programs, were anticipated to make-up the bulk of the study participants, as realized

through a system-wide campaign with the children's program and activities. And while

this was helpful in facilitating awareness building around the activity, the impersonal

quality of these tactics failed to move the enrollment needle. It was quickly realized that

members needed to be courted and engaged more directly and in far more personal ways.

Another level of engagement was needed to secure study participants.

 As a result, and working within the constraints of the new pandemic normal, the

PI increased efforts to leverage existing interpersonal relationships with nearby

community leaders and organizers, those who held personal relationships with groups of

prospective study participants, including. This also meant that study engagements of this

type and timing were grounded in interpersonal connections which required a hook to the

capture of people's interest beyond their fleeting fascination with the study concept. More

than a suspicion, this was evidenced by the fact that while the study website achieved

more than a total of 450 original hits, there were fewer than two dozen qualifying

applicants to the study (see Figure 1). Among them, there were just 17 of 21 who

engaged and completed the dual survey process, as discussed earlier in earlier chapters.

These sample sizes had broad and important implications for the study that impacted the

vetting of the instruments but also contributed to the creation of processes utilized in the study.

What the small sample size did afford, was an opportunity to take more time with participants. This difference proved to be a difference maker for the study inasmuch as the modification away from the children's small groups proctoring for the *Kids Say!* survey that was originally imagined, to one-on-one interviews, exchanges which gave way to new study insights. This was especially so in the case of the children's study proctoring approach.

Digital Survey Administration

Modeled after the MMRP (Marinak, 2015), the *Kids Say!* survey intended to pioneer a new process in which the PI or caregivers were to have implemented the instrument with young respondents using paper-based surveys in which kids were to answer independently. However, given COVID-19 mandated co-location restrictions, the test was digitized for distanced, onscreen deployment via video conference. And an online proctoring protocol was developed and employed that was informed by guiding considerations pertaining to usability when selecting a study instrument, that considered and included: (1) Ease of administration, (2) Length of time to administer, (3) Ability to create clear directions, (4) Fit for audience, (5) Ease of scoring, (6) Ease of interpretation, (7) Cost, (8) Validity, and (9) Reliability. The resultant approach also included utilization of a framework that took cues from Marinak's Me and My Reading Profile (2015), inasmuch as the researcher proctor and maintain administration control remotely --- distinct from that of the MMRP instrument, which was validated in classrooms with researchers, not teachers, conducting the administration --- was developed in discussion

with and suggested by B. Marinak, (personal communications, March 28, 2020) as a means of achieving a level of fidelity that would be closer to the original validation.

   This protocol included use of an icon-based, non-numeric ordering system, for survey items that were shown, read, and answered concurrently during a 20-minute Zoom video conference session in which a shared screen between the PI and the child was utilized.

   The survey interface included a simple white screen with questions scribed in a black and white, Time New Roman (12 point) font. Up to four question were listed at a time. Non-numeric ordering was intended to help participants keep their attention focused on the questions, rather than anticipating the next question or how many more questions were to come. Numerals were swapped out for the following food emojis, displayed in the following sequence:

Emojis

   The selection drew comments and criticism from parents and kids. Kids (3) simply wondered why there were food emojis, while parents (2) asked why emojis were of "junk food" rather than healthier food options, like fruit, or even other non-food icons altogether.

Figure 8: Emojis from Kids Say! Ordinal Relationships

1. Taco   2. French Fries   3. Cheeseburger   4. Hot dog   5. Pizza

   A few parents also suggested that the survey could benefit from a more dynamic

on-screen experience, one that engaged responding parents and kids with visual and/or interactive text and content in more juvenile and playful way. Such findings were what came from post survey chats that yielded insight on how to improve the survey, included among the Moments of Genuine Connection.

Moments of Genuine Connection

Through it all, what emerged was a process in which the PI utilized and cultivated Moments of Genuine Connection (MGC; Gonzalez, 2020), known as brief moments, typically lasting fewer than 5 minutes, during which educators and students (or in this case, proctors and survey respondents) engage in one-on-one dialogues about issues of mutual interest and concern.

Through such engagements during brief ice-breaking sessions at the beginning of each interview, the PI introduced the concept of Reading Research to the young participants and chatted briefly with the study's young respondents to elicit conversation about the child's familiarity with the concept. These MGCs were brief interactions intended to help participants feel valued, acknowledged, respected, and safe, and were activities that provided opportunities for trust-building between the PI and the child respondents. The MGCs yielded respondents' volunteering willingness to share their thoughts and feedback about their RBE experience.

Kids' consideration and interest in the idea of reading research got them talking, freely expressing their thoughts and opinions, which made for a smooth transition of their thinking about other survey concepts. It also provided an additional opportunity to demonstrate that the child could trust the process and to share his/her thoughts freely. These MGCs in the digital space fortified the interactions between the PI and the

children and enabled a level of heightened communication. Also, with the parent in the room, the kids' seemed to quickly relax and trust the process, and when offered the ability to speak for themselves, the majority happily engaged with confidence growing through the end of the study for the more introverted respondents. The ability to establish MGCs and the level of ostensibly forthcoming engagement in the digital space for a self-report instrument was a study success in as much as it proved that these aspects of the MMRP, implemented digitally, are procedurally possible. Statistical evidence of validity however, should be addressed in the next iteration of the RBE, one which would better pinpoint construct dimensions to be tested, include a larger, more robust sample size, and consequently, yield more compelling validity data and outcomes.

Small Sample Size

With the total participants of just 18, the original data derived from the study was not robust enough to make inferences to the population at large.

Demographic Findings

Another constraint of the pandemic era was the broadscale school closures and lack of available tech, computing devices (e.g., iPads, computers) and internet access. This was significant to large scale education efforts as well as for this study. And just as fewer students of lower socio-economic status were showing up to school and online classes to learn, recruits for the study were disproportionately wealthy and white. Moreover, with an overall reduction of academic activities and an increase in concerns about myriad other issues associated with the pandemic, the period was one of decreased interest in student's participation in any extracurricular activities that required parents who were now working from home and home schooling or serving as at home teachers to

their children, to do anything more, particularly non-essential. Participation in a survey was a curious activity for which there was less time to consider. This is another possible interpretation of the low-levels of study participation.

Construct Muddiness

When tested, the resultant construct muddiness suggested the following:

(1) Subscales were neither stable nor reliable. And construct dimensions are broader than other socio-emotional learning attributes, like intrinsic or extrinsic motivation as in the case of the MMRP. Which begs the question of whether empathy be explored in this way? More on this, will be discussed later in this chapter.

(2) Correlations between parents and kids scores were not statistically significantly related with each other.

The RBE data supported construct descriptions in the literature that enumerate the complexity of empathy as a multidimensional, multifaceted construct. Moreover, the muddiness of the construct that was seen in this study demands a more precise identification of the dimension to be tested. This could be achieved through the further distillation of the construct dimension and survey items. As it stands, empathy in its fullness has a number of iterations of its core four dimensions: (1) Cognitive empathy, (2) Compassionate empathy, (3) Affective empathy, and (4) Motor empathy. Future research may consider deploying the instrument with a flight of questions that interrogate a binary relationship of the single dimension. However, an antithetical relationship didn't not surface, and the literature has shown the empirical evidence of the construct's presence at later ages. One interpretation of this phenomenon was that the construct exists but is not

yet crystallized enough to become a factor to be tested for those of the age group to be tested. In scholarship about empathy as a psychometric trait, (Asakawa, Iwawaki, & Mondori, 1988) draw similar conclusions. Moreover, the construct itself is so multi-faceted that the items may not sufficiently isolate the construct properties in ways that are understandable to young survey respondents.

It seems the work of learning to be and understanding what is empathy is happening in this period but has not sufficiently coalesced. Much in the way a baby learns to walk. The child may be turning concepts over in his/her mind, but has not yet developed the facility to orchestrate the perception analysis and response to independently exercise empathy on his or her terms.

Given the process of learning such traits, in which children and their mirror neurons mimic the thought processes of those near them, this muddiness continues to be a compelling site for research. This is because the range of influences is unclear. And the efficacy of reading books to expand experience is unclear.

Future Research

The RBE was developed with the intention to serve as a pre and post-test instrument in an intervention study. Select questions from the *Parents Say!* survey related to kids' empathy. In this original conception, as a pretest, the RBE tool would be used to create a baseline empathy measure. Following the implementation of a reading program of diversity picture books, curated to impart explicit and implicit lessons of affective, cognitive and ethnocultural empathy, the RBE would again be implemented to determine whether the reading affected readers' multidimensional awareness and understanding of the empathy construct.

So, it is also worth considering that scores on the pretest *Kids Say!* survey could be low when considered a baseline in a future longitudinal study, where a post-test with the same instrument used on the group at an older age would possibly demonstrate correlations with other measures that were statistically significant. However, for this to be so, the internal reliability of the *Kids Say!* instrument would need to be stronger than demonstrated in the present study.

The Future of Empathy

Further study related to the empathy construct, particularly its dimensions and how they are formed, will open new doors of understanding. Moreover, by exploring a binary relationship of a single dimension of empathy and then applying it to the MMRP framework, could yield stronger data. Taking this approach would also be more like the original MMRP, in which a binary conceptualization of motivation (on measures of intrinsic vs. extrinsic factors) was employed. As it stands, this study looked at three separate dimensions which, based on results of the statistical analysis, were largely unrelated as evidenced by the low internal reliability scores. Looking to new studies and data about the construct generated from neuroscience and cognitive studies, it could be that the construct will manifest as one that is inappropriate for a study of this type with participants at this age range.

My study sought to measure and compare in family dyads the dimensions of empathy that had shown relevance, reliability and validity in their studies of origin. Structurally sound translation of the items' language was conducted, however, more than simply re-calibrating lexical complexity, what should have been considered was the level of human development (i.e., maturity level) needed to understand and articulate the trait.

The low values on the scaled scores, was perhaps a signal that respondents were at

seeding points in their empathy development. Namely, the study audience of readers aged

6-8 simply could not be able to fully understand the construct is a meaningful way.

Asakawa, et al. (1988) hypothesized in a study discussion that used the Bryant Empathy

Index, that empathy develops at a concordant cadence with the development of cognitive

capability (Hoffman, 1975), attributed that reach crystallized and crescendo between 3rd

and 4th grade, when student were 8- to 9-years-old.

Finally, it is hoped that the Reading Builds Empathy Literacy Study will prove

useful to parents who are working to build their child's intellective capacity by:

(a) Supporting their children's socioemotional and literacy development

through wide reading;

(b) Nurturing empathetic individuals who are critical thinkers, able to

understand themselves and those around them, and

(c) Providing a formative assessment designed to provide families

feedback to increase and expand students' ability to engage in deeper, more

complex learning.

Ultimately, the goal of all this work is to help the children learn to appreciate the

diverse feelings, thoughts, and ethnocultural experiences of those they know and have yet

to encounter in the world.

APPENDIX 1

IRB Approval Memo

IRB-FY2021-23 - Initial: Initial Submission - Expedited - St. John's

irbstjohns@stjohns.edu <irbstjohns@stjohns.edu>
Mon 8/3/2020 2:53 PM

To: blakeb@stjohns.edu <blakeb@stjohns.edu>; Valerie L. Williams-Sanchez
<valerie.williamssanchez18@my.stjohns.edu>

ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

Federal Wide Assurance: FWA00009066

Aug 3, 2020 2:51 PM EDT

PI: Valerie Williams-Sanchez
CO-PI: Brett Blake
Education Specialties

Re: Expedited Review - Initial - **IRB-FY2021-23** *Reading Builds Empathy*

Dear Valerie Williams-Sanchez:

The St John's University Institutional Review Board has rendered the decision below for *Reading Builds Empathy*. The approval is effective from August 3, 2020 through August 2, 2021.

Decision: Approved

PLEASE NOTE: If you have collected any data prior to this approval date, the data must be discarded.

Selected Category: 7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Sincerely,

Raymond DiGiuseppe, PhD, ABPP
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Professor of Psychology

Marie Nitopi, Ed.D.
IRB Coordinator

Revised Recruitment Flyer (for posting)

Help Us Study How Reading Builds Empathy

We are currently recruiting 6-8 year-olds and their parent/caregiver, to participate in a reading research survey.

Study Description:

Empathy enables us to understand others' perspectives. It is a critical life-skill also tied to academic success and lifelong learning. Increasingly, people worldwide are calling for more empathy. But, is this possible? If so, how is this achieved?

This study will take clues from literacy learning, socio-cognitive and early childhood development.

Its goal is to determine whether there is a relationship between different reading behaviors, types of picture book content, characters, and themes are better (or worse) at helping young readers develop empathy.

Study Participation Includes:
Who: Readers, age 6-8, & parent/caregiver
What: A 30 minute interview/survey
When: Jul. 27th, Aug. 5th, 14th (more dates tbd)
Where: At your home and online, via Zoom

Eligibility:
Any interested and consenting young reader and parent/caregiver pair with internet access.

Participants Receive:
- A thank you letter from the researcher
- A certificate of participation, and
- A free ebook!

If you are interested in participating in this study, please visit the website to register:

www.ReadingBuildsEmpathy.Info

Also, if you are unsure of your eligibility, or have questions, please contact: Valerie Williams-Sanchez, Principal Investigator, St. John's University, Dept. of Education: Valerie.WilliamsSanchez18@StJohns.edu

APPENDIX 3

Study Website (Screen Shots)

Home page

Study Groups Info page

Contacts page

APPENDIX 4

Registration Forms (Qualtrics - online access), page 1 & 2

ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY
THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

READING BUILDS EMPATHY STUDY REGISTRATION

First Name of Parent/Guardian:

Last Name of Parent/Guardian:

Name of participating child (*aged 6-8*):

Street Address:

City, State:

Zip Code:

Smart Phone Number (*that receives calls & text*):

Email Contact:

In which of the following do you have a library card?
(*Scroll down for all choices.*)

Blauvelt
Haverstraw
Nanuet
New City
Nyack
Orangeburg
Palisades
Pearl River
Piermont
Sloatsburg

→

ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY
THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

READING BUILDS EMPATHY STUDY REGISTRATION

Hello!
Thank you for your interest in participating in this study. Below, you will find a link to the Parental Consent letter, a pdf file with a description of the study and what you can anticipate. Please read, sign and return this form to the email below. You may take a photo of the signed form and send a picture to the email, below. By signing this form, you authorize and consent to recevie more information regarding the Reading Builds Empathy study.

Parental Consent Form.pdf

If you have questions please email me at
Questions@ReadingBuildsEmpathy.info

Regards,

Valerie L. Williams-Sanchez
Principal Investigator
St. John's Universty

Valerie L. Williams-Sanchez, P.I., St. John's University --
Questions@ReadingBuildsEmpathy.info
Survey Powered By Qualtrics

Valerie L. Williams-Sanchez, P.I., St. John's University --
Questions@ReadingBuildsEmpathy.info
Survey Powered By Qualtrics

APPENDIX 5

Parental Consent Form

PARENT & CHILD CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant:

You and your child have been invited to take part in a research study to learn more about the effect of picture book content on empathy development and affective learning on early readers. Valerie L. Williams-Sanchez, Department of Education Specialties, St. John's University, will conduct this study as part of her doctoral dissertation work. Her faculty sponsor is Dr. B. E. Blake, Department of Education Specialties.

If you agree to be in this study, you and your child will be asked to each complete a survey. For parents, it is the at-home administered, Parent Say survey of 25 questions broken out as five about demographics, five about reading behaviors, and 15 about empathy that they will be asked to complete. The parent's portion of the survey can be completed before or while the child participates in the children's survey.

For kids, the online administered Reading Builds Empathy survey will include 14 questions about ethno-affective empathy(race-based, shared empathic feeling), six about cognitive (thought-based empathy), and five about race-based thought-related empathy). The children's survey will be completed during a 20-minute video conference session in which they, along with two other

APPENDIX 6

Child Assent Form

(Screen shot of the online survey - https://stjohnssoe.ca1.qualtrics.com/)

ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY
THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

READING BUILDS EMPATHY - PART II. KIDS SAY SURVEY

Hello! Thank you for being here. We are trying to learn about how Reading Builds Empathy. That means we want to understand how reading helps people and kids live and think.

If you agree to help us, you will be asked to take a 20-30 minute survey, to answer questions about what, when, and why you read certain books. Your answers will help us understand how reading certain books help kids understand other kids lives.

There are no right or wrong answers.

If you don't want to be in my study, you don't have to be. Remember, being in the study is up to you and no one will be upset if you don't want to. Also, if you decide to stop after we begin, that's okay, too.

Would you like to be part of this study?

1 - Yes   2 - No
○   ○

→

Welcome Letter

Welcome to the "Reading Builds Empathy" literacy study. (Participant# RBE-2020-007)

Valerie L. Williams-Sanchez <valerie.williamssanchez18@my.stjohns.edu>
Thu 10/8/2020 3:01 PM
To: amyk1211@gmail.com <amyk1211@gmail.com>

ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

Welcome!

Thank you for your interest in participating in the **Reading Builds Empathy** literacy study. I'm happy to count you among those with an interest in increasing the body of knowledge around this important topic. Your involvement in this study will help reading researchers, like me, gain invaluable insight into the ways in which reading shapes our lives, communities, and world.

Now, with your signed consent form, you are officially registered as part of this study group, and ready to begin. The next steps will be to complete Part I, the Parent's Say! Survey, and to schedule a time for your child to take the survey.

You (parent/caregiver) are asked to complete Part I of the survey regarding demographics and reading behaviors, before your child's scheduled survey session. The parent's survey is a digital form, much like the original study registration form, while the children's portion will be administered live, by me. Your child along with up to two others will be taking the survey concurrently via Zoom.

Please use your Study ID Number (shown in the subject line) to complete the Parent's Say! Survey and to secure your child's survey session appointment on one of the following days: Nov. 10th, 11th, 17th, or 18th, 2020. Your appointment will last approximately 30 minutes, (see RBE Children's Survey Scheduling link below). If none of these dates and times work for you, simply send me a reply with two alternates that do. I will confirm the date and send the Zoom notification with links.

The children's assent to participate will be confirmed prior to taking the survey at the start of the sessions. If the child does not agree to take the test at that time, they will be excused from the study and nothing further will be asked. Those parent/caregiver and child pairs that successfully complete the study will receive the thank you items following the completion of the survey by all study participants. Should you have any questions, you are encouraged to reach me, the Principal Investigator, at the email below. Again, we thank you and look forward to your participation in the **Reading Builds Empathy** Literacy research study!

Survey Access - **Participant # RBE-2020-007**

- Part I: Parents Say! Survey Link.   Password: Literacy2020

- Part II: RBE Children's Survey Scheduling Link - (Please use your Participant # when making your selections)

APPENDIX 8

Reading Builds Empathy Correlational Study, pages 1-4

Reading Builds Empathy - Correlational Study

The Survey

The following is the RBE answer sheet that follows the conventions of the Me and My Reading Profile survey (Marinak, et al., 2015), to include icons instead of numbers and a three point Likert scale. The construct subscales surveyed here include affective (A), cognitive (C), and ethnocultural(E) empathy, as categorized below. The order in which questions are asked will be reordered for the survey. Also, items are variably scaled: responses are offered from most to least empathetic, (3-1) optional in random order to increase reliability of scoring/interpreting children's responses. **Questions have been modified for 6-8 yrs. old respondents.**

Proctoring the Survey

The RBE is designed for classroom teachers to use with their kindergarten through second-grade students. It is a 20-item multiple-choice instrument comprised of three subscales: one that assesses the child's cognitive empathy development (5 items), one that the child's ethnocultural affective empathy development(10 items), and one that assess ethnocultural cognitive development (5 items). One practice item will be provided to acquaint children with the format of the instrument.

The RBE is designed for the proctor to read questions aloud to the children and will be administered to groups of three students via the Zoom video conference platform. The survey is modeled after an instrument that is administered in an in-person, live classroom environment. Given the very different levels of engagement between these two types of engagement, the survey administrator may have to make in-the-moment adjustments to the instrument administration that take into consideration the age and attention span of the children.

The test is designed to be administered in one day, in a single sitting. The entire survey is intended to take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Proctor's directions will be given to students before the RBE survey is distributed.

Suggested Script
Introduction

"Today, I'm going to ask you some questions about you and your reading. I want to know what you learn through your reading. There are no right or wrong answers. You will not be graded on this. Your answers will help me make reading more interesting for you. The important thing is to think about what is right for you. Think about each question, and then give your most honest answer to each question. Think about and circle the answer that is most honest for you."

Ask parents to give the RBE survey to the child. Then begin by saying: "I will read each sentence to you twice. Do not mark your answer until I tell you to. The first time I read the sentence, I want you to think about the best answer for you. The second time I read the sentence, I want you to circle the best answer for you. Remember, do not circle your answer

until I tell you to. OK, let's begin. Read the first sample item (Taco) and say: Put your pencil on the picture of the taco. The sentence beside the taco says "I am in..." (pause). Now, put your pencil on number 1. Below number 1, it says "Kindergarten" (pause). Put your pencil on number 2. Below number 2, it says "First grade" (pause). Put your pencil on number 3. Below number 3, it says "Second grade" (pause). Now, I'll read it again. I want you to circle the answer that is right for you. Put your pencil on the taco. "I am in..." (pause). Now, you circle the answer that is right for you. Number 1, Kindergarten (pause). Number 2, First grade (pause). Number 3, Second grade (pause).

      Then, I will read the remaining items in the same way, making sure to pause to provide ample time for students to mark their responses.

I.Cognitive Empathy (CE) - Perspective Taking Through Books (Dodge, 2009).

Sample:

🌮 - In the Fall, when school starts, I will be in...
    1. Kindergarten   2. First grade   3. Second grade

<u>Circle your answer:</u>

🍟 - There is more than one side to every question and I try to look at them all.
    (1. Yes / 2. Maybe or Sort of / 3. No)

🍔 - I imagine how life is to the characters I **read** about.
    (1. Yes / 2. Maybe or Sort of / 3. No)

🌭 - I understand my friends better when I imagine how things are for them.
    (1. Yes / 2. Maybe or Sort of / 3. No)

🍕 - I understand what most **book characters** go through.
    (1. Yes / 2. Maybe or Sort of / 3. No)

🌮 - It's hard to imagine how the "other guy" sees things.
    (1. Yes / 2. Maybe or Sort of / 3. No)

🍟 - Before I say something that might be mean about someone, I imagine how it would feel if I were in their place.
    (1. Yes / 2. Maybe or Sort of / 3. No)

II. Ethnocultural/Affective Empathy (EA) - (adapted from Wang, et al., 2003).

<u>Circle your answer:</u>

- When I hear people make jokes or laugh about people who look different than me, I tell them to stop even though they are not talking about me.
  (1. Yes / 2. Maybe or Sort of / 3. No)

- I don't care if people say mean things about people who don't have the same skin color as me or who don't look like me.
  (1. Yes / 2. Maybe or Sort of / 3. No)

- I don't think about whether mean things I say hurt the feelings of people who don't look like me.
  (1. Yes / 2. Maybe or Sort of / 3. No)

- I like to help people who don't look like me, when I think others are being mean to them.
  (1. Yes / 2. Maybe or Sort of / 3. No)

- It makes me mad when my friends are treated unkindly just because they or their families look or do different things than me and my family.
  (1. Yes / 2. Maybe or Sort of / 3. No)

- I get mad when my friends are treated meanly.
  (1. Yes / 2. Maybe or Sort of / 3. No)

- When people are mean to animals, it makes me more mad then when people are mean to other people..
  (1. Yes / 2. Maybe or Sort of / 3. No)

- When I read books about people who are treated badly because of their differences, it helps me understand how they are treated.
  (1. Yes / 2. Maybe or Sort of / 3. No)

- When I see people who look different than me, I am happy for them.
  (1. Yes / 2. Maybe or Sort of / 3. No)

- I like to make friends with people who are different from me.
  (1. Yes / 2. Maybe or Sort of / 3. No)

- I like to make friends with animals more than people.
  (1. Yes / 2. Maybe or Sort of / 3. No)

- Books help me to understand animals more than different people.
  (1. Yes / 2. Maybe or Sort of / 3. No)

III. Ethnocultural/Cognitive Empathy (EC) - (adapted from Wang, *et al*., 2003).

Circle your answer:

- It is easy for me to understand what Black, Latin, and Asian people feel.
  (1. Yes / 2. No / 3. Maybe or Sort of)

- It is hard for me to imagine myself in stories about the daily life of people who don't look like me.
  (1. Yes / 2. Maybe or Sort of / 3. No)

- I know what it feels like to be the only person who looks like me in a group of people.
  (1. Yes / 2. Maybe or Sort of / 3. No))

- I think everyone is treated fairly even if we don't look the same.
  (1. Yes / 2. Maybe or Sort of / 3. No)

- I feel uncomfortable when I am around a lot of people who are different from me.
  (1. Yes / 2. Maybe or Sort of / 3. No)

_____

Scoring Guidelines

In order to increase the reliability of student responses, the items are variably scaled. To support you in scoring items correctly for calculating the Affective (A), Ethno Affective (EA), and Ethno Cognitive (EC) subscales, I will use a pending table to guide scoring and will compare the student's response.

APPENDIX 9

Participant Thank You Letter

You Did It!

Dear Participant:

Thank you for your being part of the **Reading Builds Empathy** Literacy Research study! This concludes your participation. We hope you have enjoyed this experience. Please know that through your involvement, you have provided invaluable information about reading literacy and empathy development.

As a gesture of our appreciation for your willingness to participate, please find enclosed in this email (1) A certificate of participation, and (2) your own, downloadable copy of the Cocoa Kids Collection ebook entitled, *Eddie and the Hot Cocoa Hot Rod*.

Please note, we will keep all information on file through the completion of the study. Once completed, a study write-up of the findings will be completed and possibly published. You will be notified and the document will be made available to study participants at the Reading Build Empathy website. **Please note, none of the participants' names or personal information will be included in any of the these materials.** Rather, statistical analyses of the data in the aggregate will be cited and discussed. Should you have any questions about any of this, please feel free to reach me via email at Valerie.WilliamsSanchez18@StJohns.edu.

Regards,

Valerie Williams-Sanchez,
Principal Investigator
St. John's University

Certificate of Participation

APPENDIX 11

Eddie and the Hot Cocoa Hot Rod eBook

Eddie and the Hot Cocoa Hot Rod (Cover art) Participant eBook Giveaway
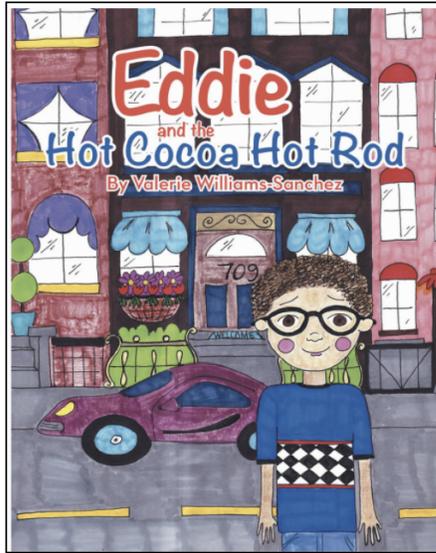
Note: **Eddie and the Hot Cocoa Hot Rod, Copyright © 2015 Valerie Williams-Sanchez**

APPENDIX 12

Empathy Reading List

Empathy Reading List (V.L. Williams-Sanchez, 2020)

Study Category (A, B or C)	Explicit (E) or Implicit (I) Empathy	Hoopla	Book Title	Author	Overview	Organization	lits: a-animal f-fantasy B-Black L-Latinx A-Asian O-Other w-White
A	E		Clifford's Good Deeds	Bridwell, N	Clifford sets out with Emily Elizabeth and their friend Tim to offer a helping paw to people in need.Clifford has a good heart, but whenever he tries to be responsible and do good deeds for others, they always seem to backfire. In the end, he manages to save two children...	Scholastic (parents)	a
A	E		Lion and the Mouse	Pinkney, J.	In award-winning artist Jerry Pinkney's wordless adaptation of one of Aesop's most beloved fables, an unlikely pair learn that no act of kindness is ever wasted. After a ferocious lion spares a cowering mouse that he'd planned to eat, the mouse later comes to his rescue,...	Scholastic (parents)	a
A	E		Sheila Rae, the Brave	Henkes, K.	Sheila Rae is not afraid of anything. She walks backward with her eyes closed, steps on every crack, growls at stray dogs, and bares her teeth at stray cats. But when Sheila Rae becomes lost on the way home from school, it is her "scaredy-cat" sister Louise who shows her...	Scholastic (parents)	a
A	I		Mouse and Lion	Watts, B.	From the illustrator of the classic edition of Snow-White and the Seven DwarfsOn a ridge above the Kalihari,Lion naps, until Mouse bumbles into him,willy-nilly, startling him awake.After a show of teeth, Lion is softenedby Mouse's pledge of loyaltyand sets him free.When...	Scholastic (parents)	a
A	E		The Cool Bean	John, J.	Sweet, whimsical tale encourages empathy and kindness.		f
A	E		We're Different, We're the Same	Sesame Street	Who better than Sesame Street to teach us that we may all look different on the outside—but it's important to remember that deep down, we are all very much alike. We all have the same needs, desires, and feelings. Elmo and his Sesame Street friends help teach toddlers and the adults in their lives that everyone is the same on the inside, and it's our differences that make this wonderful world, which is home to us all, an interesting—and special—place. This enduring, colorful, and charmingly illustrated book offers an easy, enjoyable way to learn about differences—and what truly matters.	Sesame Street	f
A	I		The Sneetches and Other Stories	Dr. Seuss	The Sneetches and Other Stories is a collection of stories by American children's author Dr. Seuss, published in 1961. It is composed of four separate stories with themes of tolerance, diversity, and compromise: "The Sneetches", "The Zax", "Too Many Daves", and "What Was I Scared Of?"	Google	f
A	I		The Hundred Dresses	Estes, E.	Wanda Petronski, a Polish girl in a Connecticut school who is ridiculed by her classmates for wearing the same faded blue dress every day. Wanda claims she has one hundred dresses at home, but everyone knows she doesn't and bullies her mercilessly. The class feels terrible when Wanda is pulled out of the school, but by that time it's too late for apologies. Maddie, one of Wanda's classmates, ultimately	Bookroo	f
A	I		The Day the Crayons Quit	Daywalt & Jeffers	Poor Duncan just wants to color. But when he opens his box of crayons, he finds only letters, all saying the same thing: His crayons have had enough They quit Beige Crayon is tired of playing second fiddle to Brown Crayon. Black wants to be used for more than just outlining. Blue needs a break from coloring all those bodies of water. And Orange and Yellow are no longer speaking--each believes he is the true color	Good Reads	f
A	I		The Giving Tree	Silverstein, S.	"Once there was a tree...and she loved a little boy." So begins Shel Silverstein's beloved story about a tree that literally gives her entire self to the person she loves. Silverstein's story, with its simple and beautiful illustrations, has been a gift to generations of...	Scholastic (parents)	f
A	E		The Rabbit Listened	Doerrfeld, C.	With its spare, poignant text and irresistibly sweet illustration, The Rabbit Listened is about how to comfort and heal the people in your life, by taking the time to carefully, lovingly, gently listen.	Brightly	a
A	I		Chrysanthemum	Henkes, K.	Chrysanthemum thinks her name is absolutely perfect--until her first day of school. You're named after a flower! teases Victoria. Let's smell her, says Jo. Chrysanthemum wilts. What will it take to make her blossom again?	Good Reads	a
A	I		My Heart	Luyken, C.	From the author-illustrator of The Book of Mistakes comes a gorgeous picture book about caring for your own heart and living with kindness and empathy. My heart is a window. My heart is a slide. My heart can be closed...or opened up wide. Some days your heart is a puddle or a fence to keep the world out. But some days it is wide open to the love that surrounds you. With lyrical text and breathtaking art, My Heart, My Heart empowers all readers to listen to the guide within in this ode to love and self-acceptance.	Bookroo	f
A	E		Emma and the Whale	Case, J.	A girl helps rescue a whale who has washed ashore. Emma empathizes with the animal's suffering, imagining what the whale is thinking and feeling. When the tide starts to come in, Emma pushes as the water swirls and rises, and eventually the whale swims free, back to her mother.	Brightly	a
A	E		Henry and the Bully	Carlson, N.	Favorite author Nancy Carlson tackles the age-old problem of bullying. The lovable Henry is back—and he's being bullied on the soccer field at school! When no one's advice seems to help, it's up to Henry to solve his bully problem for himself. Classroom favorite Nancy Carlson encourages young readers to use creativity and empathy to deal with one of childhood's toughest challenges.	First Book	a
A	E		Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile	Waber, B.	A cranky neighbor puts Lyle in the zoo, but experiences a change of heart when the crocodile saves him from a fire. "Lyle is as lovable as ever and the story and colored pictures as nonsensical".--Booklist.	Scholastic (parents)	a
A	E		Swimmy	Lionni, L.	Deep in the sea lives a happy school of fish. Their watery world is full of wonders, but there is also danger, and the little fish are afraid to come out of hiding . . . until Swimmy comes along. Swimmy shows his friends how—with ingenuity and team work—they can overcome...	Scholastic (parents)	a
A	E	1a	The Sick Day for Amos McGee	Stead, P.C.	This award-winning book shows the value of selflessness and caring for one another.	Good Reads	a
A	E		Try a Little Kindness	Cole, H.	In this funny picture book, bestselling illustrator Henry Cole shows kids different ways to be kind with his hysterical cartoon animal characters. Each page features a different way to be a good person, like using proper manners, telling someone they are special, or sharing...	Scholastic (parents)	a
A	E		Zen Ties	Muth, J	Stillwater the Panda returns in a delightful companion to his Caldecott Honor Book, Zen Shorts.Summer has arrived, and so has Koo, Stillwater's haiku-speaking young nephew. And when Stillwater encourages Koo, and his friends Addy, Michael, and Karl to help a grouchy old...	Scholastic (parents)	a
A	E		The Kindness Book	Parr, T.	With his trademark bright colors and bold lines, Todd Parr takes on a topic more important than ever: being kind to each other. This idea is both a perfect fit for Todd's cheerful, child-friendly positivity and incredibly close to Todd's own heart. No matter what other people choose to do, you can always choose to be kind — and what a wonderful thing to be! Today's parents and teachers are looking for ways to instill empathy and kindness in children at a young age — this book is the perfect introduction to a timely and timeless topic.	First Book	a
A	E		One	Otoshi, K.	Summary for Zero: One character's search to find value in herself and in others.	Huffpost	f
A	E		Otis and the Scarecrow	Long, L.	"Otis and the Scarecrow" includes messages about standing up for people and showing compassion.	Huffpost	f
A	E		The Color Monster	Llenas, A.	Caregivers will enjoy sharing this concept book that taps into both socio-emotional growth and color concepts in a simple, friendly way.	ILA Kids Choice (2019)	f
A	E		The Monster Who Lost His Mean	Haber, T.S.	As the title suggests, this book shows it's never too late to choose acceptance, inclusion and empathy.	Huffpost	f
A	E		Adrian Simcox Does NOT Have a Horse	Campbell, M.	A heartwarming story about empathy and imagination, it is one that families will treasure for years to come. Adrian Simcox tells anyone who will listen that he has a horse--the best and most beautiful horse anywhere.	Brightly	a
A	I		Great Joy	DiCamillo, K.	In her first picture book, America's beloved storyteller Kate DiCamillo, reunites with Bagram Ibatoulline to offer readers an unforgettable holiday gift.It is just before Christmas when an organ grinder and monkey appear on the street corner outside Frances's apartment....	Scholastic (parents)	a
A	I		Hey, Little Ant	Hoose & Hoose	What would you do if the ant you were about to step on looked up and started talking? Would you stop and listen? What if your friends saw you hesitate? That's what happens in this funny, thought-provoking book. Originally a song by a father-daughter team, this conversation between two creatures, large and small, is bound to inspire important discussions.	Brightly	a
A	I		The Rooster Who Would Not Be Quiet	Deedy, C.A.	Carmen Deedy's masterfully crafted allegory and Eugene Yelchin's bright, whimsical mixed-media paintings celebrate the spirit of freedom -- and the courage of those who are born to sing at any cost.	Scholastic Diversity	a
A	I		Wolf in the Snow	Cordell, M.	A girl is lost in a snowstorm. A wolf cub is lost, too. How will they find their way home?	Good Reads	a

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		Title	Author	Description	Source	
A	I	Bernice Gets Carried Away	Harrison, H.	Perfect for a new generation of Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day readers, this charming story about a grumpy cat gently shows how far a little sharing can go. Bernice is having a truly rotten time at her friend's birthday party. First, everyone else gets a piece of cake with a frosting rose. But not Bernice. Then, everyone else gets strawberry-melon soda. Bernice gets the prune-grapefruit juice. And it's warm. The last straw is the one lousy (squished) candy she gets from the piñata. So when the balloons arrive, Bernice knows just what she has to do: grab them all. And then, poor cross Bernice gets carried up, up, and away. Luckily, she figures out just how to make her way back down to the party...and she brightens lots of other animals' days on her way.	Bookroo	a
A	I	Love Is Everywhere	Benton, J.	Jim Benton brings out the funny in love!My love for you goes everywhere,and anywhere you go.It follows you both day and night,through rain, and sun, and snow.You might not always see my love,but it goes everywhere.Even if you go out walking in your underwear!	Scholastic (parents)	f
B	E	Each Kindness	Woodson, J.	"Each Kindness" presents anti-bullying messages and highlights the power of even the smallest actions.	Good Reads	B
B	I	Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut	Barnes, D.	The barbershop is where the magic happens. Boys go in as lumps of clay and, with princely robes draped around their shoulders, a dab of cool shaving cream on their foreheads, and a slow, steady cut, they become royalty. That crisp yet subtle line makes boys sharper, more visible, more aware of every great thing that could happen to them when they look good: lesser grades turn into As; girls take notice; even a mother's hug gets a little tighter. Everyone notices.	Good Reads	B
B	E	Last Stop on Market Street	de La Peña, M.	A young African-American boy named CJ exits a church, accompanied by his grandmother (nicknamed Nana), during a rainstorm. As they walk to a bus stop, CJ asks Nana why they have to walk in the rain, and Nana replies that trees, too, need water. When they arrive at the bus stop, CJ witnesses his friend, Colby, riding home in a car with his father and asks his Nana why they do not have a car. Later, the bus pulls up outside of them and CJ, along with his Nana, walks up to the front seat. After encountering a blind man and witnessing two boys with iPods a man plays a song on his guitar, causing CJ to finally feel true beauty.	Good Reads	A
B	E	I Am Enough	Beyers, G.	This gorgeous, lyrical ode to loving who you are, respecting others, and being kind to one another comes from actor and activist Grace Byers and talented newcomer artist Keturah A. Bobo. We are all here for a purpose. We are more than enough. We just need to believe it.	Good Reads	B
B	I	Amazing Grace	Hoffman, M.	Although a classmate says that she cannot play Peter Pan in the school play because she is black, Grace discovers that she can do anything she sets her mind to do.	Bookroo	B
B	I	Goldy Luck and the Three Pandas	Yim, N.	One Chinese New Year, her mother sends Goldy Luck to the pandas next door with a plate of turnip cakes, but the pandas are out and disaster follows. Includes a recipe for turnip cakes and an explanation of Chinese New Year.	Good Reads	A
B	E	I'm New Here	O'Brien, A.S.	Three students are immigrants from Guatemala, Korea, and Somalia and have trouble speaking, writing, and sharing ideas in English in their new American elementary school. I'm New Here demonstrates how our global community can work together and build a home for all.	Good Reads	L/A
B	E	Name Jar	Choi, Y.	Being the new kid in school is hard enough, but what about when nobody can pronounce your name? Having just moved from Korea, Unhei is anxious that American kids will like her. Her new classmates are fascinated by this no-name girl and decide to help out by filling a glass jar with names for her to pick from. But while Unhei practices being a Suzy, Laura, or Amanda, one of her classmates comes to her neighborhood and discovers her real name and its special meaning. Encouraged by her new friends, Unhei chooses her own Korean name and helps everyone pronounce it—Yoon-Hey.	Good Reads	A
B	E	Why Am I Me?	Britt, P.	Have you ever wondered why you are you? Or what it might feel like to be someone else? Someone taller, faster, smaller, smarter? Lighter, older, darker, bolder?	Scholastic Diversity	O
B	E	Africa is Not a Country	Knight, M.B.	Enter into the daily life of children in the many countries of modern Africa. Countering stereotypes, Africa Is Not a Country celebrates the extraordinary diversity of this vibrant continent as experienced by children at home, at school, at work, and at play.	Learner Publishing	B
B	E	Amadi's Snowman	Saint-Lot, K.N.	Amadi is a young Igbo boy from Nigeria who loves the excitement of the marketplace and wants to become a trader, but he does not think he needs to learn how to read to become a good businessman. When Amadi hears about snow for the first time, however, he realizes there are many things that reading can help him learn.	First Book	B
B	E	Be Kind	Miller, P.	A New York Times bestseller! These days, it seems more important than ever for books to show young people how to act with thoughtfulness, civility, and kindness." —The New York Times Book ReviewWhen Tanisha spills grape juice all over her new dress, her classmate wants to make her feel better, wondering: What does it mean to be kind? From asking the new girl to play to standing up for someone being bullied, this moving story explores what kindness is, and how any act, big or small, can make a difference—or at least help a friend.	Google	B
B	E	I Am Human: a Book of Empathy	Abrams, H.	"I Am Human" shares a message about understanding and accepting our imperfections and loving our flawed selves and peers.	Google	B
B	E	Lailah's Lunch Box	Faruqi, R.	Lailah is in a new school in a new country, thousands of miles from her old home, and missing her old friends. When Ramadan begins, she is excited that she is finally old enough to participate in the fasting but worried that her classmates won't understand why she doesn't join them in the lunchroom. Lailah solves her problem with help from the school librarian and her teacher and in doing so learns that she can make new friends who respect her beliefs.	Good Reads	O
B	E	Listening to My Heart	Garcia, G.	When Esperanza spots a heart-shaped rock, she sees it as a reminder to spread kindness and love in the world. But when the school play doesn't go the way she'd imagined, will she remember to give it to herself?	Good Reads	L
B	E	Lovely	Hong, J.	Big, small, curly, straight, loud, quiet, smooth, wrinkly. Lovely explores a world of differences that all add up to the same thing: we are all lovely!	Huffpost	O
B	E	My Brother Charlie	Millner, Peete & Peete	Callie is very proud of her brother Charlie. He's good at so many things — swimming, playing the piano, running fast. And Charlie has a special way with animals, especially their dog, Harriet. But sometimes Charlie gets very quiet. His words get locked inside him, and he seems far away.	Scholastic Diversity	B
B	E	Playing War	Beckwith, K.	One summer day, Luke and his friends decide to play their favorite game of war, using sticks for guns and pine cones for bombs. But Sameer, who is new to their neighborhood, doesn't want to join in. When the kids learn that Sameer lost his family in a real war, they realize that war is not a game.	First Book	A
B	E	Roses for Gita	Gilmore, R.	Gita misses her grandmother back in India—especially her beautiful garden. Through a broken section of fence, Gita can see her neighbor's lush garden, but when nearsighted Mr. Flinch sees Gita peering at his garden over the fence, he thinks she's a boy and snaps at her.	First Book	A
B	E	Sumi's First Day of School Ever	Pak, S.	The first day of school can be lonely and scary, especially when you don't speak the same language as everyone else. Sumi only knows one phrase in English, "Hello, my name is Sumi." This doesn't seem nearly enough to prepare her for a big school with wide stairs, noisy children, and a mean classmate.	Good Reads	A
B	E	Talking Walls	Knight, M.B.	If walls could talk, what would they say? Perhaps they would tell us who built them and why. Maybe they could even tell us about people's lives today or about how our ancestors lived thousands of years ago. In this book walls really do talk, and oh, the stories they tell.	First Book	
B	E	The Favorite Daughter	Say, A.	Yuriko hates her name when the children make fun of it and call her "Eureka!" Though she is half Japanese, the teasing makes her want to hide, to retreat even from the art projects she used to love. Fortunately she has a patient, kind father who finds gentle ways of drawing her out and reminding Yuriko of the traditions they share that have always brought her joy: walks in lovely Golden Gate Park, lunch at their favorite sushi restaurant, watching the fog blow in off the bay. It's enough... it's more than enough to face down her challenges with confidence.	Scholastic Diversity	A
B	E	The Girl with a Brave Heart: A Tale from Tehran	Jahanfouz, R.	Shiraz, a kindhearted young girl growing up in Tehran, has a miserable life at home with her stepmother and stepsister, who treat her like a servant. A Cinderella story.	First Book	O
B	E	We've Got the Whole World in our Hands	Lopez, R.	Award-winning illustrator Rafael López brings new life with his adaptation of "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands," saluting the lives of all young people. The rhythmic verse and repetitive emphasis on "we" and "our" encourages inclusive communities and the celebration of unity and diverse friendships all around the world.	Scholastic Diversity	L
B	I	Emma and Julia	McClintock, B.	Emma is little. Julia is big. They both love ballet. Emma takes ballet lessons. So does Julia. Emma is learning to be a ballerina. Julia is a professional ballerina. They are both excited about the big performance in the theater tonight. Emma will be watching from the audience. Julia will be dancing onstage!And afterward, Emma will go backstage to meet her ballet hero!	Scholastic Diversity	B
B	I	Soda Bottle School	Kutner and Slade	The villagers had tried expanding the school, but the money ran out before the project was finished. No money meant no materials, and that meant no more room for the students. Then one person got a wonderful, crazy idea: Why not use soda bottles, which were readily available, to form the cores of the walls?	First Book	L
B	I	Yo! Yes!	Raschka, C	Two lonely boys, one black and one white, meet on the street and become friends.	Scholastic Diversity	B/L
B	I	Frida	Winter, J.	The companion to the author's book, Diego identifies the tragedies and suffering that Frida Kahlo overcame throughout her life by using her skill as a artist to express her pain and depression--and eventually, her joys and triumphs.	Scholastic Diversity	L
B	I	Princess Truly in I Am Truly	Greenawalt, K.	A perfect graduation gift, this heartfelt story is a reminder to young girls everywhere that they can achieve anything if they put their minds to it...and dream big!	Scholastic Diversity	B

		Title	Author	Description	Source	
B	I	Saffron Ice Cream	Kheiriyeh, R.	A joyous celebration of a girl's first family outing in a new country"With her colorful, exuberant folk-art illustrations and upbeat, friendly tone, Rashin makes a daunting cross-cultural leap seem as easy as a summer breeze." -- New York Times Book ReviewRashin is excited about her first visit to the beach in her family's new home. On the way there, she remembers what beach trips were like in Iran, the beautiful Caspian Sea, the Persian music, and most of all, the saffron ice cream she shared with her best friend, Azadeh. But there are wonderful things in this new place as well -- a subway train, exciting music... and maybe even a new friend!	Scholastic Diversity	O
B	I	The Greatest Adventure	Piedra, T.	Where does true adventure come from? A young Latino boy and his grandfather find the true answer together.	Scholastic Diversity	L
B	I	Uncle Bobby's Wedding	Brannen, B.B.	Chloe's favorite uncle is getting married, and she's not happy about it. But after a magical day with Uncle Bobby and his boyfriend, Jamie, Chloe realizes she's not losing an uncle, but gaining one.	Kirkus	O
C	I	Purplicious	Kann, V.	It's purple Pinkalicious! Pinkalicious loves the color pink, but all the girls at school like black. They tease her, saying that pink stinks and pink is for babies. But Pinkalicious doesn't think that is, until her friends stop playing with her.	Scholastic (parents)	W
C	E	We're All Wonders	Palacio, R.J.	Over 5 million people have fallen in love with Wonder and have joined the movement to Choose Kind. Now younger readers can meet Auggie Pullman, an ordinary boy with an extraordinary face, and his beloved dog, Daisy.Countless fans have asked R. J. Palacio to write a book...	Scholastic (parents)	W
C	E	The Invisible Boy	Ludwig, T.	A simple act of kindness can transform an invisible boy into a friend... Meet Brian, the invisible boy. Nobody ever seems to notice him or think to include him in their group, game, or birthday party . . . until, that is, a new kid comes to class.	Good Reads	W
C	E	Jake & Lily	Spinelli, J.	The best part about this book is the lesson on bullying. Not only do you have the characters witnessing bullying, one of the main characters takes part in bullying and walks through the feelings he has after, the empathy he gains, and what he does to try to make up for his actions.	Bookroo	W
C	E	The Smallest Girl in the Smallest Grade	Roberts, J.	Hardly anyone noticed young Sally McCabe.She was the smallest girl in the smallest grade. But Sally notices everything—from the twenty-seven keys on the janitor's ring to the bullying happening on the playground. One day, Sally has had enough and decides to make herself heard.	Random House	W
C	E	Empathy: I Know How You Feel	George, E.	The ability to really understand- and care about- the feelings of another is a difficult attribute to develop. That's where Empathy: I Know How You Feel can help. Chock full of familiar situations and helpful hints, this book gives readers the tools they need to develop this important character strength.	Scholastic	W
C	E	Come With Me	McGhee, H.	When the news reports are flooded with tales of hatred and fear, a girl asks her papa what she can do to make the world a better place.	Scholastic	W
C	E	Empathy Is My Super Power	Smith, B.	With her parents' guidance, the main character learns to recognize emotions in others and discovers the power of compassion.	Huffpost	W
C	E	If Kids Ran the World	Dillon & Dillon	Two-time Caldecott Medalists Leo and Diane Dillon show children playfully creating a more generous, peaceful world where everyone shares with others. All roads lead to kindness in this powerful final collaboration between Leo and Diane Dillon	Scholastic Diversity	O
C	E	Stand in my Shoes: Kids Learning About Empathy	Sornson, R.	When Emily asks her big sister what the word empathy means, Emily has no idea that knowing the answer will change how she looks at people. But does it really matter to others if Emily notices how they're feeling? Stand in My Shoes shows kids how easy it is to develop empathy toward those around them.	Good Reads	W
C	E	Through Grandpa's Eyes	MacLachlan, P.	A touching story that teaches children how to look at the world in different ways. John's favorite house is his grandfather's—not because it is fancy or new but because he sees it through his Grandpa's eyes.	Good Reads	W
C	E	You, Me and Empathy	Sanders, J.	One of the most important social skills a child can learn is empathy. Being able to understand how another person is feeling and recognizing their needs helps people to connect to one another across race, culture and the diversity that is ever-present and so important to our world.	Good Reads	W
C	I	Lola's Fandango	Witte, A.	Lola is a young Spanish girl in awe of her glamorous older sister. However, she discovers her own talent and duende, or spirit, through secret fandango lessons from her father. The text is infused with the rhythms, movements and sounds of the dance, and the humanity of Lola's family is beautifully portrayed by Micha Archer's collage-paintings.	Embrace Race	L
C	I	Most People	Leannah, M.	Michael Leannah wrote Most People as an antidote to the scary words and images kids hear and see every day. Most People is a courageous, constructive response to the dystopian world of the news media.	NYT	O
C	I	Ms. McCaw Learns to Draw	Zemach, K.	Dudley Ellington tries, but he's just no good at school. Luckily, he has Ms. McCaw as a teacher. She's patient and she never lets other students pick on Dudley. Also, she knows wonderful things -- why stars shine, how plants grow. Dudley thinks Ms. McCaw knows everything.Then...	Scholastic (parents)	W

TOTALS	QTY
A	31
B	31
C	15
SUBTOT	77

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