



## Picture Books for Children’s Mental Health Literacy Advancement: The Reading Builds Empathy Pilot Survey

Valerie L. Williams-Sanchez

1. The School of Education, Saint John’s University, Queens, New York, USA
2. Valorena Publishing, Palisades, New York, USA

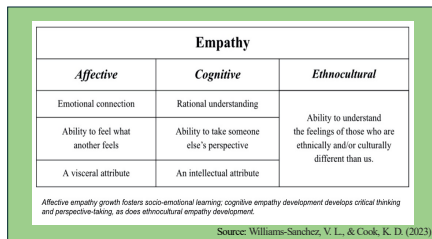
### Introduction

#### •Background:

- There is a dearth of effective and inclusive social emotional tools and therapies for youth who demonstrate epidemic levels of need for socio-emotional growth.
- Picture books are *the* modality to foster both reading skills (a social determinant of health) and social-emotional growth (an essential aspect of children’s mental health development).
- Measures and proof of efficacy are needed to validate, bolster, and inform strategies, practice and policies to set early literacy practices in family settings and beyond.

#### •Objective:

- The Reading Builds Empathy (RBE) literacy study aims to create and test a new instrument to gauge the efficacy of picture books in developing empathy in young children.



### Methodology

#### •Study Design:

- The study introduced a survey tool designed to assess empathy development in children aged six to eight.
- Included 21 parent-child pairs (totaling 42 participants).

#### •Tool Components:

- Researcher-administered component for direct measurement of children’s empathy development.
- Measurement within three dimensions: affective, cognitive, and ethnocultural empathy.
- Parent-reported data on children’s literacy activities and involvement with picture books.
- Parental observations regarding their child’s empathy growth.

#### PROCESS MAP & STUDY RECRUITMENT FLYER

1. Enrollment & Consent
2. Welcome to the RBE Orientation
3. Parents Complete *Parents Say!* Survey
4. Children Complete *Kids Say!* Survey
5. Survey is Completed

Source: Graphic and flyer, Williams-Sanchez, V. (2021).

**Help Us Study How Reading Builds Empathy**

We are currently recruiting 6-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 that leads to academic success and lifelong learning. Increasingly, people worldwide are calling for more empathy. But is this possible? If so, how is this achieved?

**Eligibility:** This study will take place from literacy learning, socio-cognitive and early childhood development.

**Who:** Readers, age 6-8, & parent/caregiver

**When:** A 30-minute time-investiture

**Where:** Jul. 27<sup>th</sup>, Aug. 5<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> (link times tell)

**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](https://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@stjohns.edu](mailto:valerie@stjohns.edu)

### The Research Questions and Descriptive Statistics:

#### Research questions:

- (1) *Is the survey effective in measuring affective, cognitive, and ethnocultural empathy for early readers, aged 6-8?*
- (2) *Are parents’ reports of children’s empathy, and children’s reported perceptions of their empathy correlated?*
- (3) *Do family’s book reading practices relate to affective, cognitive, and ethnocultural empathy?*

Table 3 Parents Say! parents’ & children’s demographic characteristics

Parent characteristic	%	Child characteristic	%
State of residence		Child race/ethnicity	
CA	5	Black	0
DE	10	Latino	5
NY	75	White	72
TX	10	Multiple	10
Missing	14	Missing	19
Age		Age	
Up to 39	24	6 years old	29
40-50	52	7 years old	33
51-65	10	8 years old	19
Missing	14	Missing	19
Highest education		Gender	
Associates	5	Male	43
Bachelors	24	Female	43
Masters	43	Missing	14
Post grad, doctorate	14	School type	
Missing	14	Home school	5
Occupation		Public school	71
Homemaker	10	Private school	10
Office Worker	5	Missing	14
Trade	48	Grade	
Certified professional	14	Kindergarten	5
Other professional	5	First grade	14
Missing	19	Second grade	43
Household income		Third grade	19
Up to \$30,000	5	Missing	19
\$30,000-50,000	0		
\$50,000-80,000	5		
\$80,000+ 100,000	10		
\$100,000+	57		
Declined	10		
Missing	14		

N=42; all responses are from parent report; cells may not add up to 100% due to rounding  
 Source: Williams-Sanchez, V. L., & Cook, K. D. (2023).

### Results

#### •Key Findings:

- Validity and reliability factor results were promising for parents, inconclusive for kids over the tool’s three dimensions: affective, cognitive, and ethnocultural empathy.
- Insights from parent-reported data on literacy activities and empathy observations.

PILOT DATA ANALYSIS			
Scale	Items	Mean (SD)	Cronbach’s alpha
<i>Parents Say!</i>			
Home reading behaviors (standardized mean score)	15	0.04 (0.46)	0.75
Child’s empathy (mean score)	12	4.14 (0.33)	0.68
<i>Kids Say!</i>			
Total empathy scale (mean score)	23	1.25 (0.12)	-0.55
Affective empathy (mean score)	12	1.36 (0.16)	-0.83
Cognitive empathy (mean score)	6	1.31 (0.28)	-0.04
Ethnocultural empathy (mean score)	5	0.911 (0.44)	0.44

N = 18

Source: Williams-Sanchez, V. L., & Cook, K. D. (2023).

### Discussion

#### •Interpretation:

- Significance of using picture books as a tool for fostering empathy in early childhood.
- The potential impact on literacy practices in familial and classroom settings.

#### •Policy Implications:

- Informing policies and strategies aimed at enhancing literacy and social-emotional growth through evidence-based practices.

### Conclusion

#### •Summary:

- The RBE study took the first steps toward the creation of a tool that provides valuable insights into the development of empathy through picture books.
- Recommends further studies to refine the tool’s interactivity with child subjects, empathy constructs, and to further explore broader applications.

ABSTRACT & RESOURCES



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