Teaching Children Emotional Intelligence: A Closer Look at the Barbie Vlogs

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Cultural Relevance in learning materials leads to greater engagement and meaning-making.

Do the Barbie vlogs increase emotional intelligence overall? Are they equally effective for children who do not see themselves reflected in Barbie?

Literature Review
- Trait Emotional Intelligence has a buffering effect against maladjustment risks (Piqueras et al., 2019).
- Culturally relevant texts act → meaning-making, investment, and engagement (Clark & Fleming, 2019; Christ et al., 2018).
- Lack of representation or misrepresentation in media is associated with a negative psychological effect on those whose identities are underrepresented (Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2017).

Hypotheses
H1: Children who watch the Barbie vlogs will score higher on Trait Emotional Intelligence than children who do not.
H2: Because Barbie may only be culturally relevant to only a portion of her audience, Black viewers who watch the vlog will show less improvement on Trait Emotional Intelligence scores than White viewers.

Methods
Participants
- 360 girls ages 6-11. Half of the participants Black (180), half White (180)
- Clustering to select 10 elementary and K-8 schools in Oregon

Measures
- Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire–Child Short Form (TEIQue – CSF) (Mavroveli et al., 2008).
- Family Affluence Scale (FAS; Currie et al., 1997) to control for socioeconomic status (SES) to capture a more clear effect of race.

Procedure
- Experimental group → show Barbie vlog.
- Neutral stimulus group → show different video of the same genre.
- All children take TEIQue – CF.
- All children complete the Family Affluence Scale.
- Debrief.

Anticipated Results
- H1 is supported if → experimental group has higher Trait Emotional Intelligence scores than both control groups.
- H2 is supported if → Black participants in the experimental group show less improved Trait Emotional Intelligence scores than White participants.

Discussion
Implications
- Extend findings about culturally relevant educational materials (Clark & Fleming, 2019; Christ et al., 2018)
- Children’s media producers should create similar but more culturally relevant programs
- More culturally relevant media in classrooms

Limitations
- Limited timespan, one measurement
- Gender-restricted sample
- Only examines two races

Future Directions
- Replicate with several measurements over time
- Consider the impact of gender
- Replicate with other ethnicities

Conclusion
In this proposal, I suggest that Barbie may effectively teach emotional intelligence through these vlogs, but a more culturally relevant program may be more effective at reaching a more diverse audience.

Read the full paper here