

# Empathy in Early Childhood:

## A Comparison between Religious and Secular Kindergartens in Israel



By : Tim Alexander

Lecturer : Dr. Efi Stolarski

Mentor : Ziv Shina



### Introduction

"Although, awareness of another person's viewpoint is critical for interpersonal communication, very little is known about the early development of empathetic ability" (Borke 2008)

"Children in early childhood who tend to be more empathetic showcase sophisticated understanding of shyness and aggression as compared to less empathetic peers" (Findlay, Girardi, Coplan; 2006)

Empathetic behaviors displayed in these kindergartens might give us a better prediction on future outcomes.

"The Process of Development in Childhood is as much cultural as it is natural" (Reviewed by Woodhead et. Al 2003)

The majority of Israeli Society is made up of either Religious or Secular Jews and by studying differences in empathy in early childhood, we can bridge gaps that have existed since the inception of that State.



### Participants

164 Kindergarteners aged 5-7 years old from both (3) Religious and (3) Secular Kindergartens from Tel Aviv, Ashdod, and Yavne

23 Teachers/Supervisors ranging in age from 20-70 from the 6 respective Religious and Secular kindergartens in Tel Aviv, Ashdod, and Yavne



### Aims/Goals

The aim is to find the similarities and differences in both how empathy is displayed and taught in both Religious and Secular Kindergartens.

The goal is to address these differences to help potentially bridge gaps for the betterment of Israeli Society.



### Research Questions

Is there a difference in how empathy is displayed in Religious Kindergartens as opposed to Secular Kindergartens between the children?

Are the teaching methods used in both of these types of kindergartens different from one another when teaching empathy and empathetic responses?



### Procedure

Teachers/Supervisors will be interviewed on teaching methods within their respective schools after signing a consent form to be apart of the study.

The interview will be a semi-structured interview that was used in a previous qualitative study on Teacher's Beliefs and Practices (Smith & Shepard 1988) and will also include questions similar to those on the Empathy Questionnaire (Baron-Cohen 2013)

Personal Observation and Video Recording from within the classroom will occur once a week for one consecutive school year.

5-7 year olds from both Religious and Secular Kindergartens will be observed by researchers after their parents agree to a consent form for their children to participate in the study.



Tim Alexander  
Yavne, Israel  
[timothy.alexander@mail.goucher.edu](mailto:timothy.alexander@mail.goucher.edu)

058-6336180

