



HELPING KIDS!



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Promoting Children's Intergroup Empathy and Prosocial Behaviours

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<https://helpingkidsqubblog.wordpress.com>



A Message of Thanks!

On behalf of Queen's University Belfast, we would like to sincerely thank each individual for participating in the study. In particular, we are grateful to the principals and teachers of the many primary schools that opened their doors to our research team.

Finally we would like to extend a special thanks to all the children and parents that participated in the study; without your help, this study would not have been possible.

Project Aims

This study aimed to understand the basic processes underlying children's prosocial behaviours in Northern Ireland. We played child-friendly research games with 200 primary school children in Belfast aged between 5 and 10 years. The games assessed how children share with others from their own school and other schools. Additionally, measures of children's empathy and sympathy were administered to predict levels of prosocial behaviour in primary school settings.

In order to assess prosocial behaviours, each child completed three rounds of a game. Before the game started, children were told they were giving to another child they had never met, either from their own school or another school nearby. In each round, the child was given the option to keep or give varying numbers of sweets. First, children were given the option to keep 1 sweet and give 1 sweet away, *or* to keep 1 sweet and give 0 sweets away (Prosocial Round). Second, they could choose to keep two, *or* give 1 and keep 1 sweet (Sharing Round). Finally, children could choose to keep 1 and give 1, *or* keep 1 and give 2 sweets (Envy Round).

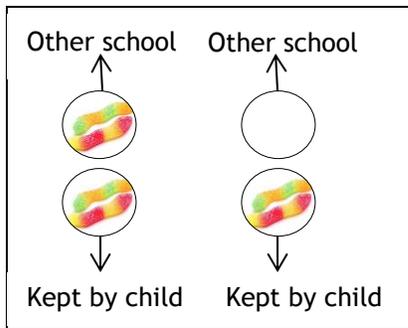
In order to measure empathy and sympathy, each child completed a child-friendly questionnaire with a trained researcher. For example, children were asked to respond to questions such as, 'I like helping people who are treated badly' on a thumbs-down (*really not like me*) to thumbs-up (*really like me*) scale.



Some of our findings!

Prosocial Behaviour

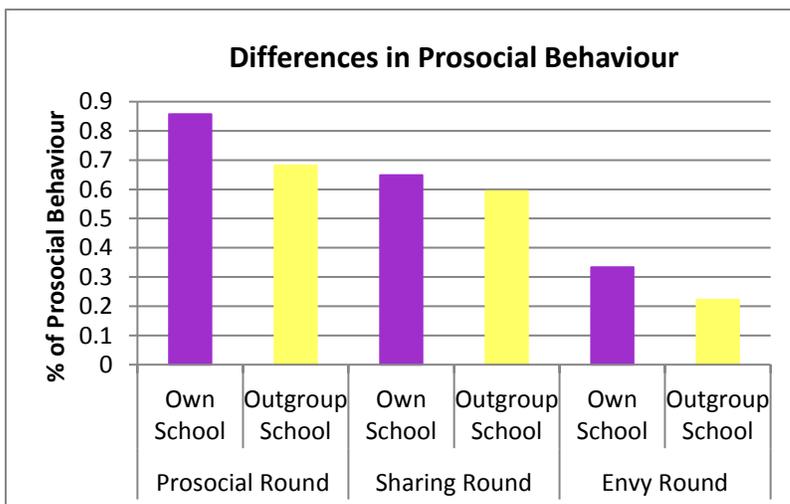
Prosocial behaviour refers to the voluntary actions taken in order to help others in need. Past research has found that children as young as 18 months have been known to elicit prosocial behaviours, suggesting that the urge to help others emerges quite early in development. However, it has also been found that children are more likely to help those who are more similar to themselves or are members of the same social group. During this study we investigated children's giving through the use of 3 resource distribution tasks based on a study by Ernst Fehr (2008).



Example of Prosocial Round

We found that children chose a more prosocial resource distribution option when giving to children from their own school compared to giving to children from another school.

In particular, children acted more prosocially toward own school members in the Prosocial and the Envy Rounds. They gave as much to other school children as to those in their own school in the Sharing Round.

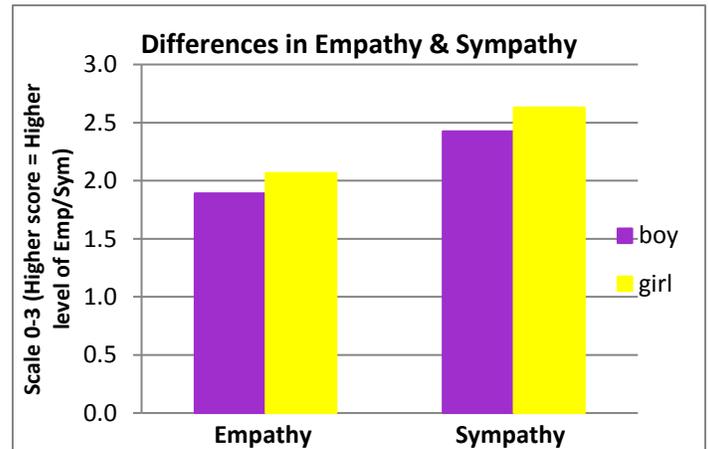


Empathy & Sympathy

Empathy refers to one's ability to understand other's feelings and, importantly, to share these feelings of another. Sympathy is often described as experiencing feelings of compassion, sorrow or pity for another person. Empathy and sympathy therefore differ with regards to perspective taking which is present during empathy and absent during sympathy.

Previous research has suggested that empathy and sympathy are important contributors towards prosocial behaviour.

First, our results showed that both girls and boys displayed higher levels of sympathy than empathy. Second, for both scales, girls reported higher empathy and sympathy compared to boys. This gender finding is consistent with previous research. Surprisingly, however, empathy and sympathy scores did not predict prosocial giving.



More Information and Participation!

If you would like to find out more about the study and similar ongoing projects, please to visit our website:

<https://helpingkidsqubblog.wordpress.com>

Current studies include research on the areas of cross-community attitudes and contact, as well as children's recognition culturally relevant symbols in Northern Ireland.

Thank you again for your contribution. We hope to work together again in the future!