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Adolescent outgroup helping, collective action, and political activism in a setting of protracted conflict

Laura K Taylor[1,2*]
Shelley McKeown[3]

[1] University College Dublin
[2] Queen's University Belfast
[3] University of Bristol

*Corresponding author information: School of Psychology, Belfield, Dublin 4, Ireland. Laura.taylor@ucd.ie

Data availability statement

All study materials and data are available from the first author upon request.

Abstract

This article examines the role of empathy for outgroup helping, collective action and political activism among youth in Northern Ireland, a setting of protracted conflict. Integrating the Empathy-Attitudes-Action model with the Developmental Peacebuilding Model, a two-wave study was conducted to assess youth's behavioural intentions and actual behaviours toward refugees. Across two waves ($N = 383$, 52% male, 48% female; 14-16 years old), empathy at Time 1 predicted more positive attitudes toward ethnic minorities at Time 2, which in turn was positively related to four outcomes aiming to foster prosocial change for refugees: helping behaviour and realistic helping at the interpersonal level, collective action intentions at the structural level, and signing a petition aiming for cultural change. That is, outgroup attitudes mediated the link from empathy to three types of prosocial action toward refugees. The findings suggest that youth not only volunteer to help an individual outgroup member, but also support broader structural and cultural change that will benefit those they may never meet. Implications for recognising and supporting the constructive agency of youth toward disadvantaged groups in conflict settings are discussed.

Keywords

Adolescent outgroup helping, collective action, and political activism in a setting of

protracted conflict

Settings of protracted conflict are often plagued by persistent intergroup tensions that can result in continuing cycles of violence. Yet, research has begun to focus on how young people can interrupt these cycles and forge more constructive relations across conflicting groups (Simpson, 2018; Taylor et al., 2014, 2018; Taylor, 2020). Empathy has been identified a key factor in promoting youth's outgroup prosocial behavior toward conflict rivals (Taylor, O'Driscoll, Dautel & McKeown, 2020b). Yet, in addition to protracted conflict, increasing diversity and global migration introduce new intergroup dynamics for youth negotiate; for example, in Northern Ireland the percentage of ethnic minorities doubled between 2001 and 2011 (Russell, 2013) and levels of diversity continue to rise (Wallace, McAreavey, & Atkin, 2013). Given these changing global demographics, the present research examines empathy-attitudes-action as one mechanism underlying different types of youth's prosocial behaviors toward ethnic minority newcomers (i.e., Syrian refugees) in Northern Ireland.

The approach integrates two theoretical frameworks: the empathy-attitudes-action model and the developmental peacebuilding model. First, the Empathy-Attitudes-Action model (EAA; Batson et al., 1997; Taylor et al., 2020b) offers insight into the relation between empathy and outgroup prosocial behavior. Empirical tests of this model with young adults have found that inducing empathy toward an individual outgroup member related to more positive attitudes toward the outgroup. Those outgroup attitudes, in turn, related to greater help for the original outgroup target, and the outgroup as a whole (Batson et al., 1997). The link from trait empathy to outgroup attitudes in adolescence is supported by research in Sweden which has found that empathy was related to less prejudice against immigrants one (Miklikowska, 2018) and two

years later (Miklikowska, 2017). Recent studies have found evidence for the full mediation EAA

model among children and adolescents measuring trait empathy (Taylor et al., 2020b) and out-

group specific empathy (O'Driscoll, Taylor, & Dautel, 2021). The link from empathy to helping

intentions was also stronger for outgroup, compared to ingroup, members (Taylor & Hanna,

2018). Perspective taking, the awareness and understanding of another person's emotions (van

der Graaff et al., 2014), has also been found to link to more positive outgroup attitudes and

support for policies that may benefit newcomers, such as Syrian refugees, in a community

sample in Northern Ireland (Schulz & Taylor, 2018). Thus, across multiple ways of

operationalizing empathy and perspective taking, with samples ranging from primary to

secondary schools to university students to the general community, there is a growing body of

evidence for the mediational EAA model. The present research extends this model by

theoretically distinguishing between different types of prosocial action informed by the

developmental peacebuilding model.

Second, the Developmental Peacebuilding Model (DPM; Taylor, 2020) explicitly

considers the *target* and *type* of outgroup prosocial acts. In doing so, the DPM extends previous

theory and explicitly recognizing children's and youth's agentic role in improving their social

world. The DPM explicitly distinguishes between different *targets* of prosocial acts, focusing on

both traditional conflict rivals with implications for other forms of diversity, such as ethnic

minority newcomers (e.g., McKeown, Cavdar, & Taylor, 2019; Sierksma, Lansu, Karremans, &

Bijlstra, 2018; Taylor & Glen, 2020). In other words, the DPM aims to tease apart specific

outgroup prosociality above and beyond a general prosocial orientation.

The DPM also distinguishes among *types* of prosocial acts, in particular, the level of

change in the child's social ecology. For example, *interpersonal* outgroup prosocial behavior

occurs within the microsystem, or the child's proximate and day-to-day relations. These acts typically aim to benefit an individual member of the outgroup through sharing, comforting, or helping. Previous research with children in settings of intergroup conflict has used a simple sticker sharing task as a measure of outgroup prosocial in the microsystem (e.g., O'Driscoll et al., 2018, 2021; Shamoa-Nir, Razpurker-Apfeld, Dautel, & Taylor, 2020), as well as a more elaborate sharing task using sweets adapted from Fehr, Bernhard, and Rockenbach (2008) (Taylor et al., 2020b). In these behavioral tasks, an individual outgroup member is the recipient of the shared stickers or sweets. Interpersonal outgroup helping among children also may be measured through questions that assess behavioral intentions within the microsystem. For example, Vezzali and colleagues assessed both children's helping intentions (e.g., helping with math) as well as realistic helping (e.g., sitting with at lunch during the school day) toward ethnic minority newcomers (Vezzali et al., 2015a). These scales have been adapted for settings of intergroup conflict to understand how children growing up in the wake of war may respond to and welcome newcomers fleeing political persecution (Glen, Taylor, & Dautel, 2020; Taylor & Glen, 2020). The present research examines prosociality in the microsystem by focusing specifically on youth helping intentions towards a (fictious) refugee who is arriving to their school.

Complementing the factors and processes that promote prosocial behavior toward individual outgroup members, the DPM outlines two other types of prosociality that are less frequently studied with children and young people. For example, actions that bring benefits to the larger community, such as through civic engagement (Checkoway & Aldana, 2013; Taylor et al., 2019), and those to improve the conditions of a group within society, such as through collective action (Choma & McKeown, 2019; van Zomeren & Louis, 2017). Rather than

distinguish between the motivations for action (e.g., allyship along ingroup norms, solidarity based on shared identification; Louis et al., 2019), the DPM highlights how civic engagement and collective action address *structural* change in the mesosystem level, or the interaction of the child's microsystems (e.g., connections among family and schools, peers, and community, etc.). For example, children may volunteer through their schools to raise money for cancer research (McKeown & Taylor, 2017). However, to our knowledge, collective action research amongst children and youth is largely absent (see Seo et al., 2014, on the role of social media use and intention to participate in a flash mob). There is evidence from adult samples that individuals are willing to engage in collective actions that cross group lines in conflict settings (e.g., Bilali, Vollhardt, & Rarick, 2017). Moreover, studies have found that British people were willing to attend protests to protect EU immigrant rights in the context of Brexit (Meleady & Vermue, 2019) and in support of justice in Palestine (Saab et al., 2015). Therefore, prosocial efforts aiming to benefit the outgroup as a whole, including members that the individual will never meet, aim to create structural change in the mesosystem. The present research addresses prosocial behaviors at this level by asking youth to report on collective action intentions to support refugee rights in Belfast.

Building on microsystem and mesosystem levels of prosociality, the DPM describes macrosystem prosocial action as aiming to promote national or global *cultural* change (Taylor, 2020). In the context of protracted conflict, that may be signing petitions or signaling voting intentions that promote an ethos of peace (Bar-Tal, Oren, & Nets-Zehngut, 2014). This type of prosocial activism aims to create constructive cultural change that is typically more abstract in nature than the previous two types. For example, this type of prosociality may include participation in social media campaigns, signing petitions, and other symbolic acts that signal a

shift in cultural norms (Taylor, 2020). Applied to another example, such as climate change, microsystem prosociality might include decreasing food waste or increasing recycling at home; mesosystem prosociality might include advocating for the school canteen to only offer sustainable, vegetarian options; while macrosystem prosociality might include boycotting air travel or polluting industries. As outlined by the DPM, these types of prosocial action are often complementary, but distinct, and youth can engage in each type of constructive social change.

Although the different types of outgroup prosociality have been investigated in isolation, recent research has adopted a more holistic approach (Thomas & McGarty, 2017; 2018; van Leeuwen & Zagefka, 2017). For example, among adults, the dual processes model proposes prejudice reduction (i.e., improving interpersonal relations) is linked with collective action (i.e., mobilizing individuals to oppose inequality) (Dixon, Durrheim, Stevenson, & Çakal, 2017). Louis and colleagues (2019) have also reviewed the adult literature on different types of intergroup prosociality, at the interpersonal level (i.e., positive and supportive contact) and broader levels (i.e., charitable giving, allyship, solidarity). These important advances from social psychology, often do not explicitly consider normative, or general, prosocial behavior. This is a gap we address in the present research.

Focusing on youth, longitudinal changes in interpersonal prosociality predict later mesosystem civic engagement in adolescents in a setting of political conflict (Taylor et al., 2018). Support for peacebuilding as also been linked with civic engagement in adolescence (McKeown & Taylor, 2017). The current analyses, thus, extend the EAA model by testing three types of prosocial action, and support the DPM by investigate outgroup prosociality across the microsystem, mesosystem and macrosystem. Recognizing youth agency, we assess their actions

and intentions at the interpersonal level, aiming to benefit an individual refugee, as well as promote broader structural and cultural change toward refugees.

Northern Ireland

As a setting of protracted conflict, tensions remain among political and national ideologies represented by two ethno-religious groups (Catholic and Protestant; Cairns & Darby, 1998). Children remain aware of these historic ethno-religious groups (Connolly, Smith, & Kelly, 2002; Taylor, Dautel, & Rylander, 2020a). The demographics of Northern Ireland, however, are changing. With the arrival of a growing number of newcomers, the number of individuals identifying as an ethnic minority doubled between 2001 and 2011 (Russell, 2013). Yet, compared its UK counterparts, Northern Ireland is both smaller and more ethnically homogenous; of the 2 million resident population in the 2011 census, 98.2% identified as White and 89% were born in Northern Ireland (Russell, 2013). Outside of the historic groups, therefore, ethnic minorities represent a relatively new outgroup in Northern Irish society.

In an annual survey of 14-year-olds across Northern Ireland, 55% of respondents reported being quite or very favorable toward people from minority ethnic groups (YLT, 2019). However, there is little research on the extent to which these attitudes translate to action; in other words, if adolescents in Northern Ireland are willing to help across these new group lines. The lack of research is not only important for scientific understanding, but also socially; classrooms across Northern Ireland are likely to continue diversifying because of migration. This process may be accentuated with Northern Ireland agreeing to re-settle 2,000 displaced Syrians (McNulty, 2016).

Present Research

The present research integrates the EAA model and DPM to investigate the antecedents of adolescents' prosocial behaviors toward a novel outgroup, Syrian refugees, in a setting of

protracted conflict. A unique contribution is to test the EAA model in adolescence for three theoretically distinct, yet related, types of outgroup prosociality. Moreover, this paper introduces a focus on collective action and peacebuilding potential through constructive political behaviors in age group where existing research is limited.

The study was conducted after the surge in migration to Europe over the summer of 2015 and uses a two-wave longitudinal design to explore the link between empathy and helping. Complementing Batson's original work that measured state-based empathy induced after hearing about an outgroup member who was harmed (Batson et al., 1997), we assess the influence trait empathy (Taylor et al., 2020b; Taylor & Glen, 2020). This contribution is important as previous research on the link from empathy to intergroup relations with newcomers is mixed. For example, empathetic concern was linked to lower cross-group friendships with immigrants seven months later in Italy (Trifiletti et al., 2019), but stable cross-ethnic friendships over five months in the UK (Jugert, Noack, & Rutland, 2013). Expanding on the research on friendship and intergroup contact, we focus on prosocial behaviors toward refugees across three levels of the social ecology.

More specifically, building on the DPM, we assess different types of outgroup prosocial action, namely, *interpersonal* intentions aiming to support an individual in need (newly arrived refugee student; i.e., microsystem), collective action intentions aiming to bring *structural* benefits for the wider outgroup (refugees in Belfast; i.e., mesosystem), as well as political activism aiming to promote *cultural* change across the globe (UN support of refugees; i.e., macrosystem). These outcomes not only cover prosociality at three levels of the social ecology (Taylor, 2020), but also combine self-report intentions as well as actual behavior. We hypothesize that empathy will relate to more positive outgroup attitudes over time, and that these

attitudes will mediate the link to youth's interpersonal, structural, and cultural prosocial action

for refugees.

Method

Participants

The sample ($N = 383$; 48% female, 52% male; 47% Catholic, 53% Protestant; aged 14-

16) included adolescents who completed both waves of a study on positive youth development.

Sample size was determined based on design of detecting small effects between community

background (k = 2) and gender (k = 2), suggesting a total sample of 388 for a statistical power of

.80 at α = .01 (Cohen, 1992). Anticipating 20% attrition based on previous longitudinal research

with adolescents in Northern Ireland (Taylor et al., 2018), we over sampled at Time 1. For the

current paper, attrition analyses revealed no differences between those adolescents that did/did

not participate at Time 2. This supports the assumption that data are missing at random (Enders,

2010).

Procedures

The Time 1 survey took place during the Spring of 2016 (when students were in Year 11)

and the Time 2 survey took place approximately 3-6 months later in the Autumn of 2016 (when

students were in Year 12). Eight secondary schools in Northern Ireland consented to part.

Selected schools were balanced between controlled (i.e., majority Protestant) and maintained

(i.e., majority Catholic) status and from both urban and semi-urban as well as interfaced[1] and

non-interfaced areas. To ensure a range of backgrounds and abilities in our sample,

comprehensive schools (i.e., inclusive of a range of abilities) and schools with higher rates of

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[1] A school is interfaced when a controlled and maintained school are adjacent and separated only by a physical barrier.

free and reduced lunch status (range = 30 to 65%) were selected to participate. Parents of

students were given the option to opt-out of the study, no parental opt-out forms were returned,

and youth provided informed assent.

Data collection took place during a single day in a computer room in each school.

Participants were introduced to the research by trained researchers and provided with a link to an

online survey (via Qualtrics). Both the researchers and the class teacher were present during the

data collection sessions and were available to answer any questions. Students who did not

identify as Catholic or Protestant completed alternative surveys and were not included in these

analyses. Each participating school received a £100 incentive and classes received an additional

£25 for class needs or events. Each student who completed the survey at both time points

received a £10 Amazon gift card. Ethical approval for the project was obtained for the research

from Queen's University Belfast.

Measures

Participants completed the measures below (in the order presented). General prosocial

behaviors and trait empathy were measured at Time 1; other variables were measured at Time 2

only.

General prosocial behavior. To control for individual differences among adolescents in

general prosocial behaviour, an adapted version for the Child Behaviour Scale (Ladd & Profilet,

1996) was used. In this 7-item measure, adolescents reported on a scale from 1 = strongly

disagree to 7 = strongly agree that statements such as "I help my peers" and "I am cooperative

with other people", describe them. Higher scores indicated greater prosocial behaviour with

excellent internal consistency (α = .91).

Trait empathy. Participants' level of empathy was assessed at Time 1 using items from the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1983). Both the empathetic concern and perspective taking subscales were included. Participants reported the extent to which they agreed with each item using a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Poor internal consistencies for both subscales and a combined scale, led us to conduct an exploratory factor analysis. The EFA revealed a five-item solution with good model fit ($N = 466$, χ^2 (5) = 11.78, $p =$ .04, TLI = .95; CFI = .98; RMSEA = .05 (95%CI: 0.01, 0.09); SRMR = .025). The final five items included: "When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them", "I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective", "I am often quite affected by things that I see happen", "I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both", and "When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in their shoes" for a while". The internal consistency was acceptable ($\alpha = .67$) and did not improve with any additional changes to the items. Higher scores indicate greater levels of empathy.

Outgroup helping intentions and realistic helping. As one of two measures of interpersonal outgroup prosocial behaviors, helping intentions and realistic helping were assess for a specific outgroup target. First, participants were asked to the read the following excerpt:

> *An estimated 12.2 million Syrians have fled their homes since the outbreak of civil war in March 2011, taking refuge in neighboring countries or within Syria itself. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of May 2016, over 4.8 million have fled to Syria's immediate neighbors Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. The government in Northern Ireland could take "a couple thousand at first" (BBC, 2015).*

Currently, in Northern Ireland, 108 Syrian refugees have been resettled, with the promise

of more groups to come in the future (NIdirect, 2016).

Adapted from Vezzali et al. (2015b), participants were then instructed that a new refugee family

was moving to their area; their son Mohammad or daughter Fatima (matched with participant's

gender) would be joining their class. Participants were then told that their teacher is seeking

volunteers to help the new student adjust to their school.

For *helping intentions*, participants were asked to rate the extent to which they would be

willing to help Mohamed/Fatima by responding to 6 statements on a 7-point Likert scale from 0

(absolutely not) to 6 (absolutely yes). Helping intention statements included, "Help

Mohammad/Fatima with English?" Items were averaged and found to be a reliable measure in

this sample ($\alpha = .93$). Higher scores indicate higher helping intentions.

For *realistic helping*, participants were also asked "Would you be willing to help

Mohammad/Fatima at lunch and/or after school the first week he/she arrives? If so, please mark

down how many days you are willing to help at the following times". Then, participants were

presented with the opportunity to select which of the five school days they would be willing to

help out at lunch and/or afterschool. If participants selected a time slot on a given day, it was

coded as a 1; a blank response was coded as 0. The total number of time slots (0-10) was

summed to calculate realistic helping.

Collective action for refugees in Belfast. To assess outgroup prosociality aiming to

foster structural change in the mesosystem, a scale of collective action was used. Adapted from

Van Zomeren et al. (2008) and Çakal et al. (2011), four items focused on action that participants

could take to create change in Belfast for the refugee community (McKeown & Taylor, 2021).

For example, items included, "Participate in a demonstration to support refugee rights in Belfast"

and "Sign up for a neighborhood project to support refugees in Belfast." Participants were asked to report how likely it is that they would participate using a 7-point Likert scale from 0 (not at all) to 6 (very). Higher scores indicated a higher collective action for refugees in Belfast (α = .94).

Signing a United Nations (UN) petition. Finally, to examine prosocial action or political activism targeting cultural change in the macrosystem, participants were presented with a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) campaign (Figure 1). As this was a public campaign, participants had the option to sign the petition by entering their first and surname. Responses were coded as No (0) if participants did not to add their name or Yes (1) if participants did include their name.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

Ethnic minority attitudes. Attitudes toward ethnic minorities was assessed using a feeling thermometer (Cairns et al., 2006). Participants were asked to report how they felt 0 (unfavorable) to 100 (favorable) towards ethnic minorities in Northern Ireland. Higher scores for this single-item measure indicated more positive attitudes.

Data Analysis Plan

Mplus 7 with full-information maximum likelihood estimation was used which estimates unbiased coefficients assuming data are missing at random. Model fit was assessed using the following guidelines: Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) and comparative fit index (CFI) $\geq$ .90, root mean square residual (RMSEA) and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) $\leq$ .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). For trait empathy, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted. Bootstrapped confidence intervals of the indirect effect were used to estimate the proposed mediation model.

Results

Table 1 includes the means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations for all variables. Exogenous predictors of adolescent gender and community background were allowed to correlate with Time 1 trait empathy and general prosocial behavior. The errors of endogenous outcomes at Time 2 also were allowed to correlate. Bootstrapped mediation with 1,000 replications was estimated in Mplus (Figure 2); the overall model was a good fit to the data ($N = 383$, $\chi^2(37) = 56.27$, $p = .02$, TLI = .97; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .03 (95%CI: 0.01, 0.05); SRMR = .027).

[Insert Table 1 here]

Regarding the demographic controls, gender was not significantly related to ethnic minority attitudes; however, girls did report more helping intentions ($\beta = .23$, $p < .001$), realistic helping ($\beta = .16$, $p < .01$), and greater collective action for refugees in Belfast ($\beta = .15$, $p < .01$) and signing a UN petition ($\beta = .11$, $p < .05$). Girls also reported higher trait empathy ($\beta = .38$, $p < .01$) and greater general prosocial behavior at Time 1 ($\beta = .42$, $p < .001$). For community background, Protestants reported lower ethnic minority attitudes ($\beta = -.30$, $p < .001$), lower collective action ($\beta = -.23$, $p < .001$), were less likely to sign the petition ($\beta = -.23$, $p < .001$), lower trait empathy ($\beta = -.28$, $p < .001$), lower general prosocial behavior ($\beta = -.29$, $p < .001$), but there were no differences between the two groups on helping intentions and realistic helping. Finally, Time 1 general prosocial behavior was significantly related to trait empathy ($\beta = .68$, $p < .001$), but was not related to ethnic minority attitudes or the other Time 2 outcomes.

[Insert Figure 2 here]

Regarding the mediational paths of interest, Time 1 trait empathy was positively related to Time 2 ethnic minority attitudes ($\beta = .26$, $p < .001$). Higher ethnic minority attitudes were also related to all four outcomes, specifically helping intentions ($\beta = .35$, $p < .001$), realistic helping

(β = .34, p < .001), collective action (β = .38, p < .001), and signing the petition (β = .41, p < .001). The bootstrapped indirect effects were significant for all four outcomes. That is, consistent with the EAA model, Time 2 ethnic minority attitudes mediated the impact of Time 1 trait empathy on prosocial actions. Moreover, as outlined by the DPM, these actions spanned levels of the social ecology, such as interpersonal helping intentions (β = .09, 99%CI: .02, .16) and realistic helping (β = .09, 99%CI: .02, .16), mesosystemic collective action for refugees in Belfast (β = .10, 99%CI: .02, .17), as well as signing a UN petition for more macrosystemic change (β = .11, 99%CI: 02, .19). The direct effects between Time 1 empathy and Time 2 prosocial outcomes were not significant, except for helping intentions (β = .17, p < .05). In sum, there was partial mediation for helping intentions and full mediation for realistic helping, collective action and signing a UN petition.

Discussion

The present research took a novel approach integrating the EAA model and DPM in a two-wave design. Within recent research on social change (e.g., Hässler et al., 2020), our focus on adolescence is unique. Among adolescents in a setting of protracted conflict, we find support for the mediational role of attitudes toward ethnic minorities in the link from trait empathy to all three types of adolescent prosocial intentions and action, ranging from interpersonal help to engaging in structural and cultural change. These findings are timely given the increasing diversity and growing numbers of refugees resettling across the UK, including in Northern Ireland (McNulty, 2016; Wallace, McAreavey, & Atkin, 2013).

These findings identify EAA as one underlying process of young people's support for, and action to help, refugees in a society that has itself been affected by political violence. For example, in 2019, while just over half of the respondent to the Young Life and Times survey in

Northern Ireland thought that people from Syria should be allowed to come, only 28% thought that Northern Ireland was a society that was welcoming to refugees (YLT, 2019). The present research attempts to fill the gap between generic support for such policies and the steps that young people can take to provide a welcoming environment to newcomers (e.g., Taylor & Glen, 2020).

At the interpersonal / microsystem level, we adapted scales from prior research (e.g., Vezzali et al., 2015a), and found support for the EAA model for both helping intentions and signing up to spend time with an individual refugee joining the participants' school. The latter of these assessments may be considered a relatively more costly form of helping as it requires offering time rather than general intention (Taylor & Glen, 2020). An important extension of the recent support for the EAA model in childhood and adolescence (e.g., Taylor et al., 2020), this paper included other types prosociality beyond donations or resource allocation tasks. Our approach also integrates previous support in adolescence for the longitudinal association from empathy to more positive attitudes toward immigrants (e.g., Miklikowska, 2017, 2018), and the link from empathy to positive intergroup relations (e.g., cross-ethnic friendships; Jugert et al., 2013; Trifiletti et al., 2019). Testing a mediation model in the present research helps to integrate these previous findings, aligning directly with the EAA model. Moreover, we find consistent mediation patterns for another type of prosociality aimed at structural change, extending previous research.

Specifically, mapping onto the DPM (Figure 2), we find that attitudes mediate the link from trait empathy to adolescent's collective action to intentions to support refugees in Belfast (structural / mesosystem), or a high-cost form of collective action (Hässler et al., 2020). We adapted previous measures to specify the site of the proposed action (i.e., Belfast) to make the

items more believable and realistic for adolescents to envisage themselves taking part. Given that the items assessed willingness to take part in a demonstration for refugee rights in Belfast, this construct is consistent with activism to challenge systemic inequality (Louis et al., 2019). Of course, there is room to expand on and improve the measurement of collective action in adolescence, but our findings offer new insight into this construct among this age group.

Finally, the analyses show support for the EAA model linking to action in the form of signing an existing UN petition to promote global solidarity with refugees (cultural / macrosystem). The use of an existing petition boosts external validity. Although other studies have categorized signing a petition as a low-cost form of collective action (Hässler et al., 2020), the present research uses it as a form of actual behavior. This operationalization complements the collective action intentions captured in the assessment of mesosystem change. Moreover, the content of the petition (e.g., "people like you, people like me"; "act with solidarity and shared responsibility"), is consistent with other related constructs such as solidarity, that is, "working for change based on shared identification uniting own with other groups" (Louis et al., 2019, p. 8). Our findings, therefore, offer support for the UN's recent policy focus on the constructive agency of young people through Security Council Resolutions 2250 (UNSCR, 2015), 2419 (UNSCR, 2018), 2535 (UNSCR, 2020) and the broader Youth, Peace and Security Agenda (Peace Direct, 2019). In sum, we find support for the EAA model promoting cultural change through global solidarity with refugees among adolescents.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although the present research makes a novel contribution, there are a number of limitations that should be addressed in future research. First, although we controlled for general prosocial behavior at Time 1, the Time 2 outcomes were not included in the first wave of data

collection. Therefore, we did not have the data to test a fully cross-lagged model. This limits our interpretation of the indirect effects (Maxwell & Cole, 2007), and future longitudinal should attempt to address this limitation with three or more waves for each construct.

Second, the measurement of empathy and related constructs might be expanded. For example, the best fitting structure in these data included items from both the empathetic concern and perspective taking subscales. This factor structure may not hold cross-culturally, and replications should conduct exploratory analyses or use alternative measures empathy, moving beyond self-report (e.g., Decety, Bartal, Uzefovsky, & Knafo-Noam, 2016). For example, previous research has examined empathy through neural activity (Gutsell & Inzlict, 2011) and eye-tracking (Hu et al., 2019) which could be applied with children and adolescents. Moreover, the present research did not examine predictors of empathy (Taylor, Tomašić Humer, & Dautel, 2021), such as group norms (e.g., Miklikowska, 2017; Tarrant, Dazley, & Cottom, 2009), intergroup contact (e.g., Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; McKeown & Taylor, 2018), or essentialist beliefs, which have been found to be associated with outgroup-specific empathy (O'Driscoll et al., 2021).

Third, future research could further extend the present findings related to collective action. Additional predictors related to collective action on behalf of disadvantaged groups among in adults could be studied (e.g., van Zomeren et al., 2008). For example, previous research has found empathy influences justice perceptions and compensation responses among adolescents and young adults (Urbanska, McKeown, & Taylor, 2019). At the same time, complementing the DPM, the motivations and justifications related to collection action could be teased apart (e.g., Thomas & McGarty, 2017; 2018), in line with more recent distinctions between benevolence and activism, or allyship and solidarity (Louis et al., 2019). However,

future research which explicitly assesses motivations for outgroup prosociality among youth is needed.

Fourth, helping ethnic outgroup members may be motivated by negative attitudes or stereotypes (e.g., Sierskma et al., 2018). For example, the underlying motivations for offering interpersonal outgroup help may be to maintain status differences or entrench the status quo (e.g., Halabi & Nadler, 2017; Thomas & McGarty, 2018). Previous reviews have also shown the relative fragility of interventions designed to promote outgroup empathy (Cikara, Bruneau, & Saxe, 2011). Finally, particularly with this age group, future research would benefit from considering the role of the family in influencing adolescent attitudes toward immigrants (e.g., Miklikowska, 2017) or promoting prosocial actions (e.g., Taylor et al., 2019). This is vital because previous research has found evidence for the intergenerational transmission of collective action to young adults from their parents (e.g., González et al., 2020).

Conclusion

Expanding the growing research linking interpersonal and broader types of outgroup prosociality with adults (e.g., Dixon et al., 2017; Louis et al., 2019; van Leeuwen & Zagefka, 2017), this paper finds empathy can play an important role in adolescents' prosociality toward refugees in a setting of protracted conflict. Integrating the EAA model and the DPM, the two-wave study indicates consistent findings across self-report, realistic behavioral intentions, and behavioral action, and across the three levels of the social ecology. In sum, the findings demonstrate youth's constructive agency to not only help those around them (i.e., interpersonal), but also to promote broader (i.e., structural and cultural) social change.

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Table 1

Means, standard deviations, ranges and bivariate correlations for all variables (N = 383)

	M	SD	Range	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Girl	48% female, 52% male			-.54***	.42***	.31***	.33***	.49***	.35***	.43***	.36**
2 Protestant	47% Catholic, 53% Protestant			-	-.29***	-0.23***	-.39***	-.39***	-.33***	-.48***	-.45***
3 General Prosocial Behavior (T1)	5.32	1.09	1 to 7		-	.55***	.31***	.45***	.26***	.31***	.23***
4 Trait Empathy (T1)	4.80	0.93	1 to 7			-	.29***	.39***	.26***	.27***	.19***
5 Ethnic Minority Attitudes (T2)	65.19	26.51	0 to 100				-	.53***	.45***	.54***	.52***
6 Helping Intentions (T2)	4.21	1.58	0 to 6					-	.62***	.59***	.44***
7 Realistic Helping (T2)	4.04	2.89	0 to 10						-	.55***	.38***
8 Collective Action for Refugees in Belfast (T2)	2.64	1.84	0 to 6							-	.56***
9 Signing a UN Petition (T2)[a]	0.59	0.49	0 to 1								-

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. T1 = Time 1; T2 = Time 2. [a] 0 = not signed, 1 = signed

Figure 1. Behavioral measure of signing a UN petition.

Each day war forces thousands of families to flee their homes.
People like you, people like me.

To escape the violence, they leave everything behind – everything except their hopes and dreams for a safer future. UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency believes that all refugees deserve to live in safety.

Add your name to the #WithRefugees petition to send a clear message to governments that they must act with solidarity and shared responsibility.

We stand together #WithRefugees.
Please stand with us.

If you would like to sign the petition please enter your first and surname in the box below. If you do not wish to sign the campaign please click to continue on with the survey.

I Stand #WithRefugees
[First and Surname]
_____

Figure 2. Structural equation bootstrapped mediation of the indirect effect of trait empathy at Time 1 on three types of outgroup prosocial behavior aiming to benefits different levels of the social ecology (*N* = 383). Control variables of adolescent gender, community background, and general prosocial behavior at Time 1 are omitted for readability. Indirect effects are depicted with dashed lines and non-significant paths are depicted with dotted lines. Standardized coefficients reported. **p* < .05; ****p* < .001