

Guilt Proneness and Charitable Behavior in Ireland

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Abstract

Prosocial behavior has continued to engage researchers in efforts to determine why people demonstrate helping behaviors towards others with seemingly no benefit to the self. The relative contribution of empathy and guilt proneness to prosocial behavior as a whole and more specifically charitable behavior was analyzed among individuals residing in Ireland, a population that has proven highly generous to charitable organizations. This study utilized the Guilt Proneness Scale (GASP) alongside the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire among a sample of 78 individuals and conducted hierarchical multiple regression analyses to examine the motivations and mechanisms underlying these behaviors. It was found that empathy proved highly predictive of both prosocial behavior and more specifically charitable behavior. Guilt proneness on the other contrary failed to contribute to this model at a notable level. However, when gender differences in this area was assessed it was found that female participants demonstrated greater levels of proneness to guilt than males and this trait proved predictive of prosocial behavior among this section of the sample. It was proposed that, with the exception of increased effects among female individuals, guilt motivated campaigns to encourage prosocial behaviors such as charitable support may not be as effective as previously hypothesized and that empathy-altruistic based campaigns may insight higher levels of prosocial behavior.

Table of Contents

Introduction	7
Methods	14
Participants	14
Measures	14
Design	16
Procedure	17
Results	19
Descriptive Statistics	19
Inferential Statistics	20
Discussion	32
References	40
Appendices	48

Introduction

Prosocial behavior is a phenomenon that has continued to fascinate researchers throughout the existing psychological literature as humans prove to demonstrate a higher level of prosocial tendencies than their fellow primates, as apparent from the size and complexity of their societies (Norenzayan & Shariff, 2008; Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin, & Schroeder, 2005; Simpson & Beckles, 2010). Often referred to as helping behavior, this occurs throughout communities around the globe and appears at times to occur with little to no benefit for the individual that engages in it (Smith, 2000). Fundamentally the action of helping others with no personal advancement from these actions contradicts evolutionary theories of behavior that state there is no such thing as a truly selfless act within species and hence prosocial behavior has presented a challenging topic for researchers within this field to unravel and truly understand (Bar-Tal, 1976; Becker, 1976). Defined as “voluntary, intentional behavior that results in benefits for another person” pro-social behavior can range from allowing someone to skip them in the que for the grocery store to donating one’s earnings to a cause they care for (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987, p 92). These behaviors are fundamental in the existence of co-operative and successful societies and provide a wealth of benefits to communities that these actions are prevalent in (Hinde, & Groebel, 1991). From the year 1990 to 2015 the number of people living in extreme poverty has declined from 1.9 billion to 836 million while the global under-five mortality rate has declined by more than half in this period (United Nations, 2018). Charitable support is an aspect of prosocial behavior that has produced a variety of empirical studies examining why these seemingly selfless donations of time and money occur within society (Anik, Aknin, Norton, & Dunn, 2009; Ribar & Wilhelm, 2002). The societal benefits from the charitable sector can be immense, however the Worldwide Giving Index has found that in their 2017 report every

western country in the top 20 has decreased in their score this year (Low, 2017). In this report it was found that one population of interest is the country of Ireland as it has scored in the top twenty of the most generous countries in the world repeatedly in recent times; on average 66% of this population donate to charity every year. Similarly, to its western counterparts, as outlined by the Worldwide Giving Index analyses Ireland's level of support for charitable organizations has now started to decrease. The challenging environment that charities are currently facing highlights the value of psychological research into understanding what motivates an individual to engage in prosocial behavior and what may be causing a downturn in the frequency of this behavior.

When endeavoring to explain the occurrence of prosocial acts such as charitable behavior researchers often turn to altruistic theories (Bar-Tal, 1976; Batson & Powell, 2003; Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin, & Schroeder, 2005). Altruistic theorists to date have produced a wide array of empirical studies aiming to explain why one chooses to help others in society at a cost to one's own resources. David Smith, a prominent figure in the field of altruistic psychological research, describes altruism as "behavior such as helping or sharing that promotes the welfare of others without conscious regard for one's own self-interest" (Smith, 2000). There are three overarching theories of altruism that have been detailed in this area of literature in attempts to explain why prosocial behavior occurs and can be summarized as follows. The egoistic altruism standpoint states that individuals assist others with the understanding that they will benefit in some manner for this action in the future. This benefit may come from reducing negative arousal from witnessing someone suffer or from the societal approval received from others that witness this act (Batson, 2014). This is in of its definition not considered true altruism and the theory describes a once highly popular viewpoint in psychological research that helping behaviors are

never truly selfless. The egocentric theory of altruistic details how prosocial actions occur to experience the satisfaction or enjoyment that can take place on seeing someone else benefit from the commodity. They would only complete the prosocial act if this enjoyment outweighed the cost of their commodity (Khalil, 2001). This theory argues that the giver in this scenario not only receives enjoyment but is displaying their societal value through this action. Finally, the “alter-centric” altruism theory dictates that the individual has a prosocial personality trait that causes them to help others at no benefit to themselves. This theory often refers to a moral sense of right and wrong that the individual holds in relation to how the world should function and this in turn motivates these helping behaviors (Khalil, 2004). The three theories outlined have been explored in great detail and have produced an ongoing debate as to whether true selfless altruism does exist.

While each of these sections of research have relevance in relation to prosocial behavior, alter centric theory has proven particularly applicable in studies regarding charitable behavior. In this line of study, it is proposed that support occurs due to a morally binding sense of right and wrong held by the giver and a genuine concern for the welfare of others (Lee & Chang, 2007; Small & Simonsohn, 2007). Researcher Daniel Batson contributed significantly to alter centric altruistic theory with regards to its impact on pro social behavior when he developed the empathy altruism hypothesis (Batson, 2012). In his studies he indicated that individuals are helping others due to an empathetic concern from seeing another struggle. In contrast with egocentric altruism, empirical writing within this theory describes a ‘pro-social trait’ that is present among particularly altruistic individuals that enables them to place themselves in the shoes of the other person. This insight motivates caring and helpful behaviors to others whether they are kin or a stranger. Batson is not the only researcher that has written extensively on the

relationship between empathy and altruism and it has been proposed that ‘almost primitive psychological mechanisms usually underlie’ empathy making it highly difficult for an individual to ignore it (Hoffman, 1979 Pg2). This results in an almost involuntary reaction to diminish the distress of seeing another suffer and results in the pro social behaviors that have been discussed hence far. The empathy altruism hypothesis received support from researchers in a study based on the impact of perceived fear and empathy on donations made by individuals to charitable organizations. In the qualitative section of this piece of research empathy presented as a reoccurring theme among participants. This finding was reflected in the quantitative phase of this study as empathy proved a predictive factor in relation to small, medium and large donations. This relationship was particularly apparent in relation to larger financial donations being made. The psychologists highlighted the importance of a focus on empathy in future studies as a limited, narrow focus on this factor has been witnessed within the existing literature (O’Loughlin Banks & Raciti, 2018).

Alongside empathy, guilt proneness has also received focus in the analysis of prosocial behaviors and has been defined as “a personality trait indicative of a predisposition to experience negative feelings about personal wrongdoing, even when the wrongdoing is private” (Cohen, Panter, & Turan, 2012, pg355). Through this research the guilt proneness trait has been connected with both honesty and humility, those who demonstrate low levels of these traits are more likely to commit delinquent behaviors, as a result those demonstrating guilt proneness are more likely to behave ethically in society. A key comparison that demonstrates how guilt proneness may motivate prosocial behavior is between this trait and that of shame proneness. Shame proneness is associated with negative feelings and judgements towards the self and fundamentally demotivates and individual due to negative arousal. Guilt proneness is associated

with negative feelings towards the specific event that induced these feelings or that may induce these feelings in the future. In this way guilt proneness motivates reparation and change and is associated with action orientated responses in place of negative self-belief and a lack of motivation to change (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994). It has been found that those who demonstrate a proneness to experiencing guilt have stronger capabilities in experiencing empathy for another person (Tangney & Dearing, 2003). This outward focus on the event that induces guilt feelings and the awareness of the repercussions of one's actions that is described in the literature supports research that proposes this trait may mediate the empathy-pro social behavior relationship (Leith & Baumeister, 1998). As outlined in this review, the ability to take into account another's perspective is highly associated with increased empathy and in turn prosocial behavior. Scholar O'Keefe writes extensively on the relationship between guilt and action motivations, he states that guilt motivates an individual to wish to change their behavior and this naturally increases the likelihood to engage in helping behaviors. Furthermore, he also highlights that current research should endeavor to produce further studies surrounding guilt as the understanding of how guilt appeals truly operate is limited (O'Keefe, 2000).

The guilt and shame proneness scale has been developed specifically to measure this trait and has been implemented in multiple studies based in the USA. (Cohen, Panter, & Turan, 2013, 2012; Cohen, Wolf, Panter, & Insko, 2011). Their findings have shown that individuals who score high on this scale are more prone to engage in prosocial behaviors. This was further supported in the analysis of guilt proneness and its relationship with donation intention to charitable organizations. Analysis has uncovered that the more predisposed an individual is to experiencing guilt the more generous they will be with regards to their charitable acts (Basil, Ridgway, & Basil, 2008). This relationship has been found to be mediated by a sense of

responsibility that fundamentally makes the supporter feel that they should act as it is the morally correct thing to do (Basil, Ridgway, & Basil, 2006). Numerous campaigns for charitable causes have utilized research such as this to produce guilt inducing appeals to motivate generosity among the public (Huhmann & Brotherton, 1997). In a key study conducted within this field researchers analyzed the impact of both empathy and guilt proneness on prosocial behavior. In an online survey among 569 participants it was found that guilt proneness and empathy were correlated with one another. (Torstveit, Sütterlin, & Lugo, 2016) Through the implementation of a step-wise regression model it was found that guilt proneness increased the explained variance in prosocial behavior from 6% to 8%. Further to these findings it was found that guilt proneness resulted in a greater increase in the predictive nature of this model among female participants. Female participants demonstrated greater levels of guilt proneness a finding that reflects current gender difference research in this area (Ferguson, & Crowley, 1997).

The current study aims to replicate the model implemented by Torstveit, Sütterlin, & Lugo and is the first study to date, to the researcher's knowledge, analyzing individuals residing in Ireland in relation to guilt proneness. This population proves of particular interest as not only has Ireland demonstrated high levels of generosity in the past it is also a country that has demonstrated the very recent trend of western countries decreasing in their level of support for charities (Low, 2017). The stark increase in registered charities in recent times alongside a seemingly shrinking source of donors has highlighted the importance of understanding how and why individuals choose to engage in pro-social behavior if these prosocial based organizations are to continue to survive (Corazzini, Cotton, & Valbonesi, 2013; Sargeant, 1999). It is in light of these findings that the empathy and guilt proneness model will not only be applied to prosocial behavior as in the original study outlined but will also be applied to the specific area of

charitable behavior. This study may provide an insight into the driving forces behind charitable behavior and demonstrate if current psychological theory is applicable within this context. The current research will also develop upon prior analysis of gender differences in the experience of guilt. Hypothesis 1(a) states that higher levels of empathy will predict higher levels of prosocial behavior while hypothesis 1(b) states that higher levels of empathy will predict higher levels of charitable behavior. Hypothesis 2(a) states that greater proneness to guilt will predict higher levels of prosocial behavior and in turn hypothesis 2(b) states that greater proneness to guilt will predict higher levels of charitable behavior among the participants. The third hypothesis (a) states that guilt proneness will prove more predictive of prosocial behavior among female participants than males and hypothesis 3(b) states that guilt proneness will prove more predictive of charitable behavior among female participants than males.

Methods

Participants

The sample for this study encompassed 86 people residing in Ireland, 8 individuals did not complete the entire study and had to be removed from the sample for statistical analysis purposes. This population has been chosen due to the fact that 66% of individuals living in Ireland support a charitable organization (Low, 2017). The remaining data set consisted of a total 78 individuals; 31 males and 47 females. These individuals were approached using a snowball sampling technique by which initially individuals were asked by the researcher to take part and in turn many of these individuals then asked acquaintances to also complete the survey. The questionnaire was shared via an online link to a Google Docs page and the recruitment of participants took place on the social media platform Facebook.

Measures

To measure the variables of interest outlined the participants completed a number of self-report questionnaires. To measure empathy, the participants answered the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire which is a sixteen item self-report questionnaire designed to measure empathy as an emotional process (Spreng, McKinnon, Mar, & Levine, 2009).

One example of an item is “It upsets me to see someone being treated disrespectfully.” This is answered on a scale of one to four; Never = 0; Rarely = 1; Sometimes = 2; Often = 3; Always = 4. Items 1,3,8,9,13 and 16 are scored positively while items 2,4,7,10,12,14 and 15 are scored negatively. These scores are then summed to acquire a continuous score for empathy levels among participants. This is a highly reliable measure of empathy with a Cronbach’s alpha

of $\alpha = .87$ (Spreng, McKinnon, Mar, & Levine, 2009). The Cronbach's alpha was analyzed in the current study and also found to be high with $\alpha = .85$.

The study also measured proneness to guilt and this variable was recorded using the Guilt and Shame Proneness Scale (Cohen, Wolf, Panter, & Insko, 2011). The NBE (Guilt Negative Behavior Evaluation) proved the most relevant aspect of this scale and was used as the measure of guilt proneness in analysis. Participants must report the likelihood that they would act or feel a certain way in the situation presented in the item. For instance, item 16 asks "You lie to people but they never find out about it. What is the likelihood that you would feel terrible about the lies you told?". The questions may be answered on a scale ranging from one to seven where 1 is very unlikely and 7 is very likely. This scale demonstrated strong reliability as it scored Cronbach's $\alpha = .69$ in the original study by Cohen. When this reliability test was conducted in the current study the Cronbach's alpha score proved even stronger $\alpha = .85$.

To measure prosocial behavior the Altruistic Personality Scale was implemented in this study (Rushton, Chrisjohn, & Fekken, 1981). This is a 20-item scale that measures prosocial behavior based on how often individuals engage in altruistic acts. For example, item 10 states 'I have delayed an elevator and held the door open for a stranger.' The participants then respond on a scale ranging from one to five. One represents never, two represents once, three represents more than once, four represents often and five represents very often. This scale proved a reliable score of prosocial behavior in the original study and scored a Cronbach's alpha $\alpha = 0.89$. Within the current sample the reliability score was $\alpha = .85$ demonstrating the consistency of this measure.

Charitable behavior was measured using three short questions in relation to an individual's charitable activity in the past year. These three questions are scored from 0 – 5. Their answers were then summed, and this was used as the continuous measure for this behavior. The answers never or €0 counted as a score of 0. The scale for the amount that an individual has donated in the past year has been based on the donation pages of three charities currently active in Ireland: Unicef, Oxfam Ireland and Focus Ireland (Focus Ireland, 2018; Oxfam Ireland, 2018; Unicef, 2018). The Central Statistics Office found that in the year 2015 – 2016 the average amount donated a year by rural households was €226.2 and €182.52 for urban households (The Central Statistics Office, 2017). Both these amounts are included in the fourth range provided in the questionnaire. When a Cronbach's alpha analysis was conducted on this measure in the current study it was found to be moderately reliable with a score of $\alpha = .57$. It is of note that the analysis indicated the removal of the questions detailing how often individuals donate their time to a charitable organization would increase this reliability score to $\alpha = .80$.

Design

This was a within subjects' quantitative study that utilized a cross sectional design. The statistical analysis in this research was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 24 (IBM, 2016). In the analyses conducted to test hypothesis 1(a), 2(a) and 3(a), the criterion variable was pro-social behavior while the predictor variables were empathy and guilt proneness. To assess hypothesis 1(b), 2(b) and 3(b) the predictor variables remained empathy and guilt proneness while the criterion variable was replaced with charitable behavior.

Procedure

As the study utilised a new questionnaire to measure charitable behaviour a pilot study was conducted to ensure the three questions used were comprehensible and appropriate. Twenty participants were asked to complete this survey to ensure they were comfortable with the nature of the questions and they were provided with an opportunity to provide feedback. In this case the questions were assessed as clear and concise and changes were not requested by the pilot study sample.

The questionnaire was created using Google Docs based on an email account set up specifically for the purpose of this study and any queries that may arise. Firstly, an information form that clearly outlined the purpose and nature of the study was inserted at the beginning of this document (See Appendix A). Here it was explained that a participant could cease participating in the survey at any point should they so choose however that once their answers were submitted, they would become a part of the data set. Ethical approval was achieved by the National College of Ireland ethics committee for this study and participants were provided with mental health support information should they have been affected at any point by the content of the study. This was followed by a section detailing informed consent and the participants had to indicate that they agreed to provide this consent before they could continue to the questions (See Appendix B).

The four questionnaires outlined were then entered into this online document using a separate section for each measure. Firstly, individuals were to complete the Altruistic Personality Survey followed by the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (See Appendixes C and D). Next, they were to complete the Guilt and Shame Proneness questionnaire (See Appendix E). This was

followed by the Charitable Behavior questionnaire and at the end of this section they then indicated if they were male or female. An 'if other please specify' option was included to ensure all participants had an opportunity to express their gender (See Appendix F).

After the questions there was also a debriefing sheet presented at the end of this survey to thank participants for their participation and provided contact details for both the researcher and the researcher's supervisor should they have any queries regarding the study (See Appendix G). Google Docs provided a short link to this document which was then shared on the social media platform Facebook to potential participants. After the appropriate sample size was collected the researcher downloaded the data as a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet which was then uploaded to SPSS for statistical analysis.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1.0

Frequencies for the current sample of individuals residing in Ireland for gender (N = 78)

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Gender		
Male	31	39.7
Female	47	60.3

Descriptive statistics were conducted on the data, please see table 1.0 for frequency of gender in the current sample. Please note figure 1.1 for mean scores across the continuous variables of prosocial behavior, empathy, guilt proneness and charitable behavior. The sample demonstrated moderate levels of prosocial behavior, high levels of empathy and guilt proneness and low levels of charitable behavior. Histogram analysis concluded that the data is non-normally distributed.

Table 1.1

Descriptive statistics of all continuous variables

	Mean (95% Confidence Intervals)	Std. Error Mean	Median	SD	Range

Prosocial Behavior (APS)	39.67 (36.98-42.35)	1.35	38	11.92	16-72
Empathy	49.85 (47.97-51.73)	.95	51	8.34	27-63
Guilt Proneness (NBE)	20.23 (18.91-21.55)	.66	21	5.87	4-28
Charitable Behavior	4.86 (4.16-5.56)	.35	4	9.71	0-13

Note. APS = Altruistic Personality Scale. NBE = Guilt Negative Behavior Evaluation.

Inferential Statistics

Hierarchical multiple regression was performed to investigate the ability of guilt proneness to predict levels of pro social behavior, after controlling for empathy. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity existed in the data. Additionally, the correlations amongst the predictor variables empathy and guilt proneness were examined and these are presented in Table 2.0. All correlations were moderate $r = .42$. This indicates that multicollinearity was unlikely to be a problem (Tabachnick, Fidell, & Ullman, 2007). Both of these predictor variables were correlated with prosocial behavior which indicates that the data was suitable for hierarchical multiple regression analysis. The analysis of VIF values, residual scores and Cook's distance determined that the data was appropriately distributed for this form of analysis.

Table 2.0

Correlations between continuous variables.

Variables	1	2	3
1. Altruistic Personality	1		
2. Empathy	.41***	1	
3. Guilt Proneness (NBE)	.33*	.42***	1

Note. Statistical significance: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. NBE = Guilt Negative Behavior Evaluation.

In the first step of hierarchical multiple regression, the predictor variable of empathy was entered. This model was statistically significant $F(1, 76) = 15.02$; $p < .001$ and explained 17% of variance in prosocial behavior (see Table 2.1 for full details). After the entry of guilt proneness at Step 2 the total variance of prosocial behavior explained by the model increased to 20% ($F(2, 75) = 9.07$; $p < .001$). The introduction of guilt proneness explained an additional 3% variance in pro social behavior scores, after controlling for empathy; a change that was not statistically significant (R^2 Change = .03; $F(1, 75) = 2.77$; $p = .10$). In the final model, only the predictor variable of Empathy predicted prosocial behavior to a statistically significant degree ($\beta = .33$, $p = .005$). Please refer to Table 2.1 for the results of this analysis.

Table 2.1 Hierarchical Regression Model of Prosocial Behavior

	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ²	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>
	<i>Change</i>						
Step 1	.41	.17***					
Empathy				.58	.15	.41***	3.87
Step 2	.44	.20	.03				
Empathy				.47	.16	.33**	2.87
Guilt Proneness (NBE)				.39	.23	.19	1.66

Note. Statistical significance: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. NBE = Guilt Negative Behavior Evaluation.

In the second phase of this study a hierarchical multiple regression was performed to investigate the ability of guilt proneness to predict levels of charitable behavior, after controlling for empathy. The data was not found to violate the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity after preliminary analyses were carried out. The analysis of VIF values, residual scores and Cook's distance determined that the data was appropriately distributed for this form of analysis.

When the predictor variables of empathy and guilt proneness were analyzed it was found that correlation was moderate $r = .42$ (Please see Table 3.0). This indicates that multicollinearity was unlikely to be a problem (Tabachnick, Fidell, & Ullman, 2007). Empathy and guilt proneness were correlated with charitable behavior which indicated that the data was suited to a hierarchical multiple regression analysis.

Table 3.0

Correlations between all continuous variables.

Variables	1	2	3
1. Charity	1		
2. Empathy	.243*	1	
3. Guilt Proneness (NBE)	.228*	.417***	1

Note. Statistical significance: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. NBE = Guilt Negative Behavior Evaluation.

Applying the same model as in the first phase of this study, in the first step of hierarchical multiple regression, the predictor variable of empathy was entered. This model was statistically significant $F(1, 76) = 4.78$; $p = .03$ and explained 6% of variance in charitable behavior (see Table 3.1 for full details). After the entry of guilt proneness at Step 2 the total variance explained by the model was 8% ($F(2, 75) = 3.20$; $p = .05$). The introduction of guilt proneness explained an additional 2% variance in charitable behavior scores, after controlling for empathy; a change that was not statistically significant ($R^2 \text{ Change} = .02$; $F(1, 75) = 1.59$; $p = .21$).

Table 3.1 Hierarchical Regression Model of Charitable Behavior

	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² <i>Change</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>t</i>
Step 1	.24	.06*					
Empathy				.09	.04	.24*	2.18
Step 2	.28	.08	.020				
Empathy				.07	.05	.18	1.46

Guilt Proneness	.08	.07	.15	1.26
(NBE)				

Note. Statistical significance: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. NBE = Guilt Negative Behavior Evaluation.

In the third phase of the study a hierarchical multiple regression was performed to investigate the ability of guilt proneness to predict levels of prosocial behavior, after controlling for empathy. However, on this occasion the model took into account the gender of the participants. With regards to the female participants these predictor variables did correlate with prosocial behavior. Furthermore, empathy and guilt proneness demonstrated a low level of correlation $r = .22$. These findings indicated alongside the analysis of VIF values, residual scores and Cook's distance that the data was appropriately distributed for a hierarchical multiple regression analysis to be conducted.

In the first step of hierarchical multiple regression, the predictor variable of empathy was entered. This model was statistically significant $F(1, 45) = 8.90$; $p = .005$ and explained 17% of variance in prosocial behavior among females (see Table 4.0 for full details). After the entry of guilt proneness at Step 2 the total variance explained by the model was 28% ($F(2, 44) = 8.64$; $p = .001$). The introduction of guilt proneness explained an additional 11% variance in prosocial behavior scores, after controlling for empathy; a change that was statistically significant (R^2 Change = .11; $F(1, 44) = 7.17$; $p = .01$).

Table 4.0 Hierarchical Multiple Regression Model of Prosocial Behavior for Females

	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ²	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>t</i>
	<i>Change</i>						
Step 1	.41	.17***					
Empathy				.68	.23	.41***	2.98
Step 2	.53	.28*	.12*				
Empathy				.55	.22	.33*	2.53
Guilt Proneness				.86	.32	.35*	2.68
(NBE)							

Note. Statistical significance: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. NBE = Guilt Negative Behavior Evaluation.

When this model was applied to male participants it was found that the predictor variables of empathy and guilt proneness were correlated at a moderate level $r = .40$ indicating multicollinearity was unlikely to be an issue. It is of note that the predictor variables did not

correlate with the criterion variable of prosocial behavior. However, the analysis of VIF values, residual scores and Cook's distance determined that the data was appropriately distributed for this form of analysis.

In the first step of hierarchical multiple regression, the predictor variable of empathy was entered. This model was not statistically significant $F(1, 29) = .92$; $p = .35$ and explained 3% of variance in prosocial behavior in male participants (see Table 4.1 for full details). After the entry of guilt proneness at Step 2 the total variance explained by the model increased to 5% ($F(2, 28) = .76$; $p = .48$). The introduction of guilt proneness explained an additional 2% variance in prosocial behavior scores, after controlling for empathy; a change that was not statistically significant ($R^2 \text{ Change} = .02$; $F(1, 28) = .61$; $p = .44$).

Table 4.1 Hierarchical Multiple Regression Model of Prosocial Behavior for Males

	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² <i>Change</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>
Step 1	.18	.03					
Empathy				.22	.23	.18	.96
Step 2	.23	.05	.02				

Empathy	.30	.25	.24	1.19
Guilt Proneness (NBE)	-.26	.33	-.16	-.78

Note. Statistical significance: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. NBE = Guilt Negative Behavior Evaluation.

A hierarchical multiple regression was then performed to investigate the ability of guilt proneness to predict levels of charitable behavior among female and male participants. Among the female participants, guilt proneness was the only predictor variable that was correlated with charitable behavior. Guilt proneness and empathy scores in the female sample demonstrated low correlation $r = .22$ which is ideal for a hierarchical multiple regression model.

In the first step of hierarchical multiple regression, the predictor variable of empathy was entered. This model was not statistically significant $F(1, 45) = 1.79$; $p = .19$ and explained 2% of variance in charitable behavior (see Table 4.2 for full details). After the entry of guilt proneness at Step 2 the total variance explained by the model was 7% ($F(2, 44) = 2.74$; $p = .076$). The introduction of guilt proneness explained an additional 5% variance in prosocial behavior scores, after controlling for empathy; a change that was not statistically significant ($R^2 \text{ Change} = .07$; $F(1, 44) = 3.59$; $p = .07$).

Table 4.2 Hierarchical Multiple Regression Model of Charitable Behavior for Females

	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ²	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>t</i>
	<i>Change</i>						
Step 1	.20	.04					
Empathy				.08	.06	.20	1.34
Step 2	.33	.11	.07				
Empathy				.06	.06	.14	.93
Guilt Proneness (NBE)				.16	.09	.28	1.89

Note. Statistical significance: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. NBE = Guilt Negative Behavior Evaluation.

With regards to the male section of the sample, it was found that guilt proneness and empathy did not correlate with charitable behavior to a statistically significant degree when the

data was separated by gender. Guilt proneness and empathy scores in the male sample demonstrated a moderate correlation $r = .40$ which implied that multicollinearity would not be an issue in the analysis.

In the first step of hierarchical multiple regression, the predictor variable of empathy was entered. This model was not statistically significant $F(1, 29) = .95; p = .34$ and, similarly to the low levels demonstrated in the female sample, explained 3% of variance in charitable behavior (see Table 4.3 for full details). After the entry of guilt proneness at Step 2 the total variance explained by the model was 4% ($F(2, 28) = .52; p = .60$). The introduction of guilt proneness explained an additional 1% variance in prosocial behavior scores, after controlling for empathy; a change that was not statistically significant ($R^2 \text{ Change} = .00; F(1, 28) = .12; p = .73$).

Table 4.3 Hierarchical Multiple Regression Model of Charitable Behavior for Males

	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² <i>Change</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>
Step 1	.18	.03					
Empathy				.08	.08	.18	.98
Step 2	.19	.04	.00				

Empathy	.09	.09	.21	1.02
Guilt Proneness (NBE)	-.04	.11	-.10	-.34

Note. Statistical significance: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. NBE = Guilt Negative Behavior Evaluation.

Discussion

According to the available literature empathy plays a fundamental role in the occurrence of altruistic activities such as prosocial behavior (Eisenber & Miller, 1987). Furthermore, guilt proneness and empathy have been found to be highly related traits and previous research has indicated that guilt proneness also interacts significantly with the level of prosocial behavior engaged in by an individual (Bagozzi & Moore, 1994; Estrada-Hollenbeck & Heatherton, 1998; Eisenberg, Spinrad, & Knafo-Noam, 2015; Leith & Baumeister, 1998; Quiles & Bybee, 1997). In the first part of this study the empathy and guilt proneness model was replicated on a sample consisting of individuals residing in Ireland, a population that has been highlighted as particularly generous to charitable organisations. It was found that empathy proved a predictive trait in relation to the level of pro social behaviour recorded among participants with those who demonstrated higher levels of empathy engaging in higher levels of prosocial behavior. These findings were reflected in the application of the empathy model to charitable behavior demonstrating that in this study one can rejected the null hypothesis in relation to hypothesis 1 (a) and 1 (b). The current study failed to replicate the initial findings of researchers Torstveit, Sutterlin and Lugo (2016) with regards to the relevant contribution of the variable guilt proneness. Guilt proneness did interact with pro social behaviour, yet this was at a minimal level and it did not add considerable strength to the empathy-based model. The result of the first phase of the current study was reflected in relation to charitable behaviour as guilt proneness failed to explain variation in charitable behaviour in the sample to a high degree. These results indicate that one fails to reject the null hypothesis in relation to hypothesis 2 (a) and 2 (b). When the study analysed the impact of gender in this area it was found that guilt proneness did in fact predict levels of prosocial behaviour engaged with among female participants to a considerable degree, however it is of note that this was not replicated with regards to charitable behaviour.

These findings indicate that one can reject the null hypothesis for hypothesis 3 (a) and fail to reject the null hypothesis for hypothesis 3(b).

Empathy

This study has contributed to a growing body of evidence that has linked the trait of empathy to prosocial behaviour. Certain altruistic theorists hypothesize that empathy produces a sympathetic concern for others and that the negative arousal associated with seeing another person suffer motivates acts of kindness and selflessness (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987). The egoistic altruistic viewpoint would state that prosocial behavior provides a mechanism through which individuals can diffuse negative arousal states such as sympathy and sadness, emotions that are often experienced by those who score highly in relation to empathy (Maner & Gailliot, 2007).

However, researcher Batson has produced a strong body of research that challenged this theory and demonstrated that if empathy levels are high an individual will demonstrate prosocial behavior regardless of the fact that escape from the situation is difficult or easy. This finding demonstrates that diffusion of a negative arousal state, which can be achieved by choosing to escape the situation, is not the fundamental motivator at play (Batson, 1991). This research has led to the development of the empathy-altruism hypothesis which states that individuals assist others and engage in prosocial behavior due to a genuine empathetic motivation to help cease the suffering of others. This theory was tested in a negative-state relief experiment that found participants who scored high on empathy measures were willing to help others regardless of an expected change in mood (Batson, Batson, Griffitt, Barrientos, Brandt, Sprenkelmeyer & Bayly, 1989).

Research within this area demonstrated that egoistically motivated pro social behavior is qualitatively different than empathetic motivated behavior and occur due to highly opposing motivations (Batson, O'Quin, Fultz, Vanderplas, & Isen, 1982). Further to these empirical findings the easy versus difficult escape study by Batson has been replicated in more up to date research and the findings have proven replicable (Bierhoff & Rohmann, 2004). The present study has developed upon empathy-based research in this area and applied this theory to the specific prosocial area of charitable behavior in relation to a population that has demonstrated high levels of this particular bearing in previous years. In reflection of the empathy-altruism hypothesis those who demonstrated higher levels of empathy did in turn donate more to charitable organizations during the past year and were more willing to give up their time to support these causes. The data also supported the work of Hsu, Liang and Tien who found that people prefer to donate monetary amounts than time as this proved the more popular option of the two (Hsu, Liang, & Tien, 2005).

Guilt Proneness

The second variable that was analyzed in this study was that of guilt proneness, this measure refers to a personality trait that predisposes some individuals to a lower threshold of experiencing guilt than that of others (Tangey, Wagner, & Gramzow, 1992). This trait can result in an individual experiencing guilt in a private setting or prior to an event occurring (Cohen, Panter, & Turan, 2012). Guilt proneness has been linked with empathy in the existing literature and the two traits are often discussed as highly related (Howell, Turoswki, & Buro, 2012; Konstam, Chernoff, & Deveney, 2001). Proneness to guilt has been linked with an increased ability in perspective thinking, a cognitive ability that is believed to be a key factor underlying empathy (Leith & Baumeister, 1998). In reflection of these studies, empathy and guilt proneness

were correlated with one another in the present study with the data demonstrating that individuals that experienced high levels of guilt proneness also demonstrating high levels of empathy.

According to egoistic theory, research within this area has postulated that individuals demonstrating guilt proneness are more likely to engage in helping behaviors as they predict a negative emotion occurring in the future (Miller, 2010). However, in contrast with empathy, guilt proneness did not prove a critical predictor of prosocial or charitable behavior among the current sample. This indicate that charitable behavior may be occurring among this sample due to an empathetic concern for others in place of motivation to prevent negative arousal. Findings such as this call into question the current research that encourages charities to employ guilt motivated egoistic campaigns to encourage support and may encourage organizations to focus on the benefit of the victim in place of the giver in their campaigns (Chang, 2014). These findings have supported literature that indicates empathetic focused altruistic campaigns can prove more effective than egoistic approaches to raising funds (Brunel & Nelson, 2000). Researcher Rodger Bennett proposed that guilt focused campaigning may in fact deter individuals from engaging in charitable behavior due their association with shame arousal. Shame is associated with anxiety and self-focus in place of other person-centered perspectives that can help manifest helping behaviors (Bennett, 1998). Further to these studies the low levels of charitable behavior evident in this sample has highlighted that research indicating western countries level of engagement with charitable organizations is on the decrease proves evident in current literature (Low, 2017).

Gender Differences

It is of note that in the current study there were some gender differences apparent when analyzing prosocial behavior. Female participants scored higher on both levels of empathy and guilt proneness than males. This was also reflected in their self-reported levels of prosocial and charitable behaviors. It was also of interest that the guilt proneness scores among female participants did predict levels of prosocial behavior at a notable level when the empathy and guilt proneness model was analyzed across gender. This finding that guilt proneness proves more relevant in relation to female behavior than that of males supports a growing range of available research in relation to females demonstrating more effects from guilt (Evans, 1984; Ferguson, Eyre, & Ashbaker, 2000). This relationship may be related to studies that found males are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors if there are onlookers present however that in turn women were more likely to engage in private prosocial behaviors such as caring for a sick family member (Eagly, 2013). This could indicate one of the factors that underlies proneness to guilt proving more predictive of female behavior in this area as this trait relates to guilt that can be experienced in private or before an event occurs.

The current study reinforces existing evidence that women appear to be more predisposed to experience guilt than their male counterparts. This has been related to an increased ability to be aware of another's wellbeing and emotions that is more heavily reinforced in the socialization of young girls (Tangney, 1992). In turn males have been found to demonstrate less sensitivity to experiencing guilt and less awareness of consequence for their behaviors that may induce harm (Benetti-McQuoid & Bursik, 2005). It was proposed in this particular area of literature that males may in fact, through their implied gender roles in society, experience a higher number of

events that induce guilt which could explain this lower sensitivity developing to ease distress or negative emotive arousal while navigating their daily lives.

The tendency for female participants to demonstrate higher levels of prosocial behavior in the literature hence far has also been linked to the fact that it seems to advance peer status further for this gender than that of males, indicating that guilt proneness may prove an adaptive function for social advancement (Fabes, Carlo, Kupanoff, & Liable, 1999). These gender differences, however, were not reflected in relation to the area of charitable behavior and two causes of this result are proposed. It is of note that in this analysis the sample demonstrated low levels of charitable behavior as opposed to higher levels of prosocial behavior and hence this may be why the model was not as applicable when gender was taken into account. Furthermore, a key limitation present in this piece of research is that, currently, reliable and tested measures of charitable behavior do not exist within the literature. This study has provided a simple and short measure of this variable that requires further replication to determine the generalizability of these scores and this may provide an insight into the reason that gender differences were not notably apparent in relation to charitable behavior. The current research has endeavored to provide an insight into a specific prosocial behavior that has received limited focus hence far and provides a platform for future studies to develop upon to further our understanding of this conduct.

It has been found in previously conducted research that in analyzing charitable behaviors, the variables that impacted on these levels varied across measures of monetary donations and donations of one's time. However, empathy proved the one psychographic variable that significantly impacted on both these forms of charitable behavior. This research not only supports the findings of the current study in relation to empathy's key role in predicting levels of charitable behavior but identifies a possible issue with regards to the analysis guilt proneness

across donations of both of both time and money. It may be proposed that in future research these forms of charitable behavior are measured on separate scales as they are currently demonstrating that certain social, behavioral and personality-based factors interact with these charitable acts in a varied manner (Lee & Chang, 2007).

It has been found that relying on self-report measures in studies can often be open to biased results due to the propensity of an individual to give what they believe are the correct or socially approved responses to the scale, this tendency is known as social desirability (Hayes, 2000). This effect can prove particularly relevant in prosocial and ethical research (Fernandes & Randall, 1992). Researchers Torstveit, Sutterlin, & Lugo (2016) did attempt to address this by implementing the brief social desirability scale however it did not prove reliable and was then removed from their study. It is proposed that experimental psychological designs testing these behaviors could address this current shortcoming and prove a highly useful development on the current research.

To conclude the study outlined has provided some key insights into the manner in which empathy and guilt proneness interact with prosocial and more specifically charitable behavior. The data has further emphasized the key role of empathy in relation to the motivation to help others at a cost to oneself. The conducted research has also contributed to gender differences research in relation to prosocial behavior and provided further evidence that male and females appear to experience guilt in a varied manner. This study has also demonstrated that guilt proneness may not be as predictive of prosocial behaviors as initially hypothesized in previous research. The utility of the application of guilt inducing campaigns to inspire support for campaigns and individuals proves questionable in light of these findings. It has been proposed that charitable organizations looking to increase their current funds and resources may choose to

focus on empathy-based altruistic campaigns. The low levels of charitable behavior demonstrated in this study further supports literature indicating that charitable support is currently decreasing among certain populations and it is proposed that this is an area of further interest for future empirical focus.

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Appendix A

INVITATION

You are being asked to take part in a research study examining what influences someone to donate to charity.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

In this study, you will be asked to complete a simple questionnaire and submit your answers. Before you complete the questionnaire, the researcher asks that you read this information sheet. You will be required to provide your informed consent before beginning the questionnaire. The questionnaire is a measure of your experience of empathy and proneness to guilt, how you would behave in certain scenarios, your gender and your charitable behaviour in the last year.

The study typically takes 5 minutes across 1 session.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and there will be no monetary cost or reimbursement.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

You have the right to cease taking part in the questionnaire at any point, choosing not to submit your answers without penalty. If you have submitted your answers this will already have become part of the data set and the researcher will be unable to retrieve your questionnaire. However, this information is non identifiable.

You have the right to have your questions about the study answered. If you have any questions with regards to the study, you can contact me at thepsychologyofgiving@gmail.com.

BENEFITS AND RISKS

There are no known benefits or risks for you in this study.

If, however you feel you are negatively affected by any of the questions detailed please do not hesitate to use the link below. This provides information regarding mental health and services you may avail of.

<https://bit.ly/2zKW3bd>

Or if you prefer you can free phone the Samaritans help line on 116 123 at any time.

CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY

The data collected will not link to any identifying information. You will not be asked to include a name / other personal contact details during this study.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

i will be more than happy to answer any of your queries in relation to the study and you can contact me at thepsychologyofgiving@gmail.com. This study is being supervised by Conor Nolan who you can contact at conor.nolan@ncirl.ie.

Appendix B

THE EFFECTS OF GUILT PRONENESS ON CHARITABLE BEHAVIOUR IN IRELAND

A research study examining why one chooses to engage in charitable behavior.

By choosing to continue with this questionnaire you are confirming the following:

- (1) You have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.
- (2) Questions about your participation in this study, if you had any, have been answered satisfactorily.
- (3) You are aware of the potential risks (if any).
- (4) You are taking part in this research study voluntarily (without coercion).

Appendix C

Altruistic Personality Scale

Using the following scale, please select the category that conforms to the frequency with which you have carried out the following acts.

1. I have helped push a stranger's car that was broken down or out of gas.
2. I have given directions to a stranger.
3. I have made change for a stranger.
4. I have given money to a charity.
5. I have given money to a stranger who needed it (or asked me for it).
6. I have donated goods or clothes to a charity.
7. I have done volunteer work for a charity.
8. I have donated blood.
9. I have helped carry a stranger's belongings (books, parcels, etc).
10. I have delayed an elevator and held the door open for a stranger.
11. I have allowed someone to go ahead of me in a lineup (in the supermarket, at a copy machine, at a fast-food restaurant).
12. I have given a stranger a lift in my car.
13. I have pointed out a clerk's error (in a bank, at the supermarket) in undercharging me for an item.
14. I have let a neighbor whom I didn't know too well borrow an item of some value to me (eg, a dish, tools, etc).
15. I have bought 'charity' holiday cards deliberately because I knew it was a good cause.
16. I have helped a classmate who I did not know that well with an assignment when my knowledge was greater than his or hers.
17. I have, before being asked, voluntarily looked after a neighbor's pets or children without being paid for it.
18. I have offered to help a handicapped or elderly stranger across a street.
19. I have offered my seat on a bus or train to a stranger who was standing.
20. I have helped an acquaintance to move households.

Appendix D

Toronto Empathy Questionnaire

Below is a list of statements. Please read each statement carefully and rate how frequently you feel or act in the manner described. Circle your answer on the response form. There are no right or wrong answers or trick questions. Please answer each question as honestly as you can.

1. When someone else is feeling excited, I tend to get excited too.
2. Other people's misfortunes do not disturb me a great deal.
3. It upsets me to see someone being treated disrespectfully.
4. I remain unaffected when someone close to me is happy.
5. I enjoy making other people feel better.
6. I have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.
7. When a friend starts to talk about his\her problems, I try to steer the conversation towards something else.
8. I can tell when others are sad even when they do not say anything.
9. I find that I am "in tune" with other people's moods.
10. I do not feel sympathy for people who cause their own serious illnesses.
11. I become irritated when someone cries.
12. I am not really interested in how other people feel.
13. I get a strong urge to help when I see someone who is upset.
14. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I do not feel very much pity for them.
15. I find it silly for people to cry out of happiness.
16. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards him\her.

Appendix E

GASP Scale

In this questionnaire you will read about situations that people are likely to encounter in day-to-day life, followed by common reactions to those situations. As you read each scenario, try to imagine yourself in that situation. Then indicate the likelihood that you would react in the way described. 1 = Very unlikely 2 = Unlikely 3 = Slightly unlikely 4 = About 50% Likely 5 = Slightly likely 6 = Likely 7 = Very likely.

1. After realizing you have received too much change at a store, you decide to keep it because the salesclerk doesn't notice. What is the likelihood that you would feel uncomfortable about keeping the money?
2. You are privately informed that you are the only one in your group that did not make the honor society because you skipped too many days of school. What is the likelihood that this would lead you to become more responsible about attending school?
3. You rip an article out of a journal in the library and take it with you. Your teacher discovers what you did and tells the librarian and your entire class. What is the likelihood that this would make you would feel like a bad person?
4. After making a big mistake on an important project at work in which people were depending on you, your boss criticizes you in front of your coworkers. What is the likelihood that you would feign sickness and leave work?
5. You reveal a friend's secret, though your friend never finds out. What is the likelihood that your failure to keep the secret would lead you to exert extra effort to keep secrets in the future?
6. You give a bad presentation at work. Afterwards your boss tells your coworkers it was your fault that your company lost the contract. What is the likelihood that you would feel incompetent?
7. A friend tells you that you boast a great deal. What is the likelihood that you would stop spending time with that friend?
8. Your home is very messy and unexpected guests knock on your door and invite themselves in. What is the likelihood that you would avoid the guests until they leave?
9. You secretly commit a felony. What is the likelihood that you would feel remorse about breaking the law?

10. You successfully exaggerate your damages in a lawsuit. Months later, your lies are discovered, and you are charged with perjury. What is the likelihood that you would think you are a despicable human being?
11. You strongly defend a point of view in a discussion, and though nobody was aware of it, you realize that you were wrong. What is the likelihood that this would make you think more carefully before you speak?
12. You take office supplies home for personal use and are caught by your boss. What is the likelihood that this would lead you to quit your job?
13. You make a mistake at work and find out a coworker is blamed for the error. Later, your coworker confronts you about your mistake. What is the likelihood that you would feel like a coward?
14. At a coworker's housewarming party, you spill red wine on their new cream-colored carpet. You cover the stain with a chair so that nobody notices your mess. What is the likelihood that you would feel that the way you acted was pathetic?
15. While discussing a heated subject with friends, you suddenly realize you are shouting though nobody seems to notice. What is the likelihood that you would try to act more considerately toward your friends?
16. You lie to people but they never find out about it. What is the likelihood that you would feel terrible about the lies you told?

Appendix F

Charitable Behavior

Please answer the following three questions in relation to your charitable behavior.

How often do you donate to charity each year?

- Never
- Once a year
- Twice a year
- Once a quarter
- Once a month
- Weekly

How much have you donated to charity in the past year?

- €0
- €1 - €50
- €51 - €100
- €101 - €250
- €250 - €1000
- More than €1000

How often do you donate your time to a charitable organisation each year?

- Never
- Once a year
- Twice a year
- Once a quarter
- Once a month
- Weekly

I am:

- Male
- Female
- Other

If other, please specify:

Appendix G

Debriefing Sheet

Thank you for taking the time to complete this study and submit your data to this piece of research. Your contribution is very much appreciated.

The purpose of this research is to determine whether proneness to guilt may impact on charitable behaviour in Ireland.

The data provided for this study is confidential and you will not be identified during the processing of this data or in the reporting of this study.

If you wish to contact the researcher for further information on the study or if you have any queries you can reach Shauna McGeever at the psychologyofgiving@gmail.com. Or if you prefer you can reach her supervisor Conor Nolan at conor.nolan@ncirl.ie.