Are Empathy, Religion and Guilt
Good Predictors of Prosocial Behaviour?
A Correlational Study.

Caroline Sheridan

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SUPERVISOR: Emma Harkin
Head of Department: Dr. S. Eccles

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Department of Psychology
DBS School of Art
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Abstract

The aim of the current study was to investigate prosocial behaviour and the predictor variables religion, empathy and guilt, and identify any gender and age differences that may be evident. To conduct the study questionnaires were given to participants via email link to a website called Kwiksurvey. The participants (N=80) consisted of 24 males and 56 females. This was a sample of convenience with a snowballing effect. The questionnaires were entered into SPSS 18 and appropriate analysis was conducted. Results showed statistically significant differences in gender, with females scoring higher on empathy, guilt and prosocial behaviour, using two-way ANOVA’s. A multiple regression was conducted and empathy, religion, guilt and age explained 13.6% of the variance in prosocial behaviour.
**Introduction**

“It is a denial of justice not to stretch out a helping hand to the fallen; that is the common right of humanity” (Seneca, 5 BC–65 AD, as cited in Fischer, et al., 2011).

**Prosocial Behaviour**

The purpose of the current study is to investigate prosocial behaviour. A convenience sample of 80 people will be administered the questionnaire. Research has looked at correlations between empathy and prosocial behaviour, as well as religion and guilt. Previous research did not look at these variables collectively which led to the current study being conducted, to investigate any positive correlations that may be evident when looking at religion, empathy and guilt together in the context of prosocial behaviour.

Prosocial behaviour consists of behaviours regarded as beneficial to others, including helping, sharing, comforting, guiding, rescuing, and defending others (Eagly, 2009). The terms “helping behaviour”, “prosocial behaviour” and “altruism” are all used interchangeably (Hogg & Vaughan, 2010). Prosocial behaviour can range from performing small acts to great deeds. It can be done unconsciously or it can be decided by weighing up the pros and cons (Bierhoff, 2002).

Prosocial behaviour and emotional empathy are conceptually and empirically linked, in that emotional empathy is thought to be a motivating factor for subsequent helping behaviour (Batson, 1990). There are many different viewpoints regarding prosocial behaviour. For instance, Batson, et al., (1989) viewed true altruism as selfless. Whereas others argued that the motivation to help associated with empathy, is directed toward the egoistic goal of negative-state relief, and not towards the altruistic goal of relieving the victim’s distress (Cialdini, et al., 1987). Negative state relief model states
that human beings have an innate drive to reduce negative moods. This can be reduced by engaging in activities such as prosocial behaviour, hence it being a motivating factor. Staub argued that empathy is unlikely to be the only basis for altruistic motivation. Valuing people and being concerned about their welfare can be the aim of individuals engaging in altruistic behaviour (Staub, 1991).

**History of Research in Prosocial Behaviour**

Psychological research into helping behaviour only began in the late 1950’s which led us to understand a great deal more about why we often go out of our way to help others and why we sometimes turn our backs on people needing our help (Hogg & Vaughan, 2011). A single event initiated research in this area, with the tragic murder of Kitty Genovese in New York in 1964.

Kitty Genovese was on her way home from work, through a respectable neighbourhood when she was viciously attacked by an assailant outside her New York apartment. It was about 3a.m. and the attack continued for half an hour, while many of her neighbours heard her screams and cries for help. Unfortunately no one called the police until it was too late and Genovese died. The next day, the police interviewed the residents of the area and 38 people admitted to hearing the screaming but failed to act. This story received national attention all over America with everyone asking why the neighbours did not help (Hogg & Vaughan, 2011).

**Bystander Effect**

The Genovese case led to a frenzy of research to discover when people would help in an emergency. The focus looked at the situational factors that affect bystanders intervening in real life situations. One of the most studied factors that affect prosocial behaviour is whether the potential helper is alone or in the company of others. The
perception that other people are also witnessing the event will noticeably decrease the likelihood an individual will help. This can happen for two reasons; the first is diffusion of responsibility, this is a reduced feeling of responsibility, by the bystander, which occurs when others are present. The second is pluralistic ignorance which is looking to others for cues about how to behave, while they are looking to you, which lead to a collective misinterpretation. This social phenomena has been coined the “bystander effect” by Latané and Darley in 1968.

Latané and Darley (1968) provided strong empirical evidence for the existence of the bystander effect in a variety of experimental settings. In both a theoretical and a practical sense, the bystander effect has played an increasingly important role in our understanding of helping behaviour. References to the effect can be found in nearly every introductory (social) psychology textbook.

Although the evidence for the inhibitory bystander effect is striking, there are also counter-examples. Sometimes, the presence of bystanders can facilitate acts of moral courage. In Munich in 2001, for example, a young man from Turkey helped a young Greek man who was chased and beaten by a group of skinheads. The young Turk risked his life while many other bystanders were watching. Similar results were found in laboratory experiments, where the bystander effect vanished when the emergency was a particularly dangerous one (Fischer, et al., 2011, p. 518).

**Bystander-Calculus Model of Helping**

Piliavin, Dovidio, Gaertner, and Clark, (1981) offer a social exchange theory for the bystander effect, according to which bystanders must calculate the perceived costs and benefits of providing assistance in three stages. The first is physiological arousal, such as witnessing the emergency, because the higher the arousal the greater chance of helping. Secondly this reaction must be labelled as either personal distress or empathic
concern. The bystander intervening reduces the anxiety of personal distress and is a self-serving need. Thirdly is to evaluate the consequences for the bystander. The bystander weighs up cost of helping and chooses the action that will reduce the personal distress at the lowest cost (Piliavin, Piliavin, & Rodin, 1975).

Krebs (1975) also found that if there is a high degree of similarity between the victim and the bystander this increases the likelihood of the bystander helping. If the victim is a friend this could increase the physiological arousal, and in turn increases emotional costs of not helping (Hogg & Vaughan, 2011).

If we take the Genovese case and evaluate the situation using the bystander-calculus model it suggests the neighbours may have felt empathic concern and personal distress but this were not enough to encourage them to intervene. The personal costs of getting killed or their cognitive appraisal of the situation (was this a marital row?) may have been a deterrent. This approach viewed situational factors as heavily influencing a person decision to help (Hogg & Vaughan, 2011).

**Nature vs Nurture Debate**

Using the example of Kitty Genovese’s neighbours it is evident that human behaviour is difficult to explain using traditional theories of human behaviour. A recurring theme in psychology is the nature versus nurture debate and this is also relevant to prosocial behaviour (Hogg & Vaughan, 2011). Biologically humans have innate tendencies to eat, drink, mate, fight and to help others (Hogg & Vaughan, 2010). This may be the reason, from an evolutionary perspective, that humans have been so successful at survival.

Kin selection theory proposes that people are more likely to help blood relatives because it increases the odds of getting our genes into the next generation (Hamilton, 1963). This forms the basis of a process through which a particular form of
altruism, such as nepotism, may have evolved. Evidence of altruistic nepotism is found widely across the animal kingdom (Holmes & Sherman, 1983). Many studies support this view, for example, Burnstein, Crandall, and Kitayama (1994) conducted studies in which participants were asked whom they would choose to help in an emergency. As expected they found that participants were more likely to say they would help a close relative rather than a distant or non relative, were more likely to help younger relatives than older ones and favoured the sick over healthy in everyday situations but favoured the healthy over the sick in life or death situation. This is consistent with kin selection theory.

The problem with evolutionary theory as the sole explanation for altruistic behaviour is the lack of convincing human evidence. The Kitty Genovese case is very difficult to explain at a biological level (Hogg & Vaughan, 2011). Biological mechanisms may predispose you to act but if, when, and how you respond will depend on your history, and the immediate circumstances (Hogg & Vaughan, 2011, p. 500).

**Age, Empathy and Prosocial Behaviour**

Central to the prosocial behaviour paradigm is our ability to respond to others needs increases in early development. Eisenberg & Fabes (1998) conducted a meta-analysis of 179 studies and concluded that older children display more emotional empathy and prosocial behaviour, towards others in need, than younger children. Research on changes in emotional empathy and prosocial behaviour in adult development are rare. Instead most research focused on either (a) age differences in cognitive empathy (i.e. the ability to recognise and interpret the needs of others), in which there are well documented declines with age or (b) age differences in trait empathy in which there are mild declines in cognitive aspects (Sze, Gyurak, Goodkind, & Levenson, 2011). To address this gap Sze, Gyurak, Goodkind and Levenson (2011)
examined emotional empathy and prosocial behaviour on a sample ranging from younger to older adults. They found (a) emotional empathy increased with age, (b) prosocial behaviour increased with age, and (c) aspects of emotional empathy (empathic concern) partially account for age-related increases in prosocial behavior, which is in contrast to the results found in Eisenberg & Fabes research in 1998.

**Gender and Prosocial Behaviour**

Even in toddlers, gender differences in empathy and prosocial behaviour can be observed (Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, Wagner, & Chapman, 1992). Eagly (2009) also looked at gender differences in prosocial behaviour and found that women and men were similar in engaging in prosocial behaviours. However gender role beliefs in society had an impact on the emphasis on particular forms of prosocial behaviour. Results suggest that the effects of gender roles on behaviour are influenced by hormonal processes, social expectations, and individual characteristics (Eagly, 2009).

Bakan (1966) introduced two concepts which summarised these dimensions of gender role beliefs. Women were thought to be more communal, that is, friendly, concerned with others and unselfish whereas, men were more agentic, such as being masterful, assertive and dominant in their approach to life (Bakan, 1966).

**Volunteering and Prosocial Behaviour**

Volunteerism refers to regular commitment to prosocial behaviour in an organisational context. As mentioned earlier, there is helping that is altruistically and egotistically motivated and the distinction between both is whether the ultimate goal is to increase the helper’s own welfare or the welfare of another person. Research by Van de Vliert, Huang, and Levine (2004), using the World Values Survey, assessed the kinds of motivation for doing unpaid work across 33 countries with a total of 13,584
respondents. A factor analysis of the respondents found the existence of four predominantly egotistical motivations and five predominantly altruistic motivations. The four egotistical motivations were (a) “time on my hands, wanted something to do”, (b) purely for personal satisfaction”, (c) “for social reasons, to meet new people” and (d) “to gain new skills and useful experience”. The five altruistic motivations were: (a) “a sense of solidarity with the poor and disadvantaged”, (b) compassion for those in need”, (c) “identifying with people who are suffering”, (d) “religious beliefs” and (e) “to help give disadvantaged people hope and dignity”. Further analysis indicated that the distinction between altruistic and egotistical motivations was an almost universal finding in the cross-national comparison.

Empathy and Arousal

From a biosocial perspective Gaertner and Dovidio (1977) argued that a common experience before acting prosocially is a state of arousal followed by empathy. Emotional empathy has been defined as an emotional response produced by witnessing a person in need, and these responses are thought to have physiological and subjective aspects (Sze, Gyurak, Goodkind, & Levenson, 2011). Both adults and children behave empathically to signs that a person is in trouble or distress. This implies that watching someone suffer is unpleasant, which further suggests that when we help others we might be trying to reduce our own unpleasant feelings (Hogg & Vaughan, 2010), as suggested by the negative state relief model (Cialdini, et al., 1987).

Empathy and Altruism

The bystander-calculus model suggests that people intervene in an emergency because the find it unpleasantly arousing and they seek relief. So altruism may not have the unselfish motives mentioned earlier but rather it is motivated by self-interest or
egoism. Batson et al., (1981) felt that an act is only truly altruistic if people help even when they are not distressed by the other person suffering. This in contrast to the bystanders in the Genovese case who felt distressed but not sufficiently enough to act (Hogg & Vaughan, 2011).

Oswald (1996) argued that to be empathic requires us to express the ability to be able to see the position of another person from their point of view. This is seen as perspective taking. Maner et al. (2002) found a connection between perspective taking, increased empathy and increased helping. This may account for why theorists such as Batson consider empathic concern to be crucial for altruism. Batson and his colleagues made a further distinction in perspective taking between understanding and experiencing how another person feels and how you would feel in their situation. Their research found that actively imagining how another feels produces empathy and this leads to altruistic motivation but also can lead to self-orientated distress which involves an added element of egoistic motivations (Batson, Early & Salvarini, 1997).

**Empathy and Gender**

There is a long standing stereotype that women are more empathic than men. To test this hypothesis Batson et al. (1996) conducted a study in which participants read an adolescent’s (same sex) description of a stressful situation such as being teased or ridiculed because of acne or being betrayed and rejected. They found that women had more empathy with same sex adolescents with whom they shared similar experiences at that age but this was not found with men. Batson viewed this as an effect of socialisation because women value interdependence and are more focused on others whereas men value independence and are more focused on the self (Batson, Sympson, Hindman, & Decruz, 1996).
**Guilt and Prosocial Behaviour**

Guilt refers to the private feelings of a troubled conscience caused by a wrongdoing or by disadvantaging a valued other. Within psychological research there has been controversy in how guilt should be defined and how it should be measured (Silfver & Helkama, 2007, p. 239). Some define guilt as a prosocial emotion that motivates positive social behaviours, such as reparation and amends (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994), whereas others focus on the maladaptive aspects of guilt such as chronic rumination, excessive sense of responsibility and a tendency to feel guilty when it is not an appropriate or adaptive response (Bybee & Quiles, 1998).

In this study the main focus is on guilt as a prosocial emotion. In the Guilt and Shame Proneness Scale (GASP) the guilt subscales were both significantly positively correlated with empathic concern, perspective taking, conventional morality, and promotion focus. The guilt subscales also were significantly positively correlated with other measures related to ethics and prosociality (Cohen, Wolf, Panter, & Insko, 2011).

According to Baumeister, Stillwell, and Heatherton (1994) guilt is a common form of emotional distress and also a common factor in behavioural decisions. Guilt feelings motivate people to apologise for misdeeds and to express sympathy but it can be used to manipulate others. People also perform a variety of actions because of the anticipation of guilt. Guilt is an interpersonal phenomenon that happens between people rather than just inside them.

People’s moods and emotions can vary from a positive to negative affect, for example love is a positive emotion whereas guilt is a negative emotion. Moods may influence how a person responds prosocially to others. Empirical studies show helping is encouraged by positive moods. For example children who are in a happy mood are more likely to share with others than children in a neutral mood (Rosehan, Underwood, & Moore, 1974). When a person is in a bad mood there is a decrease in altruistic
intentions due to an increase in the perceived emotional cost of helping (Hewstone, Stroebe, & Jonas, 2008).

Another possible explanation for the influence of guilt on prosocial behaviour is that participants try to compensate for negative feelings by doing good deeds. This negative-state-relief hypothesis (Kenrick, Baumann, & Cialdini, 1979) assumes that this negative affect is accompanied with a drive to reduce the unpleasant feelings, and prosocial behaviour is one mechanism of doing this. Guilt is mainly aroused after hurting a loved one, friend or colleague to repair the damage they have caused to the relationship. Guilt is a complex emotion and there a several types of guilt.

Literature on negative feeling states and prosocial behaviour has produced contradictory results. For example, the feelings of guilt after cheating on a test increased prosocial behaviour (Freedman, Wallington, & Bless, 1967) whereas participants who are induced to feel sad hesitate to help others (Thompson, Cowan, & Rosenhan, 1980). Carlson and Miller (1987) conducted a meta-analysis on negative mood. In some studies negative mood enhanced the level of prosocial behaviour whereas in others the opposite occurred. The results became clearer when sadness and guilt were separated. Sadness is associated with a low willingness to help others, while interpersonal guilt is associated with a high level of prosocial behaviour.

Psychologists from different perspectives suggest that the cognitive and affective basis for feeling guilt is the capacity to feel or anticipate the suffering and distress of others, in other words, to empathize with others (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994). Pelligrà’s experiment looked at the connection between individual’s ability to empathise and their prosocial behaviour which is supposedly driven by guilt-aversion. The research found that empathy could be measured but did not find a relationship with guilt aversion which ultimately triggers the prosocial behaviour. However, his research did support the view that there are gender differences in the
distribution of empathy (Pelligra, 2011).

Gender, Age and Guilt

Empirical studies on adults and adolescents found strong and consistent gender differences in guilt with females reporting more guilt feelings than males. These gender differences are interpreted against the backdrop of decreasing guilt feelings with age in adolescents, especially in boys. Subsequently in their twenties and thirties participants guilt feelings became positively correlated with age. Other gender differences that emerged were in respect to whom the participants felt guilty towards. Females primarily referred to family members whereas males generally mentioned people they had only a superficial relationship with (Bybee, 1998).

Further research on gender and age differences in guilt were conducted by Etxebarria, Isasi, and Pérez (2002). There were 202 Spanish participants, aged 15-19 and the second group aged 25 to 48. They reported their most recent experience in guilt, three things that made them feel guilty and the intensity of the feelings on a likert scale with 1-7 responses. Most of the participants reported events which were interpersonal, many included close relationships. In the adolescent group guilt intensity was greater in females than males. In the adult group males scores were closer to females so gender differences disappeared. These results show that interpersonal nature of events may be a fundamental aspect to not only antecedents of guilt but also in individual differences.

Religion and Prosocial Behaviour

Religiosity and spirituality are difficult constructs to investigate due to a lack of consistency among researchers in how they are defined and measured. There are a number of terms (e.g., religious practices, religious beliefs, spiritual experience) which are used interchangeably (Idler, 2003). Almost all psychological theories of religion
assume that religion contributes to prosociality. Religion tends to have moral principles and just world views. If we look at the biblical parable of the Good Samaritan it conveys that we should help those who need our help especially those who are underprivileged or victims of misfortune (Bierhoff, 2002). Supporting this view is research by Küpper & Bierhoff (1999) who found that the importance of religion was an independent predictor of the number of hours worked as a volunteer. Volunteers who considered religion more important were found to be more involved than volunteers who were not so concerned with religion.

Some early controversial analysis of the role of religion in promoting prosocial behaviour was presented by Donald Campbell (1975) at an American Psychological Association Conference. After studying the genetics of altruism Campbell concluded there was no strong evidence for an innate altruistic impulse, instead our genes lead us to a social personality of self serving opportunism. According to Campbell social evolution has to counter these selfish tendencies and religion is one method of doing this. He viewed religion as a major component of social evolution as it serves to shift the direction of the individual behaviour away from selfish goals toward the prosocial goals necessary for society.

Batson (1983) proposed an alternative view which doesn’t contradict or discredit Campbell but suggests a different relationship. Batson reviewed the research and felt it was consistent with the existence of this innate altruistic impulse and that it is mediated by empathic emotion. Batson discusses the idea of kin-specific altruistic impulses and asks the question what encourages altruism outside of the family? Batson felt this is where religion comes in as certain types of religious imagery may extend this kin specific altruism to outside the family. Batson talks about religious preaches such as “brotherly love” for those who are not brothers and “love our neighbours as ourselves”. They teach us that we are all children of God. Such kinship imagery may serve to
encourage empathic altruistic response to those outside the close kin whom we are
innately predisposed to respond altruistically.

Not everyone is in favour of religious influences. Freud said that, religion
provides mechanisms that control the natural destructiveness of humans caused by their
narcissistic and sexual impulses (Freud, 1927/1961), but he himself was a self-confessed
atheist and he compared religious beliefs to a “childhood neurosis” (Freud, 1927/1961).
He felt religious beliefs were infantile, delusional and foreign to reality.

“The different religions have never overlooked the part played by the sense of
guilt in civilization. What is more, they come forward with a claim...to save mankind
from this sense of guilt, which they call sin.” (Freud, 1930/1961, p. 136),

**Gender and Religion**

The general consensus on gender and religion is that females are more religious
than their male counterparts (Mahalik & Lagan, 2001; Ozorak, 1996; Reich, 1997;
Thompson, 1991 as cited by Maltby, Hall, Anderson, & Edwards, 2010), although this
is not agreed by all. Contrasting research found no gender differences in religious
participation which suggests gender differences, within the psychology of religion, is
not as clear as previously proposed (Simpson, Cloud, Newman, & Fuqua, 2008).
Research by Hayes (1996) found that males are more likely to change their religious
identification than females regardless of whether they were Catholics, Anglicans,
Protestants or other independents. What have emerged are differences in the way that
men and women experience God and faith. Women tend to emphasise personal
relationships with a loving God and others in their religious community, while men tend
to focus on God’s power and judgement and their own spiritual discipline. Females are
seen as more communal whereas men are seen as more individualistic (Furseth & Repstad, 2006).

**Age and Religion**

Early research among adolescents found religiousness is negatively related to age (Kuhlen & Arnold, 1944; Potvin et al., 1976). Potvin and Lee (1982) describe this change to adolescents maturing, which leads them to evaluating and constructing their own system of religious beliefs which in turn affects religious practice. The end result leads to rejection, modification or embrace of their childhood religion. Young adults which belong to a conservative denomination show less of an age effect than their liberal counterparts (as cited in Sloane & Potvin, 1983). This age decline appears to be temporary in nature as research supports the view that religiosity increases with age (Hunsberger & Wilfrid, 1985). Research on increasing age and religiosity are scarce. Unfortunately most research tends to be conducted on students which cannot be generalised to older people. What we do know is older people are more likely to engage in volunteer activities and one of the strongest motivators for these activities are values and religious participation (McFadden, 2008).
**Aims and Hypothesis**

The first aim of this study is to investigate the interaction of gender and age differences that may be evident when looking at them in the context of prosocial behaviour. A question on volunteering, made by the researcher, will be asked in the research questionnaire to establish levels of prosocial behaviour. The first hypothesis is that females and older participants will have higher scores on levels of prosocial behaviour.

The second aim of this study is to investigate the interaction of gender and age differences that may exist when looking at the psychological variable religiosity. Religiosity will be measured using the Stanovich Religiosity Questionnaire. The second hypothesis is that females and older participants will have higher scores on the religiosity questionnaire.

The third aim of this study is to investigate the interaction of gender and age differences that may exist when looking at the psychological variable empathy. Empathy will be measured using the Emotional Empathy Questionnaire. The third hypothesis is that female participants and older participants will have higher scores on levels of empathy.

The fourth aim of this study is to investigate the interaction of gender and age differences that may exist when looking at the psychological variable guilt. Guilt will be measured using the Guilt and Shame Proneness Questionnaire. The fourth hypothesis is that females and older participants will have higher scores on levels of guilt.

The fifth aim of this study is to look at the criterion variable Prosocial Behaviour and look at the predictor variables religiosity, guilt, empathy and age and explore how much of the variance in prosocial behaviour can be predicted by these variables. The fifth hypothesis is that the following variables religion, empathy, guilt and age will be
good predictors of prosocial behaviour. As scores on one variable go up so will scores on the other. A significant positive correlation is expected.
Method

Materials

To materials used within this study were as follows:

Sony Vaio Computer

Instruction sheet (see appendix E)

SPSS 18 Computer Programme

Online survey website called Kwiksurvey.

A cover letter was attached to the questionnaire outlining the nature of the study and contact details for the researcher and supervisor (see appendix A).

A demographic questionnaire was used to enquire as to the gender of the participant, the age of the participant, and the religion preference (if any) of the participant (see appendix B).

A volunteering question, which was constructed by the researcher, was used to establish the level of prosocial behaviour in a participant, by asking the number of hours they engaged in prosocial activities (see appendix C).

The first questionnaire used was a Guilt and Shame Proneness Scale (GASP) created by Cohen, Wolf, Panter, and Insko (2011) (see appendix D). The form of the questionnaire consists of a list of 16 items of which only 8 items relating to the guilt measure were used. An example of a question examining Guilt is “After realizing you have received too much change at a store, you decide to keep it because the sales clerk doesn't notice. What is the likelihood that you would feel uncomfortable about keeping
the money?” Responses are scored by choosing 1 of 7 responses on a likert scale where higher scores indicate higher levels of guilt.

The scores were entered into the SPSS 18 computer programme, calculated and analysed. All the statements were scored so that higher numbers indicated higher levels of guilt. No negative scoring was needed to calculate the results of this questionnaire.

To develop the GASP scale the researcher’s first study involved conducting exploratory factor analyses (EFAs) to select items for the scale and confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) to test its factor structure. In addition, as part of the scale-development process, the internal reliability and construct validity of the GASP was tested with a wide array of criterion variables. In study 2 the reliability and predictive validity of the GASP was tested on a large nationwide sample of American adults (N=862) and students (N=450). According to Cohen, Wolf, Panter, and Insko, (2011) the GASP scale has good internal consistency, with a Cronbachs Alpha coefficient of .70 (α = .70). In the current study the Cronbachs alpha coefficient was .80 (α = .80).

The second questionnaire used was the Emotional Empathy Scale created by Mehrabian & Epstein (1972) (see appendix E). The aim of the questionnaire was to develop an adequate measure of emotional empathy. The form of the questionnaire consists of a list of 33 items of which 17 items will be scored negatively. An example of a question examining Emotional Empathy with a positive score is “It makes me sad to see a lonely stranger in a group”, and an example of a question with a negative score is “People make too much of the feelings and sensitivity of animals”. Responses are scored by choosing 1 of 7 responses on a likert scale where the higher scores indicated higher levels of empathy. The scores were entered, into the SPSS 18 computer programme, calculated and analysed. To calculate total empathy scores the participants responses on the negative (-) items are changed and then an algebraic sum of all 33
responses to the scale is obtained. The research consisted of (N=91) participants who were students attending the University of California. A replication experiment was performed with employed participants (N=104) from the same population. According to (Mehrabian & Epstein (1972) the Emotional Empathy Scale has good internal consistency, with a Cronbachs Alpha coefficient of .84 (α = .84). In the current study the Cronbachs alpha coefficient was .81 (α = .81).

The final questionnaire used was the Stanovich Religiosity Questionnaire (Stanovich, 1989) (see appendix F). The form of the questionnaire consists of 4 items. An example of a question examining Religion is the statement “I attend religious services” and the choice of responses were on a 6 point scale. All the statements were scored so that higher numbers indicated stronger religious commitment. To conduct the research participants consisted of 163 (N=163) students from an American sample who were attending an introductory psychology course in Oakland University, Rochester. The 4-item religiosity scale was found to be unidimensional and reliable and this was confirmed by (Svensen, White, & Caird, 1992) when they replicated the study on an Australian sample (N=129). To test the internal consistency of the Stanovich Religiosity Questionnaire some reliability statistics were employed. The Cronbachs alpha coefficient was .89 (α = .89).

A final page was attached to the end of the questionnaire thanking the participants for taking part and advising them of exactly what the study was measuring. Contact details for the researcher were offered again if needed (see appendix G).
**Apparatus**

The SPSS 18 statistical package for the PC was used for the analysis of the data after the test were conducted.

The questionnaires were uploaded on to a website called Kwiksurvey.com and an email with the link was sent to participants.

**Participants**

The participant sample had a total of 80 (N=80) people from the general population. The sample was predominantly Irish. There were 56 females (n=56) ad 24 males (n=24). The participants ages ranged from 18-60. Participants were divided into three groups according to their age. Group 1: 18-29 years, Group 2: 30-39 years, Group 3: 40 years and above. This was a convenience sample with an element of snowballing. The participants consisted of family, friends, work colleagues and other acquaintances, whom in turn passed on the questionnaire to other participants.

**Design**

This was a sample of convenience with an element of snowballing.

The first hypothesis is that females and older participants will have higher scores on levels of prosocial behaviour. The criterion variable is prosocial behaviour and the predictor variables are gender and age.

The second hypothesis is that females and older participants will have higher scores on levels of religiosity. The criterion variable is religiosity and the predictor variables are gender and age.

The third hypothesis is that female participants and older participants will have higher scores on levels of empathy. The criterion variable is empathy and the predictor variables are gender and age.
The fourth hypothesis is that females and older participants will have higher scores on levels of guilt. The criterion variable is guilt and the predictor variables are gender and age.

The fifth hypothesis is that the following variables religion, empathy, guilt and age will be good predictors of prosocial behaviour. The criterion variable is prosocial behaviour and the predictor variables are religion, empathy, guilt and age.

Procedure

The questionnaire was uploaded on to the website Kwiksruvey. Kwiksruvey produced a link to the survey which was emailed to participants. In the email there was an explanation of what the survey entailed and if the participants consented to take part in the survey then they just had to click on the link below and this took them straight to the online questionnaire. Acceptance to undertake the questionnaire was assumed once they decided to click on the questionnaire link and complete the questions. The right to withdraw at any time was also offered to participants. The participants were informed that the questionnaire was totally confidential and anonymous and would take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The researcher and the project supervisor’s contact details were given to the participants if they had any further queries about the research. Participants were also thanked for their participation.

Data analysis

To conduct analysis on the results some descriptive statistics were employed which included frequencies, descriptives and exploratory analysis. For inferential statistics four two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and a multiple regression were conducted.
**Ethics**

There were some ethical aspects of the research taken into consideration for the project. Moderate deception was used in the research to try to encourage truthful responses. At the beginning of the research the participants were told the aim of the research was to look at “Attitudes and Beliefs of Adults Towards Helping Behaviours”. At the end of the questionnaire participants were told the actual aim of the study was to look at the relationship between Empathy, Religion and Guilt as Indicators of Prosocial Behaviour.

The researcher felt to be able to offer the participant total anonymity and confidentiality that an online survey would be an easier option as participants would not have to hand back the researcher the completed questionnaire and also the questionnaire could be completed at a time that suited the participant rather than the researcher. The participants were also told that although they were emailed the questionnaire the researcher would not know who participated and who did not. All that was retained on the online survey was the responses and the number of participant responses. The participants were also informed they were under no obligation to complete the questionnaire but if they did decide to take part then they had the right to withdraw at anytime.
Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were conducted on the raw data examining the mean and standard deviation scores of Gender on Prosocial Behaviour, Religion, Empathy and Guilt (see Bar chart 1).

Bar chart 1. Gender Differences in Scores on Prosocial Behaviour, Guilt, Empathy, and Religion.
Descriptive statistics was conducted examining the mean, median, mode, standard deviation, range and possible range on Prosocial Behaviour, Religion, Empathy, Guilt and Age (see Table 1).

Table 1. **Overall Descriptive Statistics for Prosocial Behaviour, Religion, Empathy.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Prosocial Behaviour</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Empathy</th>
<th>Guilt</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>15.29</td>
<td>168.29</td>
<td>45.79</td>
<td>34.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>167.50</td>
<td>47.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mode</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Deviation Range</strong></td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Range</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Possible Range</strong></td>
<td>0-15</td>
<td>4-24</td>
<td>105-203</td>
<td>12-56</td>
<td>18-60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Inferential Statistics

Four two-way ANOVA’s were carried out investigating Gender and Age differences between Prosocial Behaviour, Religion, Empathy and Guilt.

A standard multiple regression was conducted to investigate how much of the variance in the criterion variable, Prosocial Behaviour, can be explained by the predictor variables Religiosity, Empathy, Guilt and Age.
1) The first hypothesis is that females and older participants will have higher scores on levels of prosocial behaviour.

To test this hypothesis a two-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of Gender and Age groups on levels of Prosocial Behaviour, as measured by the volunteering question. Participants were divided into three groups according to their age. (Group 1: 18-29 years, Group 2: 30-39 years, Group 3: 40 years and above). The interaction effect between gender and age group was not statistically significant, $F (2, 74) = .20, p = .82$. There was a statistically significant main effect for gender, $F (1, 74) = 4.23, p = .04$; however, the effect size was small (partial eta squared = .01) but not for age $F (2, 74) = 1.70, p = .19$ (see figure 1) (Pallant, 2007).

In summary the hypothesis was that females and older participants would score higher on levels of prosocial behaviour. The null hypothesis for gender can be rejected because a statistically significant difference was found. However for age the null hypothesis can be accepted as there was not a statistically significant difference found for age.
Figure 1: ANOVA for Age, Gender and Prosocial Behaviour
2) The second hypothesis is that females and older participants will have higher scores on the religiosity questionnaire.

To test this hypothesis a two-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of Gender and Age groups on levels of Religion, as measured by the Stanovich Religiosity Questionnaire. Participants were divided into three groups according to their age. (Group 1: 18-29 years, Group 2: 30-39 years, Group 3: 40 years and above). The interaction effect between gender and age group was not statistically significant, \( F (2, 74) = .45, p = .64 \). There was not a statistically significant main effect for age, \( F (2, 74) = .03, p = .97 \), or for gender, \( F (1, 74) = 2.76, p = .10 \) (see figure 2) (Pallant, 2007).

In summary the hypothesis that females and older participants would score higher on levels of religiosity is not confirmed. So the null hypothesis can be accepted for age and gender in this case as a statistically significant difference was not found.
Figure 2: ANOVA for Age, Gender and Religion

Estimated Marginal Means of Religion Variable

Gender
- Males
- Females

3 Age Groups

18-29 30-39 40+

Estimated Marginal Means

14 14.5 15 15.5 16 16.5 17
3) The third hypothesis is that female participants and older participants will have higher scores on levels of empathy.

To test this hypothesis a two-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of Gender and Age groups on levels of Empathy, as measured by the Emotional Empathy Scale (EES). Participants were divided into three groups according to their age. (Group 1: 18-29 years, Group 2: 30-39 years, Group 3: 40 years and above). The interaction effect between gender and age group was not statistically significant, $F(2, 74) = 1.47, p = .24$. There was a high statistically significant main effect for gender, $F(2, 74) = 11.22, p = .001$; however, the effect size was small (partial eta squared = .13), but not for age $F(2, 74) = .84, p = .44$ (see figure 3) (Pallant, 2007).

In summary the hypothesis was that females and older participants would score higher on levels of empathy. The null hypothesis for gender can be rejected because a statistically significant difference was found. However for age the null hypothesis can be accepted as there was not a statistically significant difference.
Figure 3: ANOVA for Age, Gender and Empathy

Estimated Marginal Means of Empathy Variable

Gender
- Males
- Females

3 Age Groups
- 18-29
- 30-39
- 40+

Estimated Marginal Means
- 145
- 150
- 155
- 160
- 165
- 170
- 175
4) The fourth hypothesis is that females and older participants will have higher scores on levels of guilt.

To test this hypothesis a two-way between groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of Gender and Age groups on levels of Guilt, as measured by the Guilt and Shame Proneness Scale (GASP). Participants were divided into three groups according to their age. (Group 1: 18-29 years, Group 2: 30-39 years, Group 3: 40 years and above). The interaction effect between gender and age group was not statistically significant, $F(2, 74) = .01, p = .99$. There was a statistically significant main effect for gender, $F(1, 74) = 6.93, p = .01$; however, the effect size was small (partial eta squared = .09), but not for age $F(2, 74) = .41, p = .66$ (see figure 4) (Pallant, 2007).

In summary the hypothesis was that females and older participants would score higher on levels of guilt. The null hypothesis for gender can be rejected because a statistically significant difference was found. However for age the null hypothesis can be accepted as there was not a statistically significant difference found.
Figure 4: ANOVA for Age, Gender and Guilt

Estimated Marginal Means of Guilt Variable

Gender
- Males
- Females

3 Age Groups

18-29  30-39  40+

Estimated Marginal Means
5) The fifth hypothesis is that the following variables Religion, Empathy, Guilt and Age will be good predictors of Prosocial Behaviour.

To test this hypothesis a standard multiple regression analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between Prosocial Behaviour and the predictor variables Religion, Empathy, Guilt and Age. The aim of this project was interested in developing a predictive model to explain how much of the variance in Prosocial Behaviour can be explained via the following predictor variables Empathy, Religion, Guilt and Age. As there was no theoretical indication for the order of entry of the predictor variables into the regression equation, standard multiple regression analysis was employed. The theoretical model with four predictor variables (Religion, Empathy, Guilt and Age) explained 13.6% of variance in respondent’s scores on prosocial behaviour. (F (4, 75) = 4.12, p < .01) (see Table 3). The only significant predictor of prosocial behaviour was religion (β = -.336, p < .01), followed by empathy (β = .236, p < .05). The standardized beta value for religion indicates a high statistically significant negative predictor, while empathy is a moderate statistically significant predictor of prosocial behaviour. Age although not significant was approaching significance at (p= .06) (see figure 5) (Pallant, 2007).

In summary the hypothesis was that religion, empathy, guilt and age would all be good at predicting prosocial behaviour. Religion and empathy were found to be good predictors of prosocial behaviour, although religion was negatively correlated with prosocial behaviour. The null hypothesis for religion and empathy can be rejected. Age was found to be a predictor of prosocial behaviour but not at
a statistically significant level although it was approaching significance. Guilt was not confirmed as a good predictor of prosocial behaviour. The null hypothesis for guilt and age is therefore accepted.
Figure 5: P-P Plot of a Standard Multiple Regression for Prosocial Behaviour with Religiosity, Empathy, Guilt and Age

![P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual](image)

Dependent Variable: Prosocial

Table 3.

Standard Multiple Regression of Prosocial Behaviour with selected variables Age, Guilt, Empathy and Religion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$R$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>adj$R^2$</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model:</td>
<td>.424*</td>
<td>.180</td>
<td>.136</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>.203</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.762</td>
<td>-.089</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.04*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.314</td>
<td>-.340</td>
<td>.002*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Indicates Standardised Slopes of predictors with associated p values, * significant at .05 level
**Discussion**

The main purpose underlying the current study was to ascertain whether the psychological variables Religion, Empathy and Guilt were good predictors of Prosocial Behaviour while also accounting for any Age or Gender differences that may be evident. This research was conducted using demographic questions and questionnaires.

In the first hypothesis it was predicted that females and older participants would have higher scores on levels of prosocial behaviour. To test this hypothesis a two-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted. The results did not show a significant difference in the interaction between gender and age on prosocial behaviour. Although a statistically significant difference for gender alone was found. So the null hypothesis can be rejected for gender and the null hypothesis for age can be confirmed.

Research literature supports the above statistically significant difference that females engage more in prosocial behaviour than males (Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, Wagner, & Chapman, 1992), although this is not set in stone as Eagly pointed out. Eagly (2009) found similarities in men and women engaging in prosocial behaviour and the differences lay in the type of prosocial behaviours displayed. This was credited to societal norms about gender roles. Bakan (1996) put forward two concepts for these dimensions of gender roles which defined women as more communal, friendly and concerned with others whereas, men were more dominant and assertive.

The first hypothesis appears to support the older view of women and prosocial behaviour rather than Eagly’s more up to date research. This may be explained by small sample size or due to the fact that the sample size was predominantly Irish. Irish males may still be viewed as traditional in their nature which may explain the above results. It may seem more socially acceptable or the norm in Ireland for women to display these emotions whereas in men it may be viewed as a weakness. Further research is needed in this area and possibly an extended prosocial questionnaire is needed. The question about
volunteering may not be provide sufficient measurable data when looking at male prosocial gender roles as pointed out by Eagly (2009).

As mentioned age did not appear to effect prosocial behaviour in a significant way which is not consistent with the research in this paper. As Sze, Gyurak, Goodkind, and Levenson (2011) did find age related increases in prosocial behaviour and also in empathy. The reason this effect was not found in this study may be due to sample size and the range of participants ages as none were over 60. In Sze, Gyurak, Goodkind, and Levenson (2011) study their participants were older and some had grown up in the post-WWII era. Their experiences with suffering and distress may have led to their having a greater capacity for prosocial behaviour and empathy to others in need.

Some other aspects of this result could be the age differences in cognitive empathy as mentioned by Eisenberg & Fabes (1998) where prosocial behaviour declines with age due to a decline in cognitive empathy (i.e. the ability to recognise and interpret the needs of others). This again may have impacted on older people reporting lower hours on the prosocial measure because they may not interpret that someone else needs their help or they may not be in a position to offer this help e.g. ill health, physical abilities.

The second hypothesis predicted that females and older participants will have higher scores on the religiosity questionnaire. To test this hypothesis a two-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted. The results did not show a significant difference in the interaction between gender and age on religiosity, nor was a significant difference found in older participants on religiosity scores. The null hypothesis for gender and age differences can be confirmed.

As the research suggested religiosity is a difficult construct to define and measure. There are many different religions in the world today and each has their own set values and beliefs. The term spirituality appears to be an increasingly used term
instead of religion which further complicates matters for psychological testing of religion. The current study rejects the null hypothesis that there would a significant difference in females on religiosity. Some early researchers (Mahalik & Lagan, 2001; Ozorak, 1996; Reich, 1997; Thompson, 1991 as cited by Maltby, Hall, Anderson, & Edwards, 2010) appeared to find gender differences with females scoring higher on religiosity in males but more current research by Simpson, Cloud, Newman, & Fuqua (2008) did not find these results which suggest it is more complex than previously thought. Current research seems to suggest a more equal affect for gender. This may be because religion is on the decrease in places such as Ireland. Other research by Furseth and Repstad (2006) found differences in how many and women experience faith with women focused more on relationships in the community whereas men are thought to have a more individualistic approach. With more women in the workplace of today and increases in gender equality this may have had an indirect impact on religiosity levels as women are not based at home in the community as much. Usually both parents are working which may explain no gender differences found in the research and in this study.

Research predicted that as age increased so would higher scores on religiosity but this was not supported in the current research. These results may be due to a small sample size or possibly due to the sample not having any participants over the age of 60. In adolescent years there appears to be decline in religiosity (Potvin & Lee, 1982) due to young adults evaluating and constructing their own belief systems but this appears to be temporary in nature as research supports the view that religion increases with age (Hunsberger & Wilfrid, 1985). Research in increasing age and religiosity is limited, possibly due to lots of research tends to be conducted on students. My perception is that as you age you become more religious. This might be due to losing more friends and family members as you age and this might make you more aware of your own mortality
and increase the chances of you engaging in religious pursuits. As suggested by Erikson’s psychosocial stage, ego integrity vs. despair, older adults, like adolescents, may re-evaluate their lives and increased religiosity may be a consequence of this (Erikson, 1968 as cited in Passer & Smith, 2008, p. 450).

The third hypothesis predicted that females and older participants will have higher scores on levels of empathy. To test this hypothesis a two-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted. In summary the hypothesis that females would score higher on levels of empathy is confirmed however the hypothesis that older adults would also score higher on levels of empathy is not confirmed.

Batson (1996) conducted a study in which participants read an adolescents (of the same sex) description of a stressful event that upset them. Not only did females have more empathy, but this was related to similar experiences shared by the female participants and the same sex adolescents, but the same was not found with men. Batson viewed this as a process of socialisation because women are viewed by society as interdependent whereas men are more focused on the self. Research by Pelligra (2011) also found gender differences in the distribution of empathy. The current study supports the research that females have higher empathy levels than males but as we can see it may be more complex than it appears as men may experience high levels of empathy but do not want to express this emotion as it may be seen as a sign of weakness. For future research a wider study would need to be conducted on gender differences in empathy as the sample size for males was small (n=24). Gender roles in society are constantly changing with men becoming more stay at home parents and developing more creative pursuits such as cooking. The media also seems to portrait the idea that men should get more in touch with their feminine side. More research on this topic in the future may provide more contradictory results.
Age differences in empathy were not found in the current study so the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. A meta-analysis of 179 studies by Eisenberg & Fabes (1998) concluded that older children displayed more empathy and prosocial behaviour, to people in need, than younger children. This may be due to age related increases in empathy or a lack of cognitive abilities in the younger children. Research by Sze, Gyurak, Goodkind and Levenson (2011) looked at an older sample, younger to older adults, and empathy and prosocial behaviour increased with age with empathic concern partially accounting for the age related increases. The current study did not find evidence to support this issue. Possibly a small sample size may have affected the outcome. For future research a wider sample may be needed with more participants over the 60+ age group.

The fourth hypothesis predicted that females and older participants will have higher scores on levels of guilt. To test this hypothesis a two-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted. In summary the hypothesis that females would score higher on levels of guilt was confirmed. However the hypothesis that older people would have higher levels of guilt was not confirmed.

The current study supports the research literature that females have higher levels of guilt than males. Other gender differences found, in previous research, were in respect with whom the participants felt guilty towards. Females primarily referred to family members whereas males generally mentioned people they had only a superficial relationship with (Bybee, 1998). Although the current study found a significant difference in gender and guilt not all research supports this view. Etxebarria, Isasi, and Pérez (2002) conducted research from a Spanish sample (N=202). They had two age groups 15-19 and 25-48. In the adolescent group female reported greater guilt intensity than males but in the older group males scores were closer to females. Most of the participants reported guilt feelings in relation to interpersonal relationships and this
might be fundamental aspect to why people feel guilty while also accounting for individual differences. Although the GASP questionnaire, used in this study, had good reliability and validity it may not take into account the more complex elements of guilt. Further research may be needed on a larger sample with an expansion of a guilt questionnaire which allows for more open ended responses. This might prove a useful and informative tool in explaining gender differences if any.

The hypothesis that older participants would have higher levels of guilt was not confirmed so the null hypothesis is accepted. Bybee’s (1998) research on gender differences and guilt were interpreted in the backdrop of age related differences. In adolescents guilt feelings decreased with age, especially in males but subsequently in their twenties and thirties participant’s guilt feelings began to positively correlate with age. This led to the hypothesis in the current study that age would positively correlate with guilt. The current research did not support previous findings and this may be due to a number of reasons. The first being the small sample size (N=80). The second possibility is a lack of participants over the age of 60 although it would be still expected that a positive correlation between age and guilt would be found in the research. The current study does not take into account individual differences such as personality traits. In future research it may be useful to look at personality factors along with guilt. Certain personality types might be more prone to guilt e.g. neurotic types.

The fifth and final aim of this study was to look at the criterion variable prosocial behaviour and look at the predictor variables religiosity, guilt, empathy and age and explore how much of the variance in prosocial behaviour can be predicted by these variables. This led to the fifth hypothesis that a significant positive correlation will be found with increases in participant’s scores on prosocial behaviour positively correlating with increases in scores on religiosity, empathy, guilt, and age. This was conducted using a standard multiple regression analysis.
In summary religion had a negative statistically significant result with prosocial behaviour which meant that lower religiosity levels had higher prosocial behaviour scores. Empathy were found to be good predictors of prosocial behaviour with positive statistically significant results found, age was also found to be a predictor but not at a statistically significant level although it is important to note it was approaching significance. So the null hypothesis for religion and empathy can be rejected and the null hypothesis for age and guilt can be accepted.

An interesting result is the negative statistically significant result of religion and prosocial behaviour. The hypothesis was that religion would have a positive correlation with prosocial behaviour but the opposite was found. Most psychological theories of religion assume that religion contributes to prosocial behaviour. Küpper & Bierhoff (1999) found that importance of religion to a participant was an independent predictor of the number of hours worked as a volunteer. The gap in more current research on religion and prosocial behaviour is evident here. Relgiosity and spirituality are difficult concepts to define and this may have an impacted the results in this study. In Ireland there has been a shift away from religious teachings, such as Catholicism, which may have been sublimated into more spiritual beliefs. Alternative beliefs such as atheism is becoming more widespread, and perspectives such as evolutionary psychology and evovationary biologists such as Richard Dawkins becoming more well known through books and the media. This research contradicts Campbells view that religion is a social tool necessary to counteract our inherent genetic disposition of self serving opportunism. This research also contradicts Batson’s view that religion extends our kin-specific altruism outsode of the family. In a future study it may be useful to use a spirituality measure, while also increasing the sample size, as well as looking at cross cultural research to see if the current research results are supported across many different religious and spiritual beliefs.
Empathy positively correlated with prosocial behaviour which is in line with previous research and expectations. There is much debate about the motivation to engage in prosocial behaviour. Emotional empathy and prosocial behaviour are empirically linked. Batson viewed empathy as a motivating factor for prosocial behaviour, while others viewed the motivation for prosocial behaviour as an egoistic goal of negative-state relief, and not towards the altruistic goal of relieving the victim’s distress (Cialdini, et al., 1987). Staub argued that empathy is not the only motivation for prosocial behaviour. Valuing people and being concerned about their welfare can be the aim of individuals engaging in prosocial behaviour. Other factors influence a persons decision to engage or not in prosocial behaviour. Latané and Darley (1968) looked at the factors that influence a person’s decision to act which was influenced by the Genovese murder and their empirical studies found evidence of a bystander effect where a potential helper is less likely to help when others are also witnessing the event. Fischer et al. (2011) countered this argument with the example of a young man helping a victim who being chased and beaten even in the presence of other bystanders. Similar results were found in laboratory settings. Piliavin, Dovidio, Gaertner, and Clark, (1981) offer a social exchange for helping with bystanders calculating the perceived costs and benefits of helping. The bystander then chooses the action that will reduce the personal distress at the lowest cost to them. Krebs (1975) found a high degree of similarity between victim and bystander increases the chances of helping. From a biological perspective we are more likely to help a blood relative because it increases our chances of us preserving the genetic. The research tells us that there are many other factors at play when looking at empathy and prosocial behaviour although empathy appears to be a prerequisite for helping. Research could be expanded in this area by choosing a larger sample size, looking at correlations with other personality factors and looking at cross
cultural samples. The sample in the current study was small so it is hard to generalise the findings to the general population.

Guilt was not found to predict prosocial behaviour so the null hypothesis is accepted. Within psychological research there has been controversy in how guilt should be defined and measured. Guilt is a common form of emotional distress and also a common factor in behavioural decisions. Guilt can trigger prosocial behaviour to apologise for misdeeds or to compensate for negative feelings by performing good deeds. The negative-state-relief hypothesis (Kenrick, Baumann, & Cialdini, 1979) assumes that this negative affect is accompanied with a drive to reduce the unpleasant feelings, and prosocial behaviour is one mechanism of doing this. Research by Cohen, Wolf, Panter, and Insko (2011) found guilt subscales of the GASP questionnaire significantly positively correlated with other measures related to ethics and prosociality. Other research found helping is influenced by moods. For example children who are in a happy mood a more likely to share with others than children in a neutral mood (Rosehan, Underwood, & Moore, 1974). Hewstone, Stroebe, and Jonas (2008) found that when a person is in a bad mood there is a decrease in altruistic intentions due to an increase in the perceived cost of helping. So the research on guilt is complex and not as straightforward to define. This may influence the results found in this research on guilt as it is unknown what mood the person was in when completing the questionnaire. For future research it may be useful to give the participants a questionnaire which also measures mood and see if any correlations could be found with positive or negative moods.

Although age was not found to be a predictor across any of the variables in this research this is in contradiction to previous research. When age was added into the standard multiple regression analysis it is evident it was approaching significance. If the
sample size was bigger and the age range was wider than 18-60 years there may have been a more statistically significant differences found in the current study.

Some limitations of the current study are as mentioned the small sample size, the ratio of males to females, the predominately Irish sample, the age range from 18-60 years could be extended, and the wider problems of the complexity in defining and measuring variables such as prosocial behaviour, religiosity, guilt and empathy although empathy would appear to be a more solid and well defined construct. For future research it would be useful to devise a prosocial questionnaire which covers numerous situations. In the current research the prosocial measure was a question on volunteering. This did produce statistically valid results but the measure could be extended to take into account other prosocial situations.

In conclusion the study aimed to broaden the understanding of prosocial behaviour. A wider social perspective is needed to understand the many factors that influence prosocial behaviour. As prosocial behaviour is seen as having a positive influence on individuals and society in general it would be useful for social policy makers when decided on curriculum for schools and extending and encouraging social awareness of prosocial behaviour.
**Reference List**


Appendix A

My name is Caroline Sheridan. I am a Final Year Psychology Student of Dublin Business School. Currently I am undertaking my research project and I would be very grateful if you would complete this questionnaire. The questionnaire is on “Attitudes and Beliefs of Adults Towards Helping Behaviours”. The questionnaire is anonymous and you can withdraw from it at any time. This is being supervised by Emma Harkin and her contact details are DBS, School of Arts, 01-4177500.
Appendix B

1. What is your gender? *please circle*.
   - Male
   - Female

2. What is your age? ______

3. What is your religious preference? *please circle*.
   - Protestant
   - Catholic
   - Evangelical Christian
   - Muslim
   - Hindu
   - Buddhism
   - Jewish
   - Other
   - No Preference / No religious affiliation
   - Prefer not to say
Appendix C

Statement – Volunteering can be seen as many acts such as helping a member of your family, the elderly, the sick or the disabled. It can also be volunteering for a charity.

4. How many hours on average per week do you volunteer (without any personal or financial gain) __________
Appendix D

Instructions: 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very</td>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>Slightly Unlikely</td>
<td>About 50 % Likely</td>
<td>Slightly Likely</td>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>Very Likely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. After realizing you have received too much change at a store, you decide to keep it because the sales clerk 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 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?

4. You secretly commit a felony. What is the likelihood that you would feel remorse about breaking the law?

5. 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?

6. At a co-worker’s housewarming party, you spill red wine on their new cream coloured 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?

7. 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?

8. 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 E

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1</th>
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<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely Disagree</td>
<td>Mostly Disagree</td>
<td>Slightly Disagree</td>
<td>Neither Agree or Disagree</td>
<td>Slightly Agree</td>
<td>Mostly Agree</td>
<td>Completely Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>It makes me sad to see a lonely stranger in a group.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>People make too much of the feelings and sensitivity of animals.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>I often find public displays of affection annoying.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>I am annoyed by unhappy people who are just sorry for themselves.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>I become nervous if others around me seem to be nervous.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>I find it silly for people to cry out of happiness.</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>I tend to get emotionally involved with a friend's problems.</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Sometimes the words of a love song can move me deeply.</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>I tend to lose control when I am bringing bad news to people.</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>The people around me have a great influence on my moods.</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Most foreigners I have met seemed cool and unemotional.</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>I would rather be a social worker than work in a job training centre.</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>I don't get upset just because a friend is acting upset.</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>I like to watch people open presents.</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Lonely people are probably unfriendly.</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Seeing people cry upsets me.</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Some songs make me happy.</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel.</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>I get very angry when I see someone being ill-treated.</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>I am able to remain calm even though those around me worry.</td>
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<td>21.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>When a friend starts to talk about his problems, I try to steer the conversation to something else.</td>
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<td>22.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Another's laughter is not catching for me.</td>
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<td>23.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Sometimes at the movies I am amused by the amount of crying and sniffling around me.</td>
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<td>24.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>I am able to make decisions without being influenced by people's feelings.</td>
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<td>25.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>I cannot continue to feel OK if people around me are depressed.</td>
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<td>26.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>It is hard for me to see how some things upset people so much.</td>
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<td>27.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>I am very upset when I see an animal in pain.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
28. ______ Becoming involved in books or movies is a little silly.
29. ______ It upsets me to see helpless old people.
30. ______ I become more irritated than sympathetic when I see someone's tears.
31. ______ I become very involved when I watch a movie.
32. ______ I often find that I can remain cool in spite of the excitement around me.
33. ______ Little children sometimes cry for no apparent reason.
Appendix F

1. I attend religious services (*please circle*).
   1. More than once a week
   2. Once a week
   3. A couple of times a month
   4. A couple of times a year
   5. Hardly Ever
   6. Never

2. I consider my religious beliefs to be (*please circle*)
   1. Extremely Strong
   2. Very Strong
   3. Strong
   4. Moderately Strong
   5. Somewhat Weak
   6. Nonexistent

3. My feelings concerning the existence of God are (*please circle*)
   1. I am certain that God exists
   2. I am pretty sure that God exists
   3. I think there probably is a God
   4. I am not sure whether God exists or not
   5. I think there probably is not a God
   6. I am pretty sure that God does not exist
   7. I am certain that God does not exist

4. How important is religion in your everyday life (*please circle*)?
   1. Extremely Important
   2. Very Important
   3. Somewhat Important
   4. Not Very Important
   5. Completely Unimportant
Appendix G

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.

The aim of this study is to look at the relationship between Empathy, Religion and Guilt as Indicators of Prosocial Behaviour.

If you have any further questions my contact details are [redacted] or [redacted].