Title	Empathy, social values and civic behaviour among early adolescents in Ireland: scientific report
Author(s)	Silke, Charlotte; Boylan, Ciara; Brady, Bernadine; Dolan, Pat
Publication Date	2019
Publication Information	Silke, C., Brady, B., Boylan, C., & Dolan, P. (2019). Empathy, Social Values and Civic Behaviour among Early Adolescents in Ireland: Scientific Report. Galway: UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre.
Publisher	UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway
Link to publisher's version	http://www.childandfamilyresearch.ie/media/unescochildandfamilyresearchcentre/documentspdf/NUIG-IRC-Report-1-Scientific-Report-WEB.pdf
Item record	http://hdl.handle.net/10379/14990

Empathy, Social Values, and Civic Behaviour Among Early Adolescents in Ireland:

Scientific Report

UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre NUI Galway

The authors of this report are:
Dr Charlotte Silke – *Post-Doctoral Researcher*
Dr Bernadine Brady – *Principal Investigator*
Dr Ciara Boylan – *Post-Doctoral Researcher*
Professor Pat Dolan – *Director of the UNESCO Child & Family Research Centre*

Empathy, Social Values, and Civic Behaviour Among Early Adolescents in Ireland:
Scientific Report

CONTENTS

List of Abbreviations

AIC:	Akaike Information Criterion
CFI:	Comparative Fit Index
CFRC:	Child and Family Research Centre
CCN:	Community Connectedness
CI:	Confidence Interval
CLC:	Classroom Climate
CMIN:	Relative/Normed Chi Square
DF:	Degrees of Freedom
EC:	Affective Empathy/Emotional Concern
EPC:	Expected Parameter Change
IRC:	Irish Research Council
IRI:	Interpersonal Reactivity Index
MI:	Model Modification
PCE:	Parent Civic Engagement
PFN:	Prosocial Friend Norms
PSR:	Parent Social Responsibility
PT:	Perspective-Taking/Cognitive Empathy
RMSEA:	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SA:	Social Analysis
SEM:	Structural Equation Modelling
SR:	Social Responsibility Values
SRMR:	Standardised Root Mean Square Residual
TLI:	Tucker Lewis Index
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
YCB:	Youth Civic Behaviour
YES:	Youth Empathy & Social Values

01

Overview

At an international level, there is evidence that empathy values, social concern, and civic engagement are declining among younger generations as a consequence of the increasing individualisation of society over recent decades (Hylton, 2018; Gudjohnsen, 2016; Putnam, 2016; Levine & Liu, 2015; Kidd, 2013). Given the importance of empathy and related social values to social cohesion and democracy, it can be argued that it is of societal importance that values of empathy and care towards others be given due attention in research and policy. To date, however, there has been little research conducted on this topic among youth in Ireland.

This study aims to generate empirical evidence regarding the values and experiences of youth in Ireland towards a range of issues which reflect a sense of social responsibility towards others, including an analysis of factors that influence the development of social values and empathy. It also aims to review the degree to which national policy and curriculum supports the promotion of such values. The core research questions guiding this project are:

1. At an international level, what factors have been found to influence the development of empathy and pro-social behaviour among adolescents?

2. What are the values and behaviours of 12-16 year olds in Ireland in relation to empathy, social values and civic behaviour?

3. What factors in young people's social context are important in shaping empathy, social values and civic behaviour?

4. Are empathy and social values currently a priority in national policy for children and young people? Is this an issue of focus within the second level curriculum? Is there a need for a new or enhanced approach to teaching social values and empathy?

The methods used to address these research questions and resulting outputs are summarised in Table 1. This current Report is Empathy, Social Values and Civic Behaviour among Youth in Ireland: *Scientific Report.*

Table 1:
Overview of research questions, methodology and outputs from the overall study

Research Question	Methodology	Output
1. At an international level, what factors have been found to influence the development of empathy and pro-social behaviour among adolescents?	Systematic literature review	**Peer reviewed journal article:** Silke, C., Brady, B. Boylan, C., Dolan, P. (2018) Factors influencing the development of empathy and pro-social behaviour among adolescents: A systematic review. *Children and Youth Services Review, 94, 421-436.*
2. What are the values and behaviours of 12-16 year olds in Ireland in relation to empathy, social values and civic behaviour? 3. What factors in young people's social context are important in shaping these social values and behaviours?	Quantitative cross-sectional research with a national sample of over 700 early adolescents in 12 schools in Ireland Qualitative focus group research with 29 students in 3 schools in Ireland	Empathy, Social Values and Civic Behaviour among Early Adolescents in Ireland: *Scientific Report*
4. Are empathy and social values currently a priority in national policy for children and young people in Ireland? Is this an issue of focus within the second level curriculum? Is there a need for a new or enhanced approach to teaching social values and empathy?	Policy and curriculum review of 33 documents relevant to the Irish context Qualitative interviews with 11 key informants	Empathy, Social Values and Civic Behaviour among Early Adolescents in Ireland: *Policy & Curriculum Review & Key Informant Perspectives*
What have we learned from this programme of research? What are the implications for policy, practice and research?	Summary of overall findings and recommendations	Empathy, Social Values and Civic Behaviour among Early Adolescents in Ireland: *Composite Report* *Youth friendly summary*

02

General Introduction

Why do some young people take action to improve societal outcomes, and why do others remain unconcerned about society or focused solely on individual pursuits? This is a question that has perplexed researchers and policymakers alike for generations, and is cited as an issue of growing societal concern. It is hypothesised that 'empathy' may play a key role in answering this question.

In particular, many researchers have proposed that empathy is an important emotional and cognitive process that may help promote social connectedness and drive prosocial action. Indeed, scientists and researchers have long argued that empathy, and empathy-related processes (such as social responsibility & prosocial behaviour) are not only vital for youth's positive development, but also provide numerous benefits to society. However, although empathy and prosocial or civic engagement are associated with positive individual and social development, there is limited knowledge and understanding of the processes by which young people become interested in the 'common good', acquire empathy, and take prosocial action. The aim of this study is to shed further light on the development of empathy, positive social values, and prosocial or civic behaviour among young people in Ireland, and to expand our understanding of how young people's empathic and civic attitudes and behaviours are shaped by their social environments. Specifically, this report outlines the findings from two quantitative and qualitative research studies:

- **The Quantitative Study** consists of a large, empirical investigation into the expression of empathy, social responsibility, and civic engagement among young people in Ireland. Specifically, it assesses the level of empathic and civic attitudes and behaviours currently expressed by youth in Ireland, and investigates whether young people's empathic and civic responding are impacted by their social environments and relationships. This study also examines whether empathy and social responsibility mediate the relationship between youths' social contexts and their civic behaviours.

- **The Qualitative Study** involves an in-depth, qualitative exploration of young people's perceptions of empathy, social values, and prosocial or civic behaviour. Its focus was on providing students with the opportunity to voice their own thoughts and ideas about this topic. Specifically, the study aimed to seek youths' opinions about the significance of showing empathy, explore their beliefs about what influences young people's empathic and prosocial responding, and seek their recommendations for strategies to promote greater empathy and prosocial or civic responding among young people.

2.1 Definition of Empathy, Social Responsibility, and Civic Engagement

Although there are many definitions available in the literature, empathy is typically referred to as one's ability to vicariously feel and understand the emotions and feelings of others (Bernhardt & Singer, 2012; Duan & Hill, 1996; Davis, 1994). Generally, empathy is conceptualised as a multidimensional concept that involves both affective and cognitive components (Cuff et al., 2016; Miklikowska et al., 2011; Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006). The cognitive component of empathy is regarded as the ability to identify another person's perspective or to understand the emotions of others (Gini et al., 2007; Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006), while the affective component of empathy is characterised as the ability to share the emotions and feelings of others (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006). Modern conceptualisations propose that although the cognitive and affective elements ought to be measured separately, both components of empathy should be evaluated together, in order to gain a full understanding of the construct and how it relates to other related responses (Hoffman, 2000). Notably, while some research indicates that empathy is an innate, intrinsic skill that is biologically driven (Davis,

2018; Knafo et al., 2008; Kaplan & Iacoboni, 2006; Wolf et al., 2001), evidence suggests that empathy is also malleable, in that a person's capacity for empathy can be strengthened or weakened over time, based on their social experiences (Gerdes & Segal, 2011; Batson et al., 2003). Importantly, empathy is thought to provide the foundation for broader societal attitudes and behaviours, such as social responsibility and prosocial or civic behaviour (Wang et al., 2017; Cuff et al., 2016; Eisenberg & Morris, 2001).

While empathy is considered an interpersonal skill (Moyers et al., 2005), social responsibility is typically conceptualised as a social value orientation (Wray-Lake & Syvertsen, 2011). Nonetheless, empathy and social responsibility are considered closely related constructs, as both are linked to other, wider moral principles, such as care, justice, and altruism (Wang et al., 2017; Decety & Cowell, 2015; Wray-Lake & Syvertsen, 2011; Howe, 2012; Ehrlich & Jacoby, 2009; Flanagan, 2003; Youniss & Yates, 1997). In general, social responsibility is viewed as a set of prosocial values, representing an individual's personal commitment to, or regard for, contributing to their community or society (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015; Wray-Lake et al., 2015). Scholars propose that social responsibility values reflect an individual's interest in the 'greater good' or their concern for the welfare of others (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015; Da Silva et al., 2004). In this sense, social responsibility appears to be regarded as a person's sense of 'civic duty' or 'responsibility' to their community or society (Varela & Loreto Martinez, 2018; Crocetti et al., 2012). This sense of duty is proposed to extend beyond an individual's personal wants, needs, or gains, and can operate at a personal, societal, or global level (Gallay, 2006; Da Silva et al., 2004). Hence, social responsibility values offer important insights into how individuals view themselves in relation to others (Wray-Lake & Syvertsen, 2011).

Both empathy and social responsibility are considered important values and skills, as they act as key motivators for individuals' prosocial and civic action (Hylton, 2018; Panke & Stephens, 2018; Segal, 2011; Ehrlich & Jacoby, 2009; Pratt et al., 2003; Flanagan, 2003). Civic action, which is also commonly referred to as civic engagement, is similar to prosocial behaviour but conceptually distinct. Both prosocial and civic behaviour are generally regarded as voluntary, altruistic actions that are intended to benefit others (e.g., helping, caring, sharing, defending, comforting) (Varela & Loreto Martinez, 2018; Padilla-Walker & Fraser, 2014; Chan, 2011; Eisenberg et al., 2009). However, while 'prosocial behaviour' generally refers to behaviours that are carried out at an interpersonal level, 'civic engagement' generally refers to broader prosocial actions that are intended to help those in the wider community or society (Rossi et al., 2016; Bowman, 2011; Herrmann, 2005; Youniss et al., 2002; Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998). More specifically, civic engagement comprises a wide range of prosocial activities directed at the community or wider society, such as volunteering, community service, charitable donations, sharing of resources, helping those in need, or other forms of political activism (e.g., voting, signing petitions) (Metzger & Smetana, 2010). Both theory and research suggest that empathy and responsibility are central to the promotion of civic engagement (Smith et al., 2018; Carlo et al., 2010; Pratt et al., 2003; Verplanken & Holland, 2002), with research typically indicating that individuals who are higher in empathy, or hold greater social-responsibility values, tend to engage in greater levels of prosocial and civic behaviours (Luengo Kanacri et al., 2016; Eisenberg et al., 2006; Hoffman, 2000). Hence, empathy, social responsibility, and civic engagement are considered three closely related constructs (Panke & Stephens, 2018; Segal, 2011; Ehrlich & Jacoby, 2009).

2.2 The Importance of Empathy, Social Responsibility, and Civic Engagement

An array of national and international research attests that greater levels of empathy and 'other-oriented' values and behaviours are associated with a wealth of positive personal, interpersonal, and societal benefits (Wagaman, 2011; Shaffer & Kipp, 2010; Albanesi et al., 2007; Balsano, 2005; Miller & Eisenberg, 1988). For example, at the personal level, an accumulation of research has found significant associations between empathic or civic responding and greater cognitive and emotional development (Malin & Pos, 2015; Schmidt et al., 2007; Lerner et al., 2005; Checkoway et al., 2005; Caprara et al., 2000). In particular, higher levels

of empathy and civic responding have been linked to greater academic performance among children and adolescents – including greater school attendance, increased motivation for learning, and higher grades or test scores (Ballard et al., 2018; Gerbino et al., 2018; Miles & Stipek, 2006; Zins et al., 2004; Caprara et al., 2000; Johnson et al., 1998; Wentzel, 1993). Similarly, empathy and civic engagement have been found to promote greater physical and psychological well-being among young people (Wray-Lake et al., 2017; Konrath, 2014; Balsano, 2005). Specifically, youth who show higher levels of empathy have been found to evidence greater resilience to mental illness (Kim & Morgül, 2017; Wray-Lake et al., 2017; Anderson et al., 2014; Stracuzzi & Mills, 2010), increased self-esteem (Zuffiano et al., 2014; Fry et al., 2012; Yates & Youniss, 1996), reduced stress (Taylor et al., 2006), and improved physical health (Aknin et al., 2013; Schreier et al., 2013; Brown et al., 2003). Similarly, other research links engagement in prosocial and civic activities, such as volunteerism, charity giving, and other acts of kindness, with higher levels of psychological well-being, including greater happiness, life satisfaction, and positive emotionality (Martela & Ryan, 2016; Jenkinson et al., 2013; Borgonovi, 2008; Brown & Kasser, 2005).

In addition to these personal benefits, there is now a large body of evidence to suggest that empathy, responsibility, and civic engagement also have interpersonal and societal advantages (Hylton, 2018; Rossi et al., 2016; Lerner, 2004). First, at the interpersonal level, research typically demonstrates that empathic and civic attitudes or behaviours are associated with greater-quality peer relationships (Spinrad & Eisenberg, 2014; Attili et al., 2010; Clark & Ladd, 2000) and enhanced social competency skills (Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Sallquist et al., 2009; Caprara et al., 2000). Other research indicates that empathy, responsibility values, and civic engagement may serve as important protective factors for youth, acting as deterrents towards engagement in other antisocial behaviours, such as bullying, aggression, and delinquency (Padilla-Walker, Coyne et al., 2015; Raskauskas et al., 2010; Kokko et al., 2006; Eccles & Barber, 1999). Crucially, research also suggests that empathic attitudes and values may not only lead to greater interpersonal helping (Carlo et al., 2010; Eisenberg et al., 2009; Pratt et al., 2003) but also promote more sensitive helping – helping which is more responsive and attuned to the other person's needs (Batson et al., 2004).

Similarly, greater levels of empathic or civic responding are linked to more positive social outcomes at the wider societal level. For instance, greater individual empathy and civic engagement are associated with increased belongingness and social connectedness (Cicognani et al., 2014; Headley & Sangganjanavanich 2014; Balsano, 2005; Keyes, 1998). Empathy and civic responding are also related to lower levels of prejudice (Miklikowska, 2017; Dovidio et al., 2010; Nesdale et al., 2005) and reduced social isolation (Balsano, 2005; Mondak & Gearing, 1998). Empathy, responsibility, and civic engagement are purported to play key roles in fostering democracy and social cohesion among individuals in society, and thereby promoting greater social capital (Rivera & Santos, 2016; Putnam, 2000). Indeed, it is contended that empathy and civic responding are not just important for developing enriched, caring communities, but are essential for promoting positive societal change (Hylton, 2018; Levine, 2013). Thus, a strong research base attests to the crucial role that empathy, social responsibility, and civic engagement play in promoting personal development, strengthening interpersonal relationships, and enhancing societal well-being (Hylton, 2018; Rossi et al., 2016; Da Silva et al., 2004; Lerner, 2004).

2.3 Why Cultivate Greater Empathy & Civic Responding Among Young People?

A significant body of research indicates that the empathic or civic processes that individuals experience in their early life may not only impact their future developmental outcomes but also influence their later life responsibility values, empathic understanding, and civic engagement levels (Crocetti et al., 2016; Davis et al., 2016; Harper et al., 2016; Hope & Jagers, 2014; Barchia & Bussey, 2011; Wray-Lake & Syvertsen, 2011; Schmidt et al., 2007; Lerner et al., 2005; Bandura et al., 2003). Evidence shows that greater empathic and civic participation in early life is associated with better psychological, social, and cognitive adjustment throughout one's lifespan (Lenzi et al., 2014; Schmidt et al., 2007; Lerner et al., 2005). Other research indicates that

engagement in empathic or civic responding early in life also bestows individuals with a sense of agency and purpose (Malin & Pos, 2015; Lenzi et al., 2014; Ludden, 2011; Youniss & Yates, 1997), which helps set the stage for greater citizenship and responsibility throughout their lifecourse (Hope & Jagers, 2014; Wray-Lake & Syvertsen, 2011; Duke et al., 2009; Sallquist et al., 2009). Hence, researchers propose that the development of empathy, social responsibility, and civic engagement among young people should be a priority concern, because not only are these processes critical for positive youth development, but, given their relevance for building stronger relationships and communities, they are also fundamental for promoting social democracy (Rossi et al., 2016; Wray-Lake et al., 2016; Lerner et al., 2003; Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998).

Crucially, however, some preliminary evidence suggests that empathy levels and rates of civic or prosocial engagement among young people may be declining (Hylton, 2018; Gudjohnsen, 2016; Putnam, 2016; Levine & Liu, 2015; Kidd, 2013). For instance, in the US, Konrath et al. (2011) carried out longitudinal assessments of empathy levels among college students for over 30 years. Findings from this large, longitudinal study pointed to a consistent decline in empathy values among young people over time (Konrath et al., 2011). Similarly, Putnam's (2000) work observed significant declines in certain forms of civic engagement over the past 50 years. Recent reports from across Europe, America, and Canada indicate that youth show lower levels of empathy and civic engagement, including interest in politics, sense of community, knowledge of current affairs, care for community well-being, participation in group organisations, attendance at community meetings, and volunteering, than older adults (Hylton, 2018; Putnam, 2016; Sloam, 2016; Levine & Liu, 2015; Turcotte, 2015; Pryor et al., 2007; Balsano, 2005; Jennings & Stoker, 2004). Given the wealth of social and developmental benefits associated with empathy and prosocial responding, this apparent decline in active empathy and civic participation is an issue of growing societal importance (Rossi et al., 2016). For these reasons, numerous researchers advocate that future policy and research efforts should concentrate on encouraging and cultivating greater empathy and positive civic values and behaviours among young people (Malin & Pos, 2015; Wray-Lake et al., 2015; Konrath et al., 2011).

2.4 A Social-Ecological Approach to Empathy, Social Responsibility, and Civic Engagement

In line with the growing research and policy interest in promoting greater empathy and civic responding, stronger emphasis has also been placed on establishing a greater conceptual understanding of the development of empathy, social responsibility, and civic engagement among young people (Gudjohnsen, 2016; Rodolfo, 2011; Wilkenfeld et al., 2010). Although research has identified the value of promoting empathy and fostering civic responsibility and behaviour among young people (Hylton, 2018; Konrath et al., 2011), an important step in achieving this aim is to understand the factors that impact the development of empathy, social responsibility, and civic engagement in the first instance (Wray-Lake et al., 2016; Metzger et al., 2015; Hope & Jagers, 2014). Although there are numerous conceptual frameworks available in the literature, one theoretical model which is proposed to offer important insights into the development of empathy, responsibility, and civic engagement among young people is the Bronfenbrenner (1979) social-ecological model.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological systems theory is regarded as one of the most influential theories of child development (Espelage, 2014). It proposes that a child's development and behaviour are influenced by the interaction of their individual characteristics with multiple, interacting environmental contexts over time (Hong & Espelage, 2012; Wilkenfeld et al., 2010). Specifically, these contexts are regarded as the system of relationships that form the child's environment, and can range from micro- (e.g., immediate family context, peer group, school environment) to macro-level factors (e.g., the wider societal landscape, cultural norms) (Gudjohnsen, 2016; Espelage, 2014). These different systems are also proposed to be interdependent, in that they interact to influence development (Wilkenfeld et al., 2010). Hence, the social ecological model proposes that youth's development is both directly and indirectly impacted by their relationship with their social environment (Wilkenfeld et al., 2010).

Research suggests that this socio-ecological framework may offer important insights into the development and expression of empathy and civic responsibility and behaviour among young people. First, research has indicated that the development of empathy, social responsibility, and civic engagement appears to be heavily influenced by youth's social environments (Spinrad & Eisenberg, 2014; Zaki, 2014; Knafo & Plomin, 2006), as findings from numerous research studies report that empathic or civic responding is malleable, and capable of deviating and fluctuating across time, culture, and context (Schachner et al., 2018; Fu et al., 2017; Chopik et al., 2016; Machackova et al., 2016; Konrath et al., 2011; Singer & Lamm, 2009; Wentzel et al., 2007). Additionally, although each ecological system is purported to play a significant part in influencing young people's empathy, responsibility, and civic engagement levels, recent research has emphasised the role that youth's micro-systems (e.g. family, schools, communities etc.) play in impacting their empathic and civic development (Rossi et al., 2016; Evans & Smokowski, 2015; Plenty et al., 2015; Harper et al., 2014; Lenzi et al., 2013; Chan, 2011; Wray-Lake & Syvertsen, 2011; Wilkenfeld et al., 2010; Torney-Purta et al., 2007). In particular, a large array of research suggests that parent (Carlo et al., 2017; Harper et al., 2016; Lai et al., 2015), school (Evans & Smokowski, 2015; Jaureguizar et al., 2013), peer (Farrell et al., 2017; Miklikowska, 2017), and community (Jessor & Turbin, 2014; Lenzi et al., 2013; O'Brien and Kauffman, 2013; Albanesi et al., 2007) contexts may exert paramount effects on youth's empathic and civic development, due to their proximal relationship (Wilkenfeld et al., 2010).

2.5 Limitations Associated with the Youth Empathy, Social Responsibility, and Civic Engagement Literature Base

A large body of evidence suggests that empathy, social responsibility, and civic engagement are key to improving social well-being and developing caring communities (Hylton, 2018; Levine, 2013). A wealth of research also attests that empathy and civic engagement contribute to greater emotional, cognitive, and social development among young people (Eisenberg et al., 2016; Cicognani et al., 2014; Lenzi et al., 2014; Spinrad & Eisenberg, 2014; Wagaman, 2011). Due to the volume and strength of research connecting higher levels of empathy and civic responding with more positive youth development and increased social capital, it is proposed that the promotion of empathic and civic behaviours among young people should be a primary objective for researchers, policymakers, and service providers. However, understanding of how empathy, social responsibility, and civic behaviour develop and grow during childhood and adolescence is limited by a number of important research gaps (Davis, 2018; Miklikowska et al., 2011). This lack of knowledge in turn impedes the development of effective programmes and initiatives that can help promote greater empathic and prosocial and civic behaviour among young people.

First, a considerable body of evidence indicates that youth's empathy and civic values and behaviours are heavily influenced by the proximal social systems and contexts to which they are exposed (e.g., parents, peers, schools, communities) (Davis, 2018; Silke et al., 2018; Carlo et al., 2017; Plenty et al., 2015; Zaki, 2014; Lenzi et al., 2014; Lenzi et al., 2013; Chan, 2011; Wilkenfeld et al., 2010; Torney-Purta et al., 2007). Unfortunately, research is less clear about which aspects of these social contexts are most strongly related to youth's empathic or civic responding – information which is important for informing the development of effective services or policy initiatives. For instance, parents are widely recognised as one of the most important socialisers of youth empathy and civic engagement (Davis, 2018; Nie et al., 2016; You et al., 2015; Coyne et al., 2014). However, research indicates that a variety of parental practices, such as parental warmth or attachment (Bebiroglu et al., 2013; Duke et al., 2009; Laible et al., 2004; Mark et al., 2002), modelling or encouragement of empathy or prosocial behaviours (Jessor & Turbin, 2014; McGinley et al., 2010; Hastings et al., 2007), communication styles (Carlo et al., 2017; Miklikowska & Hurme, 2011) and disciplinary practices (Laible et al., 2008; Hoffmann, 2000) significantly impact the expression of empathy, responsibility, and prosocial or civic behaviour among children and adolescents. Knowledge is markedly lacking about which of these practices exert the strongest effects on youth's civic or empathic values and behaviours. Similarly, although research suggests that other social systems, such as youth's school, peer, and community contexts also have important

associations with youths' civic and empathic responding, little is known about which of these social contexts exert the most substantial effects on youths' civic and empathic development (see Rossi et al., 2016; Wray-Lake et al., 2016). This lack of insight into the comparative effects that different social systems exert on youths' empathic and civic attitudes, values, and behaviours is a major barrier impeding the advancement of knowledge in this area (Dolan et al., 2017; Wray-Lake et al., 2016; Metzger et al., 2015), and further research is needed to address this limitation and increase our understanding of these relationships.

The current literature base is further limited by the paucity of research exploring how these social systems and contexts impact both youth's empathic or social values and their civic behaviours (Cuff et al., 2016). Although empathy, social responsibility, and civic and prosocial responding are considered to be closely related processes (Segal, 2011; Ehrlich & Jacoby, 2009; Eisenberg et al., 2009), research indicates that these concepts are frequently not assessed together (Cuff et al., 2016; Vasconcelos et al., 2012). For example, a recent systematic review, which examined the relations between youths' psychological traits or social contexts and their empathic and prosocial responding, found that out of 168 papers, only 30 included independent assessments of both empathy and prosocial responding (Silke et al., 2018). Furthermore, as researchers also propose that empathy and responsibility may be central to the promotion of greater civic or prosocial action (Smith et al., 2018; Bernhardt & Singer, 2012; Ehrlich & Jacoby, 2009), the lack of understanding of how empathy and social responsibility values mediate or moderate the relationship between youths' social environments and their civic behaviours is considered another key limitation affecting this research area (Silke et al., 2018). Further research that addresses these limitations and expands knowledge in this area is needed, in order to help inform the development of effective practices and programmes that can help promote greater empathic responding, social concern, and civic engagement among young people.

Furthermore, in addition to the role that the proximal social context (e.g. parent, peer, school, and community) plays in shaping youth's empathic and civic responding, research suggests that the cultural context in which youth are embedded also has an important impact on their corresponding empathic or civic attitudes and behaviours (Ramey et al., 2017; Estevez et al., 2016; Schwartz et al., 2013; Wilkenfeld et al., 2010; Albanesi et al., 2007). More specifically, research has indicated that youth's empathic and civic responding varies across different cultures and nationalities (Chopik et al., 2016; Mesurado et al., 2014; Busch & Hofer, 2011), and suggests that culture may moderate the relationship between youth's proximal contextual environments and their civic or empathic attitudes, values, and behaviours (Jessor & Turbin, 2014; Brittian et al., 2013). Recently, however, it has been observed that the majority of research in the area of youth empathy or prosociality appears to have been carried out with US cultural groups (Silke et al., 2018; Chopik et al., 2016). This lack of culturally diverse research is cited as an important limitation, as it may impede knowledge about how empathy is socialised among other cultural groups (Silke et al., 2018; Chopik et al., 2016). Little research has examined empathy and prosocial or civic responding in an Irish context (see Harrington & O'Connell, 2016; Kennedy, 2013). Thus, knowledge and understanding about how empathy and prosocial or civic responding are socialised among Irish adolescents is markedly limited.

Finally, it is important to note that a small body of evidence has emerged to suggest that youth's empathic and prosocial or civic attitudes or behaviours are not expressed equally across all situations and contexts (Estevez et al., 2016; Zaki, 2014; Melloni et al., 2013). In particular, adolescents have been found to show differences in their level of empathic and prosocial responding depending on their relationship with the target (e.g., family, friends, or strangers) or other situational or cultural factors (Fu et al., 2017; Machackova et al., 2016; Padilla-Walker, Coyne et al., 2015; Mesurado et al., 2014; Padilla-Walker et al., 2014; Jaureguizar et al., 2013). However, while the importance of understanding how and why individual differences in empathic and prosocial responding occur is well recognised in the literature (Carlo et al., 2017; Harper et al., 2016; Lai et al., 2015), much of the research on this topic is quantitative. Qualitative research investigations exploring young people's opinions and ideas about empathy and prosocial or civic responding are relatively scarce. Because it is important to consult young people on matters relevant to them, in order to incorporate their voice into research and practice and open the way for new directions of understanding (Zaki, 2014), the lack of

qualitative research in this area is an important limitation, particularly given the growing emphasis now placed on 'youth voice' and 'youth empowerment' (Richards-Schuster & Pritzker, 2015).

2.6 Aims of the Current Research Study

The aim of this study is to contribute to the current research base on youth empathy and civic engagement and to expand our knowledge about empathic and civic responding among young people in Ireland. This research consists of a separate quantitative and qualitative investigation of how different social systems impact young people's empathy, social responsibility values, and civic behaviours in an Irish context.

The first study is an empirical quantitative investigation with 700 young people recruited from across the Republic of Ireland. It uses a cross-sectional (survey) design in order to measure and understand the current levels of empathy, social responsibility, and civic engagement expressed by young people in Ireland, and to investigate how different social contexts and relationships impact these empathic attitudes, responsibility values, and civic engagement levels. Specifically, the aim of this study is to identify which aspects of the social environment (e.g., parents, peers, schools, communities) are most likely to impact the expression of empathy, social responsibility, or civic engagement among young people in Ireland. This study will also examine whether the impact that these social systems or networks have on youth's civic behaviour is explained (e.g., mediated) by changes in youth's empathy and social responsibility values.

The second study is a qualitative exploration into the expression of empathy and prosocial or civic engagement among young people in Ireland. This research uses focus group discussions with 29 young people to seek their views and opinions about the development and expression of empathy and prosocial or civic behaviour among young people in Ireland. Its aims are to explore young people's understanding of empathy and prosocial or civic behaviour, probe youths' perceptions of how and why empathic or civic behaviour is or is not expressed, and to ask young people how they think greater empathy or prosocial responding can best be promoted in society.

03

Quantitative Study

This study sets out to extend the current research base by exploring the comparative effects that a variety of social systems exert on youth's empathy, social responsibility values, and civic engagement levels. In particular, this study aims to identify which aspects of the social environment (e.g., parents, peers, schools, or communities) positively impact empathic and civic responding among young people in Ireland.

More specifically, it will compare how parent (*Parental Warmth, Family Democratic Climate, Parent Social Responsibility Values, Parent Civic Engagement*), peer (*Quality Friendship, Prosocial Friend Norms, Peer Connectedness*), school (*Classroom Climate, Classroom Social Analysis, Perspective Taking Opportunities*), and community (*Neighbourhood Opportunities, Community Connectedness, Intergenerational Relationships*) contexts influence youths' (*Affective & Cognitive*) empathic attitudes, social responsibility values (*Social Concern & Social Dominance Orientation*), and levels of civic engagement (*Current Civic Behaviours, Online Civic Behaviours*). Additionally, this research aims to examine how empathy and social responsibility mediate the connection between youth's social contexts (e.g., parent, peer, school, community) and their civic behaviours.

Specifically, the current study sets out to answer three main research questions:

1. What are the current levels of empathy, social responsibility values, and civic behaviour expressed by young people in Ireland?

2. Which aspects of parent, peer, school, and community contexts are associated with youth's empathy, social responsibility values, and civic engagement levels?

3. Do empathy and social responsibility mediate the relationship between these parent, peer, school, and community contexts and youth's civic engagement?

Other secondary research objectives include:

- To identify any gender differences in young people's empathic attitudes, responsibility values, and civic engagement.

- To explore potential associations between youths' participation in extracurricular activities and their empathic or civic responding.

3.1 Method

This research employed a cross-sectional (survey) design to assess how adolescents' social environments (e.g., parents, peers, schools, and communities) influenced their self-reported empathic attitudes, social responsibility values, and civic behaviours.

3.1.1 Participants

A total of 700 (349 male, 345 female, 6 other) adolescents from 12 public secondary schools in the Republic of Ireland participated in this research. Schools from all four Irish provinces (Connacht, Leinster, Munster, Ulster) were recruited to the study, and youth were recruited from within participating schools. The distribution of students from across the four Irish provinces is presented in Figure 1. All participants were enrolled in their second year of secondary education and were aged 12–16 years (M = 13.75, SD = 0.53). Most (88%) young people identified as being Irish, while 8% had other European nationalities and 4% had non-European nationalities. The majority of young people identified as Catholic (see Figure 2) and reported living with both parents (see Figure 3). Additionally, while the majority of participants (94%) reported having at least one sibling, 6% indicated that they were from only-child families. Notably, while 91% reported having more than three close friends, 7% reported having one or two and 2% reported having none. Finally, 45% of youth reported that their mother had received some college education (see Figure 4).

■ Connacht	■ Catholic	■ Father
■ Munster	■ Christian	■ Other Guardian
■ Ulster	■ Non-Religious	■ Both Parents
■ Leinster	■ Other	■ Mother
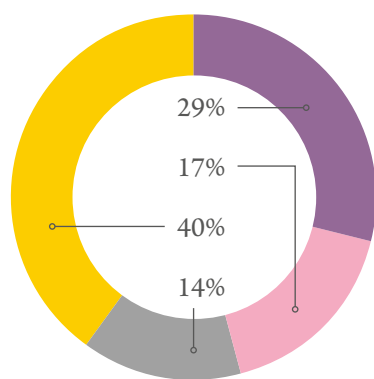
Figure 1. Percentage of participants recruited from each Irish province
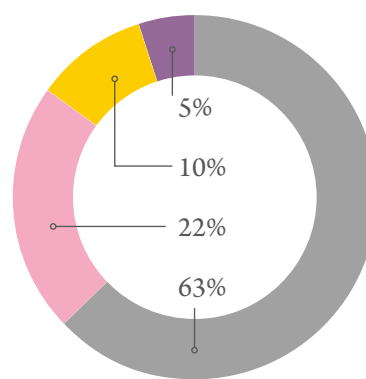
Figure 2. Adolescents' self-reported religious orientation
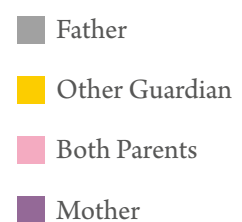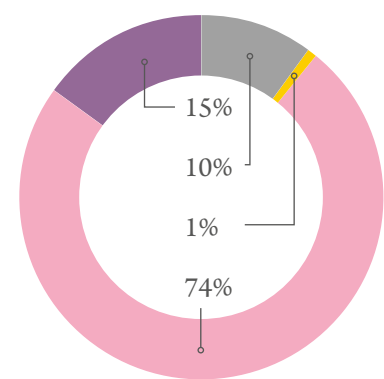
Figure 3. Percentage adolescents living with both parents, a single parent, or other guardian

Mother's Highest Level of Education
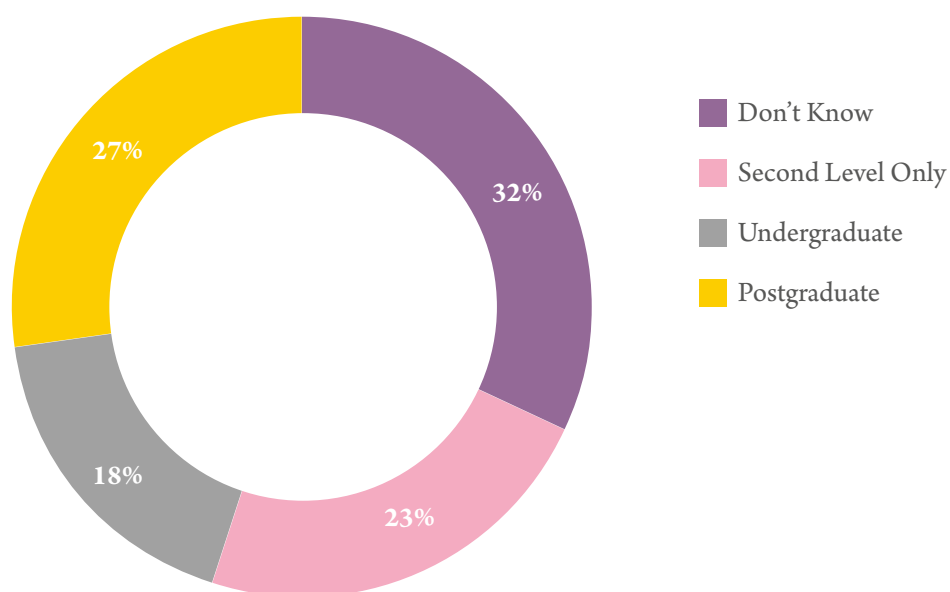
Figure 4. Adolescents' reports of their mother's education levels

3.1.2 Materials

A number of survey materials were employed to assess the various constructs of interest (contextual influencers [parent, peer, school, community], empathy, social responsibility, and civic engagement). All constructs were operationalised using established self-report scales that were validated and employed in previous research studies.

Demographic Information: An array of demographic information (nationality, age, gender, religion, number of siblings or close friends, level of mother's education, and living situation) was collected from each participant. These background characteristics were gathered in order to generate the socio-demographic profile of the participants presented above. Participants were also asked to indicate how frequently they engaged in a number of extracurricular activities, including playing sports with a team or club, learning to play a musical instrument, spending time at a youth club, participating in religious activities, engaging with social media, playing violent video games, attending grinds, or participating in performing arts or drama clubs. Previous research has linked youths' participation in such extracurricular activities to empathy and prosocial or civic engagement (Ramey et al., 2017; Bruner et al., 2014; Hardy et al., 2012; Albanesi et al., 2007).

Parental Influences: A number of separate measures were used to assess potential parental influences: Parental Warmth, Family Democratic Climate, Parent Social Responsibility, and Parent Civic Engagement. *Parental Warmth* was assessed using a two-item Likert scale developed by Mogro-Wilson (2008). Participants were asked to rate the degree to which their mother and father were warm and loving toward them, on a scale of 1 to 5, where higher scores were indicative of greater maternal and paternal warmth. Responses on maternal and paternal warmth are summed to create an overall index of parental warmth. *Family Democratic Climate* (Wray-Lake et al., 2015) was assessed on a 4-item Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, where higher scores were indicative of greater levels of authoritative parenting (e.g., My parents/guardians respect my opinions; My parents/guardians let me have a say, even if they disagree). *Parent Social Responsibility* (Flanagan, 2013) was assessed through six items which measure youth's perceptions of parental encouragement of social concern and responsibility values. Adolescents responded on a scale ranging from 1 to 5, where higher scores were

indicative of greater parental promotion of social responsibility values. Example items include 'My parents/ guardians encourage me to be helpful to others, especially the less fortunate' and 'My parents/guardians encourage me to treat everyone equally'. *Parent Civic Engagement* (Flanagan et al., 2007) was assessed by a 3-item scale, ranging from 1–5. Higher scores indicated greater parental engagement in community and civic behaviours (e.g., 'My parents/guardians do volunteer work in the community', 'My parents/guardians are active in the community'). All scales had been previously validated in similar research, with demonstrated reliability estimates.

Peer Influences: In order to assess the effects that various aspects of the peer context may exert on youth empathy, social responsibility, and civic engagement, a number of separate indicators were measured. *Quality Friendship* was measured using the Trusted Friendship scale by Syvertsen, Flanagan and Stout (2009), which assessed the quality of adolescents' peer relationships (e.g., 'I have friends I can trust to keep promises'; 'I have friends I can trust to keep a secret'). Adolescents rated four items, on a scale of 1–5, where higher scores indicated experiencing greater-quality friendships. *Prosocial Friend Norms* (Farrell et al., 2017) were assessed with a 6-item Likert scale. Adolescents were asked to indicate how often their friends engaged in prosocial activities (e.g., 'Say nice things or compliment people just to be nice?'; 'Help people without expecting something back?'), on a scale of 1–5. Higher scores were indicative of greater prosocial norms among adolescent friendship groups. *Peer Connectedness* was measured using an 8-item Likert scale (Aldridge et al., 2016), which examines youth's perceptions of the level of social support they receive from other students at their school (e.g., 'At this school I get along with other students'; 'At this school, students support me'). Items are scored on a scale of 1–5, and summed to reveal a scale total. Higher scores are indicative of higher levels of perceived peer support.

School Influences: Several aspects of the school climate were assessed through the use of individual Likert scales. First, *Student School Engagement* (Konold et al., 2017) was assessed through the use of six items, which ranged on a scale from 1–4. Students were asked to indicate the extent to which they engaged at school (e.g., 'I usually finish my homework'; 'Getting good grades is important to me'), where higher scores were representative of higher levels of school engagement. Flanagan et al.'s (2007) *Social Analysis* scale was employed to measure the extent of civic education that adolescents received in their school classes (e.g., 'In our classes, we learn about problems in our society and what causes them'; 'In our classes, we talk about current events'). Responses are scored on a 4-item Likert scale, which ranges from 1–5. Higher scores are indicative of greater levels of civic education. *Open Classroom Climate* (Flanagan et al., 2007) was employed to assess the degree to which adolescents are encouraged to share their opinions in class (e.g., 'In our classes, students are encouraged to express opinions'; 'In our classes, students can disagree with the teacher, if they are respectful'). Adolescents were asked to respond to this 4-item scale, on a range of 1–5. Responses were summed to create a scale total, where higher scores were indicative of a more open school classroom environment. Finally, *Perspective Taking Opportunities* (Flanagan et al., 2007) were measured using three items. Scale items ranged from 1–5, and assessed the extent to which adolescents were presented with opportunities in their classes to take the perspective of other students or groups in society (e.g., 'I have opportunities to work in groups on projects with people who are very different from me'; 'We talk about racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination in our classes or other school activities'). Higher scores are indicative of greater perspective-taking opportunities.

Community Influences: Three aspects of youth's local neighbourhood contexts were assessed through three separate scales: Opportunities for Involvement, Community Connectedness, and Intergenerational Relationships. *Neighbourhood Opportunities* were assessed using Opportunities for Involvement and Satisfaction of One's Needs (Serek & Machackova, 2015), a 4-item Likert scale ranging from 1–5. This scale measured the extent to which young people believed that their communities cared about them and provided opportunities for their benefit (e.g., 'In this place, there are many events and situations which involve young people like me'; 'In this place, there are enough initiatives for young people'). *Community Connectedness* (Wray-Lake et al., 2017) is a 6-item scale assessing the degree to which young people feel that individuals in their local communities are connected to one another (e.g., 'Most people trust each other'; 'In general, people

in my community work together to solve problems'). Items are scored on a range of 1–5, and higher scores are representative of a greater sense of neighbourhood connectedness. *Intergenerational Closure* (Sampson & Graif, 2009) was employed as a measure of the extent to which young people trusted and formed relationships with other adults in their local communities (e.g., 'There are adults I could talk about something important'; 'There are adults in this neighbourhood that children can look up to'). Items are scored on a scale of 1–5; higher scores indicate more positive intergenerational relationships.

Empathy: Affective and cognitive empathy were assessed using the *Empathic Concern* and *Perspective Taking* subscales of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1983). The Empathic Concern scale is one of the most widely used measures of affective empathy. Affective empathy is defined as a person's ability to experience or share the emotions and feelings of others (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006). Empathic Concern is assessed through the use of seven items, which are scored on a scale of 1–5 (e.g., 'When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them'; 'I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me'). Higher scores are indicative of higher levels of affective empathy. The Perspective Taking scale is one of the most widely used measures of cognitive empathy and assesses the extent to which a person can understand the thoughts and experiences of another person (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006). Perspective Taking was measured through the use of seven items, which are also scored on a scale of 1–5 (e.g., 'When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while'; 'I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective'). Higher scores are indicative of higher levels of cognitive empathy.

Social Responsibility: Two aspects of social responsibility were assessed in the current research: Social Responsibility Values and Social Dominance Orientation. *Social Responsibility Values* were assessed through the use of the Youth Social Conscience scale (Bebiroglu et al., 2013), a 6-item scale that assesses the sensitivity and sense of responsibility among youth regarding problems in society. Adolescents were asked to indicate the extent to which a number of values (e.g. 'Helping other people'; 'Speaking up for equality') are important to them, on a scale of 1–5. Higher scores were indicative of greater social responsibility values. Youths' *Social Dominance Orientation* was measured using the Social Dominance Orientation scale (Pratto et al., 1994). This scale was employed to measure adolescents' propensity for prejudice and approval for group-based hierarchies (e.g., 'Some groups of people are just more worthy than others'; 'It is ok with me that some groups have fewer resources than others'). This 10-item scale is scored on a range of 1–5, with higher scores being indicative of less prejudicial attitudes (i.e. a lower social dominance orientation).

Civic Engagement: Two aspects of youth civic engagement were assessed in the current study: Online Civic Engagement, and Current (Offline) Youth Civic Behaviour. Current levels of *Youth Civic Behaviour* were measured using the Voight and Torney-Purta (2013) Civic Behaviour Scale. This scale consists of nine items, scored on a scale of 1–5, which measure the extent to which students voluntarily engage in a number of civic behaviours both in and outside school (e.g., 'Offer to help someone at school'; 'Help make your community a better place for people to live'). Higher scores represent higher levels of current youth civic behaviour. *Online Civic Engagement* was assessed using the 5-item scale developed by Serek and Machackova (2014). Adolescents indicated, on a scale ranging from 1–5, the extent to which they engaged in online civic activities, such as signing an online petition or following social issues through social media (e.g., 'Discuss societal or political content on the internet'; 'Follow a group on Facebook, or other social network, dealing with social or political issues'). Higher scores on this scale indicate higher youth engagement in online civic behaviours.

3.1.3 Procedure

The procedure for the current study was carried out in four distinct stages: Obtainment of Ethical Approval, Recruitment of Schools, Recruitment of Participants, Distribution of Questionnaires.

Ethical Approval: Before commencing this research, full consideration of any ethical issues pertinent this research was undertaken, and measures were proposed to address all potential concerns. In particular, the researchers ensured that informed parental consent and personal assent would be sought from all adolescents participating in this research, and that all data would be collected on an anonymous and confidential basis. Full ethical approval for this research was granted by the Research Ethics Committee at the National University of Ireland, Galway on 27 September 2017.

Procedure for School Recruitment: Post-primary schools located in the Republic of Ireland, as listed on the Department of Education and Skills website, were invited to participate in this study, using a stratified random sampling approach. Stratified random sampling was used to recruit both single-sex and mixed-sex schools from across the four provinces of Ireland (Ulster, Munster, Connacht, and Leinster), to ensure that the composition of selected schools was nationally representative. To increase the representativeness of the sample, stratified random sampling was also used to ensure that disadvantaged schools, formally registered on the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme, were also included. Following school selection, contact was established with each selected school via a posted letter and email invitation addressed to the acting school principal. The letter detailed the purpose of the research study and outlined the level of involvement that was being sought from the school. A follow-up phone call was made to the school within two or three days to discuss the study in more detail. If the school agreed to participate, they were asked to designate a member of staff who would act as a liaison between the students and the researcher. In total, 52 schools were invited to participate, with 12 agreeing (two girls-only, one boys-only, and nine mixed-gender schools). Three schools from Connacht, two from Ulster, three from Munster, and four from Leinster took part in this research. Two were designated DEIS schools. This indicated a general response rate of approximately 23% from schools.

Procedure for Participant Recruitment: All second-year students from participating secondary schools were invited to take part in this research. First, the aims and objectives of the study were verbally outlined to students by the researcher or teacher in their individual subject classes. The researcher also provided students with a written, detailed description of what would be required of them should they choose to participate in the study. All students were notified that they were being invited to take part in a survey on youth empathy and social values. Students were informed that the survey would ask them about their values and prosocial behaviours, as well as their perceptions of their friends, parents, peers, school, and community. All students were given an opportunity to ask questions about the research project and process. Any student who expressed interest in participating in the study at this stage was given a letter containing a parent information sheet and a parent consent form. Interested students were asked to return a signed parental consent form to the school before the onset of the study. A total of 1,177 students were invited to take part in this research. This indicates a general response rate of 63% from students in participating schools. See Figure 5 for a diagrammatic overview of the recruitment process.
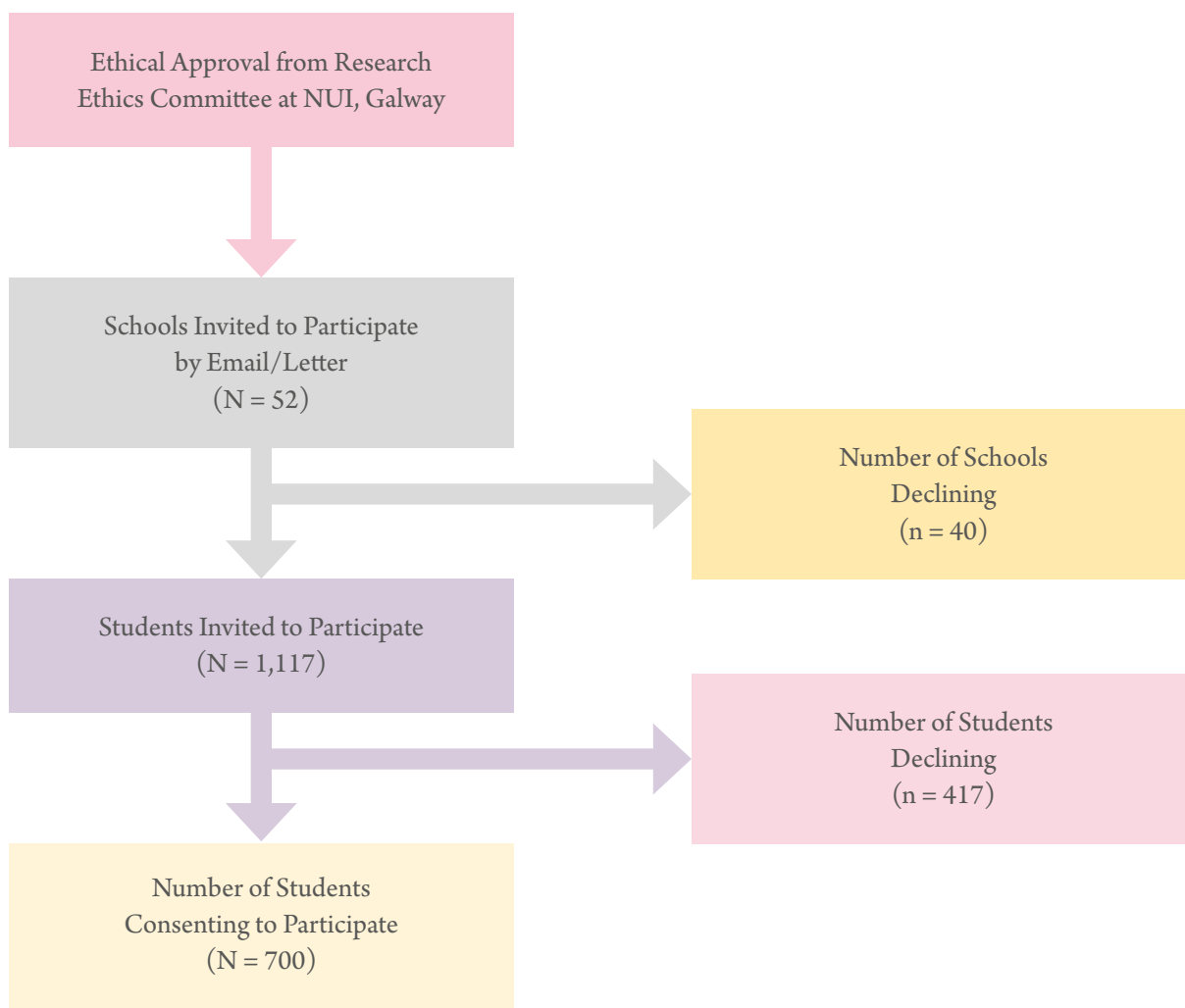
Figure 5. Diagram of participant recruitment and sample retention summary

Distribution of Questionnaires: The lead researcher returned to all participating schools within one to three weeks after the distribution of the information sheets. All students who had returned signed parental consent forms were gathered as a group in a specified classroom. These students were again reminded of the aims and requirements of the study. They were then given an opportunity to ask the researcher any questions that they had in relation to their participation. Students were reminded that they could withdraw from the study at any time and that they were free to skip any question that they did not feel comfortable answering. Students were also reminded that the questionnaire was confidential and anonymous. Students were then asked to indicate whether they still wished to take part and to assent to participation. No student withdrew from the study at this time.

Pen-and-paper questionnaires containing the survey items were then distributed to all participating students. The researcher instructed students to list their (anonymous) demographic details on the first page. Students were informed that the questionnaire contained eight sections and were asked to complete each section as accurately and honestly as possible. Students were encouraged to ask the researcher to explain any words or terminology that they did not understand. The questionnaire took approximately 30–40 minutes to complete. The researcher and a designated member of school staff remained with the students during the process. Once students had completed the questionnaire, they were thanked for their participation and debriefed.

3.2 Results

3.2.1 Overview of the Statistical Procedures

These statistical analyses were carried out in three distinct stages. First, preliminary analyses were performed on a small subset of the current sample (n = 167). These were necessary in order to identify which aspects of the social environment were most likely to significantly impact the expression of empathy, social responsibility, or civic engagement among young people in Ireland. In this respect, these preliminary analyses acted as a scoping exercise to identify the proximal social contexts which appear to be most relevant for promoting empathy and civic engagement in the Irish context. Once the relevant social contexts were identified, advanced structural equation modelling was used on the data collected from the remainder of the sample (n = 533) to test whether empathy and social responsibility mediated the relationship between these social contexts and youth's civic behaviour.[1] Finally, other supplementary analyses were carried out on the main sample to determine whether youth's demographic characteristics or extracurricular participation have an impact on their empathic or civic responses. All missing data was handled using the EM algorithm. All quantitative data was analysed using a combination of PASW Statistics 22 (IBM, 2017), and AMOS v.23 (IBM, 2017) software.

3.2.2 Preliminary Analyses – Multiple Regressions

The aim of these preliminary analyses was to compare how different parent (*Parental Warmth, Family Democratic Climate, Parent Social Responsibility Values, Parent Civic Engagement*), peer (*Trusted Friendship, Prosocial Friend Norms, Peer Connectedness*), school (*Classroom Climate, Social Analysis, Perspective-Taking Opportunities*), and community (*Neighbourhood Opportunities, Community Connectedness, Intergenerational Closure*) contexts influence youths' (*Affective & Cognitive*) empathic attitudes, social responsibility values (*Social Responsibility, Social Dominance Orientation*), and levels of civic engagement (*Current Civic Behaviours, Online Civic Behaviours*) in the Irish context. In order to achieve this aim, multiple regression analyses were carried out on the data collected from a sub-sample of 167 (83 male, 83 female, 1 questioning) adolescents.

Descriptive Overview of Adolescents' Mean Responses: Prior to conducting the preliminary multiple regression analyses, it was necessary to examine the descriptive statistics of all the measures included in the current study. First, mean scores on all outcome measures (e.g., empathy, social responsibility, civic engagement) were reviewed. As can be seen in Table 2, youth evidenced high levels of social responsibility values and relatively low levels of social dominance.[2] Similarly, youth showed moderately high scores on both the affective and cognitive empathy measures. However, youth reported low levels of current engagement in civic behaviours, as well as markedly low levels of online civic engagement. Next, outcome measures were assessed for internal reliability, where all measures showed acceptable levels (i.e. $\alpha > 0.60$). Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, reliability (α), and normal distributions (skewness and kurtosis) are displayed in Table 2.

---

[1] The exact factors tested in the structural equation model were dictated by the findings of the preliminary investigation.

[2] High scores on this scale represent lower levels of social dominance (i.e., less prejudice).

Contextual Factors	Mean	SD	Possible Range	Attained Range	Skew	Kurtosis	(α)
Social Responsibility Values	25.54	3.81	6-30	9-30	-0.85	0.88	0.86
Social Dominance Orientation	37.16	9.16	10-50	10-50	-0.62	-0.02	0.89
Affective Empathy	25.64	4.83	7-35	13-35	-0.32	-0.33	0.74
Cognitive Empathy	22.53	4.35	7-35	12-33	0.08	-0.28	0.63
Youth Civic Behaviour	24.75	6.43	9-45	12-43	0.32	-0.16	0.79
Online Civic Engagement	10.46	4.65	5-25	5-25	1.00	0.67	0.81

NOTE: *Minor levels of skewness (> 0.80) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) were evident on two factors.*

Mean responses on youths' perceptions of their parental, peer, school, and community influences were also calculated. As can be seen in Table 3, youth reported high scores on the majority of measures assessing their parental contexts or relationships. In particular, adolescents described experiencing high levels of parental warmth and high levels of democratic parenting. However, while adolescents reported high levels of parental responsibility values, they described low levels of actual parental involvement in civic behaviours. In relation to the peer context, youth evidenced high levels of peer connectedness at school and high-quality friendships. Youth also reported moderately high levels of prosocial norms among their friendship groups. In the school context, while adolescents reported high levels of school engagement, these youth only reported experiencing relatively moderate levels of exposure to civic education, opinion sharing, and perspective-taking opportunities in their classrooms. Similarly, in the context of their community environments, while youth reported high levels of connectedness and good-quality intergenerational relationships within their communities, they reported experiencing only a moderate degree of opportunity to engage with their communities. Mean scores, reliability, and normal distributions (skewness and kurtosis) for all contextual measures are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3:
Mean Responses, Standard Deviations (SD), Range, and Normal Distribution of Youths' Reports on Their Social Environments

Contextual Factors	Mean	SD	Possible Range	Attained Range	Skew	Kurtosis	(α)
Parents							
Parental Warmth	9.01	1.28	2-10	5-10	*-1.00*	*-0.10*	*---*
Family Democratic Climate	16.38	3.03	4-20	4-20	*-1.14*	*1.50*	*0.73*
Parent Social Responsibility	30.93	4.05	7-35	15-35	*-1.28*	*1.59*	*0.84*
Parent Civic Engagement	8.73	3.25	3-15	0.21	*-0.21*	*-0.73*	*0.79*
Peers							
Quality Friendships	18.09	2.62	7-20	8-20	*-1.64*	*2.42*	*0.77*
Prosocial Friend Norms	22.68	4.59	6-30	8-30	*-0.49*	*-0.05*	*0.85*
Peer Connectedness	34.38	4.74	8-40	17-40	*-0.80*	*0.13*	*0.87*
School							
School Engagement	20.09	2.84	6-24	11-24	*-0.78*	*0.36*	*0.86*
Social Analysis	15.19	3.14	4-20	5-20	*-0.47*	*-0.05*	*0.84*
PT Opportunities	10.08	2.75	3-15	3-15	*-0.24*	*-0.50*	*0.65*
Classroom Climate	14.97	3.62	4-20	4-20	*-0.60*	*0.02*	*0.85*
Community							
Neighbourhood Opportunities	14.92	3.55	4-20	5-20	*-0.69*	*0.24*	*0.87*
Community Connectedness	31.08	5.09	8-40	17-40	*-0.28*	*-0.49*	*0.84*
Intergenerational Closure	20.32	3.45	5-25	10-25	*-0.55*	*-0.26*	*0.82*

NOTE: *Minor levels of skewness (> 0.80) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) were evident on four factors. Parental Warmth was not assessed for reliability, as this factor was composed of fewer than three items.*

Next, correlational analyses were conducted on all contextual measures (*Parental Warmth, Family Democratic Climate, Parent Social Responsibility, Parent Civic Engagement, Quality Friendships, Prosocial Friend Norms, Peer Connectedness, School Engagement, Classroom Climate, Social Analysis, Classroom Perspective Taking, Neighbourhood Opportunities, Community Connectedness, Intergenerational Closure*) and outcome measures (*Affective Empathy, Cognitive Empathy, Social Responsibility Values, Social Dominance Orientation, Current Civic Behaviour, Online Civic Engagement*) to ensure that the data was suitable for multiple regression analyses. The results of these correlations indicated that these individual contextual indicators were, typically, positively associated with youths' empathic and civic responses,[3] and that no overly strong relationships ($r > 0.9$) appeared to exist between any of the variables. All correlational results are presented in Appendix I. Tolerance (> 0.1) and VIF (< 10) values for all factors were also assessed and found to be adequate, thereby demonstrating that there was no evidence of multicollinearity in the data and that the data was suitable for further regression analyses.

Multiple Regression Analyses: In order to assess how the parental, peer, school, and community contexts influenced adolescents' empathic attitudes, social responsibility values, and civic engagement, a series of multiple regression analyses were carried out. Specifically, separate regression analyses were performed to examine how Parental Warmth, Family Democratic Climate, Parent Social Responsibility, Parent Civic Engagement, Quality Friendships, Prosocial Friend Norms, Peer Connectedness, School Engagement, Classroom Climate, Social Analysis, Classroom Perspective Taking, Neighbourhood Opportunities, Community Connectedness, and Intergenerational Closure predicted each youth outcome (*Affective Empathy, Cognitive Empathy, Social Responsibility, Social Dominance Orientation, Current Civic Behaviour & Online Civic Engagement*). An overview of the analyses conducted is provided in Figure 6.
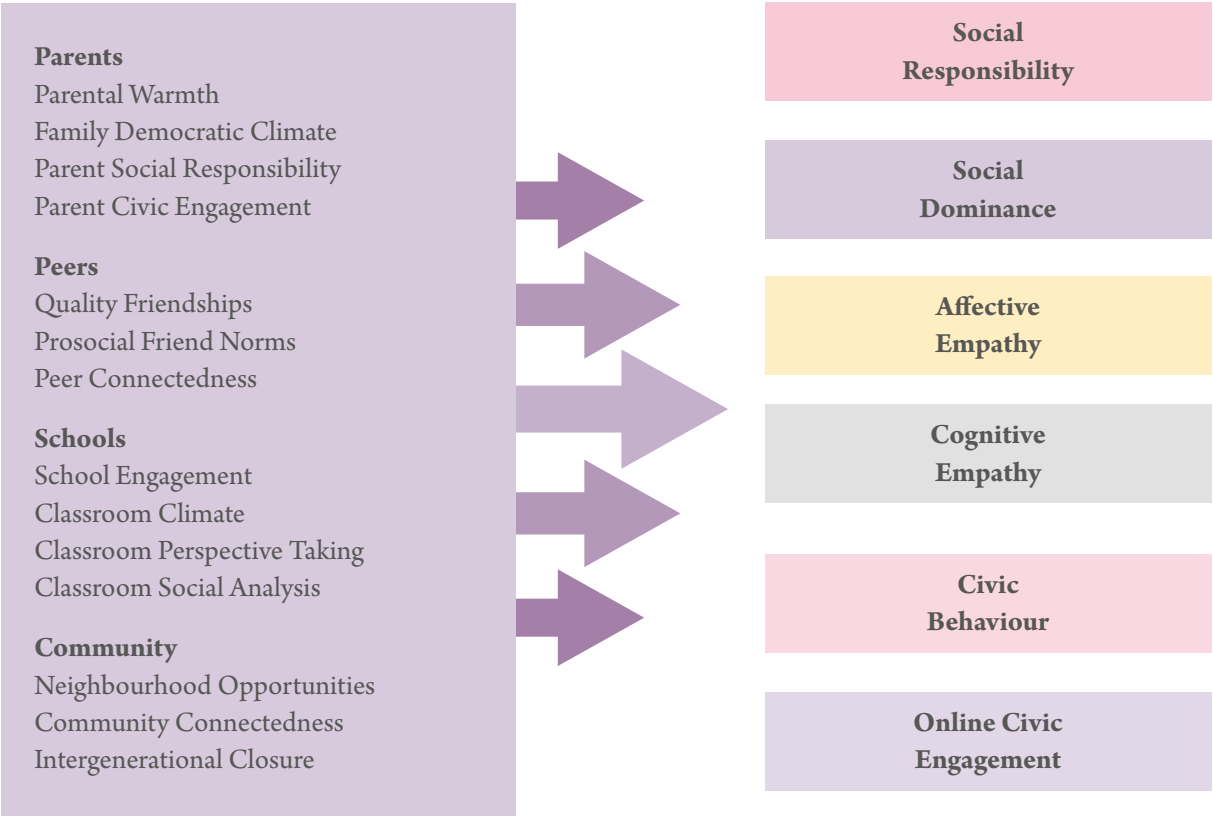
Figure 6. Display Showing the Proposed Regression Model Examining the Relationship between Parent, Peer, School, and Community Contexts and Youths' Empathy, Responsibility, and Civic Engagement

[3] Some notable exceptions were observed. Markedly, parental warmth was found to be significantly associated with only one youth outcome: online civic engagement, with which it had a negative association. Youths' levels of online civic engagement and social dominance attitudes were generally uncorrelated with other factors.

Results from the regression analyses revealed that the specified models were significant in predicting variances in youths' affective empathy, cognitive empathy, social responsibility, and current civic behaviour. Adjusted R^2 values for these models ranged from 0.19, for youths' social responsibility values, to 0.28, for their civic behaviours. R^2 is an assessment of the goodness of fit of a model, and represents the amount of variability in an outcome that can be explained by the model predictors (Field, 2009). However, these models were not significant in predicting youths' social dominance orientation or online civic engagement scores. A table providing a more detailed summary of model results, including R^2, Adjusted R^2, and F values is displayed in Appendix II. Overall, findings indicated that six aspects of youths' social contexts (*Parent Social Responsibility, Parent Civic Engagement, Prosocial Friend Norms, Social Analysis, Classroom Climate*, and *Community Connectedness*) exerted significant, positive effects on adolescents' empathy, social responsibility, and civic engagement responses. More specifically, parent social responsibility was associated with significantly higher levels of youth social responsibility (ß = 0.28, p = 0.002), affective empathy (ß = 0.36, p < 0.001), and cognitive empathy (ß = 0.22, p = 0.01). Additionally, *parents civic engagement* levels were strongly associated with increased levels in youths' civic behaviours (ß = 0.41, p < 0.001), and social responsibility values (ß = 0.17, p = 0.03). One school factor, *social analysis* (ß = 0.23, p = 0.01), and one community factor, *community connectedness* (ß = 0.25, p = 0.01), were also linked with significantly higher levels of youth civic behaviour. Another aspect of the school context, the classroom climate, was found to significantly predict higher levels of both affective (ß = 0.22, p = 0.02) and cognitive (ß = 0.31, p = 0.001) empathy. In relation to the influence of the peer context, prosocial friend norms were observed to have positive effects on both youths' social responsibility values (ß = 0.26, p = 0.004) and their cognitive empathy (ß = 0.29, p = 0.001) skills.

Notably, one negative association between the parental context and youths' civic outcomes was observed. Results indicated that higher levels of parental warmth were associated with more negative social dominance orientation values (ß = -0.24, p = 0.04); however, the overall model for this factor was not significant. Furthermore, six contextual factors (Family Democratic Climate, Trusted Friendship, School Engagement, Perspective Taking Opportunities, Neighbourhood Opportunities, and Intergenerational Closure) were not found to have any significant associations with youth's empathic or civic responding. A visual display of the significant pattern of results from these regression analyses is provided in Figure 7 below. A full overview of all standardised and unstandardised regression weights and corresponding standard errors is presented in Appendix III.

Contextual Factors	Outcomes
Parental Warmth	SOCIAL DOMINANCE
Parent Social Responsibility	SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY VALUES AFFECTIVE EMPATHY COGNITIVE EMPATHY
Parent Civic Engagement	SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY VALUES CIVIC BEHAVIOURS
Classroom Climate	AFFECTIVE EMPATHY COGNITIVE EMPATHY
Social Analysis	CIVIC BEHAVIOURS
Prosocial Friend Norms	SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY VALUES COGNITIVE EMPATHY
Community Connectedness	CIVIC BEHAVIOURS

Figure 7. Significant Associations between Aspects of the Parent, Peer, School, and Community Context and Youths' Empathy, Responsibility, and Civic Engagement

3.2.3 Main Analyses – Structural Equation Modelling

The results of the preliminary analyses suggested that specific aspects of youth's parental, peer, school, and community contexts (*Parent Social Responsibility, Parent Civic Engagement, Prosocial Friend Norms, Social Analysis, Classroom Engagement, Community Connectedness*) appear to have a significant, positive impact on the level of empathy, social responsibility, or civic engagement expressed by youth in Ireland. In order to extend the knowledge obtained from these preliminary investigations and further our understanding of how empathy and social responsibility also impact youth's civic behaviour, structural equation modelling (SEM) was carried out on the data collected from the remaining 533 adolescents (266 male, 262 female, 5 undisclosed). The aim of this structural equation model was two-fold: 1) to investigate whether these parent (Parent Social Responsibility and Parent Civic Engagement), peer (Prosocial Friend Norms), school (Classroom Climate and Social Analysis), and community (Community Connectedness) indicators directly influence youth's (affective and cognitive) empathy, social responsibility values, and current civic behaviours;[4] and: 2) to assess whether these six social contextual factors also have an indirect (i.e., mediated) relationship with youth's current civic behaviour, via youth's affective empathy, cognitive empathy, or social responsibility values.

Descriptive Overview of Adolescents' Mean Responses: Before conducting the structural equation analyses, youth's mean level of responding on all contextual, mediator, and outcome factors were examined (see Table 4 below). In relation to the contextual indicators (*Community Connectedness, Classroom Social Analysis, Classroom Climate, Friend Prosocial Norms, Parent Civic Engagement, Parent Social Responsibility*), a review of these mean scores and scale ranges indicated that youth displayed moderate to high scores on all of these contextual factors, apart from their reports of their parents' civic engagement levels, which were relatively low. Similarly, in relation to the outcome and mediator variables, adolescents reported having relatively high social responsibility values, affective empathy, and cognitive empathy, but low engagement in civic behaviour. A full overview of adolescents' pattern of responding on all measures, including means, standard deviations, scale range, normal distribution, and reliability estimates is provided in Table 4.

Table 4:
Descriptive Statistics, Reliability, and Normal Distributions for all Contextual, Mediator and Outcome Variables

Contextual Factors	Mean	SD	Possible Range	Attained Range	Skew	Kurtosis	(α)
Parent Social Responsibility	30.60	4.43	7-35	10-35	*-1.24*	*1.72*	*0.88*
Parent Civic Engagement	8.14	3.29	3-15	3-15	*0.24*	*-0.82*	*0.79*
Prosocial Friend Norms	22.66	4.58	6-30	6-30	*-0.66*	*0.54*	*0.82*
Classroom Social Analysis	14.84	3.55	4-20	4-20	*-0.64*	*0.09*	*0.86*
Classroom Climate	13.83	4.01	4-20	4-20	*-0.34*	*-0.54*	*0.83*

---

[4] Social Dominance Orientation and Online Civic Behaviours were not included in the main analyses, as the results of the preliminary investigation indicated that these factors were not significantly or positively associated with youth's social contexts.

Contextual Factors	Mean	SD	Possible Range	Attained Range	Skew	Kurtosis	(α)
Community Connectedness	29.84	6.52	8-40	8-40	-0.47	-0.20	0.88
Youth Social Responsibility	24.98	4.39	6-30	6-30	-0.90	0.67	0.89
Affective Empathy	25.96	4.84	7-35	8-35	-0.21	0.02	0.73
Cognitive Empathy	23.16	4.64	7-35	7-35	0.01	0.30	0.66
Civic Behaviour	25.85	7.53	9-45	9-45	0.35	-0.44	0.83

NOTE: *Higher scores on all measures are indicative of more positive responses.*

As can also be seen in Table 4, all factors evidenced good levels of internal consistency, with alpha levels (Cronbach's α) ranging from 0.66 to 0.89. Additionally, while all scales showed acceptable kurtosis levels (< 3), two factors (Parent Social Responsibility and Youth Social Responsibility) showed evidence of skewness (skewness > 0.80) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). However, deviations from normal skewness are to be expected in large sample sizes (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). Therefore, no transformations were carried out on the data.

Overview of Correlational Associations: Prior to testing the hypothesised structural equation model, correlational analyses were also carried out to examine associations between the six contextual indicators and youth's empathy, social responsibility values, and civic behaviours. Specifically, bivariate correlation analyses were conducted to examine the preliminary patterns of associations between the following factors: Parent Social Responsibility, Parent Civic Engagement, Prosocial Friend Norms, Classroom Social Analysis, Classroom Climate, Community Connectedness, Youth Social Responsibility, Affective Empathy, Cognitive Empathy, and Youth Civic Behaviour. Significant, positive associations were observed between all factors. Only one exception was noted: the correlation between affective empathy and parent civic engagement was non-significant (see Table 5 on the next page).

Table 5:
Correlations Between All Contextual, Mediator, and Outcome Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Parent Social Responsibility	---								
2. Parent Civic Engagement	0.31**								
3. Prosocial Friend Norms	0.36**	0.27**							
4. Social Analysis	0.27**	0.27**	0.34**						
5. Classroom Climate	0.25**	0.24**	0.33**	0.53**					
6. Community Connectedness	0.35**	0.40**	0.44**	0.41**	0.47**				
7. Youth Social Responsibility	0.38**	0.18**	0.40**	0.35**	0.30**	0.38**			
8. Affective Empathy	0.31**	0.03	0.31**	0.26**	0.25**	0.28**	0.49**		
9. Cognitive Empathy	0.25**	0.15**	0.32**	0.22**	0.29**	0.35**	0.42**	0.46**	
10. Civic Behaviour	0.26**	0.48**	0.35**	0.32**	0.35**	0.44**	0.41**	0.23**	0.23**

NOTE: $^*p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.001$

Overview of the Proposed Structural Equation Model: In the current research, a multiple mediator structural equation model was tested in order to examine the direct and indirect effects of Parent Social Responsibility, Parent Civic Engagement, Prosocial Friend Norms, Social Analysis, Classroom Climate, and Community Connectedness on youth's civic behaviour. Three mediators (Affective Empathy, Cognitive Empathy, and Social Responsibility) were included in the model (see Figure 8). In order to assess the fit/ adequacy of this proposed model in predicting youth's civic behaviour, assessments of the relevant fit indices (chi-square, RMSEA, CMIN, SRMR, CFI, TLI) were carried out. In addition to these indices of model fit, the Modification Indices (MI) and Expected Parameter Change (EPC) values for all factors and observed items included in the model were reviewed to determine whether additional model parameters should be specified. Model re-specifications were only made provided MI and EPC values were large and theoretical justification for the changes was established (Byrne, 2012). A visual overview of the structural equation model which was tested in the current research is provided in Figure 8. A more detailed overview of the recommendations for determining model fit in structural equation modelling is outlined in Appendix IV.

In order to examine the mediational effects in the model, both indirect and direct effects were evaluated for significance at the $p < 0.05$ level, with 95% confidence intervals (CIs) established via bootstrapping techniques, implemented using 10,000 bootstrap samples (following recommendations specified by Hayes, 2013). Significant mediation was considered to be present at the $p < 0.05$ level or when zero was not contained between the CIs for the indirect path (Preacher et al., 2007). In contrast to traditional approaches to tests of mediation (e.g., Baron & Kenny, 1986), the current statistical approach does not necessitate a significant direct pathway from the predictor to the outcome variable prior to testing for mediation (Westfall et al., 2014; Hayes, 2013; Preacher et al., 2007). A detailed overview of mediation analysis and an example of a simple mediation model are provided in Appendix V.

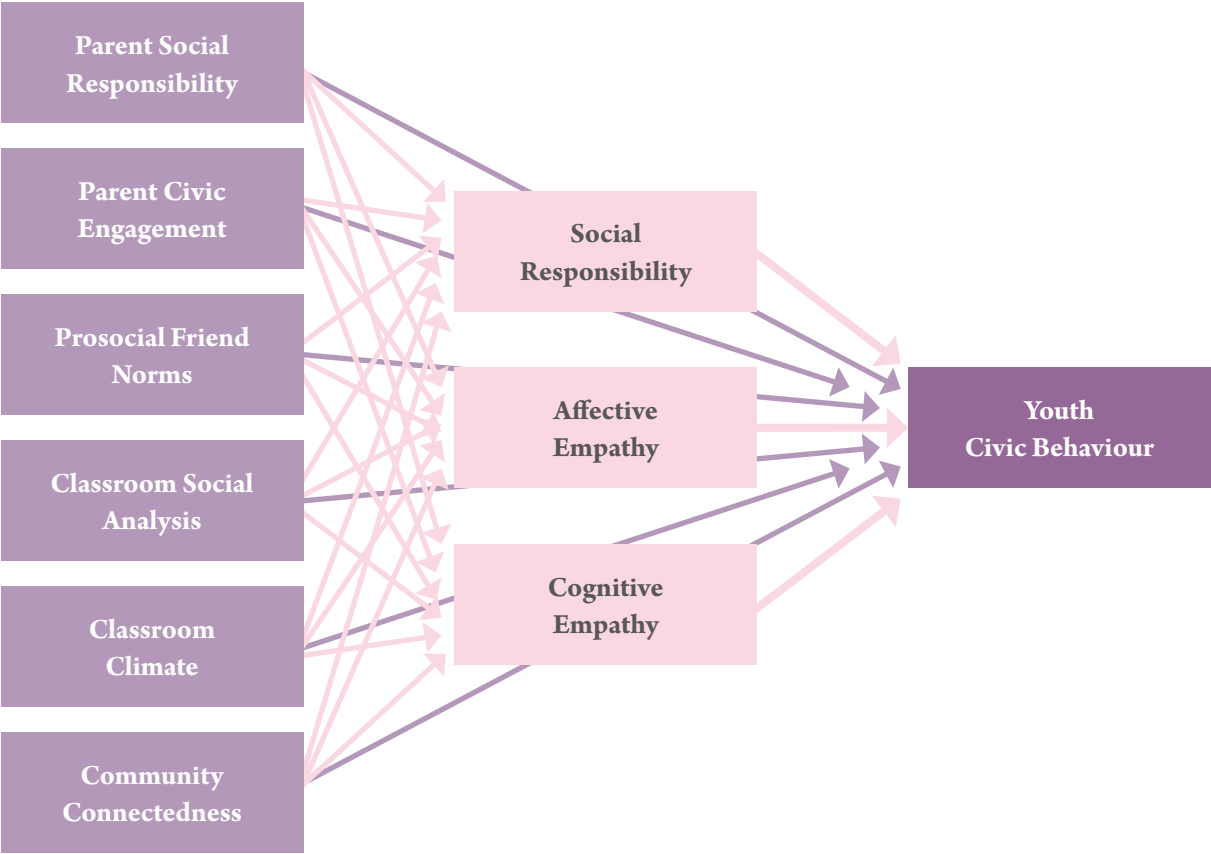Figure 8. Proposed Mediation Model Testing the Direct (———) Effects of the Parent, Peer, School, and Community Contexts on Youth's Civic Behaviours and Indirect Effects (———) Through Affective Empathy, Cognitive Empathy, and Social Responsibility.

Overview of Results from the Structural Equation Model: The mediational model above was specified in order to assess the direct and indirect effects of Parent Social Responsibility (PSR), Parent Civic Engagement (PCE), Prosocial Friend Norms (PFN), Social Analysis (SA), Classroom Climate (CLC), and Community Connectedness (CCN), and the direct effects of Affective Empathy (EC), Cognitive Empathy (PT), and Social Responsibility (SR), on Youth's Civic Behaviour (YCB). The initial test of this mediated model yielded mediocre model fit, $\chi2$ (1727) = 3964.31, p < 0.001; Q = 2.30; RMSEA = 0.049 (90% CI: 0.047, 0.051); CFI = 0.85; TLI = 0.84, SRMR = 0.06 and AIC = 4292.31. However, an examination of the modification indices indicated that a number of additional parameters (e.g., covariance) should be specified to the model to improve model fit (see Appendix VI). Following these additional specifications, the final model evidenced acceptable-to-good model fit: $\chi2$ (1717) = 3395.16, p < 0.001; Q = 1.97; RMSEA = 0.043 (90% CI: 0.041, 0.045); CFI = 0.88; TLI = 0.88, SRMR = 0.06 and AIC = 3743.16. Although the chi square test is significant and the CFI and TLI fit indices are below the recommended cut-off levels of 0.90, all remaining fit indices evidenced excellent model fit.

Overall, when tested, this proposed model was found to account for 55% of the variance in youth's civic behaviour (R^2 = 0.55). In relation to the direct effects, results from this SEM model showed that parent social responsibility exerted significant, positive effects on all mediator variables: affective empathy (β = 0.23, B = 0.23), cognitive empathy (β = 0.13, B = 0.18), and social responsibility (β = 0.21, B = 0.21). However, parent social responsibility was not found to have any significant, direct associations with youth's civic behaviour (p > 0.05). Similarly, community connectedness positively influenced all mediator variables: affective empathy (β = 0.24, B = 0.22), cognitive empathy (β = 0.25, B = 0.30), and social responsibility (β = 0.20, B = 0.18), but had no direct effect on youth's civic behaviour. Likewise, prosocial friend norms significantly predicted higher levels of affective empathy (β = 0.19, B = 0.15), cognitive empathy (β = 0.22, B = 0.23), and social responsibility (β = 0.24, B = 0.19), but did not directly influence civic behaviour. Moreover, classroom climate was found to have a significant effect on cognitive empathy (β = 0.18, B = 0.16), while social analysis appeared to significantly predict greater social responsibility (β = 0.18, B = 0.13). Interestingly, while parent civic engagement did not exert any significant effects on youth's cognitive empathy or social responsibility, higher levels of parent civic engagement were significantly associated with greater civic behaviour (β = 0.42, B = 0.34), but lower affective empathy (β = -0.22, B = -0.15). In relation to youth civic behaviour, only two other factors were found to exert significant, direct effects. Namely, higher levels of cognitive empathy (β = 0.30, B = 0.36) and social responsibility values (β = 0.16, B = 0.14) were significantly associated with greater engagement in civic behaviour. A summary of regression weights (effect sizes), including standard and unstandardised estimates, is provided in Table 6, and a visual overview of all significant, direct effects is presented in Figures 9 and 10.

Table 6:
Standardised and unstandardised regression weights (with standard errors) for the model

Outcome	Predictor	β	B	SE
Affective Empathy				
	Parent Social Responsibility	0.23**	0.23	0.06
	Parent Civic Engagement	-0.22**	-0.15	0.04
	Classroom Climate	0.09	0.06	0.05
	Community Connectedness	0.24**	0.22	0.06
	Social Analysis	0.11	0.08	0.05
	Prosocial Friend Norms	0.19*	0.15	0.05

Outcome	Predictor	β	B	SE
Cognitive Empathy				
	Parent Social Responsibility	0.13*	0.18	0.07
	Parent Civic Engagement	-0.09	-0.08	0.05
	Classroom Climate	0.18*	0.16	0.06
	Community Connectedness	0.25**	0.30	0.08
	Social Analysis	0.02	0.08	0.06
	Prosocial Friend Norms	0.22**	0.23	0.06
Social Responsibility Values				
	Parent Social Responsibility	0.21**	0.21	0.05
	Parent Civic Engagement	-0.10	-0.07	0.04
	Classroom Climate	0.03	0.02	0.04
	Community Connectedness	0.20**	0.18	0.06
	Social Analysis	0.18*	0.13	0.04
	Prosocial Friend Norms	0.24**	0.19	0.04
Civic Behaviour				
	Parent Social Responsibility	-0.09	-0.10	0.06
	Parent Civic Engagement	0.42**	0.34	0.05
	Classroom Climate	0.09	0.07	0.05
	Community Connectedness	0.09	0.10	0.07
	Social Analysis	-0.03	-0.03	0.05
	Prosocial Friend Norms	0.06	0.06	0.05
	Youth Social Responsibility	0.30**	0.36	0.06
	Affective Empathy	0.04	0.05	0.09
	Cognitive Empathy	0.16**	0.14	0.06

NOTE: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.001$

Affective Empathy

Factor	Effect
Parent Social Responsibility	+
Parent Civic Engagement	−
Community Connectedness	+
Prosocial Friend Norms	+

Cognitive Empathy

Factor	Effect
Parent Social Responsibility	+
Classroom Climate	+
Community Connectedness	+
Prosocial Friend Norms	+

Social Responsibility

Factor	Effect
Parent Social Responsibility	+
Social Analysis	+
Community Connectedness	+
Prosocial Friend Norms	+

Civic Behaviour

Factor	Effect
Parent Civic Engagement	+
Social Responsibility	+
Cognitive Empathy	+

Figure 9. Significant Direct Effects of the Contextual Factors on All Mediator and Outcome Variables and Direct Effects of the Mediator Variables on the Outcome Variable

Contextual Factors	Outcomes
Parent Social Responsibility	SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (+) AFFECTIVE EMPATHY (+) COGNITIVE EMPATHY (+)
Parent Civic Engagement	AFFECTIVE EMPATHY (-) CIVIC BEHAVIOUR (+)
Classroom Climate	COGNITIVE EMPATHY (+)
Social Analysis	SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (+)
Prosocial Friend Norms	SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (+) AFFECTIVE EMPATHY (+) COGNITIVE EMPATHY (+)
Community Connectedness	SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (+) AFFECTIVE EMPATHY (+) COGNITIVE EMPATHY (+)
Cognitive Empathy	CIVIC BEHAVIOUR (+)
Social Responsibility	CIVIC BEHAVIOUR (+)

Figure 10. Significant Direct Effects on all Mediators and Outcomes

A visual summary of all significant indirect associations between youth's social systems and their civic behaviours is displayed in Figure 11 below. A full summary of indirect or mediation effects is provided in Table 7 below. Significant indirect effects are represented by an appropriate alpha level ($p < 0.05$) and a lower (L) and upper (U) bound confidence interval range that does not contain zero. As can be seen in this table, affective empathy did not produce any significant indirect effects on youth civic behaviour, indicating that affective empathy does not mediate the relationship between any of the predictors (*Parent Social Responsibility, Parent Civic Engagement, Classroom Climate, Social Analysis, Prosocial Friend Norms, Community Connectedness*) and youth's civic behaviour. However, some significant indirect effects, through youth's cognitive empathy and social responsibility, were observed between the predictors and youth's civic behaviour. In particular, significant, indirect effects between parent's social responsibility and youth's civic behaviour were observed through youth's social responsibility (B = 0.08, $p = 0.001$) and cognitive empathy (B = 0.03, $p = 0.03$). In other words, although parent social responsibility did not directly influence civic behaviour, parent responsibility lead to an increase in youth responsibility values and cognitive empathy, which in turn indirectly led to an increase in youth civic behaviour. Similarly, both community connectedness and social analysis indirectly influenced civic behaviour through increased social responsibility values (B = 0.08, $p = 0.003$; B = 0.05, $p = 0.02$) and cognitive empathy (B = 0.03, $p = 0.02$; B = 0.02, $p = 0.04$), respectively. Conversely, parent civic engagement was found to have a negative, indirect relationship with youth civic behaviour, through decreased youth social responsibility (B = -0.05, $p = 0.001$) and cognitive empathy (B = -0.02, $p = 0.02$).
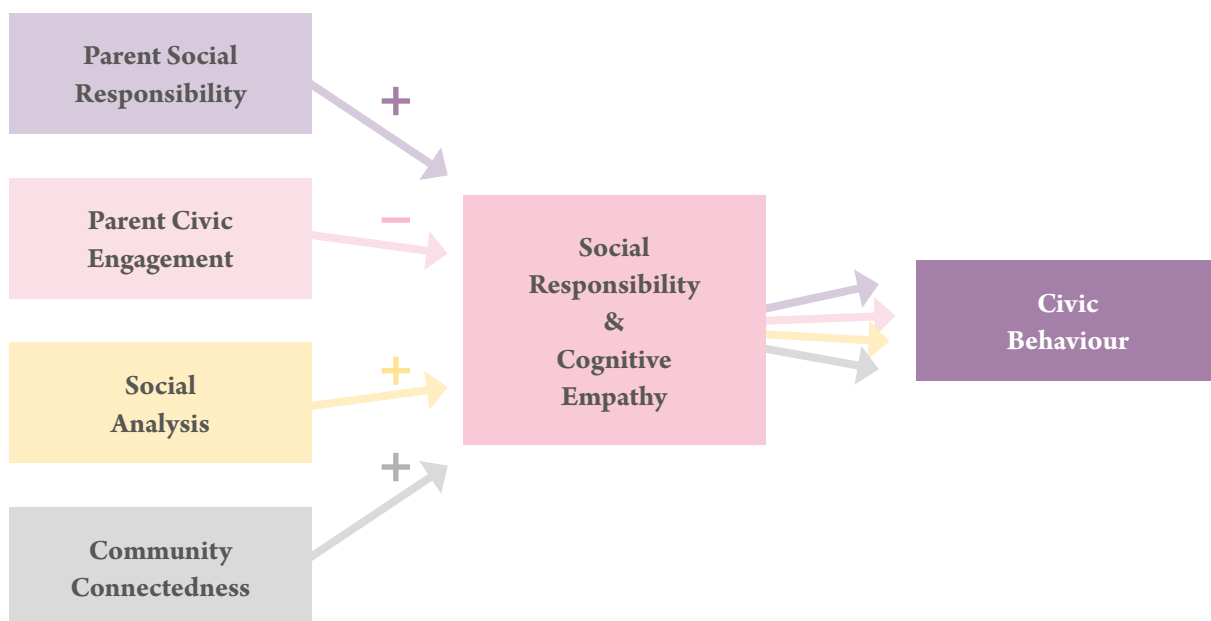
Figure 11. Significant Indirect Relationships between Youth's Social Contexts and Civic Behaviour, Through the Significant Mediator Variables

Table 7:
Tests of the Mediating Effects of Empathic Concern, Social Responsibility, and Perspective Taking on Youth Civic Behaviour, including Upper (U) and Lower (L) Confidence Intervals (CI)

Predictors	Direct Effect		Total Effect		Indirect Effect (M=EC)		CI 95%		Indirect Effect (M=SR)		CI 95%		Indirect Effect (M=PT)		CI 95%	
	B	p	B	p	B	p	L	U	B	p	L	U	B	p	L	U
Parent Social Responsibility	-0.10	0.22	0.01	0.87	0.01	0.44	-0.02	0.07	0.08	0.001	0.03	0.16	0.03	0.03	0.004	0.08
Parent Civic Engagement	0.34	0.003	0.30	0.003	-0.01	0.41	-0.05	0.02	-0.05	0.001	-0.12	-0.02	-0.02	0.02	-0.06	-0.003
Classroom Climate	0.07	0.21	0.11	0.09	0.003	0.36	-0.01	0.04	0.02	0.31	-0.02	0.07	0.01	0.32	-0.01	0.04
Community Connectedness	0.10	0.21	0.22	0.01	0.01	0.46	-0.02	0.07	0.08	0.003	0.02	0.16	0.03	0.02	0.004	0.09
Prosocial Friend Norms	0.06	0.36	0.17	0.01	0.004	0.36	-0.01	0.04	0.03	0.13	-0.01	0.09	0.01	0.13	-0.003	0.05
Social Analysis	-0.03	0.59	0.02	0.65	0.01	0.41	-0.02	0.05	0.05	0.02	0.01	0.12	0.02	0.04	0.001	0.06

NOTE: *M = Mediator; EC = Affective Empathy; SR = Social Responsibility; PT = Cognitive Empathy*

3.2.4 Supplementary Analyses

Finally, a series of supplementary analyses were carried out to examine whether youth's demographic characteristics had an impact on their empathic or civic responding. Specifically, a series of t-tests and multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine whether youth's gender or participation in extracurricular activities significantly impacted their level of empathy, social responsibility, or civic behaviour.[5]

Assessing Gender Differences: A series of independent-samples t-tests were carried out to examine potential gender differences in adolescents' responses on all contextual and outcome factors. Results revealed that female adolescents reported significantly higher levels (M = 31.27, SD = 4.57) of Parent Responsibility values than boys (M = 29.54, SD = 5.14) and significantly higher levels (M = 23.94, SD = 4.06) of Prosocial Friend Norms than boys (M = 21.42, SD = 4.68). Boys also reported significantly lower levels of Affective Empathy (M = 24.32, SD = 4.89), Cognitive Empathy (M = 22.12, SD = 4.80), and Social Responsibility Values (M = 23.60, SD = 5.14) than girls (M = 27.49, SD = 4.45; M = 24.13, SD = 4.51; M = 26.26, SD = 3.43, respectively). No other significant gender differences were observed.[6] A visual overview of all significant differences between male and female responses is displayed in Figure 12 below.
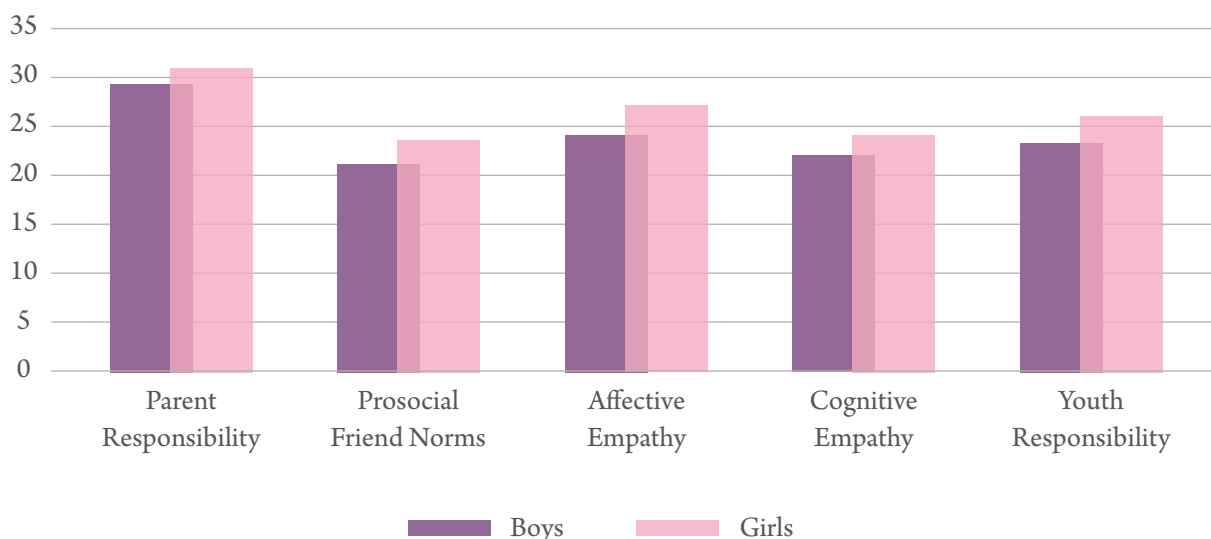

Figure 12. All significant differences observed in boys' and girls' responses on all contextual, mediator and outcome variables

---

[5] These analyses detail the results for the main sample of participants included in the SEM analyses (n = 533).

[6] In order to control for the family wise error rate, a Bonferroni correction was applied to all t-tests.

Assessing The Impact of Extracurricular Participation: Adolescents were asked to report how frequently they engaged in a series of eight club or extracurricular activities. Youth's mean scores for each of these activities are displayed below. On average, adolescents appeared to engage with social media most frequently, and showed the lowest levels of engagement for academic grinds and performing arts or drama (see Figure 13).

A. How often do you play sports with your school team or local club?

1 = Never — Mean response = 3.49 ● — 5 = Very Often

B. How often do you play a musical instrument?

1 = Never — Mean response = 2.07 ● — 5 = Very Often

C. How often do you spend time at a local youth club?

1 = Never — Mean response = 2.18 ● — 5 = Very Often

D. How often do you participate in religious activities?

1 = Never — Mean response = 2.38 ● — 5 = Very Often

E. How often do you engage with social media?

1 = Never — Mean response = 4.36 ● — 5 = Very Often

F. How often do you play violent video games?

1 = Never — Mean response = 2.73 ● — 5 = Very Often

G. How often do you attend grinds or academic classes ouside school?

1 = Never — Mean response = 1.55 ● — 5 = Very Often

H. How often do you participate in performing arts or drama?

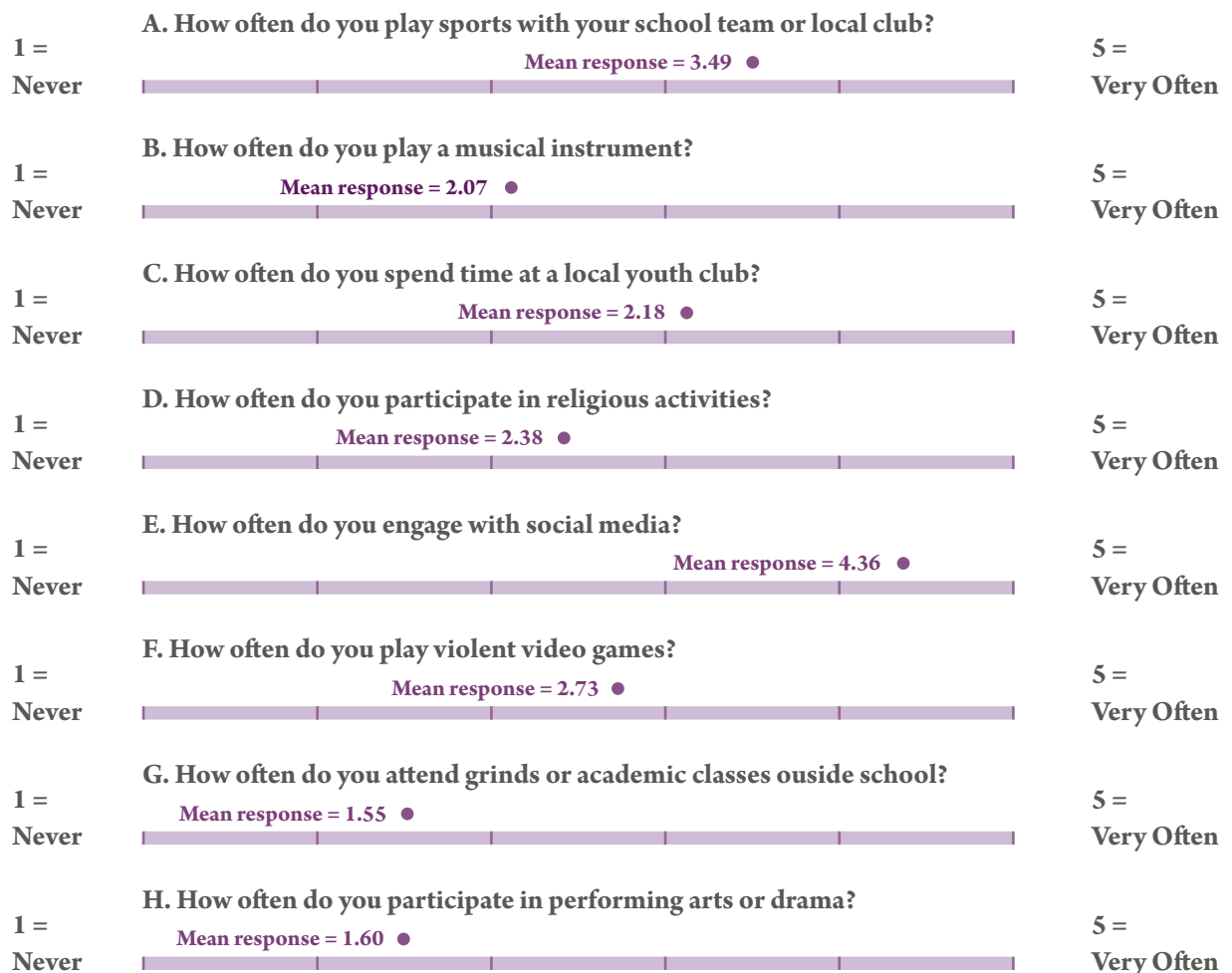1 = Never — Mean response = 1.60 ● — 5 = Very Often

Figure 13. Adolescents' mean level of engagement in different extra-curricular activities in boys' and girls' responses on all contextual, mediator and outcome variables

In order to determine whether youth who participated in different extracurricular activities showed differences in their empathy, social responsibility values, or civic behaviours, a series of multiple regression analyses were conducted. Results revealed that youth who spent more time engaging in sports (B = 0.09, ß = 0.17, SE = 0.02, $p < 0.001$), music (B = 0.05, ß = 0.09, SE = 0.02, $p = 0.03$), youth clubs (B = 0.11, ß = 0.19, SE = 0.02, $p < 0.001$), and religious activities (B = 0.13, ß = 0.21, SE = 0.03, $p < 0.001$) also showed higher levels of civic behaviour. Greater youth club participation was also associated with higher levels of cognitive empathy (B = 0.05, ß = 0.09, SE = 0.02, $p = 0.02$), affective empathy (B = 0.03, ß = 0.07, SE = 0.02, $p = 0.008$), and social responsibility (B = 0.05, ß = 0.02, SE = 0.02, $p = 0.02$). Participation in performing arts or drama (B = 0.06, ß = 0.12, SE = 0.03, $p = 0.01$) was associated with greater social responsibility values. Conversely, youth who spent more time playing violent video games showed lower levels of civic behaviour (B = -0.06, ß = -0.12, SE = 0.02, $p = 0.003$), cognitive empathy (B = -0.11, ß = -0.21, SE = 0.02, $p < 0.001$), affective empathy (B = -0.11, ß = -0.28, SE = 0.02, $p < 0.001$), and social responsibility (B = -0.10, ß = - 0.24, SE = 0.02, $p < 0.001$) values. Please see Figure 14 for a diagrammatic overview of these significant relationships.

SPORTS → + CIVIC BEHAVIOUR

YOUTH CLUBS →
+ CIVIC BEHAVIOUR
+ COGNITIVE EMPATHY
+ AFFECTIVE EMPATHY
+ SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

MUSIC → + CIVIC BEHAVIOUR

DRAMA →
+ CIVIC BEHAVIOUR
+ SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES → + CIVIC BEHAVIOUR

VIDEO GAMES →
– CIVIC BEHAVIOUR
– COGNITIVE EMPATHY
– AFFECTIVE EMPATHY
– SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Figure 14. Significant Associations between Youths' Extracurricular Participation and their Empathic and Civic Responding

3.2.5 Results Summary

Overall, results provide empirical evidence to suggest that youth's parental, peer, school, and community contexts significantly influence their empathic or civic responding. In particular, results revealed that specific aspects of the parent, peer, school, and community context directly impact youth's affective empathy, cognitive empathy, and social responsibility values. Notably, results indicate that parent civic engagement impacts youth civic behaviour both directly and indirectly, while parent social responsibility, connectedness with the community, open classroom climates in schools, and level of civic education also indirectly impact youth civic behaviour, through changes in youth's social responsibility values and cognitive empathy. However, affective empathy was not associated with any direct or indirect effects on civic behaviour. Finally, results suggest that youth's civic and empathic responding may also be impacted by their gender and participation in extracurricular activities.

KEY FINDINGS

- Preliminary analyses indicated that parent social responsibility, parent civic engagement, classroom climate, community connectedness, social analysis, and prosocial friend norms positively impact youth's empathic or civic responding.

- Preliminary analyses indicated that Family Democratic Climate, Trusted Friendship, School Engagement, Perspective-Taking Opportunities, Intergenerational Closure, and Neighbourhood Opportunities *do not* impact youth's civic or empathic responding.

- SEM analyses indicated that parent social responsibility, community connectedness, social analysis, and prosocial friend norms predict higher levels of *social responsibility*.

- SEM analyses indicated that parent social responsibility, classroom climate, community connectedness, and prosocial friend norms predict higher levels of *cognitive empathy.*

- SEM analyses indicated that parent social responsibility, community connectedness, and prosocial friend norms predict higher levels of affective empathy, *but* that parent civic engagement predicts lower levels of *affective empathy.*

- SEM analyses indicated that parent civic engagement, cognitive empathy, and social responsibility directly predict higher levels of youth *civic behaviour.*

- SEM analyses indicated that parent social responsibility, classroom climate, and social analysis had indirect, positive effects on youth civic behaviour – via increases in youth's cognitive empathy and social responsibility values.

- SEM analyses indicated that parent civic engagement had an indirect, negative effect on youth civic behaviour – via decreases in youth's cognitive empathy and social responsibility values.

- SEM analyses indicated that affective empathy is not related to youth's civic behaviours.

- Supplementary analyses indicated that boys show lower empathy, social responsibility, prosocial friend norms, and parental social responsibility than girls.

- Supplementary analyses indicated that youth's level of participation in drama, music, youth clubs, sport, religion, and video games had an impact on their civic or empathic responding.

3.3 Discussion

The aim of this research was to examine whether youth's proximal social contexts (*Parents, Peers, Schools,* and *Communities*) impact their civic or empathic responding. Overall, this research provides evidence to suggest that the social environment plays an important role in shaping the empathic attitudes, social responsibility values, and civic behaviours expressed by young people in Ireland. In particular, it identified six specific aspects of the social context (*parent social responsibility, parent civic engagement, prosocial friend norms, classroom climate, classroom social analysis,* and *community connectedness*) that appear to be consistently associated with youth's (cognitive and affective) empathy, social responsibility values, or civic behaviours. However, differences were apparent in how these social systems impact youth's empathic attitudes, social values, and civic behaviours. Differences between the direct and indirect relationships these social contexts had with youth's civic behaviour also emerged. Findings from this research revealed that cognitive empathy and social responsibility both acted as significant mediators of the relationship between the social context and youth's civic behaviour, but revealed that youth's affective empathy was not significantly connected to their civic behaviour. Results also revealed that youth tended to evidence high levels of empathy and social responsibility values but report low levels of civic engagement. Findings indicated that youth's gender and extracurricular participation are also significantly associated with their empathic and civic responding. These findings are discussed in more detail below.

3.3.1 Differences in Adolescents' Mean Responses

The findings from the current study suggest that adolescents show differences in their pattern of responding on measures assessing their empathic or civic attitudes or values, and those assessing their civic behaviours. A review of adolescents' mean responses (in both the preliminary and SEM analyses) found that youth appear to endorse relatively high scores on measures assessing their empathy and social responsibility values. Conversely, when asked to indicate their current level of civic engagement, adolescents showed relatively low levels of civic action. This appears to indicate that there is a discrepancy between adolescents' self-reported empathy or social responsibility and their actual civic or prosocial participation. This is an important finding, as it may suggest a climate of low youth civic engagement in Ireland. Given that this research is among the first to examine levels of empathy and civic responding among young people in Ireland, it is not possible to compare this pattern of findings with other Irish samples. Nonetheless, research from other cultural samples appears to support this trend of low civic participation rates among young people (Hylton, 2018; Putnam, 2016; Turcotte, 2015; Pryor et al., 2007; Balsano, 2005). However, it is important to note that research also indicates that youth's patterns of participation in civic activities varies depending on the nature of the civic or prosocial activity assessed (Gudjohnsen, 2016). Thus, while youth may have endorsed low levels of civic engagement on the current measures (e.g., civic behaviour and online civic engagement scales), these youth may show higher levels of participation in other civic domains. Another possible explanation for the low levels of civic engagement observed in the current research is the young age of the adolescent participants (12–16 years). Previous research has indicated that older adolescents tend to show higher levels of civic engagement than younger adolescents (Ferguson & Garza, 2011). It is argued that older youth may experience greater levels of independence or greater opportunities to engage, compared to younger teens, which may account for their higher participation rates. Future research is needed to provide greater clarity on whether youths' low civic engagement levels reflect a lack of interest in civic participation, or simply a lack of opportunity for civic involvement, in the Irish context.

Markedly, a similar pattern of responding was also observed in youths' reports of their parents' social responsibility values and civic participation levels. Specifically, while youth indicated that their parents promoted positive social responsibility values, they also reported that their parents did not show high levels of civic engagement themselves. This is another important finding, as it indicates that both youth and parents' social values may not align with their civic behaviours, and may suggest a pattern of responding that transcends age groups. Notably, other research reports have observed similar discrepancies between individuals' self-reported prosocial or social responsibility values, and their prosocial or civic engagement in other cultural

groups (Metzger et al., 2018), suggesting this trend is not unique to the Irish context. Although research also suggests that the behavioural domain assessed may moderate the connection between individuals' civic beliefs and their civic behaviours (Metzger et al., 2018), greater research is still needed in order to further elaborate on why individuals' empathy and social responsibility values may not correspond to their levels of civic engagement, in certain contexts. In particular, greater research into the role that wider societal norms play in influencing adults' and youths' involvement in civic activities may be beneficial in helping to generate a greater understanding of any unique patterns of civic engagement that occur within specific cultural contexts (see Chopik et al., 2016).

3.3.2 Discussion on the Relationship between Parent, Peer, School, and Community Contexts and Youth's Empathy, Social Responsibility, and Civic Behaviours

A major strength of the current study is that it is among the first pieces of research to confirm that parental, peer, school, and community contexts play a significant role in influencing the level of empathy, social responsibility, or civic behaviour expressed by young people in Ireland. Thus, this research advances the literature by providing empirical support for applying a social-contextual approach to the study of youth empathy and civic behaviour. Nonetheless, it is important to note that while this research appears to explain both significant and substantive changes in adolescents' civic responding, a large proportion of the variance in youth's civic and empathic responding remained unaccounted for by the current contextual model. Moreover, the findings from the preliminary analyses revealed that these parent, peer, school, or community contexts were not significant in explaining either youth's online civic behaviours or their social dominance orientations.[7] Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that although these social contexts may be *significantly* associated with aspects of youth's empathy, social responsibility, and civic engagement, other social or individual factors likely also play a key role in shaping youths' empathic and civic attitudes, values, and behaviours (see Davis, 2018; Fu et al., 2017; Bussey et al., 2015; Allesandri et al., 2014; Taylor et al., 2013). Thus, further comparative research examining the additional impact that other individual or societal characteristics exert on youth's civic or empathic responding may be needed in order to generate a more holistic understanding of youth's engagement in civic and empathic responding.

In addition to providing evidence that parent, peer, school, and community contexts are significantly linked to youths' empathy, social responsibility values, and civic behaviours, results also indicate that different aspects of these social environments appear to have different relationships with youths' empathic and civic responding. First and foremost, the findings from the current research indicated that youth's (affective and cognitive) empathic attitudes, social responsibility values, or civic behaviours appear to be significantly associated with six specific aspects of these social contexts: *parent social responsibility, parent civic engagement, prosocial friend norms, classroom climate, classroom social analysis,* and *community connectedness.* However, this research also found that other aspects of youths' social environments (*family democratic climate, quality friendships, levels of school engagement, feelings of connectedness with other students, classroom perspective-taking opportunities, neighbourhood opportunities,* and *intergenerational closure*) do not appear to be linked with either youth's empathic or civic responding. Although other researchers have found strong associations between these other contextual indicators and youths' empathic or prosocial or civic responding (Evans & Smokowski, 2015; Padilla-Walker, Carlo, & Nielson, 2015; Padilla-Walker, Coyne et al., 2015; Wray-Lake et al., 2015; Lenzi et al., 2014; Lenzi et al., 2013; Miklikowska & Hurme, 2011), the vast majority of this research has been carried out in international settings, with culturally diverse adolescent samples. Therefore, the current results are important, as they may suggest that there are differences between the type of social systems which influence youth's empathic and civic responding in the Irish context, and those that impact responding in other cultures. It is also possible that these non-significant trends were observed in the current research due to the comparative nature of the model tested.

---

[7] Results found that social dominance was negatively associated with parental warmth; however, the overall predictor model remained non-significant. For a more detailed discussion on this, please see Appendix VII.

In other words, it is possible that these other contextual factors are associated with youth's empathic or civic responding, but that their effects are small, and disappear (i.e., become non-significant) when compared with other more powerful predictors (see European Social Survey Education Net [ESS], 2013, for a more detailed explanation of 'unique' and 'shared' variance). Hence, these findings demonstrate the importance of assessing the comparative effect that multiple social contexts have on youth's civic and empathic responding.

This research evidenced not only that some, and not other, aspects of the social context are associated with youth's empathic or civic responding, but also that the relationship these factors have with youth's empathic attitudes, social responsibility values, and civic behaviours is complicated. Findings from the structural equation model revealed that four aspects of the social context appear to either directly or indirectly impact youth's civic behaviour: *Parent Social Responsibility, Parent Civic Engagement, Classroom Social Analysis,* and *Community Connectedness.* However, interesting patterns of relationships between these contextual factors and youth's civic responding were observed. For instance, results indicated that parental encouragement of social responsibility values were directly associated with greater youth affective empathy, cognitive empathy, and social responsibility values. While findings revealed no direct connection between parent social responsibility and youth civic behaviour, a positive, indirect connection was observed through increased social responsibility values and heightened cognitive empathy skills. Previous research contends that parental socialisation of prosocial values are consistently and directly associated with adolescents' prosocial or civic behaviours (Mesurado et al., 2014; McGinley et al., 2010; Padilla-Walker & Carlo, 2007; Wyatt & Carlo, 2002; Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). Hence, the findings of the current study extend our understanding of the relationship between parent social responsibility and youth empathy, social values, and civic engagement, by indicating that parent social responsibility may not be directly related to civic engagement – rather, parent social responsibility appears to enhance adolescents' perspective-taking skills (e.g., cognitive empathy) and social responsibility values, which in turn promotes greater youth civic engagement. This finding has key implications for research and practice by highlighting the important role that parent social responsibility plays in directly influencing youth empathy and social values, and indirectly influencing youth civic behaviour.

Similarly, two other social factors were also found to exert positive, indirect effects on youth's civic behaviour: community connectedness and classroom social analysis. Specifically, feeling connected with one's community was found to be directly associated with greater social responsibility, more cognitive empathy, and higher affective empathy. Moreover, while community connectedness did not appear to have a direct impact on youth's civic behaviours, greater community connectedness indirectly resulted in greater civic behaviour, through increased cognitive empathy and social responsibility values. Greater levels of civic education in school (e.g., Social Analysis) were also indirectly associated with greater youth civic engagement, through increased social responsibility and cognitive empathy. Thus, these findings have applied relevance, as they indicate that youths' civic and empathic responding is also influenced by wider social contexts – both those in school and those in the wider community (Evans & Smokowski, 2015; Lenzi et al., 2013; Wray-Lake & Syvertsen, 2011).

Conversely, parent civic engagement was found to have a complex relationship with youths' empathic and civic responding. Notably, in the SEM model, parent civic engagement was the only aspect of the social environment found to have a significant, direct impact on youth's civic behaviour. Higher levels of parent civic engagement were strongly and directly linked to greater youth involvement in civic activities – a link which also appears to be consistently evidenced by other international research (Lai et al., 2015; Jessor & Turbin, 2014; Van Goethem et al., 2014; Hardy et al., 2010). However, the current study also detected a weak (yet statistically significant) negative, indirect relationship between parent civic engagement and youth civic behaviour. Crucially, higher levels of parent civic engagement were associated with lower cognitive empathy and social responsibility among young people, which in turn appeared to lead to a decrease in civic participation. Parent civic engagement was also found to negatively influence youth's affective empathy – although affective empathy was not related to youth's civic behaviour. Thus, while the overall effect of parent civic engagement on adolescent civic behaviour is positive, there also appears to be some negative variance in the model, resulting

in reduced social responsibility and lower empathy. Researchers typically refer to this type of conflicting relationship as 'inconsistent' or 'competitive' mediation (Zhao et al., 2010; MacKinnon et al., 2000; Cliff & Earleywine, 1994).

Competitive mediation can occur when there is an incomplete theoretical framework or when there are multiple competing mediators (Zhao et al., 2010). Thus, the current results suggest that the direct, positive relationship observed between parent civic engagement and youth's civic behaviour cannot be explained by the current mediators alone (Affective Empathy, Cognitive Empathy, or Social Responsibility). In other words, there are other factors (not measured in the current model) that cause parent civic engagement to have a positive effect on youth civic behaviour, and further research is needed to identify what other social factors or individual processes may mediate the relationship between parent and youth civic engagement. For example, some research suggests that individual's motivations (intrinsic or extrinsic, etc.) or perceptions of the motivations of others for engaging in prosocial behaviour can have an important impact on their level of prosocial or civic participation (Llorca-Mestre et al., 2017; Kumru et al., 2012; Ariely et al., 2009; Grant & Mayer, 2009). Therefore, one possible explanation for why parent civic engagement appears to promote youth civic engagement but decrease empathy and social responsibility is that youth's reasons for engaging in this civic behaviour are extrinsically motivated (e.g., by reputation or image) – although further research on this possible connection is warranted. Nonetheless, the current findings are important, as they suggest that parent civic engagement exerts both positive and negative effects on adolescents' social responding – whereby it promotes greater civic behaviour but reduces adolescents' empathy and social responsibility values. These findings have significant implications for applied research and practice, as they highlight the importance of not only examining adolescents' levels of civic engagement but also determining their motivations for engaging in such prosocial activity, in order to generate greater understanding about whether youth's civic activity is altruistically motivated or motivated by other self-focused concerns (see Benabou & Tirole, 2006; Penner et al., 2005).

Although no other direct or indirect relationships between youth's social contexts and their civic behaviours were observed, results did reveal other significant associations between youth's social contexts and their empathic responding or social values. Findings indicated that while prosocial friend norms were not associated with youth's civic behaviours, having friends who promoted greater prosocial behaviours was significantly associated with greater affective empathy, cognitive empathy, and social responsibility values among young people. This is an interesting finding, as it indicates that while friend modelling of prosocial behaviours may encourage greater empathy and social responsibility values among adolescents, other factors may be more important in facilitating actual civic action. Additionally, results revealed that while more open classroom climates predicted greater cognitive empathy, they did not affect any other aspect of adolescents' empathic or civic responding. This finding indicates that while interactive classroom discussions may be important tools for enhancing young people's ability to understand the perspective of others, they may not influence adolescents' emotional feelings of concern for others or their willingness to engage in civic activities. This suggests that other school strategies may be more important for promoting other facets of empathic and civic responding among young people.

Overall, this research highlights the importance of examining empathy and social responsibility values as important mechanisms through which youths' social environments impact their involvement in civic activities. However, it should be acknowledged that although 'significant' indirect relationships were observed between the social context and youth's civic behaviour, these indirect relationships were typically weak (as indicated by their small effect size or low B value). The weak nature of these indirect relationships may indicate that these social factors are associated more strongly with youths' empathic attitudes and social values than with their civic behaviours. This suggests that there are perhaps other factors, or other moderation effects, not measured in the current model, that exert stronger direct effects on adolescents' civic behaviour. Future research would benefit from investigating how other social and individual processes influence adolescents' empathic and civic responding, either directly or indirectly, through other moderation or mediation processes (Lockwood et al., 2014).

3.3.3 Discussion on the Relationship between Youth's Empathy, Social Responsibility, and Civic Behaviours

Although the current research indicated that empathy and social responsibility have important links with youth's civic behaviour, some inconsistent patterns emerged in relation to the effects that youth's affective empathy, cognitive empathy, and social responsibility values were found to have on their civic behaviour. Most notably, findings revealed that while cognitive empathy and social responsibility values appear to promote greater civic behaviour among adolescents, affective empathy did not appear to have any significant associations with youth's civic behaviour. An array of theorists and researchers contend that both aspects of empathy (i.e., the understanding of others' emotions and the ability to experience feelings of concern for others) are key motivators of prosocial action (Segal, 2011; Eisenberg et al., 2009; Hoffmann, 2000). Thus, the finding that affective empathy did not promote civic action among adolescents was unexpected.

It is important to note that a small body of research has also reported no significant link between empathy and civic behaviour (Ladd & Henry, 2000; Anderson & Williams, 1996). Additionally, some researchers contend that while both affective and cognitive empathy may facilitate prosocial responding, it is possible that they may promote different types of prosocial or civic responding (Van Der Graff et al., 2018; Carlo et al., 2010; Eisenberg et al., 2010). For example, previous research has indicated that affective empathy, but not cognitive empathy, is significantly associated with adolescents' engagement in bystander-defending behaviour (Caravita et al., 2009; Gini et al., 2008). Other research indicates that cognitive empathy may be related to more public and compliant types of prosocial responding, while affective empathy may predict more altruistic behaviours (Davis et al., 2018; Carlo et al., 2017). Thus, although no significant link between youth's affective empathy and civic behaviour was observed in the current research, it is possible that affective empathy may be significant in predicting youth's engagement in other prosocial or civic activities (Omoto et al., 2010). However, further research is needed to test this hypothesis. Nonetheless, the current findings highlight the importance of examining the relationship between civic engagement and both components of empathy. They have important implications for research and practice, as results suggest that interventions aiming to promote greater prosocial responding at the societal level may benefit from targeting adolescents' perspective-taking skills and social responsibility values, as opposed to their affective empathy. Future research should expand on the current research findings by comparing the relationship between youth's (cognitive and affective) empathy and their engagement in different types of civic or prosocial behaviours.

3.3.4 Discussion on the Relationship between Gender and Extracurricular Participation and Empathy, Social Responsibility, and Civic Behaviours

It is important to briefly comment on the gender differences which emerged in the current research. While no significant gender differences in civic behaviour emerged, boys were found to show significantly lower levels of empathy and social responsibility values. Boys also reported lower prosocial friend norms and lower parental social responsibility values. These findings are in line with previous research findings, which indicated that males typically evidence lower levels of empathy than females (Farrell et al., 2016; Machackova & Pfetsch, 2016; Carlo et al., 2012). The additional finding that there are also gender differences in how friends and parents model or encourage prosocial values or behaviours among adolescents is interesting, as it suggests that girls may be exposed to more prosocial 'norms', via their parents and friendship groups, than their male counterparts, which may have indirect effects on their empathic or civic responding. Given these observed gender differences, future research may benefit from examining how gender moderates the connection between youth's social contexts and their empathic and civic responding.

Youth's involvement in particular types of club or extracurricular activities was significantly related to their empathic or civic responding. Youth who reported greater involvement in religious activities and music, youth, sport, and drama clubs were found to report higher levels of civic behaviour. Greater participation in drama clubs was also found to promote greater social responsibility values, while involvement in youth clubs was

also associated with greater social responsibility, affective empathy, and cognitive empathy. Conversely, youth who played more violent video games showed lower levels of affective empathy, cognitive empathy, social responsibility, and civic behaviour. These findings are consistent with a growing research trend (see Ramey et al., 2017; Vossen et al., 2017; Carreres Ponsoda et al., 2012; Gentile et al., 2009; Linver et al., 2009; Albanesi et al., 2007), and provide further evidence to suggest that youth's level of involvement in extracurricular activities, as well as the type of activity engaged in, may have important implications for their empathic and civic responding. Thus, these findings build on the trends observed in previous research with other cultural groups, and may have important implications for wider policy or practice, as they indicate how involvement in specific clubs or activities can have a direct impact on youths' empathic and civic responding. Nonetheless, the connection between youth's empathic and civic attitudes or behaviours and their extracurricular involvement should be further explored by other researchers.

3.3.5 Strengths, Implications, and Recommendations for Research and Practice

Overall, these research findings offer a number of important implications and suggestions for both future research and policy or practice. The current research is among the first to examine the expression of empathy and civic engagement among young people in an Irish cultural context. Crucially, although researchers recognise the important impact that cultural norms can have on how individuals' relate and engage with one another, knowledge about young people's empathic and civic responding has typically relied on evidence collected from a small number of countries (Silke et al., 2018; Chopik et al., 2017). Hence, the current research helps to advance knowledge, by extending the cultural body of research in this area and enabling policymakers and researchers to compare the level of empathic and civic responding expressed by youth in Ireland, with youth from other cultures or nationalities.

This research has significant advantages for both research and policy by shedding further light on how youth in Ireland become socialised towards greater civic and empathic responding. A major strength of this research is that it provides evidence to confirm that parents, peers, schools and communities play an important role in shaping the empathic attitudes, social responsibility values, and civic behaviours expressed by youth in Ireland. Although previous research has suggested that these social contexts significantly impact youth's empathic *or* civic responding (Rossi et al., 2016; Padilla-Walker et al., 2014; Lenzi et al., 2013; Wray-Lake et al., 2011), this research is among the first to show that these systems influence both young people's empathic and civic attitudes or behaviours. This finding has particular relevance for practice and policy, as it shows that adolescents' empathy, social responsibility, and civic behaviours are not influenced by any one factor, but rather by a collection of social contexts and networks. Hence, these findings suggest that multidimensional approaches that target both interpersonal (e.g., parents, peers) and organisational (e.g., school, community) social networks are likely to be more effective in promoting greater civic and empathic responding among young people in Ireland. However, in order to better inform policy, further research is needed to explore how these multidimensional initiatives can best be incorporated into practice.

Relatedly, another advantage of this research is that it not only investigates how broad social contexts (e.g., peers, parents, schools, community) influence adolescents' social values, empathy, and behaviours, but also examines and compares how specific aspects of these social networks (parent social responsibility, community connectedness, etc.) uniquely influence youth's civic or empathic values and behaviours. This is an important step in advancing knowledge and understanding in this area, as it is not enough to know that parents or schools influence adolescents' prosocial values and behaviours; but by knowing which aspects of parenting or the school climate have the strongest influence on adolescents' empathy and civic responding, then more targeted interventions can be developed. Furthermore, by employing this type of comparative (mediational) approach, this research not only was able to determine which social systems appear to be significantly linked to youth's empathic or civic responding, but also highlighted the complex nature of this relationship. Most notably, the findings from this analysis suggest that certain contextual factors may exert both positive and negative effects on adolescents' empathic or civic attitudes and behaviours – a finding which has key implications for further

research and practice. Specifically, the finding that parent civic engagement appears to promote greater youth civic behaviour, but reduces youth empathy and social responsibility, is important, as policy initiatives need to be aware of the complexities involved in promoting greater empathy and civic engagement among young people.

Finally, this research highlights the importance of examining empathy, social responsibility, and civic behaviour together as interrelated constructs. In particular, it observed distinct differences in youth's pattern of responding on the empathy, social responsibility, and civic behaviour measures. Although youth were found to endorse high levels of self-reported empathy and responsibility values, their engagement in civic activities was relatively low. Thus, these findings have relevance for policy and practice, as they may suggest that interventions that can help foster greater civic involvement among young people in Ireland are necessary. Findings appear to imply that there is a consistent discrepancy between youth's reported empathic attitudes or social values and their engagement in civic activities. This has key implications for research and practice, as it implies that there may be something impeding the relationship between youth's empathy or social responsibility values and their behaviour. Thus, while interventions aiming to promote civic engagement may benefit from the inclusion of empathy and social responsibility approaches, they should also be informed by a greater understanding of the factors that moderate the relationship between youths' empathic or social responsibility values and their participation in civic activities. The observation that affective empathy does not appear to be linked with youth's civic behaviours, but that youth's perspective-taking skills and social responsibility values are, also has important implications for both research and practice, as it suggests that affective and cognitive empathy may impact youth's civic behaviours differently. However, further research is necessary to determine whether affective and cognitive empathy are differentially associated with different types of prosocial or civic responding.

3.3.6 Limitations Associated with the Current Research

Although this study has several strengths, it is important to acknowledge that there are also a number of potential limitations associated with this research. First, it should be noted that the current research only examined the connection between youths' empathic or civic responding and a number of key proximal social contexts. While previous research has indicated that parents, peers, schools, and communities may be particularly relevant in influencing youths' empathic or civic responding (Chan, 2011; Wilkenfeld et al., 2010; Atkins & Hart, 2003), the wider social context (e.g., societal norms) have also been found to play a role in influencing young people's empathy and civic engagement (Coyne et al., 2011). Other research suggests that youths' psychological or cognitive functioning also impact the development of empathy, social responsibility, or civic engagement (Wray-Lake & Syvertsen, 2011). For example, research shows that a variety of individual processes and characteristics, such as personality traits, self-efficacy, and emotional regulation, may play an important role in the expression of empathy and civic engagement among young people (Bussey et al., 2015; Metzger et al., 2015; Allesandri et al., 2014; Thornberg & Jugert, 2014). Therefore, researchers and practitioners should be aware that there are likely other factors, not included in this research, that are also relevant for youth's empathic and civic responding.

Similarly, given the influential role that cultural norms are thought to play in shaping youth's social values and behaviours (Chopik et al., 2017), it is important to recognise the cultural homogeneity of the current research participants and acknowledge that these findings may not generalise beyond the Irish context. Additionally, as previous research has identified age as an important moderator of empathic and civic responding (Gruhn et al., 2008), it is important to note that as participants in the current study were, on average, approximately 13 years of age, these findings may also not generalise to other age groups, such as children, older adolescents, and adults. A further limitation of this research is that it only assessed civic behaviour and therefore cannot infer the relationship that may exist between the social context, adolescents' empathy, or social responsibility and other forms of prosocial responding. Finally, it should be acknowledged that this research employed a cross-sectional research design, and therefore findings are correlational in nature. Further experimental and longitudinal research in this area may be warranted in order to be able to infer causal inferences.

3.3.7 Conclusion

Overall, this research provides a number of key insights. Findings indicate that youths' empathy, social responsibility, and civic behaviour are substantially influenced by their parents, peers, schools, and communities. However, this research indicates that only specific aspects of these social contexts play a significant role in impacting adolescents' empathy or civic attitudes or behaviours. Findings from this research also indicate that different aspects of the social environment impact youths' empathy, social values, and civic behaviours in different ways. Hence, this research highlights the importance of examining how different social environments impact both youths' social empathy or values, and their civic behaviour. This research also provides further evidence to suggest that youth's empathy and social responsibility values are not only linked to their engagement in civic behaviour, but may also mediate the link between youth's social contexts and their civic behaviours. However, this research shows that affective empathy and cognitive empathy may have different relationships with youth's civic behaviour, and highlights the importance of measuring both components of empathy. While the findings from this research have important implications for practice and policy, greater research in this area is still needed to gain to further insight into what other social or individual processes also impact youth's civic and empathic responding, as well as to provide greater understanding of the factors that moderate or mediate the relationship between youth's social contexts or individual processes, their empathic attitudes, social values, and civic behaviours.

04

Qualitative Study

The aim of this strand of the research is to develop a clearer understanding of young people's views or opinions about the development and expression of youth empathy and prosocial or civic behaviour. Specifically, it sets out to extend our knowledge about how empathy and prosocial or civic behaviour are regarded and expressed by young people in Ireland.

Qualitative focus groups were undertaken with groups of young people to consult with them about their views and conceptualisations of empathy and prosocial or civic behaviour. This research sought to explore their perspectives about how young people acquire or develop empathy or other social values and to probe their opinions about factors that facilitate or impede engagement in prosocial or civic behaviour across contexts. Youth's recommendations for how empathy or prosocial behaviour can be better promoted among young people were also sought.

Specifically, the current study sets out to address the following research questions:

1. How are empathy and prosocial or civic behaviour viewed or conceptualised by young people?

2. In young people's opinions, what social processes or individual characteristics impact the development or expression of youth empathy and prosocial or civic behaviour?

Secondary research objectives include:

- To explore youth's opinions about the personal or societal advantages of empathy and prosocial or civic behaviour.

- To understand youth's perspectives about what may stop young people from engaging in civic or prosocial behaviour.

- To gather youth's recommendations for how greater empathic or prosocial responding can best be promoted.

4.1 Method

A qualitative research design, which relied on the use of focus group interviews, was employed in the current research. A qualitative design was utilised, in order to gather greater insight into youth's perspectives about the development and expression of empathy and prosocial or civic behaviour.

4.1.1 Participants

A total of 29 (10 male, 19 female) adolescents participated in this research (see Figure 15). All were aged 13–17 years (M = 14.76, SD = 1.27). Participants were recruited from three[8] separate public secondary schools located in the Connacht, Munster, and Leinster regions of the Republic of Ireland (see Figure 16). All participants were enrolled in their second or fourth year of secondary school education at participating schools. Figures 15 and 16 provide a visual display of the gender and regional distribution of participants.
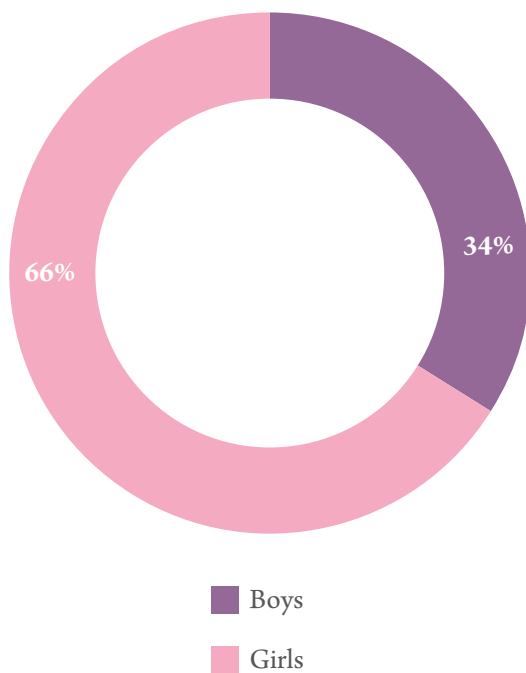
Figure 15. Percentage gender distribution between male & female participants
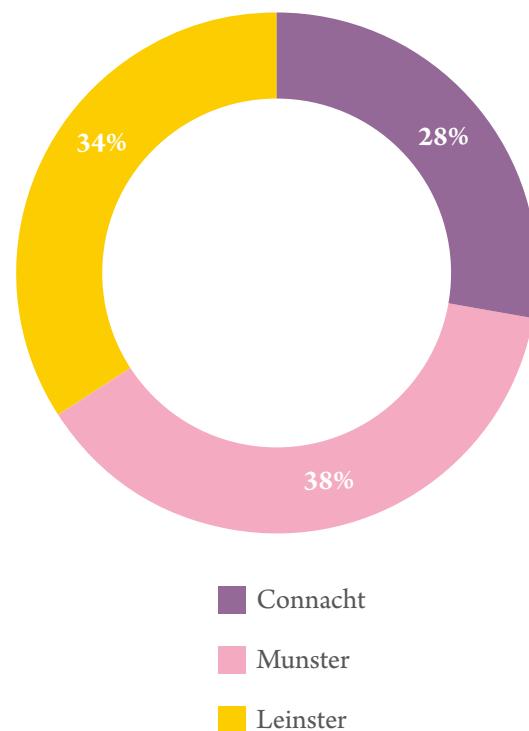
Figure 16. Percentage regional distribution of participants across the Irish provinces

4.1.2 Procedure

The procedure for this study was carried in several distinct stages as detailed below.

Ethical Approval: Before commencing this research, it was necessary to give full consideration to all potential ethical issues that were pertinent to this research and to outline strategies about how to address any identified concerns. A primary ethical consideration in the current research pertained to the issue of informed parental and student consent. Additionally, due to the qualitative nature of the research, audio-recordings of the group interviews were necessary for transcription purposes. In order to address these concerns, the aims and objectives of the research were explicitly outlined to parents and students, through detailed information sheets.

---

[8] Two of these schools also participated in the Quantitative Research Study.

The rationale for audio recording the discussions and a guarantee of confidentiality (via use of pseudonyms) once the data was collected were also provided. Parents and students were reassured that participation was voluntary and that students could withdraw from the study, or refrain from participating in a particular discussion point, at any time, without consequence. The National University of Ireland, Galway, Ethics Committee granted full ethical approval for this study on 27 September 2017.

Procedure for School Recruitment: Schools were recruited to this study as part of the larger research project. Specifically, schools were selected if they had already taken part in the quantitative survey. All schools selected were post-primary schools located in the Republic of Ireland. Initial contact was established with each school via a posted letter and email invitation addressed to the acting school principal. This letter detailed the purpose of this component of the research project and outlined the level of involvement that was being sought from the school. A follow-up phone call was made to the school within the next two to three days to discuss the study with the principal. Five schools that participated in the quantitative phase of the project were invited to participate in this research. Although four schools initially agreed to take part in this additional qualitative strand, two schools later declined due to competing commitments. As a result, two additional schools, as listed on the Department of Education and Skills website, were invited to take part, following an identical procedure. One school accepted this invitation. Overall, a total of three schools (one from Connacht, one from Munster, and one from Leinster) took part in this research, with a general response rate of approximately 43% from schools.

Procedure for Participant Recruitment: All participants were recruited through their schools. Information packages for parents or guardians and students were delivered and distributed in the school one to two weeks prior to data collection. These packages highlighted the aims and objectives of the study to students and their parents. Young people wishing to take part in these focus group discussions were asked to return signed parental consent forms to a designated teacher in the school. In total, written parental consent was received from 31 (11 male, 20 female) young people. Two adolescents were absent or otherwise unavailable on the day of data collection.

Procedure for Completing the Focus Groups: All focus groups took place during regular school hours in each of the three participating schools. On the day of participation, young people who had returned signed parental consent forms were gathered from their regular school classes by a designated school teacher and taken to a specially prepared classroom. Each focus group was facilitated by two trained researchers from the research team. Students were met by the researchers, who reintroduced the aims and objectives of the study to participants. All students were reminded that they could terminate their participation at any stage and could refrain from becoming involved in any or all discussion points, if they so wished. Students were also reminded that the focus groups would be audio recorded for transcription purposes. Students were given the opportunity to ask the researchers any questions and were asked to sign participant assent forms if they were happy to proceed with their involvement in the research. Audio recording only began once all students had returned signed assent forms. Each focus group contained 8–11 participants. In each group, all participants belonged to the same school year. An overview of participant characteristics, including age and gender, is provided in Table 8. Each focus group followed a semi-structured interview format. The facilitators began each interview by asking participants to engage in a number of ice-breakers. Specifically, each participant was asked to introduce themselves to the group and to provide some general background information (e.g., hobbies). Students in each focus group were then prompted to discuss several general topics, such as 'What is empathy?' 'Is empathy important?' 'Where do our empathy or prosocial tendencies come from?' 'Do people your age have or show empathy?' 'What helps or stops empathic responding?' 'How can we encourage more empathy or prosocial behaviour?' Each group discussion lasted for approximately 60–70 minutes.

Table 8:
Characteristics of Participants across the Three Focus Groups

Focus Group	Name	Age	Gender
1	Kevin	15	Male
1	Lily	15	Female
1	Anna	14	Female
1	Evelyn	14	Female
1	Chris	14	Male
1	Noel	14	Male
1	Cathal	13	Male
1	Paul	14	Male
1	Kelly	14	Female
1	Ava	14	Female
1	Madeline	14	Female
2	Sarah	14	Female
2	Carmel	14	Female
2	Maura	14	Female
2	Hillary	14	Female
2	Charlie	14	Male
2	Oscar	14	Male
2	Ethan	14	Male
2	Milo	14	Male
2	Ashleigh	14	Female
2	Michael	14	Male
3	Olivia	15	Female
3	Isabella	17	Female
3	Emma	16	Female
3	Martha	17	Female
3	Helen	17	Female
3	Cora	17	Female
3	Heidi	17	Female
3	Eleanor	17	Female

NOTE: *Names listed above are pseudonym. Real names have been altered for confidentiality purposes.*

Procedure for Data Analysis: All focus groups were transcribed verbatim into Microsoft Word and analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Boyatzis, 1998). Thematic analysis consists of reviewing the data, making notes, generating codes or categories of data, and developing themes from the coded data (Rice & Ezzy, 1999). It was chosen as the most suitable method of analysis, as it provides a rich description of the data by enabling the researcher to identify themes or patterns in the data (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). Additionally, unlike other qualitative approaches, thematic analysis is independent of theory, lending itself to all theoretical and epistemological approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In order to generate codes and identify themes or patterns in the data, the analysis followed the six-step framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, analysis began with reading the interview transcripts and becoming familiar with the data. All focus group transcripts were read and re-read multiple times, in order to expand understanding of the data and avoid inconsistencies with the development of codes (Rice & Ezzy, 1999). The raw data from all three transcripts were then sorted into codes, in order to capture important information from the data set. Once all the data had been coded, codes were reviewed and relevant themes were generated from the extracted codes. Initial themes were then refined in order to ensure that all important information from the data set were captured in the body of those themes, and that all themes generated were coherent, distinct, and relevant.

4.2 Results

The specified data analysis technique (thematic analysis) was applied to all information collected from the young people during the focus group interviews. From this analysis, seven major themes and 14 sub-themes were identified from the data. These themes are described in detail below.

4.2.1 Understanding Empathy

The first theme to emerge related to students' understanding of what the term 'empathy' means. Across the three focus groups, inconsistencies in students' understanding of this concept were apparent. First, several students expressed their confusion and lack of understanding of what 'empathy' meant. For example, Carmel (age 14) was among the first of her group to express her unfamiliarity with the term: *'Um, I don't know what empathy is.'* This was echoed by students in other groups, such as Kevin (age 15): *'Yeah … I actually don't know'* and Maura (age 14): *'I've no idea.'*

Although other students expressed having more knowledge of the concept, these students also appeared to view empathy in a myriad of different ways. For instance, some students appeared to view empathy as an affective response to another person: *'kind of like a feeling'* (Evelyn, age 14). When discussing her understanding of empathy, Madeline (age 14) said she believed empathy is *'when you can feel things for other people, when you have the ability to feel something for someone'*. Similarly, Martha (age 17) said that *'empathy is that you feel what other people are feeling, whether it be bad or good'*. Across the three focus groups, students were frequently observed to discuss empathy in terms of a positive emotional response to others. Emotions such as 'caring', 'concern', and 'love' were discussed by the students. Martha (age 17) said that empathy was about *'love for others … love and concern for others'*, while Sarah (age 14) said, *'I think it's about loving and caring for others'*. Olivia (age 15) said empathy involved *'concern, caring, and acceptance … because like if they don't accept the problem, then you can't really solve it'*.

On the other hand, some students seemed to view empathy as a more cognitive process. These students discussed empathy in terms of understanding another person's point of view: *'it's understanding … understanding someone's pain'* (Oscar, age 14) or as *'putting yourself in someone's shoes'* (Cora, age 17), and taking another person's perspective:

> *Imagining yourself in someone's position, for starters … that's how I see empathy. Just putting yourself in someone's position and thinking, How would I react to this if that were me? … What would I do in this position?* **(Emma, age 16)**

A number of students also discussed empathy in terms of a behavioural action. For instance, a couple of students described empathy as a moral choice, or as a desire to engage in moral action. Kevin (age 15) conceptualised empathy as having *'the choice to do something right … and doing it',* while Cathal (age 13) said that *'empathy is like doing something right, but, eh, like morally right … something you should do'.* Other students appeared to take a more general stance and equated empathy to a helping behaviour or any type of action one takes that benefits other people. For example, Hillary (age 14) viewed empathy as being there for someone in need: *'Say if someone was hurt, just, it's about being there for them',* and Olivia (age 15) said, *'It's just anything that you do to try and help someone in a situation, even if it's good or bad, that's empathy.'* One student said she felt that empathy was both an action and a feeling: *'If you do something empathic, you're like either helping someone or … you can do something empathic or you can also feel empathy, you know what I mean?'* (Martha, age 17).

Empathy v Sympathy: An important sub-theme to emerge in relation to adolescents' understanding of empathy was their opinion about the differences and similarities between empathy and sympathy. When discussing their understanding of empathy, some students appeared to conflate empathy with sympathy, as they described empathy in terms of having pity for someone or *'feeling sorry for them'* (Oscar, age 14). Similarly, when reflecting on her own personal empathic responses, another student noted: *'During the earthquake in Nepal … and people's homes were gone, I had more empathy for them … I felt sorry for other people during those times.'* Kevin (age 15) said that he believed young people *'would show empathy'* to people who are different from themselves (e.g., refugees), in that *'they'd be like, Oh, I feel so sorry for you.'*

In contrast, in one focus group, several students were assertive in distinguishing empathy from sympathy, and vocalised their belief that sympathy and pity were not equivalent to empathy: *'Sympathy is when you basically pity someone in a way, whereas empathy, you don't pity them, you feel what they're feeling'* (Emma, age 17).

> *I think that empathy is like a step up from sympathy … you're realising that instead of just saying you feel sorry for someone, you can actually take action to help them, so empathy is not just, it's not like standing back and going, Oh, I feel sorry for you, and then moving on with your life.* **(Olivia, age 15)**

Indeed, a number of students expressed their belief that empathic action was more beneficial than pity or sympathy. Students discussed how important it was *'to do an action … to act other than just to speak'* (Olivia, age 15). Eleanor (age 17) said she felt *'like actions speak more than words, so like if you're really sorry, you do something to help instead of just like saying you're sorry'.* Kevin (age 15) also appeared to doubt the value of 'words': *'It's just words, it's not real',* while Isabella (age 17) similarly discussed the importance of showing empathy:

> *Like everyone knows that actions speak louder than words. Like someone could say, Oh, I feel sorry for you, and then they walk away, and you still feel the same. But if someone walks up to you and … takes the time out of their day to spend time with you … that's way better than saying, Oh, I feel sorry for you.* **(Isabella, age 17)**

Relatedly, students also shared their beliefs that people prefer to receive 'active' empathy from others, and may in fact dislike being passively 'pitied'. For instance, Cora (age 17) said, *'some people don't appreciate, like, sympathy from people',* while Emma (age 16) said, *'I don't like people pitying me … I hate it … I don't think anyone should be pitied … I'd rather someone be like, Okay, what can I do to help, like'.* Other students, such as Helen (age 17), concurred: *'the idea of someone saying, "Oh, I pity you" to you, just like, it's really like down-putting'.* Students commented that being pitied by someone makes you feel like *'you're lower than them'* (Martha, age 17) or *'makes you feel weak and makes you feel vulnerable'* (Helen, age 17). Crucially, although the students from this focus group expressed an awareness of the differences between empathy and sympathy, they believed that empathy and sympathy were commonly confused by other people their age: *'I also think that people always mix up empathy and sympathy'* (Emma, age 16), and that *'maybe people think that when they give their sympathy to someone that that solves it, but it doesn't'* (Olivia, age 15).

4.2.2 Nature or Nurture: What Influences Empathic or Prosocial Responding?

Another emergent theme centred upon students' deliberations as to whether empathy was something that was learned through one's experiences or relationships, or whether it was a trait that people are born with. The idea that empathy occurred 'naturally', as a trait people are born with, was supported by a small number of students. Kevin (age 15) said, *'it just comes naturally … I think you're born with it'*, while Milo (age 14) agreed that empathy happens *'on instinct'*. Several other students expressed their belief that empathy was an innate trait, one that came from your *'personality … like a caring person'* (Sarah, age 14) or *'from your feelings'* (Ethan, age 14). Chris (age 14) remarked that empathy *'comes from the kindness in yourself, if you have the compassion to do so'*, while others believed that a person's own personality or moral compass was the single most important factor for empathy: *'I feel like it's your own heart set down, like, you have your own view of the person and no one can change it'* (Kevin, age 15).

On the other hand, the majority of students appeared to believe that empathy is impacted by one's experience or exposure to certain environmental factors. Oscar (age 14) suggested that people learn to show empathy because of their *'own experiences … you can sort of know how it feels'*. Similarly, in a separate group, Emma (age 16) suggested that empathy comes from *'experience – let's say you are just growing up without empathy but if you do something to someone and you automatically feel bad for what you did, you are starting to develop this'*. Others, such as Cora (age 17), said that when *'you've been through [an] experience, when someone else is going through it, you can understand with them, and that's why you have more empathy'*. In addition, students suggested that empathy develops through individuals' interactions with others. They argued that there is a reciprocal aspect to empathy and that one is more likely to develop or show empathy *'if others show empathy towards you'*. Emma (age 16) said, *'if people show empathy towards you, then it will prompt you to enact this emotion or act towards others'*, while Madeline (age 14) said, *'you learn empathy, like … especially if you're given it'*. Kevin (age 15) said that *'you give empathy to the people you respect … and who respect you'*. Notably, however, there was some disagreement among students about which types of experiences or relationships are most relevant for developing empathy, with students citing parents, friends, and 'others' as important influences on the development of empathy among young people.

Role of Parents: Across the three focus groups, the role that parents play in influencing the development of empathy and prosocial responding among children and young people was discussed at length. Most students appeared to believe that parents and *'how your family raise you'* (Anna, age 14) are important socialisation factors, *'because you spend probably ninety per cent of your time with family, you learn most of your things from your family'* (Emma, age 16). Specifically, students discussed the positive impact that can be had when parents encourage prosociality or teach empathy to their children. For instance, Noel (age 14) said, *'it depends on how you're raised, like … and on how your parents treat you and stuff … if someone is told that they're higher than you, that they're the best, then they won't have much empathy'*. Several students argued that if parents don't encourage and demonstrate empathy to their children when they are young, they will not learn to have empathy when they are older.

> *Say someone comes from a mean family, their parents are always like, 'You're the best, you don't need anyone else, you're higher than everyone else', they're not going to be very empathic.* **(Kevin, age 15)**

> *Like, for example, if you have parents that neglect their child, they don't care about the child, they don't show any empathy towards the child or tell them that they should show empathy to others, then that will show in the child's character as the child grows up.* **(Emma, age 16)**

A few students also reflected on their personal experiences with their parents and discussed how their empathic attitudes or behaviours had been influenced by their parents' encouragement and modelling of empathy or prosocial behaviours. For instance, when reflecting on what influenced her prosocial behaviours, one student said, *'Mom has always told me not to judge someone by how they look and to take their feelings into consideration'*. When discussing her motivation for volunteering as a youth worker, Sarah (age 14) mentioned being influenced by her mother: *'My mother is a youth leader … so I wanted to know what it was all about … and then*

I got far in it, and now I'm a youth worker.' Conversely, one student acknowledged the negative affect her parent had on her ability to care about or empathise with other people: *'I grew up with my Mum; my Mum is always the type of person to say, "Oh, I don't care about this; I don't need that person, they can go" … So I've always grown up knowing, Okay, I don't need to care that much about people'* (Emma, age 16).

Role of Friends: Other students said that young people's empathy or prosocial or civic behaviour *'kind of depends on your friend group'* (Carmel, age 14) and is influenced by *'the way you get along with your friends'* (Maura, age 14). Notably, a number of youth felt that friends play an even more important role in influencing empathy or prosociality than parents: *'It's mostly your friends, though'* (Ethan, age 14).

> *I'd say friends influence you more than family, because even when you're at home, you don't talk to your family as much, you're just upstairs most of the time, but then when you're with your friends you talk to them all the time.* **(Milo, age 14)**

Other students appeared to agree that friends influence empathy and prosocial responding more because of the amount of time young people spend socialising with their friends. For instance, Maura (age 14) said, *'friends are really important, like, because you hang around with them all of the time … 'cause you end up getting so close to them that you're with them in school, and then an hour after school you're with them again',* while Sarah (age 14) echoed this: *'you just start finding yourself being a mini-them or something'.* Some students said that friends were important for empathy and prosocial behaviour because *'you can say things to your friends, you're quicker to talk to your friends, and you'll listen to your friends'* (Carmel, age 14), and discussed the powerful impact that friends can exert on one's attitudes and behaviours:

> *If you're surrounded by a group of people who judge everyone as they pass, then you're going to learn to be like that. Whereas if you're surrounded by people that take into consideration what people are going through or whatever, like, you're more likely to be like that.* **(Anna, age 14)**

> *Depends who you hang out with … like, you could have a friend who just cares about you or himself, and no one else, you're gonna copy him and you're only care about yourself and your friends, and no one else.* **(Milo, age 14)**

Likewise, Charlie (age 14) discussed the negative influence that friends can play in deterring or discouraging young people from helping others:

> *One of your friends could say something … they could maybe not like that person, and you mightn't know them that good, so like, so say they're going, 'Oh no, don't talk to her, she's a weirdo, she's this, she's that', it could put you off wanting to help them, 'cause then you're like, Oh, I won't go near her so.* **(Charlie, age 14)**

Although students suggested that empathy and prosocial behaviour could be both positively and negatively impacted by friends' behaviour or attitudes, overall, students appeared to be more optimistic about this relationship; as Oscar (age 14) said, *'if one friend is brave enough to make the first step, then others could follow'.*

Role of 'Other' Family and Non-Family Members: Although parents and friends were the two most dominant socialisation factors discussed by the students in these focus groups, the role that other family members (e.g. *'my sister, my auntie'*) and other adults (*'your neighbours, your teachers … it's just how people act in general'* – Oscar, age 14) played in influencing young people's empathic development were also acknowledged. Indeed, as one student noted: *'Everybody plays a role, really'* (Michael, age 14). Carmel (age 14) expressed her opinion that parents are not the only family members to influence empathy development in young people: *'like, it doesn't even have to be your parents; like, it can be your cousins, aunties, uncles, any of them.'* Likewise, Michael (age 14) said, *'Say if you've an older brother or sister … you might inherit the good will from them.'* Sarah (age 14) pointed out the reciprocal nature of empathy or prosocial behaviour shown among people in the local community or neighbourhood: *'People from like your estate will stick up for you, you know, no bother',*

while Milo (age 14) claimed that a person's empathy or prosociality could also be impacted by the values and behaviours expressed by strangers: *'If you see someone just walking down the road and like donating to a homeless person, it might make you think, Why don't I do that?'* A couple of students agreed that the actions of strangers, in particular of other young people, can inspire greater prosocial action in others:

> *You know the shooting that happened in America and those kids that did the … march, and they organised everything, and they raised millions of dollars; they did that and they're only high-school kids. And I feel like that creates inspiration for other high-school or secondary school people to do it as well, I think.* **(Cora, age 17)**

The wider influence of religion and belief in God were also discussed in these focus groups, albeit only by two students. These students drew comparisons between empathy and religious philosophy, and suggested that people's empathic tendencies may be shaped by religious practices that encourage perspective taking. Emma (age 14) said, *'Like, if you look at it from I guess a religious perspective, it's like, that's what the Holy Spirit and God is meant to be; like they put themselves in your shoes'*, while Eleanor (age 17) also thought that following the teachings of Jesus promoted empathy:

> *From a religious standpoint … [Jesus] is the person you look up to, and the stories you hear about how he felt so much empathy for people, and like the Bible like teaches you to have empathy for people … like, his teachings is all about empathy and like being selfless and caring for other people.* **(Eleanor, age 17)**

A small number of students shared their opinions about how participation in sport can influence empathic and prosocial development both negatively and positively. Three students discussed how sports, specifically coaches, appear to actively encourage young people to not have empathy for other people. Eleanor (age 17) said, *'In sports, you can't have empathy, like; you cannot … we're conditioned to be like, Okay, you have to think about yourself … like, my coach always says like, you don't care. He even promotes it.'* Two other students appeared to agree that there is a lack of empathy in sports, because *'it's a competition'* (Cora, age 17) and you are taught to *'value yourself higher'* (Helen, age 17). While students in other focus groups didn't directly link sports and empathy, a couple of other students commented on the influence of coaches. However, these students mostly discussed the positive effect that coaches have on young people, in that *'they influence you, they help you get better'* (Ethan, age 14), and they *'tell you to keep going, instead of like putting yourself down … just keep going at it, and you can do better, like'* (Maura, age 14). Nonetheless, these students appeared to believe that coaches focus more on encouraging students *'to help yourself'* (Sarah, age 14) rather than to help others.

4.2.3 The Importance of Empathy and Prosocial Behaviour

Throughout their discussions, it became clear that students believed that empathy and prosocial behaviour are important and have several benefits at both the personal and the interpersonal or societal level. Nonetheless, students also believed that empathy was not always advantageous and may have negative ramifications. The advantages and disadvantages of showing or feeling empathy for others are detailed below.

Advantages of Empathy: Students appeared to associate empathy and prosocial behaviour with a number of personal, extrinsic rewards. Specifically, students suggested that it was important to show empathy or engage prosocially with others because *'if you show more empathy to a person, they may be more inclined to show it back'*. Sarah (age 14) talked about the reciprocal nature of empathy or prosocial responding: *'people look out for you, so you should look out for them'*, while Maura (age 14) agreed: *'if you do something nice for someone, you're more than likely to be treated the same'*. Another student said it was important to behave prosocially because *'you'll come across as a more likeable person'*. Students appeared to believe that empathy was also important for fostering a greater climate of care and compassion. Oscar (age 14) said empathy was beneficial *'because a lot of the people would start caring and appreciating each other'*. Lily (age 15) thought empathy was important *'because like otherwise everyone will just judge you and they won't know, like, maybe you can't help what you're being judged for. And like other people need to understand that.'* Other students suggested that empathy is important for facilitating

greater interpersonal relationships: *'It just helps you have a better relationship with the person'* (Sarah, age 14). Crucially, a number of students believed that empathy may also have important associations with youth mental health. For example, Anna (age 14) remarked: *'people with problems might find it easier to come to you if they know you can put yourself in their position'*, while Sarah (age 14) said, *'Like, imagine someone showing how [they] actually felt, instead of keeping it all in?'*

The implications or benefits that empathy can have for the wider society were discussed briefly by a number of students. In particular, students commented on the importance of empathy for facilitating problem solving. Madeline (age 14) said empathy *'could make a problem easier to solve because you can see things from the other person's perspective, not just your own'*, while some students, like Kevin (age 15), thought that greater empathic and prosocial responding would be beneficial to society because *'people can be very self-centred and do everything for their own good'*. Students in other focus groups also discussed how a lack of empathy could have negative implications for society:

> *Say for example a person ends up in a place of power, and because they don't show empathy towards other people, it can really result in turmoil and pain for the people, and that would probably lead to a lot of like dictatorships … because people haven't been taught to show empathy towards other people; they don't put themselves in their shoes.* (**Emma, age 16**)

Disadvantages of Empathy: Despite the number of benefits identified, young people also commonly discussed their perceptions of the disadvantages of empathy and prosocial behaviour. A number of students expressed concern that when other young people show empathy, it isn't always genuine: *'some people just do it because they see other people doing it and they want to fit'* (Maura, age 14), or *'people just do it when it suits them'* (Hillary, age 14). In particular, students appeared to fear the prospect that someone may demonstrate 'fake empathy' as a ploy to get a young person to confide their feelings in them. A conversation between Sarah, Carmel, and Maura (all aged 14) highlights this point well:

> **Maura:** *Fake empathy, yeah, they pretend they care but deep down they don't.*
>
> **Sarah:** *They fake it.*
>
> **Carmel:** *They go back and they tell everyone.*

Notably, students in other focus groups appeared to concur with these observations: *'Like, let's say you do pour your heart out and you do show the emotion, then maybe someone might use it for malicious intent'* (Eleanor, age 17). Isabella (age 17) expressed her lack of trust of others' 'fake empathy': *'It's very hard to trust people , especially like in this day, because it has happened before that you trust someone and then they basically back-stab you or do something bad.'* The idea that 'fake empathy' could be employed to *'use your weaknesses against you'* (Emma, age 16) appeared to be a big fear among the students, as evidenced by the comments of Eleanor (age 17): *'They use it against you; I feel like that's a big fear'*; Olivia (age 15), *'That's the worst thing'*, and Cora (age 17): *'Well, that's one of my fears.'*

Similarly, these youth appeared to be concerned that if they showed empathy or engaged in prosocial behaviours toward other people, their kindness or generosity would be taken advantage of. For instance, Carmel (age 14) expressed her belief that when you are inclined to help, *'some people take advantage of that'*. Milo (age 14) concurred that if you behaved prosocially all the time, people would *'just use you'*. Other students suggested that it is difficult to show empathy to *'someone who is looking for attention'* or to someone who is *'looking for empathy rather than letting it come naturally'*. On this note, when discussing his perceptions of the importance of empathy, Kevin (age 15) said he believed that empathy was only important *'to a certain extent'*:

> *'Cause I feel like, say if you get into a fight with someone … say it has nothing to do with their home life, some people might bring in their home life, bring it in to the fight, make the other person feel bad and try to get, like, empathy out of the other person … people use it out of context.* (**Kevin, age 15**)

For these reasons, students noted *'that's why so many people shut down their emotions.'*

4.2.4 Expression of Empathy and Prosocial Behaviour in Schools

When analysing students' discussions, a key theme emerged that centred on youth's perceptions of the expression of empathy between students and teachers at school. Students reported a lack of empathy being shown between teachers and students in their schools, and discussed the impact that this empathy deficit had on their education. While one student suggested that young people do not show enough empathy towards their teachers, noting that *'a lot of students always misbehave and disrespect their teachers'* (Milo, age 14), most students said that they *'don't think the teachers have much empathy'* (Kevin, age 15) for their students. A number of students indicated feeling as though teachers *'don't listen to students'* (Kevin, age 15) and that they sometimes make unfair judgements about students: *'sometimes say, there's a certain class and there's a group, that teacher only picks on that group of students and no one else in the class'* (Carmel, age 14) or that they *'pick on someone from a certain group … they just assume automatically that a certain person did it, because they have a bad record, or they've a bad history, they just assume that person did it'* (Sarah, age 14). Students appeared frustrated by the lack of help given by teachers to students who want to discuss societal issues or engage in civic activities:

> *It's just us in the student council. We talk about issues. We haven't really gotten to the part where we actually do something about it. They [the teachers] told us to organise it; they said they'd come and look at what we were talking about, but they haven't.* **(Cora, age 17)**

Students also discussed their belief that teachers, and the school context more generally, focus too much on academic pursuits and not enough on developing interpersonal skills: *'they focus on learning, and not on the people'* (Sarah, age 14). For instance, from Lily's (age 14) perspective, *'teachers, like, they don't really [show empathy], like they give you loads of homework and loads to study, and I think like they forget that you do have ten other subjects that you have to study for, and a lot of other summer exams'*. Other students were also of the opinion that some teachers *'can't accept that sometimes it's their fault for not teaching rather than the students' fault for not learning'* (Kevin, age 15). It was generally suggested that *'teachers need to have more empathy for students, they need to think about stress load and why every child may not be performing to its ability'*, while others believed that the high workload placed by schools on students may be negatively impacting young people's empathic and prosocial responding: *'if people didn't have to stress about study, as in not have to do a lot in a little amount of time, then people would be nicer'*.

Other students recognised that the lack of empathy shown to students often *'depends on the teacher'* (Sarah, age 14), and acknowledged the different ways teachers had responded prosocially to students in the past: *'Say if you go in, and you're not talking, they'll ask you are you okay'* (Carmel, age 14). Students also noted how their learning is positively impacted when teachers show that they care about the students' well-being.

> *Last year, I … say I really liked History because I really liked my teacher, he was smart, he was a good teacher, but he was also like really good to the kids. And this year it's like 'I don't care about you, I don't care about what's going on, you've this much homework, this is what you have to learn and study this', and now it's just dreadful.* **(Kevin, age 15)**

Overall, students appeared to believe that *'teachers could be more gentle to kids'* and *'should be caring and kind and empathic'*. Students suggested that if teachers showed more empathy in schools or could *'understand more of students' situations and set an example'*, then this would *'make it a lot easier to learn … like the learning environment … and there wouldn't be this constant arguing then'* (Sarah, age 14). Equally, students felt that *'it would be good to have classes where we can talk, like talk about what's on our minds'* (Kevin, age 15) and said schools should focus more on creating a more positive, empathic climate for all students:

> *Like if the school situation was changed maybe and they focused more on teaching students not only about academics but also about how to approach life, feelings, empathy, all that, because we spend so much time here and we literally leave school and are thrown out into the real world.* **(Olivia, age 15)**

4.2.5 How Much Empathy Do Young People Have?

In addition to whether young people believed that empathy was important or not, students also deliberated about whether they thought young people were typically empathetic or generally engaged in prosocial or civic behaviours. Overall, the evidence from these discussions indicated some conflicting findings. On the one hand, students appeared to believe that young people do have empathy for others, yet on the other hand, students seem to believe that young people are not empathic enough, or only actively help certain people, under certain circumstances.

A number of students shared their opinion that young people today do not typically feel or show a lot of empathy towards others. For example, when discussing whether they thought young people engage in prosocial or civic behaviours, students said it was *'not a lot'* (Cora, age 17) or *'not enough anyway'* (Maura, age 14). Interestingly, students like Milo (age 14) suggested that young people do not care enough to show empathy (*'I think if they cared, they'd do it'*), while others indicated that when it comes to young people's priorities, *'the things they put on top … empathy and looking out for others or caring for other people isn't one of them'* (Cora, age 14). One student felt that young people do not have empathy because *'nowadays, everyone has things going on in their own lives, but they always think that their problems are bigger than everyone else's. So it's like they don't listen to what other people feel'* (Helen, age 17).

Several students discussed their belief that young people are not empathetic and do not engage prosocially, by providing specific examples. In one focus group, students discussed their perceptions of young people's seeming lack of interest in societal problems or civic issues, suggesting that young people only talk about societal issues when it is popular to do so: *'They'll talk about it if it's trending'* (Cora, age 17). Emma (age 17) agreed: *'a situation like, an attack happened and then it's everywhere and they have to talk about it; that's when they're talking about it'*. However, Martha (age 17) suggested that young people still only discuss important topics *'in like a school situation, like I don't think … that wouldn't be like the topic of conversation if they were out'*, while Olivia (age 15) said that young people generally *'only talk about the typical stuff, Oh, your hair, blah, blah, blah'*. Similarly, in separate focus groups, Sarah (age 14) noted that it was not typical for young people to engage in volunteer work, while Chris (age 14) gave an example of the common lack of civic engagement among young people:

> *In the sense of the environment, they're not that like, eh, empathic, like, 'cause they leave rubbish on the floor and stuff like, and their children then, like, the next generation and stuff will kind of … the environment will be bad for them, so it's not, like, showing empathy for the rest of people.*
> **(Chris, age 14)**

Conversely, other students argued that young people do show high levels of empathic and prosocial responding. A number of students appeared to believe that young people were skilled at recognising when another person was upset or in need of help, and indicated that most young people would respond empathically.

> *You can kind of tell a fake smile from a genuine one if you try hard enough, so like I think that's how you can tell. So I think at the back of our heads we always know that something could potentially be wrong if the person is feeling a bit upset, even if they don't say if they're upset. So I think we tend to show a bit of empathy anyway because we don't know what's going on with them.* **(Madeline, age 14)**

Examples of how and in what situations young people typically show empathy towards each other were commonly discussed among the students in these focus groups. For instance, Maura (age 14) said that young people naturally help each other out: *'if someone got into trouble, you just sort of help them'*. Both Kevin (age 15) and Chris (age 14) discussed how they think young people behave prosocially when others experience a loss or bereavement: *'if someone lost someone, do you know, you'd show a bit more respect, you'd be more nicer to them'*. A number of students said that young people commonly show empathy or behave prosocially at school. For instance, Milo (age 14) said that in his school, *'I think everyone would stick up for the person getting bullied, or slagged'*. Others, like Carmel (age 14), concurred that young people typically stick up for each other: *'Say*

someone was slagging one of the girls, like, two or three of us would stick up for her anyway.' Madeline (age 14) similarly offered an example of why she believes that young people show empathy naturally:

> *If you're in class, and someone was sitting by themselves, and there's a seat between you and them, you might be like, 'Do you want to move down one?' or something, and try to talk to them. I think we do show it, even to people we don't know that well, but I think we don't even notice it ourselves that we do it. I think we do it naturally.* (**Madeline, age 14**)

Students also discussed their perceptions of young people's prosocial or civic responding in wider society. Sarah (age 14) said she sees *'a good bit'* of empathy from young people generally, while Carmel (age 14) discussed a particular situation, noting the prosocial actions of her cousin as an example of how young people engage in empathic behaviour in the community: *'last Christmas, my cousin walked into McDonald's and bought a homeless man a hot chocolate, and said Happy Christmas'.* Milo (age 14) said, *'if there was a homeless person out on the road, if you see them you might give him some money'*, providing another example of how he believed young people might try to help their wider community. Conversely, other students appeared to believe that these type of 'prosocial' actions, like donating money, were not sufficient:

> *Yeah, many people, many young people believe they're helping by donating like two euro and that's your part done. They don't see where the two euro goes. They just give it and they're like, Okay, someone will do good with that.* (**Emma, age 16**)

However, it is important to note that despite these students' conflicting views as to whether young people are typically empathetic or non-empathetic, students appeared to agree that empathy can vary depending on different individual and situational characteristics. Namely, most students suggested that whether or not empathy is shown depends on a number of factors, and noted several differences in empathic responding across different genders, ages, and targets.

Gender Differences in Empathy and Prosocial Behaviour: First, it should be noted that in each of the three focus groups, students said they believed there were differences in empathy and prosocial responding between boys and girls. Students in all three groups suggested that, in general, girls tend to have more empathy than boys. For instance, Cathal (age 13) shared his opinion that *'girls have more empathy'.* A similar comment was made by Milo (age 14), who indicated that girls *'just care a lot more about people'* – a sentiment which was echoed by a number of other students:

> *Well, for starters, just say you were going through something … girls will support you and they won't laugh at you, and they won't scoff at you and just say go stand up for yourself … They won't belittle you.* (**Michael, age 14**)

Notably, a number of students said that boys may be less likely to show empathy than girls because empathy is considered more of a 'weakness' in boys, or is not regarded as normative, acceptable behaviour. Sarah (age 14) suggested, *'I don't think boys can show their feelings around their friends – their friends will be like, "Oh look, you're being soft" … like, if you're a boy you're supposed to be hard and tough, so that's the act that you put on.'* Similarly, some students felt that *'if you're a boy, then there's people who act like they're hard but they're not'* (Michael, age 14), while others said empathy is regarded as more of a weakness in boys than in girls:

> *Especially for boys, it's a sign of weakness that you are not strong enough to toss them aside, not care about them; you're a weakling, and with boys especially yes. Like with girls it's still the same, but just it's more strong with boys.* (**Emma, age 16**)

Notably, however, a couple of students disagreed with the idea of gender differences in empathic or prosocial responding, and instead said differences in empathy occur due to differences between individuals: *'I think it kind of depends on the person, like. I think some people could care a lot like about something, like, and then someone else could just maybe not give a crap'* (Noel, age 14).

Age Differences in Empathy and Prosocial Behaviour: In addition to the gender differences acknowledged by these respondents, students also appeared to believe that differences in empathic or prosocial responding may also vary depending on the age of the individual. A small number of students suggested that empathy develops with age: *'I feel like people our age and older are like more empathetic than the younger generations coming in'* (Helen, age 17). Students in one focus group said that *'younger years, they're not as empathetic because like, there's always bullying and like, I don't know, fighting'* (Cora, age 17), or that there's 'always drama' with students in younger years *'because it's a source of entertainment'* (Martha, age 17). The idea that empathy may become easier to express as you become older, as you become less susceptible to outside influences, was touched upon briefly by another student in a separate focus group: *'I think as you grow older as well, say fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, you start to form your own views and you don't go off what your friends say and handle the fallout'* (Kevin, age 15). Notably, students also shared their opinion that it is easier to show empathy to people your own age or younger, because *'it's harder to help someone that's older than you, like say if it's a second or third year and a Leaving Cert [student] drinking, it's kinda harder to help them because it's an older person situation'* (Michael, age 14). Likewise, students also seemed to believe that young people are more likely to stick up for, or empathise with, people in their own school year than with people in different years: *'like even say someone fell out with someone in third year, third years would stick with third years, but second years would stick with second years'* (Sarah, age 14).

Target Characteristics or Situational Differences in Empathy: Another dominant sub-theme to emerge from students' conversations was the perception that empathy or prosocial responding varies depending on the social context or target to which you are responding. Overall, students indicated that some people are easier to help than others, and suggested that teenagers may be more likely to show empathy toward their *'friends and family'* or other people they *'know very well'*, as opposed to people they *'don't like or aren't really friendly with'*. For example, when talking about how young people show empathy, students typically agreed that *'it's easier, if you want to help out, if it's like someone you know'* (Eleanor, age 17), and suggested that young people are *'just kind to the people they know'* (Chris, age 14). Other students clarified that while it may be *'easier to show empathy to people that you're close with, if you didn't know the person, you wouldn't have empathy for them, but you wouldn't be rude or mean to them either'* (Kevin, age 15). Some students thought that it's just easier to *'show empathy to our friends'* (Maura, age 14), since *'like, if you're all good friends, like you care more for each other than different people, so you wouldn't care for them as much as you do your friends'* (Chris, age 14), and with people you don't know, *'you just naturally wouldn't have as much 'cause you don't know what they're going through, so they could be kinda show-boating'* (Kevin, age 15). Madeline (age 14) provided an illuminating account of why she believed young people engage in more prosocial or empathic responding with their friends, as she believes young people are more invested in these relationships:

> Say you had an argument with someone, and one person was like your best friend, and the other person was someone you barely knew? You'd be more likely to show empathy for your best friend, because you'd want to make up with them, like when it's someone you care about, you want things to go well, whereas this other person is insignificant to you, so you wouldn't want to try as hard. (**Madeline, age 14**)

Relatedly, students argued that it's harder to help people who are outside your close social network, or to empathise with *'someone who has done you wrong or something and is trying to complain about it'* (Kevin, age 15), suggesting that *'sometimes people, like, don't feel empathy for people with different views than them, because they can't relate to them or they just don't want to'* (Cora, age 17). Students also revealed that the type of relationship they have with a person, or how that person has treated them in the past (*'like their attitude toward you'* – Carmel, age 14) influences the level of empathy they show to that person: *'like if they're a genuine person, most people would help them, but if they're a bad person like or something, it might turn you off them'* (Sarah, age 14). Notably, some students distinguished between the differences in feeling empathy and taking empathic action, and pointed out that although it may be *'easier in the inner circles to act and feel, like further out it's like you can feel, it but it's harder to act'* (Martha, age 17). Some students said it is harder to take empathic action at a societal level because:

> Like say if you're trying to help someone on Twitter, you're more likely to not even be noticed at all; you're a drop in the ocean. You're drowning in an ocean of other things that other people are doing.

So I feel like the further out you go, the harder it is … the harder it is for your action to even be acknowledged. (**Olivia, age 15**)

A couple of students disagreed, claiming that empathy also depends on the situation, and that sometimes it may be easier to empathise with someone that one does not know, if *'they have a problem, and you've like been through the problem with them'* (Kevin, age 15) or if both have been through similar experiences:

It depends on the situation, because sometimes like you might feel more with someone who is not in your inner circle. You've been through that situation, so you can give them advice or you can like help them out through that. But like in the family circle or your inner circle, you might not have the same. (**Cora, age 17**)

A number of students also seemed to think, that regardless of the relationship between individuals, if the situation was dire enough, or if the person was clearly distressed, most students would feel compelled to try to help in some way. For instance, Maura (age 14) said that if someone was being teased or picked on by other students in the school, regardless of *'whether we were friends with that person or not, if their friends are just standing there, like, we'd still stick up for them'*, while other students felt that *'it's easy to show empathy to someone who is upset'*. In other words, students seemed to believe that if others are *'really mean, you might not help them, unless it's a really bad situation'* (Ethan, age 14) or that showing empathy to others *'depends how bad they need'* (Carmel, age 14).

Interestingly, while acknowledging that young people may be more reluctant to help people who are not their friends, students simultaneously suggested that sometimes it may be easier to open up to someone who is not a member of one's inner friendship circle, or that sometimes it's easier to receive help from someone *'when you're not that personal'* (Olivia, age 15). These students indicated that it can be easier to confide in strangers than in friends, because it means they can avoid burdening friends or having their friends change their opinions of them. For instance, Cora (age 17) commented: *'Me personally I like talking about serious issues with strangers, than like with my friends, because I don't want my friends to know … because it's like, because they have to then live with it'*. Similarly, Olivia (age 15) suggested that it may be easier to talk to someone who *'doesn't know everything about you, because maybe like if you know someone so well and you're so used to seeing them one way, they don't want to show their vulnerable side to you and maybe change your view on them'*. Other students thought that if your personality was not known to someone, they may be more willing to accept your help, because they wouldn't have preconceptions about your abilities. They recognised that it can be *'hard to break out of the little stereotypes that you put yourself in'*. As Emma (age 16) noted, *'it's like if someone is always like light-hearted and fun, or whatever, and then they're trying to have a serious conversation, people might not take them seriously, be like, Okay, I don't know why you're talking to me like this'*.

4.2.6 Barriers to Empathy and Prosocial Responding

When sharing their opinions about why some young people show empathy in some situations but not in others, students reflected on a number of reasons or barriers which they believed prevent young people from showing empathy or engaging in prosocial behaviour more frequently.

Societal Norms: Students in one focus group shared their opinion that young people do not show empathy to others because it is regarded as a weakness by society (*'just in this day and age with the way people behave, the way they behave is that being empathetic towards other people is a sign of weakness'* – Emma, age 16), and that young people do not wish to appear weak to others (*'showing empathy is like showing weakness, and no one wants to be portrayed as weak'* – Eleanor, age 17). Several students in this group expressed their belief that there is now a norm in society or *'a trend to not care; it's a trend to not have empathy'* (Martha, age 17). For instance, Olivia (age 15) said that *'it has now become a trend to not care about others or things that were once important or should be important'*, and felt that societal norms promote individualism over empathy: *'looking better than someone else matters more than caring for them'*. This sentiment was endorsed by others in the group:

> *You need to be, like, you need to be the winner in life; you've to take all the opportunities, so like if you're going to be stepping over someone else to get where you need to get, you'll do it because you can't be successful and stuff.* (**Cora, age 17**)

Students felt that young people often do not show empathy *'because it doesn't benefit them'* (Cora, age 17). Specifically, they said that because *'people make it seem like it's a bad thing to care for other people'* (Olivia, age 15), young people are now *'afraid to be seen as weak'* (Isabella, age 17) or fear being judged by others.

> *What stops people our age showing empathy is being judged, being judged for being different, for caring, for being 'weak'. We don't want to do anything out of the norm for fear of not being accepted.*
> (**Heidi, age 17**)

Similarly, students argued that young people refrain from showing empathy or compassion to others because they are concerned about their own image: *'Many people want to portray a strong image even if it is at the expense of others … putting ourselves first, even though they are aware that other people need our assistance, stops people from showing empathy'* (Emma, age 16). Empathy is seen as an inconvenience: *'it's bother, like – that's how people see it, it's too much effort'* (Eleanor, age 17), and these students felt that it *'puts a lot of people off because it's just a lot of effort when you've put a lot of your own time in to do it'* (Cora, age 17). Students typically appeared to feel that young people are fearful that if they help others, they may lose out on certain opportunities, or that their empathy will 'cost' them in some way.

> *People act like it's them against the world, like it's them against everyone else, so they don't stop to think about someone else, because they'd feel like if I stop now that someone is going to like overtake me; someone is going to take that opportunity that I should take to do something. So they don't stop to see how someone beside them is doing or how someone else is feeling, because they're like, I can't waste my time on that.* (**Martha, age 17**)

However, it is important to note that although this idea, that empathy is regarded as a weakness or that showing empathy involves a 'cost' to oneself, was a dominant theme in this focus group, it was not mentioned by students in the other two focus groups.

Not Knowing When or How to Help: Another potential barrier discussed by students was a lack of knowledge or understanding about how to help. Interestingly, students appeared to indicate that young people's lack of engagement in empathic action may reflect their perceptions about their inability to help, rather than a lack of empathic 'emotion'. For example, one student reflected on her own civic behaviour, stating: *'I'm really into all the activism stuff but it's like, eh, really hard because you don't know where to start'* (Cora, age 17). Other students also indicated their frustration at wanting to help others in society but feeling unable to make a difference: *'seeing something that's so unjust, and you feel like there's literally nothing you can do. You know it's so wrong what's happening to them, and you feel so much for them, but you're like, I don't know how I can help'* (Olivia, age 15), or being unsure about which resources to trust: *'you've to try and figure out what companies are legit, because there's a lot of fake'* (Martha, age 17). This idea that a lack of knowledge about how to help, or fear of making a situation worse, may act as barriers to empathic action was also discussed by a couple of students in other focus groups. For instance, Michael (age 14) argued that young people may choose not to help *'if there wasn't much you could do to help the situation'*, and advised that young people *'need to think it through if you'd just make the situation worse rather than make it better'*. Hillary (age 14) claimed that *'if your friend was like upset, then you mightn't want to push him to talk about it, because they might get angry, then you might like fight, so then you don't really want to help them, like if they're kinda sad about something'*.

When deliberating over what stops people from engaging in more empathic or prosocial action, a couple of students also cited the lack of help young people receive from other adults as a major barrier. Students said that taking action to help other people in society is *'something we need help doing'* (Sarah, age 14) because *'we don't know where to start; we're like, Okay, I really want to help, but how? What will I do that will make a difference?'*

(Emma, age 16). Students appeared to feel that even *'if we wanted to take the bigger step, we don't even know where to go, because so many people aren't even in support of it'* (Olivia, age 15). Generally, these students did not appear to believe that adults valued their opinions or suggestions about how to tackle societal issues: *'a lot of people don't want to hear kids; we're considered kids, they don't want to particularly hear from us, they're like, What do you guys know!?'* (Cora, age 17). Other students felt that because they are younger, adults believe that they *'don't know what things are important'* (Martha, age 17) or query their *'experience of the world'* (Helen, age 17). Crucially, Olivia (age 15) claimed that *'even our parents, they're just like, they'll be like listening and they're like, Yeah, but what do you know, you haven't been around as long as us, or whatever'*, and expressed her frustration with not knowing *'who can we speak to that actually cares'*.

Relatedly, at the interpersonal level, students appeared to believe that sometimes young people do not help others because they do not think it is necessary, or because they do not believe the other person wants their help. For instance, Hillary (age 14) said that whether a young person engages in empathic action or not may depend on the recipient's openness to being helped, because *'if you know the person doesn't really want to, you don't want to push it'*. Other students, like Maura (age 14) were of the opinion that *'some people might think they might leave it, 'cause like they don't even need our help like, 'cause like they know how to deal with it'*, while Sarah (age 14) argued that if someone doesn't *'want your help, then you can't try to force someone. You can tell them you'll always be there for them, but if they don't want your help...'*. Indeed, overall it appeared to be a common belief among the students that people who are upset or sad about something may not want to be helped, and that *'it's not always necessary to do something, like'* (Paul, age 14). Students argued that *'lots of people don't want help when they're sad, as in they just want to be left alone, and I think it's best to leave them alone if they want to be left alone'* (Madeline, age 14), and that *'sometimes when you're upset you just want to be left alone, and you just want to get your school day over and get out and just go back home'* (Kevin, age 15).

Social Media: Students in all focus groups commented on the influential role that social media plays in young people's empathic attitudes and behaviours. However, they disagreed as to whether social media exerted a positive or negative effect on young people's empathy.

A number of students commented on the potential of social media to be used as a tool for fostering empathy, and discussed the positive benefits that social media has for young people. Specifically, students noted that because *'social media numbers are so high'* (Olivia, age 15), it can be a positive, empathic tool because it *'shows us that this stuff is happening. So it gives us a chance to act on it and do stuff'* (Martha, age 17). A couple of students commented on the power that celebrities have to influence young people, and suggested that celebrities could use their influence to encourage young people to care more about societal issues. For example, one student said that *'someone like Kim Kardashian has a hundred and ten million followers. We don't actually sit back and think a hundred and ten million people actually look at what she does'* (Olivia, age 15), while another student said, *'There's a lot of YouTubers that do homeless videos and stuff, and that can, like, influence you'* (Milo, age 14). Notably, several students said that they *'don't get told anything about the benefits'* of social media, or that when it came to social media, *'people focus on the mean things'* more, and that *'there are a lot of kind things there that people don't tend to … like it doesn't stick out to them, they'd rather focus on the bad things than all the good things'* (Madeline, age 14). In relation to school, for instance, Noel (age 14) argued that *'all the teachers are saying is "Oh, it's bad for you, you can get bullied", and all this, but like social media helps you meet up with your friends, like you can organise or like you can go on websites'*. Similarly, Madeline said:

> *It's like if you post a picture on Instagram, the majority of people will be like, 'Oh, you look lovely' or something, but we all focus on the one person who says, 'Oh, you look horrible', instead of like the fifty other that said 'Oh, you look perfect.'* **(Madeline, age 14)**

Lily (age 14) agreed that social media can *'be a good thing'* because *'it can boost people's self-esteem, by people telling them they look great'*. Nonetheless, Lily recognised that social media may also be '*a bad thing, like when that one person leaves a negative comment – that can be real, like, hurtful, like for insecure people or anything'*.

However, Kevin (age 15) was of the opinion that this can be beneficial to young people, as it may mature them: *'I think social media matures people, matures people our age. With social media there's people who are gonna be like, 'I don't like you' and stuff, and then you have to be mature. If you are mature, you're not gonna, you're not going to take any notice of it.'* Similarly, Madeline (age 14) thought that how young people are affected by negative comments on social media may depend on their own personality: *'I suppose it's how you look at it, though. If you're pessimistic, you'll probably look at like that, but someone else might be like, Ah here, I have like forty-nine other people.'*

On the other hand, some students believed that social media has a negative effect on young people's empathy levels. A number of students felt that it is *'more easy to be mean to people, or it's easier for bullying to happen'* (Evelyn, age 14) through social media. Some students felt that people *'don't show much feeling on social media'* (Milo, age 14) and are less likely to stick up for other people online, *'because if you don't know them that well, they're obviously not gonna, 'cause they don't know you and they don't know if you know the person who is doing it'* (Michael, age 14). Markedly, students also believed that social media actively promotes a non-empathic culture by encouraging people to become famous 'at the expense of others':

> *I feel like the social media now, it's so focused on like becoming famous at the expense of someone else, like, everything we see, like, memes, vines, all that, like, a big percentage of it is hurting someone; someone is getting hurt, someone is getting embarrassed, and that's what we think is funny.* **(Olivia, age 15)**

Students argued that when it comes to social media, *'people like to portray the bad things more because that's better media'* (Martha, age 17), and that people who *'portray positivity have less followers'* (Olivia, age 15), because *'people like to be entertained'* (Martha, age 17). Hence, students felt that these social media celebrities were bad influences for young people because they tend to be people *'who are just popular for like shaming people, or being pretty, being good-looking, are the ones that have millions of followers'* (Olivia, age 15) and that *'half the people we follow online, they don't show any empathy'* (Eleanor, age 17). Students appeared concerned that being exposed to such a culture of apathy online would make students desensitised, and that they would end up showing less empathy as a result of their online exposure: *'I don't think we realise it, but like we're slowly following them because it's like, it's affecting us because we use social media so much. I feel like that's quite dangerous'* (Cora, age 17). A few students felt that because of the number of online users, social media could lead to desensitisation due to the sheer volume of messages or requests for help that young people are exposed to daily. As one student proposed, people are exposed to:

> *… millions of tweets a day, probably hundreds of millions of tweets a day, whatever, and like so many different things. We can't even stop and focus on one thing. You'd be like, Oh my God, we should like help solve this, because then ten more things come in and we're like, Okay, we don't have enough time.* **(Emma, age 16)**

Similarly, Cora (age 17) argued that frequent exposure to acts of terrorism and violence via social media and other traditional media sources may also desensitise young people, resulting in less empathy when these acts occur:

> *You know all these like attacks and stuff like that, like all the bad things that are happening; people see it and then they don't react as much as they would have in the past, because it's a daily occurrence and people just move on; they forget it as soon as it happens. People don't have empathy for people that are in those attacks, Oh, it just happened, it's a daily occurrence for our generation now, and it's going to keep on happening.* **(Cora, age 17)**

4.2.7 Recommendations and Suggestions

The final theme to emerge from the data centred upon students' recommendations and suggestions for what actions could be taken to help promote greater empathic responding among young people. Students' suggestions focused on the roles that schools, parents, wider society, and young people themselves could all play in promoting greater empathy.

Recommendations for Schools: Students in all three focus groups brought up recommendations for what they thought schools should do to help cultivate a greater empathic environment. Notably, while one or two students stated that they didn't *'think empathy is necessarily something that can be taught'* (Kevin, age 15), most students seemed to feel that schools were an important source to target for empathy promotion, because *'if school was a more positive environment, it would change youth's outlook on life and each other, as we spend a large percentage of our lives at school'*. Several students said that empathy should be *'discussed more'* in schools and that young people should be *'given more freedom to talk'*, with *'no repercussions'*. These students advocated for greater *'discussion time in school where students are able to express their opinions on topics like this'*. Helen (age 17) felt that schools should have classes or groups that discuss empathy more, because *'if you're open to discuss it in a safe environment, that'll probably help you build more confidence to actually talk about it in society'*.

Other students made other broad recommendations for schools, such as enforcing stricter rules about bullying and creating greater opportunities for students to get to know one another. Several students recommended that schools should set up charity events like a *'fundraiser'* or *'fun run in the park, like a colour run'* for students to participate in, and discussed the wide advantages that such endeavours could have. Students felt that such activities could not only help raise money for people in need (*'principals could set up a lot more events that you have to pay for, then that will go towards charities'* – Milo, age 14) but also help foster empathy between the students in the school, *'because it would bring us all together like, the class, and there'd be no, like, fighting or bitching or anything like that'* (Sarah, age 14). Similarly, another student advised that if schools could develop other *'systems for students to get to know people who wouldn't be very close',* this could also help promote greater empathy among students. While one student felt that schools could cultivate greater empathy by invoking *'stricter rules, like, um, make sure there was less bullying or hitting, or like bigger consequences for doing it'* (Milo, age 14), other students disagreed, suggesting that this could create further animosity: *'because like say if someone else has hit someone, then you get suspected'* (Maura, age 14) and then *'you could fall out with your friend over that, 'cause they got you in trouble'* (Sarah, age 14)

In addition to these broad school recommendations, students discussed the role that teachers can play in helping to promote greater empathy and prosocial behaviour. Specifically, a number of students felt that *'teachers should be encouraged to show empathy to students' problems',* with a couple of students arguing that *'teachers need to be put through more of a process. I feel like they need to go through a personality interview as well as intellectual'* (Kevin, age 15). Other students agreed that it is important for teachers to discuss and model empathy, *'so like the students can like get examples from the teachers'* (Cora, age 17), while another student said that teachers should encourage young people to show empathy to one another: *'Teachers could get kids who care and get them to convince their other friends to do good things.'*

Recommendations for Parents: A number of students discussed the importance of parenting for promoting greater empathy among young people in society. Generally, students contended that *'empathy should be instilled to you as a child, because as we grow up that will show; it will project if empathy was something that was shown to you as a child'* (Emma, age 16). Other students argued that if children are shown empathy at home, they will learn to show empathy to others as they grow. For instance, Martha (age 17) felt that *'if kids are taught at home to be empathetic, it'll be like second nature to them when they grow up'*. Emma (age 16) argued that *'it should be a parent's imperative to their child that you should be empathetic towards other people, then yes, it will help you show it as you grow.'* Similarly, while Heidi (age 17) also believed that empathy should be *'taught from a younger age from parents',* she also recognised the importance of the relationship between the child and the parent, *'because I know like some parents aren't close to like the child, or like, the communication is bad as well, so I think communication from families and just opening up, I think that would help'*. This sentiment was shared by a few other students, such as Isabella (age 17), who argued that empathy will develop *'if you learn it when you're younger and if you can have someone that you can talk to, or you can share your experience and they share theirs; so it's like an open conversation'*.

Recommendations for Young People and Society: Finally, students also commented on how young people themselves, as well as the wider society, could help cultivate a more empathic social environment. Notably, as discussed earlier, students acknowledged the role that societal norms can play in influencing how young people respond to one another, and believed that in order to promote greater empathy, negative societal norms need to be tackled. For instance, Eleanor (age 17) said that sometimes she feels that *'what you feel and your emotions are a bit of a taboo, no one really wants to talk about it, and I feel like that needs to be changed'.* Other students agreed that young people, and society more generally, need to talk about empathy and feelings more, in order to create a new positive norm: *'we need to all speak about it, and you need to see it from your point of view and ask as many questions till you figure it out'* (Olivia, age 15). Students felt that young people need to have more of an *'open mind'* and that *'empathy needs to be modelled more'* in society. Students in one focus group advised all young people *'to get involved'* and *'don't leave it be'*, suggesting that young people could be more active in promoting an empathic norm, such as by making *'flyers to show you can help'*, by all working together *'to make an afterschool club to help people in need of help'* (Sarah, age 14), by arranging to '*get everyone together and work on something together'* (Maura, age 14), or by having *'friends keep checking up on each other'.* Two students suggested that societal campaigns, such as having *'ads on TV'* (Milo, age 14), may also help *'raise awareness'* (Sarah, age 14).

4.2.8 Results Summary

Overall, young people shared a number of interesting ideas and opinions about the development and expression of empathy and prosocial behaviour. In particular, while youth recognised empathy as having innate qualities, they also identified several social systems, which they believe impact young people's level of engagement in empathic or prosocial responding. Notably, although students felt that empathy was important, due to the personal and societal benefits associated with empathic action, students appeared to be cautious about the costs associated with showing empathy to others. Youth suggested that the level of empathy or prosocial behaviour expressed may vary depending on a number of important situational (e.g., relationship with the target) or individual (e.g., age, gender) characteristics. Finally, youth identified a number of barriers limiting young people's ability or willingness to engage in empathic or prosocial behaviour, and recommended specific strategies targeting schools, parents, other youth, and society to overcome these barriers and promote greater empathy and prosocial behaviour among youth in society.

- Youth proposed that empathy promotes greater psychological and interpersonal functioning, but believed that society promotes individualism over empathy.

- Empathy was conceptualised as both an innate personality trait and a skill that can be strengthened or weakened by one's environment.

- Parents, other family members, strangers, and friends were all recognised as having the potential to positively and negatively influence the development and expression of empathy among young people.

- Adolescents believed that religion, sport, and social media also impact empathy.

- Youth believed that young people are likely to show empathy towards their friends, but may lack empathy for others who are different from them.

- The level of empathy shown by young people in a particular situation was thought to depend on the perceived level of need, as well as the age and gender of the respondent.

- Adolescents identified a weak empathic relationship between teachers and students in school and discussed the negative consequences this has for well-being & education.

- Fear of being judged, fear of making a situation worse, and lack of knowledge, skills, or access to resources were all cited as major barriers impeding young people's willingness or ability to engage in active empathic or prosocial responding.

- Youth identified schools as important targets for reform and empathy promotion, and provided recommendations for how schools, parents, young people, and society more generally can all help create a greater culture of empathy.

4.3 Discussion

The aim of this strand of the research was to expand knowledge about how empathy and prosocial behaviour are viewed and regarded by adolescents, and to increase understanding of how and why empathy is (or is not) expressed by young people in society. In total, 29 adolescents from across three schools in Ireland participated in focused discussions probing their perceptions of empathy (e.g., what it is and how or why young people show it). From these discussions, several notable themes and trends emerged. Adolescents were found to hold complex conceptualisations of empathy, regarding it as both a societal advantage and disadvantage and viewing young people's (dis)engagement in empathic or prosocial responding as being both socially and biologically driven. Adolescents identified parents, schools, and young people themselves as important agents of change and provided recommendations for how they can help cultivate a more empathic society.

First, several important observations were noted in relation to adolescents' understanding of the concept of empathy. Youth showed large disparities in their level of understanding of the definition of empathy. Several students regarded it as an affective or cognitive response, describing empathy in terms of a myriad of feelings and processes, such as sharing another's emotions, perspective taking, understanding, caring, compassion, morality, love, guilt, and kindness. Other students showed confusion and a lack of understanding over what empathy meant. These findings are important, as they suggest that further consideration of the type of terminology that is being used in programmes or research with young people may be beneficial, because not all young people are familiar with the concept. These findings also highlight important differences between researchers' typical conceptualisations of empathy and young people's understanding of the concept. Implicit

in students' definitions was the conceptualisation of empathy as both an emotion or feeling and a behaviour or action (e.g., helping). However, although researchers regard empathy and prosocial responding as closely related, these concepts are still considered empirically distinct, and researchers do not always assess them simultaneously (Cuff et al., 2016; Vasconcelos et al., 2012; Eisenberg et al., 1994). Because these concepts – of empathic 'attitudes' and empathic 'action' – were intricately linked for adolescents, who also believed that 'actions speak louder than words', future research aiming to generate greater understanding of empathic responding may benefit from recognising the applied social nature of empathy and from including measures of both empathic attitudes and behaviours, or other related feelings and behaviours, in their operationalisations.

Relatedly, it is also important to reflect on students' comparisons between empathy and sympathy. While a small number of students identified differences between them, a substantial proportion of students still appeared to equate empathy with 'pity'. This finding is interesting and has some potentially important ramifications. Pity is often considered a problematic, negative, and sometimes stigmatising emotion (Corrigan et al., 2007; Florian et al., 1999). Indeed, from a certain perspective, it can be argued that pity is almost the opposite of empathy, in that it is a self-focused reaction that often reflects a passive attitude towards another person or a lack of commitment to substantial action (Florian et al., 1999). If young people believe that showing 'pity' is the same as showing 'empathy', then this can have serious implications for society, and suggests that further intervention or education programmes that provide further knowledge about the differences between empathy and sympathy may be warranted. This conflation of pity and empathy may also help explain some of the perceived reluctance among adolescents to offer or seek help, which was identified continually by the students throughout the focus groups. If young people believe that empathy involves pity, then it is possible that what adolescents perceive as others not wanting help may in fact reflect adolescents' desire to avoid being pitied, rather than a desire not be empathised with. Although this argument is strengthened by adolescents' urgings that young people do not wish to be bestowed with 'pity', future quantitative and qualitative research would benefit from exploring this proposition further, in order to generate empirical evidence about the impact that such misconceptions about pity and empathy may have on adolescents' helping or help-seeking behaviours.

Findings from the focus group discussions also indicated that young people believe that one's ability to empathise with others comes from both their own personality traits and their exposure to a number of key contextual factors. In general, adolescents suggested that young people learn empathy through their parents' and friends' modelling and encouragement of empathy. While other research has also provided evidence to suggest that parents (Miklikowska et al., 2011; Coyne et al., 2011) and peers (Lopez et al., 2008; Barr & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2007) play an important role in empathy development, adolescents in the current study disagreed over whether parents or friends were the most influential source of empathy. Although several adolescents contended that friends play a more important role than parents in influencing empathy or prosocial responding, a couple of students believed that young people learn empathy more from their parents than from any other source. These differences in perspectives indicate that the strength of the effect that friends or parents have on the development and expression of empathy may vary for different individuals, or may be moderated by other factors. For example, other research suggests that adolescents' quality of attachment can moderate the relationship between parent or peer modelling, or encouragement, and empathic responding (Nie et al., 2016; Thompson & Gullone, 2008). Nonetheless, these findings add to a growing evidence base which indicates that parents and peers are important socialisation agents of empathy and may be important targets for strategies aiming to increase empathic or prosocial responding among young people. Indeed, in the current research, adolescents themselves identified parents and peers as important agents of change, advising that parent and peer encouragement and modelling of empathy are key to developing a positive societal norm that promotes empathy. Given that the consultation of young people in matters that affect them is now recognised as a crucial step in service development and design (Richards-Schuster & Pitzker, 2015; Department of Youth & Children Affairs, 2012; Fleming, 2013; Badham & Wade, 2008), future programmes or interventions aiming to increase empathic responding among young people may benefit from reflecting further on these young people's advice.

On this note, it is should be mentioned that although adolescents seemed to believe that parents and friends

exerted the strongest impact, they did not seem to regard empathy or prosocial behaviour as being exclusively influenced by these factors, with the influence of 'other' sources also being commonly discussed. In particular, adolescents said that young people's empathy can also be shaped and moulded through their interactions with other family members, such as aunts, uncles, cousins, and siblings, and by witnessing kindness or activism in strangers. The socialisation effects that other family members and strangers have on youth's empathy do not appear to be as widely explored in the literature (Lam et al., 2012), so future research may benefit from examining these relationships further. A small number of students also highlighted the role that religion and sports play in influencing young people's empathic responding. Intriguingly, these adolescents asserted that religiosity and belief in God encourage greater empathy, but that sports, and specifically sport coaches, encourage less empathy. While previous research also supports a positive link between youth empathy and religious beliefs (Francis et al., 2012), the proposed negative association between sports and empathy was unexpected. Research has generally indicated a positive correlation between adolescents' empathic and prosocial responding and their participation in both team and non-team sports (Ettekal et al., 2016; Chowhan & Stewart, 2007; Kavussanu, 2006). Other evidence suggests that while sports may be associated with greater empathy or prosocial responding, this may only be true for empathic or prosocial responses that are displayed on the field or directed towards teammates (Bruner et al., 2014; Rutten et al., 2008; Rutten et al., 2007). Thus, these youth's observations may reflect a deeper consideration of the implications that the sporting environment may have on youth's empathic and prosocial responding, in the wider context, and may be an important avenue to explore in future research.

Another important finding which should be discussed further pertains to students' disagreements about the level of empathy shown by young people. Some adolescents believed that young people today do not show enough empathy, that they are more concerned about their own pursuits than other people's problems and do not engage with societal issues unless for superficial purposes. Other youth believed that young people today do show quite a lot of empathy, that they are skilled at recognising when someone is upset and tend to stand up or help others when needed. Crucially, regardless of which stance adolescents took in this debate, the majority agreed that aspects of the situational context likely influence the level of empathy or prosocial behaviour shown by young people. In particular, students proposed that a person's gender and age likely impact their expression of empathy. Namely, a number of students believed that girls and older adolescents were more likely than boys or younger adolescents to show or value empathy, a trend which has been observed in numerous other studies (Del Ray et al., 2016; Vossen & Valkenburg, 2016; Gini et al., 2008; Lopez et al., 2008). However, in the current research, it is difficult to assert whether these perceived age and gender differences reflect differences in adolescents' empathic capacity or simply differences in their prosocial tendencies (see Lam et al., 2012), because when discussing the source of these age and gender differences a couple of students referred to the pressure of societal norms. Thus, further research is needed to generate greater understanding of the biological or sociological underpinnings of these age and gender differences in adolescents' empathic responding.

Adolescents also claimed that it may be easier to have empathy for some types of people than others. They said that although it is easy to show or feel empathy for people in one's close social circle, such as family or friends, it may be more difficult to empathise with people whom one does not know as well, or who display certain undesirable characteristics, such as those who are 'show-boating', 'looking for attention', or 'mean'. However, adolescents suggested that these characteristics may take less precedence in situations where there is a dire need for help. Nonetheless, these findings are important, as they suggest that adolescents may not show empathy toward all individuals equally (Masten et al., 2010). Moreover, these findings indicate that empathy may be a 'conditional' rather than a 'universal' response, in that it seems to be something that is felt or shown towards certain people, in certain situations, but not others (Van Rijsewijk et al., 2016). Evidence from other empirical research also suggests that youth's empathic and prosocial responding varies according to different situational and target characteristics (Fu et al., 2017; Machackova et al., 2016; Padilla-Walker, Carlo, & Nielson, 2015; Padilla-Walker, Coyne et al., 2015; Padilla-Walker et al., 2014), although research investigating this matter appears somewhat limited. It is paramount that future research explores this potential in-group/out-group empathy gap further, in order to elaborate on why such bias in empathic responding may occur (see Bruneau et al., 2017; Stürmer et al., 2006). Additionally, research should explore how perceptions

of need are gauged by adolescents, or whether certain target characteristics moderate adolescents' perceptions of situational need (see Hauser et al., 2014). Overall, greater understanding of why empathy is shown to some people and not to others is needed, in order to inform the development of more effective intervention programmes that can help cultivate greater empathic responding, towards all individuals, rather than just some.

Separate from their disagreements about whether or not young people are empathetic, adolescents in the current study also disagreed about whether empathy or prosocial behaviour was important. Students said there were both several advantages and several disadvantages to feeling and showing empathy. They suggested that empathy was psychologically beneficial, as it increases understanding about differences and helps young people feel more comfortable talking about their emotions. They suggested that empathy had other social benefits, in that it increases rapport and facilitates problem solving. Several students said it was important to show empathy to others because they in turn would be more likely to show empathy back. At the same time, students said there are several social and personal disadvantages associated with showing empathy. They suggested that a current disadvantage of empathy was the potential of others to 'fake' concern and expressed wariness over confiding their emotions in others for fear of having their confidence betrayed. They said that empathy can have negative repercussions for the person who engages in it, claiming that kindness can be taken advantage of by others or that showing empathy may result in the individual losing out on other important opportunities or personal advantages.

These findings have several important implications. They highlight important links between empathic or prosocial responding and youth's emotional well-being, suggesting that heightened emotional support may facilitate greater psychological well-being and providing further support to evidence garnered in other research (Spinrad & Eisenberg, 2017). However, the results also suggest that adolescents' perceptions of others' motivations for engaging in empathic and prosocial responding may moderate these effects or influence their willingness to engage in personal disclosure. Future research should be aware of, and target, adolescents' concerns about 'fake' or 'surface-level' empathy (see Humphrey, 2016). These findings are also important as they suggest that young people may value empathy for both altruistic and egoistic purposes, in that adolescents' evaluations of the importance of empathy appeared to be based on an intricate consideration of both selfish and selfless concerns (Zaki, 2014; Cialdini et al., 1987).

Students also discussed their perceptions of the situational barriers that disable and dissuade young people from engaging in greater empathic responding. This may be important to consider in future intervention programmes. Students expressed concerns that negative societal norms regarding the value of empathy may deter young people from showing or engaging in empathy. Students in these focus groups believed that empathy was regarded as a non-beneficial weakness by society, and that young people refrain from showing empathy in order to avoid negative judgement for appearing weak. This finding, that young people believe that society promotes individualism and devalues concern for others, may have important implications for interpersonal functioning and societal morality in the long term (Schumann et al., 2014; Twenge & Campbell, 2012; Hoffmann, 2001). Overall, these findings call for greater consideration of the role that societal norms play in influencing adolescents' empathic attitudes and behaviours over time. The findings suggest that targeting adolescents' perceptions of negative societal norms towards empathy may be an important area for future intervention research, and was a promotion strategy explicitly recommended by a number of youth in the current study.

Another barrier identified by these young people as being discouraging to youth engagement in empathy was youth's lack of perceived knowledge or guidance about how to actively engage in empathic responding. An interesting argument put forward by the adolescents in the current research is that young people may lack knowledge about how best to help or to show empathy, and may refrain from taking empathic action in a particular situation for fear of making the situation worse. Adolescents' discussions hinted at a perceived lack of help from other adults about how to engage in active empathy at a societal level. They believed that adults did not value young people's opinions about how to address societal issues, and they suggested that although young people need help to help others, there is a lack of guidance from older generations about how to do this. Crucially, although other research has indicated that empathy and helping appear to be declining among younger generations (Hampton, 2016; Konrath et al., 2011), these findings may suggest that youth's apparent lack of empathic or prosocial engagement may reflect a lack of opportunity or knowledge of how to help, as

opposed to a lack of willingness. Hence, future initiatives aiming to promote greater empathic responding among young people may benefit from reflecting on the role that adolescents' knowledge and perceptions of their skills have on their willingness to engage in empathic action (Barchia & Bussey, 2011; Alessandri et al., 2009). Findings also indicate that older generations may play an important role in facilitating empathic action among younger generations, particularly at a societal level, and suggest that promoting greater adult–youth opinion and skill sharing may be an important avenue for future intervention or policy research.

Students discussed the role that social media plays in influencing young people's empathic attitudes and behaviours. However, they disagreed over whether it was a facilitator or a barrier to empathy and other prosocial responding. For instance, several students advocated for the positive effects of social media, suggesting that it facilitates social interactions between young people and could be used as a powerful tool to promote empathy, because it allows greater access to prosocial content or messages that encourage empathy and prosocial behaviour. Other students felt that social media facilitated empathic decline, by exposing youth to an online celebrity culture that promotes narcissism and desensitises youth to social issues. Similarly, while some students believed that social media facilitated interpersonal callousness, others believed that how young people were affected by negative online comments may depend on their own resiliency or personality. Although previous research suggests that social media and empathy tend to be positively linked (Vossen & Valkenburg, 2016; Alloway et al., 2014; Greitemeyer, 2011), the issues discussed by the adolescents in the current research provide important food for thought for researchers and policymakers alike. This research indicates that different aspects of social media may have differential effects on adolescents' empathic or prosocial responding, and highlights the importance of generating greater understanding of how adolescents' exposure to various social media content impacts their empathic attitudes and behaviours, at both the interpersonal and societal level. Findings hint that individuals' own personality traits or skills may moderate the influence of social media and should be explored further in future research.

Finally, the topic of empathy in schools and the importance of promoting empathy in a school context was also discussed by adolescents across the three focus groups. In general, adolescents appeared to believe that there was a lack of empathy shown between teachers and students, and implied that schools prioritise academic achievement to the detriment of students' interpersonal skills and emotional well-being. Notably, however, adolescents claimed that when teachers do engage in active, empathic understanding, it can have a positive impact on the learning environment. They recommended that strategies aiming to promote empathic responding among young people should strive to target the school context, and suggested that schools should give further attention to the topic of empathy. These findings may have important considerations for future intervention strategies and programmes. However, it should be noted that the current research only consulted the perspective of students on this matter and not teachers or other staff members'. Additionally, it should be acknowledged that research has shown that teachers' ability to provide pastoral care to students can be constrained by aspects of the school working environment (Cooper, 2004). Future research should strive to explore this issue further by consulting the perspectives of all school personnel, in order to ensure that an unbiased account of the current empathic climate in schools is obtained and that robust, feasible recommendations for how best to cultivate a greater empathic school climate are gathered.

4.3.1 Recommendations and Suggestions for Research and Practice

This research is among the first to embark on an in-depth qualitative exploration of young people's conceptualisations of the meaning and importance of empathy. The results have notable implications for both research and practice. Findings highlight the complex nature of empathy, which appears to be regarded as a multifaceted construct whose origins are rooted within both the individual and their social context. These findings have important implications for both policy and research, as they provide qualitative evidence to support approaching empathy research and intervention work from a multidimensional perspective (Costa & Costa, 2016; Dvash & Shamay-Tsoory, 2014). They are also important because they provide a narrative account of adolescents' perceptions of the benefits and disadvantages of empathic responding, for both the target and the agent of empathy.

Although there is a strong research base which advocates the numerous psychological, interpersonal, and social benefits associated with greater empathic responding (Lenzi et al., 2014; Barr & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2007; Schmidt et al., 2007), it is important for researchers to recognise and address adolescents' concerns about the negative consequences of empathy and prosocial responding (Ferguson, 2016). Although this research suggests a number of perceived barriers and disadvantages to empathic or prosocial responding among young people, further research in this area is needed. In order to develop more effective empathy interventions and strategies, researchers and programme developers need to generate greater understanding of both the egoistic and altruistic concerns that can incentivise or deter young people from engaging in empathy and prosocial behaviours. Similarly, findings from the current research highlighted adolescents' perceptions of a general lack of empathic responding among young people, at least in certain contexts. These findings have significant implications for future research and practice, as not only do they indicate that further interventions to promote greater empathic responding among young people may be warranted, but they may signify that there is a parochial aspect to youth empathy (Bruneau et al., 2017; Zaki, 2014). Hence, greater research examining how target and situational characteristics influence the level of youth empathic or prosocial responding is needed, in order to inform the development of intervention programmes that can increase empathic responding among adolescents across all contexts and target groups

4.3.2 Limitations of the Current Research

Despite the strengths and implications outlined above, there are a number of limitations associated with this research which are important to address. First, the current research was qualitative in nature and represents the views of a small number of adolescents. As such, generalisations about the validity of the findings cannot be made, and the authors acknowledge the importance of carrying out future qualitative and empirical studies to examine the replication of these findings. Additionally, as the aim of the current study was to obtain foundational data about adolescents' understanding and opinions on empathy, focus group investigations were deemed the most suitable method of data collection. However, group interviews are not devoid of limitations, and it is possible that the opinions and views shared by adolescents in the current research were influenced by the opinions of other students in the focus group. Future research may benefit from employing individual interviews as an alternative method of data collection, in order to investigate whether similar or divergent patterns of responses are found. The current research is also limited by having only consulted adolescents in schools. Some young people may not be engaging in school, and their voice may not be captured here. Future research may benefit from investigating the opinions of others, such as parents or school personnel, in order to obtain a more balanced, holistic perspective of youth's empathic responding. Furthermore, although it was highly recommended that schools be targeted in empathy promotion strategies, as all focus groups took place in a school setting it is possible that the nature of the focus group setting influenced this predominance. Other research may benefit from conducting interviews in community settings, to establish whether adolescents make other recommendations about how best to promote greater empathic responding among young people.

4.3.3 Conclusion

This research provides important insights into adolescents' understanding of empathy and is among the first to consult adolescents on their perceptions about the importance of empathy and prosocial responding in an Irish context. This research highlights a number of novel findings and provides a number of key recommendations for future research and intervention work. The current research expands our knowledge about adolescents' motivations for engaging in empathic responding, increases our awareness of the disadvantages and barriers associated with youth empathy, and develops our understanding about the situational and target characteristics which influence young people's empathic responding. Further research is needed to add support to these research findings and to inform the development of effective empathy programmes and initiatives.

05

General Discussion

The findings from this research offer novel insights into, and a new perspective on, the expression of empathy and prosocial or civic behaviour among young people in Ireland. In particular, this research highlights the findings from a national quantitative survey which provides new information about the current levels of empathy, social responsibility, and civic behaviours expressed by youth in Ireland and reveals a connection between youth's empathic or civic responses and their exposure to particular social systems. Meanwhile, the findings from the qualitative study provide an enlightening account of how youth in Ireland conceptualise or regard empathy and prosocial or civic behaviour, and outlines their beliefs about the factors that facilitate, and impede, the expression of empathy or prosocial behaviour among young people.

Notably, across both these quantitative and qualitative studies, results affirm that youth's empathic and civic responses are linked to their proximal contextual environments (e.g., aspects of the parental, peer, school, and community contexts). Findings suggest that other cultural practices or individual characteristics are also likely to play a role in shaping youth's empathic and civic attitudes, values, and behaviours. Findings from this research also highlight important differences between youth's empathic attitudes or values and their civic behaviours. While the findings from these quantitative and qualitative studies complement each other in several ways, a couple of notable divergent findings also emerged. The key findings emerging from this research, including an overview of the similarities and differences between the quantitative and qualitative results, are highlighted below.

5.1 Youth's Level of Empathic Attitudes and Prosocial or Civic Behaviours

Some notable findings on the level of empathy and civic behaviour expressed by youth in Ireland were observed in this research. Results from the quantitative study indicated a potential discrepancy between youth's self-reported empathic attitudes and their civic behaviours, in that while youth reported relatively high levels of empathy and social responsibility values, they showed low levels of civic engagement. These results were somewhat corroborated by the qualitative research findings. While youth in the qualitative research disagreed about the level of empathy or prosocial/civic behaviour expressed by young people in Ireland, a small number of participants explicitly discussed differences in feeling and showing empathy at a societal level. Specifically, these youth said that while it is easy to feel empathy for others in society, it is more difficult to actively help or engage in prosocial responding at this level. On this note, it is important to point out that the findings from the quantitative research also suggested that youth's empathy and social responsibility values only had a weak connection with their civic behaviours. This was an important finding, as it may suggest that while youth's empathic attitudes or social responsibility values are linked to their civic responding, the strength of this connection may vary depending on the presence or absence of other factors. Crucially, the qualitative research shed some light on what these moderating factors may be. Here, the majority of youth proposed that young people show more, or less, prosocial engagement depending on their relationship with the target to whom they are responding or the particular situation they are in. Participants proposed that youth are more motivated to help when they have a close or positive relationship with the target or when there is a strong perceived need to help or intervene. Similarly, youth suggested that it can be difficult to take prosocial or civic action when they lack the knowledge, skills, or resources necessary to help. They proposed that fear may also inhibit young

people's prosocial or civic responding – fear of making a situation worse, and fear of experiencing personal negative consequences (e.g., being taken advantage of) as a result of their prosocial engagement.

Overall, the results of this research are important, as they suggest that while youth tend to feel empathy, they may not always show empathy for others in society. Youth themselves said that their willingness to engage prosocially or civically may vary depending on a number of situational characteristics. They said that their level of civic participation is also impacted by their level of skill, knowledge, or access to resources. Hence, findings have multiple implications for policy and practice. The results provide evidence to suggest that services or interventions that can promote greater civic or prosocial responding among youth in Ireland may be warranted. In particular, given that youth specifically acknowledged that it is easier to show empathy or engage prosocially towards friends and family than towards strangers or those with undesirable characteristics, interventions that aim to promote empathy and prosocial behaviour at a societal (as opposed to interpersonal) level may be particularly relevant. Importantly, findings may imply that interventions which target youth's motivations, fears, and skills may be particularly beneficial in increasing prosocial or civic behaviour across contexts.

5.2 Impact of Parents, Peers, Schools, and Communities

Another important finding emerging from this research pertains to the connection between youth's proximal social environments and their empathic or civic responding. Both the quantitative and qualitative studies documented evidence to suggest that parents, peers, schools, and communities play an important role in the socialisation of empathy and prosocial or civic behaviour among young people. Notably, findings from this research indicate that these social contexts have the potential to both positively and negatively impact youth's empathic and civic development. Thus, these findings have relevance for policy and practice, as they indicate that these social contexts are important agents through which greater youth empathic or civic responding can be encouraged or discouraged. The findings are also important because they highlight the joint role that both structural social practices (e.g., civic education in schools) and interpersonal processes (e.g., parental or peer modelling or encouragement of prosocial or civic behaviours) play in shaping youth's empathic attitudes and civic behaviours. Hence, it is imperative that parents, youth, schools, and communities be made aware of the important role they play in shaping the type of empathic or civic orientations and social values that are adopted and modelled by young people today. Researchers, policymakers, and the general public should work together to develop effective strategies and ensure that all youth in our society are exposed to positive social environments that nurture empathy and inspire greater civic and prosocial behaviour.

5.3 Consideration of Societal Norms

Although results suggest that parental, peer, school, and community contexts have a substantial impact on youth's empathic and civic attitudes and behaviours, findings from these quantitative and qualitative investigations also imply that youth's empathic and civic responding are not exclusively influenced by these factors. In the quantitative research, while these factors were found to explain a substantial portion of the variance in youth's civic or empathic responding, a large percentage of the variance remained unaccounted for, suggesting that other social factors or individual characteristics may also play a role. Similarly, in the qualitative research, although youth expressed their belief that parents, friends, schools, and communities play an important role in teaching or shaping empathy and prosocial behaviours among young people, youth voiced their belief about how empathic or civic responding is also shaped by other processes. They discussed the role that both innate characteristics, such as one's personality or age, and wider social processes also play in shaping youth's empathic attitudes and prosocial or civic behaviours.

In particular, the perceived negative impact that societal norms exert on youth's empathic or prosocial responding emerged as a dominant theme in these conversations. Youth suggested that young people may be discouraged from developing or showing empathy to others due to the growing societal focus on individualism.

They said that empathy or prosociality are regarded as a weakness or an inconvenience in a society that values individual gain over social compassion, and noted that youth's growing exposure to these negative norms can have a detrimental impact on their empathy or prosociality levels. Interestingly, although youth appeared to believe that empathy was not valued by society, most youth acknowledged the importance of empathy for society, identifying links between empathy and greater psychological well-being and social capital. Hence, greater policy or intervention work in this area may be needed. Specifically, intervention or service initiatives may benefit from contemplating the influential role that wider societal norms play in impacting youth's empathic or civic responding, and greater consideration may need to be given to how we as a society can foster a greater culture of empathy, social care, and helping.

5.4 Role of Religion, Social Media, Sports, and the Arts

Other interesting evidence emerged from this research in relation to the connection between youth's empathic or civic responding and their participation in certain extracurricular activities. For instance, findings from the quantitative research suggested that youth who more frequently attend religious activities, such as Mass, may also engage in more civic behaviour. This connection was echoed by a small number of students in the qualitative research, who suggested that religious teachings may promote greater empathic responding. Moreover, while this research observed a connection between sport and youth's empathic and civic responding, conflicting patterns were observed in the quantitative and qualitative studies. Although the quantitative survey suggested that sport has a positive relation with youth's civic behaviours, a small number of youth in the qualitative investigation believed that sport encourages young people to have less empathy for others (particularly the opposition) – although it should be noted that youth' reasons for engaging in civic behaviours were not assessed in the quantitative survey. Thus, it is possible that youth who participate in sport may show more civic engagement, but if this behaviour is extrinsically motivated, they may also show lower empathy. Nonetheless, the potential connection between youth's religious and sporting activities and their empathic or civic responding is an important finding, one which should be explored further by researchers and given greater consideration in policy and practice.

In the qualitative research, youth also discussed the role that social media plays in impacting both the development of empathy and the expression of prosocial or civic behaviour. Some youth discussed how social media encourages narcissism and individualism, and as a result discourages empathy. However, while some youth contended that social media can desensitise young people from caring about societal issues, others believed that social media was a positive, empathic tool. These youth proposed that social media connects young people to the wider world, making them aware of social issues, and thus could be used as a tool to encourage youth to care more about social injustice. Conversely, in the quantitative research, no significant link, positive or negative, was found between youth's level of social media use and their current levels of empathy, social responsibility values, or civic behaviour. These differences between the qualitative and quantitative findings may suggest that youth's empathic and civic responding is associated more with the type of content that youth are exposed to on social media, than with their level of social media usage – although further investigations would be needed to confirm this.

The quantitative research findings also evidence a connection between youth's involvement in drama, music, video gaming, and youth clubs and their empathic or civic responding. Greater participation in drama and music were linked to greater youth civic behaviour or social responsibility values, while greater involvement in youth clubs was linked to greater empathy, social responsibility, and civic behaviour. Conversely, playing violent video games was associated with lower empathy, social responsibility, and civic behaviour. Crucially, however, in the qualitative research, although one young person discussed how their involvement in a youth club provided them with the opportunity to become more civically engaged, students typically did not discuss the role that drama, music, video games, or youth clubs play in shaping young people's empathy, values, or prosocial or civic behaviour. Hence, further qualitative research investigating these associations may

be important in order to provide greater understanding of the role these activities play in impacting youth's empathic or civic responding and to better inform service development.

5.5 Differences Between Boys and Girls

Finally, it is important to discuss some of the observed gender differences that became apparent throughout these investigations into adolescents' empathic and prosocial or civic attitudes and behaviours. First, findings from the quantitative research suggested that teenage boys show lower levels of empathy and social responsibility values than their female peers. Importantly, findings from the qualitative research appeared to support this proposition, as the majority of young people voiced their belief that adolescent boys show less empathy than girls. Although these type of gender differences have been observed and documented by other researchers, what is interesting about the current findings is that youth in the qualitative study were able to share their opinions about why these gender differences may occur. Youth proposed that one reason is that empathy is a trait which is less valued by, or less normatively acceptable for, those of male gender. Interestingly, other evidence from the quantitative research appeared to support the notion that society socialises empathy differently for different genders. For instance, in the quantitative research, results revealed that not only are boys less likely than girls to have friends who model prosocial activities, but they are also less likely to be encouraged to adopt social responsibility values by their parents. These patterns are concerning. If research shows that empathy and prosociality are processes that provide numerous cognitive, psychological, and social benefits for youth, of all genders, then we as a society need to ensure that we value, model, and encourage greater empathy and prosocial responding, among all youth, of all genders.

5.6 Overall Conclusion

This research has contributed significantly to our understanding of the expression and socialisation of empathy and civic engagement among young people in Ireland, providing new knowledge on an important topic, identifying potential links for policy and practice, and paving the way for further national and international research in this area. This research is among the first to quantitatively and qualitatively explore the expression of empathy and civic responding among youth in an Irish context, generating greater understanding of the processes related to youth's empathic and civic responding and providing key insights into the relationship between empathy and civic behaviour. Not only does this research identify parents, peers, schools, and local communities as important facilitators of empathy, but it also suggests that these four social systems may be important agents of change, through which greater youth empathy and civic engagement can be encouraged. Findings also bring attention to the role that youth's individual skills, interests, or knowledge, as well as other societal norms and practices, may play in shaping youth's empathic and civic responding. They provide enough evidence to suggest that the role these wider processes and skills play should not be ignored or neglected by researchers, policymakers, or service providers. Moving forward, further consideration needs to be given to how greater empathy and prosocial or civic responding can best be promoted among young people in our society. Not only is this an important undertaking, it is vital for establishing a more caring, connected, and democratic environment for future generations.

Aknin, L., Barrington-Leigh, C.P., Dunn, E.W., Helliwell, J.F., Biswas-Diener, R., Kemeza, I., … & Norton, M.I. (2013) 'Prosocial spending and well-being: Cross-cultural evidence for a psychological universal', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 104(4), 635–652.

Albanesi, C., Cicognani, E., & Zani, B. (2007) 'Sense of community, civic engagement and social well-being in Italian adolescents', *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology,* 17(5), 387–406.

Aldridge, J.M., Fraser, B.J., Fozdar, F., Ala'i, K., Earnest, J., & Afari, E. (2016) 'Students' perceptions of school climate as determinants of wellbeing, resilience and identity', *Improving Schools,* 19(1), 5–26.

Alessandri, G., Caprara, G.V., Eisenberg, N., & Steca, P. (2009) 'Reciprocal relations among self-efficacy beliefs and prosociality across time', *Journal of Personality,* 77(4), 1229–59.

Alessandri, G., Luengo Kanacri, B.P., Eisenberg, N., Zuffianò, A., Milioni, M., Vecchione, M., & Caprara, G.V. (2014) 'Prosociality during the transition from late adolescence to young adulthood: The role of effortful control and ego-resiliency', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin,* 40(11), 1451–65.

Alloway, T., Runac, R., Qureshi, M., & Kemp, G. (2014) 'Is Facebook linked to selfishness? Investigating the relationships among social media use, empathy, and narcissism', *Social Networking,* 3(03), 150.

Anderson, N.D., Damianakis, T., Kröger, E., Wagner, L.M., Dawson, D.R., Binns, M.A., ... & Cook, S.L. (2014) 'The benefits associated with volunteering among seniors: A critical review and recommendations for future research', *Psychological Bulletin,* 140(6), 1505.

Anderson, S.E. & Williams, L.J. (1996) 'Interpersonal, job, and individual factors related to helping processes at work', *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 81(3), 282.

Ariely, D., Bracha, A., & Meier, S. (2009) 'Doing good or doing well? Image motivation and monetary incentives in behaving prosocially', American Economic Review, 99(1), 544–55.

Atkins, R. & Hart, D. (2003) 'Neighborhoods, adults, and the development of civic identity in urban youth', *Applied Developmental Science,* 7(3), 156–164.

Attili, G., Vermigli, P., & Roazzi, A. (2010) 'Children's social competence, peer status, and the quality of mother-child and father–child relationships: A multidimensional scaling approach', *European Psychologist,* 15(1), 23.

Badham, B. & Wade, H. (2008). Hear by Right: *Standards Framework for the Participation of Children and Young People.* Leicester: National Youth Agency.

Ballard, P.J., Hoyt, L.T., & Pachucki, M.C. (2018) 'Impacts of adolescent and young adult civic engagement on health and socioeconomic status in adulthood', *Child Development.*

Balsano, A.B. (2005) 'Youth civic engagement in the United States: Understanding and addressing the impact of social impediments on positive youth and community development', Applied Developmental Science, 9(4), 188–201.

Bandura, A., Caprara, G.V., Barbaranelli, C., Gerbino, M., & Pastorelli, C. (2003) 'Role of affective self-regulatory efficacy in diverse spheres of psychosocial functioning', *Child Development,* 74(3), 769–782.

Barchia, K. & Bussey, K. (2011) 'Predictors of student defenders of peer aggression victims: Empathy and social cognitive factors', *International Journal of Behavioral Development,* 35(4), 289–297.

Baron, R.M. & Kenny, D.A. (1986) 'The moderator–mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 51(6), 1173.

Barr, J.J. & Higgins-D'Alessandro, A. (2007) 'Adolescent empathy and prosocial behavior in the multidimensional context of school culture', *The Journal of Genetic Psychology,* 168(3), 231–250.

Batson, C.D., Ahmad, N., & Stocks, E.L. (2004) 'Benefits and liabilities of empathy-induced altruism', *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil,* 359–385.

Batson, C.D., Lishner, D.A., Carpenter, A., Dulin, L., Harjusola-Webb, S., Stocks, E.L., ... & Sampat, B. (2003) '"... As you would have them do unto you": Does imagining yourself in the other's place stimulate moral action?', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin,* 29(9), 1190–1201.

Bebiroglu, N., Geldhof, G.J., Pinderhughes, E.E., Phelps, E., & Lerner, R.M. (2013) 'From family to society: The role of perceived parenting behaviors in promoting youth civic engagement', *Parenting,* 13(3), 153–168.

Bénabou, R. & Tirole, J. (2006) 'Incentives and prosocial behavior', *American Economic Review,* 96(5), 1652–78.

Bernhardt, B.C. & Singer, T. (2012) 'The neural basis of empathy', *Annual Review of Neuroscience,* 35, 1–23.

Borgonovi, F. (2008) 'Doing well by doing good: The relationship between formal volunteering and self-reported health and happiness', *Social Science & Medicine,* 66(11), 2321–34.

Bowman, N.A. (2011) 'Promoting participation in a diverse democracy: A meta-analysis of college diversity experiences and civic engagement', *Review of Educational Research,* 81(1), 29–68.

Boyatzis, R.E. (1998) *Transforming Qualitative Information: Thematic Analysis and Code Development.* Sage.

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology,* 3(2), 77–101.

Brittian, A.S., O'Donnell, M., Knight, G.P., Carlo, G., Umaña-Taylor, A.J., & Roosa, M.W. (2013) 'Associations between adolescents' perceived discrimination and prosocial tendencies: The mediating role of Mexican American values', *Journal of Youth and Adolescence,* 42(3), 328–341.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979) *The Ecology of Human Development.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Brown, K.W. & Kasser, T. (2005) 'Are psychological and ecological well-being compatible? The role of values, mindfulness, and lifestyle', *Social Indicators Research,* 74(2), 349–368.

Brown, S.L., Nesse, R.M., Vinokur, A.D., & Smith, D.M. (2003) 'Providing social support may be more beneficial than receiving it: Results from a prospective study of mortality', *Psychological Science,* 14(4), 320-327.

Bruneau, E.G., Cikara, M., & Saxe, R. (2017) 'Parochial empathy predicts reduced altruism and the endorsement of passive harm', *Social Psychological and Personality Science,* 8(8), 934-942.

Bruner, M.W., Boardley, I.D., & Côté, J. (2014) 'Social identity and prosocial and antisocial behavior in youth sport', *Psychology of Sport and Exercise,* 15(1), 56-64.

Burnham, K.P. & Anderson, D.R. (2002) *Model Selection and Multimodel Inference: A Practical Information-Theoretic Approach.* Colorado, USA: Springer.

Busch, H. & Hofer, J. (2011) 'Identity, prosocial behavior, and generative concern in German and Cameroonian Nso adolescents', *Journal of Adolescence,* 34(4), 629-638.

Bussey, K., Fitzpatrick, S., & Raman, A. (2015) 'The role of moral disengagement and self-efficacy in cyberbullying', *Journal of School Violence*, 14(1), 30-46.

Byrne, B.M. (2012) *A Primer of LISREL: Basic Applications and Programming for Confirmatory Factor Analytic Models.* UK: Springer Science & Business Media.

Caprara, G.V., Barbaranelli, C., Pastorelli, C., Bandura, A., & Zimbardo, P.G. (2000) 'Prosocial foundations of children's academic achievement', *Psychological Science*, 11(4), 302-306.

Caravita, S.C., Di Blasio, P., & Salmivalli, C. (2009) 'Unique and interactive effects of empathy and social status on involvement in bullying', *Social Development*, 18(1), 140-163.

Carlo, G., Crockett, L.J., Wolff, J.M., & Beal, S.J. (2012) 'The role of emotional reactivity, self-regulation, and puberty in adolescents' prosocial behaviors', *Social Development*, 21(4), 667-685.

Carlo, G., Mestre, M.V., Samper, P., Tur, A., & Armenta, B.E. (2010) 'Feelings or cognitions? Moral cognitions and emotions as longitudinal predictors of prosocial and aggressive behaviors', *Personality and Individual Differences*, 48(8), 872-877.

Carlo, G., White, R., Streit, C., Knight, G.P., & Zeiders, K.H. (2017) 'Longitudinal relations among parenting styles, prosocial behaviors, and academic outcomes in US Mexican adolescents', *Child Development*, 89(2), 577-592.

Carreres-Ponsoda, F., EscartíCarbonell, A., Cortell-Tormo, J. M., Fuster-Lloret, V., & Andreu-Cabrera, E. (2012). The relationship between out-of-school sport participation and positive youth development. *Journal of Human Sport and Exercise,* 7(3), 671-683.

Chan, W.Y. (2011) 'An exploration of Asian American college students' civic engagement', *Asian American Journal of Psychology,* 2(3), 197-204.

Checkoway, B., Allison, T., & Montoya, C. (2005) 'Youth participation in public policy at the municipal level', *Children and Youth Services Review,* 27(10), 1149-1162.

Chopik, W.J., O'Brien, E., & Konrath, S.H. (2016) 'Patterns of empathic responding around the world: Cross-cultural comparisons of trait empathy', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 48(1), 23-38.

Chopik, W.J., O'Brien, E., & Konrath, S.H. (2017) 'Differences in empathic concern and perspective taking across 63 countries', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 48(1), 23-38.

Chowhan, J. & Stewart, J.M. (2007) 'Television and the behaviour of adolescents: Does socio-economic status moderate the link?', *Social Science & Medicine*, 65(7), 1324–36.

Cialdini, R.B., Schaller, M., Houlihan, D., Arps, K., Fultz, J., & Beaman, A.L. (1987) 'Empathy-based helping: Is it selflessly or selfishly motivated?', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 52(4), 749.

Cicognani, E., Klimstra, T.A., & Goossens, L. (2014) 'Sense of community, identity statuses, and loneliness in adolescence: A cross-national study on Italian and Belgian youth', *Journal of Community Psychology*, 42(4), 414-432.

Clark, K.E. & Ladd, G.W. (2000) 'Connectedness and autonomy support in parent–child relationships: Links to children's socioemotional orientation and peer relationships', *Developmental Psychology,* 36(4), 485.

Cliff, N. & Earleywine, M. (1994) 'All predictors are "mediators" unless the other predictor is a "suppressor". Unpublished manuscript.

Cooper, B. (2004) 'Empathy, interaction and caring: Teachers' roles in a constrained environment', *Pastoral Care in Education*, 22(3), 12-21.

Corrigan, P.W., Larson, J., Sells, M., Niessen, N., & Watson, A.C. (2007) 'Will filmed presentations of education and contact diminish mental illness stigma?', *Community Mental Health Journal,* 43(2), 171-181.

Costa, M. J., & Costa, P. (2016). Nurturing empathy and compassion: what might the neurosciences have to offer?. *Medical education,* 50(3), 281-282.'

Coyne, S.M., Padilla-Walker, L.M., Day, R.D., Harper, J., & Stockdale, L. (2014) 'A friend request from dear old dad: Associations between parent–child social networking and adolescent outcomes', *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking,* 17(1), 8–13.

Coyne, S.M., Padilla-Walker, L.M., Stockdale, L., & Day, R.D. (2011) 'Game on … girls: Associations between co-playing video games and adolescent behavioral and family outcomes', *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 49(2), 160–165.

Crabtree, B.F. & Miller, W.L. (1999) *Doing Qualitative Research*. USA: Sage publications.

Crocetti, E., Jahromi, P., & Meeus, W. (2012) 'Identity and civic engagement in adolescence', *Journal of Adolescence,* 35(3), 521-532.

Crocetti, E., Moscatelli, S., Van der Graaff, J., Rubini, M., Meeus, W., & Branje, S. (2016) 'The interplay of self-certainty and prosocial development in the transition from late adolescence to emerging adulthood', *European Journal of Personality,* 30(6), 594–607.

Cuff, B.M., Brown, S.J., Taylor, L., & Howat, D.J. (2016) 'Empathy: A review of the concept', *Emotion Review,* 8(2), 144-153.

Da Silva, L., Sanson, A., Smart, D., & Toumbourou, J. (2004) 'Civic responsibility among Australian adolescents: Testing two competing models', *Journal of Community Psychology,* 32(3), 229-255.

Davis, M.H. (1983) 'Measuring individual differences in empathy: Evidence for a multidimensional approach', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 44(1), 113.

Davis, M.H. (1994) *Empathy: A Social Psychological Approach*. Westview Press.

Davis, M.H. (2018) *Empathy: A Social Psychological Approach.* Routledge: London.

Davis, A.N., Carlo, G., Schwartz, S.J., Unger, J.B., Zamboanga, B.L., Lorenzo-Blanco, E.I., ... Martinez, M.M. (2016) 'The longitudinal associations between discrimination, depressive symptoms, and prosocial behaviors in US Latino/a recent immigrant adolescents', *Journal of Youth and Adolescence,* 45(3), 457–470.

Davis, A.N., Carlo, G., Streit, C., & Crockett, L.J. (2018) 'Considering economic stress and empathic traits in predicting prosocial behaviors among US Latino adolescents', *Social Development,* 27(1), 58–72.

Decety, J. & Cowell, J. M. (2015) 'Empathy, justice, and moral behavior', *AJOB Neuroscience*, 6(3), 3-14.

Department of Youth & Children Affair (DCYA) (2012) Guidance for developing ethical research projects involving children. DCYA. Retrieved from: www.dcya.gov.ie/documents/Publications/Ethics_ Guidance.pdf.

Del Rey, R., Lazuras, L., Casas, J.A., Barkoukis, V., Ortega-Ruiz, R., & Tsorbatzoudis, H. (2016) 'Does empathy predict (cyber) bullying perpetration, and how do age, gender and nationality affect this relationship?', *Learning and Individual Differences*, 45, 275–281.

Dolan, P., Kenny, J., & Kennan, D. (2017) 'Activated social empathy in child welfare and youth development', *The Routledge Handbook of Global Child Welfare,* 358.

Dovidio, J.F., Allen, J.L., & Schroeder, D.A. (1990) 'Specificity of empathy-induced helping: Evidence for altruistic motivation', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59(2), 249-260.

Dovidio, J.F., Hewstone, M., Glick, P., & Esses, V.M. (2010) 'Prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination: theoretical and empirical overview', *The SAGE Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination*, 3-29.

Duan, C., & Hill, C. E. (1996) 'The current state of empathy research', *Journal of Counseling Psychology,* 43(3), 261.

Duke, N.N., Skay, C.L., Pettingell, S.L., & Borowsky, I.W. (2009) 'From adolescent connections to social capital: Predictors of civic engagement in young adulthood', *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 44(2), 161–168. doi: 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2008.07.007

Dvash, J. & Shamay-Tsoory, S.G. (2014) 'Theory of mind and empathy as multidimensional constructs: Neurological foundations', *Topics in Language Disorders*, 34(4), 282-295.

Eccles, J.S. & Barber, B.L. (1999) 'Student council, volunteering, basketball, or marching band: What kind of extracurricular involvement matters?', *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 14, 10–43.

Ehrlich, T. & Jacoby, B. (2009) *Civic Engagement in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Eisenberg, N. & Miller, P.A. (1987) 'The relation of empathy to prosocial and related behaviors', *Psychological Bulletin,* 101(1), 91.

Eisenberg, N. & Morris, A.S. (2001) 'The origins and social significance of empathy-related responding. A review of empathy and moral development: implications for caring and justice by ML Hoffman', *Social Justice Research,* 14(1), 95-120.

Eisenberg, N., Fabes, R.A., Murphy, B., Karbon, M., Maszk, P., Smith, M., ... & Suh, K. (1994) 'The relations of emotionality and regulation to dispositional and situational empathy-related responding', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 66(4), 776.

Eisenberg, N., Sallquist, J., French, D. C., Purwono, U., Suryanti, T.A., & Pidada, S. (2009) 'The relations of majority-minority group status and having an other-religion friend to Indonesian youths' socioemotional functioning', *Developmental Psychology*, 45(1), 248.

Eisenberg, N., Spinrad, T.L., & Eggum, N. D. (2010) 'Emotion-related self-regulation and its relation to children's maladjustment', *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology,* 6, 495-525.

Eisenberg, N., Spinrad, T.L., & Sadovsky, A. (2006) 'Empathy-related responding in children', *Handbook of Moral Development,* 517, 549.

Eisenberg, N., Spinrad, T.L., & Valiente, C. (2016) *Emotion-Related Self-Regulation, and Children's Social, Psychological, and Academic Functioning,* pp. 219-244. New York, NY: Routledge.

Espelage, D.L. (2014) 'Ecological theory: Preventing youth bullying, aggression, and victimization', *Theory into Practice,* 53(4), 257-264.

ESS (2013) 'Why include more than one independent variable?' Norwegian Social Science Data Service. Retrieved from: http://essedunet.nsd.uib.no/cms/topics/regression/6/1.html.

Estévez, E., Jiménez, T.I., & Cava, M.J. (2016) 'A cross-cultural study in Spain and Mexico on school aggression in adolescence: Examining the role of individual, family, and school variables', *Cross-Cultural Research*, 50(2), 123-153.

Etkin, R.G., Koss, K.J., Cummings, E.M., & Davies, P.T. (2014) 'The differential impact of parental warmth on externalizing problems among triangulated adolescents', *Journal of Genetic Psychology,* 175(2), 118-133.

Ettekal, A.V., Ferris, K.A., Batanova, M., & Syer, T. (2016) 'Adolescent athletes' perceptions of the peer-motivational climate in sport: Do they matter for empathic concern?', *Research in Human Development,* 13(2), 142–156.

Evans, C.B. & Smokowski, P.R. (2015) 'Prosocial bystander behavior in bullying dynamics: Assessing the impact of social capital', *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 44(12), 2289-2307.

Farrell, A.D., Thompson, E.L., & Mehari, K.R. (2017) 'Dimensions of peer influences and their relationship to adolescents' aggression, other problem behaviors and prosocial behavior', *Journal of Youth and Adolescence,* 46(6), 1351-1369.

Farrell, W., Seager, M.J., & Barry, J.A. (2016) 'The male gender empathy gap: Time for psychology to take action', *New Male Studies,* 5(2), 6-16.

Ferguson, C.J. & Garza, A. (2011) 'Call of (civic) duty: Action games and civic behavior in a large sample of youth', *Computers in Human Behavior,* 27(2), 770-775.

Ferguson, E. (2016) 'Empathy: "The good, the bad and the ugly"', *The Wiley Handbook of Positive Clinical Psychology,* 103-123.

Field, A. (2009). *Discovering statistics using SPSS*. UK: Sage publications.

Flanagan, C. (2003) 'Trust, identity, and civic hope', *Applied Developmental Science*, 7(3), 165-171.

Flanagan, C.A. (2013) Teenage Citizens: *The Political Theories of the Young. Harvard University Press.*

Flanagan, C. & Levine, P. (2010) 'Civic engagement and the transition to adulthood', *The Future of Children,* 20(1), 159–179.

Flanagan, C.A. & Sherrod, L.R. (1998) 'Youth political development: An introduction', *Journal of Social Issues*, 54(3), 447-456.

Flanagan, C.A., Syvertsen, A.K., & Stout, M.D. (2007) 'Civic measurement models: Tapping adolescents' civic engagement' (CIRCLE Working Paper 55). College Park, MD: Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE).

Fleming, J. (2013) 'Young people's participation – where next?', *Children & Society,* 27(6), 484-495.

Florian, V., Mikulincer, M., & Hirschberger, G. (1999) 'The anatomy of a problematic emotion—the conceptualization and measurement of the experience of pity', *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, 19(1), 3-25.

Fousiani, K., Dimitropoulou, P., Michaelides, M.P., & Van Petegem, S. (2016) 'Perceived parenting and adolescent cyber-bullying: Examining the intervening role of autonomy and relatedness need satisfaction, empathic concern and recognition of humanness', *Journal of Child and Family Studies,* 25(7), 2120-2129.

Francis, L.J., Croft, J.S., & Pyke, A. (2012) 'Religious diversity, empathy, and God images: Perspectives from the psychology of religion shaping a study among adolescents in the UK', *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 33(3), 293-307.

Fry, M.D., Guivernau, M., Kim, M.S., Newton, M., Gano–Overway, L.A., & Magyar, T.M. (2012) 'Youth perceptions of a caring climate, emotional regulation, and psychological well-being', *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology*, 1(1), 44.

Fu, X., Padilla-Walker, L.M., & Brown, M.N. (2017) 'Longitudinal relations between adolescents' self-esteem and prosocial behavior toward strangers, friends and family', *Journal of Adolescence*, 57, 90-98.

Gallay, L. (2006) 'Social responsibility'. In: L. Sherrod, C.A. Flanagan, R. Kassimir, & A.K. Syvertsen (eds.), *Youth Activism: An International Encyclopedia* (pp. 599-602). Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing.

Gentile, D.A., Anderson, C.A., Yukawa, S., Ihori, N., Saleem, M., Ming, L.K., ... & Rowell Huesmann, L. (2009) 'The effects of prosocial video games on prosocial behaviors: International evidence from correlational, longitudinal, and experimental studies', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 35(6), 752-763.

Gerbino, M., Zuffianò, A., Eisenberg, N., Castellani, V., Luengo Kanacri, B.P., Pastorelli, C., & Caprara, G.V. (2018) 'Adolescents' prosocial behavior predicts good grades beyond intelligence and personality traits', *Journal of Personality*, 86(2), 247-260.

Gerdes, K.E. & Segal, E. (2011) 'Importance of empathy for social work practice: Integrating new science', *Social Work*, 56(2), 141-148.

Gini, G., Albiero, P., Benelli, B., & Altoè, G. (2007) 'Does empathy predict adolescents' bullying and defending behavior?', *Aggressive Behavior: Official Journal of the International Society for Research on Aggression*, 33(5), 467-476.

Gini, G., Albiero, P., Benelli, B., & Altoe, G. (2008) 'Determinants of adolescents' active defending and passive bystanding behavior in bullying', *Journal of Adolescence*, 31(1), 93-105.

Grant, A.M. & Mayer, D.M. (2009) 'Good soldiers and good actors: prosocial and impression management motives as interactive predictors of affiliative citizenship behaviors', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 94(4), 900.

Greitemeyer, T. (2011) 'Effects of prosocial media on social behavior: When and why does media exposure affect helping and aggression?', *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 20(4), 251-255.

Grühn, D., Rebucal, K., Diehl, M., Lumley, M., & Labouvie-Vief, G. (2008) 'Empathy across the adult lifespan: Longitudinal and experience-sampling findings', *Emotion*, 8(6), 753.

Grusec, J.E., & Goodnow, J.J. (1994) 'Impact of parental discipline methods on the child's internalization of values: A reconceptualization of current points of view', *Developmental Psychology*, 30(1), 4-19.

Gudjohnsen, R.Þ. (2016) *Young people's ideas of what it means to be a good citizen: the role of empathy, volunteering and parental styles.* Iceland: University of Iceland.

Hampton, K.N. (2016) 'Why is helping behavior declining in the United States but not in Canada? Ethnic diversity, new technologies, and other explanations', *City & Community*, 15(4), 380-399.

Hardy, S.A., Walker, L.J., Rackham, D.D., & Olsen, J.A. (2012) 'Religiosity and adolescent empathy and aggression: The mediating role of moral identity', *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 4(3), 237.

Hardy, S.A., Carlo, G., & Roesch, S.C. (2010) 'Links between adolescents' expected parental reactions and prosocial behavioral tendencies: The mediating role of prosocial values', *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 39(1), 84.

Harper, J.M., Padilla-Walker, L.M., & Jensen, A.C. (2016) 'Do siblings matter independent of both parents and friends? Sympathy as a mediator between sibling relationship quality and adolescent outcomes', *Journal of Research on Adolescence,* 26(1), 101-114.

Harper, Q., Worthington Jr, E.L., Griffin, B.J., Lavelock, C.R., Hook, J.N., Vrana, S.R., & Greer, C.L. (2014) 'Efficacy of a workbook to promote forgiveness: A randomized controlled trial with university students', *Journal of Clinical Psychology,* 70(12), 1158-1169.

Harrington, B. & O'Connell, M. (2016) 'Video games as virtual teachers: Prosocial video game use by children and adolescents from different socioeconomic groups is associated with increased empathy and prosocial behaviour', *Computers in Human Behavior,* 63, 650-658.

Hastings, P.D., McShane, K.E., Parker, R., & Ladha, F. (2007) 'Ready to make nice: Parental socialization of young sons' and daughters' prosocial behaviors with peers', *The Journal of Genetic Psychology,* 168(2), 177-200.

Hauser, M.D., Yang, C., Berwick, R.C., Tattersall, I., Ryan, M.J., Watumull, J., ... & Lewontin, R.C. (2014) 'The mystery of language evolution', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5, 401.

Hayes, A.F. (2013) *Methodology in the Social Sciences*. New York.

Headley, J.A. & Sangganjanavanich, V.F. (2014) 'A recipe for change: Promoting connection through relational-cultural theory', *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 9(2), 245-261.

Herrmann, T.W. (2005) 'Student involvement effects on civic engagement in the faith-based college setting: An empirical study'. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. USA: Indiana State University, Terre Haute.

Hoffman, M.L. (2000) *Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for Caring and Justice.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hoffman, M.L. (2001) 'Toward a comprehensive empathy-based theory of prosocial moral development'. In: A.C. Bohart & D.J. Stipek (eds.), *Constructive & Destructive Behavior: Implication for Family, School, & Society*, 61-86.

Hong, J.S. & Espelage, D.L. (2012) 'A review of research on bullying and peer victimization in school: An ecological system analysis', *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 17(4), 311-322.

Hooper, D., Coughlan, J., & Mullen, M.R. (2008) 'Structural equation modelling: Guidelines for determining model fit', *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 6(1), 53-60.

Hope, E.C. & Jagers, R.J. (2014) 'The role of sociopolitical attitudes and civic education in the civic engagement of black youth', *Journal of Research on Adolescence,* 24(3), 460-470.

Howe, D. (2012) Empathy: *What It Is and Why It Matters*. Macmillan International Higher Education.

Hu, L.T. & Bentler, P.M. (1999) 'Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives', *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 6(1), 1-55.

Humphrey, A. (2016) 'Effects of surface acted empathy on providers of emotional support'. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. USA: University of Michigan.

Hylton, M.E. (2018) 'The role of civic literacy and social empathy on rates of civic engagement among university students', *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement,* 22(1), 87-106.

IBM (2013) *IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 20.0.* Armonk, NY: IBM Corp.

IBM (2017) *IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 25.0.* Armonk, NY: IBM Corp.

Jaureguizar, J., Ibabe, I., & Straus, M.A. (2013) 'Violent and prosocial behavior by adolescents toward parents and teachers in a community sample', *Psychology in the School*s, 50(5), 451-470.

Jenkinson, C.E., Dickens, A.P., Jones, K., Thompson-Coon, J., Taylor, R.S., Rogers, M., ... & Richards, S.H. (2013) 'Is volunteering a public health intervention? A systematic review and meta-analysis of the health and survival of volunteers', *BMC Public Health,* 13(1), 773.

Jennings, M.K. & Stoker, L. (2004) 'Social trust and civic engagement across time and generations', *Acta Politica*, 39(4), 342-379.

Jessor, R. & Turbin, M. S. (2014) 'Parsing protection and risk for problem behavior versus pro-social behavior among US and Chinese adolescents', *Journal of Youth and adolescence*, 43(7), 1037-1051.

Ji, C.H.C., Pendergraft, L., & Perry, M. (2006) 'Religiosity, altruism, and altruistic hypocrisy: Evidence from Protestant adolescents', *Review of Religious Research*, 156-178.

Johnson, M.K., Beebe, T., Mortimer, J.T. & Snyder, M. (1998) 'Volunteerism in adolescence. A process perspective', *Journal of Research on Adolescence,* 8, 309-329.

Jolliffe, D. & Farrington, D.P. (2006) 'Development and validation of the Basic Empathy Scale', *Journal of Adolescence,* 29(4), 589-611.

Jöreskog, K.G. & Sörbom, D. (1993) LISREL 8: *Structural Equation Modeling with the SIMPLIS Command Language*. Scientific Software International.

Kaplan, J.T. & Iacoboni, M. (2006) 'Getting a grip on other minds: Mirror neurons, intention understanding, and cognitive empathy', *Social Neuroscience,* 1(3-4), 175-183.

Kavussanu, M. (2006) 'Motivational predictors of prosocial and antisocial behaviour in football', *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 24(06), 575-588.

Kennedy, P. (2013) 'The relationship between prosocial music and helping behaviour and its mediators: An Irish college sample', *Journal of European Psychology Students*, 4(1).

Kerig, P.K. & Swanson, J.A. (2010) 'Ties that bind: Triangulation, boundary dissolution, and the effects of interparental conflict on child development'. In: Schulz, M.S., Kline Pruett, M., Kerig, P.K., & Parke, R.D. (eds.) *Strengthening Couple Relationships for Optimal Child Development*, pp. 59–76. Washington DC: American Psychological Association.

Keyes, C.L.M. (1998) 'Social well-being', *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 121-140.

Kidd, B. (2013) 'The global sporting legacy of the Olympic Movement', *Sport in Society*, 16(4), 491-502.

Kim, J. & Morgül, K. (2017) 'Long-term consequences of youth volunteering: Voluntary versus involuntary service', Social Science Research, 67, 160-175.

Kline, R.B. (2011) *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling*, 3rd ed. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Knafo, A. & Plomin, R. (2006) 'Prosocial behavior from early to middle childhood: genetic and environmental influences on stability and change', *Developmental Psychology*, 42(5), 771.

Knafo, A., Zahn-Waxler, C., Van Hulle, C., Robinson, J.L., & Rhee, S.H. (2008) 'The developmental origins of a disposition toward empathy: Genetic and environmental contributions', *Emotion*, 8(6), 737.

Kokko, K., Tremblay, R.E., Lacourse, E., Nagin, D.S., & Vitaro, F. (2006) 'Trajectories of prosocial behavior and physical aggression in middle childhood: Links to adolescent school dropout and physical violence', *Journal of Research on Adolescence,* 16(3), 403-428.

Konold, T., Cornell, D., Shukla, K., & Huang, F. (2017) 'Racial/ethnic differences in perceptions of school climate and its association with student engagement and peer aggression', *Journal of Youth and Adolescence,* 46(6), 1289-1303.

Konrath, S. (2014). The Power of Philanthropy and Volunteering. *Wellbeing: A Complete Reference Guide, Interventions and Policies to Enhance Wellbeing,* 6, 387..

Konrath, S., O'Brien, E., & Hsing, C. (2011) 'Changes in dispositional empathy in American college students over time: A meta-analysis', *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 15(2), 180–198.

Kumru, A., Carlo, G., Mestre, M.V., & Samper, P. (2012) 'Prosocial moral reasoning and prosocial behavior among Turkish and Spanish adolescents', *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal,* 40(2), 205-214.

Ladd, D. & Henry, R.A. (2000). 'Helping coworkers and helping the organization: The role of support perceptions, exchange ideology, and conscientiousness', *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 30(10), 2028-2049.

Lai, F.H., Siu, A.M., & Shek, D.T. (2015) 'Individual and social predictors of prosocial behavior among Chinese adolescents in Hong Kong', *Frontiers in Pediatrics*, 3, 39.

Laible, D.J., Carlo, G., & Roesch, S.C. (2004) 'Pathways to self-esteem in late adolescence: The role of parent and peer attachment, empathy, and social behaviours', *Journal of adolescence*, 27(6), 703-716.

Laible, D., Eye, J. & Carlo, G. (2008) 'Dimensions of conscience mid-adolescence. Links with social behaviour, parenting and temperament', *Personality and Individual Differences*, 43, 1185-97.

Lam, C.B., Solmeyer, A.R., & McHale, S.M. (2012) 'Sibling relationships and empathy across the transition to adolescence', *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 41(12), 1657-1670.

Lenzi, M., Vieno, A., Pastore, M., & Santinello, M. (2013) 'Neighborhood social connectedness and adolescent civic engagement: An integrative model', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 34, 45-54.

Lenzi, M., Vieno, A., Sharkey, J., Mayworm, A., Scacchi, L., Pastore, M., & Santinello, M. (2014) 'How school can teach civic engagement besides civic education: The role of democratic school climate', *American Journal of Community Psychology,* 54(3-4), 251-261.

Lerner, R.M. (2004) *Liberty: Thriving and Civic Engagement among America's Youth.* Sage.

Lerner, R.M., Almerigi, J.B., Theokas, C., & Lerner, J.V. (2005) Positive youth development a view of the issues. *The Journal of Early Adolescence,* 25(1), 10-16.

Lerner, R.M., Dowling, E.M., & Anderson, P.M. (2003) 'Positive youth development: Thriving as the basis of personhood and civil society', *Applied Developmental Science*, 7(3), 172-180.

Levine, P. (2013) We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For: The Promise of Civic Renewal in America. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Levine, P., & Liu, E. (2015) 'America's civic renewal movement: A view from organizational leaders'. Tufts University Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life. Retrieved from: https://tischcollege.tufts.edu/research/america%E2%80%99s-civic-renewal-movement-view-organizational-leaders.

Linver, M.R., Roth, J.L., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2009) 'Patterns of adolescents' participation in organized activities: Are sports best when combined with other activities?', *Developmental Psychology,* 45(2), 354.

Little, R.J. (1988) 'A test of missing completely at random for multivariate data with missing values', *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 83(404), 1198-1202.

Llorca-Mestre, A., Malonda-Vidal, E., & Samper-García, P. (2017) 'Prosocial reasoning and emotions in young offenders and non-offenders', *European Journal of Psychology Applied to Legal Context*, 9(2), 65-73.

Lockwood, P.L., Seara-Cardoso, A., & Viding, E. (2014) 'Emotion regulation moderates the association between empathy and prosocial behavior', *PloS one,* 9(5), e96555.

López, E.E., Pérez, S.M., Ochoa, G.M., & Ruiz, D.M. (2008) 'Adolescent aggression: Effects of gender and family and school environments', *Journal of Adolescence*, 31(4), 433-450.

Luengo Kanacri, B.P., González, R., Valdenegro, D., Jiménez-Moya, G., Saavedra, P., Mora, E.A., ... & Pastorelli, C. (2016) 'Civic engagement and giving behaviors: The role of empathy and beliefs about poverty', *Journal of Social Psychology*, 156(3), 256-271.

Ludden, A.B. (2011) 'Engagement in school and community civic activities among rural adolescents', *Journal of Youth and Adolescence,* 40(9), 1254-70.

Machackova, H., Dedkova, L., Sevcikova, A., & Cerna, A. (2016) 'Empathic responses by cyberbystanders: The importance of proximity', *Journal of Youth Studies,* 19(6), 793-804.

Machackova, H. & Pfetsch, J. (2016) 'Bystanders' responses to offline bullying and cyberbullying: The role of empathy and normative beliefs about aggression', *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology,* 57(2), 169-176.

MacKinnon, D.P., Krull, J.L., & Lockwood, C.M. (2000) 'Equivalence of the mediation, confounding and suppression effect', *Prevention Science,* 1(4), 173-181.

Malin, A.J. & Pos, A.E. (2015) 'The impact of early empathy on alliance building, emotional processing, and outcome during experiential treatment of depression', *Psychotherapy Research*, 25(4), 445-459.

Martela, F. & Ryan, R.M. (2016) 'The benefits of benevolence: Basic psychological needs, beneficence, and the enhancement of well-being', *Journal of Personality,* 84(6), 750-764.

Mark, I.L., IJzendoorn, M.H.V., & Bakermans-Kranenburg, M.J. (2002) 'Development of empathy in girls during the second year of life: Associations with parenting, attachment, and temperament', *Social Development,* 11(4), 451-468.

Markstrom, C.A., Huey, E., Stiles, B.M., & Krause, A. L. (2010) 'Frameworks of caring and helping in adolescence: Are empathy, religiosity, and spirituality related constructs?', *Youth & Society,* 42(1), 59-80.

Masten, C.L., Eisenberger, N.I., Pfeifer, J.H., & Dapretto, M. (2010) 'Witnessing peer rejection during early adolescence: Neural correlates of empathy for experiences of social exclusion', *Social Neuroscience*, 5(5-6), 496-507.

McGinley, M., Lipperman-Kreda, S., Byrnes, H.F., & Carlo, G. (2010) 'Parental, social and dispositional pathways to Israeli adolescents' volunteering', *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 31(5), 386-394.

Melloni, M., Sedeño, L., Couto, B., Reynoso, M., Gelormini, C., Favaloro, R., ... & Ibanez, A. (2013) 'Preliminary evidence about the effects of meditation on interoceptive sensitivity and social cognition', *Behavioral and Brain Functions,* 9(1), 47.

Mesurado, B., Richaud, M.C., Mestre, M.V., Samper-García, P., Tur-Porcar, A., Morales Mesa, S.A., & Viveros, E.F. (2014) 'Parental expectations and prosocial behavior of adolescents from low-income backgrounds: A cross-cultural comparison between three countries—Argentina, Colombia, and Spain', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology,* 45(9), 1471-1488.

Metzger, A., Alvis, L.M., Oosterhoff, B., Babskie, E., Syvertsen, A., & Wray-Lake, L. (2018) 'The intersection of emotional and sociocognitive competencies with civic engagement in middle childhood and adolescence', *Journal of Youth and Adolescence,* 1-21.

Metzger, A. & Smetana, J. G. (2010) 'Social cognitive development and adolescent civic engagement', *Handbook of research on civic engagement in youth*, 221-248.

Metzger, A., Syvertsen, A.K., Oosterhoff, B., Babskie, E., & Wray-Lake, L. (2015) 'How children understand civic actions: A mixed methods perspective', *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 31(5), 507-535.

Miklikowska, M. (2017) 'Development of anti-immigrant attitudes in adolescence: The role of parents, peers, intergroup friendships, and empathy', *British Journal of Psychology,* 108(3), 626-648.

Miklikowska, M. & Hurme, H. (2011) 'Democracy begins at home: Democratic parenting and adolescents' support for democratic values', *European Journal of Developmental Psychology,* 8(5), 541-557.

Miklikowska, M., Duriez, B., & Soenens, B. (2011) 'Family roots of empathy-related characteristics: The role of perceived maternal and paternal need support in adolescence', *Developmental Psychology,* 47(5), 1342.

Miles, S.B. & Stipek, D. (2006) 'Contemporaneous and longitudinal associations between social behavior and literacy achievement in a sample of low-income elementary school children', *Child Development,* 77(1), 103-117.

Miller, P. A., & Eisenberg, N. (1988). The relation of empathy to aggressive and externalizing/antisocial behavior. *Psychological Bulletin*, 103(3), 324..

Mogro-Wilson, C. (2008) 'The influence of parental warmth and control on Latino adolescent alcohol use', *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences,* 30(1), 89-105.

Mondak, J.J. & Gearing, A.F. (1998) 'Civic engagement in a post-communist state', *Political Psychology,* 19(3), 615-637.

Moyers, T.B., Miller, W.R., & Hendrickson, S. M. (2005) 'How does motivational interviewing work? Therapist interpersonal skill predicts client involvement within motivational interviewing sessions', *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology,* 73(4), 590.

Nesdale, D., Griffith, J., Durkin, K., & Maass, A. (2005) 'Empathy, group norms and children's ethnic attitudes', *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology,* 26(6), 623-637.

Nie, Y.G., Li, J.B., & Vazsonyi, A.T. (2016) 'Self-control mediates the associations between parental attachment and prosocial behavior among Chinese adolescents', *Personality and Individual Differences,* 96, 36-39.

O'Brien, D.T. & Kauffman, R.A. (2013) 'Broken windows and low adolescent prosociality: Not cause and consequence, but co-symptoms of low collective efficacy', *American Journal of Community Psychology,* 51(3-4), 359-369.

Omoto, A.M., Snyder, M., & Hackett, J.D. (2010) 'Personality and motivational antecedents of activism and civic engagement', *Journal of Personality*, 78(6), 1703-1734.

Paciello, M., Fida, R., Cerniglia, L., Tramontano, C., & Cole, E. (2013) 'High cost helping scenario: The role of empathy, prosocial reasoning and moral disengagement on helping behavior', *Personality and Individual Differences,* 55(1), 3-7.

Padilla-Walker, L.M. & Carlo, G. (2007) 'Personal values as a mediator between parentand peer expectations and adolescent behaviors', *Journal of Family Psychology,* 21(3), 538.

Padilla-Walker, L.M. & Fraser, A.M. (2014) 'How much is it going to cost me? Bidirectional relations between adolescents' moral personality and prosocial behavior', *Journal of Adolescence,* 37(7), 993-1001.

Padilla-Walker, L.M., Fraser, A.M., Black, B.B., & Bean, R.A. (2014) 'Associations between friendship, sympathy, and prosocial behavior toward friends', *Journal of Research on Adolescence,* 1–8.

Padilla-Walker, L.M., Carlo, G., & Nielson, M.G. (2015) 'Does helping keep teens protected? Longitudinal bidirectional relations between prosocial behavior and problem behavior', *Child Development,* 86(6), 1759-1772.

Padilla-Walker, L.M., Coyne, S.M., Collier, K.M., & Nielson, M.G. (2015) 'Longitudinal relations between prosocial television content and adolescents' prosocial and aggressive behavior: The mediating role of empathic concern and self-regulation', *Developmental Psychology,* 51(9), 1317.

Panke, S., & Stephens, J. (2018) 'Beyond the echo chamber: Pedagogical tools for civic engagement discourse and reflection', *Journal of Educational Technology & Society,* 21(1), 248-263.

Penner, L.A., Dovidio, J.F., Piliavin, J.A., & Schroeder, D.A. (2005) 'Prosocial behavior: Multilevel perspectives', *Annu. Rev. Psychol.*, 56, 365-392.

Plenty, S., Östberg, V., & Modin, B. (2015) 'The role of psychosocial school conditions in adolescent prosocial behaviour', *School Psychology International,* 36(3), 283-300.

Pratt, M.W., Hunsberger, B., Pancer, S.M., & Alisat, S. (2003) 'A longitudinal analysis of personal values socialization: Correlates of a moral self-ideal in late adolescence', *Social Development,* 12(4), 563-585.

Pratto, F., Sidanius, J., Stallworth, L.M., & Malle, B.F. (1994) 'Social dominance orientation: A personality variable predicting social and political attitudes', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 67(4), 741.

Preacher, K.J., Rucker, D.D., & Hayes, A.F. (2007) 'Addressing moderated mediation hypotheses: Theory, methods, and prescriptions', *Multivariate behavioral research,* 42(1), 185-227.

Pryor, J.H., Hurtado, S., Saenz, V.B., Santos, J.L., & Korn, W. S. (2007) 'The American freshman: Forty year trends', *Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute*, 3.

Putnam, R.D. (2000) 'Bowling alone: America's declining social capital'. In: *Culture and Politic*s, pp. 223-234. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Putnam, R.D. (2016) Our Kids: *The American Dream in Crisis.* US: Simon and Schuster.

Ramey, H.L., Lawford, H.L., & Rose-Krasnor, L. (2017) 'Doing for others: Youth's contributing behaviors and psychological engagement in youth–adult partnerships', *Journal of Adolescence*, 55, 129–138.

Raskauskas, J.L., Gregory, J., Harvey, S.T., Rifshana, F., & Evans, I. M. (2010) 'Bullying among primary school children in New Zealand: Relationships with prosocial behaviour and classroom climate', *Educational Research*, 52(1), 1-13.

Rice, P.L. & Ezzy, D. (1999) *Qualitative Research Methods: A Health Focus.* Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press.

Richards-Schuster, K., & Pritzker, S. (2015). Strengthening youth participation in civic engagement: Applying the Convention on the Rights of the Child to social work practice. *Children and Youth Services Review,* 57, 90-97.

Rivera, R. & Santos, D. (2016) 'Civic and political participation of children and adolescents: A lifestyle analysis for positive youth developmental programs', *Children & Society,* 30(1), 59-70.

Rodolfo, G. Z. (2011) *Society at a Glance 2011 OECD Social Indicators: OECD Social Indicators.* OECD publishing.

Rossi, G., Lenzi, M., Sharkey, J.D., Vieno, A., & Santinello, M. (2016) 'Factors associated with civic engagement in adolescence: The effects of neighbourhood, school, family and peer contexts', *Journal of Community Psychology,* 44(8), 1040-1058.

Rutten, E.A., Stams, G.J.J., Biesta, G.J., Schuengel, C., Dirks, E., & Hoeksma, J.B. (2007) 'The contribution of organized youth sport to antisocial and prosocial behaviourin adolescent athletes', *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 36(3), 255–264.

Rutten, E.A., Deković, M., Stams, G.J.J., Schuengel, C., Hoeksma, J.B., & Biesta, G.J. (2008) 'On-and off-field antisocial and prosocial behavior in adolescent soccer players: A multilevel study', *Journal of Adolescence*, 31(3), 371-387.

Sage, L.D. & Kavussanu, M. (2008) 'Goal orientations, motivational climate, and prosocial and antisocial behaviour in youth football: Exploring their temporal stability and reciprocal relationships', *Journal of Sports Sciences,* 26(7), 717-732.

Sallquist, J., Eisenberg, N., Spinrad, T.L., Eggum, N.D., & Gaertner, B.M. (2009) 'Assessment of preschoolers' positive empathy: Concurrent and longitudinal relations with positive emotion, social competence, and sympathy', *Journal of Positive Psychology,* 4(3), 223-233.

Sampson, R. J. & Graif, C. (2009) 'Neighborhood social capital as differential social organization: Resident and leadership dimensions', *American Behavioral Scientist,* 52(11), 1579-1605.

Schachner, A.C., Newton, E.K., Thompson, R.A., & Goodman-Wilson, M. (2018) 'Becoming prosocial: The consistency of individual differences in early prosocial behavior', *Early Childhood Research Quarterly,* 43, 42-51.

Schermelleh-Engel, K., Moosbrugger, H., & Müller, H. (2003) 'Evaluating the fit of structural equation models: Tests of significance and descriptive goodness-of-fit measures', *Methods of Psychological Research Online*, 8(2), 23-74.

Schmidt, J.A., Shumow, L., & Kackar, H. (2007) 'Adolescents' participation in service activities and its impact on academic, behavioral, and civic outcomes', *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 36(2), 127-140.

Schreier, H.M., Schonert-Reichl, K.A., & Chen, E. (2013) 'Effect of volunteering on risk factors for cardiovascular disease in adolescents: A randomized controlled trial', *JAMA Pediatrics,* 167(4), 327-332.

Schumann, K., Zaki, J., & Dweck, C.S. (2014) 'Addressing the empathy deficit: Beliefs about the malleability of empathy predict effortful responses when empathy is challenging', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 107(3), 475.

Schwartz, S.E., Chan, C.S., Rhodes, J.E., & Scales, P.C. (2013) 'Community developmental assets and positive youth development: The role of natural mentors', *Research in Human Development,* 10(2), 141–162.

Segal, E.A. (2011) 'Social empathy: A model built on empathy, contextual understanding, and social responsibility that promotes social justice', Journal of Social Service Research, 37(3), 266-277.

Šerek, J. & Machackova, H. (2015) 'Predicting online and offline civic participation among young Czech Roma: The roles of resources, community perceptions and social norms', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 41(13), 2173-2191.

Šerek, J. & Machackova, H. (2014) 'Which Czech young adults prefer online civic participation?', Cyberpsychology: *Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 8(3).

Shaffer, D.D.R. & Kipp, K. (2010) Developmental Psychology: *Childhood & Adolescence: Childhood and Adolescence*. Cengage Learning.

Silke, C., Brady, B., Boylan, C., & Dolan, P. (2018) 'Factors influencing the development of empathy and pro-social behaviour among adolescents: A systematic review', *Children and Youth Services Review,* 94, 421-436.

Singer, T. & Lamm, C. (2009) 'The social neuroscience of empathy', *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1156(1), 81-96.

Sloam, J. (2003) '"Responsibility for Europe": the EU policy of the German Social Democrats since unification', *German Politics,* 12(1), 59-78.

Sloam, J. (2016) 'Youth political participation in Europe'. *Routledge Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood,* 287.

Smith, B.G., Kendall, M.C., & Knighton, D. (2018) 'Rise of the brand ambassador: Social stake, corporate social responsibility and influence among the social media influencers', *Communication Management Review,* 3(01), 6-29.

Spinrad, T.L. & Eisenberg, N. (2009) Empathy, prosocial behavior, and positive development in schools. *Handbook of Positive Psychology in Schools,* 119.

Spinrad, T.L. & Eisenberg, N. (2014) 'Empathy, prosocial behavior, and positive development in schools'. *In: Handbook of Positive Psychology in Schools*, pp. 90-106. Routledge.

Spinrad, T.L. & Eisenberg, N. (2017) 'Prosocial behavior and empathy-related responding: Relations to children's well-being'. In: *The Happy Mind: Cognitive Contributions to Well-Being,* pp. 331-347. Springer, Cham.

Steiger, J.H. (1998) 'A note on multiple sample extensions of the RMSEA fit index', *Structural Equation Modelling: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 5(4), 411-419.

Steiger, J.H. (2007) 'Understanding the limitations of global fit assessment in structural equation modeling', *Personality and Individual Differences,* 42(5), 893-898.

Stracuzzi, N.F. & Mills, M.L. (2010) 'Teachers matter: Feelings of school connectedness and positive youth development among Coos County youth'. New Englan: Carsey Institute.

Stürmer, S., Snyder, M., Kropp, A., & Siem, B. (2006) 'Empathy-motivated helping: The moderating role of group membership', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 32(7), 943-956.

Suárez-Orozco, C., Hernández, M. G., & Casanova, S. (2015) '"It's sort of my calling": The civic engagement and social responsibility of Latino immigrant-origin young adults', *Research in Human Development,* 12(1-2), 84-99.

Syvertsen, A. Flanagan, A. Stout, M. (2009) 'Code of silence: students' perceptions of school climate and willingness to intervene in a peer's dangerous plan', *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 101, 219-232.

Tabachnick, B.G. & Fidell, L.S. (2007) *Using Multivariate Statistics.* Allyn & Bacon/Pearson Education.

Taylor, S.E., Lehman, B.J., Kiefe, C.I., & Seeman, T.E. (2006) 'Relationship of early life stress and psychological functioning to adult C-reactive protein in the coronary artery risk development in young adults study', *Biological Psychiatry,* 60(8), 819-824.

Taylor, Z.E., Eisenberg, N., Spinrad, T.L., Eggum, N.D., & Sulik, M.J. (2013) 'The relations of ego-resiliency and emotion socialization to the development of empathy and prosocial behavior across early childhood', *Emotion,* 13(5), 822.

Thompson, K.L. & Gullone, E. (2008) 'Prosocial and antisocial behaviors in adolescents: An investigation into associations with attachment and empathy', Anthrozoös, 21(2), 123-137.

Thornberg, R. & Jugert, T. (2014) 'School bullying and the mechanisms of moral disengagement', *Aggressive Behavior,* 40(2), 99-108.

Torney-Purta, J., Barber, C.H., & Wilkenfeld, B. (2007) 'Latino adolescents' civic development in the United States: Research results from the IEA Civic Education Study', *Journal of Youth and Adolescence,* 36(2), 111-125.

Turcotte, M. (2015) 'Political participation and civic engagement of youth'. Statistics Canada. Retrieved from: www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-006-x/2015001/article/14232-eng.pdf.

Twenge, J.M. & Campbell, S.M. (2012) 'Who are the Millennials? Empirical evidence for generational differences in work values, attitudes and personality', Managing the new workforce: *International perspectives on the millennial generation,* 152-180.

Van der Graaff, J., Carlo, G., Crocetti, E., Koot, H.M., & Branje, S. (2018) 'Prosocial behavior in adolescence: gender differences in development and links with empathy', *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 47(5), 1086-99.

Van Goethem, A., Van Hoof, A., Orobio de Castro, B., Van Aken, M., & Hart, D. (2014) 'The role of reflection in the effects of community service on adolescent development: A meta-analysis', *Child Development,* 85(6), 2114-2130.

Van Rijsewijk, L., Dijkstra, J.K., Pattiselanno, K., Steglich, C., & Veenstra, R. (2016) 'Who helps whom? Investigating the development of adolescent prosocial relationships', *Developmental Psychology,* 52(6), 894.

Varela, E. & Loreto Martínez, M. (2018) 'Refining the domain of civic engagement: Empirical findings from a multidimensional model in young adults in Chile', *Applied Developmental Science*, 1-13.

Vasconcelos, M., Hollis, K., Nowbahari, E., & Kacelnik, A. (2012) 'Pro-sociality without empathy', *Biology Letters,* rsbl20120554.

Verplanken, B. & Holland, R.W. (2002) 'Motivated decision making: Effects of activation and self-centrality of values on choices and behavior', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82, 434-447.

Voight, A. & Torney-Purta, J. (2013) 'A typology of youth civic engagement in urban middle schools', *Applied Developmental Science,* 17(4), 198-212.

Vossen, H.G. & Valkenburg, P.M. (2016) 'Do social media foster or curtail adolescents' empathy? A longitudinal study', *Computers in Human Behavior,* 63, 118-124.

Vossen, H.G., Piotrowski, J.T., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2017) 'The longitudinal relationship between media violence and empathy: Was it sympathy all along?', *Media Psychology,* 20(2), 175-193.

Wagaman, M.A. (2011) 'Social empathy as a framework for adolescent empowerment', *Journal of Social Service Research*, 37(3), 278-293.

Wang, X., Lei, L., Yang, J., Gao, L., & Zhao, F. (2017) 'Moral disengagement as mediator and moderator of the relation between empathy and aggression among Chinese male juvenile delinquents', *Child Psychiatry & Human Development,* 48(2), 316-326.

Wheaton, B., Muthen, B., Alwin, D., F., and Summers, G. (1977), "Assessing Reliability and Stability in Panel Models," *Sociological Methodology*, 8 (1), 84-136.

Wentzel, K.R. (1993) 'Does being good make the grade? Social behavior and academic competence in middle school', *Journal of Educational Psychology,* 85(2), 357-364.

Wentzel, K.R., Filisetti, L., & Looney, L. (2007) 'Adolescent prosocial behavior: The role of self-processes and contextual cues', *Child Development*, 78(3), 895-910.

Westfall, J., Kenny, D.A., & Judd, C.M. (2014) 'Statistical power and optimal design in experiments in which samples of participants respond to samples of stimuli', *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 143*(5), 2020.

Wilkenfeld, B., Lauckhardt, J., & Torney-Purta, J. (2010) 'The relation between developmental theory and measures of civic engagement in research on adolescents'. *Handbook of Research on Civic Engagement in Youth*, pp. 193-219.

Wolf, N.S., Gales, M.E., Shane, E., & Shane, M. (2001) 'The developmental trajectory from amodal perception to empathy and communication: The role of mirror neurons in this process', *Psychoanalytic Inquiry,* 21(1), 94-112.

Wray-Lake, L., DeHaan, C.R., Shubert, J., & Ryan, R.M. (2017) 'Examining links from civic engagement to daily well-being from a self-determination theory perspective', *The Journal of Positive Psychology,* 1-12.

Wray-Lake, L., Rote, W.M., Gupta, T., Godfrey, E., & Sirin, S. (2015) 'Examining correlates of civic engagement among immigrant adolescents in the United States', *Research in Human Development*, 12(1-2), 10-27.

Wray-Lake, L., & Syvertsen, A. K. (2011) 'The developmental roots of social responsibility in childhood and adolescence', *New directions for child and adolescent development*, 2011(134), 11-25.

Wray-Lake, L., Syvertsen, A.K., Briddell, L., Osgood, D.W., & Flanagan, C.A. (2011) 'Exploring the changing meaning of work for American high school seniors from 1976 to 2005', *Youth & Society,* 43(3), 1110-1135.

Wray-Lake, L., Syvertsen, A.K., & Flanagan, C. A. (2016) 'Developmental change in social responsibility during adolescence: An ecological perspective', *Developmental Psychology,* 52(1), 130.

Wyatt, J.M. & Carlo, G. (2002) 'What will my parents think? Relations among adolescents' expected parental reactions, prosocial moral reasoning, and prosocial and antisocial behaviors', *Journal of Adolescent Research,* 17(6), 646-666.

Yates, M., & Youniss, J. (1996) 'A developmental perspective on community service in adolescence', *Social Development,* 5(1), 85-111.

You, S., Lee, J., Lee, Y., & Kim, A.Y. (2015) 'Bullying among Korean adolescents: The role of empathy and attachment', *Psychology in the Schools,* 52(6), 594–606.

Youniss, J. & Yates, M. (1997) *Community Service and Social Responsibility in Youth.* University of Chicago Press.

Youniss, J., Bales, S., Christmas-Best, V., Diversi, M., Mclaughlin, M., & Silbereisen, R. (2002) 'Youth civic engagement in the twenty-first century', *Journal of Research on Adolescence,* 12(1), 121-148.

Zaff, J.F., Kawashima-Ginsberg, K., Lin, E.S., Lamb, M., Balsano, A., & Lerner, R.M. (2011) 'Developmental trajectories of civic engagement across adolescence: Disaggregation of an integrated construct', *Journal of Adolescence*, 34(6), 1207-20.

Zaki, J. (2014) 'Empathy: a motivated account', *Psychological Bulletin,* 140(6), 1608-47.

Zhao, X., Lynch, J.G. Jr., and Chen, Q. (2010) 'Reconsidering baron and kenny: Myths and truths about mediation analysis', *Journal of Consumer Research,* 37, 197–206.

Zins, J.E., Bloodworth, M.R., Weissberg, R.P., & Walberg, H.J. (2004) 'The scientific base linking social and emotional learning to school success'. In: Zins, J.E., Weissberg, R.P., Wang, M.C., & Walberg, H.J. (eds.) *Building Academic Success on Social and Emotional Learning: What Does the Research Say,* pp. 3-22. New York: Colombia University.

Zuffianò, A., Alessandri, G., Kanacri, B.P.L., Pastorelli, C., Milioni, M., Ceravolo, R., ... & Caprara, G.V. (2014) 'The relation between prosociality and self-esteem from middle-adolescence to young adulthood', *Personality and Individual Differences,* 63, 24-29.

Appendix I

Summary of Spearman's rho Correlations between Parental, Peer, School, and Community Contexts and All Outcome Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
1. Parental Warmth	--																		
2. Family Democratic Climate	.39**																		
3. Parent Social Responsibility	.27**	.46**																	
4. Parent Civic Engagement	.08	.20**	.26**																
5. Prosocial Friend Norms	.17*	.33**	.25**	.23**															
6. School Engagement	.34**	.46**	.27**	.32**	.42**														
7. Peer Connectedness	.26**	.41**	.39**	.22**	.38**	.38**													
8. Social Analysis	.07	.32**	.26**	.13	.29**	.39**	.32**												
9. Classroom PT	.08	.25**	.23**	.06	.29**	.32**	.31**	.58**											
10. Classroom Climate	.11	.40**	.27**	.07	.36**	.39**	.36**	.51**	.50**										
11. Neighbourhood Opportunities	.24**	.25**	.30**	.23**	.23**	.24**	.34**	.36**	.27**	.36**									
12. Community Connectedness	.23**	.42**	.43**	.33**	.39**	.45**	.41**	.41**	.36**	.48**	.49**								
13. Intergenerational Closure	.23**	.26**	.27**	.30**	.32**	.33**	.29**	.45**	.36**	.39**	.42**	.63**							
14. Social Responsibility	.09	.32**	.41**	.24**	.39**	.25**	.23**	.22**	.18*	.27**	.18*	.26**	.13						
15. Social Dominance	-.13	-.13	.11	.12	.11	.02	.12	.18*	.08	.05	-.03	-.07	.08	.02					
16. Affective Empathy	.12	.20*	.33**	.16*	.28**	.30**	.21**	.22**	.15*	.26**	.04	.24**	.10	.50**	.28**				
17. Cognitive Empathy	.06	.18*	.30**	.11	.33**	.17*	.07	.24**	.21**	.32**	.10	.27**	.19*	.34**	.10	.33**			
18. Current Civic Behaviour	.13	.23**	.22**	.45**	.21**	.24**	.27**	.30**	.20**	.18*	.28**	.41**	.32**	.24**	-.02	.20**	.26**		
19. Online Civic Engagement	-.18*	-.08	-.05	.05	.04	-.11	.01	-.06	-.03	-.08	-.01	-.03	-.12	.14	.12	.09	.12	.25**	
20. Quality Friendship	.11	.29**	.25*	.21*	.41**	.35**	.44**	.29**	.23**	.32**	.21**	.40**	.38**	.15	.18*	.29**	.05	.13	.03

NOTE: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.001$

Appendix II

Summary of Results for the Overall Regression Models for All Predictors on All Outcomes

Contextual Factors	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F Value
Youth Social Responsibility	0.25	0.19	3.98**
Social Dominance Orientation	0.10	0.02	1.27
Affective Empathy	0.26	0.20	4.13**
Cognitive Empathy	0.25	0.19	4.03**
Current Civic Behaviours	0.34	0.28	6.02**
Online Civic Engagement	0.10	0.03	1.37

NOTE: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.001$

Appendix III

Standardised Estimates (ß), Unstandardised Estimates (B), and Standard Errors (SE)

Outcome	Predictors	ß	B	SE
Youth Social Responsibility				
	Parental Warmth	-0.04	-0.10	0.24
	Family Democratic Climate	0.16	0.20	0.12
	Parent Social Responsibility	0.28**	0.26	0.08
	Parent Civic Engagement	0.17*	0.20	0.09
	Friend Prosocial Norms	0.26**	0.21	0.07
	Quality Friendship	-0.03	-0.04	0.13
	School Engagement	-0.02	-0.03	0.12
	Peer Connectedness	-0.08	-0.06	0.07
	Social Analysis	0.03	0.03	0.12
	PT Opportunities	-0.01	-0.02	0.13
	Classroom Climate	0.12	0.13	0.10
	Neighbourhood Opportunities	0.04	0.04	0.09
	Community Connectedness	-0.10	-0.07	0.08
	Intergenerational Closure	-0.13	-0.14	0.11
Social Dominance Orientation				
	Parental Warmth	-0.24*	-1.69	0.64
	Family Democratic Climate	0.15	0.46	0.32
	Parent Social Responsibility	0.05	0.10	0.22
	Parent Civic Engagement	0.06	0.16	0.25
	Quality Friendship	0.08	0.29	0.33
	Friend Prosocial Norms	-0.05	-0.09	0.19
	School Engagement	0.06	0.20	0.32

Outcome	Predictors	ß	B	SE
	Peer Connectedness	0.01	0.23	0.19
	Social Analysis	0.01	0.03	0.31
	PT Opportunities	-0.002	-0.002	0.35
	Classroom Climate	-0.10	-0.25	0.27
	Neighbourhood Opportunities	-0.12	-0.32	0.24
	Community Connectedness	0.001	0.001	0.21
	Intergenerational Closure	0.05	0.13	0.28
Affective Empathy				
	Parental Warmth	0.10	0.38	0.31
	Family Democratic Climate	-0.14	-0.22	0.15
	Parent Social Responsibility	0.36***	0.43	0.10
	Parent Civic Engagement	0.05	0.08	0.12
	Friend Prosocial Norms	0.07	0.07	0.09
	Quality Friendship	0.12	0.22	0.16
	School Engagement	0.18	0.31	0.15
	Peer Connectedness	-0.05	-0.05	0.09
	Social Analysis	0.15	0.24	0.15
	PT Opportunities	-0.08	-0.14	0.17
	Classroom Climate	0.22*	0.29	0.13
	Neighbourhood Opportunities	-0.13	-0.18	0.11
	Community Connectedness	-0.08	-0.07	0.10
	Intergenerational Closure	-0.11	-0.15	0.13
Cognitive Empathy				
	Parental Warmth	0.02	0.08	0.28
	Family Democratic Climate	-0.05	-0.07	0.14

Outcome	Predictors	ß	B	SE
	Parent Social Responsibility	0.22*	0.24	0.09
	Parent Civic Engagement	0.02	0.03	0.11
	Friend Prosocial Norms	0.29**	0.27	0.08
	Quality Friendship	-0.16	-0.27	0.14
	School Engagement	-0.01	-0.02	0.14
	Peer Connectedness	-0.17	-0.16	0.08
	Social Analysis	0.05	0.07	0.14
	PT Opportunities	0.01	0.02	0.15
	Classroom Climate	0.31**	0.37	0.11
	Neighbourhood Opportunities	-0.15	-0.18	0.10
	Community Connectedness	0.09	0.08	0.09
	Intergenerational Closure	0.01	0.01	0.12
Civic Behaviour				
	Parental Warmth	0.05	0.25	0.39
	Family Democratic Climate	0.03	0.04	0.19
	Parent Social Responsibility	-0.10	-0.16	0.13
	Parent Civic Engagement	0.41***	0.81	0.15
	Friend Prosocial Norms	-0.04	-0.05	0.11
	Quality Friendship	-0.13	-0.31	0.20
	School Engagement	-0.08	-0.17	0.19
	Peer Connectedness	0.08	0.11	0.11
	Social Analysis	0.23*	0.47	0.19
	PT Opportunities	0.03	0.08	0.21
	Classroom Climate	-0.06	-0.11	0.16
	Neighbourhood Opportunities	0.00	0.00	0.14

Outcome	Predictors	ß	B	SE
	Community Connectedness	0.25*	0.32	0.13
	Intergenerational Closure	0.00	0.01	0.17
Online Civic Behaviour				
	Parental Warmth	-0.18	-0.64	0.33
	Family Democratic Climate	-0.08	-0.13	0.16
	Parent Social Responsibility	-0.08	-0.09	0.11
	Parent Civic Engagement	0.15	0.22	0.12
	Friend Prosocial Norms	0.13	0.13	0.10
	Quality Friendship	-0.04	-0.07	0.17
	School Engagement	-0.10	-0.17	0.16
	Peer Connectedness	0.13	0.12	0.10
	Social Analysis	0.06	0.09	0.16
	PT Opportunities	0.02	0.04	0.18
	Classroom Climate	-0.12	-0.15	0.13
	Neighbourhood Opportunities	0.00	0.00	0.12
	Community Connectedness	0.02	0.02	0.11
	Intergenerational Closure	-0.11	-0.14	0.14

NOTE: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Appendix IV

How to Determine Model Fit in SEM Analyses? When using SEM techniques, the adequacy of the proposed conceptual (e.g., structural) model being tested is referred to as the 'model fit'. Model fit refers to the degree to which the structural equation model fits the sample data provided (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003). As there is *no single statistical test* that can identify a correct model, researchers rely on a combination of fit indices to evaluate the adequacy of the proposed conceptual model. According to guidelines specified by Byrne (2012) and Kline (2011), several criteria should be used to determine model fit in SEM analyses.

Chi-Square ($\chi 2$): The chi-square ($\chi 2$) test statistic is the traditional measure for evaluating the 'exact' fit of a proposed model. Good model fit is typically indicated by a statistically non-significant ($p > 0.05$) chi-square result. However, caution is advised upon relying on the chi-square test as a sole measure of model fit (Hooper et al., 2008), as it is likely that the chi-square will be significant when large sample sizes are used (e.g., n > 200) (Kline, 2011). Thus, a model with good fit may show a statistically significant chi-square result (Byrne, 2012). Hence, due to the restrictiveness of the chi-Square test, it is strongly recommended that researchers include other fit indices when assessing the overall fit of their models (Hooper et al., 2008).

Relative/Normed Chi Square ($\chi 2/df$; CMIN): In response to the problems with the chi-square test, Wheaton et al. (1977) devised an alternative approach to assess the absolute fit of a model. This test is known as the relative/normed chi-square statistic, or chi-square/*df* ratio (*Q/CMIN*) and is proposed to minimise the impact of sample size on test significance. According to this approach, good model fit is represented by a *Q/CMIN* value of less than (<) 2.0 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA): RMSEA with 90% confidence intervals is used as a measure of the 'approximate' fit of a SEM model (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003). It is generally accepted that an RMSEA value less than or equal to 0.05 represents excellent model fit (Steiger, 2007). However, values close to 0.06 (Hu and Bentler, 1999) or as high as 0.07 (Steiger, 2007) can also indicate acceptable model fit. An advantage of RMSEA is that it calculates a confidence interval around its value, which enables the precision of the RMSEA estimate to be assessed. It is recommended that the lower boundary of the confidence interval should be 0 for exact fit or less than 0.05 for close fit (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003).

Bentler's Comparative Fit Index (CFI): The CFI statistic is another popular index of approximate model fit (Hooper et al., 2008). Values for this statistic range from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 indicating greater model fit. It is generally accepted that a CFI value > 0.90 is necessary for acceptable model fit, and a value of ≥ 0.95 represents excellent model fit (Byrne, 2012). However, this fit index is susceptible to model complexity, with indices tending to diminish with more complex models or models with more parameters.

Tucker Lewis Index (TLI): Hu and Bentler (1999) have suggested that a TLI value > 0.90 is necessary for acceptable model fit and that a TLI value ≥ 0.95 should be set as the threshold for excellent model fit. However, the TLI is a fit index that prefers simpler models (Hooper et al., 2008).
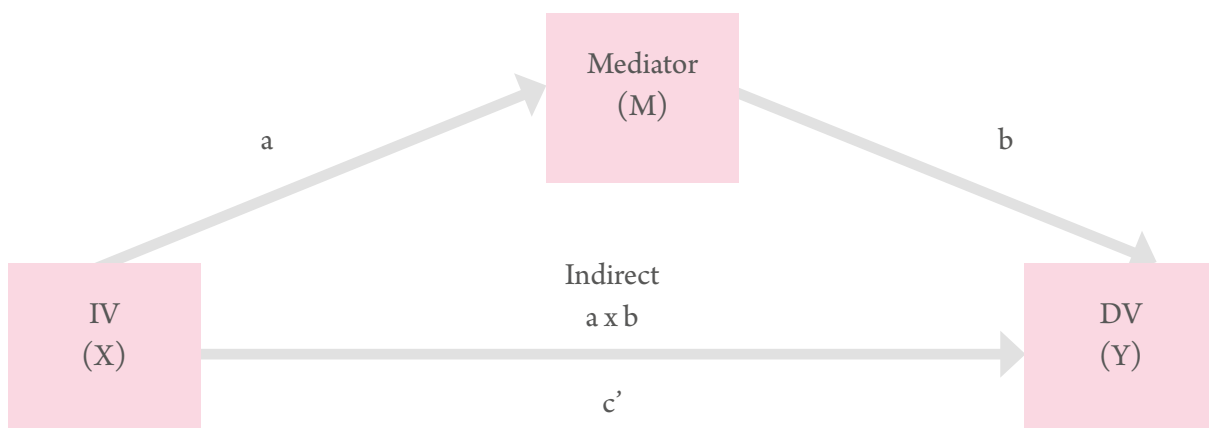
Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR): It is recommended that the SRMR values should always be reported when assessing model fit. Values for the SRMR range from zero to one, with values less than 0.08 being indicative of acceptable model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Akaike Information Criterion (AIC)/Delta (Δ) AIC: The Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and delta AIC (Δ AIC) are used to compare the relative fit of two competing models. The superior model is the one with the lower AIC value. The Δ AIC is calculated by subtracting the smaller AIC value from the larger AIC value. According to Burnham and Anderson (2002), support for the model with the higher AIC is indicated by Δ AIC values of 0 to 2, less support is suggested by values of 4 to 7, and values of 10 or greater indicate no support for the inferior model.

Item Redundancy/Model Modification: Item redundancy and model misfit are evidenced through an examination of modification indices (MIs) and regression weights of item pairs (Byrne, 2012). MIs can be conceptualised as a χ^2 statistic with one degree of freedom (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993). For each fixed parameter specified, an MI value is calculated, which represents the expected drop in overall χ^2 value which would result if the cited parameter were to be freely estimated in a subsequent analysis (Byrne, 2012). Accompanying each MI value is an Expected Parameter Change (EPC) value (Kline, 2011). This EPC value illustrates whether freeing an estimated parameter would result in a substantive improvement in model fit (Byrne, 2012). According to Byrne (2012), parameters should be re-specified if both the MI and EPC values are substantively large and theoretically meaningful (Byrne, 2012).

Appendix V

What is Mediation Analysis? Mediation analysis examines whether the connection between a predictor (e.g., Youth's Social Context) and an outcome (e.g., Youth's Civic Behaviour) can be explained by another variable – a 'mediator variable' (e.g., Empathy or Social Responsibility). A simple mediation model is presented in the diagram below. As can be seen in this model, the c path represents the direct relationship between a particular predictor (X) and a specified outcome (Y). Mediation analyses test whether the relationship between X and Y is explained by a third variable (M). The a path represents the direct effect of the predictor (X) on the mediator (M), and the b path represents the direct effect of the mediator (M) on the outcome (Y). Mediation is denoted by the a x b path, which represents the indirect effect of X on Y through M.

```
                    Mediator
                      (M)
            a                    b


    IV              Indirect              DV
    (X)             a x b                 (Y)

                      c'
```

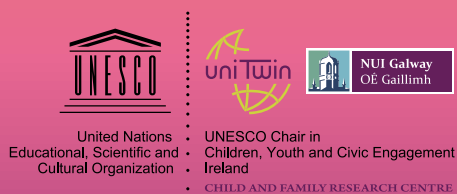**Example of a Simple Mediation Model**

Appendix VI

Based on a review of the MI and EPC values provided in the results of the structural equation modelling, a number of additional parameters were added to the model to improve model fit. Model parameters were added one at a time, according to which item pairs showed the highest levels of misfit, based on their MI and EPC values. Specifically, covariances were added between the residuals on pairs of items on the Parent Social Responsibility, Community Connectedness, Social Responsibility, Affective Empathy, and Youth Civic Engagement factors. These covariances were justified and were considered theoretically acceptable as the item pairs were located within the same scale or factor and were thematically related. One covariance was also added between the residuals on two of the mediator variables, Affective Empathy and Cognitive Empathy. This covariance was also justified on conceptual and theoretical grounds, as both factors are part of the same scale and are hypothesised to measure the same higher-order construct (e.g., Empathy). The MI and EPC values associated with each of these additional covariances are detailed in the table below.

Additional Covariances Specified Between Item Pairs in the SEM Model

Factor	Item Pairs	MI Value	EPC Value
Social Responsibility	SR5 & SR6	MI = 75.20	EPC = 0.14
Civic Behaviour	CB8 & CB2	MI = 74.10	EPC = 0.45
Civic Behaviour	CB3 & CB4	MI = 59.07	EPC = 0.35
Affective Empathy	EC2 & EC5	MI = 67.67	EPC = 0.44
Affective Empathy	EC4 & EC5	MI = 31.02	EPC = 0.27
Parent Social Responsibility	PSR6 & PSR7	MI = 20.45	EPC = 0.12
Parent Social Responsibility	PSR5 & PSR6	MI = 17.71	EPC = 0.12
Community Connectedness	CCN7 & CCN6	MI = 54.04	EPC = 0.44
Affective & Cognitive Empathy	EC & PT	MI = 62.19	EPC = 0.17

Appendix VII

An interesting finding to emerge from the preliminary analyses was the observed negative association between parental warmth and youths' social dominance orientation. In other words, youth who reported greater loving and warm relationships with their mother or father also reported more prejudiced social orientation. This finding is intriguing, as previous research has suggested that parental warmth is typically associated with increased empathy and prosocial responding (Carlo et al., 2017; Fousiani et al., 2016; Harper et al., 2014). One potential explanation for why this negative relationship occurred in the current research is that these preliminary analyses only assessed the direct relationship between parental warmth and social dominance orientation. Other unknown or unmeasured factors may be moderating the link between parental warmth and youths' prejudicial attitudes. For instance, other research has shown that high levels of parental warmth can actually predict negative outcomes among adolescents, when other family processes, such as parental conflict or parental control, are also taken into account (Etkin et al., 2014; Kerig & Swanson, 2010). Hence, it may be important for future research to examine how broader family contexts impact the relationship between parental warmth and social dominance orientation during adolescence. Nonetheless, the overall model was not found to be significant for social dominance orientation, therefore this factor was not included in any further analyses.