

The Influence of Adult Sibling Relationships on Empathy and Prosocial Behaviors

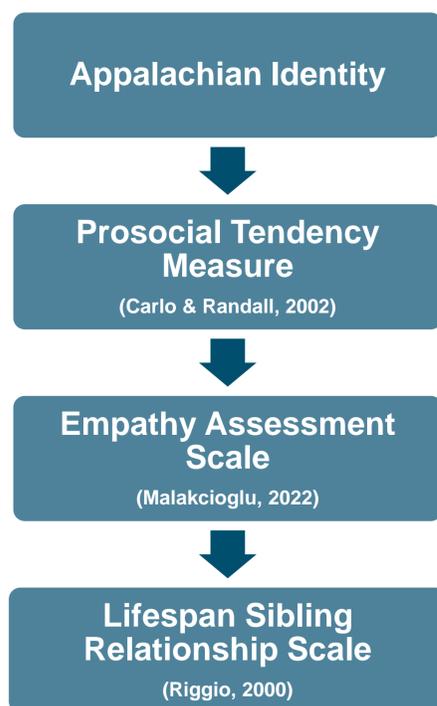
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INTRODUCTION & AIM

- ❖ The link between empathy and prosocial behaviors is well-established (e.g., Ruci et al., 2018).
- ❖ A bulk of the research examining the effects of sibling relationships on prosocial behavior has focused on childhood and adolescence (e.g., Beffel et al., 2022).
- ❖ There is a lack of systematic research examining the enduring effect of these types of relationships on empathy and prosocial behaviors into emerging adulthood (e.g., Van der Graaff et al., 2018).
- ❖ The purpose of the current study is to add to the limited evidence documenting the continued effect of positive sibling relationships on empathy and prosociality among adults with conventional and complex (e.g., half, adoptive, step) family ties. The impact of broader cultural influences is also explored. Specifically, the connection between sibling quality and Appalachian identity is examined.

METHOD

All participants ($N = 106$) were undergraduates who reported having a sibling(s) (biological, half, step, or adopted) that they lived with at least 50% of the time for a minimum of three years. A majority of the sample was female ($n = 63$; 60%). All data was collected using Qualtrics. Those who consented and met the criteria for participation, were presented with a series of demographic questions (including place of residence), followed by the outcome measures.



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RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Table 1

Regional identity and prosocial tendencies, empathetic concern, and adult sibling relationship outcomes

	Appalachian		Non-Appalachian			Cohen's <i>d</i>
	M	SD	M	SD		
PTM	65.93	7.22	67.14	9.80	$t(102) = -0.692, p = .490$	-0.14
EAS	47.85	5.75	46.68	6.29	$t(104) = 0.990, p = .324$	0.19
LSRS	180	29.46	180.4	27.83	$t(95) = -0.070, p = .944$	-0.01

Note: No significant differences were found across outcomes.

Table 2

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Prosocial Tendencies

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
EAS	0.27	0.16	0.17	0.27	0.16	0.17
LSRS				-0.13	0.03	-0.04
R^2	0.03			0.03		
F for change in R^2	0.03			0.002		

Note: Empathy was not predictive of prosocial tendencies. Sibling relationship quality did not add significantly to the overall model.

- ❖ Empathetic attitudes were not predictive of prosocial tendencies and sibling relationship quality did not significantly add to the overall model. While empathetic attitudes were relatively high for the sample, these did not significantly predict prosocial tendencies. Data collection was near mid-terms and the focus on academic responsibilities could have overshadowed attitudes about helping.
- ❖ Sibling relationship quality did not significantly add to the overall model. Other factors (e.g., sibling gender, the specific kinship ties, and the length of the relationship) not measured could have impacted the results.
- ❖ Appalachian and non-Appalachian respondents profiled similarly on all outcomes. However, the sample of Appalachians was small ($n = 34$), limiting statistical power. Further, these respondents were from a very limited radius (three-states) and may not be representative of the entire region.

CONCLUSION

- ❖ Closer examination of the impact of specific kinship ties on the link between sibling relationship quality and prosocial tendencies should be examined further.
- ❖ Findings suggest that Appalachian and non-Appalachian respondents were highly similar. These should be interpreted cautiously given the small sample of Appalachians from a limited area.

FUTURE WORK

- ❖ Dynamics between traditional and complex sibling relationships could differ. Future studies should explore models of prosocial tendencies that reflect specific kinship ties.
- ❖ The current sample of Appalachians were from a three-state area. Efforts to sample more broadly across the region would provide a more representative sample of regional differences and further insights into cultural influences.