Profiles of Children's Prosocial Behaviors and its Longitudinal Associations with Peer Aggression, Bullying, and Victimization

Ting-Lan Ma, Su Jiang, Sandra Simpkins, Deborah Vandell, Nicole Zarrett
Edgewood College; University of California Irvine; University of South Carolina

Background

Relations between children's prosocial behaviors and other aspects of their relationships with peers is a topic of considerable interest (Eisenberg, et al., 2015; Templeton, 2013). Children who are prosocial are less involved in bullying and aggression, as well as less likely to be victimized (Perren & Alsaker, 2005; Closson & Hymel, 2016). However, less is known about if subtypes exist in children's prosocial behaviors, and whether these subtypes are associated with subsequent peer relationships in distinct ways. In this study, we identify distinct profiles of prosocial behaviors in middle childhood (4th grade) and examine how these profiles are associated with subsequent peer relationships in early adolescence (6th grade).

Research Questions

This study examined the following questions:

1) To identify distinct profiles of prosocial behaviors in middle childhood (4th grade)
2) To examine how these profiles are associated with subsequent peer relationships in early adolescence (6th grade).

Methods

Participants

The longitudinal data were part of the NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development, a birth cohort of 1340 children recruited at 10 sites in the United States.

Measures

Teacher reports of nine prosocial behaviors were collected at 4th grade (n = 914) using the Child Behavior Scale (Ladd & Profilet, 1996). Peer relationships 6th grade were measured by both self-reported bullying and victimization (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996), and teacher-reported social exclusion, general aggression, relational aggression and peer victimization using CBS.

Data Analysis

To examine the latent profiles emerged from the nine prosocial behaviors, we conducted Latent profile analysis in Mplus 8.0 using full information maximum likelihood estimation with robust SEs. To determine the best solution of number of classes, we examined multiple fit indices including the BIC, AIC, CAIC, SABIC, LMR-aLRT, and cmP which demonstrated the four-class solution as the best fit (Figure 1).

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Questions & Comments: Contact Ting-Lan at tma@Edgewood.edu

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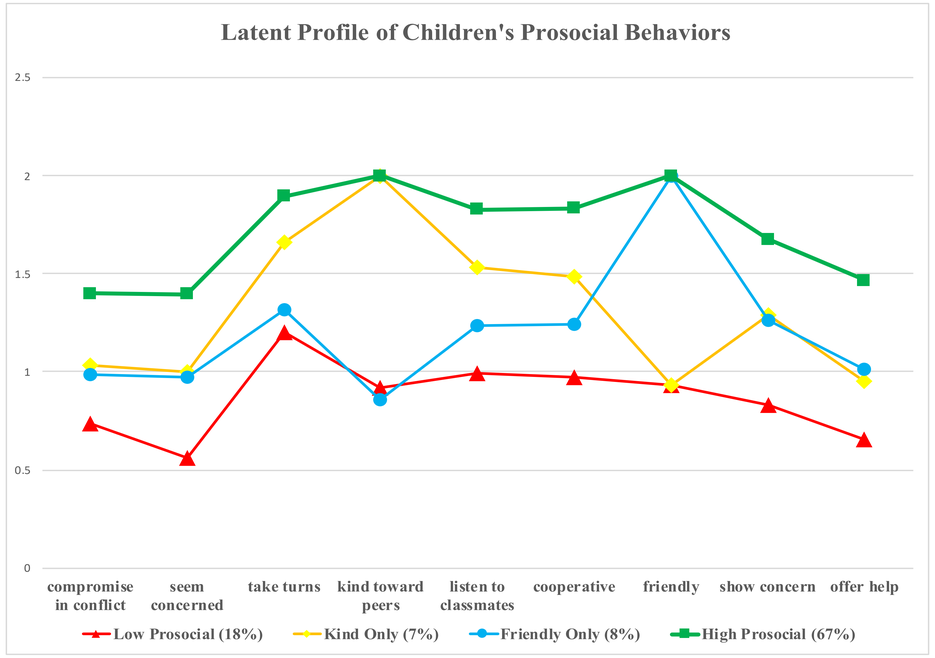
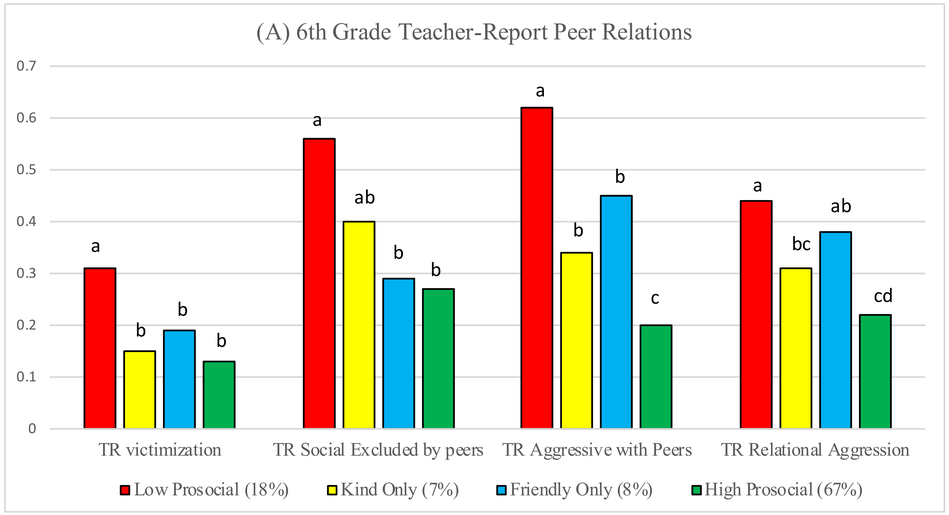
Results: Figure 1

Aim 1: Distinct profiles o f Grade 4 prosocial behaviors



Results: Figure 1

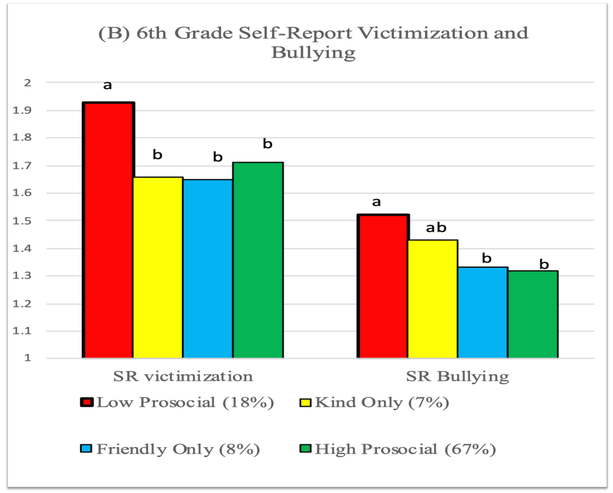
Aim 2A: how these profiles are associated with Grade 6 **teacher-report** peer relationships



Row means with different subscripts are significantly different at $p < .001$ using LSD post hoc test. A mean noted with "$_{ab}$" means it is not significantly different from neither the mean noted with a "$_{a}$" nor from the mean noted with a "$_{b}$".

Results: Figure 2

Aim 2B: how these profiles are associated with Grade 6 **self-report** peer relationships



Row means with different subscripts are significantly different at $p < .001$ using LSD post hoc test.

Discussions

Our results suggest several heterogeneous patterns of prosocial behavior that are differentially related to children's later relationships with peers.

Although children who were consistently low on indicators of prosocial behaviors in middle childhood had the most problematic relationships with peers in early adolescence, children who were friendly (but not kind) and children who were kind (but not friendly) also displayed some problematic peer relationships.

This study has implications for anti-bullying prevention and intervention programs. Traditional socio-emotional training programs that target just low prosocial children may not be comprehensive. Although small in percentage, children who showed mix patterns of a sporadic high kind or friendly behavior generally in combination with generally moderate to low degree across other prosocial behaviors may potentially be aggressive or victimized during early adolescence.

More studies need to be done to verify the existence of children who fall in these non-traditional prosocial patterns and to understand the developmental mechanisms of how specific prosocial profiles evolve to later problematic peer relationships.

CONTACT: Ting-Lan Ma, tma@edgewood.edu