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EDITED AND REVIEWED BY  
May Ling Halim,  
California State University, Long Beach,  
United States

\*CORRESPONDENCE  
Daniel Lapsley  
✉ dantapsley@nd.edu

RECEIVED 28 November 2024  
ACCEPTED 12 December 2024  
PUBLISHED 07 January 2025

CITATION  
Lapsley D, Carlo G, Davis A, Fabes R and  
Laible D (2025) Editorial: Promoting a kinder  
and more just world: the development of  
prosocial, moral, and social justice behaviors  
in adolescence.  
*Front. Dev. Psychol.* 2:1536381.  
doi: 10.3389/fdpys.2024.1536381

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# Editorial: Promoting a kinder and more just world: the development of prosocial, moral, and social justice behaviors in adolescence

Daniel Lapsley<sup>1\*</sup>, Gustavo Carlo<sup>2</sup>, Alexandra Davis<sup>3</sup>,  
Richard Fabes<sup>4</sup> and Deborah Laible<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Psychology, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN, United States, <sup>2</sup>School of Education, University of California, Irvine, Irvine, CA, United States, <sup>3</sup>Family and Child Studies, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM, United States, <sup>4</sup>Family and Human Development, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, United States, <sup>5</sup>Department of Psychology, Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA, United States

## KEYWORDS

prosocial development, moral development, social justice, adolescence, ethnicity, minority adolescents, relational developmental systems

## Editorial on the Research Topic

Promoting a kinder and more just world: the development of prosocial, moral, and social justice behaviors in adolescence

Recent sociopolitical movements around the world are advancing scapegoating, divisiveness, hatred, and violence toward minoritized and vulnerable populations. Although not new to human history, recent mass movements are promoting extraordinary global injustices and inequities. How to counter these injustices with better understanding of the development of prosociality is an urgent challenge for researchers.

Such scholarship entails an integrative, relational developmental system (RDS) metatheoretical approach and the broader process-relational paradigm to which it belongs (Lerner, 2006; Overton, 2013; Witherington et al., 2018). The relational paradigm asserts the interplay of indissociable, co-acting, and interpenetrating sources of developmental influence that move over time in the direction of systemic organized complexity. Indeed, RDS themes are increasingly evident in the study of character development (Lerner, 2018; Nucci, 2018), character education (Lapsley and Narvaez, 2006), positive youth development (Callina et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2015), and prosocial moral development (Carlo et al., 2022; Davis et al., 2021). This Research Topic is a timely set of papers based on RDS-inspired approaches that approximate efforts toward *Promoting a Kinder and More Just World*.

Maiya et al., for example, on the basis of an ecocultural strength-based model of prosocial moral development (Davis et al., 2021), showed that mothers' social rewards were indirectly related (via familism values and ethnic identity) to higher levels of everyday helping behavior in a sample of recent immigrant U.S. Latino/a adolescents. The lesson here is that parents can influence internalization of cultural strengths that influence prosocial behavior.

In an innovative cross-national study of six countries, Cirimele et al. also invoke the bioecological model in their investigation of whether the processes that drive prosocial development in adolescence are universal or whether other-oriented helping behavior varies in accord with broad cultural factors associated with a country's Human Development Index (HDI: life expectancy at birth, expected years of schooling, mean years of schooling, standard of living). They showed that prosocial behavior generally shows a linear increase as children move into adolescence, but this trend is moderated by HDI. Prosocial behavior tended to increase in contexts with lower HDI, but remain stable in high HDI contexts.

The notion of "altruism-born-of-suffering" refers to persons who are motivated to address social injustice even in the presence of adversity (Staub, 2005). Previous evidence has typically relied on retrospective interviews or cross-sectional study designs. Carlo et al. showed that U.S. Mexican girls who reported early-life trauma exhibited increases in altruistic behavior across adolescence and into young adulthood, but only in girls who reported high levels of familism values in mid-adolescence. These findings also provide evidence on the importance of cultural values as triggers for prosocial moral development even after reported early-life trauma. The findings also counter common negative stereotypes of U.S. ethnic/racial minoritized youth.

Family socialization effects were also investigated with respect to racial bias (Agalar et al.), the development of non-prejudicial attitudes toward sexual minorities (Padilla-Walker et al.), and deviant behavior (Chi et al.). The latter project showed how that supportive parenting that meets adolescent interpersonal needs reduces the tendency toward deviance. Padilla-Walker et al. showed that prejudice and non-prejudice follows different developmental lines, and that mothers' teaching that emphasizes rejection or correction of biased attitudes is particularly important for encouraging non-prejudiced value orientations in adolescents. Finally, Agalar et al. showed that color-conscious racial socialization counters adolescent racial prejudice, particularly when socialization practices support adolescent autonomy.

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These papers underscore the fact that prosocial moral development not only interfaces dynamically with broad ecological systems, but is also bound inextricably with other normative challenges whose co-development rely upon a suite of "adaptive developmental regulations" (Lerner and Overton, 2008, p. 249) commonly found in asset promoting families and schools. If so there is as much ordinary magic in the promotion of social justice as there is in building resilience processes in development (cf. Masten, 2014).

## Author contributions

DLap: Writing – original draft. GC: Writing – original draft. AD: Writing – review & editing. RF: Writing – review & editing. DLai: Writing – review & editing.

## Conflict of interest

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The author(s) declared that they were an editorial board member of *Frontiers*, at the time of submission. This had no impact on the peer review process and the final decision.

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