The Emotional and Relational Correlates of Prosocial Fantasies

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DEPARTMENT:

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BACKGROUND:

- Humans are often characterized as selfish creatures, primarily motivated by self-interest with little care or concern for others
- We questioned this assumption and examined whether people spend time daydreaming or fantasizing about how they can help others (prosocial fantasy)

METHODS:

227 adults (*Mage* = 37.92, SD = 9.99, M = 58%, F = 41%, NB = 0.4%) recruited from MTurk completed an online survey

Participants were asked to report their...

 general happiness, relationship satisfaction and self-reported helping behaviour

As well as (3) questions of interest:

- a) Have you ever experienced a prosocial fantasy?
- b) How many prosocial fantasies have you had in the past 30 days?
- c) Which targets have you had a prosocial fantasy about helping?

People who have more prosocial fantasies report experiencing higher levels of happiness, more satisfying relationships, and are more willing to help others.

"I have a strong passion towards sewing and specifically sustainable fashion & practices. I had wanted to help save material from going into the landfill. So, during the summer I made it a mission to upcycle a ton of clothes and search for fabrics that people were going to throw away. After being able make items out of "trash", I was able to give a second life to clothes and fabrics. I think that I am helping keep stuff out of the landfill and in turn, that helps the earth. I think about this very often because I am still constantly seeking second hand items to repurpose into something new." - Female, 19

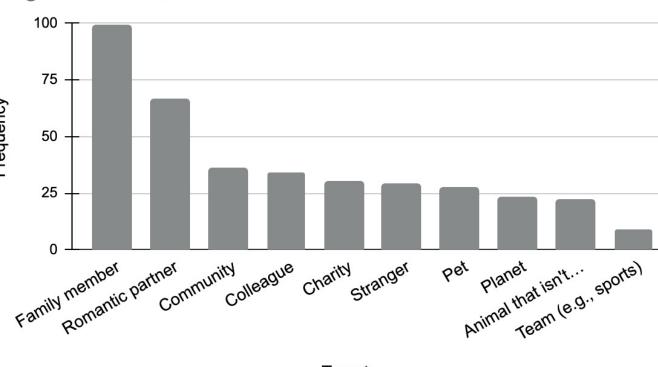


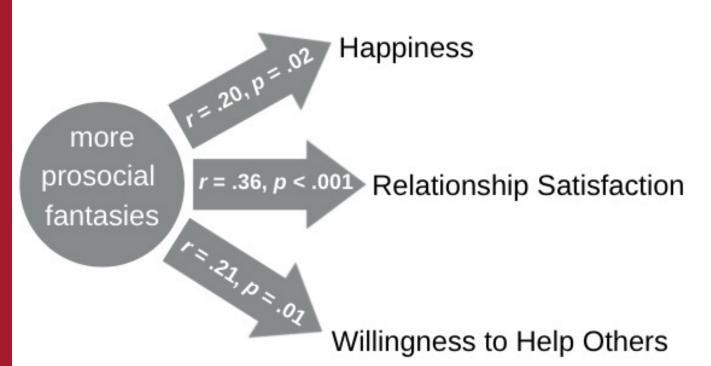


RESULTS:

- A majority (62%) of people reported having a prosocial fantasy, X² (1) = 13.33, p < .001
- Among those who did, people had an average of 43.96 (SD = 35.90) prosocial fantasies per month

Targets Of Prosocial Fantasies





DISCUSSION:

These findings challenge a
dominant narrative that humans
are selfish actors by showing that
most people spend time
fantasizing about the ways in
which they can help others. This
work offers a new way to consider
the link between prosociality and
well-being

FUTURE DIRECTIONS:

 We will examine the base rates and content of prosocial fantasies among an ex-offender population

undergraduate research symposium

