

The Emotional and Relational Correlates of Prosocial Fantasies

PRESENTER:

Anurada Amarasekera

✉ aamarase@sfu.ca

CO-AUTHORS:

Lara B. Aknin & Tiara A. Cash

DEPARTMENT:

Psychology, Helping and Happiness Lab

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

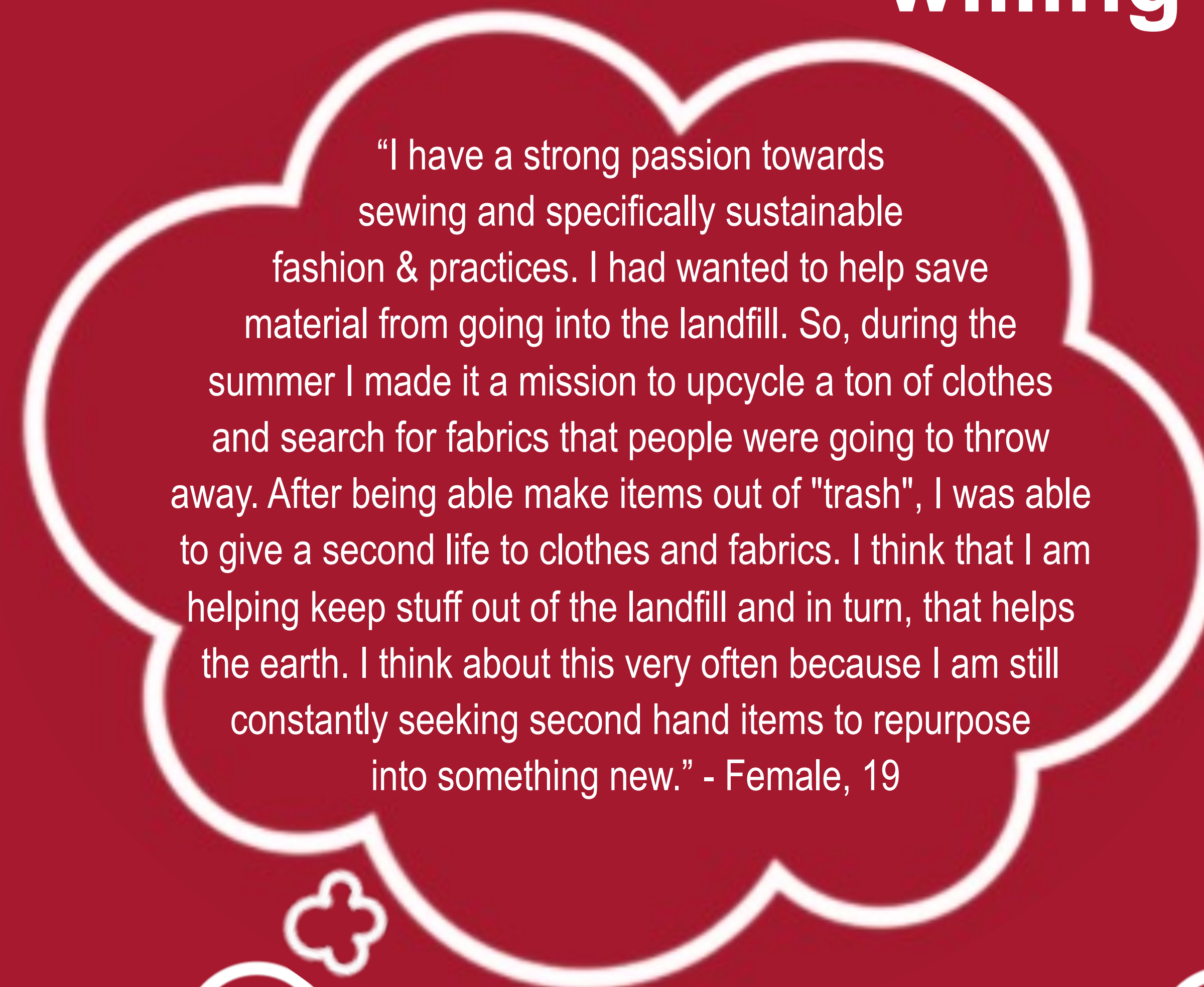
Participants were asked to report their...

- 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?

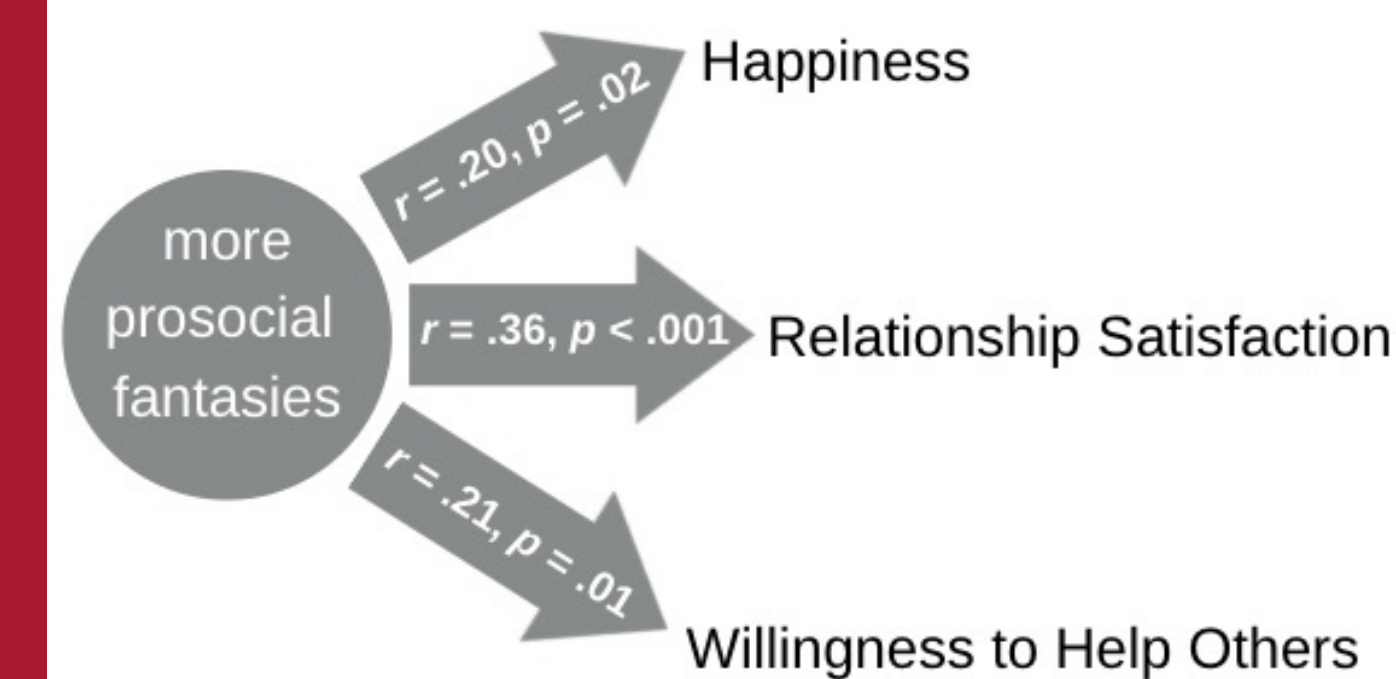
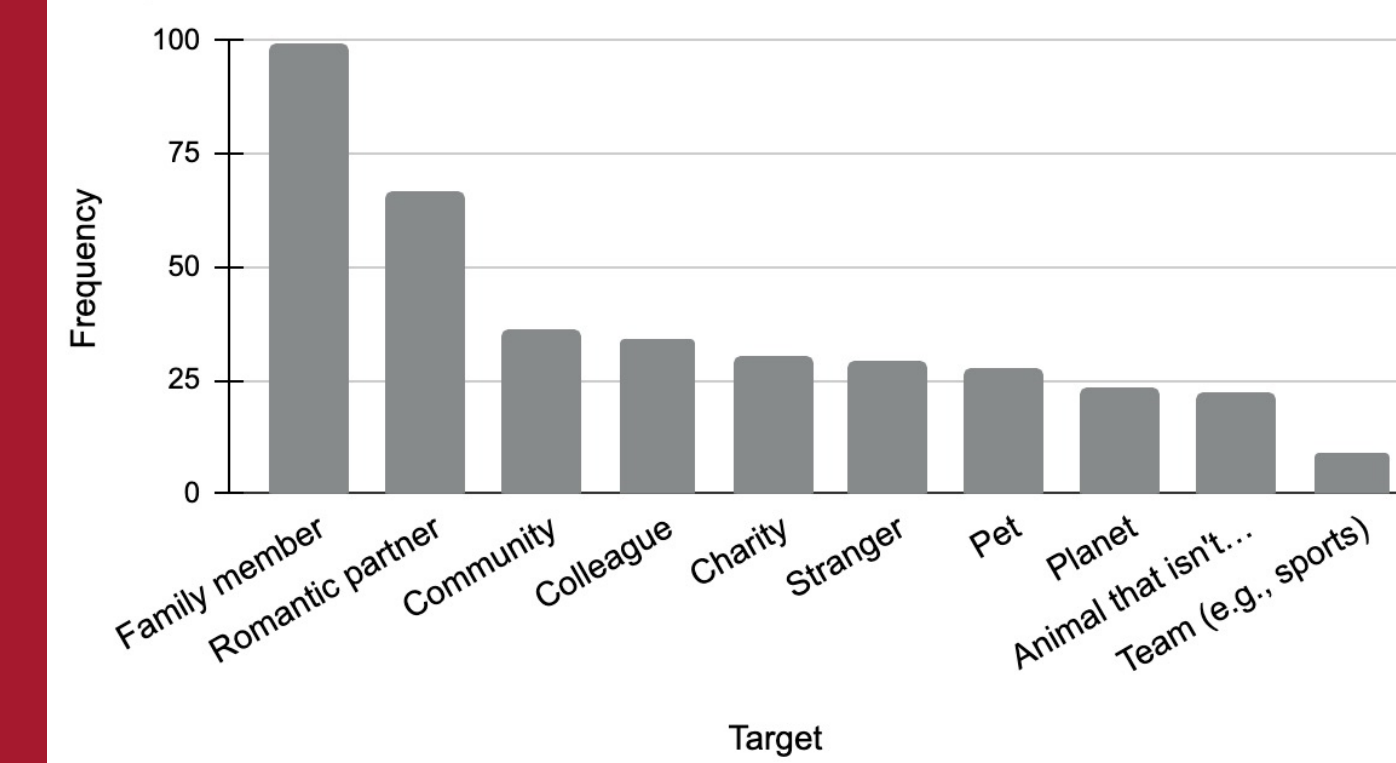
People who have more prosocial fantasies report experiencing higher levels of happiness, more satisfying relationships, and are more willing to help others.



RESULTS:

- A majority (62%) of people reported having a prosocial fantasy, $X^2(1) = 13.33, p < .001$
- 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