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# Cultivating a better society: Anti-Mafia farm participation increases prosocial motivations

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## ABSTRACT

The present research tested whether an Anti-Mafia experiential education program would influence self-reported prosocial motivations in a group of 79 Italian participants. The Caprara Prosocial Questionnaire was used to evaluate prosocial motivations and was completed before the camp began, when it ended and three months after it ended. Participants also completed a Measure of Social Status and other demographic information. Results indicated that participant prosocial motivations were higher than normative data and that these motivations increased following participation in the camp and remained stable over time. In addition, participants with a high SES were more likely to have increased prosocial motivations. In discussing prosocial changes Camp dynamics and the correlation with SES and individual vs. group participation are examined.

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## 1. Introduction

Most civilizations view prosociality as a fundamental virtue. Prosocial behaviour has been described as being essential for the creation of an efficient civilization as it increases desired behaviours like compassion, empathy, care, fairness, and responsibility (Erikson, 1964; Lam, 2012; Lee Preston, Salomon, & Ritter, 2013; Santrock, 2008).

Prosocial behaviour refers to voluntary actions directed at favouring other people, groups or society (Batson & Powell, 2003; Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad, 2006; Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin, & Schroeder, 2005). Neither compensation expectations nor reciprocity are considered to be the driving motive of prosocial behaviour (Roche, 1995; Simpson & Willer, 2008), rather it is the desire to perform actions that will benefit other people (Batson, 1987).

In this article, we first briefly review how prosocial motivations can be either trait or state-based, and how gender, socioeconomic status and participation status (as an individual vs. part of a group) can significantly influence prosocial motivations. We then propose a straightforward quasi-experimental study where prosocial motivations were measured before, at completion and three months following participation in an Anti-Mafia farming volunteer camp program in Italy.

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## 2. Prosocial motivations and their influences

### 2.1. Trait vs. state-based

Prosocial motivations has been conceptualized as both trait-based and as a state-based. As a trait, prosocial motivation is reflected in the five-factor model of personality as agreeableness (Costa, McCrae, & Dye, 1991; McCrae & Costa, 1999) as being predisposed towards empathy and helpfulness (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987), and as being concerned about others (Schwartz, 2010). As a state, prosocial motivation involves a situational influence (McNeely & Meglino, 1994)—e.g., seeing a person in need, that drives one to focus on promoting the welfare of other people (Gebauer, Riketta, Broemer, & Maio, 2008).

### 2.2. Gender

It is a common belief that women are more prosocial than men and in fact both males and females view females as more prosocial than males (Eagly & Crowley, 1986; Eisenberg, Morris, McDaniel, & Spinrad, 2009; Penner & Finkelstein, 1998). Gender has been consistently correlated with prosociality by several studies in young people (Carlo, Crockett, Wolff, & Beal, 2012), and has been shown to be associated with more self-reflective internalized concerns for others and therefore prosocial moral reasoning (Carlo, Koller, Eisenberg, Da Silva, & Frohlich, 1996). However, gender is not a strong moderator of socialization outcomes while social expectation may bias women towards prosocial behaviour, especially on observational studies (Hastings, Utendale, & Sullivan, 2007).

### 2.3. Socioeconomic status

Previous research leaves an unclear picture on the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and prosocial motivations making it difficult to propose a directional relationship between the two. Several studies demonstrate that children, adolescents and young adults with a low SES are less likely to demonstrate prosocial behaviours both in the short and long-term, e.g., (Brian Brown & Lichter, 2006; Haapasalo, Tremblay, Boulerice, & Vitaro, 2000; Lichter, Shanahan, & Gardner, 2002). This could be the consequence of stress associated with poverty that increases people's concern for personal welfare or could be linked to the limited availability of prosocial role models people with a lower SES (Santrock, 2011). Other research contradicts these findings as people with lower SES have been found to be more reliant on others in everyday life (Kraus & Keltner, 2009; Kraus, Piff, & Keltner, 2009), while in a study by Piff, Kraus, Côté, Cheng, and Keltner (2010), people with a lower SES were more generous, charitable, trusting, and helpful than those with a higher SES.

### 2.4. Participation status

The desire to engage, as an individual, in prosocial behaviour is typically associated with intrinsic motivations while as part of a group, has been shown, at times, to be associated with extrinsic motivations (Ariely, Bracha, & Meier, 2009; Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999). The motivation to help others can be described as either pleasure based, where there is an anticipation (and often satisfaction) of positive affect, or as pressure based, where conformity to a social norm or when one feels pressure from institutions, friends or even the situation (Gebauer et al., 2008). This distinction between pleasure and pressure based prosociality mirrors fairly well with the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; see also Grant, 2008) where pleasure based prosocial motivation is fundamentally an intrinsic motivation whereas pressure based is fundamentally an extrinsic motivation. In related research, empathy has been found to be associated with independently choosing to help others rather than dependently being told to help others has been found a (Pavey, Greitemeyer, & Sparks, 2012).

## 3. Libera! summer camp an outdoor experiential education

Several Italian Anti-Mafia organizations convert lands (typically a farm, orchard or grove) confiscated from the mafia into business and educational opportunities for young people. The main organization that does this is called "Libera" (Free). Libera was founded in 1995, after the murder of Falcone and Borsellino, both magistrate judges. Approximately 6000 people (mainly from Italy) participate each summer in one of the many volunteer camp programs of Libera, "E!State Liberi" (Pucciarelli, 2013) where goods produced are then sold to supermarkets, boutique stores and online. The main objective of the summer volunteer camps is to promote a culture of legality and social justice that can successfully counteract the attitude of violence, privilege and blackmail that are typical of the mafia (Libera, 2014).

A typical camp lasts about a week and includes around 30–40 volunteers. A typical day at the camp is divided in two parts. In the morning, volunteers work on the land while in the afternoon and evening, volunteers attend educational and informational activities about the mafia and anti mafia politics in Italy and around the world. Activities include things like meeting with mafia victim families, attending seminars with law enforcement professionals who are investigating the mafia business, and meeting with people who live and work in areas with a high mafia presence (Piobbico, 2014).

Volunteering at the Libera! Camp is fine example of an outdoor education (i.e., experiential education that occurs outdoors). Experiential education harnesses the fact that personal reflection and social meaning construction are

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