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A proposal for an integrated model of prosocial behavior and collective action as the expression of global citizenship

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Abstract

The processes of globalization that have characterized recent decades have prompted social psychology to rethink some everyday life concerns and local problems at a global level. This article presents an explanatory model of collective action aimed at fighting poverty with a proposal to integrate the Encapsulated Model of Social Identity in Collective Action (EMSICA) with some antecedents from both the psychology of volunteerism and authority relationship literature. A self-report questionnaire was administered to 783 Italian participants, and through structural equation modeling, we demonstrated that moral reasoning, engagement values, and prosocial disobedience function as antecedents of the EMSICA model and, thus, are elements in the global fight against poverty.

The processes of globalization that have affected and transformed civil society in recent decades have undoubtedly influenced the field of social psychology, in particular, the paradigms that focus on study of identity, responses to natural calamities, and social justice (Arnett, 2002; Chiu, Gries, Torelli, & Cheng, 2011). One of the consequences of globalization (Davies, 2006) is a new attention to topics of global interest such as economic inequality or poverty. This new focus has led scholars to ask whether it is necessary to reconsider the concept of the active citizen and local collective action at a global level. A recent definition of global citizenship (for a review, see Marzana, Pozzi, Fasanelli, Mercuri, & Fattori, 2015) characterizes it as a pattern of activism where people, becoming focused on transnational social problems, no longer focus exclusively on their own community but also on global social issues (Davies, 2006; Schweisfurth, 2006).

Within social psychology, different authors have tried to link prosocial action with collective action from a theoretical perspective (Dovidio, Piliavin, Schroeder, & Penner, 2006; Iyer & Leach, 2010; Stürmer & Snyder, 2010). This contribution takes up this challenge using as its starting point EMSICA—the encapsulated model of social identity in collective action (Thomas, Mavor, & McGarty, 2012)—which theorizes that collective action results from social identification arising from feelings of moral outrage and perception of collective efficacy. The feature that distinguishes this approach from other models of collective action is the focus on action for the benefit of social groups to which the actors do not belong, broadening the possible range of action from local to global social issues.

In our opinion, this approach can be integrated with some dispositional variables derived from theories of volunteerism (Marta, Pozzi, & Marzana, 2010) and authority relationship (Passini & Morselli, 2009) in order to focus attention on the antecedent conditions of collective action addressing a global issue such as poverty. Thus, the result is an innovative integration of the EMSICA model that links three different approaches from social psychology that address global issues and their resolution. The approach we use has some parallels to the work of Bliuc et al. (2015) who adapt the approach of Duncan (2012) to focus on the distal antecedents of collective action including individual differences and ideological factors (but unlike these authors, we do not adopt the concept of group consciousness) and, more directly, follows the structure of the volunteer process model of Omoto and Snyder (1995).

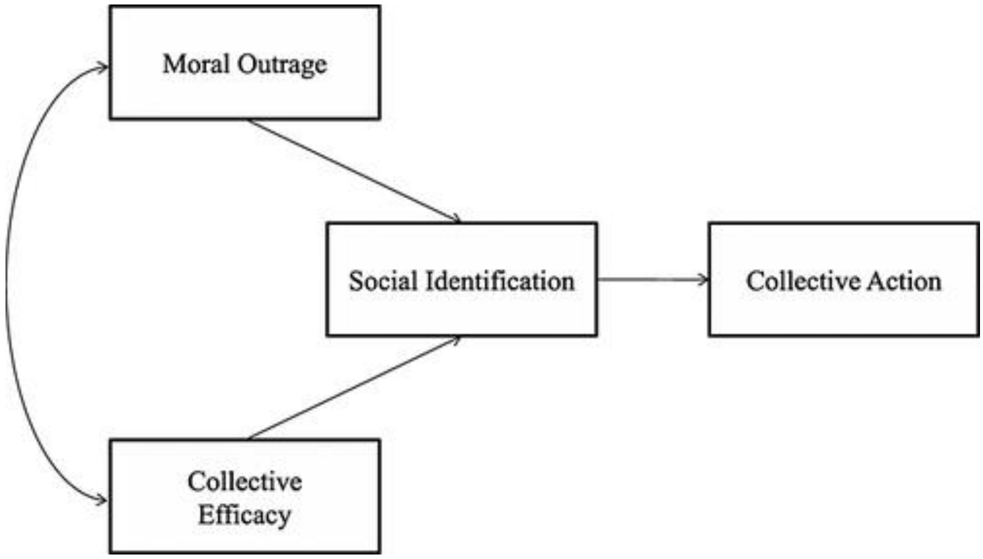
Social Psychology of Collective Action

Why do people engage in protest and social movements to defend their concerns? The quest for an adequate answer to this question gave rise to the branch of research called the social psychology of protest, whose first studies focused on psycho-political variables framing protest as mainly fostered by collective identity, perception of injustice, and collective agency (Klandermans, 1997). Recent studies maintained the overall structure of this framing but introduced new elements such as politicized identity and anger (van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2007). Field studies of specific social movements involved in locally unwanted land uses mobilization revealed new insights and discovered community involvement, place attachment, and perception of like-minded supporters in the area as important elements in promoting activism (Mannarini, Roccato, Fedi, & Rovere, 2009). Integration between theoretical models of collective action led to SIMCA—social identity model of collective action (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). Van Zomeren and colleagues' meta-analysis demonstrated that the feeling of outrage and anger due to perceptions of injustice and collective efficacy mediate between social identification and collective action.

Trying to explain why there are more instance of mass grievance than there are protest actions, scholars of social movements integrated problem-focused coping and efficacy-based theories (Van Zomeren, Spears, & Leach, 2008) and proposed that collective efficacy could play a fundamental role (van Zomeren, Spears, Fischer, & Leach, 2004). Efficacy-based theories assume that protest actions are promoted by a positive expectation that a group-based effort can be effective in changing an unjust status quo. Simultaneously, while group-level emotions have often been omitted in social psychology, they were shown to be important predictors in explaining collective action processes (van Zomeren et al., 2004). This innovative branch of research was built on the group-based appraisal theory (Scherer, 2005; Smith, 1993), which explains inter-individual differences in the evaluation of an event and in the consequent emotional responses. Thus, specific inter-group emotions lead to inter-group behaviors, which, in a situation of unjust status quo and feelings of relative deprivation, can become collective action against a “culpable” group. Specifically, group-based anger was seen to be the prototypical emotion for protest actions (van Zomeren et al., 2004) and proved to be a direct predictor of group members' participation in a social movement.

The EMSICA model represented a development within this branch of research (Thomas et al., 2012). This explanatory model, developed as a variation of the SIMCA model (van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008), conceives that perception of injustice and beliefs of collective efficacy are encapsulated within social identification and collective action (Figure 1).

Figure 1



EMSICA model (Thomas et al., 2012)

Within the EMSICA logic, the perception of a social injustice (moral outrage), combined with simultaneous beliefs in collective efforts with like-minded people, may facilitate the emergence of social identification, followed by the intention to act collectively to restore social equality.

This theoretical conception arises from the considerations of Van Zomeren et al. (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008; Van Zomeren, Spears, & Leach, 2008), stating that the causal effect within the SIMCA model could be reversed, so that moral outrage and group efficacy can increase the levels of identification. Furthermore, this recursive relationship has been tested recently (van Zomeren, Leach, & Spears, 2010), and experimental results demonstrated that group efficacy beliefs increased the members' identification, promoting collective action tendencies. Moreover, although moral outrage has been under-investigated within inter-group helping research, recent studies have proven its relevance in predicting international aid by advantaged group members (Thomas & McGarty, 2009) and anti-poverty actions (Thomas, McGarty, & Mavor, 2010). Thus, "people are more likely to take action to support a cause when they experience an action-relevant emotion and/or believe that taking action can make a difference" (Thomas & McGarty, 2009, p. 116).

The structural configuration of EMSICA can explain the process through which persons engage in collective actions benefitting members of a disadvantaged group, assuming that the emotion of moral outrage leads to social identification and, together with collective efficacy beliefs, can be caused by being acquainted with group damaging social injustice.

EMSICA theorization re-considers the process of identification, not assuming it is derived from a pre-existent group membership, but as being formed and shaped by a shared opinion: opinion-based groups (Bliuc, McGarty, Reynolds, & Muntele, 2007). According to Bliuc et al. (2007), social groups can be defined by several variables (age, gender, nationality, etc.), as well as by shared opinions. Indeed, according to self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), once a person identifies with an opinion-based group (e.g., opponents of some government policy), he or she will likely act in line with the norms of that group. Opinion-based group identification proved to be an excellent predictor of engagement in political behaviors (Bliuc et al., 2007).

In our view, EMSICA can be re-conceptualized as an explanatory model of global citizenship (Schweisfurth, 2006). Under this theoretical label, we include the processes by which people engage in prosocial behavior in an attempt to address global social issues (e.g., civil and human rights, economic injustice, etc.).

The Psychology of Volunteerism and (Its Link to) Collective Action

According to the most recent definition of Snyder and Omoto (2008), volunteering refers to a free and deliberate choice to practice helpful activity extending over time; being maintained in the absence of remuneration or other forms of recompense; often occurring within formal organizations; and finally, is administered for an individual or social cause for which one desires to give one's own contribution (for other similar definitions, see Musick & Wilson, 2007; Penner, 2002, 2004; Wilson, 2000). Volunteer action thus stands as a practice that encompasses many other forms of social participation including collective action, which at times falls under the comprehensive label of "volunteering" and, at other times, is considered separately. If we consider the diverse forms in which it occurs today (from social and militant engagement like participation in environmental groups, to help and support aimed at individuals and groups with special needs, to blood donation, etc.), volunteering also has a political dimension (Marzana, 2011; Omoto, 2005; Wilson, 2000). Volunteerism therefore deals with different aspects of a unique phenomenon that we can label as social action. Following the conceptual definition given by Snyder and Omoto (2007), social action includes all activity moving from the individual motivation but having society's problems as a target, and tending to be an active involvement, are referred to as social action.

From this standpoint, volunteerism can be associated with collective action, both being forms of social action aiming to benefit others and oneself. One of the first attempts to define volunteerism was made by Omoto and Snyder (1990, 1995). Omoto and Snyder's volunteer process model (1995) starts from the idea the authors have developed identifying three conceptual stages: antecedents, experiences, and consequences of volunteering. One of the distinctive features of this model is that variables within and between stages are dynamically related to each other. Furthermore, the authors call for a description of the voluntary phenomenon at three different levels: individual, organizational, and social. In their theoretical model, they cross these three levels with the three stages of the volunteers' experience. This combination develops a model that specifies when particular processes occur as a consequence of events at earlier stages. In particular, the antecedent stage refers to the individual, organizational, and social features that exist prior to becoming a volunteer. These may be personality characteristics, demographic and resource differences, cultural and social norms, and motivational concerns that influence and orient individuals to seek out opportunities to volunteer.

The experiences stage focuses on volunteers' working relationships with recipients of volunteer services, other volunteers, and staff members in volunteer organizations. At this stage, volunteers have entered the organization and begun their service. In many forms of volunteering, they are actively involved in developing relationships with others, offering aid, and considering the rewards and costs that their involvement entails.

At the consequences stage, volunteers have worked for a period of time and have developed varying ideas toward volunteering, as well as toward their organization, and intentions for future volunteer work. Omoto and Snyder's model is usually used for studies on volunteerism, but it can be extended to other types of social action (Omoto, 2005).

A second important contribution to the study of volunteerism can be seen in Penner's work. Penner's (2004) theoretical model of sustained volunteerism originates from the attempt to predict and explain sustained engagement over time, highlighting the importance of some dispositional and organizational variables—starting from an initial decision to volunteer, developing a volunteer identity, and sustaining this choice over time through a developing process. The operationalization of the theoretical model (Marzana, Marta, & Pozzi, 2012b; Marzana, 2011) identified some prosocial variables that predicted the choice to engage in volunteerism.

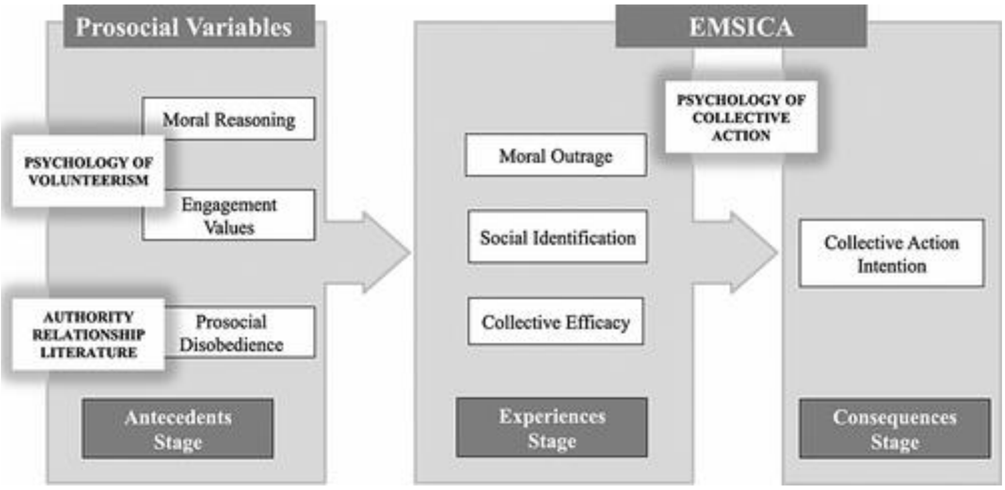
In his model of the volunteering action, Penner (2002) differentiates variables into four categories: (i) demographic characteristics, (ii) personal attributes, (iii) social pressures, and (iv) volunteer activators.

Two variables belonging to the personal attributes of volunteerism theorization (Penner, 2004) can coherently be assumed to be possible components of collective action: engagement values and moral reasoning as a component of the prosocial personality. Penner, Fritzsche, Craiger, and Freifeld (1995) found that some personality traits can be linked with social action (including volunteerism) and devised an instrument—the prosocial personality battery—to detect them (Penner et al., 1995; Rioux & Penner, 2001).

Prosocial personality includes constructs such as moral reasoning and social responsibility, which are considered basic elements in an interpersonal relationship and fundamental factors in motivating persons to volunteer for others. Engagement values reflect the position taken and the relative importance attributed to issues of a social or political nature (Marzana, Marta, & Pozzi, 2012a) and develop over time beginning in adolescence (Amnå, 2012), becoming a fundamental factor for volunteerism and active citizenship. Moral reasoning, especially post-conventional reasoning, according to Kohlberg's classification (1976), allows people to “recognize the limitations of their own culture's morality, understand cultural relativity, and engage in principled ethical reasoning that appeals to abstract principles such as justice, fairness, and human well-being” (McFarland & Mathews, 2005, p. 369).

In our view, Penner's prosocial personality variables can be inserted into the antecedent stage of the conceptual idea of volunteerism developed by Omoto and Snyder (see Figure 2 for details).

Figure 2



An integrated model of prosocial and collective action

Prosocial Disobedience and Collective Actions

As mentioned previously, in some cases, collective action can assume forms of demonstration, protest, and disobedience, questioning the authorities responsible for the unjust status quo. In this sense, recent findings from authority relationship studies defined a specific type of authority relationship: prosocial disobedience (Passini & Morselli, 2009). Passini and Morselli defined it as a behavior enacted to violate an unjust law and caused by the resolve to extend social well-being to the whole society. Prosocial disobeyers base their actions on two principles: social responsibility and moral inclusion. The former requires disobedient actions to be "enacted for the sake of the whole society, including all its different levels and groups" (Passini & Morselli, 2009, p. 101–102). Moral inclusion means that no individual or group should be excluded from or damaged by the social change.

Thus, prosocial disobedience is an instrument of democracy (Passini & Morselli, 2011), and it can be a tool in the hands of citizens and the community to check the legitimacy of the authorities' demands, becoming a factor in preventing authoritarian tendencies (Morselli & Passini, 2012; Passini & Morselli, 2010). Accordingly, prosocial disobedience is considered as a fundamental instrument of citizenship, helping persons to preserve democracy (Passini & Morselli, 2011). Prosocial disobedience can be considered a prosocial behavior, to the extent that persons do not protest exclusively for their own interests and benefit, but also for the well-being of other persons and social groups (Marta et al., 2010; Penner, 2004). Notably, the definition of prosocial disobedience has many similarities with civil disobedience, which can be conceived as its forerunner. Accordingly, it is reasonable to argue that prosocial disobedience should be "a necessary and normal part of a mature constitutional democracy" (Thomassen, 2007, p. 201), and it seems important to recall Hannah Arendt's claim for a constitutional niche for civil disobedience (Smith, 2010). If Arendt argued for an institutional civil disobedience, Fromm (1981) assumed that a state supporting freedom could not be, by definition, in opposition to disobedience. Furthermore, Fromm introduced us to the concept of responsible disobedience. In his essay (1981), the German scholar defined our historical period as characterized by excessive social obedience, a time in which individuals are trained to conformity by institutions such as school and family. In this cultural context, the disobedient must be responsible for the awakening of those people who cannot stop conforming and obeying on their own. If, with Arendt's theorization, we observe a duty to disobedience—that is, an institutional disobedience accepted and imposed by law—with Fromm, we saw the beginning of an era of conscious assumption of responsibility (Passini & Morselli, 2006). This assumption of responsibility, combined with a process of moral inclusion, can lead to prosocial disobedience. Morality is a fundamental component in the authority relationship (Skitka, Bauman, & Lytle, 2009): "when people have a moral stake in decision outcomes, their reasoning about outcome fairness and decision acceptance will be based more strongly on internal conceptions of personal right and wrong than on their established perceptions of authorities' legitimacy" (pp. 568–569). Therefore, morality has great importance in predicting collective action (Comunian & Gielen, 1995; Thomas & McGarty, 2009; van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2012; Vilas & Sabucedo, 2012), but can also lead to negative social consequences if applied in exclusionary ways (Opotow & Weiss, 2000). Likewise, moral inclusion is fundamental for prosocial disobedience because it restructures moral boundaries, enlarges social identification, and includes outgroups in the process of social change (Thomas, McGarty, & Mavor, 2009a). Being able to expand moral standards to include out-groups is necessary for acts of prosocial disobedience (Opotow & Weiss, 2000) because it avoids moral disengagement (Bandura, 2002), which can lead to destructive social behaviors (Bocchiaro, 2011). Accordingly, the development of moral reasoning is an important issue at both personal and civic levels because it directs protest to out-group-oriented positive outcomes and is associated with prosocial behavior (Comunian & Gielen, 1995).

In line with what has been described in this section, we believe that a degree of prosocial disobedience is necessary in order to activate people to fight against a global social issue like poverty. As has been shown by qualitative (Pozzi, Fattori, Bocchiaro, & Alfieri, 2014) as well as quantitative studies, it is necessary to have some degree of awareness of the culpability and inefficiency of the system that created these inequalities, which people must then disobey and contest in order to create a state of social justice.

The Present Study

This study involves integrating three research branches of social psychology—(i) social psychology of collective action, (ii) psychology of volunteerism, and (iii) authority relationship literature—has the following aim: to test the impact of prosocial variables from the sustained volunteerism model by Penner (2002) and from the authority relationship literature (Passini & Morselli, 2009), as antecedents of the EMSICA model in favor of a disadvantaged group (Figure 2).

Figure 2 shows how we combined the three social psychological branches. In particular, we used Omoto and Snyder's conceptual stages to interpret and order the constructs derived from the three branches of research. Specifically, within the antecedents stage, we have placed the prosocial variables (moral reasoning, engagement values, and prosocial disobedience); in the experiences stage, we have placed moral outrage, collective efficacy, and social identification; and in the consequences stage, we have placed collective action intention.

Method

We tested this hypothesis through structural equation modeling, specifically path analysis, run with Amos v. 21 to test our theoretical model integrating prosocial variables within the EMSICA model.

Participants

A self-report questionnaire was administered to 783 participants (551 women, 70.4%; 232 men, 39.6%) aged M = 23.18 (SD = 3189; range 16–30; one missing data). Of these, 443 (56%) were university students, 137 (17.5%) workers, 99 (12.6%) student-workers, and the remaining 102 (13%) described themselves as currently doing, respectively, "other" (44.5.6%) and searching for jobs (58.7.4%). Participants were recruited according to a convenience sampling procedure in the Milan area (Lombardy—northern Italy) and Lecce (Puglia—southern Italy). Specifically, 486 participants (62.1%) reported that they were born in southern Italy, 252 (32.2%) in northern Italy, and 37 (4.7%) in central Italy (eight missing data). All the participants completed the questionnaire on a voluntary basis after having signed participation consent.

Research Design

The task was inspired by Thomas et al.'s (2012) procedure. Participants were asked to respond to a self-report questionnaire regarding "active citizenship" and were evaluated, first of all, on the following prosocial variables: moral reasoning, engagement values, and prosocial disobedience attitude. After that, the participants read a call for action inspired by a real Amnesty International campaign 1

- responsibility of governments, businesses, and international financial institutions;
- access to the rights and essential services for human dignity without discrimination; and
- active participation of people who live in poverty and their representatives in the fight against poverty. Link to the campaign: http://www.amnesty.it/io-pretendo-dignita.html

aimed at helping people living in poverty in third world countries. Then they were asked if they supported this campaign or not. All participants answered "Yes" to the question "Do you support this campaign?" self-categorizing themselves into an opinion-based group and were then considered eligible for the study.

Subsequently, we administered the instruments assessing the EMSICA variables, namely, moral outrage, group efficacy, social identification, and collective action intentions.

Measures

Moral Reasoning

This scale described how a person makes decisions when he or she has to choose between two courses of action or alternatives when there is no clear right or wrong way to act. We used a subscale from Penner's Prosocial Personality Battery (1995) validated in the Italian context (Marzana et al., 2012a). The factorial analysis confirmed its monofactorial structure, and the eight items ranged from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). An example is, "My decisions are based on an equitable and fair way of behaving." α = .80.

Engagement Values

This scale measured the position taken and the relative importance attributed by the subjects to issues of social and political nature. We administered a 7-item scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important) with a monofactorial structure recently validated in the Italian context (Marzana et al., 2012b). An example is "For me, it is important to do something to improve society." α = .76.

Prosocial Disobedience Attitude Scale

This instrument assessed attitudes toward opposition to an unjust authority in order to change an unjust status quo. Prosocial disobedience attitude was measured with an instrument recently developed in the Italian context.

We used eight selected items forming two independent factors (four items for each factor, ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree)): Collective action attitudes (CAA) and critical authority relationship (CAR). The former addressed an evaluation of prosocial disobedience; an example is, "I respect those who oppose an authority to change an unfair situation." The latter dealt with the cognitive aspects of prosocial disobedience; an example is, "I think I must always respect the laws created by an institution (reverse scored)." These two factors, due to their low correlation ($r = .25$, $p < .001$), were considered separately during the analysis. CAA α = .81, while CAR α = .79.

Moral Outrage

This scale measured the level of emotional activation related to the campaign and the issue of poverty in general. It was composed of three items (an example is, "I feel outraged when I think about people living in poverty") (Thomas et al., 2012), and α = .80. This scale was taken from Thomas et al. (2012) and translated into Italian.

Collective Efficacy

This scale assessed whether the participants believed in the usefulness of collective efforts to address the campaign's goals. It was a 3-item scale (an example is "I believe that this campaign can help poor people improve their conditions") by Thomas et al. (2012); α= .84.

Social Identification

We used seven items to measure the degree of identification with the opinion-based group (an example is, “I am confident that being a supporter of this campaign really reflects my values and beliefs”, Thomas et al., 2012); α = .92.

Collective Action Intentions

This scale evaluated the outcome of the model, that is, the degree of intention a person had for joining forms of collective action (i.e,, sign a petition, attend a rally, make a donation, and so on). It included eight items (an example is, “I would join a movement supporting this campaign”, Thomas et al., 2012); α = .91.

The last four scales ranged from 1 (totally disagree) to 9 (totally agree).

Results

Testing Prosocial Variables within EMSICA

We used Amos v. 21 to test our hypothesis that prosocial variables (i.e., moral reasoning, engagement values, CAA, and CAR) and EMSICA (see Table 1 for correlations). Our initial hypothesis (Figure 3—all variables in the antecedent stage are connected to all the EMSICA variables) did not fit the data, χ2 (5) = 108.62, p < .001, RMSEA = .163 (95% CI: [.137–.191]), TLI = .597, CFI = .928; thus, we tested alternative models.

Table 1. Correlation matrix between variables considered by the integrated model of prosocial and collective action

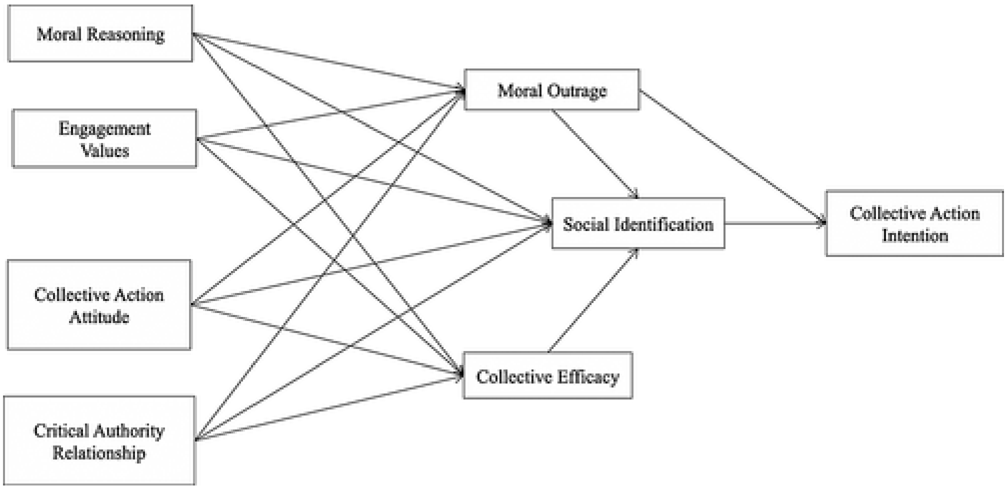
	Moral reasoning	**Engagement values**	**CAA**	**CAR**	**Moral outrage**	**Collective efficacy**	**Social identification**	**Collective action intention**
Moral reasoning	–							
Engagement values	.28**	–						
CAA	.14**	.28**	–					
CAR	−.04	−.06	.25**	–				
Moral outrage	.26**	.32**	.22**	−.01	–			
Collective efficacy	.24**	.24**	.16**	.06	.34**	–		

	Moral reasoning	Engagement values	CAA	CAR	Moral outrage	Collective efficacy	Social identification	Collective action intention
Social identification	.26**	.31**	.27**	.08*	.34**	.55**	–	
Collective action intention	.23**	.31**	.28**	.16**	.33**	.58**	.70**	–

Note: CAA, collective action attitudes; CAR, critical authority relationship.

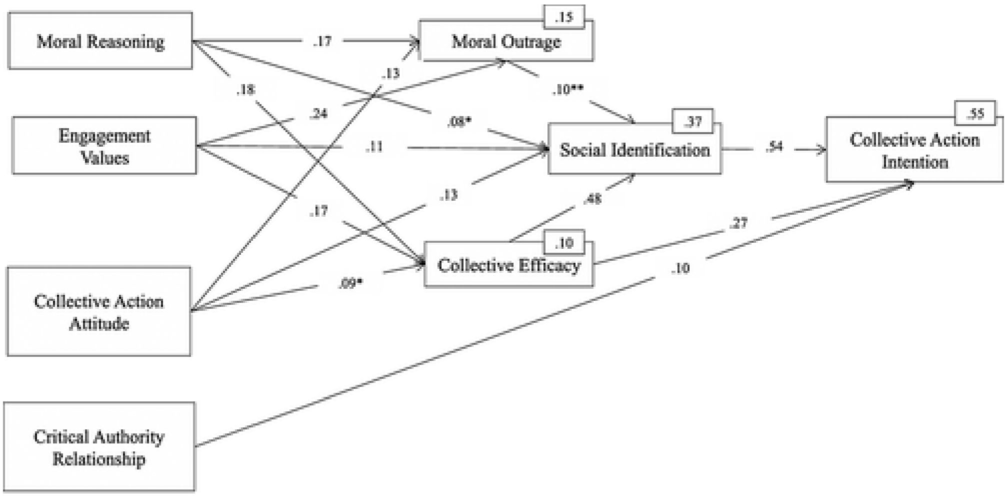
* p ≤ .05; ** p < .001.

Figure 3


Moral Reasoning
Engagement Values
Collective Action Attitude
Critical Authority Relationship
Moral Outrage
Social Identification
Collective Efficacy
Collective Action Intention

An integrated model of prosocial and collective action

We used modification indices to obtain an adequate fit using a bootstrap procedure with 5000 resamples. The modified model shown in Figure 4 involved two additional paths: a direct path from collective efficacy to collective action intention and a direct path from critical authority relationship to collective action intention. The final model had χ2 (9) = 27.025, p = .001, RMSEA = .051 (95% CI: [.029–.073]), TLI = .961, CFI = .987. This model accounts for 55% of the total explained variance in collective action intention.


Moral Reasoning
Engagement Values
Collective Action Attitude
Critical Authority Relationship
Moral Outrage
.15
Social Identification
.37
Collective Efficacy
.10
Collective Action Intention
.55
.17
.18
.13
.24
.08*
.10**
.11
.13
.17
.48
.09*
.54
.27
.10

Note. Path coefficients are standardized estimates. All coefficients are significant p <.001, except were noted: * p ≤ .05, ** p ≤ .01 .

Figure 4

Results of path analysis for the integrated model of prosocial and collective action

This analysis is consistent with social identification, moral outrage, and collective efficacy fully mediating the relationship between CAA, moral reasoning, and engagement values as significant indirect effects (Table 2). As expected, the prosocial disobedience factor CAA correlates significantly with moral reasoning ($r = .14$, $p < .001$), engagement values ($r = .28$, $p < .001$), and with CAR ($r = .25$, $p < .001$); moreover, we found a positive correlation between engagement values and moral reasoning ($r = .28$, $p < .001$). These results supported statistically the accuracy of our theoretical hypothesis.

Table 2. Mediation indices—Indirect and direct effects between variables in the integrated model of prosocial and collective action

	CAR	MR	EV	CAA	CE	MO	SI
Standardized indirect effects—two-tailed significance							
CE							
MO							
SI		.000	.000	.004			
CAI		.000	.000	.001	.000	.006	
Standardized direct effects—two-tailed significance							
CE		.000	.000	.017			

	CAR	MR	EV	CAA	CE	MO	SI
MO		.000	.001	.001			
SI		.045	.002	.000	.000	.006	
CAI	.000				.001		.000

Note: CAR, critical authority relationship; MR, moral reasoning; EV, engagement values; CAA, collective action attitudes; CE, collective efficacy; MO, moral outrage; SI, social identification; CAI, collective action intention.

Discussion

This study integrated prosocial variables within a collective action process. The results had twofold theoretical and methodological implications. The first is statistical support to the notion that moral reasoning, engagement values, and prosocial disobedience are predictors of positive global collective actions. This is the first time that the assessment of prosocial disobedience both as a relevant prosocial variable and as a predictor of actions expressing global citizenship has emerged in authority relationship literature. The second is cross-cultural validation of the methodological procedure developed by Thomas et al. (2012).

The results highlighted the role of prosocial disobedience, moral reasoning, and engagement values as reliable and consistent predictors of a process of engagement in a positive collective action. It has been proven that the more positive are a person's attitudes toward prosocial disobedience, high levels of moral reasoning, and high engagement values, the more he or she will be willing to engage in a process leading to collective actions that benefit the whole society. Moreover, results showed that prosocial disobedience, namely, CAA, has positive correlations with two fundamental variables predicting volunteerism: moral reasoning and engagement values (Marzana et al., 2012b). These results support the theoretical thesis of prosocial disobedience as an instrument of global citizenship (Passini & Morselli, 2011) and introduce moral reasoning and engagement values as relevant predictors of a prosocial action on behalf of a disadvantaged group. What is more, results confirmed that social identification with like-minded people completely mediates between moral outrage and collective action, and partially mediates between collective efficacy and collective action. These results confirmed that moral outrage and belief in collective efficacy precede and contribute to the formation of a social identification within an opinion-based group (Thomas, McGarty, & Mavor, 2009b). The relevance of this evidence lies in its capacity to be suited to different social issues, from water for life (Thomas et al., 2012) to an Amnesty International anti-poverty campaign.

Furthermore, from a methodological standpoint, this study is in line with the assumptions made by Mackie et al. (2000) about self-categorization into an opinion-based group. This specific categorization, induced by an affirmative answer to the question, “Do you support this campaign?” could be, with good levels of reliability, considered sufficient to elicit emotions regarding social issues.

Conclusions and Limitations

Ongoing humanitarian disasters and unstable socio-political circumstances continually require that more people, mainly in wealthy countries, engage in global social issues in order to overcome social inequalities and create social well-being. These specific social actions can be theoretically situated within global citizenship, including in this definition all those citizens outraged by social injustice who are both willing and able to act in order to change an unjust local or global status quo (Davies, 2006). Recent reflections concerning the authority relationship (Passini & Morselli, 2009) defined prosocial disobedience as an important instrument to address relevant social issues—a tool of global citizenship—considering it as the most effective technique to promote and support social change benefitting the whole society.

This paper advances research that analyzes the impact of globalization on psychological phenomena, by proving support for the theoretical assumption that prosocial disobedience as an instrument of global citizenship. Using the variables from the EMSICA model of Thomas et al. (2012) as a placeholder for the engagement process whereby people are led to engage in global collective actions, we found that prosocial disobedience, moral reasoning, and engagement values were plausible antecedents of these variables.

These findings could lead to important applications in as much as prosocial disobedience, moral reasoning, and engagement values are considered, both socially and scientifically, to be characteristics that every citizen needs to have and apply through action. More specifically, these insights might motivate policy makers to foster these characteristics within global citizenship education programs (Pigozzi, 2006). This paper also strengthens the rising branch of research considering disobedience as a positive phenomenon (Bocchiaro, Zimbardo, & Van Lange, 2012). In this way, disobedience can find social legitimization if enacted for positive global social changes, thus being seen as a recognized and effective tool for improving life conditions of marginalized social groups.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the ongoing debate on the dynamic nature of social identification and its causality relations with the variables within the SIMCA and EMSICA models (Swaab, Postmes, van Beest, & Spears, 2007; Thomas et al., 2009a). Future research should focus on “what it means,” as suggested by Thomas et al. (2010), because it can be a catalyst for the formation of a social identification, which proved to be an important factor in leading persons to prosocial collective actions.

One limitation of this study concerns its cross-sectional nature. We used a one-time data collection based on correlating data, making the causality relations between the antecedents and the dependent variables less consistent. Another limitation is that we have measured action intentions rather than actions (Ajzen, 1991): a common issue within studies addressing social movements and protests (van Zomeren, Spears, et al., 2008). Similarly, we tested attitudes rather than prosocial disobedience directly.

Future research could deepen the analysis of prosocial disobedience, both at a theoretical and empirical level. Firstly, research could assess prosocial disobedience and social action variables within real groups of prosocial activists, simultaneously solving the limitations of assessing behavioral intentions and offering the possibility to evaluate real collective actions. Furthermore, considering the contribution of prosocial disobedience, moral reasoning, and engagement values to fostering global citizenship, as highlighted in these pages, it could be particularly interesting to test their efficacy if integrated in global citizenship education programs (Yamashita, 2006).

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