

Young People and Volunteerism: A Model of Sustained Volunteerism During the Transition to Adulthood

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Abstract A model of sustained volunteerism in young people is proposed. The longitudinal study addresses the questions “Why do young people decide to continue to volunteer over an extended period of time?” There were 158 volunteers (82 female and 76 male). The volunteers completed measures of motivation to volunteer, integration, and satisfaction with the organization, merged effects due to voluntary service, social support, identity, and intention to volunteer on a first (Time 1) and a second research wave (Time 2). Results show that both dispositional and organizational variables are important in determining long-term volunteerism in young people and confirmed that role identity is the best predictor of intention to volunteer.

Keywords Young-adult · Volunteerism · Role identity

For many years, social and developmental psychologists have applied their theories and methods to the topic of prosocial behavior in order to understand why and when people help others.

Two distinct traditions of research in psychology can be identified, each of which investigates a specific form of prosocial behavior (Omoto and Snyder 1995; Snyder and Omoto 2000). One research tradition on prosocial behavior focuses on short-term, unplanned, and spontaneous prosocial action in favor of a stranger (the classic example is bystander intervention; Latané and Darley 1970). A second research tradition focuses on long-term, continuing

assistance provided to a family member suffering from a serious or chronic illness.

Recently however, more attention has been given to another form of prosocial behavior: volunteerism. It is a specific type of sustained, planned, prosocial behavior that benefits strangers and occurs within an organizational setting (Omoto and Snyder 1995; Snyder and Omoto 2000; Penner 2002).

Literature on volunteerism shows three limitations. One of the limitations is the scarcity of research on adolescents and young adult volunteers. The second is a consideration of family variables in the analysis of long-term commitment by young people. The third limitation is the fact that only a few of these studies have a longitudinal design helpful to elucidate causal relations.

The present study attempts to explain young-adult volunteerism by addressing the following general question: “Why do young people decide to continue to volunteer over an extended period of time?”

The first section of this article provides an overview of the research on young volunteers and a brief illustration of the principal models of volunteerism. Following this is our longitudinal study.

Youth Volunteerism

In the past few years young adults have increased their engagement in volunteer activities. Despite this, only recently has their personality, motivations and effects produced through their participation in voluntary activities been fully discussed. Researchers agree that results obtained from adult volunteer sample research cannot be generalized tout court to young adult samples (Kirkpatrick-Johnson et al. 1998). Late adolescence and young

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adulthood are key periods for personal and social identity (Mortimer et al. 1982; Alwin et al. 1991; Scabini and Rossi 1997) and voluntary commitment can assume specific meanings and characteristics as far as this period of life is concerned.

Young adulthood is a crucial period for attitudinal and prosocial capacity development (Erikson 1963). Young adulthood sees a growth of prosocial behavior because of emerging interpersonal relationships, cognitive and emotive development and changes in social context (Carlo et al. 1992, 1999; Marta and Scabini 2003). During this period of life key psychological dimensions crystallize and tend to remain stable throughout the course of adult life (Alwin et al. 1991; Mortimer et al. 1982, 1996; Kirkpatrick-Johnson et al. 1998; Fisher and Schaffer 1993; Hanks and Eckland 1978).

Only a few studies have been conducted on prosocial development during young adulthood (Carlo and Randall 2001, 2002) and even fewer focuses on volunteerism. Even though there has been an increase in volunteer studies especially in the last three decades (Eisenberg and Fabes 1998), “it is surprising that very little is known about youth volunteering, the social and psychological characteristics of volunteers, their motivation for volunteering or the psychological effect of volunteering” (Kirkpatrick-Johnson et al. 1998, p. 310). The scant literature on youth volunteering focuses on two issues: the characteristics of volunteers, i.e., their personality and motivation, and the potential effects of volunteering, i.e., the analysis of: agency, social relatedness and moral-political development and awareness (Yates and Youniss 1996a; Kirkpatrick-Johnson et al. 1998).

Several studies have defined some young-adult volunteer personality characteristics: volunteers are more extroverted, have less need of autonomy, have a greater ego strength (Smith and Nelson 1975), have higher internalized moral standards, have a more positive attitude toward self and others, have a greater degree of self-efficacy and optimism, have more emotional stability and have a greater empathy and a less narcissistic investment on the self than do non-volunteers (Allen and Rushton 1983; Hart and Fegley 1995; Pancer and Pratt 1999; Yates and Youniss 1996a).

We have done a multi-methodological research project on adolescents and young-adult volunteers and their families,¹ in order to understand the socio-demographic and psychological characteristics of young Italian volunteers

¹ The measures of this research project are: self-reports; in depth-interviews; drawing of the family life space and a weekly diary. Self-reports were administered to the 155 and 154 family triads; in depth-interviews and drawing of the family life space to 12 family triads from each group and a weekly diary to 20 young people from each group for 6 weeks.

and to detect elements in the family matrix and in the intergenerational family relationships that exert an influence on the young volunteers’ commitment in the community. We found results partially consistent with the works mentioned above (Marta and Scabini 2003; Guglielmetti 2003). A total of 155 young volunteers aged between 18 and 28 years were compared to 154 non-volunteers aged between 17 and 28 years. As expected, the volunteers scored significantly higher than non-volunteers on prosocial personality, but volunteers scored significantly lower than non-volunteers on narcissistic investment. However, volunteers showed a lower level of self-esteem than non-volunteers.

Motivations to volunteer have been well investigated too. Chacon and Vecina (2000) declared that, motivations have long been considered a crucial factor in distinguishing a long-term volunteer from one who decides to stop. On the other hand, motivations influencing the decision to become a volunteer are different from those influencing volunteerism retention (Gidron 1984; Oda 1991; Winniford et al. 1995). It was demonstrated that individuals who think volunteerism to be an opportunity to learn capacities and competencies useful to themselves, are involved in the service for a shorter time (Capanna et al. 2002). The above motivations seem to favor the choice to become a volunteer, but not the choice to maintain the commitment. This seems to be typical of young volunteers. A young-adult’s motivational framework at the beginning of the commitment in voluntary organizations appears to be composite. It has the same strong value and community-oriented base as an adult’s. Moreover, it draws on experiences that lead to a competence and ability necessary for self-growth and to enter the job market (Capanna et al. 2002; Omoto et al. 2000; Wuthnow 1995; Sundeen and Raskoff 1994).

In our previous multi-methodological research project, in depth interviews with 12 young volunteers and self-reports filled out by 155 young volunteers showed results consistent with the above studies. Young people’s initial volunteerism is determined both by self-oriented and other-oriented motivations, but they maintain the commitment for an extended time on the basis of other-oriented motivations (Guglielmetti and Marta 2003).

Many studies on the effects of volunteerism in young people highlight how voluntary service is useful for socialization, for getting involved in the social context of belonging (Sundeen and Raskoff 1994), for political participation (Hanks 1981; Flanagan et al. 1998), as promoter of civic engagement and support of prosocial norms (Youniss and Yates 1997). In a voluntary organization youths meet a different set of norms, different from the traditional one received in a family or at school (Larson 1994). Moreover, voluntary action has a protection function against the psychosocial risk (Benson 1993), reducing

young people's behavioral problems and school neglect (Moore and Allen 1996) and arrests due to deviant acts (Uggen and Janikula 1999). Together with these functions, Youniss and Yates highlight how volunteerism favors the social generation approach and the connection between youths and adults and the ideology and social tradition they represent. This connection promotes communication between generations through experiences that are shared by individuals (Kaplan 1997).

Volunteerism increases self-esteem, self-acceptance, and self-efficacy (Hart and Fegley 1995; King et al. 1970; Omoto and Snyder 1990; Conrad and Hedin 1982; Tierney and Branch 1992; Primavera 1999; Yates and Youniss 1999; Pancer et al. 1998). Furthermore, it sustains cognitive development and supports moral development (Yates and Youniss 1996b). In brief, volunteerism empowers and supports the identity construction. In experiencing voluntary actions, young people are allowed to assess their identities through action and to appraise themselves as producers rather than just consumers (Logan 1985). They develop "occupational identity" (Erikson 1963), and volunteerism assumes a pedagogic function.

Identity is a key construct to develop a favoring and promoting attitude through community involvement over a period of time. Identity is a crucial factor in assuring intention to volunteer, too (Youniss and Yates 1997). In particular, research on volunteerism has explored how commitment to prosocial role identity develops and how such identity leads to prosocial action (Piliavin et al. 2002). Lee (1998) studied a sample of 566 freshmen students and found that volunteer role identity was related to parental volunteering, perceived expectations and also to their intentions to volunteer during their college career.

Recently the influence of the family-of-origin on young volunteers has been investigated. It is well known that educational practices and family experiences could contribute to inhibit or develop individual prosocial behavior (Eisenberg and Fabes 1998; Fletcher et al. 2000). In particular, support is one of the critical and basic dimensions in parenting that influences their offspring's commitment in the community. Several studies indicated that the quality of family relationships is important to predicting sustained service participation (Clary and Miller 1986; Hart and Fegley 1995; Rosenhan 1973). Fletcher, Elder, and Mekos, further developed the studies of Rosenhan and Clary and Miller. Through longitudinal research they verified the complex relation among educational styles, parenting (support and warmth), and educational practices (parental reinforcement and modeling) in predicting children's participation in volunteer activities. Research highlights the support-oriented parental style as an active instrument in predicting children's involvement, independently of their parents' social commitment.

Our previous multi-methodological research project revealed that parental support—especially that provided by the father—is a good predictor of prosocial behavior and commitment in voluntary organizations (Marta and Scabini 2003; Boccacin 2003).

Models of Volunteerism

Research on long-term volunteerism is guided by three models, tested or proposed for volunteers of all ages: volunteer process model by Omoto and Snyder (1995); role identity model by Callero et al. (1987); Grube and Piliavin (2000); and sustained volunteerism model by Penner (2002). In the present section we briefly present and discuss each of them.

The volunteer process model (Omoto and Snyder 1995) identifies three stages in volunteerism: antecedents, experiences, and consequences of volunteering. Furthermore, the authors describe the voluntary process as having three different levels: the individual, the organizational and the social. In their theoretical model, they correlate these three levels with the three stages of the volunteer's experiences.

The antecedents stage regards the individual, organizational, and social features that exist prior to become a volunteer. These may be personality characteristics, demographic and resource differences, cultural and social norms, and motivational concerns that influence and direct individuals to seek out opportunities to volunteer. At the antecedents stage different dispositional factors are likely to be important, such as prosocial personality and motivations. Motivational factors are more specific dispositional antecedents to volunteerism that most likely work in conjunction with other general dispositional factors. Embedded in a functionalist framework, Omoto and Snyder (1995) suggest that people have different motivations to engage in volunteer service which are expressions of individual life tasks, plans, or goals (Snyder and Cantor 1998).

In particular, studying volunteers aged between 20 and 65 years, they revealed a predictive, direct effect between volunteerism motivations and length of service. According to their volunteer process model, the more one is motivated, the longer one will volunteer. Moreover, Omoto and Snyder (1995) also found that other-focused motivations are related with beginning voluntary service and that self-oriented motivations predicted the length of time in volunteer services. However, recent research has shown that motivations and the volunteer's involvement bond are more complex. Subsequent research has not confirmed a significant direct correlation between motivation and length of service (Chacon et al. 1998). The research shows an indirect effect due to the volunteer's experience in the

organization. Satisfaction and integration with the group were assumed as mediating variables (Barbaranelli et al. 2003). In other words, it seems that a strong motivational push is not enough in itself to maintain a sustained involvement, but a favorable climate in the organization is needed to satisfy personal and social functions that are at the heart of motivations.

The second stage, experiences, focuses on the volunteers' working relationships with recipients of volunteer service, other volunteers, and staff members in volunteer organizations. Within this stage, the number and quality of relationships that volunteers form during their service affects their satisfaction and integration in the organization (e.g., Omoto and Snyder 2001). Volunteers who are more satisfied with their volunteering tend to have greater intentions to continue to volunteer and to stay longer with the organizations (Omoto and Snyder 1995).

The last stage of the volunteer process model is that of consequences, or outcomes. Research at the consequences stage is relatively rare. Nevertheless, constructs at this stage can reasonably be seen to reflect the causal effects of antecedents and experiences stage variables and processes, as well as the dynamic interactions between them (Omoto and Snyder 2000, 2002; Snyder and Omoto 2000). At the consequences stage, volunteers have worked for a period of time and have developed varying attitudes toward volunteering, the organization and intentions for future volunteer work. However, they can also show change in their attitude through volunteerism. Some may decide to stop their work whereas others may want to continue contributing.

The second model, Piliavin and colleagues' role identity model (Callero et al. 1987; Grube and Piliavin 1996; Piliavin and Callero 1991) asserts that individuals engage in voluntary actions because of a strong volunteer or service "identity". This model is based on the identity theory developed by Stryker (1980), McCall and Simmons (1966), and Turner (1978), as a derivative of symbolic interaction theory. Central to the theory are role identities,² components of the self that correspond to the social roles we play.

In essence, the role identity model asserts that as people continue to be volunteers, commitment to the organization increases. Commitment in turn increases the incidence of action on behalf of the organization. Accompanying the increased commitment and continued volunteer activities are a change in the volunteer's self-concept, the volunteer's role becomes part of his or her identity. It is this role identity that directly drives the volunteer's behavior,

because the person strives to make his or her behavior consonant with a volunteer's role identity. In brief, the model suggests that the best predictors of future volunteer activity should be past levels of volunteer activity, organizational commitment and role identity (Grube and Piliavin 1996, 2000).

Embedded in an interactionist perspective, Penner (2002) proposes a model in which dispositional and organizational factors are not independent of one another, "they influence one another and the resultant interactions between them influence sustained prosocial actions" (p. 459). The model proposes that demographic variables, dispositional variables (personal beliefs and value; prosocial personality, and motives), organizational variables (organizational attributes and practices and relationships with the organization), situational factors and social pressure influence the decision to volunteer and influence sustained volunteerism through the mediation or moderation of role identity. "A high and involving level of volunteer activity will likely produce a strong volunteer role identity. One's "Volunteer Role Identity" is the direct and proximal cause of "Sustained Volunteerism," that is the amount of volunteer activity a person engages in after he or she has been a volunteer for some significant period of time" (Penner, p. 463). The model provides interesting suggestions as to how the service organization might attract and retain volunteers but up to now it is a conceptual model and needs to be empirically tested.

Our main goal in this article is to more completely understand long-term volunteer behavior in young people. In order to reach this aim, and according to the literature, we assumed that:

1. neither dispositional nor organizational variables can, by themselves, provide a full explanation of why young people continue to volunteer over an extended period of time (Omoto and Snyder 1995; Penner 2002; Piliavin et al. 2002);
2. a specific model for sustained volunteerism in youth must be developed using those variables from the three more well-known models of volunteerism for volunteers in general, of all ages—Omoto and Snyder's volunteer process model; Piliavin's and colleagues role identity model and Penner's sustained volunteerism model—which research has shown as undoubtedly influencing the intention to volunteer. In accordance with Grube and Piliavin (2000), these variables are: motivation, identity and organizational experiences;
3. the model should include the volunteers' perception of the volunteering effects on themselves and the support provided by significant others such as father, mother, friends and partner because these variables play an important role in young people volunteering and

² Under the traditional definition, roles "are viewed as the behavioural expectations that are associated with, and emerge from, identifiable positions in social structure" (Callero 1994, p. 229). Role identity is a role that "becomes internalized and adopted as a component of the self" (Piliavin et al. 2002, p. 472).

moreover, because of the absence of consideration of family related variables in literature.³

Two research questions are addressed in this study:

1. is the intention to volunteer predicted by: dispositional variables (such as other-oriented motivation), organizational variables (such as integration and satisfaction with the organization), family and relational variables (such as support), and effects of volunteerism on the volunteer by the mediation of the volunteer's identity (Time 1)?
2. is the volunteers' model stable over a period of time? Does it work at Time 2 data collection?

A Model of Young People's Sustained Volunteerism

According to literature findings and our previous results, we assumed that values motivation (called other-oriented motivations) and both integration and satisfaction with the organization play an important role in defining volunteer identity. Moreover, the effects of and support provided by the volunteer's father, mother, friends and partner also influence volunteer identity. Volunteer identity is the best predictor of intention to maintain the commitment for an extended time.

Below we summarize our theoretical model (see Fig. 1). A diagram can provide an effective means of presenting the full system of relations in a unified and integrated manner and represents a direct translation of theoretical predictions (Tanaka et al. 1990).

Method

Participants

There were 158 young adult participants. When the first data collection was made the female volunteers and male volunteers (51.9% and 48.1%, respectively), ranged in age from 24 to 30 years ($M = 26.9$, $SD = 1.6$). The majority of the volunteers have a high school certificate (55.1%). In addition, 34.8% of the former also have a degree, 6.3% a PhD or other professional qualification while 3.8% left school without any qualification. 58.9% of the volunteers are mostly workers. Some of the volunteers are still at university (15.2%) while 20.3% are student workers.

A large number of volunteers live with their parents and siblings (39.9%), while 21.5% live only with their parents. 58.9% of the volunteers' parents work. At the first data

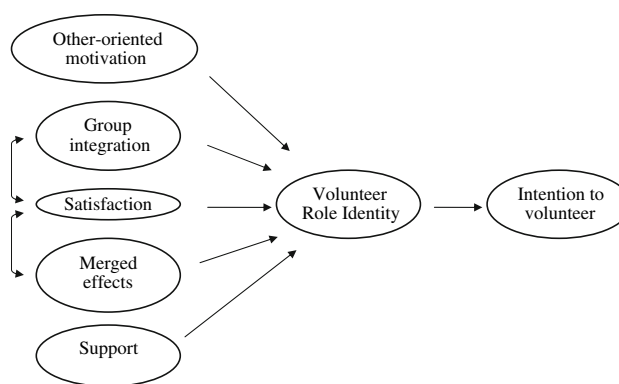


Fig. 1 The theoretical/conceptual model

collection (Time 1) 41.1% of the sample used to dedicate at least 3 h a week to helping people, 23.4% from 4 to 5 h a week, 19.6% from 6 to 10 h, 10.1% from 11 to 25 h and 1.9% more than 25 h a week. 3.8% dedicated at least 20 days a year. At Time 1 the majority of young adults (27.8%) declared to have spent from 4 to 5 years with the organization they were working for while 21.5% declared to have spent from 6 to 10 years. Nineteen percentage were volunteering for the organization for 2–3 years, while 17.7% had begun 1 year before the first data collection was made. 7.6% were volunteering for more than 10 years while 6.3% for only 6 months. No differences were registered between Time 1 and Time 2 as regards socio-demographic variables.

Procedure

The sample was drawn from a longitudinal dataset constructed as part of a large project on young adult volunteers. The data was collected at two different times (Time 1 and Time 2).

At Time 1 of the present study there were 461 young volunteers, aged 21–29 years, residents in Lombardy and Emilia Romagna.⁴ The volunteers were engaged in voluntary service organizations working with minors, for a minimum of 3 h a week or at least 20 days a year. Three volunteers were selected from each organization. Gender distribution reproduces the present situation in the examined territories as regards the age of interest, who was male (45.8%) and who was female (54.2%). It is assumed that the voluntary service organizations are distributed proportionally regarding the population density.

Structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with the volunteers in their organization. When the interview portion was completed, participants filled in a self-

³ We tested variance homogeneity with Levene's statistic test. Levene's test allowed us to compare all subgroups.

⁴ These are two big areas in the north of Italy, historically considered the "cradle" of Italian volunteerism (Italian Welfare Ministry 2000).

administered paper-and-pencil questionnaire. The respondents were informed that all information was confidential and subpoena protected and their consent was requested for the second data collection (Time 2).

Time 2 data was collected 1 year after Time 1. 440 (95.4%) subjects of the first data collection were contacted, those who had given their confirmation of availability to be reconsidered for a hypothetical second data collection at Time 1. Out of these 440, 380 (82.4%) gave their consent, however, only 246 (53.4%) subjects were met.⁵

The 246 subjects completed a questionnaire in which the first item assessed the current situation of the individual. A four-choice question assessed if, at the moment of the data collection, the subject (a) was still volunteering in the same organization, (b) was volunteering additionally in a different organization, (c) had changed organizations, or (d) had stopped volunteering. It was decided to consider only 1 subsample for this study, those individuals who were continuing in the same organization.

Finally, out of the 246 subjects, only 225 were considered. Data analysis highlighted that 164 of them were still continuing to volunteer in the same organization. For the final data, we had to delete some cases that presented a large number of missing variables, five started volunteering additionally in another organization, eight changed organizations and 68 stopped volunteering (out of these we deleted one case), and one failed to complete the questionnaire correctly. It resulted in a database with 158 cases still volunteering in the same organization.

Measures

Self-report measures were administered at both Time 1 and Time 2, those of: motivation to volunteer, integration and satisfaction with the organization, social support, merged effects due to voluntary service, volunteer identity and intention to volunteer.

Motivations

The participants completed the Italian version (Barbaranelli et al. 2003) voluntary function inventory (VFI) by Omoto and Snyder (1995). This is a 30-item scale in which volunteers indicated their agreement with each item on a five-point scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very much). According to Omoto and Snyder's model (1995), motivations belong to the antecedent stage. They rationally derived their instrument from conceptualizations of the six proposed psychological

and social functions served by involvement in volunteer work: values; understanding; career; social; protection; and enhancement. Thirty items can be divided into five-item subgroups, each for a specific motivation. The reliability coefficients (Cronbach's α) for the five-item subgroups in the VFI at Time 1 and Time 2 were: values = .65 and .67, respectively, e.g., "I am concerned about those less fortunate than myself," understanding = .72 and .77, respectively, e.g., "I can learn more about the cause for which I am working," career = .85 and .88, respectively, e.g., "Volunteering can help me to get my foot in the door at a place where I would like to work," social = .79 and .73, respectively, e.g., "People I am close to want me to volunteer," protection = .72 and .68, respectively, e.g., "No matter how bad I have been feeling, volunteering helps me to forget about it" and enhancement = .73 and .79, respectively, e.g., "Volunteering makes me feel important." Value is considered an other-oriented motivation while the remaining are considered self-oriented.

Satisfaction

Satisfaction with the organization was assessed using an ad hoc scale. It is a 17-item scale revealing satisfaction: with the organization (six items), with the group (five items) and with the activity (six items). Item examples are: satisfaction with the organization, e.g., "This organization has great meaning for me," satisfaction with the group, e.g., "I am satisfied with the opportunity to learn this group offers me" and satisfaction with the activity, e.g., "I like volunteer services very much." A factorial analysis on the scale indicates a three-factor scale. Cronbach's α at Time 1 were .78, .76, and .75, and at Time 2 of .78, .84, and .72, respectively.

Integration with the Organization

Integration with the organization was assessed through an ad hoc single question about the degree of integration perceived by subjects with their organization. Recipients had to indicate their agreement on a five-point scale (from 1 = not at all, to 4 = very much).

Merged Effects

Volunteers' perceived change with themselves was assessed. It is an index that measures the effect of the voluntary activity upon the volunteers themselves. An ad hoc scale was constructed. The original version was made up of 11 items, but a nine-item scale was used. Cronbach's α = .69 at Time 1 and .84 at Time 2. Respondents had to indicate their agreement

⁵ This was due to different reasons, such as last minute cancellation of the appointment and people who changed his/her mind once met.

on a three-point scale (1 = not at all, 2 = quite enough, 3 = very much). This scale presents items such as “I’m more friendly” or “I understand how lucky I am” or “I have improved my relationship with my parents.”

Social Support

The young adults were presented a social provision scale source-specific (Cutrona 1989). This instrument has one main characteristic: it assesses social support not in the general social network but in the specific interpersonal relationship defined by researches. In this investigation respondents were asked about the support they received from mothers, fathers, friends and partners. Participants used a four-point scale to answer (1 = not at all, to 4 = a lot). A total receive support index was recorded using the 12 items (three items for each support sources). Item examples are: “This person is happy for me to do social service,” “I feel personally responsible for this person’s welfare,” and “If I really need it, I can count on this person’s help.” Alpha value at Time 1 = .89 and .87 at Time 2.

Volunteer Identity

The eight-items Callero et al.’s role identity scale (Callero et al. 1987) was employed to assess identity. Performing a principal-axis factor analysis, oblique rotation, 2 factors were specified. A role identity factor was obtained (three items), $\alpha = .82$, and a social identity factor (five items), $\alpha = .83$. Item examples are: “to be a volunteer means more than to do volunteer service” or “to volunteer is an important part of my identity” or “I’m proud to belong to my volunteer group.” We decided to calculate an index called “volunteer identity” summing up the two subscales. At Time 1, alpha values = .70 and .81, respectively.

Intention to Volunteer

The intention to volunteer in the next three years was assessed. Recipients had to indicate their agreement on a four-point scale (1 = not at all, to 4 = very much) with regards to their willingness to continue volunteering.

Results

Preliminary Analysis

Descriptive statistics on all measures for volunteers at Time 1 and Time 2 are provided in Table 1.

Table 1 Means and standard deviations

	Volunteers			
	Time 1		Time 2	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Other-oriented motivation	3.42	.58	3.69	.55
Group integration	3.06	.72	3.28	.56
Satisfaction	3.19	.41	3.32	.36
Merged effects	1.79	.36	2.19	.45
Support	3.91	.34	3.90	.34
Volunteer role identity	3.37	.75	3.65	.66
Intention to volunteer	2.82	.72	3.21	1.12

Correlation coefficients were computed between each variable of the model at Time 1 and Time 2. As Table 2 shows, the volunteers’ correlation coefficients at Time 1 and Time 2 are similar.

The Model

Structure equation model (SEM) analyses were conducted using EQS 6.0 (Bentler 1998). Different path analyses models were performed. The first analysis was to confirm our theoretical model with the volunteers’ samples at Time 1. The same model was then tested at Time 2 to observe validity of the same model.

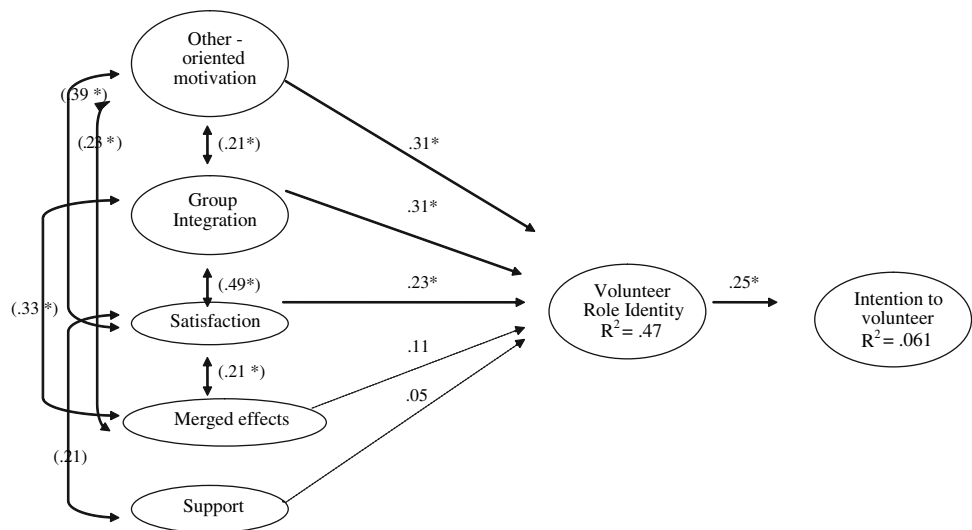
Research question 1: is the intention to volunteer predicted by: dispositional variables (such as other-oriented motivation), organizational variables (such as integration and satisfaction with the organization), family and relational variables (such as support), and the effects of volunteerism on the volunteer by the mediation of the volunteer’s identity?

We tested our specified model of the volunteer process on the volunteers at Time 1 (see Fig. 2, model 1). The data fit well with our theoretical model. The statistical χ^2 -test is not significant: this means that the model obtained from data does not differ from the theoretical model ($\chi^2 = 12.367$ $df = 8$ $p = .13$). Our model presents a RMSEA of .060, a CFI of .978, NFI of .944, NNFI = .942 RMR = .021. As can be seen in Fig. 1, there are six significant causal paths. Other-oriented motivation directly influences volunteer identity (path coefficient = .31), such as group integration (.31), satisfaction (.23), merged effects (.11), and support (.05). While the first three constructs are strongly related to identity, merged effects and support are not. Moreover, the last causal path connects volunteer identity with the intention to volunteer (.25).

Examination of path correlation estimated by EQS (shown in Fig. 2) is also important. There are strong

Table 2 Volunteers and ex-volunteers' correlation coefficients

	Other-oriented motivation	Group integration	Satisfaction	Merged effects	Support	Volunteer role identity	Intention to volunteer
Volunteers' correlation t1							
Other-oriented motivation	1.000						
Group integration	.208**	1.000					
Satisfaction	.413**	.491**	1.000				
Merged effects	.253**	.318**	.246**	1.000			
Support	.150	.078	.209**	.192*	1.000		
Volunteer role identity	.488**	.486**	.532**	.354**	.181*	1.000	
Intention to volunteer	.162*	.177*	.215**	.101	.208**	.216**	1.000
Volunteers' correlation t2							
Other-oriented motivation	1.000						
Group integration	.439**	1.000					
Satisfaction	.368**	.584**	1.000				
Merged effects	.229**	.238**	.253**	1.000			
Support	.194*	.036	.040	.015	1.000		
Volunteer role identity	.492**	.572**	.576**	.198*	.167*	1.000	
Intention to volunteer	.191*	.255**	.365**	.068	.020	.310**	1.000

Fig. 2 Volunteers' model 1* $p < .05$ 

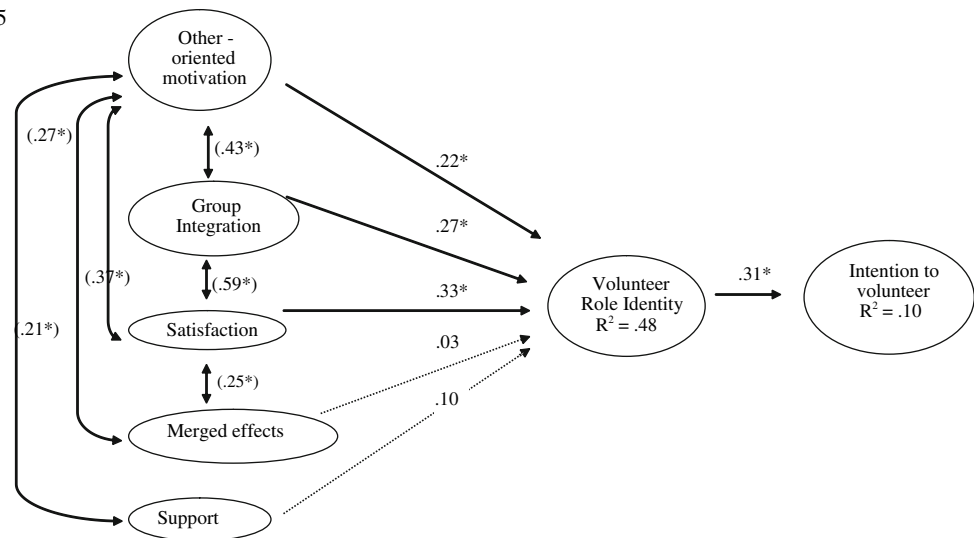
correlations between the three “strong related antecedents” to volunteer identity. Other-oriented motivation is strictly limited to satisfaction ($r = .39$) and also to group integration ($r = .21$). Furthermore, satisfaction and group integration, the two organizational variables, are correlated at .49.

Models with single and aggregated motivations were tested but did not fit the data. The model without identity was tested too but once again the models did not fit the data.

We tested an alternative model, substituting other-oriented motivation with self-oriented motivation. It did not run. We did this in order to test the importance and the exclusive role of other-oriented motivation in volunteer process models.

Research question 2: is the volunteers' model stable over a period of time? Does it work at Time 2 data collection?

Are subjects still behaving according to specific ways? Or do they change their attitude over time?

Fig. 3 Volunteers' model 2 * $p < .05$ 

We tested our statistical model 1 on Time 2 volunteer scores too, in order to verify if the same model was still working over a period of time. Fit indices obtained from the first attempt were acceptable but not favorable. A different chart of correlations among variables emerged after analyzing Time 2 data. After seeing both the EQS output and the correlation matrix we decided on a different correlation path. After this, fit indices improved (see Fig. 3, model 2)

The statistical χ^2 -test is not significant. ($\chi^2 = 9.685$ $df = 8$ $p = .29$). Our model presents a RMSEA of .037, a CFI of .993, NFI of .960, NNFI = .980, and a RMR = .012.

In particular, the two models differ in correlations among the five volunteer identity predictors.

As can be seen in Fig. 3, even for this model, six causal paths are highlighted. In particular, other-oriented motivation is strictly related to volunteer identity (.22) such as group integration (.27) and satisfaction (.33). Merged effects and support are less related, .03 and .10, respectively. The last causal path is the one between volunteer identity and intention to volunteer (.31). Correlations change in this model, the biggest changes are related to other-oriented motivation, which is correlated to all other constructs, satisfaction however, is no longer related to support.

At Time 1, models with single motivations was tested but did not fit the data ($\chi^2 = .000$, CFI = .414, RMSEA = .220 (.186–.256)). The model without identity was tested too but once again the model did not fit the data ($\chi^2 = .000$, CFI = .024, RMSEA = .267 (.226–.311)).

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand why young people decide to continue to volunteer over an extended

period of time. We assumed that young people's sustained volunteerism is influenced by dispositional and organizational variables and that role identity is a key construct. In order to elucidate the causal relations among dispositional and organizational variables linked to sustained young people's volunteerism and identity, a structural model was tested specifically on young volunteers.

The model we tested suggests that both dispositional and organizational variables are important in determining long-term volunteerism in young people. Moreover, in accordance with previous research (Callero et al. 1987; Grube and Piliavin 2000), our analysis confirmed that role identity is the best predictor of intention to volunteer. For volunteers who still remain involved in the service, analysis also confirms the fact that identity is still a mediating variable between dispositional and organizational variables and the intention to volunteer.

In detail, other-oriented motivation, group integration and satisfaction with the organization, are strongly related to young people's volunteer identity, whereas merged effects and support are not.

This could mean that integrating one's own identity, to be aware and caring of others as well as being satisfied and integrated in the organization, could affect length of service. In accordance with Piliavin and colleagues' theory (Piliavin et al. 2002; Callero et al. 1987; Grube and Piliavin 2000) and Penner's model (Penner and Finkelstein 1998; Penner 2002), volunteer identity is very important in the decision and in the will to continue volunteering.

Testing the same model over time can test its stability. At Time 2, our model of sustained young volunteers was confirmed. In fact we can see an improvement in some path coefficient already present in the model at Time 1. In particular, volunteers have strengthened their "organizational antecedents links" through their service. It could be

said that group integration linked to satisfaction represents a single compact group of organizational. Even other-oriented motivation increases significantly its link to satisfaction (from .21 to .43; Fisher's Z test = 2.086) while the correlation with group integration remains almost stable (from .39 to .37). Volunteer identity also increases its causal link with the intention to volunteer.

Volunteer identity can be a prominent role, not only for the defined social tasks and characteristics the volunteer assumes, but also for the symbolic, affective, and value investment that the same individual and the broader society have upon it. In this sense talking about role identities assume meaning because these activities give voice to identity constitutive elements so as to build meaningful, ethic-affective based belongings. Moreover, these activities identify a position within bond dynamics that allows differentiation processes to develop. It could be suggested that differentiation and belonging are two opposite poles of a social bond continuum between people, in this way, volunteer identity develops into both specific and flexible tasks. Furthermore, volunteer identity is developed through relationships with the recipients of the volunteer's service as well as through the relationships with the organization.

Voluntary engagement is the expression of the need to build one's own social identity. In this sense, the volunteer's group and organization become fundamental in measuring one's own maturity and to be more receptive to social issues and society in general.

In this work there is clear evidence of how crucial volunteer identity is in the comprehension of young people's volunteerism.

In light of these results we can assume that firstly, in accordance with Omoto and Snyder (1995, 2000), Penner (2002) and Grube and Piliavin (2000) the organization plays an important role in the volunteer process. Secondly, in contrast to Omoto and Snyder's results—on a sample of volunteers of all ages—but as in our previous research project, other-oriented motivation influences the young volunteer's choice to maintain the commitment over an extended time.

The support variable is also interesting. We could hypothesize that others who support the service could be interpreted negatively by volunteers, as social or normative pressure. We could also hypothesize that if the choice to volunteer is not a part of one's own identity but is taken in order to satisfy a compliance desire (i.e., not to observe internalized norms). The findings on the role of identity, other-oriented motivation and organizational variables in long-term volunteerism suggests that service organizations interested in maintaining young people's involvement in volunteerism need to understand the changing motivational pattern of volunteers and "relationships" within the organizational network. "Thus, service organizations must do

more than simply recruit volunteers; they must work to maximize the volunteers' involvement with the organization" (Penner 2002, p. 464). If the initial level of involvement is maintained, a volunteer role should be developed. Once this identity has emerged, service organization has a volunteer who should remain for a long time.

Thus, the service organization has a great responsibility in maintaining young people's involvement in voluntary action and in supporting the pedagogic function assumed by volunteerism. In other words, they are partly responsible for encouraging young people to think about and work toward the ideal of a "common good".

In future research we plan to focus on two limitations of the present study. The first limitation is that we limit our analysis to the volunteers in general without considering ex-volunteers. The second limitation is the fact that we tested the model only on young volunteers. In order to test the specific nature of this model it is necessary to apply the model to a sample of adult and elderly volunteers.

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