

## THE PRO LOCO ITALIAN VOLUNTEERS INVOLVED IN THE PROMOTION OF TOURIST EVENTS

**Alessandra Fermani**  
*University of Macerata*

**Mina Sehdev**  
*University of Macerata*

**Olena Motuzenko**  
*Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv*

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*The purpose of this study was describing who are the volunteers involved in the Pro Loco association; analysing how the sense of identification is strong in the participants; identifying the functions of motivations and the sense of self-efficacy and collective efficacy in the participants. Participants were 222 Italian volunteers. The 49% of them were members of the Pro Loco for more than 6 years. They show a strong identification with the group. The main reasons for their involvement and commitment in Pro Loco are community function and understanding function; on the other hand the career function is not a linked motivation. Volunteers show good levels of self-efficacy and collective efficacy and a positive association between function, identification and sense of self-efficacy and collective efficacy. Regressions show that the motivation to community function and understanding function are predictors of identification and sense of self-efficacy and collective efficacy.*

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**Keywords:** *Pro Loco, volunteers, functions, identification, Self-efficacy, Collective-efficacy.*

JEL Classification: *L83, M1, O1*

### INTRODUCTION

The Pro Loco associations are non-profit organizations made up of volunteers who are engaged in the promotion of local traditions and in improving culture, education and the quality of life. This is pursued through the organization of events, festivals and researches of local history (like a tourist office). Their main purpose is to promote the local

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products, the beauty of the area and organize pleasant visits for tourists. L'UNPLI (National Union of the Italian Pro Loco) was founded in 1962 and coordinates more than 6.000 Pro Loco. They play a key role in promoting local tourism and developing community awareness about the importance of maintaining cultures, traditions and relationships. So, the Unpli is the association that all the Pro Loco refer to, or rather the basic association which joins the protection and the safeguard of the local specificity and represents a great immaterial patrimony and a great resource for the Nation. Made up of passion and longing of staying together and within a banner of free voluntary work, the association aims at organizing events, researching and studying the local history, maintaining the local cultural traditions, co-operating with the relevant Municipal Administrations, promoting one own "campanile" in the whole of the larger Regional picture with its food & wine specialities.

In Italy research concerning the phenomenon of the Pro Loco is rare, especially in the context of social psychology. Hence the attempt to bridge the gap through a research which describes the volunteers of the Pro Loco, their motivations, their group identification and their sense of self-efficacy and collective efficacy.

## **THE HISTORY OF PRO LOCO**

In its long past, tourism has had different historical moments with three very important protagonists: entrepreneurship, associations and public institutions. In fact, in addition to the state and the local authorities, the associations are another subject of great importance. In Italy, for example, we can say that the Italian Touring Club and the Italian Alpine Club play an extraordinary role.

The history of Pro loco begins at the end of the nineteenth century when some committees of citizens decided to use the preposition "pro" before the name of the locality where they operated; the term "pro" indicated the willingness to work in favor of the country. The first Italian Pro loco, that one of Pieve Tesino, was born in 1881. Today, we can define the Pro loco as the main tour operator about the culture of a specific area and its testimonials (Tomasello, 2009).

Until last century the Italian State took no interest regarding the tourism sector, in opposition to the situation of France and Switzerland. In Italy the first attempts to create a tourist organization were at a private level; finally, following the example of France, the first Pro loco was created.

In 1919, the first World War and social difficulties related to it showed that tourism could be useful for the state budget. In the same year the Italian National Agency for Tourism (ENIT) was established. Afterwards, the ENIT began to think of specialized subjects in tourism activities that could work with local governments: the so-called «Aziende autonome di soggiorno e turismo». In the most important touristic resorts, these structures replaced the Pro loco associations. Instead, the so-called «Enti provinciali per il turismo» were established in 1935.

It is possible to mention an anecdote about the origins of Pro loco associations: in the past, they were noble, since the roles of president and secretary were, in most cases, covered by some nobles and notables of the local area. The terrible years of World War II did not bring luck to tourism and Pro loco associations, but after the end of the war and the following reconstruction, these associations regained strength and courage.

An important signal came from the law of 4 March 1958 which dictated the rules for the financing of the Pro loco associations (tourist tax used to finance the Pro loco), but on the 1st January 1989 this tax was cancelled, together with one of the few forms of public funding aimed at Pro loco associations. The above law also provided the establishment of a national register of the Pro loco associations, which was created in 1965.

A central date was 1962, the year of the birth of UNPLI (National Union of the Italian Pro Loco), which had the task to unite and to assist all the associations that are located on the Italian territory. Another set of rules for the Pro loco associations was the law of 1983, which proposed a first and important affirmation of the role of the Pro loco on the national territory, but only with the new law of 2001 new indications and a specific recognition of the Pro loco associations have been made.

Generally the Pro loco are called non-profit organizations. However the term non-profit refers only to the absolute prohibition to divide any profits among the members of the management, as the profits should only be used to achieve the aims of the association.

As far as the laws of volunteering, in 2000 we finally have a law which regulates the associations operating in the socio-cultural, leisure and sports areas: these types of associations, including the Pro loco, are called associations of social promotion (Nardocci, 2007).

The Pro loco associations in Italy are coordinated by UNPLI. One of the main purpose of this national association is to promote and to protect the local features of their members, in order to achieve greater well-being and to develop a more and more active management. The UNPLI unites

6000 Pro loco operating in Italy for about 600,000 members. Through its regional and provincial structures, it has now reached a maturity and succeeds every day in creating important projects in the cultural, environmental and social fields. Besides, it has created an important network of relationships with institutions and entrepreneurs and also with the most important voluntary associations in Italy.

Thanks to the website ([www.unpliproloco.it](http://www.unpliproloco.it)), you can find the location and the contact details of all the Pro loco associations. Inside the website one of central arguments shown is characterized by the idea of a solid group of associations, which represents a great resource for the country.

Finally, the UNPLI is also involved in many projects that represent its commitment in several areas: protection of villages and traditions of their identity (project: Open for Holidays); training and updating of the volunteers' skills (project: The Pro loco associations towards a future of quality - the new frontiers of volunteer tourism); promotion of environmental and cultural features of our country (project: SOS Intangible Cultural Heritage); recognition of the social role of older people and a correct management and development of the local cultural heritage (project: Embrace Italy); planning of a law for the promotion, development and recognition of the Pro loco associations and popular culture (project: We guard our history); defense and revaluation of intangible heritages for a better quality of life and greater social welfare (project: We balance the future); establishment of a multimedia library containing both various productions of the UNPLI association and contributions made by all the Pro loco associations and by other associations of our country (project: Multimedia library of Civitella d'Agliano).

## **TRADITIONS OF RESEARCH IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY: THE VOLUNTEER PROCESS MODEL**

Recent research reports show that the membership to associations - especially in the fields of entertainment and culture - is rising. Marzana (2011) argues that this could be a useful signal in order to understand the level of participation in public life and people's civilian vibrancy.

National surveys indicate that in the United States a percentage between 45% and 55% of adults spend at least some of their time as unpaid volunteers for service organizations (Penner and Finkelstein, 1998). About 64.3 million Americans, or 26.8% of the adult population,

gave 7.9 billion hours of volunteer service worth \$171 billion in 2011 (www.independentsector.org).

In Italy more than 1 million volunteers are involved in associations: 54, 4% are males and 45.6% are females. We have nearly 900,000 people of all ages: 22.1% is under 29 years; 41.1% is between 30 and 54 years; 23.3% is between 55 and 64 years and 13.5% is over 64.

As a result of the Study on Volunteering in the European Union, the level of participation in Europe in 2010 is as follows:

<b>Level</b>	<b>% Population</b>	<b>Countries</b>
Very high	Over 40%	Austria, Nederland, Sweden, United Kingdom
High	30%-39%	Denmark, Germany, Finland, Luxembourg
Medium	20%-29%	Estonia, France, Latvia
Relatively low	10%-19%	Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Ireland, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Romania, Slovenia, Spain
Low	Under 10%	Bulgaria, Greece, Lithuania

If the trend towards fewer government services for disadvantaged people goes on, although these are impressive figures, the need for unpaid volunteers will increase. Therefore, from an applied perspective, it is important to learn about the factors that lead people to voluntary work and drive them to continue it for extended periods of time.

It is interesting that, although there is a large theoretical literature on the causes of short-term individual acts of helping (Schroeder, Penner, Dovidio and Piliavin, 1995), there is a relative dearth of theoretical models which attempt to explain volunteerism. Indeed, we are aware of only two well-developed models: the social psychology model worked out by Omoto and Snyder and the more sociological model by Callero and coll. (1987). This last one de-emphasizes the available variables and uses the role theory and the social structure within which volunteerism

occurs to explain this behaviour. In essence, the role identity model argues that as people continue in their voluntary work, commitment to the organization increases.

In this article, we briefly discuss only the Volunteer Process Model by Omoto and Snyder (1995, 2010) with particular regard to the motivations, because the second model is not directly relevant for the present study. About the first model, it has been used by a large network of researchers who have examined volunteers in a variety of roles working on behalf of a range of causes, as well as to understand different forms of social action (for a review, see Snyder and Omoto, 2007). The Authors do not mean to reduce the role of environmental, situational, and socialization influences in promoting involvement in social action, or even to suggest that personality factors are not relevant to all stages of the volunteering.

The Volunteer Process Model specifies psychological and behavioural features associated with each of three sequential and interactive stages (i.e., antecedents, experiences, consequences) and speaks of activity at multiple levels of analysis (i.e., the individual, the interpersonal, the organizational, and the social system). This model considers both the antecedents of volunteering and what happens to volunteers over time. Volunteerism represents a distinctive form of helping. According to these authors, some forms of volunteerism imply a commitment that extends over considerable periods of time and also remarkable personal costs. Volunteerism raises questions of personality, of motivation, and of mechanisms for sustaining it. Omoto and Snyder believe that as there are usually few situational constraints on the initial decision to undertake activities of volunteering, the available variables play a major role in this decision. Thus, among the important antecedent variables there are the volunteer's prior personal experiences, current circumstances, current personal reasons and social needs. This model gives special emphasis to such reasons and needs; such conceptualization is based on Clary and Snyder's (1991) functional analysis of prosocial behaviours. This functional analysis proposes that volunteering serves different functions for different people (and perhaps multiple functions for the same person). Particularly, concerning the motivations scale, the resulting inventory produced five scale scores, each created by summing over the responses to its five items and each measuring a specific motivation for AIDS volunteerism. The five scales, named in agreement with the items defining them, are: Values, Understanding, Personal Development, Community Concern, and Esteem Enhancement.

In order to understand why a person offers help, it is necessary to understand what particular function helping serves for her or him. Therefore, at the antecedent stage, research guided by this model has identified personality characteristics and motivational tendencies, as well as aspects of people's life circumstances, that lead people to get involved as volunteers and that predict who will become more effective and satisfied in his work. When it comes to starting volunteerism, people are particularly likely to get involved when circumstances suggest that doing so will serve their own motivations. Moreover, once in service, volunteers are likely to continue their involvement when they perceive that their own motivations are being fulfilled.

In conclusion, we can affirm that such a model, especially its specification of the initial stages of the construct, has potential utility for understanding a wide range of types of social action.

## **THE PRESENT STUDY**

The main purpose of the present study was to examine, in general, who are the volunteers involved in the Pro Loco, their background in order to social-anagraphic situation and their commitment in Pro Loco. Secondly, we analysed how the sense of identification, the functions/motivation of the involvement in Pro Loco, the sense of self-efficacy and collective efficacy were strong in the participants and we compared these factors across gender and age.

Thirdly, thanks to the regression, we tested whether the correlates in terms of functions are comparable with ingroup Identification, Collective efficacy and Self-efficacy. We further investigated the associations between sense of identification or Collective efficacy and Self-efficacy.

## **METHOD**

### **Participants**

The Italian sample consisted of 222 (130 males, 92 females) volunteers and ranged in age from 15 to 79 years ( $M$  age =45.8 years;  $SD$ = 15,1). Four age groups were represented in this sample: a middle-adolescent group (15-17 year-old) composed of 9 adolescents; a young group (aged 18-29 years) of 34 young people; an adult group (aged 30- 59 years) of 133 adults and another over 60 years group (aged 60-79 years) of 46 adults.

The 49% of them were members of the Pro Loco for more than 6

years and the sample is involved about 20 hours a month in the association. The 56% work and about the 27% are retired or unoccupied. Only 14% have a degree, 42% have a high school diploma, 35% a middle school one and 5% only primary school. Volunteers declare that they were not affected (60%) or they have entered the association thanks to their friends' influence (40%).

## Procedure

Before starting our study, we obtained permission to administer questionnaires from the Pro Loco's presidents. In a first step the Pro Loco were contacted via e-mail; as in most cases we did not receive an answer, we followed and achieved the associations personally or by telephone. After we received the president's permission, participants were informed about the study and asked if they wished to participate. Approximately 99% of the sample approached chose to participate. Interviewers visited the Pro Loco and asked participants to fill out the questionnaire packet.

## Measures

**Identification.** We employed the short version of Identification Scale (Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004) to assess positive identification processes in group. The measure was translated from English to Italian by a bilingual psychologist. The Identification Scale consists of 6 items with a response scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items include: the success of my group (Pro Loco) is also my success. Reliability of the Identification scale, in terms of Cronbach's alphas, was found to be adequate with values of .70.

**Voluntary Function Inventory.** This construct was measured using the Voluntary Function Inventory Scale (Omoto and Snyder, 1995; Italian adaptation by Barbaranelli, Caprara, Capanna and Imbimbo, 2003). The VFI consists of 30 items scored on a five-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Specifically 5 items measure «Career function» ( $\alpha = .83$ ; sample items include: to offer the opportunity to have success in my future work); 5 items measure «Social function» ( $\alpha = .68$ ; e.g. because my friends are involved in voluntary action); 5 items assess «Enhancement function/Esteem Enhancement» ( $\alpha = .76$ ; e.g. to feel better about myself); 5 items assess «Protective function» ( $\alpha = .83$ ; e.g. to feel less alone); 5 items tap «Understanding function» ( $\alpha = .76$ ; e.g. to learn more through direct experience); and 5

items measure «Community function» ( $\alpha = .86$ ; e.g. to help members of the my community).

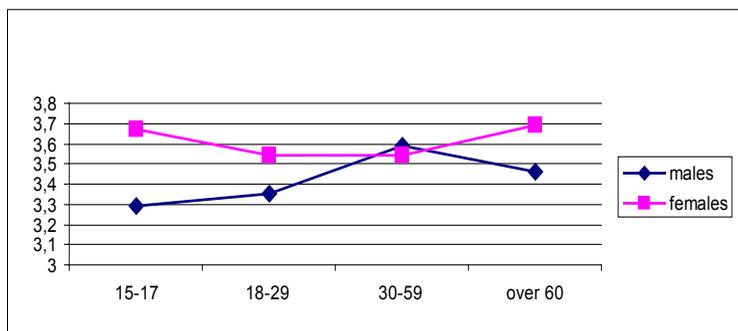
**Self- efficacy.** The Scala di Efficacia Personale Percepita (Self-efficacy Scale; Barbaranelli and Capanna, 2001) was used to assess the sense of Self-efficacy in participants, as the volunteers feel able to deal problematic events personally and with success, and consists of 19 items, scored on a five point scale: from 1 (not able) to 5 (quite able). A sample item is: I am able to maintain positive morale in the face of difficulties. Cronbach's alphas were 87.

**Collective efficacy.** Scala di Efficacia Collettiva Percepita (Collective Efficacy Scale; Barbaranelli and Capanna, 2001) was used to assess the sense of collective efficacy about ingroup, as the volunteers consider the organization able to manage stressful events, and consists of 5 items; scored on a five point scale: from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A sample item is: the ingroup is able to stimulate the active participation of all members. Cronbach's alphas were 78.

## RESULTS

The first aim of this study was to analyse how the sense of identification was strong in the participants.

**Graphic 1** Mean-levels of identification in middle adolescent (15-17), young (18-29), adult (30-59) and over 60 males and females



Sex differences within age were inspected with a Multivariate Analysis Of Variance (MANOVA). In these analyses we accounted for age differences, as we examined sex differences within age cohorts (i.e., middle adolescent boys (15-17) versus middle adolescent girls (15-17);

over 60 males versus over 60 females etc...). The results of these analyses appear in Graphic 1.

Within the sample, no age and no sex differences were found with regard to Identification (see Graphic 1); however, participants showed a strong identification with the in-group.

We assessed mean-level differences across volunteers motivations of choice to act in Pro Loco by comparing similar sex and age groups across motivations (e.g., middle adolescent boys versus middle adolescent girls etc...) with a MANOVA.

It has to be noted that these comparisons should be interpreted very cautiously, because we did not establish scalar measurement equivalence. Descriptive statistics for these mean-level comparisons are displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1** Mean (Std Deviation) and Volunteers' Motivations

Functions	Age				$F(3, 222)$	$\eta^2$
	15-17 ( $n = 9$ )	18-29 ( $n = 34$ )	30-59 ( $n = 133$ )	Over 60 ( $n = 46$ )		
Career function	3.04 <sup>a</sup> (.79)	2.87 <sup>a</sup> (.68)	1.93 <sup>b</sup> (.82)	2.01 <sup>b</sup> (.88)	6.69 <sup>***</sup>	.08
Social function	3.22 (.51)	2.86 (.68)	2.93 (.59)	3.16 (.70)	2.31	.03
Enhanc. function	3.19 (.38)	2.95 (.61)	3.05 (.59)	3.34 (.74)	3.07	.04
Protect. function	2.50 (.71)	2.23 (.89)	2.25 (.89)	2.76 (.91)	2.45	.03
Underst. function	3.80 (.32)	3.34 (.70)	3.51 (.58)	3.57 (.65)	1.64	.02
Comm. function	3.36 <sup>a</sup> (.89)	3.31 <sup>a</sup> (.85)	3.64 <sup>b</sup> (.74)	4.08 <sup>b</sup> (.77)	7.22 <sup>***</sup>	.09

Note. Tukey Test \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Table 1 suggests that young people (15-17 and 18-29) were more motivated by career function than their adult counterparts (30-59 and over

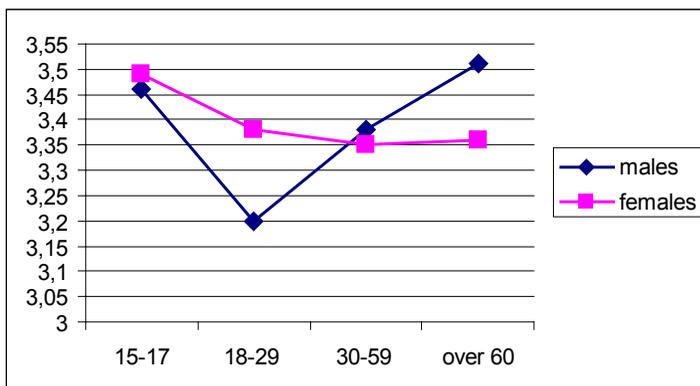
60), on the other hand for Community function, adults (30-59 and over 60) exhibited higher mean-levels than young people (15-17 and 18-29).

Relating to gender, the results suggest that female volunteers were more motivated by Enhancement function (mean = 3.28;  $F(1, 222) = 4.85, p < .05, \eta^2 .02$ ) and Community function (mean = 3.79;  $F(1, 222) = 5.70, p < .05, \eta^2 .03$ ) compared to males (mean = 3.11 for Enhancement function and 3.58 for Community function). In general, the means show that the more motivating factors were functions as Understanding function and Community function. We did not find a significant multivariate interaction effect of age by sex.

As a final mean-level analysis, we compared the magnitude of sex differences and age across Self-efficacy and Collective efficacy.

The results about the Self-efficacy analyses appear in Graphic 2.

**Graphic 2** Mean-levels of Self-efficacy in middle adolescent (15-17), young (18-29), adult (30-59) and over 60 males and females



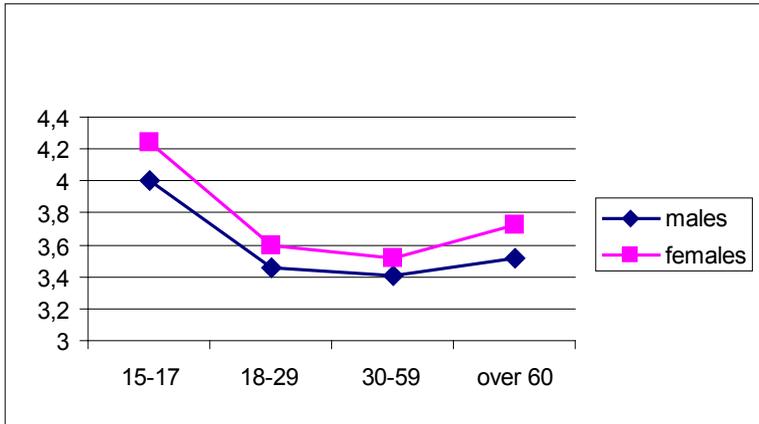
Within the sample, no age and no sex differences were found with regard to Self-efficacy, however, participants showed higher means levels of Self-efficacy (see Graphic 2 above). We did not find a significant interaction effect of age by sex.

With regard to Collective efficacy analyses appear in Graphic 3.

Specifically, univariate test (ANOVA) indicated that when age increased also the Collective efficacy increased (see graphic 3;  $F(3, 222) = 3.57, p < .01, \eta^2 .05$ ). These analyses also showed no significant differences neither sex nor interactions.

At a glance, volunteers showed good levels of self-efficacy and collective efficacy. With increasing age, the self-efficacy increases while the collective efficacy decreases.

**Graphic 3** Mean-levels of Collective efficacy in middle adolescent (15-17), young (18-29), adult (30-59) and over 60 males and females



On the other hand, about the time spent in association, results showed that volunteers who were involved for longer perceived greater sense of Self-efficacy (after 1-2 years of involvement increases the average perceived Self-efficacy: mean= 2.60 and 2.72 respectively for 1-6 months and 7-12 months; statistically different means to the Post Hoc Test = 3.43, 3.52 and 3.61 respectively for 1-2 years, 2-5 years and over 6 years). We did not find the same results for Collective-efficacy or Identification).

A further aim of the present study was to examine the associations between volunteer functions (see Table 2 below) and relevant correlates (i.e., Identification, Self-efficacy and Collective efficacy) and the associations in linear regressions between Identification or Collective efficacy and Self-efficacy (see table 3 below).

Results reported in Table 2 indicated that Social function was positively associated with Collective efficacy; Understanding function and Community function were positively associated with perceived Identification, Self-efficacy and Collective efficacy.

**Table 2** Standardized Betas and Proportion Explained Variance for the Regression Analyses of Identification, Self-efficacy and Collective efficacy on volunteer functions as predictors

Functions	Identification	Self-efficacy	Collective efficacy
Career function	.10	.08	.13
Social function	-.06	.05	.18*
Enhancement function	.15	.11	.12
Protective function	-.01	.12	-.05
Understanding function	.22**	.18***	.19*
Community function	.20**	.22*	.13*
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.23***	.31***	.29***

Furthermore, regression showed positive associations between Self-efficacy on Identification and Collective efficacy as predictors (see table 3 below).

**Table 3** Standardized Betas and Proportion Explained Variance for the Regression Analyses of Self efficacy on Identification and Collective efficacy as predictors

Functions	Self-efficacy
Identification	.28
Collective efficacy	.35*
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.26***

Note. \*p<.05. \*\*p<.01. \*\*\*p<.001.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to Omoto and Snyder (1995), the study of helping has long been a mainstay of theoretical and empirical inquiry in the social and behavioural sciences. The conceptual framework of the volunteer process that has guided our investigations is informed by psychological theory and research, identifying relevant constructs at each stage of the volunteer process, and that grounds these constructs in different theoretical and empirical contexts in personality and social psychology. However, even though the role of volunteer process and of group memberships has been studied, the relations among forms of pro-social behaviour, identification, motivations, Self-efficacy and Collective efficacy in particularly tourism group membership have been relatively neglected. In Italy researches concerning the phenomenon of the Pro Loco are very rare, especially in the context of social psychology. However, in particular through the organization of events, festivals and researches of local history, the Pro loco play a key role in promoting local tourism and developing community awareness about the importance of maintaining cultures, traditions and relationships. Jepson, Wiltshire and Clarke (2008) say that festivals achieve a sense of community and well-being by renewing the life stream of a community is only possible if the life stream is inclusive of local communities' cultures, fed by the internal tributaries and which are recognisable to those communities when they are re-presented in the festival itself.

In our research we tested that within the sample, no age and no sex differences were found with regard to ingroup identification, but participants showed a strong identification with the ingroup. In agreement with the authors cited above, the perception of the identification is critical to the success of the personal and collective goals.

About the volunteers' motivations, Pro Loco's females were more motivated by Enhancement function and Community function compared to males. In Penner's and Finkelstein's study (1998) small but consistent gender effects were found. Men and women did not differ in how much they worked for an organization, but they did appear to differ somewhat in the reason why they engaged in such efforts. The highly active and involved female volunteers scored lower than the highly active and involved males on the measures of altruistic motives and on the Other-Oriented Empathy. In other words, the impact of altruistic motives and other-oriented dispositions on volunteer activities was confined primarily to the male volunteers. For Penner and Finkelstein these gender effects are probably unique to being an AIDS volunteer; recall that almost 90%

of the male volunteers were homosexual. As such, it may have been easier for some of them to identify and empathize with the primary beneficiaries of this service organization. We believe these gender effects are determined by the type of organization in which you are involved.

On the other hand young people were more motivated by career function than their adult counterparts, while for Community function, adult exhibited higher mean-levels than young people. We think that these results are explained in the Pro Loco because you can meet many influential people (entrepreneurs, administrators, etc...) and these associations are often a way to enter politics. In general, the means show that factors more motivating were functions as Understanding function, good reason to know your territory, and other oriented function as Community.

In every healthy organization management has the responsibility to create, develop and maintain a positive environment in which individual employees are able to motivate themselves (Zopiatis and Constanti, 2007). Volunteers showed good levels of Self-efficacy and Collective efficacy. With increasing age, the Self-efficacy increases while the collective efficacy decreases. About the time spent in association, results showed that volunteers who were involved for longer perceived greater sense of Self-efficacy. We do not found the same results for Collective efficacy or Identification. With the passage of time, the volunteers showed a bit of fatigue, as if the individual loses the perception of Collective efficacy or of Identification and thought of having to achieve the aims alone. In a little qualitative study (Fermani and Castellano, 2013) with Pro Loco stakeholders, the volunteers more involved in the leadership functions said to be very tired from continual fighting with other partner or member of a council.

On the other hand, Social function was positively associated with Collective efficacy; Understanding function and Community function were positively associated with perceived Identification, Self-efficacy and Collective efficacy. Furthermore, regression showed positive associations between Self-efficacy on Identification and Collective efficacy as predictors.

This is a critical point because, although people are identified in the group, driven by motives other-oriented and love for the land, with a good sense of self-efficacy and collective efficacy, volunteers do not negotiate the conflict. Due to the low cultural background and to jealousies, in volunteering there are no team work or network with other associations (e.g. often within a few kilometres, on the same day, are more festivals organized simultaneously).

As shown in our study, the low generational change is another problem. Although the Civil Service is looking to fill this gap, the Pro Loco associations are still for old people with good will, but little preparation. For example, some Pro Loco do not reply to e-mails because the volunteers do not know the use of Internet, have not scientific knowledge about their city and their knowledge of the language is limited. Just think that the national UNPLI website ([www.unpliproloco.it](http://www.unpliproloco.it)) has not an English version. Technological innovation is considered as a major force in tourism industry (Korres, 2008; Chan, 2012).

We believe that showing the commitment of the Pro Loco, since primary school, can bring great improvements to both these associations and in general for tourism.

The present study has several limitations and a first limitation concerns the fact that we only collected quantitative data. Future investigations could integrate the present findings with qualitative data to provide a more comprehensive account of the volunteers' views.

Our findings have potential implications for new leaders interested in fostering civil society and in more fully engaging people in volunteer process. For instance, learning programs and best communication may not only encourage greater community engagement and awareness but also may have the added benefit of increasing student involvement in volunteer activities (Nassar and Talaat, 2009). In short, these activities may serve triple duty in helping the community in which they are hosted, in promoting development and growth among participants, and in offering a pathway to broad civic engagement that does not depend on traditional civic education, knowledge of personality types, or a motivational intervention. Students may not start out civically minded, but nonetheless end up with greater political awareness and a propensity for civic engagement by virtue of their involvement in service activities.

In conclusion, and on the basis of results of the present research, we wish to emphasize and encourage further theoretical and empirical integration of research on characteristics of personality (Yildiz, Üngüren and Polat, 2009) and research on intergroup processes, especially in attempting to explain helping behaviour in specific context as tourism.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The authors would like to thank, UNPLI and Sabrina Castellano for their support to this research, as well as participants for sharing their time and thoughts.

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*SUBMITTED: FEB 2013*

*REVISION SUBMITTED: APR 2013*

*ACCEPTED: MAY 2013*

*REFEREED ANONYMOUSLY*

**Alessandra Fermani** (alessandra.fermani@unimc.it) is a Professor and Researcher at Macerata University, Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism, Piazzale Bertelli, 62100 Macerata, Italy.

**Mina Sehdev** (m.sehdev@unimc.it) is a Professor at Macerata University, Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism, Piazzale Bertelli, 62100 Macerata, Italy.

**Olena Motuzenko** (o.motuzenko@mbfnabat.org) is a Professor at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Department of the Geography of Ukraine, Acad. Glushkova avenue, 2 Kyiv - GSP - 608, Ukraine.