

Abstract

Competence and warmth are two fundamental stereotypical dimensions that frame people's social judgements. Since we currently lack evidence about how the volunteering workforce is socially perceived, this paper aims to (1) understand which stereotypes are associated with volunteers, and (2) determine whether these perceptions vary as a result of contextual changes (i.e., professionalization) that have recently characterized nonprofit organizations (NPOs). Two empirical survey-based studies were conducted in Belgium, one comprising data collected from a general population sample ($N = 233$), and the other from volunteers ($N = 128$). Study 1 displayed volunteers being perceived by the general population as warmer rather than competent. Study 2 found that ingroup warmth perceptions in a volunteers' sample decreased as NPOs became progressively more business-like. Combined, these two studies illustrate that warmth is at the heart of the volunteers' role and show that the increasing professionalization of NPOs affects this perception.

Keywords: Stereotype Content Model, volunteering workforce, nonprofit organizations, professionalization

Stereotypes of Volunteers and Nonprofit Organizations' Professionalization: A Two-Study Paper

“Volunteers do not necessarily have the time;
they just have the heart.”

- Elizabeth Andrew

Volunteer labour constitutes a vital human resource, and therefore managing this workforce effectively is as important to NPOs as managing other resources (Handy and Mook 2011). Yet, as noted by Ho and O'Donohoe (2014), research on stereotypes of volunteers as a social group remains very scarce. However, improved understanding of social perceptions of the volunteering workforce might help scholars and practitioners learn how individuals behave towards them (Aaker, Vohs, and Mogilner 2010; Laczko and Hanisch 1999; Netting, Nelson, Borders, and Huber 2004). This is especially important because volunteer labour constitutes a vital human resource for most nonprofit organizations (NPOs) (Studer 2016). For example, in Belgium 12.5% of people aged 15 years and over are volunteers in an organization (Marée, Hustinx, Xhaufleur, De Keyser, and Verhaeghe 2015).

Moreover, stereotypes about groups depend on their socio-structural characteristics, such as their resources and intergroup status (Fiske, Xu, Cuddy, and Glick 1999). It is likewise relevant to question whether and how stereotypical perceptions can change within the specific organizational context of NPOs (Netting et al. 2004), because many have started to professionalize significantly, that is, to become more business-like (Maier, Meyer, and Steinbereithner 2016; Vantilborgh, Bidee, Pepermans, Willems, Huybrechts, and Jegers 2011). This means that they tend to adopt for-profit organizations' managerial practices, such as occupational training or the use of efficiency and performance indicators (Anheier 2009). In other words, such a context likely provides more professional resources to volunteers.

Up to now, very little has been known about how professionalization affects stereotypical perceptions of the volunteering workforce (Ferreira, Proença, and Proença 2015; Ganesh and McAllum 2012), and there is a significant absence of reliable quantitative measures of this professionalization phenomenon.

Consequently, to fill these glaring gaps in the literature, we have developed two related studies that respectively address, on the one hand, stereotypes that the general population holds about volunteers and, in comparison, paid employees and, on the other hand, stereotypes that volunteers hold regarding their own group, and how these stereotypes change in the context of NPOs' professionalization.

To our knowledge, our study is the first to assess how both people in general and volunteers in particular perceive the unpaid labour force, and how the professionalization of NPOs influences these perceptions. In doing so, we are making a significant contribution to the literature on social perceptions of volunteering (Ho and O'Donohoe 2014). We are also responding to the call of authors such as Vantilborgh et al. (2011), Vantilborgh and Van Puyvelde (2017) and Alfes, Antunes, and Shantz (2017) for research exploring the consequences of NPOs' professionalization. In addition, we use a quantitative measure of professionalization that can be helpful to the nonprofit research community. We believe that knowing how stereotypical representations are framed by the evolution of contextual features can help NPOs improve the image they convey to external stakeholders. Furthermore, it can allow them to manage the effects of these representations on their workforce (Aaker et al. 2010; Bennett and Sargeant 2005).

Theoretical Background

The Stereotype Content Model (SCM)

We have adopted Judd and Park's (1993) understanding of stereotypes in the following research, referring to a stereotype as a "set of beliefs about the characteristics or attributes of a group" (p. 110). Concretely, we are interested in the beliefs (i.e., perceptions) that the general Belgian population (Study 1) and volunteers (Study 2) hold about volunteers as a social group.

To assess stereotypes of volunteers, we use the Stereotype Content Model (SCM), which has been the subject of flourishing research in the organizational field, among others (see the review of Fiske, 2018). Since the seminal contribution of Fiske et al. (1999), the SCM has been based on the idea that *agents* (i.e., individuals) perceive *targets* (e.g., other individuals, or groups/organizations, or more generally abstract concepts like cultures: Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2008) based on two fundamental dimensions representing stereotypes: warmth and competence (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, and Xu 2002; Kervyn, Fiske, and Malone 2012). While other dimensions have been raised in combination with warmth and competence (e.g., trustworthiness: Dreves, Tscheulin, and Lindenmeier 2014), the literature has shown that the two stereotypes explain most of the variance in the perceptions of individuals (Bufquin, DiPietro, Partlow, and Smith 2018; Wojciszke 1994). In addition to absorbing all aspects of social perceptions, they have been observed in a large variety of cultures and countries (Cuddy et al. 2008; Fiske 2018; Kervyn, Fiske, and Yzerbyt 2013).

Concretely, the SCM considers that a target can be judged as warm or cold and competent or incompetent, that is, it can be accorded positive or negative values on the warmth and competence dimensions respectively. Perceptions of warmth indicate that agents consider the target to be friendly and sociable (or on the contrary unfriendly), whereas perceptions of competence suggest that the target is

considered to be efficient and proficient (or on the contrary incapable). These inquire as to whether agents see the target as having (or not having) laudable intentions toward them, whereas judgments of competence specify whether or not the target is readily able to follow through on these intentions (Cuddy, Glick, and Beninger 2011; Fiske et al. 2002).

The extent to which a target is judged warm and competent is correlated respectively with its perceived competition and status (Fiske et al. 2002). A target is judged as competitive when one considers it as taking away resources from others, and as possessing a high status when one considers it as being prestigious, well educated, or economically successful (Fiske et al. 2002). The SCM postulates that warmth and competence combine to create a unique set of emotions towards groups in each stereotype category. For example, pity is elicited toward non-competitive and low-status groups that are seen as warm but incompetent, such as elderly people and working mothers (Cuddy et al. 2011). Figure 1 depicts the model of the SCM.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

The SCM has also highlighted a compensation effect between the two dimensions: for instance, when comparing two targets (e.g., two groups), judging one target as warm will result in judging the other target as incompetent (Judd, James-Hawkins, Yzerbyt, and Kashima 2005; Kervyn, Yzerbyt, Demoulin, and Judd 2008; Kervyn, Judd, and Yzerbyt 2009). The compensation effect would also occur within the target (e.g., one person), meaning that when it is for instance judged as competent, it is simultaneously seen as cold (Holoien and Fiske 2013). This effect is the opposite of the halo effect, according to which perceptions are positively related

to each other (e.g., if agents perceive a target as warm, then they automatically perceive it as competent as well: Yzerbyt, Kervyn, and Judd 2008).

The SCM has been applied, among others, to management studies (Cuddy et al. 2011). For instance, Aaker et al. (2010) found that people perceive NPOs as warm while for-profit businesses are usually seen as competent. In the following, we suggest that their findings can be transferred from the organizational-level (i.e., NPOs vs. for-profit organizations) to the individual-level (i.e., volunteers vs. paid employees).

Volunteering Versus Paid Staff

Although volunteering has always been part of the labour market, it is only in recent decades that it has begun to receive academic attention. The idea that altruism, or the achieving of an ideal, is considered one of the main reasons for people to volunteer is widespread (Leete 2006), albeit other reasons such as career or functional motives can also play a role (Houle, Sagarin, and Kaplan 2005). Volunteers themselves perceive the volunteering activity as being highly altruistic, and they consider that if they would receive external rewards, such as financial advantages (which are typical of the paid workforce), this could only harm their reputation (Bidee, Vantilborgh, Pepermans, Huybrechts, Willems, Jegers, and Hofmans 2013; Carpenter and Myers 2010). Moreover, pro-social attitudes seem to be more typical of volunteers (Briggs, Peterson, and Gregory 2010). As an example, while formal care often involves paid labour, volunteers are usually associated with informal care due to the support they bring to others (Fine 2015), and paid caregivers are generally perceived as less warm than unpaid caregivers (Meagher 2006).

Focusing on personality differences, Elshaug and Metzger (2001) noticed that volunteers are more agreeable than paid employees performing the same activity. Similarly, volunteers tend to have a more empathic personality than paid employees (Mitani 2014). Earlier research (Mitchell and Shuff 1995) even found that volunteers were more likely to display traits that are related to feelings (for example, agreeableness, associated with warmth: Aaker 1997; Elshaug and Metzger 2001) than to thoughts (for example, conscientiousness, more related to competence: Kervyn et al. 2012).

Using the SCM, García-Ael, Cuadrado, and Molero (2018) found that paid employees were generally perceived as more competent than warm. Most analyses have assumed that volunteers are less professional than paid employees because, unlike occupational groups, they receive limited training, are less skilled and have lower power/status (Ganesh and McAllum 2012), suggesting that volunteers would be perceived as less competent than paid employees according to the SCM's mechanisms (i.e., compensation effect). Moreover, although rarely related to the idea of paid labour, competence has been depicted as not being aligned with the typical orientations or values that volunteers adopt in their work, suggesting that competence is inconsistent with the idea of volunteering (Boezeman and Ellemers 2008; Ruoranen, Klenk, Schlesinger, Bayle, Clausen, Giauque, and Nagel 2016). Moreover, as Overgaard (2019) noted, one belief that still prevails regarding volunteering is that "money drives out love." This could be translated here in terms of stereotypes: from the moment money (paid employment) enters into play, love, kindness and warmth leave it.

As far as we are aware, no study has applied the SCM to the distinction between the paid and unpaid workforce. While our focus is on volunteers, we also

examine stereotypes of paid employees, mostly as a point of comparison to volunteers. Furthermore, this is done in Belgium, a country where volunteering constitutes a major segment of the labour market (Marée et al. 2015).

Contextual Changes of NPOs

Since the early 1980s, many NPOs have implemented considerable changes that have increased their similarity to for-profit organizations—a phenomenon labelled in the literature as “professionalization” or “becoming business-like” (Dart 2004; Maier et al. 2016; Vantilborgh et al. 2011). Concretely, this means that they adopt, for example, for-profit tools and managerial practices. There are multiple reasons for this to occur, such as the need for NPOs to compete with for-profit and public organizations which have started to offer similar services (Dobrai and Farkas 2008). Moreover, cuts in government funding reduce economic resources for many NPOs, leading these organizations to apply business models and practices (Hwang and Powell 2009). Increased competition for limited government funds also leads NPOs to set higher standards of performance (Dobrai and Farkas 2008).

Some research on NPOs has reported that professionalization has several effects and implications for the organizations themselves and for both volunteers and paid employees. From the NPOs' perspective, becoming more business-like may have consequences, such as employing more paid staff or providing more formal education credentials and training to volunteers (Lundström 2001). This is the case for all types of NPOs, yet in human service organizations, in particular, it can have deleterious effects when profit is at the expense of service quality, leading to beneficiaries' mistreatment (Meagher and Szebehely 2019).

With respect to volunteers, professionalization requires higher levels of qualification, and this is likely to have repercussions for volunteers' own practices and identities (Ganesh and McAllum 2012). Although the professionalization phenomenon holds certain benefits for NPOs, such as growth and efficiency, it may lessen the nonprofit spirit and lead to diminished participation. Kelley, Lune, and Murphy (2005) demonstrated that professionalization might lead to a breakdown of volunteer commitment in an organization. Similarly, Hwang and Powell (2009) showed that, on the one hand, the introduction of business-like tools and procedures from the profit sector and, on the other hand, the higher involvement of paid professionals in the nonprofit sector, lead to a decline in volunteers' motivation. King (2017) reported that while becoming professionalized could be positively experienced (for example, if a NPO was perceived as more organized, and financially responsible), it induced judgements that volunteers and NPOs were more distant from the social mission, suggesting that perceptions of NPOs and volunteers as being warm could be impaired. Ultimately, professionalization can slowly blur the distinction between NPOs and for-profit organizations (Brainard and Siplon 2004) and, consequently, it can increase perceptions of volunteers as being competent rather than warm (Aaker et al. 2010; King 2017).

Hypotheses

Building on this research, we have conducted two related studies. Since up to now it has been unclear how volunteers are perceived as a social group (Ho and O'Donohoe 2014), in the first study we examine stereotypes that the general population (i.e., agent) holds regarding volunteers and paid employees (i.e., targets)

using the SCM (Fiske et al. 1999). When comparing the two groups and due to the compensation effect (Judd et al. 2005), we suggest the following hypotheses:

H1: Volunteers will be perceived as warmer than paid employees.

H2: Paid employees will be perceived as more competent than volunteers.

In the second study, we switch from the general population's point-of-view to that of volunteers (i.e., they become the agents) by examining which stereotypes they hold regarding their own group (i.e., target), in order to replicate the analysis, focusing on a sample of volunteers. It will allow us to understand how volunteers reflect about their own group. We further examine how these stereotypes are influenced by the phenomenon of NPOs' professionalization, since we are interested in the impact of professionalization beyond the stereotypical perceptions. This leads to the following hypotheses:

H3: Volunteers will perceive their ingroup (that is, volunteers in general) as warmer rather than competent.

H4: The more volunteers perceive NPOs as becoming professionalized, the less they will perceive their ingroup as warm and the more they will perceive it as competent.

Study 1

Participants and Procedure

A questionnaire was developed for the purpose of Study 1 and distributed online via the social networks of the research assistant of one of the authors who had been involved in some volunteering activities, as well as through the site of a French-speaking association for volunteers in Belgium. These channels were chosen

to create a sample of respondents as large and diverse as possible (i.e. including, among others, employees and volunteers) in the French-speaking part of Belgium. In order to increase the participation rate, potential participants were offered the chance to win two movie tickets by taking part in a raffle. The online questionnaire was composed of an information sheet explaining the nature of the research, stating that it was anonymous, as well as an informed consent form, and the questionnaire itself.

Among the 496 potential respondents (i.e., opened questionnaires), 233 participants answered the items related to the main variable (i.e., stereotypical perceptions), and among them, 19 participants did not provide socio-demographic information. The following, therefore, depicts these socio-demographics for the remaining sample of 214 individuals, although we used the total sample ($N = 233$) for all the analyses of Study 1. The majority of the respondents were women (70.1%), and 57.9% were students, while 26.6% were paid employees (the rest being unemployed, freelance, or retired). The fact that about half of the sample was composed of students is not surprising. Belgium is a country where young people show one of the highest average number of hours volunteering (Marée et al. 2015). They usually get involved at an early age in volunteering activities, most of the time through responsibilities in youth movements (e.g., the Scout movement, which is very widespread in Belgium, GHK 2010). Therefore, they may be considered as a significant part of the public interested in volunteering. Precisely, despite they were not volunteering at the time of the survey, most of the participants had volunteered in the past (44.4%). The others either had never volunteered (32.7%) or were still volunteers (22.9%). For this last group, about half had done so for one to four years (43.2%). The majority (61.4%) volunteered between one to five hours per week. 54.5% of them combined this volunteer activity with a paid job, and 50% combined it

with another volunteer activity. Participants worked as volunteers mainly in sectors related to education (e.g., children and youth) (50.4%) and social work (e.g., integration of foreigners) (18.7%).

Measures

The language used in the survey was French, since this study took place in the French-speaking part of Belgium. We used back-translation to translate items from English to French (Brislin 1970).

Stereotypes: General instructions to the participants were adapted from Cuddy et al. (2008), telling them that the questions they were presented with concerned the way they thought that other people perceived this specific target, and *not* the way they themselves would perceive them. This allowed us to control for issues related to participants' social desirability. All the participants had to grade the two targets (volunteers and paid employees working in NPOs) from 0% ("Not representative at all") to 100% ("Fully representative"), using ten items (five for the warmth dimension and five for the competence dimension). These items were adapted from the research of Fiske et al. (2002), Cuddy et al. (2008), and Brambilla, Carnaghi, and Ravenna (2011), and can be found (in French and English) in the appendix.

Control variables: Participants were required to indicate their gender, age, occupational status (paid employee, student, retired or pre-retired, unemployed, or freelance) and work experience as a volunteer (if any). Since age and occupational status were significantly correlated with paid employees' perceived competence as dependent variable, we controlled for them in the analyses (Becker 2005).

Results

Descriptive statistics, correlations, and Cronbach alphas (which are acceptable to excellent: DeVellis 2012) are shown in Table 1. Controlling for age and occupational status, findings showed a significant interaction effect of the 2 (target: volunteers and paid employees) x 2 (dimension: warmth and competence) ANOVA ($F(1, 211) = 66.805, p < .001, \eta^2 = .24$). Volunteers were perceived as warmer than paid employees ($F(1, 211) = 44.133, p < .001, \eta^2 = .17$) while paid employees were seen as more competent than volunteers ($F(1, 211) = 24.968, p < .001, \eta^2 = .11$). Thus, Hypotheses 1 and 2 were supported.

[INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Complementarily, the ANOVA showed that volunteers were perceived as significantly warmer rather than competent ($F(1, 211) = 62.991, p < .001; \eta^2 = .23$) while employees were perceived as slightly but significantly more competent than warm ($F(1, 211) = 8.467, p < .001; \eta^2 = .04$).

Study 2

Participants and Procedure

The second study relies on data collected during two Belgian volunteering exhibitions, which were attended by volunteers from various NPOs. Authorizations for survey distribution were received from the organizational committee and a total sample of 128 volunteers was gathered for the study. The questionnaire was distributed only in a paper-and-pencil version. Participants had the option of returning their completed questionnaire directly to the researcher who was present at

a stand in the exhibition, or returning it in a box at the reception office. As an incentive, a similar raffle to Study 1 was organized.

The majority of participants were female (75%), with a secondary degree (57%). Most of the participants (47.7%) were retired, the rest were working as freelance or as permanent/temporary employees, were unemployed, or were still studying. They were engaged in their current NPO for an average of 8.51 years ($SD = 9.92$) and in their volunteering activities for an average of 9.4 hours per week ($SD = 10.58$). The majority of participants worked as volunteers mainly in sectors related to social work, including services to older people (49.2%) and health (16.7%). 13.3% volunteered in the youth sector (i.e., education). These characteristics were in line with the depiction of the general profile of volunteers in Belgium (Handy et al. 2010; Marée et al. 2015).

Measures

Similarly to Study 1, participants were also required to indicate their age, gender, level of education (primary school, secondary school, and university or similar), sector of current volunteer activity, seniority (or volunteering activity tenure), and hours volunteered per week. Since none of these variables correlated with the dependent variables, we did not take them into account (Becker 2005).

Stereotypes. We used the same scale and approach as in Study 1 to measure volunteers' perceptions of warmth and competence.

Perceived NPOs' professionalization. We used a scale that measures an individual's perception of the extent to which a NPO is professionalizing. Building on the theoretical framework of Hwang and Powell (2009) and Vantilborgh et al. (2011), this original scale contains 40 items (see the appendix) that capture four characteristics

of NPO professionalization, namely rationalization, professionalism, managerialism, and a commercial focus (Bynoe 2012). Respondents were asked to reflect on whether each indicator could be observed in their NPO during the past three years. All items were scored using a dichotomous response format ("yes" was coded 1, and "no" was coded 0). Five independent experts evaluated the face- and content-validity of this measure. All items were considered to be appropriate indicators of professionalization, and the experts agreed on the specific characteristics of professionalization measured for the majority of items ($kappa = .63$, $z = 21.4$, $p < .001$). Disagreements were resolved through discussion until consensus was reached. Since this scale was originally developed to measure managers' perceptions of professionalization, we selected for this study the items most relevant to volunteers' activity, for each dimension of the scale. For example, we selected item 2 ("In the past three years, my organization replaced paid staff by volunteers") but we did not include item 24 ("In the past three years, my organization used cost-benefit analysis") because most volunteers are probably unaware of their NPO cost-benefit procedure. The 19 selected items are flagged in the table in the appendix. Finally, for these 19 items, we checked the factor structure of the measure with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in Mplus version 7, using the WLSMV estimator as the items are categorical. Employing CFA rather than exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is recommended when there is a strong theoretical basis for the hypothesized model, such as in our study (Williams 1995). In addition, it allowed us to assess the fit of the model to the data and to compare the hypothesized model against alternative model(s). The hypothesized model has four first-order latent factors (rationalization, professionalism, managerialism, and a commercial focus) which load on a second-order latent factor (NPO professionalization) (see the appendix). This

hypothesized model offered a good fit to the data ($\chi^2(148) = 218.81, p < .001$, RMSEA = .06, CFI = .90). In addition, this hypothesized model offered a significantly better fit to the data than a model in which all items directly loaded on a single latent factor (NPO professionalization) ($\Delta\chi^2(4) = 82.39, p < .001$).

Results

Descriptive statistics, correlations, and Cronbach alphas are shown in Table 2. On average, volunteers perceived their group as warmer ($M = 8.96, SD = 1.42$) rather than competent ($M = 7.86, SD = 1.55$), ($F(1,127) = 84.558, p < .001, \eta^2 = .40$). Thus, H3 was supported.

[INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

To investigate the role played by NPOs' perceived professionalization on the stereotypical dimensions of warmth and competence, we performed hierarchical regressions (see Table 3). Due to their strong intercorrelation (see Table 2), we first controlled for the stereotypical dimension that was not tested (for example, if warmth was the dependent variable, then competence was the control variable). Specifically, after competence was controlled for, volunteers who considered that NPOs were professionalizing were less likely to perceive their ingroup as warm ($\beta = -.15, p < .05$). However, the perception of NPOs becoming increasingly more business-like was not significantly related to the perception of volunteers as competent, after controlling for warmth ($\beta = -.04, p = .58$). H4 was therefore confirmed for warmth but not for competence.

[INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

Discussion

The findings of our two studies underline specificities regarding (1) how volunteers and paid employees are perceived by the general population, (2) how volunteers perceive their ingroup as being competent and warm and (3) how these perceptions are influenced by the context (i.e., NPOs' professionalization). Table 4 summarizes the hypotheses and indicates whether or not they are supported.

[INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

First, our sample of the general population (Study 1), as well as the sample of volunteers (Study 2), consider volunteers as generally warmer rather than competent. This is in line with the literature linking stereotypical perceptions about volunteers to their altruistic role in society (Bidee et al. 2013). When compared to paid employees, volunteers were viewed as warmer, reinforcing their image as being a generous and friendly group. In contrast, paid employees were judged as the most competent, and volunteers as least competent.

Comparing rankings of warmth and competence, a compensation effect (Yzerbyt et al. 2008) seemed present. This effect applies both to the between-targets level and to the within-target level. Concretely, in the first case, the fact that one target is mostly representative of one dimension (e.g., paid employees are perceived as competent) infers that the other target is representative of the other dimension (e.g., volunteers are perceived as warm). In the second case, the compensation phenomenon appears for both volunteers and paid employees working in NPOs.

Perceptions of volunteers as a less competent group are counteracted by perceptions of the same group as warmer. Regarding paid employees, they are judged as more competent than warm, although the difference is less striking than for volunteers. Likewise, we found correlations between competence and warmth within, as well as between, volunteers and paid employees. They are, however, not necessarily in conflict with our ANOVA outcome. While perceptions (i.e., warmth and competence) are interrelated (as can be seen in the correlations), examining them in a comparative context (i.e., between the targets 'volunteers' and 'paid employees') plays a role (as can be seen in the ANOVA). In other words, the two dimensions can possibly behave differently when they are considered in a social comparison context, although they are linked (Fiske 2018).

Second, findings from Study 2 show that when volunteers consider that NPOs are becoming increasingly professionalized, they consider their ingroup (i.e., volunteers) as less warm. This somehow supports the idea that money *can* drive out love (Overgaard 2019): the trend to be more productive and business-like (i.e., preoccupied with money) impacts volunteers as a group typically (self-)perceived as "loving" or caring. This could be a risk or unintended negative side effect of professionalization (Ferreira et al. 2015), since altruism (i.e., showing warmth) is at the heart of the volunteers' role. According to the stereotype, becoming or remaining a volunteer implies that individuals convey a warm and friendly attitude. Since professionalization may damage this perception, the question emerges as to why one would be willing to still volunteer. Contrary to findings that professionalization might bring increased expectations about volunteers' competence (King 2017; Ruoronen et al. 2016), or that with professionalization comes stronger efficiency (Mitchell 2016), our results show that volunteers who perceive higher

professionalization do not regard their group as being more competent. Specifically, we found no significant relationship between perceived professionalization and perceived competence.

In brief, professionalization seems to have the potential to be detrimental to the traditional image of volunteers being warm, but not to reinforce perceptions of volunteers as competent. In this sense, professionalization can be seen as a threat rather than a resource for volunteers, leading potentially to an absence of motivation (Bidee et al. 2013) or disruptive behaviours (Jaskyte 2017). For instance, if volunteers perceive themselves as less warm due to the professionalization of their NPO, the chances are high that paid employees feel the same way about volunteers. This could be problematic, because mutual perceptions are at the core of inter-group interactions (Laczo and Hanisch 1999) and if these perceptions happen to be misleading, they could trigger increasing conflict between the two groups of workers (Rimes, Nesbit, Christensen, and Brudney 2017).

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite the contribution of our findings, we need to acknowledge several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design of the studies does not allow us to draw any conclusion about causality. While stereotypical perceptions may change over time (Duehr and Bono 2006), this should be examined in the context of the ongoing professionalization phenomenon. The question remains as to whether stereotypes that individuals have about each other may vary over time, and if so, the nature of the role of professionalization in this process. We particularly encourage future researchers to assess stereotypes longitudinally within the framework of NPOs' professionalization, particularly because this could shed light on whether (changes

in) stereotypes are causes or effects of professionalization (Maier et al. 2016). A useful direction leading to the assessment of causal relationships would also be to determine the reasons why individuals generally consider volunteers a warm group. Beyond the impact of status and/or competition (i.e., the social factors that influence stereotypes of competence and warmth respectively), this could be achieved by, for instance, interviewing participants with open-ended questions, in order to understand what drives the mechanisms leading to such perceptions.

Second, the size of our samples (especially in Study 2) may limit the generalizability of our findings. Moreover, our two samples mostly consisted of female participants. Nevertheless, our samples are quite representative of two main volunteering sectors in Belgium, social services and education (i.e. youth services) (Marée et al. 2015). While women are more likely to volunteer than men (Rotolo and Wilson 2006), especially in sectors like education (Marée et al. 2015), this could have influenced our findings. Indeed, as volunteerism is associated with the stereotypical dimension of warmth, this dimension is also linked to feminine traits (Eckes 2002). Consequently, our participants might not have disentangled these two groups when asked to stereotypically judge volunteers. However, since gender was not related to stereotypical perceptions in our two studies, the chances that it played a role are minimal.

Third, our study dealt with perceptions. We did not intend to study whether they match the reality of how volunteers *really* are and how they *actually* change and adapt their behaviour in the context of professionalization. Future research should examine several aspects of potential consequences of our findings which we cannot acknowledge here, such as behaviours. In particular, considering the relationships between paid employees and volunteers, Kreutzer and Jäger (2011) pointed out how

professionalization enforces conflict between the two groups. For instance, when volunteers—typically perceived as warm—would be led to accomplish the same tasks as paid employees, and given that they would be aware of how they are generally perceived, they would purposely diminish their warm side by behaving, for instance, in a less friendly manner, in order to appear as more competent. This way, they could be more likely to compete with paid employees (Holoien and Fiske 2013). Conversely, paid employees may feel threatened by volunteers, especially in a working context that pushes volunteers to be more professionalized, but also by conflicting perceptions about hybrid identities that professionalization brings (Sanders and McClellan 2014). Future research should analyze the effects of NPOs' professionalization on stereotypes about both volunteers *and* paid employees.

Fourth, other contextual dimensions should be taken into account to make the impact of perceived professionalization on perceptions more salient. Results of various studies have been shown to be strongly related to the country-context. Overgaard (2015) for example found that volunteers in Denmark were not allowed to provide direct care to patients in a hospice, whereas in Australia they could participate in such work. This shows that the relation between (and potentially perceptions of) professional paid workers and volunteers are different according to the country in which volunteering activities take place. Furthermore, volunteering is more frequent in the northern European countries rather than in the southern ones (Papa, Cutuli, Principi, and Scherer 2019), and most research on volunteers is conducted outside of regions such as Africa (Kühn, Stiglbauer, and Fifka 2018). Therefore, the country-context is of primary importance when analyzing research findings and, as a result, we suggest forthcoming investigations examine how volunteers are perceived in regions other than Belgium.

Finally, to the best of our knowledge, our study is one of the first to examine effects of perceived NPOs' professionalization using a theoretically-driven quantitative scale. Indeed, while interest in the topic of NPOs' professionalization has been rising lately in the literature, most investigations have looked at this trend from an exploratory point-of-view (e.g., with qualitative data: Kelley et al. 2005; Kreutzer and Jäger 2011; Ruoranen et al. 2016). However, since the nonprofit research community becomes more and more aware of the necessity to rigorously develop scales that are valid and reliable across cultures and contexts (e.g., Wymer, Gross, and Helmig 2016), our scale needs to be fully validated by future research. Our study has furthermore shown that in the specific case of stereotypes, the NPOs' professionalization scale highlighted some organizational conditions of volunteers' negative stereotyping (i.e., considering volunteers to be cold). More generally, the professionalization scale could help scholars to better understand perceptions of NPOs' professionalization and potentially its consequences for reliability (Vantilborgh and Van Puyvelde 2017), turnover intentions (Ferreira et al. 2015) and the like, among volunteers and paid employees. In particular, future research should investigate how to buffer the negative consequences of professionalization, while maintaining the emphasis on its positive influences (Vantilborgh et al. 2011).

Conclusion

The two surveys in this paper demonstrate that pro-social traits (in terms of warmth) are the core of perceptions of volunteer' work role. Consequently, volunteers appear especially congruent with NPOs' social mission. Strikingly, findings of Study 2 showed that NPOs' perceived professionalization decreased volunteers' perceived warmth while it did not increase perceptions of them as

competent. Finally, our research proposes a quantitative scale of perceived professionalization that can potentially be further validated, in order to help researchers better understand the effects of the way individuals consider NPOs to be professionalizing.

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