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Extending organizational socialization theory: Empirical evidence from volunteer work for refugees in France and Australia

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Abstract

How are volunteers who provide assistance to refugees socialized into their organizations? Known as the process through which newcomers evolve from organizational outsiders into insiders, socialization is particularly crucial among volunteers, as they often help vulnerable groups such as refugees. To examine this issue, which is critical to both scholars and practitioners, we draw on a large-scale qualitative study conducted in France and Australia. Based on triangulated data from 42 in-depth interviews, 17 hours of participant observations and document analysis, we shed light on the socialization of volunteers. We identify a three-stage process during which volunteers become insiders: (i) familiarizing with the role; (ii) bonding with the group; and (iii) embedding into the organization. Each stage consists of tactics, learning domains, emotions and outcomes that are particularly salient to the volunteer experience. With only slight differences between the two countries, our model extends organizational socialization theory by uncovering a process that allows volunteers to feel confident in their role, integrated into their team and part of a larger purpose. We also contribute to debates on volunteer management by highlighting organizational tactics that fit the volunteer experience.

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Introduction

Worldwide, 970 million individuals volunteer (Diez de Medina, 2017). These volunteers are a critical resource to nonprofit organizations (NPOs) in tackling large and complex societal issues, such as the global refugee crisis (Berrone et al., 2016; Greene, 2012). As many NPOs rely heavily on their voluntary workforce (non-paid staff) to accomplish their mission, they must understand how volunteers experience their work, and subsequently manage them in a way that promotes this experience. This is particularly important, because research shows that volunteers who are not satisfied with their experience are likely to leave their organization (Butt et al., 2017). A crucial phase of the volunteer experience is organizational entry (Bauer et al., 2007; Haski-Leventhal and Bargal, 2008). Therefore, understanding this phase is essential for developing organizational socialization tactics (i.e. practices aimed at facilitating a volunteer's transition from organizational outsider to insider; see Bauer et al., 2007) that fit volunteers.

Most research on organizational socialization tactics has approached the entry phase as one portion of the process (Bauer et al., 2007; Jones, 1986). However, in practice, new volunteers are likely to face several steps during the entry period as they familiarize themselves with their role, their group and the wider organization (Haski-Leventhal and Bargal, 2008). Therefore, it is unlikely that they will adjust to all facets simultaneously and instantaneously (Ellis et al., 2015; McAllum, 2018). By taking a monolithic approach to the entry period, research cannot fully capture the progression of volunteers and the dynamic nature of their experience. In addition, a lack of understanding of the complex, multi-faceted nature of the entry phase makes it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of organizational tactics in supporting volunteers to become organizational insiders. For instance, in order to learn their role, volunteers may need stronger support at the beginning of their entry into the organization rather than a few months later. Hence, unpacking this process enables NPOs to develop tailored organizational tactics for the different stages of the volunteering entry phase.

In this study, we explore the volunteer socialization experience during the entry period by examining the following: how volunteers are socialized into their role, group and organization; what socialization tactics are used to support their learning; and what outcomes indicate their socialization progression. To answer these questions, we provide an in-depth analysis of volunteers' trajectory to becoming organizational insiders. We draw on data from 42 in-depth interviews, 17 hours of participant observations and over 200 pages of document analysis in the context of volunteer work for refugees in two countries, that is, France and Australia. Despite the importance of volunteer work in helping refugees, this context remains underexplored, and yet we need more knowledge to provide efficient assistance to the growing number of refugees (Florian et al., 2019; McAllum, 2018).

This article makes important contributions to organizational socialization theory and volunteering research. First, we deconstruct an essential phase of the newcomer

socialization process—the entry phase—by highlighting three stages that are necessary to become an 'organizational insider' (Bauer et al., 2007: 707). By providing a more fine-grained analysis of the socialization process, we shed light on what leads to effective socialization (Bauer et al., 2007; Reichers, 1987) and contribute to a central debate amongst scholars (Cooper-Thomas and Anderson, 2006). Improving socialization is particularly important in the context of volunteering, because daily practices and ties developed during this process may well prevent volunteers from changing their organization or quitting volunteering altogether (Hustinx, 2010; Wilson, 2012).

Second, whereas most volunteering research takes a static perspective (i.e. the volunteer experience is viewed as not changing over time), the present study considers the volunteer experience as a dynamic one (Hustinx et al., 2010; Wilson, 2012). Extending our knowledge of the dynamic nature of volunteering contributes to the person–environment fit literature (Englert et al., 2020), as it opens up avenues for researchers to examine practices that match volunteers' needs at the different stages of the volunteering cycle. Doing so is important, in order to increase the professionalism of the nonprofit sector and improve the management of volunteers (Hwang and Powell, 2009; Traeger and Alfes, 2019).

Third, by examining organizational socialization in the context of volunteering for refugees—a non-traditional work arrangement in a high-adversity environment—we are able to identify unexpected emotional challenges, novel forms and contents of tactics, and new immediate volunteering outcomes (Ashforth et al., 2007a; Bourgoin and Harvey, 2018). We therefore highlight the main emotions volunteers encounter on their way to becoming organizational insiders and discuss how learning and organizational tactics can help them manage their emotions.

Literature review

Organizational socialization research

Organizational socialization has been defined as a process through which newcomers become familiar with their organization and the behaviors expected of them (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979). Through this process, newcomers evolve from organizational outsiders to insiders (Bauer et al., 2007). We identify four main streams of research in organizational socialization: socialization processes, tactics, learning domains and outcomes.

The first stream of research focuses on examining three main phases of the socialization process: anticipatory socialization, organizational entry and post-entry (Bourgoin and Harvey, 2018; Haski-Leventhal and Bargal, 2008; Kramer, 2010). First, anticipatory socialization describes what happens before newcomers enter their organization (Kramer, 2010), including the recruitment and selection processes during which they have their initial encounters with the organization (Schneider et al., 1995). In this phase, newcomers form expectations and images of the organizational reality (Louis, 1980). Second, organizational entry describes new members' first months inside the organization and their experience of its reality (Bourgoin and Harvey, 2018). This phase may include culture shock and surprise, leading some to revise their expectations and engage in a process of sensemaking (Louis, 1980). Third, post-entry is the period in which newcomers see themselves as full members of the organization, followed by possible

attrition (Haski-Leventhal and Bargal, 2008; Kramer, 2010). By dividing organizational socialization into key phases around the physical displacement of newcomers (outside, inside and exiting the organization), scholars have improved our understanding of their experiences during this process and have provided a springboard for research to investigate the role of socialization tactics in each stage.

A second area of study explores socialization tactics used by organizations to support this process. Most influential in this regard is the work of Van Maanen and Schein (1979), later extended by Jones (1986), who classified socialization tactics into two types: institutionalized and individualized tactics. The former are associated with structured and formalized socialization, aiming to provide newcomers with systematic information (Jones, 1986). Individualized tactics, on the other hand, are associated with a lack of formal structure and provide unsystematic and random information to newcomers (Jones, 1986). This classification of tactics is largely used in empirical studies (e.g. Kim et al., 2005; Lapointe et al., 2014; Saks and Gruman, 2011) to test the effectiveness of socialization tactics, mainly without distinguishing the aforementioned socialization phases.

A third stream of research examines newcomers' learning. More specifically, socialization scholars have sought to understand how individual socialization tactics facilitate their adjustment to their organization (Bourgoin and Harvey, 2018). This research highlights different learning domains that are crucial for full integration into a new organization: (i) learning about their role, their tasks and the organization; and (ii) assimilation into workgroups and the organization (Morrison, 2002). This stream of research has identified a large array of learning content that newcomers must incorporate during the first months of activity (Cooper-Thomas and Anderson, 2006). For instance, they need to develop knowledge of organizational history, goals, missions and visions (Cooper-Thomas and Anderson, 2006; Schneider et al., 1995), learn how to perform their tasks, and develop an understanding of their role and how to carry it out. A vast amount of attention has been given to *what* newcomers learn during their first months and *how* this relates to outcomes, such as role clarity, performance and turnover (Bauer et al., 2007; Bourgoin and Harvey, 2018; Cooper-Thomas and Anderson, 2006).

Research on newcomers' learning also highlights the importance of understanding emotions, and takes three main perspectives. First, some scholars (e.g. Bauer and Erdogan, 2014; Ellis et al., 2015) approach socialization from a stress perspective and conceptualize emotions as the result of a stressor (e.g. role complexity, pressure) that can interfere with individuals' learning ability. A second, more normative, perspective focuses on the extent to which newcomers learn about what emotions are acceptable in their new organization and how to adjust their own emotions to create a better fit (Choi, 2018; Guo, 2019). Third, research has taken a process perspective (e.g. Haski-Leventhal and Bargal, 2008) to uncover what emotions are experienced during organization socialization and how they evolve. This perspective resonates with research examining emotions in the workplace, which stresses the importance of capturing the natural arising of emotions as part of organizational life from a process perspective (Elfenbein, 2007).

A fourth stream of research focuses on the outcomes of organizational socialization and mostly explores distal outcomes such as performance, satisfaction and intent to remain (Ashforth et al., 2007b). Although distal outcomes are crucial to the long-term survival of organizations, they do not necessarily capture whether newcomers have

successfully become organizational insiders (Bauer et al., 2007; Ellis et al., 2015). Researchers have therefore suggested examining proximal outcomes to reflect the transformation that newcomers undergo during socialization (Bauer et al., 2007). Proximal outcomes include the more immediate results of the socialization experience—for example, role clarity, self-efficacy and social acceptance (Bauer et al., 2007)—and play an important role in influencing distal outcomes, such as organizational commitment and intent to remain (Ellis et al., 2015).

Although research on organizational socialization phases, tactics and learning has improved our understanding of how newcomers enter an organization, we still lack knowledge on how the interrelations between each of these concepts lead to specific patterns and outcomes. Specifically, how a learning domain is intertwined with tactics during each socialization phase to generate outcomes has received little attention (Saks and Gruman, 2018) and therefore limits our understanding of what makes for successful organizational socialization. Capturing how tactics and learning interact at each phase of the socialization process enables us to develop a granular knowledge of what tactics organizations can implement—and at what time point—to support newcomers' learning trajectory. The present study therefore aims to integrate the different streams of organizational socialization research by investigating the organizational socialization of volunteers working for refugees.

Organizational socialization of volunteers

Volunteers are non-paid staff who give their time freely to contribute to the social good and causes that matter to them (Wilson, 2000). In the past two decades, volunteering has become a 'more episodic, noncommittal and self-oriented [type] of participation' (Hustinx, 2010: 236), which has forced NPOs to design and implement new tactics to fit volunteers' unique needs and motivations (Englert et al., 2020; Studer, 2016). For example, they are often driven by personal values and beliefs and a profound need for affiliation and recognition (Butt et al., 2017). However, these motives can vary according to the demographics of volunteers, such as age, education, career and family status (Wilson, 2000). Hence, because of the uniqueness and volatility of the voluntary workforce, organizational processes and tactics developed in a for-profit context cannot be automatically transferred to the volunteering context (Englert et al., 2020; Haski-Leventhal and Bargal, 2008).

A large body of research interested in volunteer socialization has mainly taken a deductive approach to test tactics borrowed from the for-profit context, showing that socialization tactics can promote volunteer outcomes (see Studer and von Schnurbein, 2013, for an overview). For instance, Hidalgo and Moreno (2009) demonstrate that organizational support and training predict volunteers' intention to remain in their organization. Jordan (2009) shows that institutionalized tactics can promote volunteers' perceptions of person–organization fit, organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Contrasting with this dominant approach, the study by Haski-Leventhal and Bargal (2008) takes an inductive approach and highlights the process through which volunteers working in a challenging environment (youth on the streets in Israel) move from the nominee phase to retirement.

Although existing research on volunteer socialization provides important insights into the tactics and processes used by NPOs to socialize newcomers, those studies are mostly based on data collected more than 10 years ago and on theoretical frameworks developed for the for-profit context. In view of the professionalization of volunteer management that took place over the past decade (Powell and Bromley, 2020; Traeger and Alfes, 2019), new tactics and processes might be in place in today's NPOs, so we need more recent empirical examples from the nonprofit context capturing the tactics used in different organizations.

Research on refugee assistance highlights that it can be a demanding and emotionally draining task, as repeated contact with a distressed population can create similar feelings among volunteers, that is, uncertainty, anxiety and stress (Larruina and Ghorashi, 2016; Robinson, 2014). In addition, contradictory discourses from volunteer friends, family, NPOs and society about assisting refugees can lead to conflicting emotions among volunteers (Larruina and Ghorashi, 2016). Finally, NPOs may intensify pressure and stress on volunteers by requiring their commitment to the beneficiaries without preparing them for the demands of their role (McAllum, 2018; Robinson, 2014).

In summary, research on organizational socialization is scattered among four main streams (process, tactics, learning and outcomes), and the lack of integration between these streams limits our capacity to evaluate the effectiveness of organizational efforts in socializing newcomers. Volunteer work for refugees offers an appealing empirical context through which to integrate these streams of research by investigating the volunteer experience after joining the organization. Indeed, the usual lack of a formal contract between volunteers and their NPO, the diversity of volunteers' backgrounds and competencies and the high demands of their activity make their socialization particularly important in helping them become insiders. Hence, we pose the following research questions:

How are volunteers socialized into their role, group and organization?

What socialization tactics are used to support volunteers' learning?

What outcomes indicate volunteers' socialization progression?

Method

Research approach

We chose a qualitative methodology for the study because of the exploratory nature of the research questions and the scarcity of research on volunteers' organizational socialization in the refugee context (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). We view volunteers' organizational socialization as a socially constructed phenomenon (Haski-Leventhal and Bargal, 2008; Mills et al., 2006; Smith and Turner, 1995) that we aim to capture by reconstructing and contrasting the different realities of the volunteer experience. By adopting a constructivist approach, our study contrasts with the majority of volunteering research taking a positivist approach (Weenink and Bridgman, 2017) and resonates with recent

research, such as Englert et al. (2020), aimed at fostering the emergence of new findings and the development of theory building in the field of volunteering.

Sampling strategy

Based on a theoretical sampling strategy (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) we selected individual participants based on their ability to inform our exploration of volunteers' experience of organizational socialization, their individual characteristics (role in the organization: volunteer, coordinator, organizational leader; tenure of volunteers: 3 weeks to 10 months; age: 20 to 81; gender: 35 women and 7 men; education level: high school diploma to PhD), organizational affiliation and country of residence (Englert et al., 2020; Ritchie et al., 2014). Typically, women are overrepresented in volunteering (Wilson, 2000), particularly in the context of refugee assistance (Florian et al., 2019; McAllum, 2018), which is also the case in our sample. Table 1 shows the characteristics of individual participants.

Our sampling process followed Englert et al.'s (2020) three main steps. First, we selected seven individuals in France, based on an open and unstructured sampling strategy. We used these initial interviews to ascertain the fit of our research approach and to specify our research questions. Second, we selected a further 14 individuals in France to increase the diversity of our sample. The participants came from three different organizations and had different tenures, demographics (e.g. age) and organizational roles (volunteers, coordinators and organizational leaders). Having volunteers with different tenures (see Table 1) was particularly beneficial in contrasting between the interviews and identifying the process stages. Including coordinators and organizational leaders helped triangulate volunteers' perceptions. The coordinators could share day-to-day routines; organizational leaders had a more distanced and broader view of the socialization process and use of tactics. As a third step in our sampling process, we chose another 21 participants volunteering for four different organizations in another country, namely Australia, thus allowing us to increase the diversity of our sample further with regards to individual participants, organizations involved in refugee assistance and countries. We stopped conducting interviews when theoretical saturation was achieved (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Our methodological procedure is detailed in Figure 1.

We selected the participating organizations based on their size (numbers of volunteers ranged from 12 to 2500), year of establishment (1939 to 2017), activity (helping refugees) and country (France or Australia). In addition, we aimed to explore whether the socialization experience, implementation of tactics and outcomes were common across different organizations and countries (Wilson, 2012). In total, seven organizations participated in our study; three were based in France and four were based in Australia. They all provided services to refugees, such as assisting them in finding a home or providing legal advice. Table 2 presents the organizations that participated in the study and their respective characteristics.

We began by collecting data in France, at which point we realized that local specificities (e.g. recent local procedures for asylum seekers) influence volunteers' experience of socialization. Thus, we decided to also collect data in Australia, which has a different policy approach to the refugee crisis. On the refugee policy spectrum, France is situated

Table 1. Characteristics of participating individuals.

Role of interviewee	Tenure	Gender	Age	Education level	Organization	Country
Volunteer	3 months	M	81	Unknown	A	France
Volunteer	6 months	W	25	Master's	B	France
Volunteer	7 months	W	53	Master's	A	France
Volunteer	9 months	W	50	PhD	A	France
Volunteer	8 months	W	35	Master's	A	France
Volunteer	3 weeks	W	70	Master's	A	France
Volunteer	5 months	W	22	Master's	B	France
Volunteer	7 months	W	68	Master's	A	France
Volunteer	3 months	W	31	Master's	A	France
Volunteer	5 months	W	29	Master's	A	France
Volunteer	8 months	W	33	Master's	A	France
Volunteer	10 months	M	24	Master's	C	France
Volunteer	3 months	W	21	Bachelor	D	Australia
Volunteer	3 months	W	20	High school diploma	D	Australia
Volunteer	3 months	W	20	High school diploma	D	Australia
Volunteer	3 months	W	20	High school diploma	D	Australia
Volunteer	1 month	W	28	Bachelor's	F	Australia
Volunteer	4 months	W	60	High school diploma	F	Australia
Volunteer	9 months	W	54	Bachelor's	G	Australia
Volunteer	3 weeks	W	20	High school diploma	E	Australia
Volunteer	3 months	W	28	Bachelor's	E	Australia
Volunteer	8 months	W	31	Master's	E	Australia
Volunteer	6 months	M	43	Bachelor's	E	Australia

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

Role of interviewee	Tenure	Gender	Age	Education level	Organization	Country
Volunteer	1 month	M	32	High school diploma	F	Australia
Volunteer	5 months	W	65	Bachelor's	E	Australia
Coordinator	18 months	W	26	Bachelor's	G	Australia
Coordinator	2 years and 11 months	M	36	High school diploma	G	Australia
Coordinator	2 years and 3 months	W	25	Bachelor's	D	Australia
Coordinator	1 year and 9 months	M	35	PhD	D	Australia
Coordinator	1 year and 3 months	W	46	Bachelor's	F	Australia
Coordinator	2 years and 11 months	W	31	Bachelor's	E	Australia
Coordinator	5 years	W	55	Master's	A	France
Coordinator	10 years	W	70	Master's	A	France
Coordinator	1 year and 6 months	M	26	Master's	C	France
Organizational leader	20 years	W	Unknown	Unknown	A	France
Organizational leader	20 years	W	79	Master's	A	France
Organizational leader	Unknown	W	Unknown	Unknown	A	France
Organizational leader	3 years	W	Unknown	Unknown	B	France
Organizational leader	6 months	W	Unknown	Bachelor's	E	Australia
Organizational leader	1 year and 8 months	W	30	Master's	G	Australia
Organizational leader	9 years	W	Unknown	PhD	B	France
Organizational leader	2 years and 6 months	W	27	Master's	C	France

Note: 'Unknown' indicates that the interviewees did not provide this information during the interview. We asked interviewees at the beginning of the interview to share details such as their age and education level, but if they did not provide this information or declined to answer on privacy grounds, we did not ask a second time.

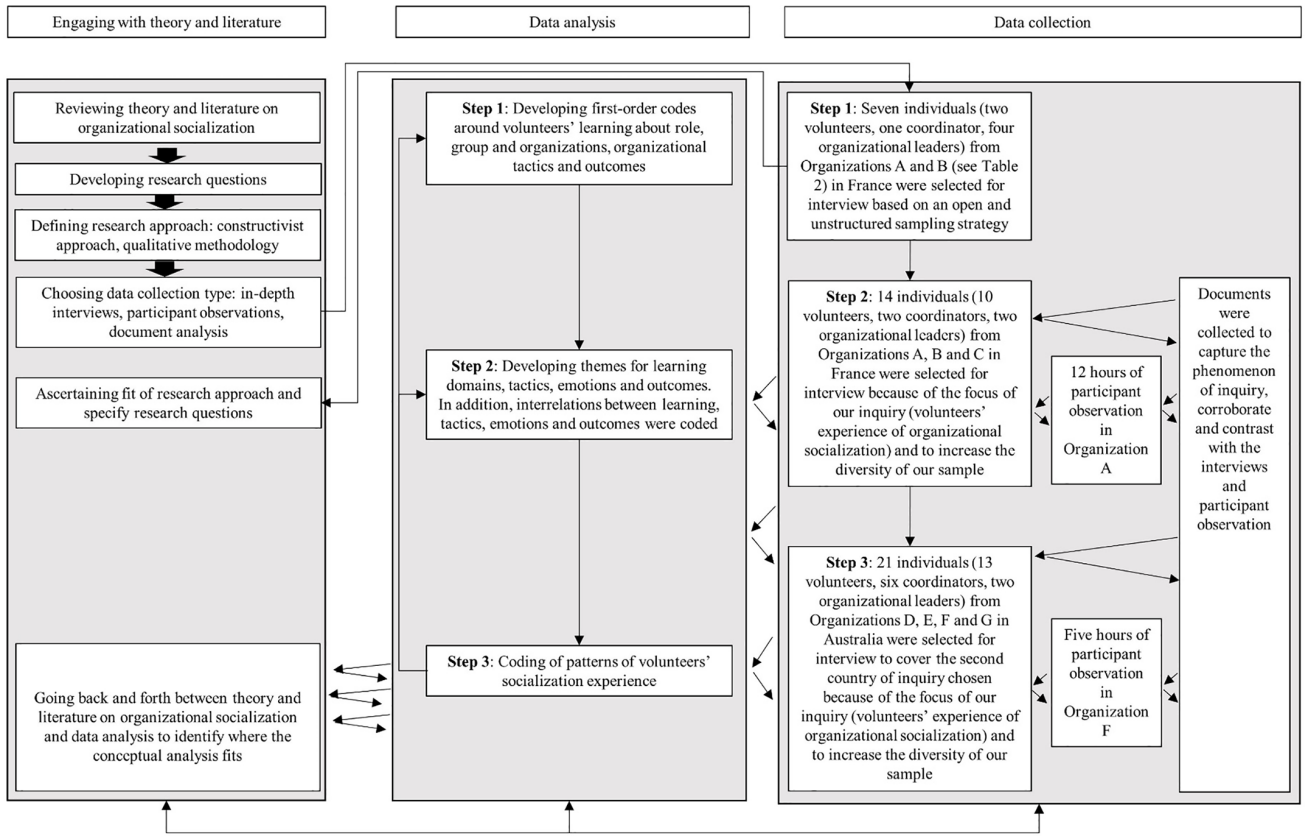

Figure 1. Methodological procedure.
Note: Graph adapted from Englert et al. (2020).

Table 2. Characteristics of participating organizations.

Organization	Country	Year of creation	Number of volunteers	Type of refugee assistance
A	France	1939	2500	Defending foreigners' rights, providing legal advice
B	France	1972	50	Protecting foreigners' rights, providing legal advice
C	France	2016	12	Training and support for soccer players from refugee backgrounds
D	Australia	2011	350	Mentoring for high school students from refugee backgrounds
E	Australia	2011	50	Providing re-settlement and social inclusion support (from legal advice to cultural programs) to refugees
F	Australia	2017	30	Providing goods and furniture to refugees in the host country
G	Australia	2017	15	Assisting refugees to find a home

between countries that have made great efforts to welcome refugees (e.g. Germany) and countries that have hosted fewer refugees (e.g. Australia) (UNHCR, 2021). In France, in 2017, there were 63,115 asylum-seekers and 337,158 refugees (UNHCR, 2021). In Australia, in 2017, there were 48,029 asylum-seekers and 48,480 refugees in the country (UNHCR, 2021).

We further validated the choice of extending our research to Australia by exploring the role played by the volunteering sector in France in contrast to Australia. The latter follows a liberal nonprofit regime (large nonprofit sector and low government social spending), whereas France follows a corporatist regime (large nonprofit sector and high government social spending) (Anheier and Salamon, 1999; Salamon et al., 1999). In Australia, volunteering is embedded in the national culture, and individuals are expected to volunteer at some point in their life trajectory (Handy et al., 2010; Salamon et al., 1999). In France, the nonprofit sector is characterized by new organizations that mostly emerged in the 1980s, and their volunteer workforce is seen as an agent of change (Salamon et al., 1999), as reflected in this quote depicting the French nonprofit landscape: 'New nonprofit organizations are striving to serve as advocates for the unemployed, the homeless, refugees, those without identity papers, and those without rights' (Salamon et al., 1999: 93). Hence, volunteers' comprehension of their role is likely to differ based on country and culture (Anheier and Salamon, 1999; Handy et al., 2010).

Data collection

To analyze the phenomenon of interest—volunteer socialization—we conducted 42 in-depth interviews (21 in Australia and 21 in France), 17 hours of participant observations, and document analysis. This data triangulation increased the validity of the procedure and the results (Flick, 2004). Interactions between the three data sources are depicted in Figure 1. By combining different sources and methods of data collection to explore the

same phenomena, we were able to identify convergence and corroboration between the data collected (Bowen, 2009; Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

Interviews. We conducted 42 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 25 volunteers, nine coordinators and eight organizational leaders, which enabled us to identify recurring patterns while considering the unique perspectives of the interviewees (Lindlof and Taylor, 2011). Most interviews were conducted face to face, in English or French; seven interviews were conducted via Skype because of distance. The interviews lasted between 25 and 72 minutes, resulting in a total of 30 hours of audio files. Three groups of questions composed our interview guide. First, we opened the interview by asking volunteers about their experience in general. Specifically, we asked them to describe their first weeks/months, to share who and what helped them during this time and to outline which factors made it easy or difficult for them to become familiar with their organization. Second, we focused on socialization tactics by inquiring about the type of interventions provided by the organization. Third, we examined outcomes by asking volunteers how they felt and how they would describe their attitudes toward their volunteering work. Organizational leaders and coordinators were asked the same questions as the volunteers but from their own perspective.

We ensured that the interviewees felt comfortable engaging in storytelling by allowing them to choose the setting for the interview and informing them that all information would be de-identified. We use pseudonyms for the interviewees and the organizations. In the findings, we refer to interviews via quotes attributed to volunteers, coordinators and organizational leaders, in accordance with their role, and organizations are given a pseudonym, depending on their size and age (see Table 2).

Participant observations. Seventeen hours of participant observations were conducted during onboarding training, formal and informal meetings, and daily assistance provided to refugees. Twelve hours were conducted in Organization A in France, and 5 hours were conducted in Organization F in Australia. These observations enabled us to look at how socialization tactics were implemented and how volunteers learned. In addition, we were able to look closely at the interactions and relationships between volunteers, co-volunteers, coordinators and refugees (Spradley, 1979). We took notes of these observations (Spradley, 1979), and refer to these as 'field notes' in the findings.

Document analysis. Document analysis was conducted on relevant documents shared with us by the participant organizations (e.g. orientation materials, organization reports, flyers explaining the role of volunteers). In addition, we used public information available on the organizations' websites, which included the steps volunteers undergo after joining the organization, and videos of them testifying to their experience. We also reviewed documents about events and training, which helped corroborate information provided in the interviews. In total, over 200 written pages and 25 minutes of video material were analyzed. This analysis allowed us to verify our understanding of volunteer role, group and organization learning, tactics used by the organization, emotions and related outcomes, as well as the major steps that comprise the entry phase. We view documents as social products that reflect individuals'

construction of meaning and interpretation of the phenomenon under investigation (organizational socialization), which is in alignment with a constructivist perspective (Owen, 2014).

Data analysis

During the 13 months of data collection, data were simultaneously collected and analyzed, and emergent findings were discussed amongst the co-authors (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). During this process, we engaged with the literature on organizational socialization and constantly navigated between the literature and the data to see where and how our work fitted in (Charmaz, 1996). Our data analysis procedure is illustrated in Figure 1.

Data analysis followed three main steps, which were applied to all interviews. First, we developed first-order codes of volunteers' learning, tactics used by the organization and outcomes of the volunteering experience. We identified three learning domains: role, group and organization. Codes were compared and discussed amongst all co-authors. This initial coding and different authors' viewpoints made us turn our attention to the interactions between learning domains, tactics and outcomes. Although not coded yet, volunteers' emotions were noticed and discussed by the authors in this initial data analysis step. In the second step, we focused on coding interrelations between tactics, learning and outcomes, as well as volunteers' emotions.

Thereafter, we exchanged views on these interrelations and noticed a trajectory, so in the final step, we focused on coding patterns of volunteers' organizational socialization trajectory. It became apparent that the interrelations between learning domains, tactics, emotions and outcomes were related to a stage and that within each stage volunteers' experiences differed according to their progression into their organization and their position in the entry phase. Thus, three stages emerged, namely familiarizing with the role, bonding with the group and embedding into the organization, each with its own different socialization features. Figure 2 illustrates the coding system and provides illustrative quotes.

Findings

The data analysis led to the identification of three socialization stages during the entry period: (i) familiarizing with the role; (ii) bonding with the group; and (iii) embedding into the organization. For each stage, we present the organizational socialization tactics volunteers perceived as helpful in facilitating their learning. We further highlight how learning and tactics shaped volunteer outcomes, and we discuss emotions experienced by them in each stage. Figure 3 illustrates the learning domains, tactics, emotions and outcomes of each socialization stage.

Stage one: Familiarizing with the role

The first stage commenced when volunteers officially joined the organization, and it ended before they provided help to refugees on their own for the first time. In this stage, they became familiar with their role, but had no direct contact with beneficiaries (Organizations E, F and G), or at least not on their own (Organizations A, B, C and D). In

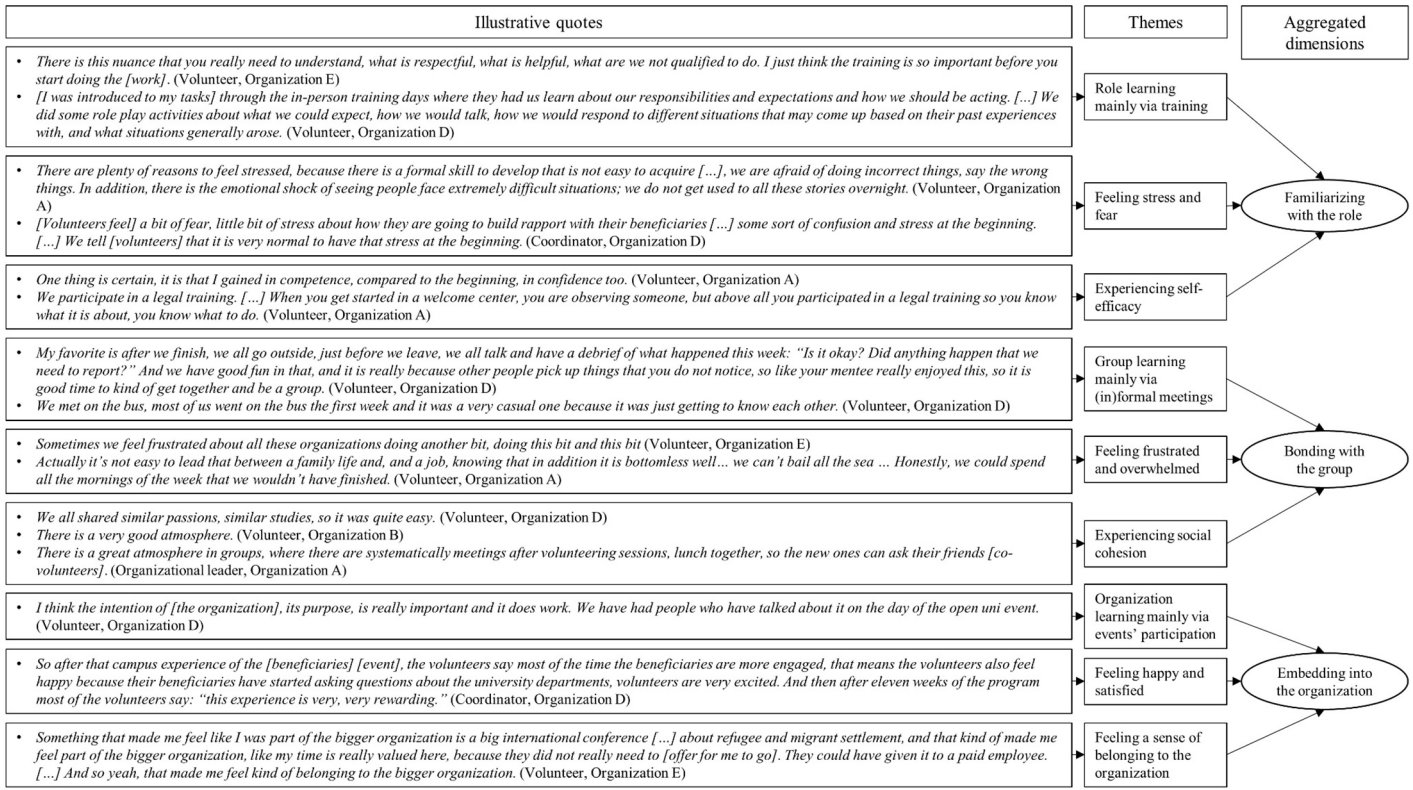

Figure 2. Coding system and illustrative quotes.
Note: Graph adapted from Hesse et al. (2019).

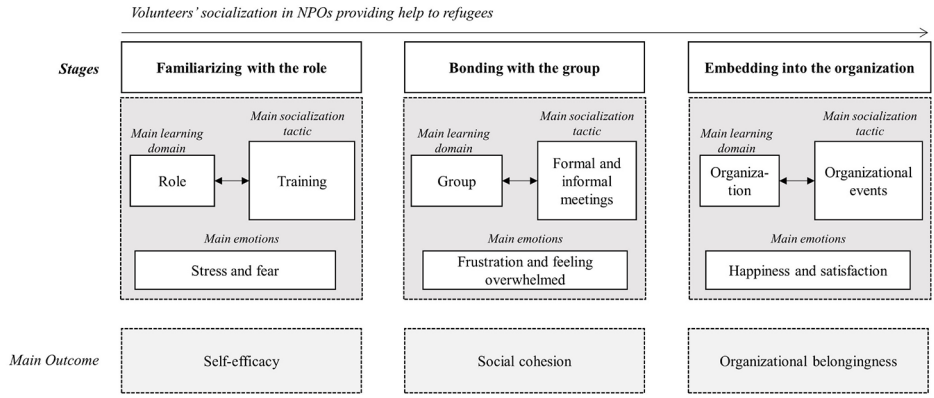

Figure 3. Volunteers' experience of the entry period in NPOs providing help to refugees.
Note: Our data demonstrate salience of emotions, tactics, learning domains and outcomes at each stage, as presented in the Figure.

addition, they became familiar with new aspects of their organization and met their peers, often for the first time, but mostly discovered the reality of their role through training:

> We did a training session [. . .] I found that really helpful. So we just did a bit of understanding the background of refugees [. . .], something that not a lot of people understood before that. We also did lots of role play activities on how to deal with different types of [beneficiaries] who might not be willing to open up. That was really, really helpful. (Volunteer, Organization D)

The duration of this first socialization stage varied by organization and volunteer. In organizations that used observation as training, this stage could take up to six months, whereas in organizations using workshop sessions as trainings, it took about two weeks before new volunteers were able to move to the next stage. According to some participants, the duration of this stage depended upon prior qualifications, emotional and physical capabilities and availability to become an active actor in their socialization (e.g. learning their notes, asking questions).

The main learning domain at this stage was the volunteers' role. Indeed, although they met their co-volunteers and learned about the organizational mission, history and values, the most intense learning experience during this stage related to their role, because they needed to develop knowledge and formal skills to carry it out. More specifically, volunteers had to learn how to provide help for and interact with refugees: (i) identify and understand the needs of people who were forced to leave their country, lose their homes and find themselves in an uncertain situation; (ii) provide solutions for refugees' actual challenges; and (iii) know how to react when refugees shared their trauma with them. As one volunteer explained, 'There is this nuance that you really need to understand, what is respectful, what is helpful, what we are not qualified to do' (Volunteer, Organization E).

The main socialization tactic, which helped volunteers learn about their role, was training, the format and type of which varied according to organization and activity. We

identified four main formats and types of training: intense and qualifying training (in-depth training over several days) (Organizations A, B and G), observations of more experienced peers (Organizations A, B and C), half- or full-day face-to-face training (Organizations D, E, F and G) and online training (Organization D). Although content varied by organization and activity, new volunteers training in all participating NPOs consisted of four components, which together enabled them to develop the tools required to carry out their role. First, training helped them understand who the refugees were, what they had experienced and how to interact with them. For instance, Organization D used films depicting the journey of a refugee showing the possible struggle experienced by refugees on their journey to the host country, and a film focusing on how to be culturally adaptable highlighting the necessity for volunteers to consider refugees' cultural background. Second, training emphasized the importance of confidentiality with regard to refugees and their situation, in order to guarantee safety and privacy. Third, tools were introduced to new volunteers aiming to help refugees communicate and provide solutions to their actual challenges. Fourth, volunteers' self-care aspects were emphasized during training. For instance, they were taught how to establish boundaries between themselves and refugees, and between themselves and the organization (e.g. switching off notifications from the NPO and not providing their private phone number to beneficiaries): '[The training focuses on] understanding [refugee] mental health, trauma and self-care as well, so like volunteer boundaries and how to look after yourself and not just other people. [. . .] The self-care aspect is really important' (Coordinator, Organization G).

We noticed differences in terms of training types used in France and Australia. For example, in France, observations of experienced volunteers were in use in the three participating organizations, whereas none of the participants in the four Australian organizations used this method, as all organizations relied on intense and qualifying training, face-to-face instruction and online platforms.

Some volunteers reported experiencing emotions such as stress and fear at this stage. We identified two main reasons for such emotions. First, they felt an important responsibility because of the particularly uncertain situation of refugees: 'We intervene in the life of individuals, it is a huge responsibility, we are afraid of making mistakes' (Volunteer, Organization A). For instance, volunteers from Organization A provided legal advice to refugees on how to appeal an 'OQTF' (an obligation to leave the French territory in the next 30 days issued by the French Government) (field note, Organization A). If the appeal was not successful, refugees had to return to their country of origin, some of which were in the midst of war. Second, stress and fear emerged from hearing the difficult reality of the refugee situation and not knowing how to behave:

> There are plenty of reasons to feel stressed, because there is a formal skill to develop that is not easy to acquire [. . .], we are afraid of doing incorrect things, saying the wrong things. In addition, there is the emotional shock of seeing people face extremely difficult situations; we do not get used to all these stories overnight. (Volunteer, Organization A)

In organizations A and D, professional psychological support was proposed for volunteers feeling particularly stressed: 'If they are feeling really stressed, then we do referrals

through Campus Wellbeing, who can support them better than we can. So we have done that in the past as well' (Coordinator, Organization D).

The main outcome of this stage was self-efficacy. Volunteers who participated in trainings described feeling more confident and in control of their role because they had the opportunity to learn the fundamental knowledge and skills needed to assist refugees: 'I am getting more confident. When I first started, I was a little withdrawn, because I did not really understand how it all worked and did not want to do anything I was not meant to do' (Volunteer, Organization E).

The transition to the next stage in which volunteers were able to provide autonomous help was usually initiated by the volunteers themselves, although in some cases coordinators, senior volunteers and mentors provided encouragement.

Stage two: Bonding with the group

The second socialization stage began with the volunteers' first fully autonomous contact with the refugees and ended when volunteers felt they had the ability to engage beyond their local activity in the organization's wider purpose. 'New volunteers advised, guided and provided support on their own' (field note, Organization A):

> 'For me, I found it was fast, because I arrived in October and already in December, I received a few beneficiaries on my own. It was from January onward when indeed I was totally independent; it was relatively quick' (Volunteer, Organization A).

At the end of this stage, both volunteers and coordinators reported a 'fall' in motivation, as reflected by a volunteer at Organization D: 'In the beginning, it is really exciting to start, and then it probably settles to just being like happy to go' (Volunteer, Organization D).

The main learning domain in this stage was the group, consisting of co-volunteers and coordinators. Indeed, volunteers at this stage focused on learning about their co-volunteers and coordinators, who were a crucial source of information and emotional support, as they answered volunteers' questions, discussed difficult cases, showed them how to behave in specific situations, facilitated dialogues and helped build healthy relationships with refugees. As one volunteer explained, 'You get to know your [team members] quite well, so you always feel like even if there is a problem, you know what to do about it' (Volunteer, Organization D).

The most helpful socialization tactic for volunteers in getting to know their peers and coordinators were formal and informal meetings. Formal meetings with co-volunteers and coordinators occurred every week, and their structure varied from organization to organization. They included 'debriefing after each volunteering session' and a 'weekly team meeting' after a volunteering session. Informal meetings also took place on a regular basis and were as important as formal meetings; for example, informal socialization happened on buses while travelling to and from an activity. Formal (e.g. planned team lunch) and informal meetings (e.g. sharing a bus ride) allowed volunteers to engage with their peers and coordinators: 'We had lots of times when we had lunch, where everyone would sit in a group and we all would just talk. [. . .] So, that was pretty defining—and then probably the first bus ride' (Volunteer, Organization D).

In this stage, some volunteers reported experiencing challenging emotions, such as feeling overwhelmed and frustrated, for two main reasons. First, working on their own with refugees, who had their own traumas, was overwhelming for many volunteers. Second, they felt that the problem was large and particularly complex in relation to their individual action: 'There is a little bit of frustration, but it is not frustration with people, it is that I want to—we want to—do more; there is so much to do' (Volunteer, Organization G). Another explained, 'I have frustrations; [. . .] we cannot fight the atrocious laws' (Volunteer, Organization A).

Volunteer coordinators and organizational leaders emphasized the importance of the group in helping volunteers who felt overwhelmed, owing to the situations with which they needed to deal, by reminding them that it was a normal feeling and that the group was there to support them in difficult cases:

> We remind people that it is okay to say no, and it is okay to feel overwhelmed. I think in my previous roles, in my previous volunteering stuff, there was not much discussion about that, whereas now I think there is about vicarious trauma and how you should be prepared to, like, hear people's stories but know when it is enough for you, and know when it is enough for them, and how not to be the savior in a situation where you are the volunteer trying to fix the situation. (Coordinator, Organization G)

An organizational leader also highlighted that:

> Volunteers [need to know] they are not alone when it comes to cases—precisely because burnout is also because we feel overwhelmed by situations, there are too many, there is an overflow—that it is the whole group that carries each person who is received, and not just the volunteer alone. (Organizational leader, Organization A)

The main outcome of this stage was social cohesion. Repeated contact and exchanges with colleagues during formal and informal meetings were particularly helpful for volunteers to develop a sense of social cohesion within the team. Indeed, they could develop a similar language, shared common interests and codes of conduct, as explained by a coordinator: 'We are 12 [volunteers]; it's quite amazing that people who are so different can work together and get along with each other, understand each other, have the same language, although we have very different personalities' (Coordinator, Organization A). A volunteer also described that 'there's the feeling of being comfortable in a group, there is a need to feel that here we can share things together, that there is cohesion, even sympathy between people' (Volunteer, Organization A). During this stage, volunteers became closer to each other, and gained information and emotional support from their peers and coordinator.

Stage three: Embedding into the organization

This stage started when volunteers felt more available and willing to turn their attention to the larger purpose of their organization, and began to embody it. Participation in events was particularly helpful to volunteers to embed into the organization:

> I have attended [a] conference and that was a very useful one. People came from all over the world to share their experiences, how they have been able to help this group of people to be a part of the society, to integrate. (Volunteer, Organization E)

The main learning domain in this stage was the organizational purpose. Volunteers reported a deeper understanding of the overarching purpose and impact, and their importance for their full integration into their organization:

> I think the intention of [the organization], its purpose, is really important—and it does work. We have had people who have talked about it on the day of the open uni event, [when] a former beneficiary came in and gave a speech. He was just really not focused on high school, because he did not have anyone to tell him what options he had in the future, and [. . .] now he is doing medical science. He was clear about the importance of having that volunteer–beneficiary relationship at an age that is going to count. So I think the actual purpose of the program is really great, just the little fine-tuning things that need to happen to make it even better, I think. (Volunteer, Organization D)

The tactic that was most beneficial for volunteers to learn about their organization at this stage was participating in events, such as the refugee celebration day to which the volunteer was referring in the quote above. Volunteers were invited to participate voluntarily in organizational events, where they could fully embody the role of an organizational member. Indeed, during these events, outsiders saw volunteers as full members and representatives of the organization. Examples of events were demonstrations (Organizations A, B and C), Christmas, anniversary celebrations (Organization B), football matches (Organization C), a refugee celebration day (Organization D), festivals, conferences on migration (Organization E) and fundraising (Organization G). For example, a volunteer from Organization E who participated in a conference explained: 'It was lovely, you went there [a festival], you could volunteer to be on a store or do different things, give people directions, explain to them what the organization does' (Volunteer, Organization E). A coordinator also explained: 'It was a weekend where we got together in a place near the coast [. . .] and we talked a little bit about the timeline of the organization; how far we have come' (Coordinator, Organization G).

We noticed differences between Australia and France regarding the types of events volunteers participated in. Although it was not mentioned by any of the study participants in Australia, volunteers participated in political demonstrations in France: 'I started in January, so there were no events I participated in right away, but later on, we did several things; for instance, we made a placard and we went to a demonstration against the asylum immigration law' (Volunteer, Organization B). In addition, 'From time to time, there are strong actions, like gathering in front of prefectures, demonstrations to which the organization calls for a gathering with a meeting point for the organization' (Coordinator, Organization A).

Some volunteers explained feeling happy, which related to seeing their impact and deeply capturing what their organization stands for: 'I am so happy I could find such an organization that really thinks there is a need and really feels the responsibility to help people who really need support' (Volunteer, Organization E). In addition to happiness,

volunteers reported feeling satisfied because of the change their actions led to for the beneficiaries:

> Yes, satisfied. I have really enjoyed the experience a lot. It could seem a bit mundane [. . .]. I am just going to this mentoring that I have, and it is not very important. But then you look back and think: 'oh, like they could have totally not known about any of this university stuff'. (Volunteer, Organization D)

Participation in events and being part of the organizational purpose further contributed to these emotions. A volunteer at Organization C, whose purpose was to make isolated young refugees feel part of a group by having them train collectively and play football matches, explained:

> The basic goal is to make [the beneficiaries] play soccer [. . .], to get them out of their isolation. [. . .] When we see them on the field, when they start to play collectively and when they score a goal, they have the reflex to go to one another and they are happy together, it's very satisfying. [. . .] The football match, when we win, at the end and everyone is here, we are so happy. (Volunteer, Organization C)

The main outcome of this stage was a sense of organizational belongingness. Events were particularly helpful in making volunteers feel part of the organization. Moreover, they could develop a deep alignment with the purpose of their organization. They represented the organization and were seen by others as organizational members, which stimulated their sense of belonging to the NPO, as two volunteers explained: 'I feel pretty related, that is to say that I quite often agree with the general purpose of [the NPO], [. . .] I have the feeling of being linked to the NPO, of being part of it' (Volunteer, Organization B). 'I realized the other day that I was saying "us" more easily. I spoke with the coordinator and I realized that I was talking about "us," so about a month ago, it is obvious in fact' (Volunteer, Organization A).

Discussion

The present study is the first to examine volunteers' socialization in a context that requires deep understanding and yet remains underexplored: volunteering for refugees. Drawing on triangulated qualitative data, we uncovered three new sub-phases of the organizational entry—familiarizing with the role, bonding with the group and embedding into the organization—that volunteers went through after joining an organization to help refugees. In each stage, there was different salience in terms of learning domains, socialization tactics, emotions and outcomes. In the first stage, new volunteers mainly focused on learning their role. Training was the tactic that contributed the most to role learning in this first stage. Volunteers explained that they felt fear and stress, but as a result of the socialization tactic and role learning, they experienced increased self-efficacy. In the second stage, the main learning domain was the group (co-volunteers and coordinators), who helped address emotions such as frustration and feeling overwhelmed. The main tactics that helped volunteers connect with their group were informal and formal meetings, which resulted in social cohesion. In the third stage, volunteers further developed their knowledge and awareness of the organizational purpose, mainly through

participation in events, which contributed to a sense of organizational belonging. During this stage, they experienced emotions such as satisfaction and happiness. Together, these socialization stages enabled volunteers to develop their confidence in providing substantial help to refugees and to feel integrated into their group and organization. Although our findings account for the slight differences in terms of tactics used in stages one and three between the two countries, we did not find significant differences in the overall process between France and Australia (see Figure 3).

These findings contribute to the development of organizational socialization theory in several ways. First, whereas most research views the entry phase as one entity (Bauer et al., 2007), the present study deconstructs this phase and highlights three main stages. In doing so, we contribute to debates about what makes socialization successful and how scholars can study it (Bourgoin and Harvey, 2018; Cooper-Thomas and Anderson, 2006). More specifically, our inductive approach contrasts with most research on volunteer socialization focusing on the relationship between NPOs' tactics and outcomes (Hidalgo and Moreno, 2009; Jordan, 2009). We highlight new interrelations between learning, tactics and emotions (Haski-Leventhal and Bargal, 2008), which together support volunteer progression in the organization. We therefore contribute to the accumulation of knowledge in the field of socialization by integrating different streams of research that hitherto operated in isolation.

Second, the deconstruction of the entry period in stages organized around role, group and organization contributes to research on person–environment fit. Our findings echo research suggesting that volunteers' perceptions of fit are likely to evolve over time (Englert et al., 2020) by showing that volunteers focused more on certain fit domains depending on their progression into their organization. We also extend person–environment fit theory by highlighting the importance of connecting the different socialization components in order for volunteers to perceive fit. Specifically, whereas research on socialization mainly highlights the tactics that organizations can implement to increase fit (Jordan, 2009), our study shows a much more complex process, demonstrating that tactics need to be related to volunteer learning in order to promote fit. We believe that this new approach opens up avenues for research aiming to understand the mechanisms leading to volunteers' perceived fit with the environment in which they volunteer.

Third, our study contributes to research examining how emotions unfold in an organizational context (Elfenbein, 2007), by shedding light on the emotions of volunteers that surfaced during each socialization stage of the entry period. Our study thus contrasts with research highlighting the emotions that characterize newcomers' work group and organization, and how they adjust to them (Guo, 2019), by shifting this perspective and showing what emotions newcomers bring to their new organization. In doing so, we complement research drawing our attention to the emotional challenge of volunteering for refugees (Larruina and Ghorashi, 2016; Robinson, 2014) by presenting ways for organizations to adjust to and support volunteers' emotional process. This is important to facilitate their adjustment and improve socialization, in order to promote their well-being.

Fourth, our study contributes to cross-cultural aspects of organizational socialization (Taormina and Bauer, 2000). Overall, our findings show that the socialization process

was similar across the two countries included in the study, namely France and Australia. Although we found slight differences in terms of the types of tactics used (training types for role familiarization, types of events for embedding into the organization), they had no implications for the overall process depicted in our model (Figure 3). It appears that volunteers' progression into their new organizations followed the same stages along with the same learning domains, and they experienced similar emotions and outcomes. Arguably, however, our research methods and sample size do not allow us to generalize our findings to all organizations providing assistance to refugees in France and Australia, and certainly not beyond. We therefore encourage additional research to test our model on a larger scale and to include additional countries following other nonprofit regimes (e.g. Japan as a statist regime, and Sweden as a social democratic regime) in their sample. This empirical endeavor would help researchers to examine further the replicability of socialization models across countries (Taormina and Bauer, 2000).

Fifth, we contribute to research aimed at understanding how organizations can tackle grand challenges (e.g. George et al., 2016; Hesse et al., 2019), which highlights the complexity of the refugee crisis—a pressing issue that is not easily solved. Volunteers helping refugees play a crucial role in orientating them in their host country. For refugees, volunteers are often their first contact when they arrive in their host country. Our study not only sheds light on the complexity of the entry phase of volunteers and the related challenges, but also highlights how important volunteer work is for refugees to reach a safer place (e.g. via the acquisition of asylum rights) and see new opportunities in their host country (e.g. via school mentoring). In addition, our findings shed light on the outcomes (e.g. self-efficacy and social cohesion) and positive emotions (e.g. satisfaction and happiness) that volunteers can experience when helping refugees.

Practical implications

Whereas recent studies highlight that NPOs may contribute to the emotional exhaustion of volunteers (McAllum, 2018; Robinson, 2014), our study presents concrete tactics to prevent negative outcomes and enhance self-efficacy, social cohesion and a sense of belonging. These findings have important implications for leaders, coordinators and volunteers in organizations aiming to help refugees or other beneficiaries. First, we suggest training activities and content that support role learning and self-efficacy. For instance, we found that an intensive observation phase, and online and face-to-face instruction, fitted volunteers' needs and characteristics. Second, formal and informal meetings with team members can enhance team cohesion, so NPOs could implement creative ways to support these, such as via online platforms and organizing picnics or bus trips for volunteers.

Furthermore, in helping people such as refugees, who face persistent adversity (Shepherd et al., 2020), NPOs need to actively support volunteers' emotional well-being. As our study reveals that volunteers exhibit a range of emotions during the entry phase, from fear and frustration to satisfaction and happiness, NPOs can help them manage their emotions by, for example, providing training and role plays in order to define and manage boundaries with NPOs and beneficiaries, and to prevent emotional over-involvement. In addition, emotional support provided by professional psychologists can assist volunteers who experience stress and frustration and feel overwhelmed.

Our findings also speak directly to volunteers, who need to be aware of the emotional challenges the activity presents and take care of their own well-being when helping individuals facing persistent adversity. They can ask for help from their peers and coordinators when feeling overwhelmed and when they experience frustration, fear and stress, and be aware that these emotions are a normal part of the process. In addition, our results encourage volunteers to take part in training, events, informal and formal meetings, all of which can help them to become an organizational insider and experience a higher sense of self-efficacy, social cohesion with their peers and organizational belonging.

Limitations and future research

Although this study makes several important contributions to organizational socialization theory and volunteering research, it also has several limitations that can be addressed with additional research. First, our qualitative research approach limits the generalizability of our findings. However, by choosing to interview volunteers, coordinators and organizational leaders from two different countries and seven different organizations with various profiles, we aimed to reach representational generalization (Englert et al., 2020; Ritchie et al., 2014). Hence, our proposed model might fit other volunteering activities, as well as the for-profit or public sector in which job demands can be particularly high (e.g. firefighters, nurses).

Second, we did not interview volunteers who had left an organization. Hence, the socialization process presented may be seen as ideal. Although coordinators and leaders explained that volunteers resigned mainly because of a lack of fit, availability or a change in life circumstances, future research could explore additional reasons that lead volunteers to cease their activity during the stages highlighted in the study.

Third, through our research design, we were able to extend organizational socialization theory, but we could not establish causal relationships between the identified tactics, learning domains and outcomes. Hence, future research could use longitudinal or experimental designs to test our model and collect data over several points in time, in order to establish causal relationships. In particular, as some volunteers mentioned that they ‘quite often agree with the general purpose of the organization’, future research could explore the extent to which volunteers understand and accept their NPO’s general purpose, and whether this changes over time, looking at concepts such as organizational vision acceptance.

Furthermore, although the refugee crisis has been called a ‘grand challenge’ by organizational scholars (e.g. Hesse et al., 2019), there is still a lack of research revealing the impact and outcomes of volunteering for refugees. We therefore encourage future research to explore and make heard the voices of refugees.

In conclusion, in the present study we deconstructed an essential phase in the volunteer experience—the entry period—in a context that urgently requires greater understanding: volunteer work for refugees. Indeed, the refugee crisis has been recognized as one of the world’s most pressing challenges and one that could well become a public health crisis, requiring NPOs to prepare volunteers to help refugees. Drawing on triangulated qualitative data collected in France and Australia, we highlighted three new socialization stages of organizational entry. With only limited differences between the two countries in terms of types of tactics, our findings shed light on the learning trajectory of

volunteers and the salient tactics that support this learning, which promote self-efficacy, social cohesion and organizational belonging.

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