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2.1 INTRODUCTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION

Organizations comprise different work roles that contribute to the achievement of organizational goals. For the organization to function effectively, it is important that employees who occupy these different work roles know what is expected of them. Therefore, when employees enter a work role it is important that they acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors necessary to adapt to this role (Wanberg, 2012). This acquiring of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior by employees is called organizational socialization and is not only important from an organizational perspective but also from an employee’s perspective. To help employees adjust to their role reduces newcomers’ uncertainty which usually accompanies their entry into a new work role. Moreover, this speeds up the process of becoming a full-fledged member of the organization. Research has shown that the success of this adjustment can lead to positive organizational outcomes such as role clarity, social acceptance, job satisfaction and commitment (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007; Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007; Wanberg, 2012).

The process of organizational socialization consists of four stages (Ashforth et al., 2007). The first stage starts before employees actually enter the organization. In this anticipation stage individuals prepare themselves for entering the organization by developing expectations about the organization and their new work role. This phase is followed by the encounter stage in which individuals actually enter the organization. In this stage the discrepancy between the expectations developed beforehand and actual practice becomes clear, posing demands, including new ones, on the individual. The demands posed by the organization force individuals to adjust their perceptions and behavior in accordance. These changes are made during the adjustment stage and are internalized by the individual in the stabilization stage (Ashforth et al., 2007). This process of organizational socialization is not solely limited to newcomers; also employees confronted with changes in their work role are confronted with the stages of encounter, adjustment, and stabilization. This shows that organizational socialization is a continuous process.

1 See also section 2.4
Different strands of literature have studied various aspects of this organizational socialization process such as socialization tactics (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), socialization agents (Reichers, 1987; Korte, 2010), proactive behavior (Jones, 1986), and socialization content (Chao et al., 1994; Klein & Heuser, 2008). Although the point of departure of these strands differ, there appears to be agreement in the literature on the fact that information and learning are core components of organizational socialization (Ashforth et al., 2007; Bauer et al., 1998; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2005; Korte, 2010; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Morrison, 2002; Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Wanberg, 2012). As a consequence, more and more scholars have made an argument for putting learning at the heart of organizational socialization research. This has resulted in an increased emphasis in the literature on the acquisition of different kinds of knowledge and what is exactly learned during socialization (i.e. socialization content) (Ashforth et al., 2007; Chao et al., 1994; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2005; Saks & Ashforth, 1997).

This increased emphasis in the organizational socialization literature on what is actually learned during the organizational socialization process translates in what the literature calls a socialization content approach (Klein & Heuser, 2008). In such an approach, the focus is often on what employees learn about different aspects of their organization (e.g. politics, history, language) (Chao et al, 1994; Klein & Heuser, 2008). Yet what individual employees learn during their organizational socialization process, does not say anything about the dynamics underlying this process; in other words it does not say anything about how this content is learned. According to several reviews, the dynamics behind the socialization process have been largely neglected in organizational socialization literature as the main focus has been on the link between socialization tactics and socialization outcomes (Ashforth et al., 2007; Bauer et al., 1998; Saks & Ashforth, 1997).

This lack of insight into the dynamics underlying the organizational socialization process of employees prompts the call for a more ‘localized approach’ (Ashforth et al., 2007). In this respect, Ashforth et al. (2007) state that a great deal of socialization does not take place at the organizational level, but in the localized contexts in which employees work. They phrase this idea as follows:
“Newcomers are socialized largely through specific interpersonal and group-based interactions (Anderson et al., 1999; Anderson & Thomas, 1996; Falcione & Wilson, 1988; Jablin, 2001; Moreland & Levine, 2001; Reichers, 1987; Slaugther & Zickar, 2006; Stohl, 1986) that are grounded in localized contexts and focus largely on aspects of that context, and that result in newcomer change and actions largely affect the localized context rather than the wider organization. The abstract and distal organizations is made concrete and immediate -is made ‘real’-through such visceral interactions” (Ashforth et al., 2007:36)

In this study I take such a localized approach. Thereby I try to contribute to our understanding of the dynamics underlying the organizational socialization process. Inspection services are especially suitable for studying organizational socialization using a localized approach as inspectors have two main localized contexts: 1) the own organization and 2) ‘the field’, the inspected facilities in which the inspections are performed. In the localized context of the field inspectors often work on their own and have limited interaction with other organizational members. This is different from, for example, accountants who also work outside their own organization, though in teams with other colleagues (Hatmaker & Park, 2014). The distance between the organization and daily work environment of employees enhances a problem that Kaufman summarizes as follows:

“No matter how detailed and specific the programming, how elaborate and sensitive the feedback mechanisms, how forceful and relentless the techniques of correcting deviation, the members of human associations still tend to respond to other influences as well and therefore behave in ways the leaders do not expect or want” (Kaufman, 1960:160).

To counter this potential threat to organizational performance, Kaufman states that:
“It was inevitable that managers should try to control what goes on inside each individual organization member, to get them to do of their own volition what the managers want them to do, and to equip them with the resources of skill and knowledge for those duties” (Kaufman, 1960:160).

To better understand how this ‘control’ can successfully contribute to steering the behavior of individual employees, the next section focuses on two theories explaining the link between societal, in this case narrowed down to organizational, expectations and individual behavior. First, a brief comparison is made between identity theory and social identity theory. Using this comparison I argue for the use of identity theory in this study. After that, identity theory is integrated with organizational socialization literature to better understand the concept of organizational role identity. This is followed by a discussion of how the effectiveness of the organizational socialization process is best assessed using organizational role identity as outcome of this process. After that the chapter focuses on how the information necessary to develop an organizational role identity is gained. The final section of this chapter pays attention to the role of the individual in the organizational socialization process.

2.2 IDENTITY THEORY AND SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

2.2.1 COMPARING BASIC CONCEPTS IN IDENTITY THEORY AND SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

Both identity theory and social identity theory start from the assumption that the ‘self’, or who one is, is shaped through interactions with society. In other words, one’s environment influences the own perception of the ‘self’. Equally, both theories deal with the question of how the social environment influences individual behavior through this self (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995; Stets & Burke, 2000, 2003). These theories, however, differ as a result of the different strands of literature in which they are developed. Identity theory originates from a

sociological and micro-sociological stream of literature, whereas social identity theory is developed within the tradition of social psychology (Hogg et al., 1995; Stets & Burke, 2000, 2003). Both theories are very elaborate in addressing the relation between societal expectations and individual behavior, comprising different concepts, assumptions, and relations. Yet, the discussion in this chapter is limited to the differences between the two theories. These differences are important for our argument regarding the usability of the theories for this research. I first start by briefly describing the core of identity and social identity theory and the main difference between both theories. Then after I have made an argument for the use of identity theory in this research, I move back and discuss the mechanism through which identity theory explains the influence of societal expectations on individual behavior.

The two central concepts of identity theory that are of importance for this study are: role and (role) identity. The concept of role refers to “the cultural expectations tied to social positions in the social structure that actors try to meet” (Burke & Stets, 2009: 39). To use a different phrasing, the role is the set of expectations we as society have of individuals occupying specific positions (Burke & Stets, 2009; Stets & Burke, 2003). For example, in our society, a judge is expected to show high levels of integrity, and a medical doctor is expected to have up-to-date knowledge about different treatments. However, the occupant’s interpretation of that role (e.g. judge, medical doctor) can deviate from the societal expectations. These “distinctive interpretations individuals bring to their roles” are labelled role identities in identity theory (Burke & Stets, 2009: 30). Differences in role identities are therefore the result of differences in the interpretation of role aspects by individual professionals. Moreover, identity theory states that the deviation in role identities explains the differences in the behavior of individual professionals as role identities affect individual behavior (Burke & Stets, 2009).

The core concept in social identity theory, social identity, was introduced by Tajfel (1959) and can be described as “a person’s knowledge that he or she belongs to a social group or category” (Stets & Burke, 2000: 225). These social categories are said to provide individuals with “a definition of who one is in terms of the defining characteristics of the category” (Hogg et al., 1995: 259). This means that depending on one’s affiliation with a social group or
category, individuals have a prescribed set of behaviors, norms, values etc. (Brewer, 1991; Haslam, Powell, & Turner, 2000; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Hogg et al., 1995). So, when an individual assumes group membership of a Roman Catholic Church, he or she is expected to attend Masses and participate in the church community. This description shows the fundamental difference between the concepts of social identity and role identity: *social identity is the result of expectations related to group membership rather than the result of individual interpretations of expectations belonging to a specific role.*

This difference is best illustrated by comparing the focus in the definition of, respectively, the social and role identity. The concept of role identity focuses on the specific roles individuals occupy in society, whereas central to the definition of social identity is an assumed group memberships; or as Stets and Burke put it: "The basis of social identity is in the uniformity of perception and action among group members, while the basis of role identity resides in the differences in the perceptions and actions that accompany a role" (Stets & Burke, 2000: 226). This implies that the explanatory power of social identity theory is found in explaining similarities in behavior, whereas role identity is more fitted for explaining differences (Hogg et al., 1995; Stets & Burke, 2000). As this research focuses on explaining *differences* in the behavior of members of a specific occupation, it is more appropriate to use identity theory.

2.2.2 THE MECHANISM BEHIND IDENTITY THEORY

Delving deeper into identity theory, I focus on the definitions of role and role identity. The concept of role refers to expectations external to the individual related to their positions in society, whereas role identity refers to the specific interpretations individuals have of these expectations. As individuals hold different roles in society, the ‘self’ consists of different role identities (Burke & Stets, 2009; Stets & Burke, 2003). To illustrate this point, consider that individuals hold different role positions simultaneously such as husband, son, volunteer, employee etc. The ‘self’ comprises the interpretation of these different positions; in other words, who you consider yourself to be is determined by your interpretation of the different role positions you hold. This multitude of potential role identities raises questions regarding how we know which role identity is acted upon.
According to identity theory, the role identities are hierarchically ordered within the self-concept (i.e. this hierarchy is based on the likelihood people will act upon these role identities), which in the theory is referred to as identity salience. This hierarchy is important as identity theory assumes that individuals act according to role identities high in the hierarchy (Burke & Stets, 2009). The salience of role identities is influenced by the commitment of the individual to that particular role (Burke & Reitzes, 1991). In this respect, commitment is defined as “the degree to which the individual’s relationships to particular others are dependent on being a given kind of person” (Hogg et al., 1995: 258). This implies that when important relationships might be lost by not adhering to a specific role (identity), the probability increases that the commitment to this specific role is high. Yet, the literature makes one exception to the assumption that identity salience determines individual behavior. This exception occurs when the context strongly demands a specific type of behavior. In such a case it is assumed that instead of identity salience, these external demands determine individual behavior (Burke & Reitzes, 1991; Stets & Burke, 2000; Stryker, 1968).

This poses an interesting conundrum when dealing with inspection services. Inspectors often have a strong professional background in the fields they are inspecting; think of health care inspectors or education inspectors. This background is necessary as inspectors need to have the theoretical knowledge and thorough understanding of the field in order to be able to perform inspections. Moreover, this professional background translates in a professional role identity that potentially competes with the organizational role identity for the primary position in the identity salience. It should be mentioned that the professional and organizational role identity are not necessarily conflicting. Yet, if there is a conflict, this raises interesting questions with regard to how this affects the salience of these role identities. Even though the main focus in this research is on how the organizational role identity is shaped, this brings up the question how effective organizational socialization is when confronted with a conflict between the two identities\(^3\). In the next section the outcomes of the organizational socialization process are discussed. I argue that by integrating identity theory with organizational socialization literature the effectiveness of the organizational socialization process can be better assessed.

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\(^3\) See section 2.7 for a discussion of the role of the individual in the organizational socialization process
2.3 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION: OUTCOMES OF THE PROCESS

Effectiveness is a relative concept dependent on the desired outcomes of a process or policy. Focusing on the organizational socialization literature, it can be noticed that the number of socialization outcomes identified is extensive (Ashforth et al., 2007; Bauer & Erdogan, 2012; Bauer et al., 1998; Fang, Duffy, & Shaw, 2011). A distinction often used in the literature is that between proximal outcomes and distal outcomes of organizational socialization. The proximal outcomes indicate how well employees are adjusted to the organization. The indicators of this adjustment revolve mostly around (1) the acceptance by insiders, (2) the amount of role clarity employees have, and (3) performance self-efficacy which refers to the confidence of employees to perform their job (Bauer et al., 2007; Bauer & Erdogan, 2012; Feldman, 1981; Fisher, 1986). These proximal outcomes mediate the relation between socialization efforts and the more distal outcomes of organization socialization such as job attitudes (e.g. job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intentions) and actual newcomer behavior (job performance, turnover) (Bauer & Erdogan, 2012).

Yet, these distal outcomes do not “capture the process of adjustment and whether the socialization has occurred successfully” (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012:15). Moreover, proximal outcomes are considered more indicative for the effectiveness of organizational socialization since these outcomes reflect “the acquisition of requisite knowledge and skills for the organizational role as well as the development of social relationships that will help bind the newcomer to the organization and its goals” (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003:781). Yet, adjustment indicators such as occupant’s role clarity do not provide insight into whether this ‘clarity’ matches the organizational expectations regarding this role.

There are also authors that focus on employees’ knowledge about the organization’s expectations of its employees and their knowledge of how the organization functions, rather than on the level of adjustment (Bauer & Erdogan, 2012). Such an approach to organization socialization is labelled a socialization content approach in which the focus is on what employees actually learn (Ashforth et al., 2007; Chao, O’Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2005; Klein & Heuser, 2008; Saks &
Ashforth, 1997). Research in the field of organizational socialization content is mainly focused on discerning different content domains (e.g. politics, history, language, organization, job, team, and so forth) (Ashforth et al., 2007; Chao et al., 1994; Haueter, Macan, & Winter, 2003; Klein & Heuser, 2008). Although most categorizations are thematic such as language, politics and so forth (Chao et al., 1994), the measurement scales contain items measuring these themes on different levels within an organization. The newcomer socialization questionnaire (NSQ), a measurement scale developed by Haueter et al. (2003), uses these dimensions as it distinguishes between organizational, work group (i.e. team), and task level. According to this scale, socialization content at the organizational level consists of knowledge about the mission, vision, and policies of the organization. Furthermore, the organizational level relates to knowledge about structure and bureaucratic procedures within the organization. The work group or team level of organizational socialization content relates to knowledge about the functioning and structure of the team. Finally, at the task or job level, socialization content refers to the knowledge employees need to perform their tasks (Haueter et al., 2003). These different levels of socialization content contribute to employees’ understanding about the organization’s expectations regarding their role in the organization (Ashforth et al., 2007; Haueter et al., 2003; Kaufman, 1960; Saks & Ashforth, 1997).

These two approaches towards organizational socialization outcomes do not determine the ‘receptiveness’ of employees regarding the expectations of their organization. Therefore, in this research identity theory is combined with a socialization content approach to provide more insight into the actual effectiveness of the organizational socialization process (see figure 2.1). The socialization process provides employees with knowledge about the organization’s expectations. Yet, this knowledge is not directly translated into the organizational role identity but is interpreted by employees first. This leads to the following proposition:

**Proposition 1a** There are different interpretations of the organizational role which results in different organizational role identities of employees.

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4 See section 4.3.3.2 for a discussion of this measurement.
Consequently, organizational role identities of employees can deviate from the organization’s expectations. By using the concept of role identity rather than role clarity, this research provides better insight in whether the individual’s interpretation of the organizational role indeed matches the organization’s expectations of employees occupying such a work role. Therefore I expect that:

Proposition 1b) Effective organizational socialization increases the congruence of an individual employee’s organizational role identity with the organizational role through socialization content.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 2.1** Link between socialization content and organizational role identity

### 2.4 THE DYNAMICS BEHIND THE ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION PROCESS

Organizational socialization is considered effective when employees have perceptions and act in accordance with the expectations of their organization (Anakwe & Greenhaus, 1999; Saks, Uggerslev, & Fassina, 2007). This means that in some cases individuals need to change perceptions, behaviors, and attitudes or gain skills in order to fit in with the organization. Organizational socialization and resulting changes in employees (e.g. attitudes, behaviors) are most significant upon, yet not limited to, entering a new organization. When employees get promoted or change work roles within the same organization, employees are also confronted with new expectations accompanying their new work role. Even when employees stay in the same position, the continually changing environment of organizations can trigger new socialization processes.
For example policy changes can lead to changes in the expectations of the organization thereby influencing the work environment of organizational members (e.g. structural changes, changes in job content). This means that organizational socialization can take place even years after initial employment, making socialization a continuous learning process (Ashforth et al., 2007; Burke & Stets, 2009; Van Maanen & Schein, 1977).

Even though the importance of organizational socialization for the continuity and performance of organizations is recognized, the dynamics underlying this process remain somewhat a mystery. Within organizational socialization research, there are two important streams of literature that deal with the question what influences the organizational socialization of employees, namely: socialization tactics and practices, and socialization agents (Klein & Heuser, 2008).

### 2.4.1 SOCIALIZATION TACTICS: VAN MAANEN AND SCHEIN’S TYPOLOGY

The main body of literature within organizational socialization research deals with the concept of socialization tactics. Socialization tactics are “the ways in which experiences of an individual in transition from one role to another are structured for him by others [i.e. organizational members] in the organization” (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979: 34). This strong managerial approach does not automatically imply that ‘these ways’ are always intentional on the part of the organization and its management. In some instances, ‘these ways’ are unintentional from the side of the organization and are more the result of normal day-to-day interactions between employees (e.g. water-cooler chats, informal meetings and such). In the latter case, the use of the term tactic can cause some confusion as intuitively one would think that this implies an action that is premeditated by the organization. Although this might not be the case for the interaction as such (e.g. water-cooler chats, informal meetings), it is the case for the decision of the organization not to actively involve itself in the socialization process of its employees.

Van Maanen and Schein (1979) distinguish between six dimensions of socialization tactics. These dimensions distinguish between the different ways in which the socialization tactics can be structured. The first dimension, collective versus individual socialization processes, deals with the difference between
socialization processes in which groups of individuals are put through learning experiences, such as training programs, together (i.e. collective socialization tactics) versus socialization processes in which individuals have to develop their own unique set of experiences (i.e. individual socialization process). The second dimension of formal versus informal socialization processes deals with the extent of segregation of regular organizational members when employees are socialized. During formal socialization employees are more or less segregated from regular organizational members, whereas during informal socialization employees are part of the regular organization.

The third dimension distinguishes between sequential socialization processes that consist of a prescribed sequence of discrete and identifiable steps leading to a specific role (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) and random socialization processes in which “the steps leading to the target role are unknown, ambiguous, or continually” (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979: 51). Consequently, there is no identified sequence of steps leading to the completion of the socialization process. Next, there is the (fourth) dimension of fixed versus variable socialization, this dimension deals with how long it takes to complete a specific passage within the socialization process. In fixed socialization processes, the exact amount of time it takes to complete a specific passage is known. On the other hand, variable socialization processes “give recruits few clues as to when expect a given boundary passage” (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979: 55). In other words, variable socialization processes do not provide any indication of when the transition to another role is completed.

The final two dimensions deal with the social aspects of the socialization process (Jones, 1986; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). There is the dimension of serial versus disjunctive socialization processes. During serial socialization processes, experienced members teach individuals who are about to assume similar kinds of positions as these members occupy (i.e. they act as role models) (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). In this type of socialization process, newcomers are expected to adopt the role as taught by the experienced members. In contrast, during disjunctive socialization there are no role models available, thereby leaving room for individuals to develop their own interpretation and implementation of their role. The final dimension of investiture versus divestiture is related to the specific identity by which individuals enter an organization (Van
Maanen & Schein, 1979). During investiture socialization processes the viability and usefulness of personal characteristics is confirmed. Such a socialization process communicates a positive message from the organization to employees about their identity, actually saying ‘we like the way you are’ (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979: 64). The opposite is true during divestiture socialization processes when organizations “seek to deny and strip away certain personal characteristics of a recruit” (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979: 64).

Jones (1986) tried to reduce the complexity of the different dimensions of Van Maanen and Schein by dividing them into three categories: context, content, and social aspects. The context category consists of the dimensions of collective vs. individual and formal vs. informal tactics, focusing on the different contexts in which organizations provide information to newcomers. The sequential vs. random and fixed vs. variable dimensions relate to the content or shape of the information that is provided via socialization. Finally, the dimensions serial vs. disjunctive and investiture vs. divestiture reflect the more social aspects of the socialization process (Jones, 1986). Finally, Jones aggregates the dimensions to one distinction between intentionally and unintentionally implemented tactics which he refers to respectively as institutionalized (i.e. collective, formal, sequential, fixed, serial, and investiture tactics is intended) and individualized (i.e. individualized, informal, random, variable, disjunctive and divestiture is unintended) socialization tactics (Jones, 1986).

It is important to realize that, whatever distinction, socialization tactics are organizational-level strategies that: “not only influences the way information is disseminated to new employees but also the type and source from which the information is received” (Klein & Heuser, 2008: 283). The next section deals with an important source in the socialization process on which the literature has focused, namely: socialization agents.

### 2.4.2 Socialization Agents: Internal and External Agents

Research focusing on socialization agents assumes that social interaction is pivotal for the adjustment of employees to their new work role (Klein & Heuser, 2008; Reichers, 1987). This is supported by the statement of Ashforth et al. that “newcomers are largely socialized through specific interpersonal and group-
based interactions” (Ashforth et al., 2007: 37). These interactions take place with so-called socialization agents who are “individuals who help to facilitate the adjustment of newcomers through various actions” (Saks & Gruman, 2012: 39). These socialization agents can either be internal to the organization (e.g. co-workers, supervisors, subordinates) or external (e.g. clients, customers) (Reichers, 1987). Yet the focus in the literature has mainly been on interactions with insiders as this is shown to be the primary mechanism behind organizational socialization (Feldman, 1989; Korte, 2010; Reichers, 1987; Saks & Gruman, 2012). Thereby, the literature overlooks potentially contradictory messages communicated by external actors.

This focus on interaction with insiders as primary mechanism for organizational socialization shows an implicit assumption in the organizational socialization literature, namely that indeed there are frequent interactions with supervisors and colleagues. This is often the case when employees work on a daily basis inside one of their organization’s buildings. In some professions, however, the main place of work is outside the own organization. In case of, for example, accountants, employees work outside the organization but are still surrounded by colleagues (Hatmaker & Park, 2014). This contrary to inspectors who’s work is solitary in nature, limiting their interaction with organizational insiders. Yet, the contact between inspectors and external actors is frequent. Since Reichers describes the frequency of interaction with organizational insiders as the main mechanism for socialization (Reichers, 1987), this raises the question of what happens when employees such as inspectors are ‘in the field’ and have frequent interactions with external actors. Could this mean that the opposite will prove to be true: that when employees have frequent interactions with external actors, socialization takes place only of skills, attitudes, and behaviors that these external actors expect from the employees? In other words, does a work environment outside the organization increases the chance that employees get ‘captured’ by the inspectees interests and go native? In the section below propositions are developed regarding the impact of the different localized contexts on the socialization content of inspectors.
2.5 THE LOCALIZED CONTEXT: THE ORGANIZATION AND THE FIELD

Employees’ localized contexts in which they work are determined by their specific work role. The encounters with, for example, socialization agents in these localized contexts can be structured by socialization tactics. In inspection services it can be said that there are actually two main types of localized contexts for inspectors; namely (the interactions within) the organization (e.g. training program, selection procedure, formal and informal networks) and (the interactions with external actors during their work in) the field (e.g. inspectees).

If organizations employ institutionalized socialization tactics implementing, for example, selection procedures or training programs, I expect that more important socialization encounters take place in the localized context of the organization. However, if organizations employ individualized socialization tactics the likelihood that important socialization encounters take place in the localized context of the field will increase. These expectations lead to the following proposition:

Proposition 2a) The localized context in which important socialization encounters take place differs between organizations employing different socialization tactics.

As inspectors work most of the time outside the organization, encounters in the localized context of the organization are often institutionalized (e.g. training, selection procedure, meetings). The content of these encounters can be influenced by the organization. Therefore I expect that:

Proposition 2b) The localized context of the organization provides employees with the socialization content desired from an organizational perspective.

This research also emphasizes the importance of the localized context of the field. By recognizing the importance of information that communicates the expectations of external actors to employees about their performance, this research also lets go of another assumption in the socialization content approach
namely that socialization content learned in the different localized contexts is automatically congruent with the expectations from the organization. As little research has been done on this topic, the proposition is formulated more broadly. (see figure 2.2).

Proposition 2c) The localized context of the field can either confirm the organizational message or provide employees with a different perspective.

Figure 2.2 Influence of the localized contexts on socialization content

2.6 LEARNING MOMENTS IN THE LOCALIZED CONTEXTS: INFORMATION SOURCES AND INFORMATION SETTINGS

2.6.1 LEARNING MOMENTS: INFORMATION SOURCES AND INFORMATION SETTINGS

In section 2.4.1.2 attention was paid to socialization agents as information sources in the organizational socialization process. Yet socialization agents are not the only type of information source for employees during the socialization process. There is a broad spectrum of information sources that employees can use to gain information. These encounters with information sources can be considered learning moments in which socialization content is conveyed. Some of these sources are general and can be found in all organizations, e.g. colleagues; while other sources are context specific, e.g. job-specific information systems (Miller & Jablo, 1991; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). The main distinction used regarding information sources is the one between interpersonal and non-interpersonal information sources (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992).
The interpersonal sources are the socialization agents, or persons from within the organization, such as supervisors, co-workers, and mentors who are known to play an important role during the socialization process (Bauer et al., 1998; Saks & Gruman, 2012). The role of socialization agents can either be institutionalized (e.g. mentor) or individualized (e.g. immediate colleagues) (Feldman, 1981; Saks & Gruman, 2012). There is potentially overlap as socialization agents can have both institutionalized roles as well as individualized roles in the socialization process. Therefore, it is important to distinguish what type of role socialization agents fulfill, especially in relation to specific situations. For example, a colleague can be in charge of a training program and at the same time provide advice during an informal chat. In the training program, when this colleague is encountered primarily as being part of the formal network institutionalized by the organization, this colleague is expected to communicate the organization’s expectations. However, when speaking outside of institutionalized networks with colleagues socialization content conveyed might differ. Furthermore, the idea of individualized networks of socialization agents also allows room for the inclusion of external actors, which is especially important in the case of inspectors who frequently interact with actors external to the organization. This explicit emphasis on the role of external actors in the organizational socialization process adds to the literature on organizational socialization, as the focus in literature until now has mainly been on internal actors.

There are also non-interpersonal sources that employees can use to gather the information needed for their socialization. Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992) define these non-interpersonal sources as official organizational literature, experimenting with new behavior, and observation. This dissertation argues, however, that experimenting with behavior or observations does not refer to an information source itself, but more too proactive behaviors aimed at gathering necessary information (Crant, 2000; Parker & Collins, 2010). The information source in this case would be the team leader or colleagues providing feedback or being the ones observed. Therefore, deviating from the definition of Ostroff and Kozlowski, I define non-interpersonal information sources strictly as literature. However, a distinction is made between whether this literature is internal, i.e. institutionalized, such as work instructions, policy documents, or external, i.e. individualized, for
instance professional literature. Also, one can imagine that due to technological developments non-interpersonal sources are no longer strictly limited to ‘literature’. Promo-movies, for example, could also be considered non-interpersonal information sources important for, for example, anticipatory socialization.

In some situations, however, it is the interaction between different information sources that generates and conveys the socialization content to employees. This type of learning moment differs from the information sources as learning moment as it is not possible to identify one single information source as the one providing the socialization content. For example, courses or training programs consist of lectures in combination with written materials. Moreover, often during these lectures there is also interaction between participants that generates information. This whole complex of interaction makes it difficult to distinguish between the specific contributions of the different sources to the socialization content conveyed.

To summarize, in the localized contexts there are two types of learning moments in which socialization content is conveyed. First, there are learning moments based on specific interactions with a singular information source. This type of learning moment is dubbed information sources. Second, there are moments in which the interaction between multiple information sources determines the socialization content conveyed. This type of learning moment is labelled information setting. Thus, there are two types of learning moments: information sources and information settings. Either type of learning moment can be institutionalized or individualized. Institutionalized information sources can be, for example, mentors, whereas a well-known example of an institutionalized information setting is the training program. Examples of individualized information sources are external actors or colleagues. Finally, training-on-the-job is an example of an individualized information setting.

### 2.6.2 LEARNING MOMENTS: INSTITUTIONALIZED AND INDIVIDUALIZED

Organizations with institutionalized socialization tactics can have both institutionalized as well as individualized learning moments. The same is true for organizations employing individualized socialization tactics. The difference is in
the number of institutionalized learning moments which is expected to be higher in organizations employing institutionalized socialization tactics. As socialization tactics are organizational level strategies that determine the type and information source encountered by employees, learning moments potentially differ between organizations employing institutionalized and individualized socialization tactics (see figure 2.3) (Klein & Heuser, 2008). Therefore, I expect that:

Proposition 3a) The learning moments for employees differ between organizations employing institutionalized and individualized socialization tactics.

Research has shown that institutionalized socialization tactics have a positive impact on organizational outcomes (Saks & Gruman, 2012). I expect institutionalized learning moments to have a similar positive effect on the socialization content of employees. Since these learning moments are consciously implemented by the organization, organizations have more control on the content of these learning moments (see figure 2.3). Therefore I expect that:

Proposition 3b) Institutionalized learning moments contribute positively to employees’ knowledge of the organizational socialization content.

Little is known about the specific impact of individualized socialization tactics, as often individualized socialization tactics are operationalized as the absence of institutionalized socialization tactics (Saks & Gruman, 2012; Saks & Ahsforth, 1997). Arguments can be made for a positive impact of individualized learning moments, such as colleagues helping newcomers to understand the organization during regular contact, as well as for a negative impact, when the expectations of external actors differ from those of the organization (see figure 2.3). Therefore, I formulate the expectations regarding the impact of individualized learning moments more broadly:

Proposition 3c) Individualized learning moments impact on employees’ knowledge of the organizational socialization content.
Figure 2.3 Conceptual model: Learning moments in the localized contexts
In this section the different learning moments that can contribute to the employee’s socialization are discussed. An important distinction is whether these learning moments are consciously implemented by the organization or result from regular day-to-day interactions. Research has shown that institutionalized socialization is associated with positive organizational outcomes (Saks & Gruman, 2012). In the next section the role of the individual employee in the organizational socialization process is discussed.

2.7 THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE SOCIALIZATION PROCESS

Traditionally, the focus in organizational socialization literature was one-directional, focusing on how organizations influence the adjustment of employees (e.g. socialization tactics, -internal- socialization agents) (Griffin, Colella, & Goparaju, 2001; Jones, 1983; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Until the early 1990s, the influence individuals can exert over their own socialization was mostly ignored (Bauer, Morrison, & Callister, 1998; Jones, 1983). In this section the role of the individual in the organizational socialization process is discussed. It should be mentioned that although the role of the individual is taken into account, the main focus of this research is on the learning moments that provide employees with the information necessary to adjust to their new work role.

2.7.1 PROACTIVE BEHAVIOR AND PROACTIVE PERSONALITY

Jones (1983) was among the first to emphasize the role of the individual in the organizational socialization process by stating that “it is impossible to predict the nature of the newcomer’s response to the organization until both organizational and individual factors are analyzed conjointly” (Jones, 1983: 464). This idea about the impact of the individual in the organizational socialization process is elaborated upon in the literature on proactive behavior. Proactive behavior can be defined as the “self-initiated anticipatory action that aims to change and improve the situation or oneself”5 (Parker & Collins, 2010: 635). In the organizational socialization process, these actions are driven by the need of

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5 In this research the focus is on the adjustment of the individual.
employees to reduce feelings of uncertainty (Griffin et al., 2001; Gruman, Saks, & Zweig, 2006; Kim et al., 2005; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Saks & Ashforth, 1997).

Feelings of uncertainty are very common among employees when confronted with changes in the workplace or a completely new work environment. As information provided by the organization often does not completely alleviate the uncertainty of employees, proactive behaviors are said to provide employees with other types of, such as practical, information (Ashforth et al., 2007; Bauer et al., 1998; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). Therefore, proactive behaviors are considered antecedents of organizational socialization content and proximal socialization outcomes in the literature on organizational socialization (Ashforth et al., 2007; Ashforth, Sluss & Saks, 2007).

Proactive personality is an antecedent for almost all proactive behaviors that can be employed by individuals (Parker & Collins, 2010). Therefore, proactive personality is included in the research to provide us with an indication of the importance of proactive behaviors in the organizational socialization process. Based on the literature it can be expected that proactive behaviors lead employees to experience more learning moments as they go actively looking for information (Crant, 2000; Parker & Collins, 2010). I expect that:

Proposition 4a): Proactive personality of employees increases their knowledge about the organizational socialization content.

2.7.2 PROFESSIONAL ROLE IDENTITY

Section 2.4 discussed identity theory and the idea that salience of identities is decisive for the behavior of employees. This raises questions with regard to how other role identities affect the salience of the organizational role identity and how other role identities might influence the interpretation of the organizational socialization content (Stets & Burke, 2009). In this respect, Johnson, Morgeson, Ilgen, Meyer and Lloyd (2006) note that individuals might relate more to their occupation and profession than to the organizations for which they work. This might especially be the case for employees having an occupation that scores high on the professionalization continuum as these professions have high levels of prestige (Hickson & Thomas, 1969 in Johnsen et al., 2006; Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006).
In their study, Johnsen et al. (2006) compare veterinarians working in organizations were the mission is consistent with the mission of their profession, with veterinarians working in organizations whose mission is not necessarily consistent with the profession’s mission. When the organization’s mission is the same as the profession’s mission, often the other employees in the organization are also professionals. There are also organizations in which the mission of the profession deviates from the organizational mission (Johnsen et al., 2006). In a study on medical residents, Pratt et al., (2006) found that when there was a discrepancy between the work identity and professional identity this led to identity customization. In this process residents customized “who they were to match what they did” (Pratt et al., 2006:255). Pratt et al. (2006) further identify three conditions that influence this process of customization, namely work discretion, violation strength, and the strength of identity. The question remains whether this holds true for situations in which employees do not work on a daily basis in their own organization.

The findings of Johnsen et al. (2006) suggest that the strength of identification with the organization is indeed dependent on the employment situation of professionals such as veterinarians. Important for this research is the finding that “veterinarians in nonveterinary medicine organizations identify less with the organization than with the profession or their workgroup” (Johnsen et al., 2006:505). This could provide a potential problem in situations where the professional role identity and organizational role identity have to fight for salience. I expect that (see also figure 2.4):

Proposition 4b) The professional role identity plays a role in the interpretation of the organizational socialization content.

In this section the role of the individual in the organizational socialization process is discussed. Though beyond the scope of this research, additional research should focus more in-depth on the exact role the individual plays in enabling these learning moments.
2.8 CONCLUSION: THE DYNAMICS UNDERLYING ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION

In this research a socialization content approach is taken. This approach is based on the assumption that when employees know more about the organizational socialization content, their uncertainty is reduced and these employees become better adjusted to their work role. I argue that such a rationalist approach overlooks the role of the individual in interpreting socialization content. In order to assess the effectiveness of the organizational socialization process, it is important to know how employees interpret the expectations of the organization. Therefore organizational socialization literature is combined with identity theory as the concept of organizational role identity deals with this interpretation.

To gain a better understanding of the dynamics underlying the organizational socialization process, this research focuses on the localized contexts of employees. In the case of inspection services, a distinction can be made between the localized context of the organization and the localized context of the field. In both of these contexts employees can encounter information sources or information settings that provide them with socialization content. These learning moments (i.e. information sources and information settings) can either be consciously implemented by the organization (i.e. institutionalized) or be the result of regular day-to-day interaction (i.e. individualized). These learning moments are dependent on organizational socialization tactics which are the organizational-level strategies about the ways in which the socialization experience of employees is structured.

The main focus of this research is on how the organizations try to structure the learning moments of employees. Yet, individuals can also influence their own socialization process by employing proactive behaviors. These behaviors can help them gather information not provided by the organization. Moreover, their professional role and professional role identity potentially play a role in the interpretation of the organizational socialization content. The overall conceptual model leading this research is presented in figure 2.4. Table 2.1 gives an overview of the different propositions underlying the conceptual model and the empirical chapters that elaborate on them.
Table 2.1 Overview of propositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nr</th>
<th>Proposition</th>
<th>Ch.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a</td>
<td>There are different interpretations of the organizational role which results in different organizational role identities of employees.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b</td>
<td>Effective organizational socialization increases the congruence of an individual employee’s organizational role identity with the organizational role through socialization content.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a</td>
<td>The localized context in which important socialization encounters take place differs between organizations employing different socialization tactics.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b</td>
<td>The localized context of the organization provides employees with the socialization content desired from an organizational perspective.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2c</td>
<td>The localized context of the field can either confirm the organizational message or provide employees with a different perspective.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a</td>
<td>The learning moments for employees differ between organizations employing institutionalized and individualized socialization tactics.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b</td>
<td>Institutionalized learning moments contribute positively to employees’ knowledge of the organizational socialization content.</td>
<td>6/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3c</td>
<td>Individualized learning moments impact on employees’ knowledge of the organizational socialization content.</td>
<td>7/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a</td>
<td>Proactive personality of employees increases their knowledge about the organizational socialization content.</td>
<td>6/7/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4b</td>
<td>The professional role identity plays a role in the interpretation of the organizational socialization content.</td>
<td>5/8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2.4 Conceptual model: The dynamics underlying the organizational socialization process