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Between cause and control

Korff, Valeska Pailin

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3

MOTIVATION MATTERS. EFFECTS OF INSTITUTIONALIZED SOCIALIZATION IN A HUMANITARIAN NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION⁷

Abstract

In for profit organizations, institutionalized organizational socialization or introduction programs were found to positively affect newcomers' adjustment to the job (proximate outcomes like role ambiguity, role conflict and person-organization fit) as well as their job attitudes and behavior (distal outcomes like job satisfaction, performance and retention). Goal-framing theory and arguments regarding the role of intrinsic motivation are used to derive hypotheses on the effects of institutionalized socialization in nonprofit sector organizations. We argue that effective institutionalized socialization in nonprofit organizations needs to enhance the proximate outcomes of sense of significance and personal enjoyment. Hypotheses are tested with a unique sample of n=39 matched pairs of individual performance evaluations drawn from real life personnel records of the Dutch section of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, a renowned nonprofit humanitarian organization. Findings indicate that participation in the socialization program positively affects employees' sense of significance, personal enjoyment, job satisfaction and decreases turnover intentions. Participation does not affect role clarity, role conflict, person-organization fit, and performance. Implications for organizational socialization theories are discussed.

⁷ This chapter is co-authored with Liesbet Heyse, Rafael Wittek and Melinda Mills and currently being prepared for journal submission. Marijtje van Duin advised on data collection and analytical strategy. Astrid van Dijk assisted with data collection at MSF Holland. Sincere thanks to the organization for supporting the research, including facilitating the participation of the author in the introduction program.

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3.1 Introduction: Organizational Socialization in Nonprofit Organizations

The process of entering and becoming familiar with a new organization, referred to as organizational socialization (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), is a critical phase for all newcomers. How employees experience their orientation within a new organizational environment can have strong proximate and distal effects (Saks & Ashforth, 1997). *Proximate outcomes* refer to the direct effects of socialization, like reduced role ambiguity, lower role conflict and higher person-organization fit. They are related to newcomers' adjustment to the organizational role. *Distal outcomes* refer to effects on work attitudes and behavior, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, task participation and mastery, turnover intentions and actual turnover (Saks, Uggerslev, & Fassina, 2007). Socialization programs can provide organizations with potentially highly effective means to integrate their new employees.

Mandatory standardized introduction programs or “institutionalized socialization” (Jones, 1986) can be particularly effective in socializing newcomers. Previous research amply demonstrated their benefits in for profit organizations, but has so far neglected the nonprofit sector (Haski-Leventhal & Bragal, 2008). This is the focus of the present study, which addresses the following question:

In what way and to what extent do institutionalized socialization programs in nonprofit organizations affect newcomer's adjustment, attitudes and behavior?

Current socialization theories (for an overview, see e.g. Ashforth, Sluss, & Saks, 2007; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Saks et al., 2007) argue that effective socialization programs work because they affect three types of proximate outcomes: they reduce role ambiguity and role conflict, and they increase person-organization fit. Building on goal framing theory (Lindenberg, 2001a; 2001b), we suggest that in nonprofit organizations, socialization programs will be effective if they increase two other proximate outcomes: the sense of significance (i.e. the extent to which the work is experienced as meaningful), and personal enjoyment (i.e. the hedonic satisfaction realized in the job). The reason is a difference in motivation: unlike employees in the for profit sector, nonprofit employees combine “other-regarding” or altruistic interests with particular “self-regarding” or instrumental motivations (Story, 1992).

The specific motivation of nonprofit employees is likely to be pronounced in the humanitarian sector. Insider reports give a lively account of the “dual” motivation of humanitarian aid workers as both keen to reduce human suffering even at the expense of own personal risk and discomfort, and at the same time craving the excitement and thrill of the work experience (Bortolotti, 2004). The Dutch section of *Médecins Sans Frontières* (hereafter MSF Holland), one of the most renowned organizations in the humanitarian sector, provided unrestricted access to their personnel data. This data included detailed employee performance evaluations, which constitute in depth accounts of individual employees' performance, perception of the work situation and attitudes. Since the organization also has an intensive eight day institutionalized socialization program for newcomers, MSF Holland provides an ideal case study setting to test our propositions.

The contributions of this chapter are threefold. First, building on goal framing theory, we extend the scope of current socialization theories by introducing “sense of significance” and “personal enjoyment” as additional proximate outcomes of newcomer adjustment. Second, our study is the first one to assess the effects of institutionalized organizational socialization programs in a specific nonprofit setting, a humanitarian organization. Since many characteristics of nonprofit employment, like low remuneration and a flexible and colloquial work style, are particularly pronounced in the humanitarian sector (Loquercio, Hammersley, & Emmens, 2006), it provides a good test case for the study of socialization programs in nonprofit organizations. Third, our study is one of the very few that can make use of performance evaluations and a personnel database as data sources, thus enabling the analysis of outcomes based on real life data. This includes the measurement of performance based on line managers’ evaluations, as well as the operationalization of retention in terms of numbers of actual missions attended. Both cases offer advantages in terms of reliability compared to self-reported survey data.

The next section presents the theoretical background. Section two presents the research design, the sampling strategy, coding procedures and the methods of analysis. Section three presents the results. Section four concludes.

3.2 Effects of Institutionalized Socialization in Nonprofit Organizations

3.2.1 Institutionalized socialization

Organizational socialization refers to “the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role” (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 211). Organizations can shape this process through institutionalized socialization programs. Such programs are characterized by incorporating the following socialization tactics: they are *collective* and *formal* in so far as all new recruits undergo the same treatment, separately from regular employees. Furthermore, the process is *sequential* and *fixed*, i.e. transparently planned with a definite end date. Finally, institutionalized socialization programs are *serial* in so far as experienced organizational members take the role of mentors, who teach socialization contents in a *divestiture* manner, i.e. universally and irrespective of the particular characteristics of the new recruits (Jones 1986). Constituting the most intensive form of organizational influence on the socialization process institutionalized organizational socialization programs usually have strong effects on how newcomers adjust to their job (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007; Ashforth, Saks, & Lee, 1998).

Socialization theories distinguish between proximate and distal effects. Proximate outcomes refer to the degree to which employees master role-requirements, integrate into the organization and perceive the job as facilitating the achievement of work goals. Distal outcomes reflect attitudinal and behavioral reactions to the job (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003), such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Most studies (Saks et al, 2007; Bauer et al., 2007) found that proximate outcomes only partially mediate the effect of institutionalized socialization on distal outcomes (Saks & Ashforth, 1997).

3.2.2 Standard proximate outcomes: Role clarity, role conflict and person-organization fit

Current socialization theories (Ashforth et al., 2007; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Saks et al., 2007) usually hypothesize three proximate effects on newcomer adjustment: role clarity, role conflict, and person-organization fit. First, entry into a new organization can come along with feelings of anxiety, since employees are uncertain about behavioral expectations (Louise, 1980). Institutionalized socialization can reduce this uncertainty. By providing information on various aspects of organizational life, socialization programs enable participants to develop behavioral scripts or routines that allow for an appropriate response to diverse situations and to prioritize between tasks (Berger & Bradac, 1982). Such reduction of uncertainty enhances *role clarity*, i.e. enables newcomers' to form realistic assumptions about role requirements and expectations directed toward the role bearer. This in turn increases the predictability of responses to behavior and facilitates confidence regarding the ability to act appropriately (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964; Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). Accordingly, our first hypothesis reads:

Hypothesis 1 (Role clarity): Nonprofit employees' participation in a socialization program is positively related to role clarity.

Second, uncertainty reduction reduces the risk of *role conflict*, i.e. the incongruence between different role requirements. Role conflict can manifest itself in three ways. First, as an incompatibility of an employee's time, resources and skills with the defined role behavior; second, as a conflict between multiple roles that require different behaviors; and third, as inconsistent organizational policies, demands or standards of evaluation (Kahn et al., 1964). As scripts provided during socialization programs are supposed to enhance the prioritization of tasks (Berger & Bradac, 1982), we expect that socialization programs reduce role conflict:

Hypothesis 2 (Role conflict): Nonprofit employees' participation in a socialization program is negatively related to role conflict.

The third dimension of newcomer adjustment is integration into the organization. An expression of such integration is *person-organization-fit*, i.e. the compatibility of employee and organization in terms of values (Schneider, 1987). Socialization programs can facilitate value congruence, either through influence or through selection (Cable & Parsons, 2001). The provision of information about organizational values such as the organization's mission, principles of conduct, ethics etc, constitutes the basis for both processes. Such information provision, particularly by organizational members serving as role models, has the potential to guide new recruits towards the adoption of organizational values. At the same time, it allows employees to appraise their suitability with the organization and thereupon decide whether to stay or leave. In effect, employees who underwent an institutionalized socialization program are able to adjust their values to the organizational values or leave in case of incompatibility.

Hypothesis 3 (Person-organization-fit): Nonprofit employees' participation in a socialization program is positively related to person-organization-fit.

3.2.3 Nonprofit-specific proximate outcomes: Sense of significance and personal enjoyment

A defining characteristic of the nonprofit sector is that organizations are not allowed to pursue the realization of material or monetary gain. Nonprofit organizations serve more general normative and moral societal objectives. Consequently, nonprofit organizations attract a workforce that identifies with these norms. Commitment to the values and the cause of the organization is considered a precondition (Mirvis, 1992). Research on work motivation of nonprofit employees indeed shows that they have different job-related goals (e.g. Clary, Snyder, & Stukas, 1996; Tschirhart, Mesch, Perry, Miller, & Lee, 2001), and that they tend to accept lower wages and benefits because they are committed to the cause of the employing organization (Emanuele & Simmons, 2002; Leete, 2006). Nonprofit work itself is experienced as interesting and challenging and the social interaction involved in this work is considered appealing (Onyx & Maclean, 1996).

Current socialization theories neglect these fundamental motivational differences between for profit and nonprofit employees. We argue that these differences in motivation matter, and that current socialization theory needs to be extended to capture this difference. The goal-framing theory of intrinsic motivation (Lindenberg 2001a; 2001b) provides a suitable heuristic for this purpose. This approach conceptualizes intrinsic motivation as “being motivated to do something without being forced by commands and without being (non-routinely) paid to do it” (Lindenberg, 2001a, p. 319). Two fundamental constituents of intrinsic motivation are feelings of (moral or *normative*) obligation and (personal, *hedonic*) enjoyment, as opposed to the motivation for (monetary) *gain*.

Goal framing theory suggests that these three motivations or *goal frames* (normative, hedonic, gain) have different “a priori” strengths. Normative motivations – concerned with acting appropriately and doing the right thing – are weakest; hedonic motivations – concerned with immediate well-being and pleasure – are strongest; gain motivations – concerned with the guarding and extension of resources – fall in between.⁸ A stable normative goal frame can only be sustained if the other two goal frames are either weak, or are compatible with the normative frame (Lindenberg, 2001a, p. 336). Misalignment between goal frames can cause overall motivation to deteriorate (Lindenberg & Steg, 2007). Providing conditions that facilitate a stable normative motivation of employees is a major challenge for all organizations, since employees’ adherence to rules is a basic requirement for any organization to function. Nonprofit organizations face a particular problem in this respect. For profit organizations elicit stable cooperation of their members by aligning normative and gain motives (e.g. through performance related pay). Nonprofits do not have this option, since reliance on monetary rewards and the gain motive is considered as inappropriate (Theuvsen, 2004). More than their counterparts in the for profit sector, they need to rely on providing norm-compatible hedonic background goals in order to prevent the normative motivation of their employees from decaying. Employee motivation in nonprofit as well as

⁸ In Story’s (1992) categorization, the normative goal corresponds to other-regarding interests, gain and hedonic goals are both aspects of self-regarding or instrumental interests.

public service organizations has indeed often been described as showing this specific combination of “other-regarding” normative motives and “self-regarding” hedonic motivations (Perry & Wise, 1990; Story, 1992). In the humanitarian sector, this combination is visible in personal accounts (e.g. Cain, Postlewait, & Thomson, 2004; Olson, 2000) describing on the one hand the strong normative drive of aid workers, their dedication to serve others even under adverse circumstances, and on the other hand the emphasis on personal growth, experiences of community and the immediate stimulation derived from working in exotic places and mastering difficult situations (Bjerneld, 2009; Reijn, 2007).

In terms of newcomer adjustment, goal-framing theory implies that successful socialization into a nonprofit organization requires aligning the normative and hedonic motivations of their employees with the goals of the organization. Socialization programs can achieve this in two ways. First, by emphasizing the relevance of the work and by highlighting the crucial role of the organization for its beneficiaries, socialization programs can emphasize the normative basis of the job. This can strengthen newcomers’ conviction that their contributions will be meaningful for others, thus assuring them that they will be able to realize altruistic aspirations. Furthermore, in the context of a socialization program, newcomers are brought together with peers who share their motivation. Particularly for prospective humanitarian staff, whose ambition to work in conflict and disaster zones is often met with puzzlement by their environment, such social approval and confirmation is of relevance (Bortolotti, 2004). In effect, this reassurance will reflect in participants perceiving their work as more significant.

Hypothesis 4 (Sense of significance): Nonprofit employees’ participation in a socialization program is positively related to a sense of significance of the work.

Second, by showing that personal enjoyment can go together with normative goals, socialization programs can prevent decay of intrinsic motivation. Many “hedonic” interests that were found to be of noted relevance for many nonprofit and particularly humanitarian employees like thrill seeking, learning about new cultures (Reijn, 2007), but also the relative autonomy as well as the personal contact to colleagues (Onyx & Maclean, 1996), need not conflict with normative motivations. Socialization programs can explicate this by communicating that personal enjoyment (e.g. in the form of socializing with colleagues or enjoying the exoticism of the location) is an important and legitimate part of the job that is not at odds with the normative mission of the organization. The latter becomes particularly important in the humanitarian sector, where aid workers may be confronted with extreme forms of suffering, which make any form of personal enjoyment seem inappropriate.

Hypothesis 5 (Personal enjoyment): Nonprofit employees’ participation in a socialization program is positively related to personal enjoyment.

3.2.4 Distal outcomes: Job satisfaction, performance and retention

Job satisfaction, individual performance and retention are among the most frequently studied distal outcomes of organizational socialization programs (e.g. Cooper-Thomas & Anderson,

2002; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Saks & Ashforth, 1996; Taormina, 1999). Meta-analytic studies (Saks, Uggerslev, & Fassina, 2007; Bauer et al., 2007) show that organizational socialization affects these outcomes both directly and indirectly, i.e. through the mediating effect of proximate variables like role clarity, role conflict and person-organization fit. For example, Saks, Uggerslev and Fassina's (2007) meta-analytic review found that the effect of institutionalized socialization on job satisfaction was only partially mediated by role conflict. Role ambiguity and perceived fit partially mediated the effect on performance, and the effect on intention to quit was partially mediated by role conflict and perceived fit. Overall, their study showed that institutionalized socialization positively affected job satisfaction, performance, and intention to stay. Similarly, Bauer et al.'s (2007, p. 713) meta-analytic study revealed a strong direct effect of organizational socialization on job satisfaction and intention to remain with the organization, in addition to partial mediation through role clarity. We therefore hypothesize that participation in socialization programs has a direct effect on these distal outcome variables:⁹

Hypothesis 6 (Distal outcomes): Nonprofit employees' participation in a socialization program is positively related to (a) job satisfaction, (b) individual performance, and (c) retention.

3.3 Research Design and Setting

3.3.1 The case study organization and its socialization program

MSF operates worldwide to provide direct medical emergency relief. The Dutch section, MSF Holland, was initiated in 1984 as a small branch of the larger umbrella association. Since then, MSF Holland has developed into an organization of its own standing with a workforce exceeding 7,000 employees (expatriate and national staff), responsible for more than 70 aid projects worldwide and with an annual income of over 121 million Euros (Annual Report, 2009). MSF Holland closely cooperates with sections in Germany, the UK and Canada, with which it forms an Operational Center - located in Amsterdam - that has full discretion about how to raise funds, recruit staff and conduct aid projects.

MSF Holland's institutionalized socialization program¹⁰ consists of an eight day introductory course for new recruits, who are about to join one of the organization's aid projects in Africa, Latin America or Asia. The central objective of the program is to prepare newcomers for their first assignment by introducing them to the organization's identity, its operations and their roles and responsibilities within it. During the program, participants attend lectures on diverse topics relating to humanitarian work. They receive information

⁹ Unfortunately, sample size restrictions preclude a mediation analysis in our study, wherefore we do not elaborate hypotheses on the possible mediating effects of proximate outcomes on the relation between participation in a socialization program and distal outcomes.

¹⁰ This section is based on documents about the socialization program as well as on field notes by the first author, who was allowed to participate in a socialization course in July 2009. In this context, the intensity of the socialization process could not only be observed, but in fact personally experienced. Like other researchers (Reijn, 2007), who report similar sensations, at some point during the program, the author in fact began to toy with the idea to join MSF.

concerning their future tasks, the values of the organization, the scope and relevance of humanitarian aid, and the conduct expected of them in the field. Everyone stays at the course location for the entire eight days, sharing meals, accommodation, and free time. The program is perceived as exhausting, but also as an exciting and enjoyable experience characterized by intense social interaction.

Though participation in the program is mandatory for all new recruits, not everyone participates. At times, positions in the field need to be filled urgently, which can conflict with the scheduling of the socialization program as it only takes place every three months. Such urgency of placement then requires newcomers to assume their position without having participated in the training program. While considered suboptimal by the organization, this situation holds the advantage of creating a natural experiment for testing our hypotheses.

3.3.2 Sampling, Data and Method

Sampling strategy: a matched pair sample

The starting point for the empirical analysis was the organization's personnel database of field workers. It comprises the employment records of 2,985 employees. In a first step, we selected all employees who started their first mission for the organization in the timeframe of 2003 to 2005, as the structure and content of the socialization course did not change during this period ($N=1,459$).

In a second step, the database allowed us to identify those who had attended the socialization program and those who did not. Overall, almost 47% of the employees in the database did not participate in the program. While this number is high, according to the organization, urgency of placement is the only reason for not attending the introductory program. Other factors such as previous experience in aid work do not warrant exemption.

In a third step, chi-square tests (not reported) were conducted to compare participants and non-participants. These did not reveal any significant differences in terms of work experience (age, salary, position, type of contract) and project assignments, thus supporting the claim that no exemption is granted based on individual characteristics of new recruits.

Fourth, we opted for a matched pair sampling strategy because it has been shown to be a suitable method to assess the effects of interventions (Heckman, Ichimura, & Todd, 1998), particularly for small samples. Five key characteristics were chosen on which participants of the socialization program were matched with non-participants: project, time frame, position, gender and salary. Gender, position and salary are personal characteristics which are often controlled for in socialization studies. Project, i.e. the particular relief operation an employee joined, and time frame, i.e. the year in which the employee was working in this specific project, are particularly relevant in the context of humanitarian work. Both can have substantial influence on the work experience. The security situation and type of emergency, for example, differ substantially between projects as well as over time. Matching respondents on project and time frame therefore provides an extra guarantee that participant and non-

participant faced similar working conditions. This sampling strategy produced 39 matches (i.e. 78 individual cases of newcomers) for whom performance evaluation data was available.

The final step consisted in transcribing and coding information on the proximal and distal outcomes for these 78 cases, since this information was made available in the form of hard copies of performance evaluations.

3.3.3 Coding of performance evaluations & socialization outcome variables

The data sources used were performance appraisal forms filled out separately by employee and line manager after the employee's first mission in the field. These confidential documents provide a unique and rare real life insight into employees' perceptions of their work experience and managers' appraisal of employee performance.

The appraisal forms consist of three parts: in the first section, the employee describes how he or she perceived the first mission in terms of task clarity, supervision, team integration, and relation between expectations and reality. In the second part, the line manager comments on skills of the employee and generally appraises performance. The final section offers room for both the line manager and the employee to reflect on the work experience and on possible prospects for the employee in the organization. To develop our coding scheme, we used established measurement instruments on proximate and distal outcomes developed for survey research purposes. Coding was conducted by three independent coders and aided by the software Atlas.Ti. Disagreements between coders were rare, and were resolved through discussion.

Role Ambiguity. An employee was coded either as experiencing role ambiguity or role clarity based on the complete information provided in the first part of the performance evaluation. Based on Rizzo, House and Lirtzman's (1970) measurement instrument, *role ambiguity* was identified when an employee reported unpredictability of outcomes and responses or uncertainty about behavioral requirements and expectations (e.g. "*I will never achieve what MSF wants me to do. Nobody ever explained to me what MSF wants but I feel they want me to set up systems, flow charts and so. And in that I do not feel too confident. I have had no handover and in my briefings things were not clear to me.*"). In survey research, role ambiguity usually constitutes one side of a spectrum on the opposite side of which is role clarity (Rizzo et al. 1970). Therefore, if no evidence of role ambiguity could be found, an employee was coded as experiencing role clarity. In the data file, the categories were respectively coded 0 for "role ambiguity" and 1 for "role clarity". The same source and strategy were used for the variables role conflict/absence of role conflict, and person-organization-fit/misfit.

Role Conflict was identified, following Rizzo et al. (1970), when an employee reported conflict a) between time, resources, or capabilities, and defined role behavior; b) between several roles which require incompatible behaviors; c) or between organizational demands in the form of incompatible policies, conflicting requests from others, and incompatible standards of evaluation (e.g. "*Have felt that the last six months in particular have been very busy and that covering both the Project Coordinator and the Logistics Administrator position in this project was perhaps a mistake. I feel disappointed that I have not really had the time to do either job well and have left*").

many things undone.”) Reports of role conflict were coded as “0”; absence of role conflict was coded as “1”.

Person-organization misfit was defined as employee reports of experiencing incompatibility of personal values with organizational values such as “*I feel that I am not a very good match in this culture*” (Kristof, 1996). If such concerns were mentioned, the variable person-organization-fit was coded as “0” (misfit). In the absence of explicit statements about incompatibilities, the variable was coded as “1” (fit).

Sense of Significance. Building on several measures (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley, 2001; Kalleberg, 1974), we created an ordinal variable with three categories. “3” (feelings of significance): the document contained employee statements referring to the impact for beneficiaries, feelings of accomplishment and general sense of doing something worthwhile (e.g. “*MSF means a lot to the local people, and in that sense it is an important mission. We give hope and help to the locals.*”). “1” (doubts of significance): the document contains statements expressing concerns about the value and sense of the work (e.g. “*The relatively low medical waste output of what we are doing in so many sites (morbidity and mortality) versa the amount of money spent on the project is to me not completely justified.*”). “2” (nothing mentioned): the document contained not statements related to feelings or doubts of significance.

Personal enjoyment was coded “1” (enjoyed the job) when an employee literally stated that s/he “*liked*” or “*enjoyed*” the job, found it “*interesting*” or “*exciting*” (Kalleberg, 1974; Spector, 1985). Since no explicit expressions of disliking the job, or of experiencing it as boring or frustrating could be found in the documents, the variable was coded as “0” (nothing mentioned) otherwise. The underlying assumption is that employees who did not explicitly mention discomfort or enjoyment also did not experience particular feelings of such kind.

Job satisfaction. Different sections of the performance evaluation forms were used as sources to substantiate a differentiation between personal enjoyment and job satisfaction. Information concerning personal enjoyment was taken from the first section of the form outlining the employees’ general appraisal of the assignment. *Job satisfaction* was coded based on the section “satisfaction current job”. If it contained only positive statements (e.g. “*Very satisfied. I really wanted a placement that allowed me to practice hands-on medicine (with lots of challenges) and that’s what I got.*”), the employee was coded as satisfied (“3”). If it contained only negative statements (e.g. “*Very little job satisfaction or feeling that I made any difference to the Darfur population.*”), it was coded as dissatisfied (“1”). If it contained both negative and positive statements (e.g. “*I was placed in locations I actually wouldn’t sign up for, but within the circumstances I was satisfied even though not challenged enough.*”), it was coded as partly satisfied (“2”).

Performance. The second section of the performance evaluation provides the project manager’s appraisal of an employee’s *performance* in the following domains: expertise, duties, social skills, personal skills, adherence to organizational values, and management. Codes were directly adopted from the original grades used in these evaluations: exceeded requirements (“4”), met requirements (“3”), did not fully meet requirements (“2”), did not meet

requirements (“1”). An employee’s overall performance was computed as the average overall performance domains.

Retention was measured as the number of assignments an employee accepted after his or her first mission¹¹. Data was obtained through the personnel database, which provides information until 2008, hence allowing the tracking of respondents’ careers up to five years after entering the organization.

3.3.4 Analytical methods: Wilcoxon signed-rank and McNemar test

Non-parametric tests for matched samples were carried out. We applied the McNemar test for dichotomous variables and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test for ordinal variables. Both take into consideration the particularities of matched samples. The McNemar test assesses the relative marginal frequencies of possible pairings. The Wilcoxon test consists of a pair by pair comparison of the mean differences between participants and non-participants (McNemar, 1947; Wilcoxon, 1945). The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to analyze the effect of socialization on job satisfaction, performance, retention, and sense of significance. The McNemar test was applied to inquire the significance of differences between participants and non-participants in terms of role clarity and conflict, person-organization-fit, and personal enjoyment.

3.4 Results

Of the 39 pairs in our sample, 24 (61%) were female and 15 male (39%). This mirrors the gender distribution of MSF’s workforce. 19 of the pairs were paramedics, 10 pairs consisted of medical doctors, and 10 pairs occupied non-medical positions. Pairs were distributed across 27 projects, the majority of which were located in Africa. All respondents received the same basic salary. Table 3.1 summarizes the descriptive for all variables, as well as the results of the significance tests of the group comparisons.

3.4.1 Proximate outcomes

The first three hypotheses predicted that participation in the socialization program would increase role clarity (H1), decrease role conflict (H2), and increase person-organization fit (H3). None of the tests yield significant differences between participants and non-participants, leading us to reject H1, H2, and H3. With regard to person-organization fit (H3), it should be noted that the distribution is much skewed: hardly any employee reports a mismatch between personal and organizational values.

¹¹ Alternative measures of retention such as different interpretations of length of stay with the organization or reenlistment for a 2nd mission were applied with varying outcomes in terms of significance levels. However, the overall trend across all retention measures indicated a positive effect of participation in the socialization program, with number of missions constituting the least ambiguous and most potent operationalization.

H4 (Sense of significance) predicted that participants in the program show a higher sense of significance than non-participants. The Wilcoxon rank test yields a significant difference between both groups, leading us to accept H4. In fact, none of the participants falls into the category “doubts of significance”, compared to 22% of non-participants.

H5 (Personal enjoyment) predicted that personal enjoyment is higher for participants than for non-participants. The outcomes of the McNemar test are significant and in the predicted direction: 58% of participants enjoy their job, compared to 37% of non-participants. H5 is corroborated.

Table 3.1 Socialization Effects: Frequencies, Descriptives and Significance Tests

ROLE CLARITY	Role clarity	Role ambiguity			McNemar
Participants	19 (53%)	17 (47%)			x
Non-participants	20 (54%)	17 (46%)			
ROLE CONFLICT	Absence of role conflict	Role conflict			McNemar
Participants	21 (58%)	15 (42%)			x
Non-participants	20 (54%)	17 (46%)			
P-O-FIT	P-O-Fit	P-O-Misfit			McNemar
Participants	35 (97%)	1 (3%)			x
Non-participants	34 (92%)	3 (8%)			
SENSE OF SIGNIFICANCE	Feeling of significance	Nothing mentioned	Doubts of significance	Wilcoxon	
Participants	14 (39%)	22 (61%)	0 (0%)	**	
Non-participants	8 (22%)	21 (56%)	8 (22%)		
PERSONAL ENJOYMENT	Enjoyed the work	Nothing mentioned			McNemar
Participants	21 (58%)	16 (42%)			**
Non-participants	14 (37%)	25 (63%)			
JOB SATISFACTION	Satisfied	Partly satisfied	Dissatisfied	Wilcoxon	
Participants	25 (68%)	12 (32%)	0	*	
Non-participants	18 (47%)	18 (47%)	2 (6%)		
PERFORMANCE	Min/Max	Mean (SD)			Wilcoxon
Participants	3.0/4.0	3.4 (0.33)			x
Non-participants	2.5/4.0	3.3 (0.43)			
NUMBER OF ASSIGNMENTS	Min/Max	M (SD)			Wilcoxon
Participants	0/4	0.77 (1.16)			**
Non-participants	0/2	0.38 (0.63)			

Notes: ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, x = no significant difference within pairs

3.4.2 Distal outcomes

H6a (Job satisfaction) predicted that job satisfaction would be higher for participants than for non-participants. Overall, most employees report satisfaction with their job.

Nevertheless, the difference between participants and non-participants is significant, with a higher proportion of participants being satisfied with their job than non-participants. This leads us to accept H6a.

H6b (Performance) predicted that participants receive higher performance ratings than non-participants. With average scores being almost identical, no significant difference can be detected. H6b is therefore rejected.

H6c (Retention) predicted that participants go on more missions than non-participants. The difference between the two groups is significant, with the maximum number of assignments being twice as high for participants than for non-participants. H6c is accepted.

3.5 Discussion and Conclusion – Motivation Matters

The purpose of this chapter was to inquire how and to what extent institutionalized socialization programs in nonprofit organizations affect newcomers' adjustment, attitudes and behavior. Utilizing original employee performance evaluations as the main data source, we find that MSF Holland's eight day socialization program increases employees' sense of significance and personal enjoyment (proximate outcomes), and improves job satisfaction and retention (distal outcomes). The latter findings are in line with previous socialization studies conducted in for profit organizations, which document direct effects of institutionalized socialization on outcomes like job satisfaction and retention. The strong effects for the two proximate outcomes are novel. They extend the scope of previous socialization theories, which assume that socialization programs are effective mainly if they reduce uncertainty and person-organization misfit. Our study suggests that, at least in nonprofit settings like the humanitarian sector, a major requirement for organizational socialization programs is to sustain stable normative motivations. They may achieve this objective through increasing newcomers' sense of significance and personal enjoyment: reaffirming newcomers' confidence in the relevance of their work and demonstrating that nonprofit work is compatible with the realization of personal enjoyment.

It is particularly noteworthy that MSF Holland's socialization program does not affect the proximate effects on newcomer adjustment as predicted by standard socialization theories: role clarity, role conflict, and person-organization fit. One potential explanation for these null-findings may be sought in the specific characteristics of the humanitarian sector. Aid work is characterized by a high degree of uncertainty, resulting from highly dynamic situations and intransparent contexts (Edwards & Hulme, 1996). Role requirements are seldom clearly specified and change often. Providing clear behavioral scripts during socialization is therefore often not feasible. Put differently, role ambiguity and role conflict are "built in" aspects of most of the jobs in the sector – a feature that socialization programs cannot resolve. As a result, the socialization program also does not lead to performance differences between participants and non-participants. However, while the socialization program does not reduce the uncertainty new aid workers face, it may prepare them for the experience. The positive effect of the socialization program on job satisfaction can be

interpreted as potentially indicative of participants' enhanced ability to sustain a positive attitude despite experiences of role ambiguity and conflict.

The null-finding for person-organization fit is due to the extremely low number of respondents that were coded as "misfits". Goal framing theory provides a heuristic to understand this remarkable degree of value congruence. Goal frames influence people's perception and evaluation of situations: persons in a normative goal frame are sensitive to different clues than persons in a hedonic or gain goal frame (Lindenberg & Steg, 2007). With regard to the choice of employer, it can thus be argued that a normatively motivated person, as we expect the majority of nonprofit and humanitarian workers to be, will focus on prospective employers' normative characteristics, i.e. organizational culture, mission, principles, and values. Aspects such as pay, available bonuses and advancement opportunities, which are likely of relevance for a person in a gain goal frame, are presumably less influential. Accordingly, we reason that nonprofit employees are likely to seek employment in organizations based on an affinity with the organization's values. From this perspective, the high degree of value congruence and related absence of socialization effects becomes a feature of the normative nature of aid, or generally, nonprofit work.

Four limitations of our study need to be mentioned. First, while our study established clear direct effects of institutionalized socialization on proximate and distal outcomes, we could not analyze the relation between proximate and distal outcomes. Tests of a mediation model with conditional logistic regression analysis failed to converge due to small sample size. The question to what degree an employee's sense of significance and personal enjoyment mediate the effect of nonprofit socialization programs on performance, retention, satisfaction, and other distal outcomes is a fruitful avenue for future research.

Second, though the use of process-produced real life data - in the form of coded transcripts of performance evaluations - is one of the advantages of our study, the information that could be extracted on psychometric constructs related to newcomer adjustment is necessarily relatively coarsely grained. In addition, a strong assumption had to be made for documents that did not contain explicit statements about one of the proximate or distal outcomes. In these cases, we coded this trait as "not mentioned". For example, the fact that personal enjoyment is not explicitly mentioned in the document does not imply that the employee scores lower on personal enjoyment than an employee who happens to mention his enjoyment (or is asked about it by his or her manager) during the performance evaluation interview. Future studies would benefit from multimethod research designs in which content analytic strategies of personnel documents are complemented by other data collection methods like interviews or surveys, which allow the application of validated psychometric scales.

Third, the relatively high number of non-participants in the mandatory program indicates possible measurement problems. Information was obtained through the personnel database of MSF Holland, and according to accounts by the organization; recording of information on training is not always up to date. Records are particularly unreliable for employees who join MSF Holland after being recruited by sections external to the Operational Center

Amsterdam. We compensated for possible recording errors by taking into consideration indicators concerning previous work experience (salary scales, recruiting section), yet some ambiguities remain. This is an unfortunate, yet common predicament of using “real” data.

Fourth, our study was conducted in one humanitarian nonprofit organization, analyzing the effects of one socialization program. Such case study research design holds limitations in terms of generalizability of findings. In order to assess whether the theoretical mechanisms proposed in our study also apply more broadly, cross-sectional research designs involving nonprofit organizations from both the humanitarian and the non-humanitarian sector would be desirable. Such studies would also benefit from a detailed look at the content of institutionalized socialization programs.

We conclude with possible implications of our study for theory and practice. Recent contributions to theories of organizational socialization emphasize the need for a closer examination of the mechanisms through which socialization affects outcomes at the level of individual employees (Saks et al., 2007). Following this lead, our use of the goal framing theory of intrinsic motivation pointed to the relevance of hitherto neglected proximate outcomes of socialization effects, personal enjoyment and sense of significance. Goal framing theory proved useful to derive two novel hypotheses for socialization effects in the nonprofit sector. Future studies might benefit from exploring its use for modeling socialization effects in the for profit sector. For example, personal enjoyment and sense of significance may be relevant socialization outcomes also in private companies, in particular for specific function categories, like professionals.

On the practical side, one implication of our study is that institutionalized socialization programs in (humanitarian) nonprofit organizations may benefit more from focusing on measures to sustain normative motivation and aligning it with the short term motivations for enjoyment, rather than from attempts to reduce cognitive inconsistencies, uncertainty and person-organization misfit by providing detailed information on how to do the job. Employees’ normative motivations are inherently brittle. Though the management of humanitarian nonprofit organizations may count on a workforce whose normative motivations tends to exceed those of private sector employees, the normative commitment of employees in this sector nevertheless is susceptible to decay. MSF Holland’s socialization program succeeds at least partly in counteracting such tendencies by reaffirming the motivation of their employees and aligning it with their need for personal enjoyment. Whether this specific program may serve as a template for the design of institutionalized socialization programs in other organizations is a relevant question not only for human resource practitioners. Answering it will require to move beyond current socialization theories for private sector employees.