PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY NEGOTIATION DURING ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION IN THE CONTEXT OF SOLUTION FOCUSED THERAPY TRAINING

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Table of Contents

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Abstract

This report describes how employees adapt to a new organizational method by negotiating their professional identity. Usually employees need to adapt to a new organizational method during times of internal- and external organizational change. During the change process employees are likely to experience a high level of uncertainty which organizations aim to reduce via organizational socialization and organizational training in particular. During their socialization period, employees often also experience a certain level of tension due to a discrepancy between individual- and organizational expectations regarding the adaptation to the changing organizational system. Employees try to reduce uncertainty and achieve balance through the process of professional identity negotiation, where the outcome will be the employees' adjusted behavior to the organizational approach. Due to the great impact of professional identity negotiation on socialization outcomes, more elaborated understanding was necessary on how professional identity negotiation occurs during the socialization period. Therefore, this study examines the processes which take place during professional identity negotiation and the negotiation strategies that employees apply based on the results of the prior information-seeking process and the contextual requirements they have to deal with during their daily work. It will be reported on an existing dataset of 30 semi-structured interviews and ten logbook files from ten health care respondents which were combined with own observations. The data reflects the experiences of health care professionals working with Solution Focused Therapy during organizational training. The results were analyzed by applying elements of a grounded theory approach through which different ways of information seeking and five different negotiation strategies could be identified. The strategies are the result of the negotiation process and reflect the way the healthcare employees are dealing with the organizational approach, involve their clients and adapt to a given practical situation. The negotiation strategies are reflected by five different approaches which are labelled as follows: compliance approach, cooperative approach, directive approach, doing what works approach and commanding approach. The different strategies offer a new way of understanding how professional identity is negotiated while dealing with contextual requirements. Knowing that, organizations should focus more on contextual conditions and barriers during the socialization period in order to prepare their employees and achieve higher organizational identification- and adjustment.

Key words: Professional identity negotiation, information-seeking, organizational socialization, organizational training, Solution Focused Therapy, organizational identification- and adjustment

Introduction

In today's fast changing labour market employees often find themselves confronted with all kinds of changes. Some of the most obvious changes are transitions within an employees work environment like a change in profession or job. In some cases, people intend to get engaged with work transitions in order to broaden their professional horizon and to seek new challenges. In other cases, work transitions do not always occur freely due to redundancies, when employees are forced to find a new job. Either way, changes in job, whether they are intended or introduced by force, can produce an anxious situation which can cause uncertainty for the employees (Bordia, Hobman, Jones, Gallois, & Callan, 2004; Nicholson, 1984). Uncertainty can be provoked when employees for example experience ambiguity due to a lack of knowledge regarding a new work situation. Changes in profession can also represent challenges to established norms, professional beliefs and competencies, which can be accompanied by tension (Crossnan, & White, 1999; Ibarra, 1999). During such changes employees are confronted with the challenge to resolve their uncertainty and the upcoming tension (Bordia et al., 2004) in order to be able to fulfil organizational expectations. Employees know that they might risk losing their jobs when they do not fulfil the requirements of a new company. This is why employees are in high need to get information when they are faced with new work circumstances (Morrison, 1993a, 1993b). Therefore, it can be assumed that any person crossing organizational internal- or external boundaries is looking for clues on how to proceed with one's work (Billett & Smith, 2006; FAME Consortium, 2007; Vähäsantanen & Billet, 2008). Especially information regarding ones professional role and tasks within the organization is very relevant for employees in an early state of socialization (Ashforth, Sluss & Saks, 2007; Feldman, 1981; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; van Maanen, 1978).

Uncertainty and not knowing how to act within the organization, might lead to a low level of productivity (Ashforth, Sluss & Saks, 2007), which in turn could negatively impact the overall organizational performance. That is why organizations have recognized the importance of helping employees to reduce uncertainty and to simplify the integration within the company, which is why organizations at its best try to socialize organizational members into the new profession (Kenny, Pontin & Moore, 2004). The process of socializing members into a new profession is called organizational socialization. In this research, organizational socialization will be seen as the process through which new members learn and adapt to the value system, the norms and the required behavior pattern of an organization (Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein & Gardner, 1994). During this process, organizations try to help and also use socialization as a strategic opportunity to steer the employees into a desired direction. Steering employees into a desired direction, with for example organizational training, includes the achievement of desired knowledge, attitudes and behaviours towards the company (Allen, 2006; Cable & Parson, 2001; Morrison, 1993a, 1993b; Kammever-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). Organizations aim to influence the desired achievements by integrating organizational training during socialization programs so that (new) employees learn and adapt to the new organizational approach more easily (Knight, 2000).

Unfortunately, even if the level of uncertainty and the amount of tension would be very high, employees will not automatically develop a positive attitude to the organization, identify themselves with the organization or even act conform the organizational expectations. During organizational socialization, employees might not only struggle with reducing uncertainty, but also with finding a balance between conflicting personal- and organizational expectations (Kreiner & Sheep, 2009). In other words, people do not identify or adapt only because an organization wants them to. In order to find a balance between personal- and external expectations, employees become engaged with professional identity negotiation. The process of professional identity negotiation incorporates an employee's striving to develop a clear understanding of their expected role within the organization (Buck, 2005; Scheeres & Solomon, 2006; Vähäsantanen & Billet, 2008). Knowing how employees' professional identity negotiation looks like during such a process might help organizations to better influence newcomers organizational identification and –adjustment (Vähäsantanen & Billet, 2008). Therefore, this research aims to contribute to the understanding on how employees negotiate their professional identity during organizational training as it is an important part of organizational socialization.

Theoretical Framework

Socialization through Organizational Training

During socialization programs, organizations can integrate two different types of socialization tactics: institutionalized and individualized tactics. Both tactics have in common that they help newcomers to adapt to the organization by reducing uncertainty connected to concern of joining a new organization (Allen, 2006; Cable & Parson, 2001; Kammever-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). Despite the common goal, the two different types of tactics need to be interpreted in a different way. Institutionalized tactics encourage employees to adapt to a predetermined role. In contrast, individualized tactics are encouraging the employees to develop their own approach to their roles (John, 1986; Ashforth, Sluss& Saks, 2007; Jones, 1986). Organizational training is one example of an institutionalized tactic. Firms use training during organizational socialization in order to encourage newcomers to learn and adapt a new way of thinking and working (Bauer, Bodner, Truxillo & Tucker, 2007; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Klein & Weaver, 2000). A structured training can provide the newcomers with all the information they need which contributes to uncertainty reduction and to the facilitation of organizational identification and –adjustment (Allen, 2006; Bauer et al., 2007; Jones, 1986). This makes organizational training a powerful source for organizations. Due to the importance regarding the reduction of uncertainty and tension by helping the employee to understand the new work environment, this study will limit its scope and focus on organizational training.

Organizational training usually includes aspects of both formal- and collective tactics. Formal tactics are clearly defined socialization activities during training classes where newcomers are supposed to learn their roles. The underlying aim of formal socialization activities is to provide newcomers with consistent messages about core values, goals, expectations, policies, and assumptions of the organization which signal the importance of adapting to the new environment (Klein & Weaver, 2000; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006). Important outcomes of formal tactics during organizational socialization are shared values and reduced uncertainty (Allen, 2006; Cable &

Parsons, 2001; Feldman, 1994). Organizations can choose to integrate collective socialization tactics when learning is stimulated in groups. Research has shown that newcomers appreciate opportunities for interaction within a cohort and social learning, because of the possibility to learn from each other (Allen, 2006; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). By using collective tactics, employees will be informed about general aspects regarding the organization, roles and appropriate responses. Through common messages organizations aim to reduce uncertainty about roles in order to create a greater sense of shared values (Allen, 2006; Baker & Feldman, 1991; Cable & Parsons, 2001; Feldman, 1994). Often, training programs also provide employees with information about mental models and decision making strategies that are commonly used in the organization (Lankura & Scandura, 2002; Smith, Ford, & Kozlowski, 1997). That might stimulate the development of new skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, and relationships, and the development of appropriate sense-making frameworks (Chao et al., 1994a; Chatman, 1991; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; De Vos, Buyens, & Schalk, 2003; Louis, 1980; Thomas & Anderson, 1998)

Organizational Identification and -Adjustment

Training programs facilitate organizational socialization by stimulating positive attitudes in combination with organizational identification which finally leads to organizational adjustment (Allen, 2006; Bauer et al., 2007; Jones, 1986). In this research, organizational identification will be seen as the individuals' statement about him- or herself regarding the extent to which he or she is willing to integrate organizational beliefs into his or her identity (Pratt, 1998, p.172). Research has shown that if people strongly identify themselves with their work organization, their sense of survival is tied to the organization's survival, leading to direct efforts on behalf of colleagues and the organization as a whole (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994, p.254). Additionally, employees who identify with their organization are likely to become more integrated within the organizational community (Carmeli, Gilat & Waldman, 2007) which leads to the explanation of organizational adjustment. The term organizational adjustment refers within this research to the extent to which an employee becomes willingly integrated and acts compliant to the organization's professional and social system (Allen, 2006; Carmeli, Gilat & Waldman, 2007). The range of organizational adjustment is reflected within this research by the degree of active engagement regarding organizational methods and expectations. Research has shown that adjustment within an organization is closely related to job performance regarding the company's method (Carmeli, Gilat & Waldman, 2007). In other words, identification focuses on the evaluation of the congruence and the integration of the organizational beliefs with the employee's personal ones. This can be classified as a more internal process that takes place in the employees mind whereas adjustment describes the person's active engagement in organizational actions in a way that is also in line with the former learned values and beliefs.

Both aspects, the evaluation aspect of organizational identification and the action aspect of organizational adjustment are part of the professional identity negotiation process. Professional identity negotiation will be seen within this research as the (internal and external) dynamic interaction process (Swann, Johnson & Bosson, 2009). through which individuals attempt to achieve congruence between their work related actions and their professional identity (Pratt, Rockmann & Kaufmann, 2006). Internal dynamic interaction represents the professionals' introspection through self-reflection (Lankau & Scandura, 2002) and external interaction is defined as the interaction with the professionals' work environment (Allen, 2006). The employees' personal evaluations during organizational identification are related to the internal dynamic interaction process which was emphasized in the definition of professional identity negotiation. The active engagement of the employees within their professional environment during organizational adjustment relates to the external dynamic interaction process which was also mentioned within the definition of professional identity negotiation.

The descriptions of the two concepts organizational identification and organizational adjustment indicate that identification has a fundamental effect on adjustment (Ashforth, Sluss and Saks, 2007). If employees do not identify themselves with their work organization, it is unlikely to expect that a high level of adjustment will be developed (Carmeli, Gilat & Waldman, 2007). The organizational attempt to integrate employees through organizational training would fail and result in tension due to an experienced gap between organizational expectations and personal role expectations (Nelson, 1987). A low level of adjustment and a high level of tension would even imply the possibility of low work performance. Of course organizations try to avoid tension through proper socialization and especially organizational training in order to avoid negative outcomes as lower work performance. Furthermore, newcomers try to find out if the current organizational setting and enables them to act conform to organizational expectations which is about identifying work situations where it is possible to enact regarding to the expected role. Accordingly, employees will evaluate if they are willing and able to act conform the organizational expectations. Employees will also negotiate about which behavioral tactics to apply by handling personal identities that are in line with and supportive of the self-concept (Kreiner & Sheep, 2009).

Tension during Organizational Socialization

As mentioned in the introduction it is unlikely that employees unopposed adapt their expected roles within the organization. Throughout the whole socialization process there are different circumstances which can cause tension. Tension occurs when personal values and prior experiences, through for example previous socialization, are dissonant with expectations the organizational environment holds (Dutton, Ashforth & Albert, 2000; Pratt, 2000; Swann, Johnson & Bosson, 2009). Research suggests that employees who already have undergone a profound socialization process come with existing values and skills (Kenny, Pontin & Moore, 2004). When there are differences between earlier experiences and organizational expectations within the new environment, tension seems likely to appear. Tension can also increase when there are discrepancies regarding the experiences during organizational training and practical work situations (Clark, 1997). When role expectations are difficult to fulfil at work, through for example counteracting work conditions or situational aspects, it can have impact on the way employees decide to act towards the organizational method. Furthermore, some conflicts might arise between an employee's need for feeling competent and connected and the desire for personal verification (Swann, Johnson & Bosson, 2009). On the one hand people want to act conform the organizational expectations so that they can bond with their social work environment and be rewarded through for example compliments. On the other hand employees want their actions to match their personal convictions. In order to prevent and ease emerging tension, individuals are in a constant process of professional identity negotiation to achieve optimal balance (Kreiner & Sheep, 2009).

Professional Identity Negotiation

In the introduction the importance of information regarding the employees expected organizational role during times of uncertainty was brought up. Furthermore professional identity negotiation was introduced as a solution to reduce tension and to find a balance between personal and organizational expectations. To highlight the interconnectedness between information-seeking and professional identity negotiation, these aspects need to be explained in more detail.

Information seeking

Till now it might seem that employees have a quite passive role regarding the internalization and adaption of organizational related information during organizational training. However, recent research has shown that employees do not passively react to the socialization attempts of organizations, but that they are active agents who try to understand what is going on within their new professional environment (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006). Next to the organizational effort to provide the employees with suitable sense-making frameworks in order to socialize them into the organization, employees are also seeking information by themselves in order to reduce uncertainty and understand the organization and their expected role in it (Cooper-Thomas Anderson, 2006; Morrison, 1993a, 1993b; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). They also use different strategies while they are seeking information. Recent and older research has found that information seeking includes looking for feedback and observing role models. These two strategies are key aspects of information seeking (Ashfort & Cummings, 1983; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). Employees try to get some feedback from colleagues and supervisors in times of uncertainty, because they want to affirm their professional role (Bauer et al., 2007). Besides the evaluation of the supervisor, self-evaluation was found to have an important role during the process of feedback seeking. According to Williams & Johnson (2000) feedback seeking is associated with greater agreement between self- and supervisor evaluations of performance which finally leads to better performance. Information seeking is something which is especially present in the beginning of the socialization period, but of course is also integrated during an employee's whole tenure. However, the obtained information gives input for the professional identity negotiation where employees decide how they can achieve balance between the personal –and the organizational expectations. This makes information-seeking an important part of the professional identity negotiation process.

Professional identity negotiation strategies

When employees collect sufficient information they might respond to tension and uncertainty in different ways. During professional identity negotiation, employees develop different strategies or tactics in order to be able to deal with different situations which cause tension and challenge the employee's identity. Employees might try to absorb the change by negotiating an acceptable balance by, on the one hand (partly) adapting to the organizations way of working and on the other hand, seeking changes so that personal actions better match with personal convictions (Ibarra, 1999, Nicholson, 1984). When employees seek changes they might try to change role requirements during negotiation so that actions better match personal needs, abilities and identity. By doing that, they can react with different modifications to preserve and enact valued aspects of their identity while attaining a negotiated adaptation to the new situation (Swann, Johnson & Bosson, 2009). Different examples for professional identity negotiation strategies, where employees make modifications, can be found within the current literature. As an example for these negotiation strategies, the findings of Vähäsantanen and Billet (2008) will be illustrated. Vähäsantanen and Billet (2008) did research on teacher's identity negotiation strategies during changes at work and found out that negotiation strategies are a reflection of the professional's decision regarding their orientation towards work and describe the current attitude regarding practicing active agency in a reform context. The employees either get engaged in a professional development strategy, passive accommodation, active participation, a balancing act or withdrawal. In the first strategy, employees are positive about the current reform, but also worried about their ability to perform well, which is why they are in need for professional development and training. Employees who chose a passive accommodation strategy adjust to the social demands, because they believe that resisting the changes would be too exhausting. The third strategy is applied when professionals are worried about the current reform which is why they are willing to show active engagement during the transformation. The fourth strategy "balancing act" is on the one hand committed towards the changes, but on the other hand it is experienced as exhausting which is why employees have to find a middle course. Employees with the withdrawal strategy are basically negative regarding the current reform, because they see it as a threat which is why they consider leaving the organization. These different strategies have shown that there are a lot of possibilities for employees to find a professional balance. Furthermore, employees strive through trial and error, learning the rules of social interaction and communication to achieve smooth identity negotiation (Swann et al., 2009).

Introduction of the Research Case

An upcoming trend of the last year within different kinds of organizations is to socialize employees into a solution focused approach (Corcoran & Pillai, 2009). Solution focused therapy, as to what in the following will be referred as SFT, involves giving people the authority to act freely by finding and determining their own solutions which implies a high level of active involvement (Cauffman, 2010). SFT can be broadly applied within different work branches. However, currently SFT is often practiced within health care, because of its positive effect on clients with regard to therapeutic success (Ferraz & Wellman, 2008). This approach can be quite confusing for health care employees without earlier experiences in the field of SFT, because it requires a less traditional way of thinking. Often health care professionals are used to provide their clients with care and are not familiar with letting the clients make their own decisions. When employees get introduced with SFT during organizational training in the context of socialization, it can be assumed that information seeking in combination with professional identity negotiation will be highly present. Especially in such an insecure situation employees need to reduce their uncertainty and find a balance with organizational expectations and their professional identity is quite high. Due to the fact that professional identity negotiation is likely to occur, the socialization of health care professionals into a solution focused therapy approach via organizational training is as an appropriate case for further theoretical- and practical investigations.

Research Question

In order to contribute to earlier findings regarding information seeking and negotiation of professional identity by adopting different strategies for managing changes and responding to social and situational demands during organizational socialization, the following research question was formulated:

How do healthcare professionals negotiate their professional identity during organizational socialization in the context of Solution Focused Therapy Training?

According to the research question and the previous information given within the introduction and the theoretical framework, this paper gives more insights regarding the way employees are seeking information within their work environment in order to get a clear understanding of their expected role. Furthermore, this study also provides more insights regarding how negotiation strategies are formed and applied on the work floor in order to solve uncertainty, reduce tension and finally achieve balance. The professional’s considerations and the way of applying the organizational approach in different situations will be seen as indicators for the extent to what employees identify and adjust to the organizational method during practical situations.

Method

Research Setting

The research site was the mental health care organization Tameij in the northeast of the Netherlands. At Tameij, about 1500 employees offer guidance and support for about 2300 clients of the organization. Within this company SFT is a central topic and applied through the whole organization. SFT is a quite new method. SFT is originating from psychotherapy and developed in the United States in the 1980s in order to receive better results and higher client satisfaction (Gingerich & Eisengart, 2000). SFT helps clients to reach their goals more effectively through its unique characteristic of focussing on solutions instead of problems as which is often the case in standard care (Gingerich & Eisengard, 2000).

SFT is a central topic at Tameij which can be recognized in several processes within the organization. SFT is not only applied during sessions with clients, but also during daily routines and interactions with other professionals. Tameij aims that therapists and clients develop a relationship where the clients find a way to handle their problems by themselves. The research site aims to follow the SFT concept as it is described by Cauffman (2010) who states that three different mandates can be distinguished within SFT: leader, coach and manager. A mandate can be seen as a form of authority / power the healthcare professional needs in order to be able to carry out different tasks.

Mandates can help employees to make a decision regarding the involvement of the client while dealing with the organizational method. According to Cauffman (2010) a mandate is something which always belongs to the professional, but it needs to be earned through interaction with the involved person. As a leader, the professional takes the initiative and determines the general lines. The leader determines who is going to be involved, what needs to be done and how the outcomes of a conversation will look like. A coach has the task to create a context where the client can help himself and the coach helps the client to make the most out of a given situation. The manager of the healthcare process is responsible for the creation and the organization of the general requirements during care. Furthermore, the manager is responsible for the management of the professions specific expertise (Cauffman, 2010). The concept of mandates will be brought up again within the results section of this study.

Due to the solution focused organizational vision, Tameij aims to socialize their (new) employees into solution focused therapists, which is why employees have to attend several solution focused trainings when they enter the organization. The socialization process within Tameij contains an e-learning course, five days of solution focused supervision (training) and two days training regarding the SFT concept of Louis Cauffman where participants learn more about SFT related techniques and the company's vision regarding the solution cube. The trainings are given through workshops led by internally trained employees with sufficient experiences regarding the application of solution focused therapy. In the different training sessions employees get the possibility to explore and exercise with each other during for example role playing games and team building exercises. Within every stage during supervision sessions it is highlighted that SFT strives to be goal directed.

Changes regarding the way of working within healthcare often requires a paradigm shift which can be experienced as difficult by the health care professionals, especially when a traditional approach to care was embedded in (earlier) training and socialization (Anderson & Funell, 2010). This is why health care professionals at Tameij are systematically socialized to the new set of responsibilities and expectations in order to be able to deal with these difficulties and possible confusions. When (new) employees at Tameij already have experiences in health care when they come to Tameij, often a paradigm shift will be required which can be experienced as a challenging project by the health care professionals, especially when a traditional approach to care was embedded in earlier training and socialization (Anderson & Funell, 2010). As it was assumed that the level of uncertainty and tension will rise due to the acquired change, this case was evaluated as an interesting starting point for further investigations on how employees' professional identity negotiation unfolds.

Research Design

To answer the research question, a qualitative approach was chosen where I drew on an existing data set of 30 transcribed interviews, log files and own observations at Tameij. The Interviews were used as the main information source. Interviews are often preferred as a medium to explore the experiences, views, beliefs and motivations of individual participants (Gersick, Bartunek, Dutton, 2000). The use of interviews allowed an open approach and enabled continuous adjustment. A lot of detailed information was provided because the interviewee also had the possibility to discuss personal topics and problems which would not have been possible to address during a survey (Gersick, Bartunek, Dutton, 2000).

Sample

The existing data set was the result of a longitudinal research design focusing on how employees perceive SFT. The participants were selected according to the following criteria: First, they had to be newcomers who worked less than a year at Tameij, but with the outlook of a long tenure which implied the exclusion of employees with a zero hour's contract. Furthermore the newcomers still had to follow the solution-focused supervision or a part of it and had to be willing to participate in three interview sessions, to register two weekly a logbook and to allow several video and sound recordings from their work with clients. Different employees with different functions in various groups were desired. Possible participants were approached via their group managers, but employees were allowed to participate freely. Prior to the beginning of the research, the participants were informed via a Power Point presentation about the aim of the research, the expected duration, time investment, planning and the handling of their personal data due to the researcher's responsibility regarding anonymity. After the presentation, the participants had to sign an informed consent where they agreed to the terms and conditions of the research. Within the present research only the interviews of the employees who had direct contact with the clients, the coaches and assistant coaches, were included because they were most affected by the SFT approach. In total ten employees consisting of five coaches and five assistant coaches, with different professional tenure as shown in Table 1, were suitable for the purpose of this research. All the ten participants attended the e-learning course, nine participants participated during the five day solution focused supervision, delivered as a half day spread over a period of two and a half month and four participants also participated in the two day training of Louis Cauffman.

Table 1

Professional tenure

Participant	Professional tenure (yrs.)[a]
1	22
2	4
3	> 8
4	> 8
5	13
6	25
7	5
8	< 2
9	< 2
10	4

Note.[a] < 2= little work experience, 4-5= normal work experience, >8 a lot work experience

Data collection

During the first data collection phase three interviews were conducted per respondent. An overview of the different data collection phases can be found in Table 2. The interviews were semi-structured and allowed on the one hand to define the areas which needed to be explored and on the other hand they also allowed the interviewer or interviewee to diverge in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail. The flexibility of this interview structure allowed for the discovery of information that is important to the participants individually. This is often is not possible in completely structured interviews (Baarda, Teunissen & de Goede, 2009). Interview schemes were more used as an overall guide and not as a fixed list with questions which needed to be completed. The first interview often contained general questions in order to get to know the respondent and to get a first impression about his or her expectations about SFT and the organization. During this phase the clients were also introduced with the logbook which they had to fill in every two weeks. The logbook was send after the first interview to the participants via email. Participants were asked to fill in the logbook after they finished their work on the same day. The logbook template contained three questions which also can be found in Table 2. The second and third interviews were almost always introduced with the same question: "Did something change at your work since the last time we talked?". In the second interview, questions regarding the participant's experiences with SFT during the training and in practical work situations were asked. In addition, information was gathered about the impact of the direct environment and the application of SFT within the team. The third interview often included questions over the logbook study and its results. These questions varied a lot according to the different answers which were given by the participants. All interviews were conducted by the same interviewer and lasted between 18 and 75 minutes (mean=38).

In addition to the existing data set I participated in a five day supervision program from March 2013 till May 2013 and made personal observations in order to get a better feeling for the research topic and the processes the participants got engaged with. The other participants of the course were informed about my presence during the training. I introduced myself as a student of the University of Twente, working on a research project regarding solution focused training and its impact on health care professionals. Later on I just blended into the group and participated in all the exercises and (video) sessions as everyone else did. This course helped to get a good understanding about the approach and a first idea about the way the health care professionals experienced the whole course setting. It also helped to interpret the interview data from an insider and outsider perspective.

Table 2

Data collection phases

Phase	Phase	Example questions/ Content
1	First interview session	"Can you tell something about your professional background (e.g. education and work experiences)?", "What are your expectations regarding SFT?", "How would you describe SFT at Tameij?", "How can you compare working at Tameij with your other work?" and "Do you recognize SFT on the work floor?".
2	Logbook files	"Have you been consciously busy with applying SFT in the past two weeks?", "Can you describe specific moments where you had the feeling that you could effectively apply SFT or not and whether you decided to apply SFT or not?", "Can you rate the following statements, ranging from 0 to 6 (never-always) regarding your personal experiences and feelings regarding different work aspects?"
3	Second interview session	"What kind of a role plays SFT at your work at this moment?", "What is your current attitude regarding SFT?", "Do you think different about SFT after the training session?", "How do you apply the theory in practice?, "How do you decide what you are going to do?", "What effect does SFT has on your work experience?" , "What kind of feedback do you get from colleagues?", "Do you see/ hear about colleagues using SFT as well?"
4	Third interview session (discussing logbook results)	"Do you have examples where you could or could not effectively apply SFT?", "How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your actions?", "How does SFT look like when you apply it?", "Did the logbook had impact on you and your work at Tameij?", "To what extent are you aware of solution focused action?"
5	Observation	Attending 5 day SFT supervision

Analysis

The aim of the study was to build theory in the area of professional identity negotiation during socialization which was why steps of a grounded theory approach were used to better understand the underlying dynamics during the negotiation processes (Pratt, Rockmann & Kaufmann, 2006). In order to get a complete picture of the interview data and to get the context right, the three interviews of each participant were added to one narrative.

Data assessment

During the assessment of the data, the first step was about understanding the general context and the sentiment of the three interviews. This stage consisted of reading the material several times until a pattern emerged and everything was clear. This first step of data assessment was also about searching for themes which described the emerging patterns (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998). In the second step citations of the respondents were marked as quotations and labelled with open codes. Initially these codes were assigned close to the information which was given in the text. That was necessary so that a detailed overview of the relevant data could be gained. In a third step sub codes were assigned if it could further enhance the information density of the code scheme. Throughout the analysis higher-order themes emerged which made it possible to group similar open codes into categories (step 4) (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). After discovering the theoretical categories, underlying dimensions were tried to be formed in order to understand how different categories fitted together in a coherent picture (step 5) (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Pratt, Rockmann & Kaufmann, 2006).

During the whole coding process, the data analysis followed an iterative pattern of moving between the data and literature several times to gain insights into the emerging structure of the data and possible explanations regarding the negotiation process of the health care professionals (Vough, 2012). The ten logbook files and the observations were used as background information in order to understand the essence of the interviews. Several times codes were deleted, changed and merged in order to reflect the data adequately. A very detailed code scheme with 454 codes and sub-(sub) codes, distributed over 14 categories was developed. It helped to get a good orientation within the data and to get the context and the prevailing mood of the different interviews right. Only the main categories and key aspects, which were highly relevant within the current research, where integrated and explained in a codebook. If all 454 codes would have been included in this report it would be too much information to process for the reader and it would work against the aim to provide clear insights into the developed coding strategy. Therefore, the current codebook which can be retrieved in Table A1 only provides insights into the overall coding structure. An overview with important quotations can be found in Table A2. All coding was recorded in AtlasTi software to facilitate organization and retrieval (Vough, 2012). The last step implied to follow up on the results and the proper notation of conclusions (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998).

Explanation of codes

During the data analysis the codes were grouped regarding the relevant concepts professional identity negotiation, organizational identification and –adjustment. Before the coding process started these three concepts were defined and marked as “code families” within AtlasTi (Table A1). Codes which emerged during the analysis were assigned to one of the three families. Codes which for example matched with the definition of professional identity negotiation were assigned to the code family “negotiation”. The emerging codes and sub codes regarding the negotiation concept were grouped into the categories “parties involved”, “behavior with client”, “behavior SFT”, “SFT course” and “logbook reflection”. The first mentioned category “parties involved” captured codes relating to the direct environment of the employee such as colleagues at work, the manager, other social workers, the family of the client and the organization itself. “Role colleagues” was a code which belonged to the category “parties involved” which could be further divided into sub codes such as feedback, collectively consulting and observation. In order to be able to get a clear picture regarding the way the participants were seeking information and negotiated their professional identity it was important to look for small details which were defined as sub-sub codes. An example for a sub-sub code for the sub code “feedback” would be “asking for advice” which can be seen in Table 3. Within AtlasTi for every code, sub code and sub-sub code some examples with the number of the belonging quotation were listed. This was very helpful during the last analysis step when the results were noted and interpreted, because quotes could be easily retrieved within the big data pool. Due to the large amount of different codes, which was mentioned lately, the division into sub-sub codes was excluded in the code scheme in order to keep it clear (Table A1). To get an impression of the detailed code structure, Table 3 contains an example of the exact coding procedure.

Table 3

Example coding hierarchy

Code family	Category	Code	Sub code	Sub-sub code	Definition sub-sub code
Negotiation	Parties involved	Role Colleagues	Feedback	Asking for advice	Respondents were proactively asking their more experienced colleagues to provide them with work related information in order to be able to evaluate past actions and to plan future steps.

In some cases codes could also belong to two code families. That occurred when quotations contained aspects of both definitions which was the case with the code "adapting treatment". When the negotiation regarding SFT treatment had a positive outcome regarding the application of SFT, it could also be assigned to the family "adjustment". All the codes within the family "adjustment" were assigned to the category "application SFT" whereby the codes mainly described the participant's degree of using SFT techniques with the client and their professional environment. Furthermore codes were assigned to the code family "identification" when the attention was laid on the way the professionals identified themselves with the existing belief system at Tameij and the way the employees saw the solution focused way of working. That was about examining the professional's attitude towards the organization and the organizational approach of working. Codes regarding for example earlier work experiences and the work situation at Tameij were prescribed to the category "work". Codes regarding the personal fit and the opinion towards SFT were prescribed to the category "application SFT".

Results

The data analysis reveals different ways of how employees were seeking information within their new organizational environment. The different ways of information seeking will be explained in the first paragraphs of the results section. Afterwards, in the second part, the employees' identification with the organizational approach will be described, as well as disturbing contextual factors during practical work situations. In the last part of the results section, it will be further elaborated how employees were dealing with the requirements of SFT during a practical work context by applying different identity negotiation approaches.

Information Seeking during Organizational Socialization

Observation

In order to get more clarity about how things work within the organization and how interaction with clients should take place, new employees were found to be in need to observe their peers (colleagues, direct supervisors and managers). The newcomers observed their colleagues during different exercises such as role playing games and practices with different cases during organizational training. Observing ones professional environment gave employees the opportunity to get some information about how their colleagues applied the organizational approach. By observing one's peers, employees learned more about the organizational method itself and they got insights into how the application should look like in practice, as shown by an example of respondent 8:

> "The last time I had a conversation with my client which my manager was also attending. She did one part of the conversation and I did the other part. The client spoke a lot easier to her, because she applied SFT very well by responding to the needs of the clients. During the conversation she made conclusions and asked different questions. The client likes to talk a lot and sometimes it is difficult to cut that of, because I don't know how to do it in a good way. I saw that my manager did that very well. […]" (8:113, 3)[1].

Seeing colleagues and supervisors successfully applying the organizational method, the new employees developed the desire to be able to act in a similar way as their role models did. The analysis reveals that observation seemed to stimulate the employees to compare themselves with their colleagues. When a discrepancy was found it could result in an ambition to grow and in an aspiration to develop better organizational related skills which was expressed through statements like this:

> "I hope I can grow further as well, because when I see my colleagues they can identify six help questions within two minutes while I still have to keep on asking questions. […]" (1:283, 3)."

Feedback

Next to making observations, information seeking was also about trying to achieve feedback from peers regarding possible improvements. Seeking feedback required a lot of proactivity and effort of the participants. The employees reported that they contacted their peers most of the time for advice in order to get to know how things work within the organization. The results showed that employees, who were asking for advice, also often were in need for reassurance:

> "[…]. When I'm in doubt about something, I talk about it in order to be sure that it is right. I am only working here for one year now, so I do not know everything and I can misjudge a situation. You have to cover yourself and reassure with someone" (1:95, 3).

Especially in the beginning employees were in high need to confirm their thoughts and test themselves and also their colleagues by checking their ideas several times. During moments of reassurance participants desired further input of their colleagues. In feedback situations, colleagues were expected to express their appreciation or their disapproval regarding the newcomers' actions. Most of the time,

[1]No. respondent : no. quotation, no. interview

employees appreciated the input they received, because it helped them to understand the organizational method better step by step. During moments of feedback employees also appreciated it when managers tried to stimulate them in a positive way to improve their work performance. Of course, employees also had to deal with criticism during feedback situations, but in most cases they tried to learn to channel it into something positive to work with. Respondents seemed to be happy with getting compliments and it can also be assumed that the positive stimulations through compliments and confirmation enhanced their self-esteem and their self-confidence which finally stimulated them to try harder to apply the organizational method. This development was discovered as an overall trend in the course of the different interview sessions.

Consultation & cooperation

When employees got more used to their new environment and their peers, the information seeking process shifted from a one-directional information flow, where employees primarily got advice, to a two-directional interaction process where informational exchange could take place. The shift regarding a more two-directional approach became clear through statements like the following:

> "First you have an orienting relationship, because you are busy with examining what will be required. […]. At a certain point you achieve more of a co-expert relation with the manager, because you know how to do your work and she knows how to do her work. So you have to find a way to get along with each other and come to an acceptable agreement" (6:207, 3).

The analysis exposes that more skills and experiences made the employee more confident and so they thought they could demand more. They tried to make use of their more equal relationship by standing up to their personal point of view and giving more personal input during discussions. The professionals actively consulted other employees during formal and informal meetings where they exchanged information and experiences and discussed their clients with each other. "Discussing together" implied that this was not an one-directional process were only more experienced employees provided newcomers with information, but it underlines the two-directional aspect of getting engaged with each other which was also about cooperating and working together. Such discussions enabled employees to exchange work-related information in order to enhance the performance regarding the organizational approach. In the beginning, respondents preferred opportunities where they were able to talk freely to their colleagues during informal occasions, such as smoking breaks, which was for example expressed by the following quote:

> "In the past I used to smoke with my colleagues. During our smoking breaks we talked a lot about clients. This one does this and this one that and oh does she has problems with that? Oh wait, it could be that… During these breaks you are more relaxed which works very well, because if you are in the middle of something it is more difficult to evaluate compared with a little more distance to the situation. What you need is a more external view" (1:377, 3).

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that a relaxed atmosphere makes the employees feel comfortable, so that they dare more to seek interaction with more experienced colleagues.

Self-reflection

A crucial aspect during the information seeking process was the professional's self-reflection. Through the reflection of the achieved information and also of personal actions, the professionals got aware about their new environment and how they had to behave within it. Furthermore, the self-reflection stimulated a raise in consciousness regarding the organizational method. Through the SFT course and the logbook, the professionals were regularly confronted with their conscious and unconscious work related actions. The evaluation of conscious and unconscious actions made self-reflection a form of information seeking where the employee sought the information by him- or herself. The employees looked back and evaluated their own behavior through which they got more aware about their actions success. The results showed that the process of self-reflection helped the employees to make changes regarding their behavior when they realized they could do something in a better way:

> "During the first training we talked about the transition of clients with a low IQ[2] and about the possibilities of SFT. […] When I am busy with the logbook I catch myself on using Sofie or Tom as examples very often, because they have a higher IQ which makes it easier to communicate with. The consequence is that I apply SFT easier with them than with clients with a lower IQ. This is about achieving awareness and making the right transition which includes arguing in a different way. Normally you tend to think about a solution on your own and now you have to make sure that the client does it by him or herself" (10:49, 2).

An important side effect of the reflection process was that participants gained more self-confidence when they realized that they did something well. The participants could think about their actions and developed a strong approach towards SFT which helped them to find their personal way of handling the organizational approach. Furthermore, seeking for information helped employees to form a certain attitude towards the organizational approach which also had impact on their willingness to apply it during work situations. Overall, employees seemed to be convinced about the effectiveness of the organizational approach and were willing to apply it in practical situations. The professionals' attitude regarding the organizational approach will be described in the following part of the results section.

Identification with the Organizational Approach

By entering Tameij, employees were confronted with the challenge to unlearn some old customs and conceptions due to prior socialization in order to be able to get engaged with the approach with an open mind. In general, when the employees managed to get to know and to understand the organizational approach through active information seeking, they were willing to apply the organizational method during their daily work. Overall, the newcomers had a positive attitude towards the organizational method. The results revealed that they supported the idea behind SFT and were convinced about its positive effect on clients. Some newcomers had little difficulties in the beginning with understanding the purpose of the approach, but when they collected enough information, they appreciated the way of working with the organizational method. The employees' appreciation was expressed several times during the interviews:

[2] Intelligent Quotient (IQ) (Table B1)

> “What really appeals to me is that you stand next to the clients instead of standing to the opposite of them. If a client does not open the door, just accept it. It is not working from my goals, but working with the goals of the client who determines the pace. My expectations should not become the pitfall during therapy, so you better should not have expectations. I don’t do this work for myself, you don’t do it so that you can give yourself a tap on the shoulder and say that you did a good job, no, you have to try to accompany someone and forget about your own ego. That’s the challenge” (6:15, 1).

However, the practical context and several requirements the employees were confronted with, sometimes could hinder the professionals to fully apply the method.

Contextual Determining Factors while Working with SFT

Despite the generally positive attitude towards the organizational approach, the application of the method depended on the practical context within a given work situation. Within the next five paragraphs the issues the employees were confronted with during practical work situations will be described.

Available time

The available amount of time during work, which was highly present within this research, was one of the context determining factors during a practical situation. Throughout the data analysis it could be discovered that the employees for example did not always had time for deep interactions with clients due to fixed indication times:

> “It is a rising method which works in the tempo of the client, but we have to deal with indication times. If I only have one hour for a client, I cannot sit with him for two hours and wait till the client manages to achieve his or her goals” (6:159, 2).

Knowing that on the one hand the clients were in need for informal chit chat and interpersonal exchange and knowing on the other hand that there was not always enough time for this caused a discrepancy the professionals had to deal with. Furthermore, professionals had to deal with a lot of administrational work. Dealing with the bureaucracy made it sometimes difficult for them to apply the SFT approach which was usually experienced as more time consuming.

IQ of the client

Next to the time aspect, the IQ of the client made it sometimes difficult for employees to apply the method in its full extent. According to the participants, people with a high medical indication, which meant a low IQ, were in need for more steering and care. A common opinion among the professionals was that SFT could not or could only be applied in a limited way with clients with a low IQ. The results show that participants thought that most of these clients could not express what they wanted:

> “I am very positive about solution focused work. I think it works very well with clients who can declare what they want, but it is getting more difficult when they are not able to do that. So I think a difference has to be made regarding the IQ of the client, but in general I think it is always better when clients think about a solution and finally come up with an answer by themselves” (9:26, 1).

Difficulties with SFT techniques

During data analysis it became clear that a lack of application of the method was also connected to specific techniques. On the one hand, employees tended to forget easily about tactics like scaling- or miracle questions. On the other hand the analysis also brought up that the employees sometimes did it on purpose because they didn't see the additional value of applying SFT in a given situation which was expressed with quotations like the following:

> "We have a family we visit 5 times a week and if you ask five times a scaling question they would find that very weird and it would be too difficult for them. […] Most of the goals of the clients are so small it is actually not even necessary. You have to follow the big lines of SFT and the daily interpretation is making sure that the kids have a nice afternoon and that you help the parents. If that's your goal you don't need any scaling questions. […]" (1:370, 3).

Controversies with superior colleagues

Interacting with older colleagues at work not always went smoothly, which could cause some frustration among the new employees. This was because participants wanted to apply the organizational method the way they learned it during the current training, which did not always match with the older practices their colleague used to work with. Older employees usually tended to stick to old habits and wanted to work the way they were always used to. In their early employee stadium, the newcomers did not dare to correct their older colleagues, because they thought that they were not in the position to judge their more experienced peers. Several times, the employees were confronted with the aversion of their older colleagues regarding new things. Disagreements with older colleagues and supervisors did not only occur on the work floor, but also during organizational training. Data analysis shows that there were situations were respondents felt being forced into a particular positive direction by their trainer:

> "She is already 20 years in employment and she does not agree with the way we did it. She immediately tried to push us into a positive direction. Tameij wants everything positive and there has to be a positive help question with a positive goal. But I think a solution focused way of working has to come from ourselves. She forces us to do it in a certain way which is not solution focused anymore. […]"(4:130, 2).

The results have shown that employees were more convinced by the organizational method when they got the possibility to think about change without any pressure. When the employees got room for exploring the new organizational approach freely, their attitude towards the method developed more or less in line with the organizational expectations

Work pressure

Another important contextual factor at work which could affect the way the organizational approach was applied was work pressure. The results showed that employees could experience work pressure when there was for example a lot of aggression within the group and employees were overextended by the situation. During such situations employees also seemed to take their work home with them which also was experienced as a disruption of the work-home balance. In the last case, most employees reacted with rejection to the approach which will be explained in the paragraph "Commanding approach".

Five Different Professional Identity Negotiation Strategies

Dealing with the reality of the practical work context caused a lot of tension which employees tried to solve by negotiating with themselves and their professional environment during daily situations at work. A common agreement had to be achieved which of course wasn't always easy, especially when different opinions were involved. As a result of their professional negotiation, employees found a way to deal with the given work context through which they tried to achieve a balance between their personal beliefs, organizational expectations and the current situation they were confronted with. While negotiating their professional identity, employees made a choice regarding the different elements of the SFT approach by adjusting themselves and their practical behavior to a given situation. Data analysis reveals that when the employees were dealing with the different elements of the SFT approach and contextual requirements, they handled either a compliance-, collaboration-, leading-, or doing what works approach or they rejected the application of SFT which was expressed by the commanding approach. The way the employees finally got engaged with the organizational approach and involved their clients in different practical situations was seen as a reflection of their level of organizational adjustment during the different situations.

Compliance approach

The compliance approach was characterized by a high engagement with the organizational system where the contextual factors were not really an issue or employees found a way to handle them very well. The compliance approach was seen when the employees managed to apply organizational techniques, managed to deal with their colleagues' suspicion, time issues and tried to make use of mandates which were earlier introduced in the method section under "Research settings". The high amount of application of the organizational method reflected a high organizational adjustment in the given situation. Applying the techniques was mainly expressed by making compliments to the client, constantly asking questions such as open questions, questions about earlier success, active listening and setting goals with clients. The proper application of the organizational approach was also seen by the participants when they let the clients make their own decisions. Therefore, the client's level of involvement was very high within this approach. This was for example expressed in situations where the healthcare professionals took their client's goals into consideration and let them determine all by themselves. When employees handled a "compliance approach" they confidently dealt with problems during work situations such as colleague's skepticism. The employees were convinced that clients should be encouraged to do as much as possible by themselves which could be confirmed by the following quotation:

> "In my opinion the clients should have control. That works very pleasant. With phrases like 'I thought you said' you show that you listened to the client and that you work with the clients wishes. In one situation you choose to just repeat it and in another situation it would make things more difficult and you should not do it. But in general it is important to give the client control. Sometimes I even tell that they are the boss. My colleagues think this is very weird, but it works very good" (1:104, 3).

Despite the fact that colleagues with a longer tenure at Tameij did not always appreciate the newcomers' way of working, these employees asserted themselves and applied the organizational approach. Moreover, employees who handled a compliance approach tried to apply the organizational method regardless of all possible barriers. By doing so, they also ignored the time aspect and took the time the client needed. The results show that employees even tried to integrate SFT aspects outside of Tameij:

> "At the other healthcare center I work for, we provide clients with more care and make decisions for them. I now take more time which I didn't do before. Technically you do not have enough time, but now I think with other things to just leave it and first deal with the client. I realize that I do that more and more lately." (5:158, 3).

Furthermore, participants tried to make use of mandates. The data reveals that the term "mandate" often caused confusion for most of the employees. Employees did not exactly know how to define and how to apply the mandate concept. Generally, they handled it very broad and thought they were handling it in situations where they fully took control over their clients. When employees took control over their clients, they were convinced that they would not really act according the principles of SFT. This was the reason why employees only used the term mandate when they didn't know how they had to go on with a client and usually tried to avoid the application. However, the results show that employees occasionally made unintentional use of elements of the different mandates which also will be seen within the other approaches in the next paragraphs. For the compliance approach it is relevant that there were occurrences were employees made a switch in roles while they were dealing with clients in order to get better access to them. At the same time, this showed commendable application of mandates within the organizational approach which was for example expressed with the following quotation:

> "I once had a client and the only way I could get through to him was via the friend role. By doing that I got more influence and she was a lot more open towards me. […] When I did that she opened up to me. Sometimes you also use a network in order to get closer to the client and to gain more trust. It all depends on the relationship. Sometimes you have very dominant clients where you have to make clear that he/ she is the client and not the other way around so that the client knows which position you take" (1:157, 3).

Cooperative approach

The cooperative approach was similarly characterized by employees defying contextual barriers and applying SFT, but not to its fullest degree like people did as earlier explained in the compliance approach. The involvement of the clients for example occurred on a more medium level. Instead of leaving all thinking and decision making completely over to the client, this approach was about involving the client by searching solutions together**,** which could lead to quicker solution finding. Employees used this strategy when the IQ of the clients made it difficult for them to find solutions all by themselves. In such a case, therapists aimed to save time to spend it with other clients who were more capable of thinking about their own solutions. Data showed that for finding solutions together and also implementing these solutions together with the clients, it was important to think with them and not to enforce personal norms and values.

> “There is one client who is always cooking for himself, but he takes his recipes out of a book which calculates for four persons. He just doesn’t know better and does what the book says. Than you can start finding a solution and ask: Do you want to adjust the recipes with me for one person, would you like that? This is also a nice activity where you can learn to understand why he always made too much. If you buy a product from honing it is always for four persons and then we can complain about him making too much food and eating too much, but he just doesn’t know better. Our project now is making a cooking book for one person for him” (5:146, 2).

This showed how employees were cooperating with clients in order to find a suitable way of approaching them while reacting to their needs and applying the organizational method.

Directive approach

The directive approach was also often a reaction to the time and the IQ issue. During data analysis it was found that in some cases the healthcare professionals decided to take the lead in order to guide the client inconspicuously into the right direction which implied a low level of client involvement. During data analysis it could be found that through the directive approach health care employees tried to steer their clients by offering the client a limited selection of options from what he/she could choose:

> “We can stimulate clients to think along with us by giving them two options. If I would ask an open question and she would answer she wants to go to ant Sonja and I would say no to it, she would not understand it and she would walk away. But when I say we can walk to the ducks or we can listen to the music, than she can choose between two things and she won’t get a no as an answer“ (8:130, 3).

Compared to the cooperative approach, the directive approach went a little further. Within the cooperative approach professionals aimed to find a solution together with their clients which acquired a certain amount of input from the clients. The directive approach however only provided the employee with two predetermined options which did not give the client a lot of possibilities for own additions. This was similar to the leader mandate with the difference that the employees who were applying the directive approach did not entirely plan the outcomes of the interaction with the client. There was still some room for the clients input. The professionals chose the directive approach, because it was a subtle way of leading the client into the right direction. The following quotation explains the necessity to limit the clients’ choices from time to time:

> “Some solutions the clients come up with are not realistic and not possible to achieve, but I am not in the position to judge. It is fine with me when the client has unrealistic goals, but I will try to find a subtle way to provide him with better advice by stimulating the client to take other things into consideration as well” (6:154, 1).

The directive approach was about unnoticeable trying to remain control over the conversation with the client, so that they had the idea that they finally made the right decisions by themselves which also created a feeling of independence. By doing so, the employee showed respect for the client, but was also able to determine what was going to happen. Keeping up the illusiveness of a totally free decision was a way of the experts to deal with interfering contextual requirements in a given practical situation. Of course, this asked quite an amount of creativity and empathy which needed to be developed.

Doing what works

A great part of the health care professionals were supporters of the approach "doing what works" which referred to a combination of different methods and could be a reaction to all the mentioned contextual variables. Therefore, the "doing what works" approach could provoke a mixed level of client involvement. This approach differed from the last three described approaches, because through this approach employees distanced themselves from only thinking in terms of one approach. "Doing what works" implicated the smallest changes for the professional due to a very high sensitivity to the context. Participants who applied this approach did not disincline the organizational approach. They handled SFT more flexible and found it important to make a switch in method (eclectic work) when something else would work better, even if it was not SFT. These discoveries could be confirmed with statements like this:

> ”I use the techniques based on my personal feeling. I sense how the conversation goes at that moment and how the client is reacting. I am not very focused on using the techniques. In the beginning I invested a lot in asking open questions and now I do it automatically without even realizing. Within SFT you have questions like "What do you want?" and I can imagine that a client doesn't want to specify that every hour, every week, because it is quite exhausting. So you have to play with it and integrate it in the conversation through which you will get all the answers you need with the advantage that it won't feel like a burden for the client. Asking open questions can be quite exhausting. So if you can get your answer with a closed question and with a joke without stressing the client, you do that. You can vary with that which is very important, because it does not have to be so fixed" (1:208, 3).

When applying the "doing what works" approach employees did not use solution focused work as the goal itself, but more as a helping tool which could be used in combination with different possibilities of approaching clients. In that case, participants did not experience the organizational method as a holy instrument, but more as a tool where the underlying idea was important which for example was reflected by the following citation:

> "I apply the SFT steps and things, so far as I can remember them, but I cannot name them anymore. I think I do more with the idea behind SFT and I ask a lot of questions, but not everything. I think, if you have to keep all of that in mind, it wouldn't work and it would be too much" (1:390, 3).

If SFT did not work with a client, something else was used which meant that the professionals had to stay open-minded and unprejudiced before and during interaction with the client. Choosing between different methods was a process of testing and using personal instincts respectively feelings and intellect and not only thinking about rules. Participants explained that it was sometimes necessary to "throw all the personal values away and think intuitive in order to get to understand the client." (6:291, 1).

Commanding approach

The word "commanding" already implies that there were situations where the employees chose to refuse to give the clients any room for personal involvement. Depending on the situation, health care employees chose for applying a commanding direction which meant that the health care professionals were commanding their clients instead of letting them making their own decisions. In order to find a way out of this dilemma, employees took a broader definition of the organizational method and extended the meaning of “mandate”, so that they could use SFT in situations where they took control. This was earlier introduced during the description of the compliance approach. The commanding approach differs from the last four approaches in a way that there was absolutely no chance of giving the clients the opportunity to find solutions and make decisions by themselves. That was usually the case when the health care professionals had to deal with the intellectual and physical condition of the client through which clients were not capable of thinking for themselves, when there was absolutely no time, when employees had difficulties with several SFT techniques and when there was too much pressure at work which also had impact on the work home balance. The results have shown that there were situations, which made it for the employees impossible to apply SFT in any form, because clients with a low IQ could not respond to it:

> “Their self-insight is very often a problem, because they don’t have any. Often they even cannot look at themselves. So you cannot ask questions like “How can you do that differently?”, because they don’t know what to do with it. As the healthcare employee you need to say them what they have to do and give practical tips” (1:168, 3).

Healthcare professionals also were in need to take the medical and psychological background of the client into consideration. Especially clients with a difficult background needed to be more controlled. In such situations the professionals had to maintain total control over a client which also acquired a close collaboration with colleagues. In order to be able to control the client they had to stick together and follow the same rules. It was also discovered that employees had difficulties with the application of specific techniques during conversations with their clients, because they forgot it or they thought it was too difficult to apply with the clients with a lower IQ. The data analysis reveals that participants often had trouble with scaling questions:

> “Some things you do apply and some things you don’t. For example I think the scaling questions are difficult to use, because a lot of clients don’t get it. As a result of that you barley apply it” (8:56, 2).

Besides the clients IQ there was also another reason why employees did not apply this particular question. According to the data, the employees had difficulties with the integration of some of the methods into daily practice due to a lack of practical experiences. On the one hand, there were situations where employees were not sure about how they had to use SFT and on the other hand they did not see the benefit of applying it. Furthermore, it could be found during data analysis that employees were reacting with rejection towards SFT when there was too much trouble at work through which they could not focus anymore. According to the outcomes of the data analysis employees had to deal with both, a lot of work pressure and problems with the group when they did not think about applying SFT:

> “I had some time that I wasn’t used to the fact that I could open my mail at home. I did that and I actually had a lot of trouble with that, because I was almost 24 hours busy with work. Then I had a moment when I thought: now is it over. When I am at my work I will check my mail, but I won’t do it at home anymore. I only work that much percent, its fine. I really had difficulties with that. I thought that I was done and I didn’t

want to work anymore. There was also a lot aggression within the group where I had moments where I thought: what am I doing here." (7:162, 3).

Problems at work could also influence the personal life of the employees. Especially employees with family and children found this kind of trouble irritating. These workforces were in high need for stability at work, because happenings at work could affect the home situation and also the other way around. In such situations employees spent more time worrying then getting engaged with SFT. In the Table 4 all the approaches which were recently discussed are summarized for a short overview.

Table 4

Summary approaches

Approach	Definition	Required contextual requirements[a]
Compliance approach	The compliance approach is characterized by the full application of SFT and high client involvement.	Contextual factors form no barrier or are neglected.
Cooperative approach	The compliance approach refers to employees making changes regarding the SFT approach by aiming to find and implement solutions together which requires a middle level of client involvement.	Average IQ, small restrictions regarding available amount of time
Directive approach	The directive approach refers to the employees making changes regarding the SFT approach by providing the clients with a limited selection of predetermined options which implies a low level of client involvement.	Low average IQ, middle restrictions regarding available amount of time
Doing what works approach	The doing what works approach is characterized by employees switching flexible between different methods also if it was not SFT which represents a mixed level of client involvement.	Contextual factors can be present in any form.
Commanding approach	The commanding approach refers to the employees taking total control over the client and determining everything for them which makes client involvement impossible.	Well below average or lower extreme IQ, high restrictions regarding available amount of time, difficulties with techniques, work pressure

Note.[a] Contextual requirements: time, difficulties with techniques, skepticism colleagues, work pressure

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to enrich data regarding the way health care professionals negotiate their professional identity during organizational socialization in the context of solution-focused therapy training. The current findings extend existing theoretical and practical information by providing more insights regarding how employees seek information to reduce uncertainty during daily work. Furthermore, this research provides in depths information regarding the challenges the professionals have to deal with when they try to adapt the organizational method. How employees were dealing with the daily challenges in order to achieve balance between personal- and external expectations was reflected by the application of several professional identity negotiation strategies.

Information Seeking during Organizational Socialization

In earlier research it was identified that employees are in need to reduce uncertainty regarding tasks and roles during the job transitions phase (Kramer, 1994). Most of earlier studies were very successful in defining this need, but through the current results, valuable information can be added on how information seeking processes to reduce uncertainty actually look like during organizational socialization. In the current research the following information seeking procedures were discovered: observing, seeking feedback, consultation & cooperation with the professional environment and self-reflection. Different work associates such as colleagues, superiors and clients were found to influence the progress of these processes. Also in earlier research, the people within an employee’s environment were found to be a useful source for support and stimulation (Allen, McManus & Russel, 1999), but also as a source for confusion and restriction (Maanen, 1978). This research adds more detailed information regarding the possibilities for support, causes for confusion and the respective consequences.

To begin with, employees make observations within their professional environment. Within the context of professional identity development, earlier research discovered that people make conclusions over themselves by observing personal characteristics of others within their environment (Ibarra, 1999). Similarly, in the current research was found that by observing colleagues and specific role models, the employees are able to filter all the relevant information and find a way to deal with the organizational approach as well. Beyond that, the employees observe their colleagues and also compare themselves to them in order to better understand the new work environment and to seek clarity. During such moments it was seen that employees on the one hand admire their colleagues for their skills and look up to them, but on the other hand they also critically evaluate their colleagues’ behavior. The information the employees obtain through observation helps them to find their own way of approaching clients while applying solution focused therapy. Accordingly, the results have shown that observing colleagues gives new employees important input for critical negotiation which can elicit a sense for competition through which the participants try extra hard to fulfill role expectations.

Another highly present information seeking process was searching for feedback. In the existing literature a lot of information can be found about insiders providing newcomers with feedback during organizational socialization, but less information can be found regarding the employees efforts to try to actively search for it (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Bauer et al., 2007; Fang, Duffy and Shaw, 2010; Saks et al., 2007). This research provides more insights in the newcomers' motives to proactively try to obtain some reactions from their peers as well as the outcomes for their involvement. The results show that employees are in need for advice and want to be confirmed regarding past or planned actions which explains that they especially try to achieve performance related feedback. When employees achieve positive feedback regarding their actions, it helps them to get engaged with the organizational approach again. Earlier studies found that feedback can contribute to the construction of a newcomer's sense of confidence and competence as an outcome of gaining insider information (Fang, Duffy and Shaw, 2010). This explains the importance of getting more insights regarding the information seeking process where employees actively search for feedback, because an employee who feels confident with what he or she is doing is more likely to get engaged with the organizational method (Martin, Jones & Callan, 2005).

In the last two passages focus was laid on the findings regarding observation and searching for feedback during the process of information seeking which was also earlier found to be as highly relevant information seeking processes during organizational socialization (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson; 2006, Bauer et al. 2007). Beyond these processes, findings within this research have shown that people are also in high need for consultation and cooperation as well as self-reflection during the information seeking process. When the employees feel confident enough they do not only want to get advice from their peers anymore, but they are searching for another interactional level where they can bring up own ideas and experiences which adds another dimension towards the known way of seeking information and processing it. Furthermore, employees also use the possibility to personally reflect on their actions which is basically about evaluating one's professional performance regarding organizational expectations. Ibarra (1999) stated that people tend to internally- and externally seek evaluation when they try to make sense of their environment during professional identity development, but no further information could be provided about how this looks like in practice. Furthermore, Öhlen (1988) stated that different seminars and reflective discussions with colleagues are important tools which provide input for the professional identity negotiation process. However he laid the focus more on external reflection, as most of earlier research did, while reflection within this research mainly highlights the importance of internal reflection with oneself. The process of internal self-reflection was found to be used for personal evaluation and also as a source of information. When employees get engaged with self-reflection they can process earlier input they received much better. It seems that when the newcomers realize by themselves that they are able to accomplish their new job tasks, that it enhances their confidence and stimulates them to get engaged with the task again. The results indicate when people achieve awareness of their work related skills and possibilities during professional identity negotiation, they seem to be more likely to apply the organizational method. This tendency can be related to findings of Bauer et al. (2007) who found in prior research that a feeling of self-efficacy is an important indicator for adjustment. This was also seen during the self-reflection process which is an interesting addition to what is already known regarding the role of self-reflection during information seeking and professional identity negotiation in the context of organizational training during organizational socialization. At this point it needs to be mentioned that these indications need to be further researched as no causal connections can be made with the qualitative results of this research. Overall, the findings regarding information seeking indicate that professional identity negotiation always consists of an ongoing process in which individuals show active behavior in order to seek information to understand and be able to adapt to their new professional environment. This explains again the high relevance of the discussed information which could be obtained through the current findings.

Five Different Professional Identity Negotiation Strategies

This research could enrich the theoretical information regarding professional identity negotiation during organizational socialization by providing more insights on how employees try to manage with disruptive factors during practical situations at work and try to achieve balance between their personal beliefs and role expectations. This was expressed by the way professionals got engaged with the organizational method while dealing with contextual requirements. During organizational socialization, employees are expected to adapt aspects of their future role. Pratt, Rockmann and Kaufmann (2006) found out during earlier investigations that individuals can engage with changes in ways that can range from acceptance up to dismissal and outright rejection, shaped by their personal interests, conceptions and the behavior of others towards them. Within the current research it was found that the professional behaviour is not only adjusted to personal convictions and the social environment, but that the current situation also has a high impact on the professionals' negotiated decision regarding the application of the method. The health care professionals adapt their solution focused behavior towards a given work situation which means that the actions of the employees are for the most part outcomes of the professionals' contextual depending negotiations. Difficulties with factors such as lack of time can interfere with the employees' willingness to apply the organizational method and act in line with organizational expectations. Earlier research, in the context of work role transitions, found that individuals might react with different modifications to preserve and enact valued aspects of their identity (Nicholson, 1984, Swan et al., 2009). This research provides additional information about how these different modifications look like in practice. The modifications are captured by the different negotiation strategies the employees use to manage with the challenges at work. The strategies can range from a compliance approach which is characterized by high engagement of the organizational method and high client involvement to a commanding approach which is characterized by very low engagement with method related aspects and no client involvement. With these approaches the professionals make several gradations towards the organizational method. The compliance approach is used when employees are able to handle possible contextual barriers very well and in worst case the employees do not know how to handle them and refuse the organizational approach. Health care professionals can also choose for a more flexible strategy in order to be able to act more freely regarding solution focused therapy by for example also integrating other approaches they used to work with before they entered Tameij. Therefore, creative solutions like the "doing what works approach" were found. With these more action-related approaches, the current research went a little further than earlier studies, which focused more on a general attitude level (Vähäsantanen and Billet, 2008); Swan et al., 2009).

Furthermore, this research was executed within the context of organizational SFT training which also did not get much attention yet as a research context regarding professional identity negotiation during socialization. The different approaches were discovered in a very specific context within health care, but it can be assumed that they are also applicable in other work contexts where employees are confronted with change and are expected to learn a new organizational methodology. Besides, the learning process does not particularly need to occur during the socialization period of workforces. During their whole career employees will always be confronted with organizational requirements and the personal need to create a balanced environment to work with (Kreiner & Sheep, 2009). Probably a shift in focus will occur and other factors might impact the application of an organizational approach in other practical situations, but in general it can be assumed that a certain behavior probably will be repeated in different contexts as well (Kreiner & Sheep, 2009). For all kinds of organizations it is important to be aware of the approaches which are chosen by their (new) employees in practice in order to be able to identify common problems and preferences. By identifying how employees are dealing with organizational requirements in a given situation in order to reduce tension and adjust to a practical situation, relevant provisions can be made to better influence the professional identity negotiation process and to steer the employees into the right direction to support organizational commitment and role orientation (Allen & Meyer, 1990). This might be especially relevant for organizations in situations where the newcomers' current way of handling a situation is not desired.

Other studies in the field of health care and professional socialization indicated that newcomers find it quite challenging to face reality and accept when they are not able to act regarding their value system (Clark, 1997). In the context of the present research, providing patients with proper care within a suitable time limit was found to be a challenge to the newcomers' value system due to the fact that it is not always possible to achieve proper care. Nevertheless, within this research it seemed that a value dissonance is not a big issue for most of the employees when they manage to "work around" most difficulties. By choosing the different approaches, newcomers have the feeling to do the best they can in a given situation. Furthermore, the findings of this research extend the outcomes of Ashforth and Saks (1996) and Ibarra (1999) who explained that identity and role change evolve interactively till a synthesis is achieved. In the current research the professional identity was not found to be that sensitive to the expected role changes, because the professionals mostly hold a quite positive attitude regarding the new organizational approach right from the beginning. Of course this can look different if the professionals do not agree with the organizational approach. In this research, the underlying principles of SFT connect with the professionals personal convictions regarding care, although employees have no prior experiences with SFT. It was shown that participants try to fit SFT to the given work situation through which they sometimes have to lower their sights, but in a way they can deal with it. Only when employees have to deal with the commanding approach, they regret it most of the time.

Practical Implications

The findings of the current study enrich existing literature with well-founded information regarding the role of the employees' social environment during information seeking and acting with the organizational approach. Based on the findings, organizations should invest in improving their training sessions by laying more focus on the integration of the discussed information seeking processes observing, searching for feedback, consultation & collaboration and self-reflection. By doing that, organizations might get the chance to influence the professional identity negotiation process and react to difficulties employees have to deal with in order to be able to lead them in a desired direction. According to the defined needs regarding for example observation and consultation & cooperation it could be beneficial to give some more attention to mentoring employees. Especially, as mentoring was also earlier discovered as an important tool for influencing the information seeking process during organizational socialization (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1993). This would imply that the employees have a mentor with whom they can talk on a regular basis and discuss problems as well as clarify questions. Previous studies have identified mentoring as a key process in socializing individuals into a certain profession (Beech & Brockbank, 1999; Fitzpatrick et al., 1996; Kenny, Pontin & Moore, 2004). Swann et al. (2009) noted that mentored employees might show better adjustment, more job commitment and greater performance which supported also prior findings of Allen et al. (2004) and Underhill (2006). This makes mentoring an interesting aspect for the current organizational context as well. According to the current findings it would also be useful if newcomers get the possibility to observe a small selection of mentors or more experienced colleagues more often. This can for example be realized through collective client sessions. Also creating opportunities for newcomers where they can practice and exchange information with colleagues who have similar clients seems to be very important, because then employees can learn from each other on how to deal better with contextual aspects they are regularly confronted with. Earlier research found that peer relationships can be very supportive during newcomer socialization (Allen, McManus & Russel, 1999; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1993). Together, potential strategies can be developed to get engaged with the organizational approach even when employees are confronted with difficult barriers.

Considering the importance of feedback, either seeking for it or providing it to peers, periodical feedback sessions should be integrated during organizational training. Asfhord, Blatt and Van de Walle (2003) suggested that employees seeking feedback can be associated with high quality performance and interactions at the workplace which makes it worse to support. According to the current findings, the processes of professional identity negotiation can be supported by organizations motivating their newcomers to seek and exchange feedback. In general, the organization should create an environment in which the newcomers can get in contact with their colleagues and superiors on a regular basis in order to get the support they need. The importance of focusing on the employees' interaction with peers in organizational context was also mentioned by Dobrow and Higgins (2005) who assumed that individuals construct their identities through their developmental networks. Developmental networks are a set of different people in the professional environment who can provide newcomers with psychological and career support (Higgins & Kram, 2001). Furthermore, it was found that the professionals' self-esteem can be addressed during interactions where feedback is involved. Due to the proactive behavior after employees' organizational entrance it can be assumed that especially new employees are in high need for personal growth and development which is why goal-oriented career planning and support should be integrated into the socialization process as well. It might enhance the person-organization fit which is important, because if the employees experience a personal connection with the organization, it might also enhance their active engagement with the organizational method (Bretz & Judge, 1994). Accordingly, informing about opportunities for career development in an early stage of socialization might work as an incentive for employees to deal with organizational topics.

During the data analysis self-reflection was also identified as an influential aspect during information-seeking. Due the high influence of self-reflection as an information seeking process, professionals' self-reflection should be further stimulated by the organization as it helps employees to reduce uncertainty and enhance awareness of their own actions. According to the current findings, the moments the professionals take to reflect and to look back during the trainings, helps to increase awareness which is important for work-related skills and also for understanding the company's goals and values. According to these findings employees should get the opportunity and should be encouraged to reflect on their actions in order to be able to develop professionally. Klein and Weaver (2000) already stated that training programs should clearly help increase employee awareness and understanding for the company's goals and values. The present research provides more insights on the self-reflection process and its outcomes. The results show that employees are more aware of their actions through reflection which encourages them to get engaged with the organizational approach. Furthermore, organizations should avoid forcing their employees into a specific direction, because otherwise they might risk losing the employees attention and willingness to get engaged with the organizational approach. These findings contribute to earlier research regarding person-organization fit (Cable & Parson, 2001; Kim, Cable & Kim, 2005) as they deliver additional explanations for a decrease in the experienced fit. Another practical suggestions would be that superiors should make sure that they are informed about trouble at work due to for example aggression within a group, so that they can take actions to prevent frustration and disapproval regarding the organizational way of working. Swann et al. (2009) mentioned earlier that emotional exhaustion in the workplace can be linked with effects like increased job turnover, physical and psychological distress and decreased work environment (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002). This illustrates the importance for organizations to achieve an environment for its employees where they can freely develop and where they have enough room for negotiation. With the consideration of the findings of this study such dramatic actions like quitting ones job could be prevented.

Findings have illustrated that employees are very busy with handling the organizational approach within a given contextual framework. In general, health care employees should get more support when they struggle with context related aspects. It would be relevant to help the employees to, for example, deal with time issues and help them setting the appropriate priorities. Next to lack of time, another reason for not applying SFT to its full extent is insecurity due to a lack of knowledge regarding the underlying theory of SFT. Probably, it can be beneficial if solution focused therapy trainings would be repeated on a regular basis and not just during the organizational entrance. This can also decrease tensions with older or more experienced colleagues, because they would have the same updated knowledge regarding the organizational approach. During such repetition sessions, difficulties regarding theory or other things can also be discussed. According to the collected information regarding the professional identity negotiation process, more moments should be created during training context where newcomers can discuss topics with each other where they are concerned about. In line with that, a more structured communication policy within teams should be handled.

Limitations & Future Research

As with most qualitative research, the results could have been biased by the subjective evaluation of the researchers. As a consequence of that, the generalizability of the results cannot be guaranteed. Usually interpretive findings are not generalizable (Baarda et al., 2009). In order to limit the level of subjectivity, it was aimed to apply an objective and open approach. Especially during the development of the code system, the data and the codes were checked several times, aiming to analyze as objective as possible. Several adaptations were made before the code system was considered as complete. The result was a very detailed description of the codes so that decisions regarding code choices easily can be understood. A co-coder would have enhanced the reliability of the research, but that would have gone way beyond the scope of this research which is why no second coder was included during the coding process.

The sample was also not free from bias. One limitation could have been the small size of the sample, consisting of 10 respondents. It would be interesting to check if similar results occur within a bigger pool of data. This might also help to further develop the created code system (Seidel & Kelle, 1995). The small sample was another aspect which further restricted the generalizability of the study. Due to the interpretative results and the small sample the findings of this study cannot be quantified or analytical related to each other. This is actually not a big issue, because this study aimed to gain broader insights regarding elements of professional identity negotiation in order to extend the empirical horizon regarding this topic. Another limitation regarding the sample was that the participants could take part voluntarily within the research. Every employee could freely sign in which was why the sample could have been one-sided influenced by participants with mainly positive attitudes regarding the organization and the organizational approach. It can be assumed that employees who had negative opinions refused to take part in the study. Maybe different insights regarding professional identity negotiation, while professionals were dealing with the organizational approach in different situations, would have been gained with a different sample with more mixed attitudes. In addition, emphasis on negotiation related processes was examined during newcomers who were still in training. These processes can change when the people gain more experiences within their new work environment. It also needs to be mentioned that the professional identity negotiation strategies were found in a very specific context which means that they need to be handled carefully (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop 2004; Billett & Somerville, 2004). It was already assumed that the strategies could be applied in other contexts as well, but it needs to be kept in might that they might change due to its dynamic nature. More research in similar and different conditions and work contexts in order to be able to find a common pattern can be recommended. Future research might solve the mentioned issues by also handling a large and more diverse sample. In the last part of this chapter, starting from now, more information regarding possibilities for future research will be given.

Socialization has been conceptualized as one of the primary ways in which organizational culture is transmitted and maintained (Kim, Cable & Kim, 2005). Till now only a few studies have focused on how newcomer's professional identity negotiation looks like during organizational socialization. Especially the fact that the employees were socialized by organizational training into the concept of SFT contributes to the results of earlier studies in the field of health care. This research provides more insights on different information seeking processes employees get engaged with and insights on which approaches they choose to apply the organizational approach in different work situations. Due to the high importance of the information seeking aspects (Morrison, 1993a, 1993b; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992), more research should be executed regarding information seeking and its connection to the overall professional identity negotiation process as well as on how employees adapt to the organizational approach (Allen, 2006; Bauer et al., 2007). It could also be further identified which aspects regarding observation, feedback, consultation & cooperation, and self-reflection are most influential so that organizations know what needs more attention during organizational socialization. It would also be interesting to identify the link between these aspects for more quantitative, generalizable results.

Within this research the different approaches regarding the organizational methods were found to depend on the contextual situation, but still more information is acquired regarding the way how employees negotiate their identity during difficult work situations and how they prevent tension by applying different negotiation strategies. Next to the impact of the contextual dimension, it would also be relevant to investigate the impact of different personality dimensions during the professionals' negotiation. Several aspects such as a lack of patience were noticed during data analysis, but they were not further investigated within this research. More attention was given to the contextual factors, but it would be interesting to gather some more information about the impact of certain personal characteristics and how these might impact the professional identity negotiation. Especially since earlier research indicated that both personal and contextual factors shape professionals development (Vähäsantanen & Billet, 2008). Furthermore, within this research, all the participants found themselves in an early socialization stage. It would be very interesting to get more detailed information over professional identity negotiation within different socialization stages such as during an anticipatory or an encounter stage (van Maanen, 1978; Feldman, 1981). There might be negotiation processes which are especially present in the beginning or in the end of the socialization process. With more knowledge about that, employees can get the organizational support they need at the right time.

The current research examined general aspects regarding professional identity negotiation by focusing on the way professionals' seek information within their environment in order to reduce uncertainty and on how get engaged with the organizational approach. Focus was also laid on the way employees try to find a balance between personal- and external expectations by dealing with a certain work situation. It would be interesting to find out more about changes within the employees personality during the socialization period. Research regarding socialization has thus far focused primarily on changes in the way a newcomer performs a role and not on changes to the newcomer as a person (Pratt, Rockmann & Kaufmann, 2006). It would be very relevant to investigate professional identity negotiation and the development of a new organizational member over a certain period of time. It can be assumed that professional identity negotiation might change over time due to more experiences the professionals gain while they are working within the organization. In combination with the insights of this study, extensive research on professional identity negotiation in combination with identity development can be an interesting starting point (Pratt, Rockmann &Kaufmann, 2006).

Conclusion

Socialization research suffered from a lack of clarity regarding the way professional identity negotiation takes place during newcomer socialization (Bauer et al., 2007). Brennan & McSherry (2007) highlighted that there is more need for scientific and practical information regarding employees coping with the demands of the transition during a socialization process such as uncertainty. As a response to that, this research aimed to provide more insights into professional identity negotiation during organizational socialization. The study was conducted in the context of organizational training where newcomers of a healthcare organization were introduced to a new organizational method which is called Solution Focused Therapy. Principles of a grounded theory approach were applied in order to be able to capture how the new employees make sense of their environment and adjust to the organizational method as these processes are important elements of the professional identity negotiation process. During data analysis four different aspects of information seeking could be found: observation, feedback, consultation & cooperation and self-reflection. As a result of the information seeking process, professionals make a well-founded consideration about what behavior is most appropriate in a given work situation. By choosing different approaches to get engaged with the organizational method, employees negotiate to find a balance between their own belief system and organizational expectations within a specific work context while dealing with different contextual requirements. Employees tried to prevent tension by making little changes regarding the involvement of the client while applying the organizational method so that they can act in a way which is more or less consistent with their personal convictions and external expectations. The results of the negotiation have shown that employees either get engaged with a compliance-, cooperative-, directive-, doing what works- or commanding approach. Based on the findings of the current research valuable information can be added to the existing literature on how professionals try to find a professional balance between their personal attitude and organizational expectations during organizational socialization depending on the work context within a given situation. Organizations can use the current findings to adjust their socialization programs in order to better meet newcomers' needs during the professional identity negotiation process. Knowing the aspects employees are struggling with during work situations in order to achieve balance, organizations can better respond to it. When organizations adequately respond to employees needs it might result in more efficient application of the organizational approach and finally it may lead to better organizational identification and- adjustment. More quantitative and qualitative research regarding professional identity negotiation needs to be executed with a bigger sample and different organizational settings in order to confirm and dig deeper into the current findings.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Table A1

Codebook

Code family	Category	Code	Subcode	Definition Code or Subcode
Identification	Work	Earlier work experiences		Refers to the newcomers professional background
Identification	Work	Earlier work experiences	Differences / similarities Tameij and last organization	Includes mainly differences / similarities regarding the organizational way of working
Identification	Work	Content		Includes newcomers speaking positively or negatively over general work aspects
Identification	Work	Way of working / work situation Tameij		Includes newcomers speaking positively or negatively about the organizational practices
Identification	Work	Work atmosphere		Refers to employees statements regarding their experiences of the work environment
Identification	Attitude SFT	Personal fit		Refers to the degree of agreement regarding the company vision and the vision of the employee
Identification	Attitude SFT	SFT in general		Refers to employees talking negatively or

				positively about SFT in general
Identification	Attitude SFT	SFT approach at Tameij		Includes employees negative or positive evaluation regarding SFT at Tameij
Negotiation	Parties involved	Colleagues	Observation	Refers to the passive surveillance of colleagues
Negotiation	Parties involved	Colleagues	Feedback	Refers to all kind of employee actions regarding positive and/ or negative criticism regardless of providing, receiving or searching for it.
Negotiation	Parties involved	Colleagues	Collectively consulting	Includes the mutual exchange of information and experiences between employees
Negotiation	Parties involved	Family client		Refers to all interaction related processes with the family of the client
Negotiation	Parties involved	Manager		Referrs to all interaction related processes with the manager
Negotiation	Parties involved	Other social worker		Referrs to all interaction related processes with other people who are involved in the clients care
Negotiation	Behavior client	Contact		Refers to various forms of personal contact with the clients and the importance of it

Negotiation	Behavior client	Relationship with clients	Refers to the employees attempt of bonding with the clients (e.g. getting to know the client & gaining trust)
Negotiation	Behavior SFT	Familiarization	Includes all general processes employees get engaged with to get used to new responsibilities and work situation
Negotiation	Behavior SFT	Active SFT awareness	Includes active thinking and active engagement with SFT
Negotiation	Behavior SFT	Making modifications	Refers to all actions related to employees trying to find their own way of applying SFT
Negotiation, Adjustment	Behavior SFT	Adjusting treatment	Includes attuning therapy and SFT to the needs of the clients
Negotiation	Behavior SFT	Client involvement	Refers to searching for solutions together with the client
Negotiation	Behavior SFT	Taking the lead	Refers to the therapist unnoticeable guiding the client into the a desired direction
Negotiation	Behavior SFT	Doing what works	Refers to the therapists switching between methods in order to answer the clients help question
Negotiation	Behavior SFT	Commanding approach	Includes steering & commanding the

				client into a certain determined direction
Negotiation	Logbook reflection			Refers to the realization of conscious and unconscious use of SFT
Negotiation	OGW cursus	Reflection effect		Refers to the realization of the positive outcomes of SFT related behavior
Adjustment	Application SFT	Use of techniques		Refers to the implementation of SFT techniques during work with clients
Adjustment	Application SFT	Use of techniques	Making use of mandates	Refers to the implementation of mandates
Adjustment	Application SFT	Letting clients determine		Refers to actions where the client had to find a solution by him/herself
Adjustment	Application SFT	Automatic application		Includes unconscious application of SFT at Tameij, but also at another workplace or with the family
Adjustment	No application SFT	SFT techniques		Refers to employees reasoning why they are not applying SFT due to methodological restrictions
Adjustment	No application SFT	Lack of time		Referred to cutbacks regarding the method by lack of time for therapy treatment
Adjustment	No application	SFT with		Referred to the lack

	SFT	colleagues	of SFT application with colleagues
Adjustment	No application SFT	Work pressure	Refers to different situations and factors which creates a lot pressure at work through which employees refuse to apply SFT

Note. To keep the codebook simple and clear only the main codes and no sub-sub codes were included

Table A2

Overview quotations

Quotation	Quoatnumber + Interviewnumber	Higher-order topic	Theoretical dimension
Information seeking			
It is very nice to be in a team where you can talk about your opinion. When we work with different cases you watch your team members very consciously. How does she handle this and how does she handle that. Normally, you don't see that, because you never work with two people and one client. So usually I don't see how she is applying things …".	8:88, 2	Observing clients together with colleagues	Observation
Trainings are important, because you learn from each other. Someone does it like this and someone like that, because everyone is different. I think this is very important. By watching the videos for example I thought by myself it could be done in a different way or she did it very well.	3:232, 1	Learning from each other	Observation
This is something that I appreciate within the team. It was very nice to receive all the emails from the team where they told me that I did a good job.	5:237, 3	Receiving compliments	Feedback
Sometimes it is very difficult, because you think "How are we going to do that?", but then you see the effect and then you know that you did something good. I can also test myself and also my colleagues by explaining them the way I did it and asking how they would have reacted and if they appreciate the way I did it or not.	10:157, 3	Testing & confirmation	Feedback
It was mentioned that within your target audience it could be that…, but still it is difficult to make a good assessment. Therefore I needed my colleagues and still I have to ask a lot of advice. How do I have to see this? How do I have to see that?	1:118, 3	Asking advice	Feedback
Right now I have a client where I think that SFT does not work very well. So I have a lot of questions I want to ask our behavior expert Ilona. Discussing together about what could happen if I work in a certain way. I have a picture in my head or an idea, but it is useful to consult someone about it. I cannot get to him, but what do you think what is going to happen if I react	6:104, 1	Asking advice	Feedback

this way?			
Erna directly encourages me to open up my mouth and come up with something to create a positive atmosphere. I really like this.	5:180, 3	Getting Encouraged by manager	Feedback
I told our manager that he also has to hand over more responsibilities to the employees. Like e.g. asking what can we do with that? But instead I only receive a mail where he says that he will do it himself. The problem is that you won't get self-managing or solution focused employees with this approach, because you just have to mail Henk and he will arrange everything for you.	7:103, 2	Providing feedback to manager	Feedback
We watched and discussed the content of video tapes we took of the clients with each other in order to review what is happening and to gain some acquaintance. For example, we have to look much more specific at the client's signals and how we react accordingly.	10:127, 3	Reviewing actions	Consultation & cooperation
We have sleep meetings on regular basis. Coincidently, on Friday is the next one. During these meetings we talk about specific clients we have difficulties with. For example, one client always came to the door around quarter past 11 while he has to lay in bed at 11 o'clock. Then we discuss this problem together. How do you handle this? Does she do that with you as well? Something like that.	5:215, 3	Discussing problems	Consultation & cooperation
Normally, I do not work during the day. Most of the time I have night shifts and maybe on a daily shift we could discuss things with each other, but I do not know my colleagues well enough for that. I started on the first of April and now I slowly start to get to know them better and they get to know me better. Now you act more freely, but in the beginning it is just too much. Really.	5:106, 2	Getting more used to colleagues	Consultation & cooperation
During such moments you think more consciousnessly over how you could have done it in a different way or if it would not have been more effective handling it differently. But I cannot remember a situation where I thought afterwards that I am going to do it differently next time. Till now I didn't think through in such detail.	9:106,3	Conscious thinking	Personal reflection
You always have to stop and consider SFT which already helps you realizing that you are applying SFT in many situations. Especially, in my first year I had difficulties realizing if I applied	1:230, 3	Evaluating ones actions	Personal reflection

SFT or not. Reflection actually makes you very aware of your actions and in a way it gives you self-confidence. Also the fact that someone is monitoring you with the help of the logbook keeps you sharp.

Identification

In the job opening it was said that SFT works with the power of the client. I do not remember the exact formulation, but it was something like that and it totally matches with my vision. I am not a supporter of taking someone by the hand and doing everything for the clients, sometimes you have the tendency to do that, but you actually want to teach people the necessary skills so that they can do it by themselves. That was very appealing to me.	1:301, 1	Match with organizational vision	Attitude SFT
I think solution focused therapy is a very nice method. If you want to change something, the client needs to want to change it by himself. If the clients do not want to change himself, he could never solve his problems. So, it always starts with client where the solution has to come from. This is always a good solution and the client will do it. If you force someone to do something, they will only do it because you want it which will never lead to change.	4:186, 2	Positive over methodological way of working	Attitude SFT
If I take too much over they will track themselves back. If I just lay back like “What are we going to do today?”, they will come with very good ideas. It would be really stupid to take it over in most cases. Sometimes it is necessary and sometimes not.	1:73, 2	Positive over methodological way of working	Attitude SFT
Very often we think that things are clear to clients, but if you check it and ask them again they do not know specific things and I realize that I haven’t been clear enough. When the clients do not understand it, is our fault	10:151, 3	Thinking in terms of method	
Of course SFT was not developed for nothing, but because it can have a lot of effect. However, you should not expect that it is a holy solution and this is where organizations and also employees are sometimes to blind to see. They think when I use the method everything will be fine, but it’s not like that.	6:95, 1	SFT no holy instrument	Attitude SFT
You have to accept someone as the person he or she is. Your judgment that something is not	6:156, 3	Thinking in terms	

possible can produce an imbalance or an inequality. According to SFT you should not say that you know it better, it is about letting the client tell how something has to work. With that approach you create a level of equality through which you achieve the client's trust. You don't trust anybody if you always get a no.		of method	
I am convinced about the fact that when I start enforcing personal norms and values on the clients in situations where they do not have any need for it, you risk losing them. They will reject you and you will lose the bond with them. A client asks very much, her help questions is literally mentioned: "I would like to have some tips about how I can dissolve these things and how can I do that". Very often I relate that to myself, I would do it like this and what do you think about it. I made that mistake once during a conversation and then I realized that I lost that person. That happens when your own opinion is too dominant. When that happens you have to start from the beginning and slowly build the bond again. It can happen in the beginning of a conversation and everything can be fine in the end again.	1:242, 3	Thinking in terms of method	Attitude
Contextual and- situational factors / Other factors employees were dealing with			
We do not discuss a lot new things within the team, because they want to work like they always did, but I am not used to that. I made that clear during conversations with the manager. Every now and then I try to talk with him about it.	7:104, 2	Colleague tend to stick to old habits	Controversies with colleagues
Our trainer Rob told us during the SFT course that the client is always allowed to choose his own clothes. That was something I had to discuss with him, because on the one hand there are some clients who are able to choose a little bit and on the other hand there are clients were it is just not possible. They would look stupid and I think this is a shame, because they already have to deal with prejudices and then they should not have to look like that. That was something we did not agree on.	5:139, 2	Discussing client responsibilities	Controversies with colleagues
Right now we are in the vacation period and I have 3 or 4 more clients. In the best scenario, I would have six more hours available, but that is not possibly. So you decide to make more	1:72, 3	No SFT when lack of time	Discrepancy time

appointments, but keep them shorter. A logical consequence is that you have to break off a conversation when you actually should go much deeper, because you don't have enough time. Right now I choose for seeing them twice a week, because they are used to that, but then you have to keep it shorter. It's your decision, but you have to make a choice. When my colleague comes back we can spend more time together.			
I tend to provide the clients with answers. When I have a conversation with the client, I have to force myself not to come up with an answer even when I know that she knows it by herself. I tend to do that when there is not so much time left and when I say it I know that we can finish the conversation faster. At a certain point you have to make choices regarding the time you have left.	10:112, 3	Interrupting clients when lack of time	Discrepancy time
There is a lot of bureaucracy, paperwork and justification towards the city council, because they provide us with money. I totally understand that this needs to happen, but I also know that you achieve the most when you get in contact with the client. The actual quality time, which doesn't mean spending time on the couch, but the quality of care, the real work.	6:78, 1	Less time for client due to paperwork	Discrepancy time
In general, when clients have a higher indication, they need more care, but this can be expressed in different ways. For example, there is one man who has a brain damage and he needs a totally different treatment than someone with a really low level. His intelligence is quite high, but on a mental and emotional level he scores quite low. So there is quite an area of tension. Nothing is only black or white. Very often there is a correlation between a low IQ and a higher indication, but it does not have to be like that. It also depends on the skills the clients have learned. With every client it is a bit of adjusting and measuring.	1:267, 3	Fitting and measuring	IQ client
I have the idea that I just know the clients, which is also why I am not very consciously busy with the method. You basically have a normal conversation and there are no situations where I think: "Where am I in the flow chart right now?". No.	9:45, 2	No application in the beginning	Knowledge about client
It was my limitation, because I could not estimate what it was about to have an IQ of 70. In the beginning I was very careful. When I experienced a sign of resistance I made a step back which	1:198, 3	Learning to estimate the IQ	Knowledge about client

strengthened the bond with the client, because they knew when they came up with something it was going to happen. There is no right or wrong, but right now I am treating them differently. Sometimes I say that I am going to arrange it for them instead of asking: do you want me to make a call? For some clients this is too much, because than you are asking them to admit that they need help. When the clients know you longer and know that you respect them you can do that for them. Therefore, you need some experiences. In the beginning, I could not estimate what someone needs at which level. This is only possible when you work for some time and when you got a lot of advice from your colleagues. When I started working here, they also told me that I will need a training period of two years and now I am finally getting why, because developing this understanding takes some time. You have to experience it.		level of clients	
I do not think about professional challenges in the future. At this moment I am only sort of ticking off my shifts. Right now, I am more busy with thinking about how I can arrange everything at home with the baby-sitter."	7:175, 3	Managing private situations	Work pressure
During supervision we were asked if someone already knew the theory, because according to them you practice first and then you learn the theory, but for me it was the other way around. I need to understand the theory first before so I know how everything works.	6:108, 2	Need for learning and mastering theory	Lack of knowledge regarding the org. method
I need more control over the method before I can use it in practice. You cannot have a good talk with your client when you didn't practice in the first place. You slowly need to build things up.	4:88, 1	Need for practical experiences	Lack of knowledge regarding the org. method
Adjustment / Attuning SFT behavior			
It is new for me that you ask the client: "How do you think you could solve that?" I was not familiar with finding a solution together. It was always finding a solution for them, but I think this is very nice and I realize that I started using it more often. I ask my clients about how they think they can solve it and I take more time. We also talk very clearly about what we want. Of course I	5:14, 1	Letting clients find own solutions	Compliance approach

already have fifteen years of working experiences, but from time to time some things just creep in. The course reminds me that I have to keep this in mind. I think this is very nice.			
Some people are very excited when they can make an appeal to differentiation, to the way they managed earlier. Knowing what they are capable of is a very strong tool, because deeply they know that they can do it. Sometimes people need some more differentiation, before they can apply it by themselves, but this is the challenge. Someone learns to ask him-or herself the right questions in order to be able to remember how he or she did it earlier and then he or she can use it again.	6:172, 2	Application organizational method	
I don't know if I use it every day. I think it kind of crept in. Yesterday, I was busy within cleaning upstairs and suddenly my client freaked out. She decorated her whole room and the decoration had to be removed, because the windows needed to be cleaned. Than you come up with a solution, but that was not good. So you try it more subtle and let her think about a solution. What can we do instead and what do you want? Than it is immediately over.	1:88, 1	Automatic application organizational method	
I took over a client in January who actually wanted to stop with care, because there was drama with his debt consultant / administrator. I supported him so that he could formulate what went wrong. Through that we developed a confidential relationship which enabled us to work together. He avoided care, but now I see him once or twice a week and I think 'bingo!', you know? This was achieved by letting him determine by himself.	6:163, 2	Application organizational method	
I realize that I apply SFT at home as well. Probably, I won't do it always, because I tend to take care of people. But there are situations at home with my kids, for example with the soccer clothing, that I tell them that I won't wash it if they don't put it in front of the washing machine so that they learn that they won't get any clean sport clothing any more if they don't do it. Of course the kids had to get used to that.	5:150,2	Application of organizational method at home	
Normally I tend to search a solution by myself and now it is more that you have to stimulate the client to do the work by himself. What would you like to do and what could we do together or what do you expect me to do. It is a different way of approaching.	10:48, 2	Searching for solutions together	Cooperative approach

I would not say that it is much, but there are some things were you are proud, because you did it together. Very often the client is even more proud and thinks: “Yes, I succeeded.” Of course, if he would have thought about a solution all by himself it would be even better.	8:76, 2	Searching and implementing solutions together	
I try to visit my clients during their work. In the last year I almost visited everyone. During the last evaluation one client said that I was the best guide he has ever had. This is because of my connection with his environment which shows concern for the client. I think this is an important part of client treatment. The clients are not stupid, they also realize when the guide visits them and shows a little more interest. They realize this coach visits me and is interested in what I am doing and I can show him around. Now I am only talking about visits at work, but it is also important to get to know the family. So even if you don’t get paid for that you get something in return.	6:254, 3	Showing concern for client	
She always had a fixed pattern how she organized her day and since she lives with us we have more possibilities to make an appeal to her. We go walking. What do you want? Do you want to embroider or to you want to come with us? By asking these questions she can decide by herself what she wants. We decide when we are going to ask her, but when we ask her she can always choose.	10:57, 2	Providing clients with options	Directive appoach
In different situations you have to try to get access to the client via taking a mandate position. When you do that you tell the client that it is just the way it is. Sometimes you can provide the client with two options. First, I did not know what to do with the mandate role, because what is it actually? It is about providing the client with a limited offer of choices. I think this is meant by mandate. I am still busy with figuring it out, but I know that it does mean that the therapist gets the possibility to take control and come up with a solution. For example, when the client wants something which is just not realistic to achieve.	4:165, 2	Providing clients with options	Directive approach
The trap is that you want to do too much for the client so that you let him / her decide less. If you are busy, the first thing you will do is taking the lead, because it is faster.”	1:71, 3	Taking the lead	Directive approach
You have to point very consequent to the rules. Clients are not allowed to walk in drunk. In such	4:314, 3	Sticking to to	Directive

situations you have to be very calm and try to avoid to be threatening. You slowly need to steer them where you want them to be. You do not immediately start to coach, but with a little bit of this and a little bit of that you try to steer them in the right direction.		rules, Leading client into right direction	approach
It is always based a little bit on feeling and during team meetings with colleagues and a remedial educationalist we talk about how you can identify client's limits. We talk about what he is able to do and what not. You lead the conversations with clients more. They can decide, but I try to steer them in a certain direction.	7:64, 2	Leading clients into right direction	Directive approach
I realized that I quite changed regarding my view towards SFT. In the beginning, I was very busy with applying SFT as strict as possible. I wanted to ask the client everything. The client always had to say what he wants, but that was wrong, because they do not always have to say it. They can also indicate it in another way without saying anything. I realized that when I got to know my clients better. When you know the clients, they should not have to say everything. You cannot always keep on going asking questions, because then you ask too much of them. Right now, I am busy with developing these skills so that I don't over ask them anymore. You cannot always keep on going asking questions, because this is too difficult for them.	1:175, 4	Loosening SFT rules	Doing what works
I think that you sometimes achieve more when you just use your intellect instead of doing everything via paper.	3:34, 1	Using intellect	Doing what works
Sometimes you have to throw all the norms and values away in order to get to understand the client.	6:291, 1	Using intuition	Doing what works
There was a moment when the tension was so high so that I had to determine now I am going to do this and I am going to change that. Of course, I got the question "why?" in return, but in such situations my answer is only "because I say so" and then you realize that she understands that this is the agreement and then she is fine with that. In this situation I determined for her what is going to happen, but it is actually very nice that she is coming back to me and tells me that it worked out very well. I think this is solution focused work. Determining for the client obviously is not solution focused, but the effect of my action is. She is thinking about it by herself and she is	10:136, 3	Making clear statements	Commanding approach

positive about it.				
In some cases blank listening does not help. It would not be useful, because one man for example gets care assistance for a long time which is why he knows all the tricks. What he needs is stability, borders and clarity”.	1:134, 3	Setting rules		Commanding approach
You cannot give the client too much space, because we have agreements with each other. There are fixed control rounds and guidelines which explain what the clients have to do. These are also guidelines for us. But if another coach says it is ok than the clients experience too much space. I know one boy who’s closet should be controlled every Tuesday evening, because every now and then he tries to hide things in it. But some coaches are a little afraid of him. Especially new coaches shrink back and then it is not happening. Of course the boy gets that.	3:156, 3		Maintaining control	Commanding approach

Appendix B

Table B1

Alternate Wechsler IQ classifications

Corresponding IQ Range	Classifications
130+	Upper extreme
120-129	Well above average
110-119	High average
90-109	Average
80-89	Low average
70-79	Well below average
69 and below	Low extreme

Note. Groth-Marnat, G., Gallagher, R. E., Hale, J. B., & Kaplan, E. (2000). The Wechsler intelligence scales. In G. Groth-Marnat (Eds.), *Neuropsychological assessment in clinical practice* (pp. 129–194). New York: Wiley.