Playing a role - but which one? : how public service motivation and professionalism affect decision-making in dilemma situations

Schott, C.

Chapter 2

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION AND PROFESSIONALISM AS GUIDELINES FOR DECISION-MAKING IN DILEMMA SITUATIONS[1]

1 Parts of this chapter are based on Schott, C., Van Kleef, D. D. & Steen, T. (2014). What does it mean and imply to be public service motivated? *The American Review of Public Administration*. DOI: 0.1177/0275074014533589; Schott, C. & Pronk, J. L. J. (2014). Investigating and explaining organizational antecedents of PSM. *Evidence-based HRM: A Global Forum for Empirical Scholarship*, 2(1): 28-56; and Schott, C., Van Kleef, D. D., & Noordegraaf, M. (2015). Confused professionals? Capacities to cope with pressures on professional work. *Public Management Review*. DOI:10.1080/14719037.2015.1016094.

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework that has served as a guideline for the empirical research described in this study, and helps to answer the research questions formulated in the introduction. The chapter is divided into seven sections. First, the concept of 'dilemma' is analysed, the key characteristics of the public sector are elaborated on, and an explanation is offered as to why public service professionals regularly face dilemmas. This insight increases our knowledge of what the dilemma situations are that public service professionals are frequently confronted with in practice (SRQ1). Next, the literature on coping strategies is briefly introduced, because this field of literature can help to answer the question of what kind of decisions public service professionals make in dilemma situations (SRQ2). However, the focus of this research project was on the reasons underlying decision-making in dilemma situations, rather than public service professionals' actual decision-making. Therefore, the literature is not discussed in detail, but decision-making in dilemma situations is investigated in an exploratory way and the empirical findings are linked to the literature on coping strategies. Sections 2 and 3 introduce PSM and professionalism, respectively, and I account for the focus on these two concepts as explanatory variables of decision-making in dilemma situations. After a literature review on PSM and professionalism, persistent knowledge gaps are discussed, resulting in a comprehensive basis for secondary research questions 3 and 4. Section 4 presents a literature overview of studies in which PSM and professionalism are combined, resulting in a basis for secondary research question 5. In Section 5, identity theory is introduced into the study of professionalism and PSM, as a theory that can help to address the knowledge gaps in current PSM and professionalism literature. In Section 6, a number of hypotheses and propositions are formulated that result from combining PSM, professionalism and identity theory, and provide theoretical answers to the remaining secondary research questions (SRQ3-5). In Section 7, the most important theoretical insights are summarized. The hypotheses put forward in Section 6 are represented within a schematic conceptual model, and a table is provided indicating which part, or parts, in the results chapters address which research question.

2.1 Key characteristics of the public sector: the roles of conflicting values, contrasting demands and the public interest

It is commonly known that working in the specific context of public governance entails a regular need to take decisions in the face of dilemmas (De Graaf, Huberts & Smulders, 2014; Hood, 1991; Humphrey & Guthrie, 2001; Olson, O'Kelly & Dubnick, 2006; Provan & Milward, 2001). As mentioned in the Introduction, moral or ethical dilemmas have been studied intensively in the field of public administration and can be seen as situations

in which important ethical values clash (e.g., Cooper, 2001; Maesschalck, 2005). Other disciplines that also involve research on moral dilemmas are business ethics (e.g., Treviño, & Weaver, 2003) and organizational studies (e.g., Jones, 1991). Even though in this study the concepts of dilemma is viewed more broadly and less normatively than in the research field of moral dilemmas – I see dilemmas as a special form of trade-off, characterized by the fact that the situation has negative consequences no matter what option is chosen (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2000) – what unifies both approaches is the assumption that the following three conditions are met.

First, the individual should be committed to the values or interests that are in conflict; otherwise no dilemma is perceived. Second, the situation must require the individual to become active; to decide to do or not to do something. A person can be committed to various values at the same time without feeling any tension. Conflicts are experienced only in situations in which people have to decide to do (or not to do) something that involves a trade-off between values they are committed to. Next to this, individuals need to have some discretionary space to act, which implies that they have to make a decision – choosing between two or more conflicting possibilities of decision-making. In Subsection 2.4.1 I will elaborate on the inevitability of discretion in public servants' work.

As this research project was aimed at increasing our understanding of what determines behaviour of public professionals in dilemma situations, we first need to specify what the dilemma situations are that public service professionals are frequently confronted with. In this section, I elaborate on three key characteristics of the public sector that may cause individuals working in the public sector being to be frequently confronted with dilemmas: value pluralism, varying demands from different stakeholders, and the fuzziness of the concept of public interest.

One rationale for the existence of public organizations is to defend and produce public values (Rainey, 2009). It has been argued, for example, that public values are the result of government activities authorized by citizens and their representatives (Moore, 1995). Bozeman (2007), on the other hand, addresses public values at both an individual and a societal level. This means that individuals may have their own views on "the rights, obligations and benefits to which citizens are entitled and, on the other hand, the obligations expected of citizens and their designated representatives" (p.14). In the context of the rise of managerialism (Frederickson, 2005; Kernaghan, 2000), economic individualism (Bozeman, 2007), and privatization (De Bruijn & Dicke, 2006), public organizations are increasingly challenged to balance 'classical or traditional' governmental values such as integrity, neutrality, legality, and impartiality on the one hand with 'business-like' values such as

efficiency, innovation, responsiveness and effectiveness on the other. This development is also visible in the extensive literature on the principles of good governance and, related to this, in the literature on public values. De Graaf and Van der Wal (2010) have recently called into question whether it is possible to do things right (having integrity) while at the same time realizing objectives (being effective). Both values are regarded as important for public organizations in order to create legitimacy. By referring to actual working situations of public employees, the authors demonstrate that in certain circumstances these values clash. The problem seems to be that there is no overriding 'good' or 'common' scale ranking the importance of these values (Berlin, 1982; Hampshire, 1983; Spicer, 2009; Van der Wal, De Graaf & Lawton, 2011), and no definite list of public values in the first place (Rainey, 2009). Van der Wal et al. (2011) assume that conflicts of values are incommensurable since there is not one public value more important to other values; a condition that in moral philosophy is called *value pluralism* (Wagenaar, 1999; Nieuwenburg, 2004). A contrasting voice is that of Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007), who argue that "both values [liberty and efficiency] are viewed important, but it is nonetheless possible to specify or interfere a hierarchy of importance" (p. 370).

In their work public servants have to deal with a great number of stakeholders. They have to deal with national and international law and regulations, media and diverse interest groups, the interests of politicians and managers, and the interests of various individual citizens each having their own requests for public services. Because public organizations a) hold a monopoly position as providers of social services which are not exchanged on economic markets but are justified by social values, b) act as regulators of externalities, spill-overs and individual incompetence, and c) depend on legislative bodies and political powers, they have to represent the interests of various stakeholders (Rainey, 2009). It can be argued that potential conflicts arising from different interests are amplified by the fact that "government organizations operate under greater public scrutiny [than private organizations] and are subject to unique public expectations for fairness, openness, accountability, and honesty" (Rainey, 2009, p. 86). Lipsky (1980) argues that public sector workers are "constantly torn by the demands of service recipients to improve effectiveness and responsiveness and by the demands of citizen groups to the efficacy and efficiency of government services" (p. 404). The author investigates how public service workers use their professional autonomy to make decisions and protect themselves against pressures and uncertainties. Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2000) argue that the fundamental dilemma of public servants' work is that they constantly have to deal with the tensions between the needs of individual citizens and the demands and limits of rules. They conclude that street-level workers base their decisions

on normative choices – i.e., on the worth of the individual client – rather than rules and regulations. Accordingly, next to value pluralism, contrasting demands arising from multiple stakeholders can be assumed to be omnipresent in the public sector. Or borrowing Hardy's words (1981), "most administrative practice […] is a compromise between conflicting values and forces within society" (p. vii.). There is a great body of research into the question of how public servants deal or cope with their unpredictable environment, which is characterized by conflicting demands. A brief review of the literature on coping behaviour is provided in Section 2.2, because this literature helps to operationalize public service professionals' decision-making in dilemma situations.

Public organizations can be defined as being in charge of promoting the public interest (Appleby, 1952; Bozeman, 2007; Flathman, 1966). According to a normative point of view, the public interest is an ideal. It is what citizens expect from government and what public officials – both politicians and administrators - strive for or should strive for. However, the concept of public interest has proved notoriously difficult to measure and define (Mitnick, 1980). There is no clear idea of what the public interest means, both in a general sense and applied to specific cases (Bozeman, 2007). Schubert (1960) identified three different conceptualizations of the public interest: a realistic, a rational, and an idealistic perspective, all of which he criticizes because they cannot be verified and cannot be used to describe the behaviour of real individuals. According to Schubert, what is most important about the public interest is that it cannot be used as a guideline for the behaviour of public servants. In line with Schuetz's (1953) philosophical approach to common-sense and scientific thinking, we suggest that the public interest needs to be addressed as a context-dependent interpretation rather than an abstract ideal. Rutgers (2012), for example, points out that the notion of public interest is time and place specific, i.e., contextual, and hence very much a matter of interpretation. Similarly, Rhodes and Wanna (2007) view the public interest as having a "different meaning in different narratives" (p. 415). The fuzziness of the public interest concept can be partly explained by some of the key characteristics of public organizations, i.e., value pluralism and different demands arising from multiple stakeholders. For example, working in health care requires fostering individual and public health, economic well-being, research and development, and sustainability: all potentially conflicting aspects of the public interest. Everyone has their own view of what the public interest is, given a specific context, and hence also of what actions could be taken to foster the public interest and of the extent to which these actions actually serve the public interest. Similarly, Rainey (1982) points out that "there are as many ways to conceive of public service as there are to conceive of the public interest" (p. 289).

Our theoretical discussion about possible factors explaining why public service professionals frequently have to make decisions in the face of dilemmas has provided insights into the situations in which public service professionals might experience dilemmas. It can be summarized in the following proposition:

> P1: *Public service professionals experience dilemmas in situations in which equally important values clash, various stakeholders' demands are in conflict, or the 'public interest' is the guideline of behaviour.*

After presenting some situations that public service professionals are expected to experience as dilemmas, I will discuss some literature on coping strategies, because this literature provides useful guidelines to operationalize decision-making in the context of dilemmas.

2.2 Decision-making in dilemma situations: coping strategies

In public administration literature, coping strategies have been identified as key responses to situations which are characterised by conflicting values and demands (Hupe & Hill, 2007; Loyens & Maesschalck, 2010). Following Steenhuisen (2009), I refer to coping behaviour "as a response to competing values that take form in the actions and decisions" (p. 20). Originating from the fields of psychology and psychiatry, which primarily focus on the question of how people deal – or cope – with mental problems and stress, a large body of literature on coping behaviour is also found in the fields of public administration, organizational behaviour, sociology, and political science (e.g., Brunsson, 1989; Lawton, McKevitt & Millar, 2000; Lipsky, 1980; Tetlock 2000; Thacher & Rein, 2004). For this research project I did not use coping strategies as a means to understand the cognitive mechanisms that make it possible to deal with dilemma situations. Rather, I saw them as a useful typology that could help to operationalize decision-making in the dilemma situations I might encounter in the research setting. In an extensive literature review on coping behaviour, Steenhuisen (2009) identifies two dichotomous dimensions of coping strategies that underlie the great variety of coping mechanisms discussed in the public administration, organizational behaviour, sociology, and political science literature: decoupling versus coupling, and emergent versus deliberate coping strategies. *Coupling* is a multi-value response. One example is 'hybridization' – 'the coexistence of two policies or practices with different values bases' (Stewart, 2006, p. 188). *Decoupling*, in contrast, is a mono-value response that decouples values, either in unconnected institutions or over time. Examples of decoupling are 'biasing', 'casuistry', and 'cycling'. 'Cycling' refers to

alternating between two conflicting values in order to realise each value separately over time. 'Casuistry' is a decoupling strategy and implies that in value conflict individuals make their decisions on the basis of their experience in comparable cases (De Graaf, Huberts & Smulders, 2014). Biasing, as defined by Stewart (2006), is favouring certain values above others through dominant discourses.

Another strategy is 'building firewalls', which are forms of structural separations that defer the responsibilities from one level in the systems to another (Thacher & Rein, 2004). In other words, 'firewalls' move the value conflict to elsewhere in the system. The mechanism is closely related to Endler and Parker's (1990) avoidance-oriented coping strategy, which is often discussed in the field of psychology. 'Building firewalls' also fits well in the second dichotomous dimensions of Steenhuisen's (2009) typology of decision-making: deliberate or purposeful versus emergent coping strategies. According to the author, 'bucket-passing' (ascribing one's own responsibility to another person or group) and 'procrastination' (putting off upcoming tasks) are *deliberate coping* strategies using decision avoidance. An example of an *emergent coping* strategy is the 'garbage can model' developed by Cohen, March and Olsen (1972), which depicts decision-making as much less systematic and rational than expected by proponents of rational choice theory. From this perspective, people are not sure about their preferences. This results in problems and solutions "flow[ing] along through time, sometimes coming together in combinations that shape decisions" (Rainey, 2009, p. 141). In the empirical part of this dissertation (5.2), the actual decisions that public service professionals make are explored and linked to the coping strategies discussed above.

In the next sections two concepts are discussed of which I want to know whether they can help is learn more about the reason why public service professionals make certain decisions in the context of dilemmas: PSM and professionalism.

2.3 Introducing public service motivation into the study of decision-making in dilemma situations

This section introduces PSM into the study of behaviour in dilemma situations. After discussing different definitions of PSM, I will elaborate on the argument made in the Introduction that PSM is an interesting concept to be studied in the context of this research. An overview of current research on PSM will be provided and the remaining knowledge gaps will be discussed.

2.3.1 Public service motivation as explanatory variable in dilemma situations

In 1982, Rainey laid the foundation for the concept of PSM by asking a large sample of private and public managers to rate their desire to engage 'in meaningful public service' (p. 288). Over the past 30 years, interest in and research on PSM has increased immensely among both public administration scholars and practitioners (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008). Today there are several definitions of PSM. The original one, provided by Perry and Wise (1990), defines PSM as "a predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public organizations" (p. 368). Rainey and Steinbauer (1999) refer to it as "a general, altruistic motivation to serve the interest of a community of people, a state, a nation or humankind" (p. 20). Brewer and Selden (1998) view PSM as "a motivational force that induces individuals to perform meaningful public service (i.e., community, and social service)" (p. 417). More recently, Perry and Hondeghem (2008) see PSM as "an individual's orientation to delivering services to people with a purpose to do good for others and society" (p. vii). Vandenabeele's (2007) definition goes a step further because it also refers to the origin of PSM. In his view, PSM is "the belief, the values and attitudes that go beyond self-interest and organizational interest, that concern the interest of a larger political entity and that motivate individuals to act accordingly whenever appropriate" (p. 549). In spite of this variety, what unifies all definitions is the idea of providing 'meaningful public service' or serving the community.

PSM is frequently used as an explanation of behaviour-related variables such as (individual) performance, interpersonal citizenship behaviour, and commitment. (For an overview of this type of research, see Subsection 2.2.3). The immense interest in the consequences of PSM is grounded in one of the most fundamental assumptions about PSM, i.e., that "in public service organizations, PSM is positively related to individual performance" (Perry & Wise, 1990, p. 370). Highly public service motivated individuals are expected to perform well, since they are working to provide services they perceive as meaningful (Perry & Wise, 1990; Wright & Grant, 2010).

Next to its explanatory value vis-à-vis behaviour in general, PSM is an interesting concept to include in this study, because in research PSM is assumed also to guide behaviour in situations where individuals need to make trade-offs. This assumption is supported in studies linking PSM and whistleblowing. Brewer and Selden (1998) found that highly public service motivated individuals report wrongdoings out of concern for the public interest more frequently than do individuals scoring low on PSM. These individuals do not consider the interest of the people responsible for the wrongdoings, but "act in ways that are consistent with the theory of PSM. This is, they are motivated by the concern for the public interest" (Brewer & Selden, 1998, p. 413). Similarly, Vandenabeele et al. (2006) argue

that when personal and organizational interests are in competition with the public interest, "the public interest should prevail" (assuming that the individual is highly public service motivated) (p. 14). Next to this, according to Vandenabeele (2007) PSM is embedded within what March and Olson (1989) describe as 'the logic of appropriateness' because it refers to the realization of certain institutional values rather than self-interest. A rational choice perspective – a logic of consequences – has limitations when applied to dilemmas because of its presumptions of relatively conscious, deliberate decision-making processes, and choices that are preceded by evaluation and judgment (Weber, Kopelman & Messick, 2004). Thus, PSM seems to be an interesting concept to use if we want to learn more about what drives the behaviour of individuals in situations characterized by dilemmas.

The first definition of PSM, provided by Perry and Wise (1990)[2], focuses on psychological motives of behaviour and implies that PSM has a pluralistic character. Knoke and Wright-Isak (1982) differentiate three categories of psychological motives, which they call rational, norm-based, and affective. *Rational motives* are concerned with the maximization of utilities. Working in the public sector is seen as a way to satisfy one's personal needs and image of self-importance, while serving public interests (Rawels, 1971). *Norm-based motives* involve actions generated to conform to recognized norms (Perry & Wise, 1990). They can be described as an altruistic desire to serve the public interest (Downs, 1967). *Affective motives* refer to commitment to a program based on personal identification with it (Perry & Wise, 1990). When affective motives are in play, employees commit to a public organization because they are convinced that the public organization serves the public good and that their work is socially important (Perry & Wise, 1990). A couple of years after the ground breaking work by Perry and Wise, Perry (1996) used Knoke's and Wright-Isak's distinctive motives to identify four different dimensions of PSM: Attraction to public policy making, Compassion, Commitment to civic duty/public interest, and Self-sacrifice. He mapped three of these four dimensions directly on to the motivational foundations identified by Knoke and Wright-Isak. *Attraction to policy making* is related to the rational choice processes; *commitment to civic duty/public interest* maps to normative motives, and finally, there is a link between *compassion* and affective motivation (Perry, 2000). However, Perry (2000) fails to link the last dimension *self-sacrifice* to a psychological motive for PSM; and neither do Perry and Vandenabeele (2008) in their theoretical approach to PSM, nor Kim et al. (2013) in their empirical study focussing on the dimensionality of PSM and the instrument to measure it. Therefore, we should exercise some caution in assuming a direct relation between psychological motives and different PSM dimensions.

2 PSM as "an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations" (Perry & Wise, 1990)

Overall, scholars agree that PSM is composed of multiple dimensions (Wright, 2008). However, because of growing concern about the reliability of separate dimensions of PSM in countries outside the American context (e.g., Leisink & Steijn, 2008; Liu, Tsang & Zhu, 2008; Vandebeele, 2008), new measurement instruments have been developed and the dimensionality of PSM has changed. Vandenabeele (2008), for example, found evidence of an additional PSM dimension in Belgium which he calls *democratic governance*. Very recently, a great number of international PSM scholars from twelve different countries combined their efforts: they systematically investigated the dimensionality of PSM and developed a questionnaire instrument with an improved theoretical and empirical basis to measure PSM internationally (Kim et al., 2013). The results indicate that PSM is a four-dimensional construct including the dimensions: Attraction to public service (APS), Commitment to public values (CPV), Compassion (COM), and Self-sacrifice (SS).

Attraction to public service is an action-oriented dimension. It focusses on the degree to which participants are dedicated to public service, community and common good, and are willing to participate in the public policy process. It is a redefinition of Perry's (1996) 'attraction to policy' dimension and measured by items that better represent action-oriented and instrumental motives (Kim et al., 2013). *Commitment to public values* is a redefinition of Perry's Attraction to public policy making dimension. It therefore is a value-based dimension assessing the "extent to which an individual's interest in public service is driven by their internalization of and interest in pursuing commonly held public values such as equity, concern for future generations, accountability and ethics" (Kim et al. 2013, p. 83). C*ompassion* can be regarded as a sense of patriotism and benevolence which is described by Frederickson and Hart (1985) as an extensive love for all people within the community and the imperative to protect them. Newly developed items measure the degree to which participants identify with the suffering and needs of others. Finally, the willingness to substitute services to others for tangible personal rewards refers to the dimension *self-sacrifice*. This dimension presents the altruistic or pro-social origins of PSM (Perry, 1996).

Summing up: Because of the explanatory value of behaviour and the embeddedness within the 'logic of appropriateness', I expect PSM to be an interesting concept to be included into this study as it (potentially) helps to understand what drives professionals' decision-making in the context of dilemmas. In the following section an overview of traditional PSM research is presented.

2.3.2 Overview of traditional public service motivation research

In PSM literature different strands of research can be distinguished, all primarily relying on quantitative data. A minor strand focuses on the antecedents of PSM. Already in 1997, Perry explicitly called for research on the impact of organizations on PSM. More recently, Perry's call was repeated by Brewer (2008), who argued that insufficient attention has been paid to organizational antecedents of PSM. This line of thought was also supported by Leisink (2004), who suggested that personnel policies may contribute to creating conditions at work that help to generate PSM. Nevertheless, the number of studies investigating organizational antecedents of PSM remains limited. Moynihan and Pandey (2007) were able to demonstrate that red tape is negatively related to PSM, whereas hierarchical authority and reform orientation have a positive impact on PSM. Camilleri (2007) found evidence that suggests a positive relationship between employee-leader relations and PSM and between specific job characteristics and PSM. Other scholars (e.g., Georgellis et al., 2011; Giauque et al., 2013) heightened the negative consequences of monetary incentives on PSM. Crowding-out theory (Frey & Jegen, 2001) offers a plausible explanation for this phenomenon. If payment is related to individual performance people can no longer perform an activity purely for the sake of it – which is a key element of intrinsic motivation. Therefore, monetary incentives might undermine PSM, which is a specific form of intrinsic motivation. (For a systematic review on the relationship between PSM and performance-based payment see Frey, Homberg and Osterloh (2013)). Very recently, attempts have been made to assess the organizational antecedents of PSM by investigating the impact of several HR practices on PSM (Giauque et al., 2013; Schott & Pronk 2014), while Vandenabeele (2010) focused on the various institutions one is affiliated with such as family, political affiliation, and age cohort as antecedents of PSM.

A relatively young strand of PSM research addresses the question of *how* the level of PSM develops over time. At the suggestion of leading PSM scholars (e.g., Bozeman & Su, 2014; Perry & Hondeghem, 2008; Wright & Grand 2010), longitudinal panel research on PSM is now being carried out (e.g., Brænder & Andersen, 2013; Kjeldsen, 2014; Kroll & Vogel, 2013; Wright & Christensen, 2010; Ward, 2014). This type of research is important as it helps to increase our knowledge of PSM as either a dynamic state or a stable trait (Wright & Grant, 2010). This knowledge is relevant, because it can help to explain the higher level of PSM generally found among civil servants as compared to individuals working in private organizations (e.g., Houston, 2006; Rainey, 1982; Steijn, 2008; Taylor, 2008). If PSM is a static trait, higher levels of PSM among public sector employees cannot be the result of socialization mechanisms but should be attributed to attraction-selection-retention

mechanisms. The latter are derived from the broader Attraction-Selection-Attrition framework (Schneider, 1987) and Person-Environment Fit Theory (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). The main argument then is that public service motivated workers are attracted by public sector work because of the opportunity it offers to contribute to the public interest and provide meaningful public services. Interestingly, the results of longitudinal PSM research are mixed. Georgellis and Tabvuma (2010) found that individuals who accepted a public sector job showed an increased level of PSM for at least five years. Ward (2014) and Kjeldsen and Jacobsen (2012) found that PSM declines over time after people join the labour market, but that the drop in PSM may be mitigated by positive (public) socialization. Kroll and Vogel (2015), on the other hand, found evidence that PSM is stable across time. Kjeldsen (2014) and Brænder and Andersen (2013) went a step further. The authors included work characteristics and Danish soldiers' 'deployment to war', respectively, into the analysis, in order to get a more complete picture of post-entry PSM dynamics. They found that the different PSM dimensions changed in different ways or stayed stable across time. This means that some studies wholly or in part support the idea of PSM being a stable trait, while others indicate that PSM is a dynamic state that can both increase and decrease across time. What is more, there are a number of scholars who argue that PSM might be both at the same time: a relatively enduring individual predisposition and a temporary psychological state (Liu, Yang & Yu, 2014; Wright and Grant, 2010). Support for this argument also comes from Fleeson (2001) who points out that even traits are not fully stable. Rather, they vary to a certain degree within persons because of their individual reactions to changing external circumstances. An explanation for the increase of PSM is, for example, provided by Brewer (2008), who argues that organizational socialization is likely to be a crucial mechanism for "transmitting a 'public institutional logic' and seeding public service motivation" (p. 149). Scholars argue that public values, which according to Vandenabeele (2010) are the basic principles of public institutions, are internalized or socialized in such a way as to result in a higher level of PSM. One often cited explanation for the decline of PSM across time is the 'reality shock' (Brænder & Andersen, 2013; Kjeldsen, 2014; Kjeldsen & Jacobsen, 2012), a phenomenon that has been observed among, for example, social workers (Blau, 1960), police recruits (Van Maanen, 1975), and teachers (De Cooman et al., 2009). The argument is that newcomers who are initially motivated by their interest to help others become frustrated and disillusioned by the reality of their daily work; by negative attitudes of clients; complicated procedures; red tape; and by lack of gratitude and positive feedback. The term 'reality shock' goes back to the work of Hughes (1958) and is linked to unsuccessful organizational socialization. In various studies it has been used to describe the discrepancy between how nursing graduates understand their professional

nursing role on the basis of their training, and the working reality they are confronted with when entering the practice of healthcare services (e.g., Delaney, 2003; Duscher 2001, 2008; Kramer, 1974). However, reality shocks are not a unique characteristic of the transition from nursing graduate to professional; they have also been observed among teachers (San, 1999; Weinstein, 1988) and police recruits (Van Maanen, 1975). Next to this, Dean et al. (1988) showed that accountants who switch from one job to another can also experience reality shock. This means that reality shock plays a role not only during the transition from being a student to being a professional, but also in situations in which newcomers' expectations formed prior to organizational entry – for example, during the selection and recruitment process or earlier working experiences – are not compatible with the reality of the new working context. Fisher (1986) even goes one step further. The author argues that reality shock may even occur during an individual's career within the same organization, for example in response to a promotion after which expectations are not met. Building upon Wright and Pandey's (2008) critical note that just because public agencies can provide individuals with opportunities to act upon their PSM there is no guarantee that agencies actually will, I argue that public service motivated individuals may experience a reality shock after job entry, which results in a drop in PSM. Indeed, employees may be frustrated by high levels of red tape in public organizations (Boyne, 2002); lack of sufficient resources; vague policy goals; and formally circumscribed rules, regulations and directives from above (Lipsky, 1980) or clashes between an organizational focus and a focus on the public interest at the core of public service motivation (Steen & Rutgers, 2013). These characteristics of the public sector prevent PSM from being effectively put into practice. Individuals who expect their job to enable them to contribute to the public interest and make a difference for society may realize that the working reality it looks different and consequently lose their PSM.

Third, and most often, PSM is treated as an independent variable. The effect of PSM is measured most frequently by self-reported outcome variables such as job satisfaction (e.g., Bright, 2008; Wright & Pandey, 2008), organizational commitment (e.g., Camilleri, 2006; Crewson, 1997; Leisink & Steijn, 2009), interpersonal citizenship behaviour (e.g., Pandey, Wright & Moynihan, 2008), organizational performance (e.g., Brewer & Selden, 1998; Kim, 2005), and individual performance (e.g., Alonso & Lewis, 2001; Frank & Lewis, 2004; Leisink & Steijn, 2009; Naff & Crum, 1999; Vandenabeele, 2009). However, the findings from these studies are inconsistent. Some studies support the PSM-performance relationship (e.g., Naff & Crum, 1999; Vandenabeele, 2009), whereas others report negative or mixed findings (e.g., Alonso & Lewis, 2001; Ritz, 2009).

Another strand of research based on exactly these uncertainties. Recently, the awareness has grown that the PSM-performance relationship is more complex than originally thought

and that contextual factors should be included in the analysis. Perry, Hondeghem and Wise (2010), for example, point out "that the effects of PSM are more nuanced than Perry and Wise (1990) projected" (p. 684). Wright and Pandey (2008) criticize the assumption, frequently found in studies on the consequences of PSM, that public organizations provide sufficient opportunities to satisfy the motivation of their employees to serve the public. Just because public agencies have the possibility to provide individuals with opportunities to act upon their PSM, there is no guarantee that they actually will do so. Steen and Rutgers (2011) follow up on this by raising the question of what happens if employees have no opportunity to put their PSM into practice. In their view this may result in frustration, leading to deviant behaviour. Thus, PSM could be a double-edged sword bringing risks of adverse effects, as also discussed by Maesschalck, Van de Wal and Huberts (2008), and Giauque, Ritz, Varone and Anderfuhren-Biget (2012). The former point out that PSM may result in unethical or illegal behaviour, the latter find that some dimensions of PSM increase resigning from work. Wright and Christensen (2009) conclude that instead of asking whether public service motivation affects employees' behaviour, such as self-selection and remaining with public organizations, perhaps it might be more appropriate to ask when and under what conditions PSM affects employees' behaviour. Some researchers attempt to take into account contextual factors, for example by including ideas on person-organization fit into the analysis of the PSM-performance relationship (e.g., Bright, 2007; Leisink & Steijn, 2009; Wright & Pandey, 2008).

2.3.3 Two persistent knowledge gaps

In this section, two persistent knowledge gaps are pointed out and addred. First, what does it mean and, related to this, what does it imply to be public service motivated in the context of dilemma situations? Second, how and why does PSM change over time? The first question is discussed first

What does it mean and what does it imply to be public service motivated?

The discussion of current PSM literature shows that quantitative studies on the antecedents and consequences of PSM form a substantive part of PSM research. Next to these, there is a growing number of studies into the theoretical origins and dimensions of PSM (e.g., Perry & Vandenabeele, 2008; Vandenabeele, 2007, 2008). In his PSM measurement scale, Perry (1996) identifies four dimensions, each providing a unique contribution to a person's PSM. Perry's dimensions provide a theoretically grounded conceptualization of PSM, but at the same time it remains unclear what exactly PSM is, and how it incorporates the different

dimensions that are often found to be inconsistent in how they correlate with other factors under investigation (e.g., Andersen & Serritlew, 2012; Giauque et al., 2012; Taylor, 2007). This raises the question of whether we should continue to treat PSM as one single construct with an overarching meaning. The continuing unclarity of the construct is also illustrated by the ongoing efforts to improve the PSM measurement instrument (for example through testing for the validity and reliability of the Perry measurement scale across different cultures (Kim, 2009; Kim et al., 2013; Vandenabeele, 2008)); the frequent calls to check for (international) generalizability and cross-validation of study results (Andersen & Pedersen, 2012); and the attempt to contribute to the examination of the PSM construct by investigating how different roles relate to PSM (Johnson, 2012), and Bozeman and Su's (2014) critique that PSM too often shares space with related concepts such as 'helping others', 'service motivation', and 'altruism'.

Liu et al. (2008), for example, found evidence that the generalizability of PSM observed in the Anglo-Saxon culture and context is limited when it comes to China. Consistent with these findings, Giauque et al. (2011) argue that in PSM research the cultural and institutional contexts also need to be considered. They call for a conceptualization of PSM taking into account the institutional characteristics of the individuals under study, by measuring and identifying national characteristics of services. I agree that is important to integrate national values and norms into PSM studies. However, I want to go one step further and argue that it is important also to include the institutional context at lower levels of analysis. Professions have historically been a source of public service values (Perry, 1997), and therefore I put forward the argument that it is important to shed light on the question of whether PSM is affected by the professional context, too.

Unlike quantitative efforts to improve the PSM measurement instrument, however, "only a few articles exist which focus on the validity of the construct from a non-statistical viewpoint, carefully exploring the concept's definition" (Ritz & Neumann 2012, p. 2). Loon et al. 2013, for example, using interview data, showed that differences in the organizational logic are reflected in employees' expressions of PSM. In another qualitative study on PSM, Kjeldsen (2012) demonstrated that occupation and the employment sector have different relationships with the separate PSM dimensions. Ritz (2011) used 21 partially structured interviews to improve the dimension 'attraction to policy making' within the PSM measurment scale.

From my discussion of different definitions of PSM I could conclude that what unifies all definitions is that PSM is associated with providing 'meaningful public service' or serving the community. For this reason, I argue that PSM can be described as a personal orientation or commitment towards the public interest. In other words, the public interest is

by definition an integral aspect of PSM. This line of reasoning is supported by Vandenabeele (2008) who describes PSM as "the motivation (of civil servants) to contribute to the public interest in a disinterested way" (p. 15) and the observation that the public interest is not only an integral aspect of PSM as an one overarching concept, but is integral also to the separate PSM dimensions. As discussed in Subsection 2.3.1, for example, the dimension 'attraction to public service' focusses on the degree to which participants are dedicated to public service and common good. The public interest and the common good are certainly not the same, but in the words of Simm (2011) "there is much that they have in common" (p. 557). The definition of the PSM dimension 'commitment to public values' directly refers to the public interest: it is a redefinition of Perry's original PSM dimension 'commitment to the public interest'.

Unfortunately – as discussed in detail in Section 2.1 – there is no strict definition of 'the public interest' (Bozeman, 2007). Rather, the public interest is a very elusive concept, which makes PSM a fuzzy concept as well. What does it mean to be public interest (or public service) oriented? And in relation to this, what is the specific effect of such an orientation on behaviour? Do public service motivated individuals promote the idea of security, or will they act in the interest of transparency? We can use Rainey's (2009) words, who – while referring to Bozeman's (2007) notion that public values also exist at the individual level – argues that "individuals may vary widely in their conceptions of PSM" (p. 73). It is precisely because of this lack of insight into the meaning of the PSM concept itself that still "little is known about the effect of PSM on actual behaviour" (Andersen & Serritzlew 2012, p. 19). Only if we know what the public interest is will the meaning and behavioural implications of PSM become clear. In other words, I argue that the fuzziness of the concept of PSM, especially in dilemma situations, is related to the fact that it incorporates another vague concept: that of the public interest.

The fuzziness of the concept of public interest means that even in highly public service motivated individuals behaviour is likely to vary, depending on the person's interpretation of what constitutes the public interest, especially in situations of conflicting values and demands. Consider, for example, a school teacher confronted with the choice between either giving extra attention to a small group of disadvantaged children or keeping up with the prescribed content of the curriculum. After all, time is not infinite. What will she decide? It is doubtful whether the mere fact of being highly public service motivated helps to explain which choices she will make. More understanding is needed of how this teacher interprets her role of serving the public interest when confronted with such a dilemma, in order for us to make realistic predictions concerning decision-making and, ultimately, behaviour.

Including the context in the analysis of the PSM-performance relationship (e.g., Bright, 2007; Leisink & Steijn, 2009; Wright & Pandey, 2008) can be an important step towards

explaining the inconsistent findings from previous studies. However, even if the context is included, a direct link between the two concepts is doubtful, because there are many situations in which the meaning of the 'public interest' - and hence the actions required to pursue it - is unclear due to its (possibly inconsistent) composition. Does being public service motivated imply specifically helping individual students with learning difficulties, or being effective and preparing the greatest number of 'average' students for final exams? Next to being aware of the context, it is even more important to include individual interpretations of the public interest in the PSM-performance analysis. Only then will we get to know the potential power of PSM and can more accurate predictions about the behavioural consequences of the construct be made.

How and why does PSM develop over time?

As summarized in Subsection 2.2.3, recently a growing number of scholars have started to use longitudinal panel research designs to disentangle the attraction-selection-attrition versus socialization mechanisms, and address the question of whether PSM is a stable trait or dynamic state (Brænder & Andersen, 2013; Georgellis & Tabvuma, 2010, Kjeldsen, 2014; Kjeldsen & Jacobsen, 2012; Kroll & Vogel, 2015; Ward, 2014, Wright & Christensen, 2010). The findings from these studies are mixed. I argue that in order to develop this debate further and make it possible to draw stronger conclusions regarding the nature of PSM, it is necessary to focus more closely on the mechanisms explaining possible changes in PSM. The longitudinal studies discussed above try to isolate the attraction-selection-attrition and socialization mechanisms, assuming that this makes it possible to attribute changes in the dependent variable – changes in PSM – to one of the two. However, most researchers do not succeed in fully isolating these two mechanisms. The study by Wright and Christensen (2010), for example, measures the PSM of current employees and analyses the relationship between PSM and employment sector at different moments in time. The findings, therefore, might be due to "adoption (post-employment rationalization or socialization) rather than attraction selection processes" (Wright & Christensen, 2010, p. 168). The same is true for the studies by Geogellis and Tabvuma (2010) and Ward (2014). To our knowledge, only Kjeldsen and Jacobsen (2012) and Kjeldsen (2014) go one step further. The authors administered questionnaire to a panel of physiotherapy students and social work students, both before and after their first made their job choice, "which provides a unique opportunity to test the 'pure' attraction and socialization effects associated with PSM and the employment sector" (Kjeldsen & Jacobsen, p. 2). Next to the problems related to successfully isolating attraction-selection-attrition and socialization mechanisms, current longitudinal studies provide

only limited explanations for the often found drop in PSM, which cannot be the result of any of these two mechanisms. Kjeldsen and Jacobsen (2012) found that PSM decreases; similarly, Kjeldsen (2014) found that the PSM dimension of compassion decreases. The authors of both studies argue that this decrease might be explained by the reality shock. However, they do not measure the reality shock directly but derive this conclusion from the fact that PSM drops after the individual has entered the labour market. A mechanism underlying the decrease of PSM which did get tested is the socio-psychological mechanism of dehumanization resulting from dramatic events: the deployment of soldiers to war (Brænder & Andesen, 2013).

The above shows that the research designs of traditional longitudinal studies have their limitations. They show *how* PSM changes over time, but cannot sufficiently explain *why.* As mentioned above, the 'reality shock' is often mentioned as one possible explanation for the drop in PSM over time. However, as far as I know, its effect on the development of PSM over time has not yet been empirically tested.

I argue that if we want to increase our understanding of *how* PSM develops over time (whether it stable or changeable) and beyond that, *why* it changes (what mechanism underlie the potentional changing process) we need to overcome the limitations of current longitudinal PSM research. Qualitative research is a particularly useful way to identify settings and contextual factors yet unkown to the researcher, find out how these relate to the phenomenon of interest, and describe complex processes (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Thus, I suggest interviews as a suitable research method in this context. If a small group of employees is studied intensively, the socialization and attraction-selection mechanims can be held constant and we can investigate not only *how* PSM develops over time but also whether the 'reality shock' can explain the *why*. This approach is in line with Kjeldsen and Jacobsen (2012), who explicitly invite scholars to conduct qualitative research because this makes it possible "to get closer to the mechanism underlying individual adaption processes" (p. 22).

2.3.4 Conclusion

This discussion of PSM literature indicates that in dilemma situations we cannot be sure what kind of behaviour to expect from somebody who is highly public service motivated. Despite the large number of 'quantitative' articles on PSM, we still have limited knowledge of particularly the meaning of PSM and how individuals actually put their PSM into practice if they are confronted with complex real-life situations that force them to make trade-offs. This can be explained by the fact that the integral and central aspect of PSM, i.e.,

the 'public interest', is also a very elusive concept. I argue that in order to fill in the gap in current PSM literature it is necessary to complement PSM with concepts and theories that are clearer about the meaning of the public interest. Only if we treat the public interest as an interpretation rather than an ideal, and if we gain insight into what it means to individuals to serve the public interest in a specific situation, can we say something about the actual effect of being public service motivated.

Next, it also becomes clear from this discussion that our knowledge of how and, in particular, why PSM develops over time is still very limited. The results of longitudinal studies on PSM are mixed. Most of them do not succeed in entirely eliminating socialization effects and, beyond that, they do not empirically investigate the mechanism explaining the drop in PSM that is frequently found. If we want to deepen our understanding of the nature and development of PSM over time, potential explanations for changes in PSM – such as the 'reality shock' – need to be empirically investigated.

2.4 Introducing professionalism into the study of decision-making in dilemma situations

Having introduced PSM as an explanatory variable in dilemma situations and pointed out knowledge gaps in current PSM research, I will now discuss the second variable explaining decision-making in dilemma situations that is central to this study: professionalism. This is followed by an overview of approaches to professionalism that are of interest to this study, including 'new' perspectives in which classical sociological approaches to professionalism are reinterpreted. Finally, remaining knowledge gaps are pointed out.

2.4.1 Professionalism as explanatory variable in dilemma situations

For many years sociologists have studied professionalism, which has resulted in one dominant view of the subject: *the sociology of professionalism*. Traditionally, professionalism is perceived as the collective control of specialized theoretical knowledge, applied to specific cases, based upon institutionalized procedures and ways of working, as well as socialized professional norms and values (e.g., Abbott, 1988; Elliott, 1972; Freidson, 2001). Professionals are granted autonomy in order to apply their (often tacit) knowledge to complex cases (Evetts, 2003; Freidson, 1994), whilst their professional behaviour is socialized, supervised, and sanctioned within and by the professional group. Professional associations are formed to regulate professional practice by transmitting practical skills, theoretical knowledge, and self-defined codes of conduct; this results in predominantly

uniform professional behaviour. From this perspective, medicine, engineering and law are clear and classic examples of 'true' professions (e.g., Krause, 1996). Practitioners have an academic degree, the entrance to their professional practice is strictly regulated, they have a lot of autonomy in their function based on the application of systematic theoretical knowledge, and professional norms and values are maintained and outlined by the professionals as a group (Flexner, 1992). It should be acknowledged that other scholars use the concept 'professionalism' in a less restrictive manner (e.g., Adler & Kwon 2013; Andersen & Pedersen, 2012; Moore, 1970). Andersen and Petersen (2012), for example, claim that professionalism needs to be seen as a comparative occupational variable. They argue that university lecturers have a higher level of professionalism than secondary school teachers, who in turn have a higher level of professionalism than primary school teachers. In this study the professionals under study – veterinary inspectors – are seen as 'true' or 'classic' professionals.

Supervisors often do not have the same professional background as the professionals they monitor. Being non-experts, they do not possess the theoretical knowledge that professionals have. Hence, unlike professional peers, they are often unable to evaluate whether or not members of a certain occupation did the most appropriate thing within a given situation (Roberts & Dietrich, 1999). This is one of the reasons why "it is impossible to analyse the work of any public employee from the time he (or she) steps into the office in the morning until he (or she) leaves at night without discovering that his (or her) act is a seamless web of discretion and action" (Gulick, 1933, p. 61). Because of the political desire to reduce escalating costs of the public sector, empower consumers, increase quality, reduce the risk of individual making wrong decisions and provide equal treatment for everybody, more business-like management techniques – such as rigorous performance measurement and output control – were introduced into the public sector from the late 1970s onwards. However, control mechanisms can never completely cover each and every case and circumstance, so that there will always be situations where professionals exercise discretion. As mentioned in Section 2.1, the inevitability of professional discretion is an important precondition of this study. If individuals had no option for discretion, rules and regulations would serve as clear guidelines for behaviour in situations where values and interests conflict. Individuals would simply follow the rules and there would be no need for trade-offs between the different interests and values that are omnipresent in the public sector.

In the sociology of professionalism, professionalism is viewed as a determinant of behaviour. Through professional socialization – for instance by shared educational backgrounds, professional trainings, membership of professional associations – professionals adopt certain values and develop a shared professional identity (Evetts, 2003, 2006). Because of this shared identity and the "urge to do a job creditably in the eye of one's professional peers" (Miller, 2000, p. 307), it is assumed that professionals develop similar work practices and procedures, shared ways of perceiving problems and their appropriate solutions, and common ways of dealing with customers and clients (Evetts, 2006). In other words, it is assumed that merely belonging to a certain occupation has behavioural consequences. This deterministic view on professionalism is summarized by Andersen (2009) who – referring to Andersen and Blegvad (2002) and Goodrick and Salanik (1996) – points out: "the sociology of professions expects that firm professional norms prescribe a given behaviour, the professional will act accordingly, regardless of other motives" (p.82). It is also related to March and Olsen's (1989) 'logic of appropriateness'. According to Suddaby, Gendron and Lam (2009), professionalism is a logic that is based on rationalized mythologies, value structures that are taken for granted as strong assumptions of appropriateness. Because of the limitations of a rational choice perspective in the context of dilemma situations (see earlier Subsection 2.3.2), professionalism is expected to be an interesting concept by which to learn more about why public service professionals make certain decisions in situations characterized by dilemmas.

Summing up: Because of the strong explanatory value of behaviour, the embeddedness within the 'logic of appropriateness', and the inevitability of professional discretion, I expect professionalism to be another interesting concept to be included into this study. I assume that professionalism – next to PSM – is valuable concept to be studied as it (potentially) helps to understand what drives professionals' decision-making in the context of dilemmas. In the following section, different sociological approaches to professionalism are discussed.

2.4.2 Overview of traditional and recent approaches to the sociology of professionalism

Within the classic sociology of professionalism there are two contrasting sociological interpretations, which differ as to the content of the shared professional identity: the functionalistic and the neo-Weberian approach. Next to these, there is also a more balanced approach. In more recent perspectives on the concept of professionalism, scholars argue that it cannot be detached from its context – especially the organizational context.

These approaches are: organizational professionalism, occupational professionalism and hybridized professionalism. In this section, I elaborate on each of these approaches to professionalism separately and pay attention to the interfaces between them.

Within the *functionalistic approach*, professionalism is viewed as a normative value system. Central here is the idea that professionals are driven by altruistic motives and aim to work in the best interest of society (Parsons, 1951; Goode, 1969; MacDonald, 1995). Scholars have argued that professionalism presents a bulwark against threats to stable democratic processes (Marshall, 1950) or a force against the threat from governmental and industrial bureaucracies (Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1933).

Proponents of the *neo-Weberian approach* (also called post-functionalistic approach) approach professionalism as an ideology of occupational powers. In line with this, DiMaggio and Powell (1983), following Larson (1977), interpret "professionalization as the collective struggle of members of an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work, to control the production of producers" (p. 49). The main argument is that distinct professions are collectively self-interested and eager to maintain a monopoly in the market for their own services (Johnson, 1972; Larson, 1977). Professionals collectively aim to increase their status and upward mobility within the social order, through controlling the license to practice and protecting their elite positions.

From the 1990s onwards, researchers began to consider the possibility that professional self-interest and public interest are not necessarily at opposite ends of a continuum, but that the pursuit of self-interest might be compatible with serving the public interest (Saks, 1995), thus creating a more balanced approach to professionalism resulting in the *re-evaluation or reappraisal of professionalism as a normative value system* (Evetts, 2006, p. 136). It has been argued, for example, that professions might need to close markets in order to guarantee specialized knowledge, and sufficient training and education, but once this has been achieved professionals could then concentrate more fully on the performance- and service-related aspects of their work (Evetts, 2006). Freidson (2001) points out that professionalism should be regarded as a unique form of occupational control (next to consumer control and managerial control), which he calls the 'third logic'. Similarly, Fournier (1999) emphasises that the appeal to the discursive resources of professionalism in new occupational domains may act as a "'disciplinary mechanism' that serves to profess 'appropriate' work identities and conducts" (p. 280). This re-evaluation approach, therefore, presents a more balanced assessment of professionalism as a normative value system. Professionalism is no longer seen as a pure altruistic motive to act in the state's best interest but as a form of decentralized occupational control which is important in civil society (Durkheim, 1992).

Unfortunately, this sociological approach to professionalism rather ignores the notion that professionalism cannot be detached from its context, even though "most professional activity now takes place in organizational settings' (Muzio & Kirkpatrick, 2011, p. 390) and 'organizational capacities" are called for, 'also inside professional domains' (Noordegraaf, 2011, p.1349). Seen in this light, the classic perspective on professionalism is rather one-dimensional. Changing circumstances mean that classic characteristics of professionalism, such as technical knowledge, autonomy, and professional norms and values (professional principles) are subjected to many pressures (e.g., Noordegraaf & Steijn, 2013). They are no longer self-evident and are therefore no longer sufficient for defining professionalism. In studying what professionalism means today, therefore, we also need to consider organizational and societal factors. They make it necessary to develop new perspectives on professionalism as classical characteristics of the sociology of professionalism are hollowed out. According to Noordegraaf, (2011, 2013) principles of new public management provide a threat to professional autonomy and more critical customers question the authority of professionals. Societal pressures (e.g., distributed information, demographic changes) lead to fragmented professional fields and enhance interdependencies, which implies that the legitimacy of professionals is (negatively) affected. In the following paragraphs, three different approaches to professionalism, including rather recent ones, are reviewed, namely: *occupational professionalism*, *organizational professionalism* and *hybridized professionalism*. These approaches present reactions to the external pressures that hollow out the classic characteristics of professionalism.

One reaction to safeguard professionalism in times of contextual change is to return to more 'purified' forms of professionalism. This implies a criticism of extending the notion of professionalism beyond the field of the 'true' professions. So-called 'new' professions, such as education, social work, or policing are disparaged because they lack substantive content and institutional control (Noordegraaf, 2007). Only those who directly render services to clients are viewed as professionals, not those who support these services (e.g., consultants, managers, auditors). Purified professionalism fits well into the research literature on *occupational professionalism* and shares some similarities with the reappraisal of professionalism as a normative value system. Professionalism as an 'occupational principle' (cf. Freidson, 1994), as well as an occupational value, can be interpreted as a distinctive way of organizing and controlling professional work and professionals that has genuine advantages for both the professionals themselves and their clients (Elliot, 1972; Evetts, 2012; Freidson, 1983). Compared to the reappraisal of professionalism as a normative value system, however, literature on occupational professionalism is clearer about the origin of occupational principles. Working conditions, professional objectives and standards are

assumed to be set by professionals themselves. This makes occupational professionalism a bottom-up approach. Next to this, the interrelatedness of professionalism and serving the state´s interest is less central to occupational professionalism than to the reappraisal of professionalism as a normative value system. The work of Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2000) may be categorized as fitting the occupational professionalism perspective. The authors argue that even though public service professionals acknowledge that they are government employees – because it is the state who pays their monthly paycheck – they emphasise that they primarily work for their clients and families. At a more practical level this means that, instead of working in the state's interest, professionals stretch rules in order to put the interest of the client first.

A second approach to professionalism in the light of modern knowledge societies is *organizational professionalism* (Clark & Newman, 1997; Larson, 1977). Organizational and commercial logics are used to promote and facilitate occupational change and to assure appropriate behaviours on the part of professionals. It is not professional values and principles, but organizational objectives that define client-practitioner relations and set achievement targets and performance indicators (Evetts, 2012). In other words, professionalism is depicted as a top-down strategy that can be used instrumentally by organizations to control professionals. Professional service firms become 'significant actors' as well as 'sites' of professional control and regulation (Suddaby et al., 2007). This perspective can be linked to debates on professional service firms (e.g., Greenwood et al., 2005; Von Nordenflycht, 2010), in which professional services are embedded within corporate organizational structures and principles. Large corporations increasingly emerge as primary loci of professionalization. Through organizational structures, strategies and reward systems they increasingly activate and secure professional values, objectives, and rewards connected with professionalization (see also e.g., Brivot, 2011).

Third, there is an increasing number of scholars who take a more integrative approach to professionalism (Adler & Known, 2013; Cooper & Robson, 2006; Faulconbridge & Muzio, 2008; Gleeson & Knights, 2006). Professional control is no longer seen as either a bottom-up agency by professionals, or a top-down strategy by managers. Instead, professionalism is seen as the co-product of both parties being involved. The distinction between managerialism versus professionalism, or the debate about occupational versus organizational professionalism becomes blurred. Faulconbridge and Muzio (2008), for example, focus on the interconnection between different mechanisms of organizational and occupational control through the concept of *occupational or organizational professionalism*. Others focus on *hybridized professionalism*. Reay and Hinings (2009) identify four strategies for managing conflicting work logics that make it possible for rivalry logics to coexist.

On the basis of this overview of professionalism literature, I argue that there are large differences between the six different approaches to professionalism as to the question of which behaviour can be expected from professionals. The two classic approaches – functionalist and post-functionalist – represent two extremes on a continuum. According to the former perspective, professionals are assumed to follow professional norms which are grounded in altruism and directed at society. However, proponents of the latter perspective argue that professional norms are a way to uphold professional privileges – from this perspective, the driving force is professional self-interest. The reappraisal of professionalism as a normative value system is a more balanced approach; it does not exclude the possibility that professional self-interest and the public interest are compatible. More recent approaches to professionalism have a different focus. They do not concentrate on the question of whether professionals are guided by altruistic or by self-interested motives, but rather argue that professionalism can no longer be studied without integrating the broader context. This has resulted in three approaches – occupational, organizational and hybridized professionalism – that each provide a different answer to the question of how professionalism is re-defined in times of increased external pressures. *Occupational professionalism* presents a purified type of professionalism in which professional norms and values – set by the professional associations themselves – are assumed to present guidelines of behaviour without engaging. Within *organizational professionalism*, large corporations are seen as the main loci of professionalism and professionalization. Organizational forces are expected to facilitate occupational change and assure appropriate behaviours of professionals. From the perspective of *hybridized professionalism*, professionalism is seen as a co-product of both organizational forces and professional norms and values. In the next section, I will elaborate on the claim that there are large differences between the six different approaches to professionalism regarding the question which behaviour can be expected from professionals, and discuss a persistent knowledge gap in current professionalism literature.

2.4.3 Persistent knowledge gap

This review of the sociology of professionalism literature shows that the concept of professionalism may work as a normative values system (functionalist approach), as an ideology of occupational power (neo-Weberian approach), or as a mechanism of professional control (re-appraisal functionalist approach). In more recent work on professionalism, the concept is defined by the way professionals cope with external pressure: relying on purified professional norms and values (occupational professionalism), adhering to organizational

forces (organizational professionalism), or combining professional and organizational values (hybridized professionalism). As a result, the theory of professionalism is vague as to which behaviour can be expected from professionals. Where do professionals place their loyalties? Do they go for quick solutions that benefit the occupation (neo-Weberian approach)? Do they base their actions on professional norms directed at society at large (functionalist approach and reappraisal of the functionalist approach)? Are organizational, or professional principles dominant (occupational or organizational professionalism)? Or do these principles co-exist (hybridized professionalism)? In short, the question whether professionals are loyal primarily to their clients, or to the organizational rules and regulations? Or do they find new ways that allow them to live up to both? To make matters even more complex, we need to consider whether the approaches can be strictly separated. Is it always clear where the loyalties lie? Or can professionals be equally loyal to more than one interest at the same time, which would imply that they experience conflicts since they cannot serve all 'masters' at the same time? The question then arises what this implies for professional behaviour in situations where the demands from different stakeholders clash and trade-offs have to be made.

Empirical research on these questions has been very limited. Most articles on the state of professionalism are of a theoretical nature (e.g., Adler & Kwon, 2013; Events, 2003, 2006; Fournier, 1999; Noordegraaf, 2007; 2011; 2013; Fournier, 1999; Freidson, 2001; Gleeson & Knight, 2006). A small number of scholars have contributed to this discussion empirically by applying qualitative research methods within exploratory research designs. Faulconbridge and Muzio (2008) and Reay and Hinings (2009) found support for the idea of co-existing logics – or hybridized professionalism – within an organizational field. In an exploratory document analysis of the training of British and Dutch medical doctors, Noordegraaf (2011) identified some new connections between professionalism and organizations at the level of organizational guidelines. Quantitative studies on professionalism in the discipline of public administration primarily focus on the effects of professionalism on various outcome variables such as performance (Andersen, 2009), career path (Teodoro, 2009), and administrative decisions and actions (Demir, 2011).

Besides this variety of theoretical presumptions about professionalism, research indicates that individuals with the same professional background still behave differently in practice. This provides a challenge to the fundamental assumption in the sociology of professionalism i.e., merely belonging to a certain occupation has behavioural consequences. For example, Bucher and Selling (1977) point out that not all psychiatrists have the same ideas about their field and about how one should act as a professional; nor do all of them share the same beliefs about the efficiency of competing treatments or therapeutic approaches. Selden,

Brewer, and Brudney (1999, p. 172) note that "popular stereotypes and scholarly depictions do not provide a clear understanding of how public administrators perceive their roles and responsibilities or how they use their considerable discretionary power". Similarly, Clouder (2003) shows that occupational therapy students perceive the profession of occupational therapy in different ways, which suggests that this occupation implies more than one ideal professional role. Gould and Harris (1996) found that, in spite of identifying with general traits such as "'caring people', social workers indicate that they are 'not tied to any particular image" (p. 229). In a qualitative study, Van Kleef, Schott & Steen (2015) found evidence that some veterinary inspectors are very strict in applying rules and regulations, whereas others are sensitive to the particular needs of the individuals – the owners of animals – being inspected. Using Q-methodology, De Graaf (2011) identified four different types of public top administrators (by-the-book professionals, society's neutral servants, personally grounded servants, and open and principled independents), depending on the way they weigh their loyalties to their different masters (elected official, colleagues, the public good, moral imperatives, the law, and the organization's clients). The author points out that these typologies matter because they have behavioural implications - "they indicate how administrators behave and make decisions" (De Graaf, 2011, p. 285). This is in line with, for example, research by Nias (1989) and Tickle (1999). These authors found that teachers' perceptions of their professional identity influence their judgements and behaviour. Overall, it seems that the behaviour of professionals is influenced by more than just one set of overreaching norms.

2.4.4 Conclusion

There are different theoretical perspectives on professionalism, and the personal interpretation that individuals bring to their professional role seems to matter as well. Research shows that the behaviour of professionals is influenced by more than just one overreaching occupational norm, as described in the sociology of professionalism. This implies that the uniformity and stability of professionalism (as described in the sociological perspective on professionalism) can be challenged. Mechanisms of professional socialization alone do not provide a sufficient explanation for variance in professional behaviour. What follows from this is that the predictive power of professionalism concerning behaviour is less strong than initially predicted proponents of the sociology of professionalism. Merely being a professional does not show how people interpret their professional role and, related to this, where their loyalties lie. Following a limited number of scholars (Demir, 2011; DeHart-Davis, Marlowe & Pandey, 2006; Moynihan & Pandey, 2007; Perry, 1997), I want to stress the need to approach professionalism at an individual level. Rather than

treating professionalism at an occupational level, these scholars refer to professionalism as a *professional identification* with a certain occupation through membership and active involvement in professional organization or associations. This individual approach allows for differences between individuals on the level of identification with the profession and in its behavioural implications. It explains the probability that people will act according to professional standards as dependent on the strength of their identification with the profession. However, this approach again ignores the fact that different professionals may view their professional roles differently and hence provides only a partial explanation for the fact that individuals with the same educational background may act differently in practice. I argue that to investigate the impact of professionalism on behaviour, especially in situations of conflicting values and demands, a different conceptualization of professionalism is needed: a conceptualization that goes beyond the idea of professional socialization implying that all professionals within a certain occupation develop a shared professional identity and act in accordance with it. This implies seeking an approach that enables us to integrate the different approaches of the sociology of professionalism by taking into account the different interpretations individuals bring to their professional role.

This review of the literature on professionalism and PSM has shown that both concepts can be used to partially explain behaviour. However, our critical discussion of the remaining knowledge gaps also shows that PSM and professionalism alone – as they are conceptualized in current literature – do not have sufficient explanatory value in the context of this study, i.e., in the context of dilemma situations. The following two questions, therefore, need to be addressed first:

- *How can the meaning and behavioural consequences of PSM be clarified?* (SRQ3)
- *How can the meaning and behavioural consequences of professionalism be clarified in the context of dilemma situations?* (SRQ4)

Another question that deserves closer attention in the context of this study relates to the relationship between PSM and professionalism. Andersen and Pedersen (2012), for example, ask the question: "does socialization within an occupational group […] increase public service motivation (PSM), or is altruistic motivation replaced by professional norms or even occupational self-interest?" (p. 46). This refers to the question of '*what is the relationship between PSM and professionalism*' (SRQ5). Do they fundamentally clash, or do they supplement each other? And, if the latter is true, could combining them be helpful to reduce the fuzziness of the PSM concept?

2.5 The interrelatedness of PSM and professionalism

In order to answer the questions about the interrelatedness of PSM and professionalism, I will here review relevant theoretical and empirical literature on the relationship between these two concepts and pay attention to the question of how professionalism is viewed by the different authors.

On the basis of the idea that professionals are focused on protecting their markets (post-functionalistic approach), Wilbern (1954) points out that the very nature of the public service in a constitutional democracy is incompatible with the self-interest aspects of professionalism. According to Wilbern, professionalism is part of the tendency of professionals to move professional loyalty to larger portions of the population, and insulation from political control with professionals' self-interest. Similarly, Van Wart (1998) predicts that through the use of exclusive rights professionals set their own standards, regulate the members of their occupational area, and insulate themselves from democratic control. Even more decisively, Pugh (1989) argues that "to ensure that public administrators uphold their traditional roles as guardians of the public interest, any and all attempts toward professional status ought to be sedulously avoided" (p. 5).

A clash between PSM and professionalism is also expected if professionalism is treated as occupational professionalism, i.e., if norms and values are perceived as being set by the professionals themselves. Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2000), for example, observed that public service professionals see themselves as agents for the clients rather than the state. They are working in the interest of individual clients, not as agents for public organizations charged with serving the public interest. Lipsky (1980) points out that public service professionals experience conflicts between their professional concern for the (individual) client on the one hand, and the general social role of the agency and the need of the organization to process work quickly on the other.

Finally, if professionalism is approached as a distinctive form of decentralized occupational control (reappraisal of professionalism as a normative value system) or from a functionalistic perspective, PSM and professionalism are expected to supplement one another. Pandey and Stazyk (2008) claim that professional organizations typically have ethical codes which promote the public interest. In the course of their education, professionals are expected to become socialized to "an ideology that asserts greater commitment to doing good work than to economic gain" (Freidson, 2001, p. 127). In line with this, Vinzant (1998) notes that "professional role motivation theory and public service motivation are not mutually exclusive [] [but have] considerable overlap" (p. 357). To my knowledge, there have been no studies combining PSM with the more recent approaches to professionalism: organized professionalism and hybridized professionalism.

Most of the studies discussed above are theoretical; some are empirical studies in which qualitative research designs were used. Next to this, there are a limited number of studies addressing the PSM-professionalism relationship via questionnaire data. Moynihan and Pandey (2007), for example, found a positive relationship between PSM and professional identification. In contrast, Perry (1997) concluded that professional identification has no positive overall effect on PSM. He finds that professionalism is negatively related to the PSM-dimension 'attraction to policy making', positively associated with 'commitment to the public interest' and 'self-sacrifice', and not related to 'compassion'. Andersen and Pedersen (2012), too, noticed an unclear relationship between professionalism – treated at an occupational level – and PSM. The authors emphasize that the degree of professionalism (ranging from low, such as health assistants, to high, such as physicians) shows varying relationships with the separate dimensions of PSM. These findings are supported in a qualitative study by Kjeldsen (2012), who found that the degree of professionalism has varying relationships with the separate PSM dimensions.

The above review of the literature on the interrelatedness of PSM and professionalism suggests that there is no clear answer to the question of how professionalism and PSM relate to one another. This conclusion is supported by Andersen (2009) who points out that "professionalism and PSM are clearly not the same, but they seem to be related in ways that have not yet been fully analysed" (p. 95). This observation is not surprising, since different authors have different views on professionalism. Some argue that a high degree of professionalism by definition implies commitment to an altruistic service ideal directed at safeguarding the public interest rather than personal gains, whereas others warn against the collective self-interest of individuals belonging to a professional group. Some view professionalism at the occupational level, while others study it at an individual level. Hence, the diverse theoretical arguments and empirical findings on the relationship between PSM and professionalism cannot be rigorously integrated, because this entails the risk of comparing apples with oranges. I argue that this problem can be solved by using a different conceptualisation of professionalism, a conceptualization that – as pointed out above – is clearer about the meaning of the concept by integrating the different perceptions of what it means to be a professional.

In order to answer SRQs 3, 4 and 5, I introduce identity theory into the study of professionalism and PSM. Identity theory is used to reduce the knowledge gaps in traditional PSM and professionalism approaches, and helps to clarify the interrelatedness of the two concepts. The theory offers a line of reasoning for understanding behaviour by focusing on the reciprocal relations between the self and society, and has been soundly confirmed in well-defined research within psychology and, particularly, sociology (Burke &

Stets, 2009; Stryker & Burke, 2000). The theory can provide insights into the way in which individuals attach personal meaning to the public interest and their professional role. After outlining the main aspects of identity theory in Section 2.6, I will combine it with PSM and professionalism in Section 2.7.

2.6 Introduction to identity theory

Central to identity theory is the idea - originating from structural symbolic interactionism - that society is a mosaic of relatively durable patterns of interactions and relationships embedded in an array of groups, institutions, and communities (Burke & Stets, 2009; Stryker & Burke, 2000). It is assumed that the self, which emerges out of the interaction with these complex social structures, provides the link between the environment and individual behaviour. In other words, identity theory offers a line of reasoning for individual behaviour, using the context and the self as explanatory variables.

The self is not a one-dimensional construct but consists of a collection of role identities, each of which is based on the individual's occupying a particular role in social intercourse (Stryker & Burke, 2000; Stets & Burke, 2000). Somebody may, for example, occupy the roles of friend, a family member, a professional, a member of a certain organization, and public servant all at the same time.

Hogg, Terry and White (1995), define role identity as "self-conceptions, self-referent cognitions, or self-definitions that people apply to themselves as a consequence of the structural role positions they occupy" (p. 256). Role identities are the interpretations that individuals bring to the roles they hold in society. Roles, in this context, can be seen as "the cultural expectations tied to social positions in the social structure that actors try to meet" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 39). The 'role' concept in identity theory shows strong similarities with 'social identity' as defined in self-categorization theory, which was built upon Tajfel's (1972) social identity theory. From this perspective, individuals "are perceived as, are reacted to, and act as embodiments of the relevant in-group prototype rather than as unique individuals" (Hogg et al., 1995, p. 261). They tend to classify others and themselves into social categories which serve as guidelines in ordering the social environment, and enable individuals to position themselves in complex social settings (Leisink & Steijn, 2008). This approach, however, cannot explain why professionals with the same occupational backgrounds – individuals who are members of one specific group – behave differently in practice. Also, within this theory there is no room for our assumption that individuals interpret the meaning of the public interest differently, which implies different behavioural consequences. Rather, from the perspective of social identity theory, being public service

motivated – or belonging to the social category of public service motivated individuals – is associated with one specific kind of behaviour.

The idea that roles (or social roles) can be interpreted in different ways is empirically supported by Gouldner's (1957) findings of several decades ago. Gouldner identified two types of organizational roles within academic communities: *cosmopolitans* (individuals who are committed to their professional skills and values) and *locals* (individuals who are loyal to their organizations). These broad types can be further refined into subtypes, depending on the degree of commitment to either organizational or professional values. Recent empirical support has come from Johnson (2012), who identified distinct roles among city planners.

What follows from the differentiation between role and role identity is that, by definition, behaviour is determined by both general guidelines or norms of behaviour integrated within a given role, and the interpretations individuals bring to these directives. This means that both social structures and personal agency have an impact on behaviour which explains why not all individuals holding a particular role automatically behave in the same way or in line with their social category (or role) at all times. The concept of role identity shows how the role of, for example, being a student and acting like one can be interpreted differently. If an individual interprets the role of student as 'academi', this person is likely to attend class regularly, take notes, and score high on exams. On the contrary, if a person has a student identity that stresses being 'social', this person can be expected to go to parties and spend a lot of time socializing with friends.

Because of the inherent multiplicity of role identities that constitute the self, the question arises how role identities are arranged within the self in order for the person in question to decide on a specific behaviour. According to identity theory, the various role identities within the self are organized in a hierarchical way: not all role identities held by an individual are equally important to the self. Role identities at the top of this hierarchy are called *salient identities*. Stets and Burke (2003) define a salient identity as an "identity that is likely to be played out (activated) frequently across different situations" (p. 135). Thus, in any situation a salient identity is more likely to have behavioural consequences than other identities. The identity theory concept of role identities and identity salience suggests stability in role identities and their salience across time and situations (Stryker & Burke, 2000). For some individuals, concerns for the family come before those for their work, while for others the occupational role identity might be the most dominant aspect of the self.

According to Stets and Burke (2003), *commitment* is an important determinant of identity salience. Commitment is referred to as "the degree to which persons' relationships to others in their networks depend on possessing a particular identity and role" (Stryker &

Burke, 2000, p. 286). Commitment is a two-dimensional construct (Stets & Burke, 2003). The "quantitative" dimension reflects the number of persons that one is tied to through a particular identity. The "qualitative" dimension refers to the strength of these particular ties. The greater the commitment (both qualitative and quantitative) to an identity, the higher the identity will be positioned in the salience hierarchy, and in turn the more likely the actor is to play out behaviour confirming that identity in a particular situation. This implies that the hierarchy of identity salience is unique to every individual.

There have been a number of empirical studies on the relationship between salient role identities and actions. McAdam and Paulsen (1993), for example, found that individuals' willingness to apply for recruitment to activism is related to the salience of relevant identities. Charng (1988) found that individuals with a very salient blood donor identity donate blood more often than individuals without such an identity.

2.7 New approaches to the study of public service motivation and professionalism

In the previous sections some gaps in traditional PSM and professionalism research were pointed out which need to be addressed first if we want to find an answer to the primary research question: *what is the combined impact of public service motivation and professionalism on public servant professional's decision-making in dilemma situations*? First, we need to know how the meaning and the behavioural consequences of PSM and professionalism can be clarified (SRQs 2 and 3). In the following I develop, by combining literature on PSM and professionalism with insights from identity theory, new approaches for studying the two concepts that are clearer about their meaning and consequences – approaches that overcome the limitations of traditional research. With regard to PSM I argue that PSM had better be viewed as a *role identity-dependent* rather than an abstract ideal. Concerning professionalism I argue that treating the concept as *professional role identity* helps to explain why professionals with the same professional background show varying behaviour in practice, and which behaviour can be expected from public service professionals. Third, the new approaches to PSM and professionalism are combined in order to learn more about the relationship between PSM and professionalism (SRQ 4). Finally, the concept of decision-making and the new approaches to PSM and professionalism are combined within one conceptual model that helps to increase our understanding of the role the two concepts may play in professional public servants' decision-making (PRQ).

For each secondary research question, one or two propositions/hypotheses are formulated that – expect for one – I have empirically investigated/tested, as described in the empirical part of this dissertation. As mentioned before, the term 'proposition' is used to indicate that qualitative methods were primarily used and 'hypotheses' if quantitative methods played a more important role to verify the propositions/hypotheses.

2.7.1 Approaching public service motivation as a role identity-dependent concept

Combining the concepts of PSM and role identity does not conflict with current research on PSM. Important scholars such as Perry and Vandenabeele (Perry & Vandenabeele, 2008; Vandenabeele, 2008) have earlier viewed PSM from an institutional perspective. Central to this approach is the idea that by means of mechanisms such as socialization, social identification, cultural preferences, and social learning, public institutional logics are transmitted and individuals "acquire a new social identity as member of the institution" (Perry & Vandenabeele, 2008, p. 60). Accordingly, PSM can also be referred to as 'public service identity' (Perry & Vandenabeele, 2008; Vandenabeele, 2007, Vandenabeele, 2008). This approach to PSM shows strong similarities with the 'role' concept as described in social identity theory, and assumes that the behaviour of public service motivated individuals is guided by public institutional logics (public values, norms, rules, public interest) imparted by institutions. As a consequence of this institutional perspective, individuals scoring high on PSM are expected to show similar behaviour in practice.

The problem with viewing PSM as a social identity, or role, is that the meaning of the concept itself and its behavioural consequences remain fuzzy. According to identity theory, behaviour is influenced by both some general guidelines or roles and the interpretations individuals bring to them. This implies that if we want to clarify the meaning and behavioural consequences of PSM we should not only consider the general expectations related to serving the public interest, but also be aware of how individuals interpret their tasks of serving the public interest from the different roles they occupy in society.

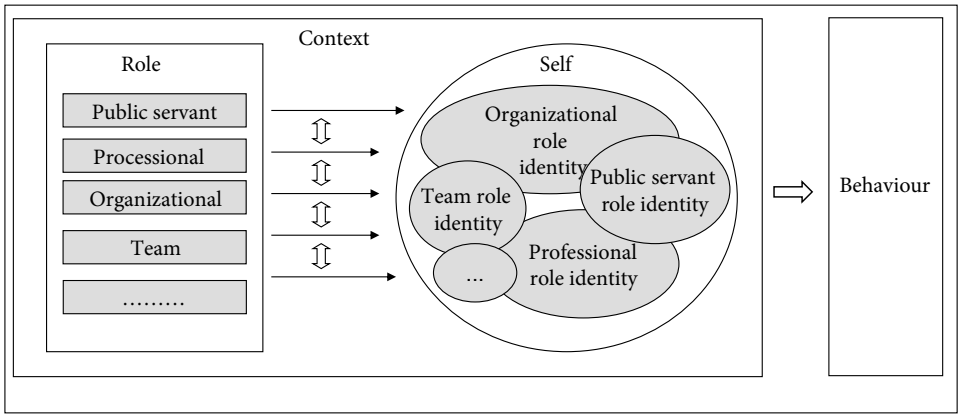
Living in a complex society, especially working in the public sector, implies holding many different roles and being confronted with even more expectations related to serving the public interest. Moreover, we need to consider the fact that in some circumstances different roles can be conflicting. Behaviour expected in one role may clash with expectations associated with other roles (Piliavin et al., 2002). Interestingly, we can even trace this line of reasoning regarding role identities, conflicting roles, and different expectations as to what constitutes the public interest, back as far as Max Weber's (1989) discussion of 'personae',

'life order', and 'value spheres'. According to Weber, different personalities are formed to fit the different life spheres in which an individual is engaged, e.g., family, business, or official relations. He points to the discrete ethical domains these different life spheres are linked to. Rather than seeing one unified moral personality and one universal ethic, Weber claims there is a plurality of 'value sphere' potentially in conflict with each other. (For a more extensive analysis of Weber's discussion on 'persona', 'life orders', and 'value spheres', see du Gay (2000)).

In organizational stress research, such situations are described as 'role conflicts' (Tummers, Vanmeeren, Stijn & Bekkers, 2012). Piliavin et al. (2002) consider the case of reporting health care errors from the viewpoint of a nurse. The expectations associated with the occupational role imply that "reporting errors" is essential, as this is closely related to a core value of nursing, namely integrity. As a team member, however, a nurse is unlikely to be expected to report misconduct: doing so will destroy relationships with direct colleagues and cast a damaging light on the team. Tummers et al. (2012) identify three role conflicts that mental health care professionals experience when implementing policies: policy-client, policy-professional, and organizational-professional conflicts. For example, a policy-professional role conflict occurs when professionals perceive that the behaviour demanded by the policy (such as following strict rules) is incompatible with the values and norms set by the profession. This raises the question of what happens in the case of a role conflict. Which expectations will be acted on, and which ignored?

The idea of a hierarchy of identity salience offers a line of reasoning by which we may explain how role conflicts are solved internally, and hence what behaviour can be expected. The relative levels of an individual's commitment to different role identities determine which role identity is positioned highest in the identity hierarchy (for a schematic overview of the self, see Figure 1), and consequently what meaning is given to being public service motivated. For example, if public service motivated individuals have a great number of connections with people that are valuable to them through the team identity, we may expect that their commitment to the team identity will be stronger than the commitment to other role identities. Consequently, it is the team identity that becomes salient, and behaviour will be guided primarily by the person's interpretation of how to serve the public interest as a team member.

Figure 1 Schematic representation of the self with a salient organizational role identity



This theoretical discussion about combining PSM with insights from identity theory and approaching it as a role identity-dependent concept can be summarized in the following propositions:

> P2: *The meaning of public service motivation, and its behavioural implications, depend on the interpretations individuals bring to the different roles they occupy in society.*

> P3: *The effect of public service motivation on behaviour is influenced by the hierarchy of the role identities within the self.*

2.7.2 Approaching professionalism as professional role identity

I suggest combining professionalism with identity theory, because this can help to overcome the limitations of the dominant view on professionalism: the sociology of professionalism. From this traditional perspective, professionalism is here seen as a shared professional identity resulting from socialization mechanisms (Evetts, 2003, 2006). However, the problem with this perspective is that it cannot explain the variations in professionals' behaviour and differences in their views on their professional role (e.g., De Graaf, 2011). As explicitly described in identity theory, role identities by definition include both the general guidelines of what it means to occupy a certain role and the personal interpretations that individuals bring to their role. Hence, professional role identities may vary as individuals interpret their role in different ways. Professionals all have their own frames of reference which is influenced not only by professional socialization, but also by, for example, their personal and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, for this type of research I suggest approaching professionalism as *professional role identity*. Only if we take into account how

individuals interpret their professional role and where their loyalties lie can predictions about behavioural consequences of professionalism be made, especially in the situations of conflicting values and interests that I study.

This approach is not new. The idea that roles (or social roles) can be interpreted in different ways is empirically supported by Gouldner's (1957) findings of several decades ago. Gouldner saw two types of organizational roles within academic communities: cosmopolitans (individuals who are committed to their professional skills and values) and locals (individuals who are loyal to their organizations). These broad types can be further refined into subtypes, depending on the degree of commitment to either organizational or professional values. More recently, Chreim, Williams and Hinings (2007) – referring to Ibarra (1999) and Pratt and Dutton (2000) – defined professional identity as "an individual's self-definition as a member of a profession" (p. 1517). The authors stress that the way professionals view their professional role is crucial, because it is central to how they act in work situations. However, research at the individual level on professional role identity construction has been limited. This kind of research is generally done from a sociological perspective and tends to "ignore the individual dynamics associated with professional role identity reconstruction" (Chreim et al., 2007, p. 1517). In order to illustrate the concept of professional role identity I again refer to the case of the primary school teacher. The way she thinks of her work is the result of professional socialization. During training, she internalizes certain professional norms and values. However, there are other forces likely to influence the way she perceives her work. The fact whether she is a mother or not, the school where she is employed, her years of employment, and political and religious convictions, for example, can also play a role. This leads to our next proposition:

> P4: *Individuals holding the same profession differ regarding the way they interpret their professional role: they have different professional role identities.*

These professional role interpretations are likely to have clearer behavioural consequences than the broad, sociological concept of 'professionalism'. This assumption can also be illustrated with the example of the primary school teacher. As time is not infinite, she will frequently be confronted with the choice between either giving extra attention to a small group of disadvantaged children, or keeping up with the prescribed content of the curriculum. Teachers who primarily view their professional role as helping the disadvantaged will interrupt the class to pay attention to the children lagging behind. In contrast, teachers who think that their main task is to prepare as many children as possible for secondary school will stick to the official schedule. By researching how individuals give meaning to

their professional role, we can learn more about how professionals interpret their role and which decision-making behaviour we may expect. This leads to the first hypothesis:

> H1: *Decision-making in dilemma situations is influenced by professional role identity, i.e., the way individuals interpret their professional role.*

2.7.3 The relationship between public service motivation and professionalism, and the combined effect on decision-making in dilemma situations

In the previous sections it has been pointed out that we cannot be sure what kind of behaviour can be expected simply from knowing that somebody scores high on PSM, because the integrated and central aspect of public service motivation, namely the 'public interest', is a very elusive concept. I have proposed that the meaning of public service motivation and its behavioural implications depend on the interpretations individuals bring to the different roles they occupy in society (P2). Next to this, I have suggested that in this context the idea of a hierarchy of identity salience is useful, because it may explain how conflicting interpretations of the concept of public interest (which are tied to the different roles individuals occupy in society) are solved internally. Depending on whether an individual has a dominant professional, organizational or team role identity the meaning of 'public interest' is likely to differ (P3).

However, our discussion of the professional role identity has told us that individuals not only have varying roles, but also differ regarding the way they perceive the same (in the school teacher example) professional role, which results in the proposition that individuals differ regarding the way they interpret their professional roles: they have different professional role identities (P4). This implies that the meaning attached to what constitutes the public interest – viewed as an integral element of PSM – depends not only on the interpretations individuals bring to the different roles they occupy in society, but also on the way they interpret specific roles. Put differently, the meaning of the public interest may vary both *between* and *within* roles.

Because this study aims to increase our understanding of the relationship between PSM and professionalism (SRQ5) and the role these two concepts together play in public professional servants' decision-making in dilemma situations (PRQ), it seems obvious to combine PSM with professional role identity – not with other role identities – in order to demonstrate how this can help to further clarify the meaning and behavioural consequences of PSM.

Consider the case of physicians. Some physicians might focus on providing cost-efficient treatments, because they think in terms of the economic robustness of the health care system when considering the 'public interest' of their role as of physician. Depending on the degree of PSM, the physician is more or less likely to make decisions that are consistent with these economic considerations. On the other hand, other public service motivated physicians would always stand up for public health (e.g., providing precautions against common diseases), regardless of cost and efficiency considerations, because this is exactly their perception of what it means to work for the public interest.

Another example is the case of police officers. Some officers might argue that considering the personal circumstances of persons involved in a crime is crucial, as they view focusing on the 'really bad guys' and fighting 'real crime' as important aspects of serving the public interest. Others might argue that being a strict enforcer of rules and regulations is an important aspect of their role as a police officer, because they interpret their task of working for the public interest in terms of providing reliable judgments and actions the society at large. Now consider the situation that an officer catches a woman driving too fast and without a seatbelt on her way to the hospital because her child has been seriously scalded with boiling water. Depending on the extent to which the officer is public service motivated, and the officer's interpretation of what it means to serve the public interest, the officer will either let the woman pass quickly or will make her wait until all details have been noted down.

On the basis of these examples, I assume that by investigating what professional practices and values are considered by professionals to be important aspects of their work, we can learn what it means to them to serve the public interest as a professional in a dilemma situation. This leads to the following proposition:

> P5: *Professional role identity provides meaning to being public service motivated and is reflected in decision-making in dilemma situations.*

On the basis of our theoretical discussion and the examples, I conclude that identity theory can help to increase our understanding of the roles of PSM and professionalism in dilemma situations. By approaching professionalism as professional role identity, and linking PSM with role identities in general and with professionals role identity in particular, I have developed new approaches to study PSM and professionalism that might be clearer about the meaning and behavioural consequences of the two concepts in question. Differences in the aspects individuals find important in their work help to understand why equally highly public service motivated individuals make different choices in the face of dilemmas. Put differently, professional role identity gives meaning to PSM. The remaining question then is what effect the level or strength of PSM exactly has on decision-making, and ultimately on

behaviour in dilemma situations. How is the level of PSM reflected the behaviour of public servants? Does an individual who scores low on PSM make different decisions in dilemma situations than somebody who is highly public service motivated? I expect no direct effect of the strength of PSM on decision-making because of the fuzziness of the concept. Rather I expect that even though two individuals have the same PSM score, they may make different choices in the face of dilemmas because of the role identity dependency of the concept of PSM. However, I expect that a high level of PSM will drive individuals to decisions that are consistent with their interpretation of what it means to serve the public interest in their specific role. Individuals who score low on PSM, in contrast, will more easily adhere to a pragmatic solution that might involve sacrificing their personal interpretation of the public interest. Put differently, I expect highly public service motivated individuals to behave more in accordance with their interpretation of what it means to serve the public interest in their specific role than individuals who score low on PSM. Therefore, I argue that the strength of PSM influences the relationship between role identity and decision-making in dilemma situations.

As this study aims to increase our understanding of the role PSM and professionalism together play in public professional servants' decision-making in dilemma situations (PRQ), it is on obvious thought to combine PSM with professionalism – seen from a new perspective, as in the case of professional role identity – in order to investigate exactly what influence the level of PSM has on decision-making. The leads us to the second hypothesis:

> H2: *Public service motivation moderates the relationship between professional role identity and decision-making in dilemma situations.*

Critical readers might argue that P5 and H1 are in conflict with each other, because in P5 professional role identity influences PSM, and in H2 PSM influences the effect of professional role identity on decision-making. Therefore, I stress that P5 is about the *meaning* of PSM, while H1 is about the strength of PSM. In other words, professional role identity provides meaning to PSM and the *strength* of PSM influences the impact of professional role identity on decision-making.

2.8 Summary of the theory and outline of the conceptual model

In the previous sections the core concepts of this study have been discussed: 1) key characteristics of the public sector, 2) decision-making, 3) PSM, and 4) professionalism. I have pointed out gaps in current literature, and provided theoretical answers to the five secondary research questions raised in the Introduction. These questions need to be addressed first if we want to increase our understanding of the role that PSM and

professionalism together play in public service professionals' decision-making in dilemma situations. In this final section of the theory chapter I summarize the most important theoretical insights and propose a conceptual model (Figure 2) to be tested by quantitative questionnaire data. This section is concluded with a table (Table 1) listing the primary and secondary research questions, with the sections from the empirical part of this book where the answers may be found.

Individuals working in the public sector are frequently confronted with the need to make decisions in the face of dilemmas. In this study I set out to increase our understanding of what determines the behaviour of public service professionals in dilemma situations, so that it is important to specify what the dilemma situations of public service professionals are (SRQ1) and what kind of decisions they make in these situations (SRQ2). I have discussed three key characteristics of the public sector, which (partly) explain why public service professionals are frequently confronted with dilemmas, and put forward the proposition: Public service professionals experience dilemmas in situations where equally important values clash, various stakeholders' demands are in conflict, or 'the public interest' is the guideline of behaviour (P1). Next to this, I have introduced coping behaviour as a useful typology to operationalize decision-making. Because SRQ 2 is addressed in an exploratory way, I have not put forward any proposition here; rather, the empirical results are linked to the typology of decision-making afterwards. In Section 5.1 I empirically identify real-life dilemma situations using interview data, and link them to the key characteristics of the public sector. In Subsection 7.1.4 I demonstrate that respondents experience these situations as stressful. Section 5.2 I report on my empirical investigation of the kinds of decisions veterinary inspectors make in dilemma situations, and shows how they relate to the research on coping behaviour. The results of these analyses have then formed the basis for the development of a measurement instrument that captures public service professionals' decision-making in frequently encountered real-life dilemma situations; this is discussed in Subsection 7.1.3.

In the public management literature, two concepts are frequently discussed as having exploratory value regarding behaviour: PSM (e.g., Frank & Lewis, 2004; Leisink & Steijn, 2009; Naff & Crum, 1999; Vandenabeele et al., 2006) and professionalism (e.g., Andersen & Blegvad, 2002; Evetts, 2003, 2006; Goodrick & Salanik, 1996). This dissertation, therefore, aims to shed light on the role these two concepts play in public service professionals' decision-making in dilemma situations. However, the critical literature reviews of PSM and professionalism research have shown that there are important knowledge gaps in current literature.

Regarding PSM, the question *how can the meaning and behavioural consequences of*

PSM be clarified in the context of dilemma situations? has been raised (SRQ3), because if we use traditional approaches to PSM we cannot be sure what the meaning of PSM is and what kind of behaviour in dilemma situations we can expect from somebody who is highly public service motivated. I have argued that the reason for this relates to the fact that 'the public interest', which is an integrated aspect of PSM, is a fuzzy concept (Bozemann, 2007). Therefore, if we want to increase our understanding of its meaning and behavioural consequences it is necessary to complement PSM with concepts that are clearer about the meaning of the public interest. In Section 5.3 the fuzziness of PSM is empirically shown via interview data. I suggest introducing identity theory into the study of PSM, because this theory provides an answer to the question (SRQ3) raised above. Identity theory provides insights into the way in which individuals attach meaning to 'the public interest' from their specific roles in society. Because of this, I suggest viewing PSM as a role identity-dependent concept rather than an ideal, and put forward the propositions that *the meaning of public service motivation and its behavioural implication depend on the interpretations individuals bring to the different roles they occupy in society* (P2), and that *the effect of public service motivation on behaviour is influenced by the hierarchy of the role identities within the self* (P3). In Sections 5.5 and 7.3, research proposition P2 is subjected to quantitative and qualitative research methods, respectively. The investigation focuses especially on the question if the meaning of the public interest varies across different roles. P3 was not empirically investigated in this research project because the focus of this study is on how people interpret their professional role, not on how they see the other roles they also hold in society and how this is related to the meaning of the public interest. In Subsection 5.3.1 another knowledge gap in current PSM research, revealed in the literature review, is empirically addressed: the question of *how and why PSM develops over time.* Longitudinal PSM research primarily focuses on isolating attraction-selection-attrition and socialization mechanisms in order to find an explanation for the higher level of PSM often found in public as compared to private organizations. Because neither mechanism can explain the decrease in PSM often found, I here empirically investigate the effect of the 'reality shock' on the development of PSM. Reality shock is a phenomenon often used by PSM scholars to provide an explanation for a drop in PSM (Brænder & Andersen, 2013; Kjeldsen, 2014; Kjeldsen & Jacobsen, 2012).

Regarding professionalism I have formulated the question *how can the meaning and behavioural consequences of professionalism be clarified in the context of dilemma situations?* (SRQ4). The review of the literature on sociology of professionalism suggests that the concept of professionalism may work in different ways: as a normative values system, an ideology of occupational power, a mechanism of professional control, or a coping mechanism for external pressures. This means that we cannot know what kind of behaviour to expect from

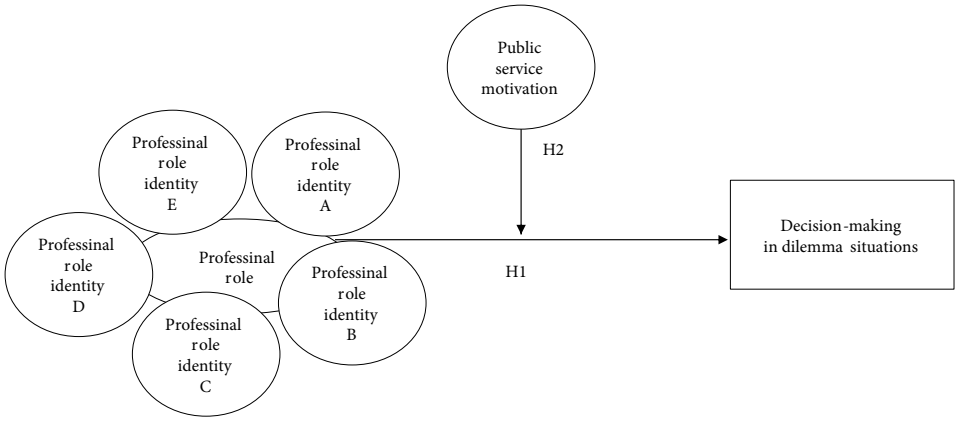
professionals by simply using the concept of professionalism. Next to this, I have reviewed relevant literature viewing professionalism at the individual level (e.g., De Graaf, 2011). What becomes clear from these writings is that professionals vary with regard to the way they interpret their professional role. This contradicts the central idea of the sociology of professionalism, i.e., that professionals develop similar work practices and procedures, shared ways of perceiving problems and their appropriate solutions, and common ways of dealing with customers and clients (Evetts, 2006). On the basis of insights from identity theory I suggest approaching *professionalism as professional role identity,* i.e., the perception individuals bring to their professional role. In order to empirically investigate whether this new conceptualization can be used to clarify the meaning and behavioural consequences of PSM, I put forward the proposition that *individuals holding the same profession differ regarding the way they interpret their professional role: they have different professional role identities* (P4), and the hypothesis that d*ecision-making in dilemma situations is influenced by professional role identity, i.e., the way individuals interpret their professional role* (H1). In Sections 5.4 and 5.5, the interview data on P4 are discussed. On the basis of the results of these analyses, a measurement instrument was developed that captures different interpretations of the professional role. Section 7.2 and 7.4 examine if the results of the qualitative analysis can be verified using quantitative data. Section 7.4 also discusses H1.

After theoretical answers to secondary research questions 1 to 4 have been provided, the remaining secondary research question is: *what is the relationship between PSM and professionalism?* (SRQ5). I have argued that by linking PSM with professionalism – viewed as professional role identity – the meaning and behavioural consequences of PSM can be further clarified. Differences in the aspects individuals find important in their work help to understand why individuals scoring equally high on PSM make different choices in the face of dilemmas. Put differently, professional role identity gives direction to the meaning of PSM, or *professional role identity provides meaning to being public service motivated and is reflected in decision-making in dilemma situations (P5)*. The use of qualitative data to investigate P5 is described in Section 5.5. Section 7.2 examines if the qualitative results can be verified using quantitative data. This analysis is not only relevant to gain a better understand of the relationship between PSM and professionalism, but also helps to verify the argument that PSM should be approached as a role identity-dependent construct rather than an ideal; it thus helps us to further answer secondary research question 3.

Finally, I have argued that the level of PSM strengthens the relationship between professional role identities and decision-making in dilemma situations. Highly public service motivated individuals make decisions that are more consistent with their interpretation of what it means to serve the public interest than do individuals scoring low on PSM. Individuals scoring low on PSM are expected to more easily adhere to a pragmatic

solution that might involve sacrificing one's personal interpretation of the public interest. This leads to the hypothesis that *PSM moderates the relationship between professional role identity and decision-making* (H2). The testing of this hypothesis (represented in Figure 2), which provides an answer to the primary research question by means of questionnaire data, is described in Section 7.6.

Figure 2 Schematic representation of the conceptual model



Below a table is provided that lists the research questions, with the sections and subsections from the empirical part of this dissertation where the answers can be found.

Table 1 Research questions, related hypotheses/propositions, and section(s) in the empirical part of this book

	Secondary research questions	**Hypothesis/ Proposition**	**Section in empirical part**
1	What are the dilemma situations that public service professionals are frequently confronted with?	P1	5.1 7.1.5
2	What kind of decisions do public service professionals make in dilemma situations?		5.2 7.1.3
3	How can the meaning and behavioural consequences of PSM be clarified in dilemma situations?	P5 P2	5.5 7.3
4	How can the meaning and behavioural consequences of professionalism be clarified in dilemma situations?	P4 H1	5.4/5.5 7.2/7.4
5	What is the relationship between PSM and professionalism?	P5	5.5 7.2
	Primary research question		
	What is the combined impact of PSM and professionalism on public service professionals' decision-making in dilemma situations?	H2	7.6