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

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Chapter 8

FINAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS[1]

1 Parts of this chapter are based on Schott, C., Kleef van, D. D. and T. Steen (2014). What does it mean and imply to be public service motivated? *The American Review of Public Administration*. Doi: 10.1177/0275074014533589 and Schott, C. Van Kleef., D. D., & Noordegraaf, M. (2015) Confused professionals? Capacity to cope with pressures on professional work, *Public Management Review*. DOI: 10.1080/14719037.2015.1016094.

In this study I have attempted to improve our understanding of what drives public professionals' decision-making in real-life dilemma situations. In particular, I aimed to shed light on the question of what effect public service motivation (PSM) and professionalism together have on public service professionals' decision-making in dilemma situations. At the same time, there are still gaps in our knowledge about PSM and professionalism. When it comes to the context of dilemma situations, our knowledge about what it really means and implies to be a professional and to be public service motivated is limited. Therefore, another important aim of this study has been to add to the literature on PSM and professionalism, and to develop new approaches to the study of these topics that can help to clarify the meaning and behavioural consequences of the two concepts in dilemma situations. To this end, I combined PSM and professionalism with insights from a different discipline: identity theory. I formulated a set of hypotheses/propositions and tested/investigated them. The professionals studied were veterinary inspectors working for the Dutch Food and Consumer Safety Authority ('*Nederlandse Voedsel- en Warenautoriteit*' NVWA), responsible for public health, animal health and animal welfare. They were considered ideal subjects for my research because the different aspects of their work frequently raise dilemmas: they interact with different types of inspectees who have strong and diverging economic interests, which they used to consider in their (prior) work as praticing veterinarians (e.g., farmers, owners of abattoirs, truck drivers). At the same time, it is their primary task to enforce European law, national law, and rules set by the organization directed at safeguarding public health, animal health and animal welfare.

In this final chapter I offer some concluding comments on this study. I begin with a synthesis and discussion of the results of the qualitative and quantitative analyses in order to provide more complete answers to the research questions formulated in Chapter 1. Second, I summarize the theoretical contributions of this dissertation in relation to existing literature. Third, on the basis of the findings of this study some practical implications for Human Resources managers are pointed out. Finally, I will acknowledge some limitations of these study and suggest possible directions for future research.

8.1 Qualitative and quantitative results combined

In this section I will revisit the hypotheses and propositions advanced in Chapter 2 in the light of the combined qualitative and quantitative research findings presented in Chapters 5 and 7. This makes it possible to evaluate whether the initial, qualitative findings of this study may be generalized to the entire population of veterinary inspectors, and to provide stronger answers to the research questions. In the following six subsections each of the

five secondary research questions and the primary research question will be addressed separately. I will present the hypotheses and/or propositions, and discuss the combined qualitative and quantitative research findings that resulted from testing/investigating them.

8.1.1 Dilemma situations experienced by veterinary inspectors

In order to answer the secondary research question *what are the dilemma situations public service professionals are frequently confronted with* (SRQ1)? I investigated the proposition, derived from my theoretical study, that *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* (P1). In the qualitative part of the empirical study, I investigated dilemma situations directly by asking veterinary inspectors to describe situations in which they experienced a dilemma. In the quantitative part of the empirical study – while assuming that work-related tension and dilemmas are inseparable –respondents were asked to indicate the level of tension they experienced in their work and note down one situation in which tensions were high. Overall, proposition P1 was supported by the qualitative data (5.1). This enabled me to use the qualitative findings as the basis for the dilemma scenarios included in the questionnaire. The qualitative findings could for the most part be verified by the quantitative data on work-related tension (7.1.4), which suggests that the initial qualitative findings may be generalized.

Out of 38 interviewees, 29 (74% of the sample) indicated that they experienced dilemmas, and 168 out of 258 questionnaire respondents (65% of the sample) came up with a concrete situation in which work-related tensions were high. These findings suggest once again that working in the public sector entails a regular need to make decisions in the face of dilemmas (e.g., De Graaf, Huberts & Smulders, 2014; O'Kelly & Dubnick, 2006; Olson, Humphrey & Guthrie, 2001; Provan & Milward, 2001). Situations in which different interests were in conflict – for instance, the objectives set by the NVWA and the economic interests of farmers and/or owners of abattoirs – frequently came up in the qualitative and quantitative results. Situations in which the public interest was the guideline of behaviour were not directly mentioned as dilemma situations or as situations causing work-related tensions. However, interviewees did mention dilemma situations in which animal welfare – an aspect of the public interest – was the guideline of behaviour. They indicated that safeguarding animal welfare is a vague and subjective objective, and that they experienced dilemmas in situations in which they were expected to safeguard this objective. This finding is also reflected in the quantitative data obtained in this study. Some respondents mentioned decisions related to animal welfare as causing work-related

tensions. Together, the qualitative and quantitative findings are in line with an argument presented by Tannenbaum (1991) that animal welfare is not a specific state of an animal that can objectively be described by veterinarians. My expectation that situations in which values of equal importance clash can also be considered dilemma situations was confirmed only in the qualitative data. Here, interviewees indicated that they experienced a dilemma if they had to prioritize either animal welfare or public health.

There are also a large number of additional situations in which individuals indicated that they experienced work-related tensions (n=133; 80% of the work-related tension situations) – tensions, however, which are not particularly characteristic of the public sector – such as situations in which work instructions were experienced as unworkable in practice. Work-related tensions were also experienced in situations involving aggression, in which time pressure was high, and organizational support and uniform decision-making was lacking. These findings are in accordance with results from psychological stress research. According to the Job Demand-Control-Support model (Johnson & Hall, 1988), job demands, job control, and worksite social integration are crucial aspects of employees' well-being. Two further interesting findings were that: 1) the variable 'work-related tensions' was bimodally distributed[2] and 2) there were significant differences in the levels of tensions experienced between men versus women, practitioners versus 'regular' veterinary inspectors, and between respondents who had additional employment versus respondents who did not. In each comparison, the former group experienced a lower level of work-related tensions than the latter. (You may recall that most respondents who have additional employment were practitioners. However, there were eight respondents who were 'regular' veterinary inspectors but also worked in private practice). One explanation for this finding might be that women, 'regular' veterinary inspectors, and respondents without additional employment are more committed to the organization they work for and for this reason also experience more work-related tensions. Scandura and Lankau (1997), for example, point out that women may be more committed to their work than men if they perceive the organization's policies to be in line with their family roles. Working hours at the NVWA are more predictable and fewer in number, especially if compared to working hours in private practices, where night shifts are common. As mentioned earlier, practitioners (and employees without additional employment, who often are practitioners) worked fewer hours for the NVWA and did not always participate in team meetings. It may be argued that these factors negatively affect organizational commitment. Practitioners may feel excluded, and the lower number of contact hours with the organization and colleagues might prevent the

2 One group of employees experienced a low level of stress, another group a high level of stress, whereas only few respondents indicated that they experienced a medium level of stress.

development of personal ties. A high level of organizational commitment, in turn, might be associated with a stronger perception of work-related tensions. Irving and Coleman (2003) suggest that highly committed individuals are more exposed to work-related problems: they are less likely to remove themselves from these problems because of their desire to stick with the organization in difficult times.

8.1.2 Decisions made by veterinary inspectors in dilemma situations

Secondary research question 2, *what kind of decisions do public service professionals make in dilemma situations?* was addressed in an exploratory way. This means that no specific expectations or propositions about this point were put forward in the theory chapter. Rather, I briefly introduced literature on coping strategies, analysed the interview data in an exploratory way, and afterwards linked the results to literature on coping strategies. The interview data provide evidence that veterinary inspectors make varying decisions in dilemma situations, primarily in the categories 'biasing' and 'building firewalls', and sometimes 'hybridization' (5.2). 'Biasing' in this context, means that some values or interests are no longer recognized as important. 'Building firewalls' means shifting the conflict to elsewhere in the system, which makes 'building firewalls' an avoidance-related coping strategy. In a few cases, veterinary inspectors made decisions that could be related to the coping strategy 'hybridization'. They came up with new ways of doing their work that enabled them to combine two conflicting values at the same time.

The results of the qualitative analysis were used to formulate quantitative response categories for three 'vignettes' (hypothetical dilemma situations), which I developed on the basis of the answers to secondary research question 1. The quantitative results for the vignettes were in accordance with the qualitative results, which implies that the qualitative findings can be generalized (7.1.3). The data collected via the questionnaire showed that public service professionals make different kinds of decisions in dilemma situations; different patterns of coping strategies could be distinguished. In none of the dilemma situations that we tested was one response category chosen by the absolute majority of all respondents. As with the qualitative findings, the two response categories chosen most frequently were 'biasing' and 'building firewalls'. Interestingly, only few respondents made decisions that were beneficial to the inspectees' economic interests. This might be interpreted as a sign that socially desirable answers were given: a potential threat to the validity of the research findings. Norms are important determinants of socially desirable behaviour, because they define what constitutes a good impression in specific situations (Atteslander & Kneubühler, 1975). Van Kleef, Schott and Steen (2015) found that what is stressed as core principles by

the NVWA is strict and consistent enforcement of rules and detachment from the objects of inspection. A service-oriented attitude, on the contrary, is considered highly objectionable in the organisation. Thus, individuals might consciously or unconsciously give socially desirable answers, as a form of impression management. I will come back to this limitation in the final section of this study. In both dilemma situations that involved public health (Dilemmas 1 and 3), veterinary inspectors were more likely to choose the response category that made it possible for them to safeguard public health than to go for an option enabling them to realize the other, conflicting value or demand (economic interests in Dilemma 1 and animal welfare in Dilemma 3). In the two situations in which considerable economic interests were involved in terms of a substantial amount of money being at stake (Dilemmas 1 and 2), a large group of respondents indicated that they would defer their decision and talk to their supervisor first. In other words, the coping strategy 'building firewalls' was applied and the conflict was returned to a higher level in the organization. Interestingly, this finding is in accordance with the results of a recent study by De Graaf et al. (2014). The authors found that client managers of a Dutch municipality often deferred the final decision to the middle managers or executives in situations in which various desirable values conflicted. This finding is all the more interesting because it indicates that coping patterns might be context-dependent, a perspective that seems to be overlooked in literature on coping behaviour in public administration. Support for the context-dependency hypothesis can be found in psychological research literature. Lazarus (1993), for example, encourages researchers to study coping as a) a style or personality characteristic, and b) a process that changes over time in accordance with the situational context in which it occurs. Finally, as in the interviews, the strategy 'hybridization' was reflected in the questionnaire data much less frequently than 'biasing' and 'building firewalls'. Even though 'hybridization' was not one of the possible response categories[3], a relatively large group of respondents came up with new ways of doing their work that enabled them to combine both conflicting values (animal welfare and public health) in Dilemma 3. In other words, they used the coping strategy 'hybridization'.

Besides asking respondents what decision they would make in a specific dilemma situation I also asked respondents, in both in the qualitative and the quantitative part of the study, why they made this decision, i.e., what were their underlying considerations. This information is interesting because it enabled us to double-check whether the kind of decisions veterinary inspectors made matches the considerations that we expected to underlie certain coping strategies discussed in Section 2.2. Moreover, the information may

3 Cf. 5.2: 'hybridization' was not included as a separate response category in the vignettes because this coping strategy had been mentioned in the interviews only rarely.

shed light on factors (next to PSM and professional role identity) that could also explain decision-making in dilemma situations. For the most part, the kind of decision made was in accordance with the individual's considerations. For example, inspectors disqualified the cattle because they wanted to safeguard public health/enforce rules and regulations: they coped by 'biasing'. However, the results also indicated that the coping strategy applied can deviate from the considerations expected to underlie the strategy. For example, in Dilemma 1 individuals indicated that they deferred the decision not only because they wanted to play safe, but also because of the inspectees' characteristics (e.g., 'because the inspectee is a good guy') or because they wanted to limit financial damage. The results also suggested that 1) a variety of considerations play a role in decision-making, 2) the relative importance of these considerations is context-dependent, and 3) considerations can be linked to ethical standards frequently discussed in organizational ethics literature. Additional considerations (in the qualitative part of our research I referred to these as 'inspectee-related' and 'inspection-related' considerations) primarily mattered in situations in which animal welfare and public health are not seriously threatened. Because at least one of these two values was put at risk in each of the three vignettes included in the questionnaire, it is not surprising that the additional considerations were mentioned far less frequently as number one consideration in decision-making. The observation that considerations in dilemma situations are context-dependent is not new. Romzeck and Dubnick (1987) point out that institutional expectations constituted major considerations in decision-making in the Challenger tragedy. Ferrel and Gresham (1985) developed a contingency framework by which to understand ethical decision-making. As discussed in Section 5.6, most considerations can be linked to the typology of 'ethical standards' developed by Measschalck (2004), prescribing how public servants should reason in ethical dilemmas, and to empirical studies on ethical decision-making among Belgian police officers (e.g., Loyens & De Schrijfer, 2012).

Next to this, the results showed that the veterinary inspector's degree of 'commitment to the inspectee' seems to be a very important, implicit consideration in decision-making in dilemma situations. If veterinary inspectors had personally known the inspectee for many years they were less likely to make a decision that would have negative consequences for that inspectee. This qualitative finding was verified by the quantitative data. The results of the logistic regression analysis suggested that hypothesis H3, *commitment to the inspectee influences decision-making in dilemma situations*, can be accepted for Dilemmas 1 and 2. (In Dilemma 3, the effect had the same direction, but was not significant). In both dilemma situations, a one-unit change in 'commitment to the inspectee' increased the likelihood of the decision being deferred, compared with a response category implying immediate negative consequences for the inspectee. This finding fits the views on social distance

and rule enforcement found in the literature. In an empirical study among correctional officers working in a women's prison, Freeman (2003) found that respondents who showed a preference for adopting a personal, informal, supervisory relationship with inmates reported fewer minor rule violations than colleagues who did not. He concluded that a personal relationship with an inmate increases the willingness to look at factors beyond a rule violation situation and to assist the inmate in adjustments. In other words, the way correctional officers inspectors look at prisoners and veterinary inspectors look at inspectees seems to matter. Moreover, this finding highlights the fact that public servants' decision-making is not a one-time event. Rather, decision-making seems to be an iterative process informed by contextual factors such as the relationship with the inspectee. This finding is in line with the results of the classic prisoner's dilemma. Here, repeated iterations also play a very important role. Because of their ongoing relationships with a history and a future, actors in these situations develop strategies such as those known as *tit-for-that,* rather than deciding to defect (Axelrod, 1980).

8.1.3 Clarifying the meaning and behavioural consequences of professionalism in dilemma situations

On the basis of insights from identity theory, I put forward the argument that the meaning of professionalism can be clarified by approaching professionalism as professional role identity. The central argument was that the concept of professional role identity has a clearer meaning and clearer behavioural consequences than the traditional sociological approach to professionalism, because it takes into account the different interpretations individuals have of their professional role. By contrast, the traditional view on professionalism does not make clear whether professionals go for quick solutions that benefit their occupation (neo-Weberian approach), or base their actions on professional norms directed at society at large (functionalist approach, reappraisal of the functionalist approach). Also, this sociological perspective implicitly assumes that all professionals with the same professional background think and act in a similar way (e.g., Andersen, 2009). In order to ensure whether this new approach to professionalism is indeed valuable, I empirically investigated 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 tested the hypothesis that *decision-making in dilemma situations is influenced by professional role identity: the way individuals interpret their professional role* (H1). I will begin by summarizing and discussing the results of the qualitative and quantitative analyses with regard to P4.

Different perceptions of professional role: professional role identity

The results of the interview analyses showed that veterinary inspectors had different interpretations of four central aspects of their work: communication and social skills, knowledge base, strict rule enforcement, and safeguarding organizational (5.4). For most of the veterinary inspectors, communication and social skills matter since they are regarded as necessary for law enforcing. However, there were also inspectors who stressed the importance of communication with colleagues as a way to improve consistent rule enforcement. Differences between the sources of veterinary inspectors' knowledge were also found. Many mentioned the knowledge of inspection tools, while others seemed to focus more on veterinary medicine or a combination of veterinary medicine and acquaintance with inspection tools as a knowledge base. The clearest differences were found between attitudes towards strict rule enforcement and the levels of importance veterinary inspectors attached to it. This finding supports Brewer and Walker's (2010) argument that red tape – which can be described as rules, regulations, and procedural constraints that seem to exist without any apparent *raison d'ĕtre* (Torenvlied and Akkerman 2012) – is a 'subject-dependent construct' because different managers may perceive rules, procedures, and regulation quite differently. Some veterinary inspectors indicated that they had a positive attitude towards rule enforcement because they saw it as a) an instrument to safeguard organizational objectives, and/or b) an inherent aspect of their work, intended to guarantee uniformity and transparency towards all stakeholders. Other inspectors expressed a negative attitude towards strict rule enforcement, often grounded in the belief that empathy and dialogue are better ways to safeguard organizational objectives. However, there were also inspectors who opposed strict rule enforcement for personal reasons: they explained that this aspect of the work did not fit their peace-loving personality and self-perception.

Finally, the results of the qualitative analysis also showed variations in the hierarchy of the levels of importance veterinary inspectors attached to the values they considered leading in their work. Some veterinary inspectors explicitly put public health at the top of their list, while other prioritized animal welfare over public health. Even though not immediately mentioned by inspectors when they were asked what values they represent as professionals, several interviewees clearly indicated that the economic interests of stakeholders should also be taken into account, because these stakeholders are key figures in the Dutch economy. An explanation for the fact that economic interests were mentioned only implicitly as an answer to the question "what are the values and interest you represent in your professional role?" might – again – be related to the phenomenon of social desirability. As mentioned earlier, the NVWA strongly emphasizes that inspectors need to be immune to the economic

interests of entrepreneurs: they are expected to work autonomously and transparently (Van Kleef, Schott & Steen, 2015). Therefore, individuals driven by a desire to avoid negative evaluations might consciously or unconsciously give socially desirable answers as a form of impression management.

In a second phase of the qualitative analysis I went a step further and explored whether it was possible to identify different types, or conceptualizations, of the role of veterinary inspector. I investigated whether specific interpretations of the central aspects of the work of veterinary inspectors were more closely related than others. The data showed that it was possible to differentiate between three conceptualizations of the role of veterinary inspector (5.5): veterinary inspectors with a *veterinary medicine-focused professional role identity,* who safeguard animal welfare without sticking rigidly to rule enforcement, sparing the inspectee trouble and relying on veterinary medicine as knowledge base; veterinary inspectors with an *organization-focused professional role identity,* who see strict rule enforcement as a central aspect of their work, who aim to safeguard public health and base their decisions on rule and regulations; and a large group of veterinary inspectors with a *mixed or hybrid professional role identity,* who are more sensitive to external circumstances such as the frequency of a particular wrong occurring at a company and the quality of the explanation an inspectee can provide.

Questionnaire data were used to investigate if these qualitative findings could be generalized to the entire population of veterinary inspectors. As described in previous sections, I developed the questionnaire items on the basis of the qualitative findings. In particular, veterinary inspectors were asked to think of themselves in their role of veterinary inspectors and prompted to identify where they would place themselves in relation to the bipolar questionnaire statements about the professional role identity dimensions 'strict rule enforcement', 'commitment to economic interests', 'animal welfare' and 'public health' (6.1.2.2). They were also prompted to indicate on what considerations they based the decisions they made in dilemma situations (6.1.2.5). The combined results of correlation analyses between a) professional role identity dimensions and professional role identity dimensions, b) different considerations in dilemma situations and different considerations in dilemma situations, and c) professional role identity dimensions and different considerations in dilemma situations, yielded two interesting findings. First, they provided evidence that the way inspectors interpret their professional roles (professional role identity) and their considerations in decision-making were linked. The only professional role identity dimension that did not correlate with its expected underlying consideration in decision-making was that of strict rule enforcement: this did not correlate with the consideration 'because that is what the rules say'. Second, the correlations provided additional evidence

that different types of veterinary inspectors can be distinguished: veterinary inspectors who rely on rules; who want to safeguard animal welfare and public health; and who score low on 'commitment to the economic interests' (organization-focused professional role identity) versus veterinary inspectors who consider the financial damage their actions may entail; who are committed to the inspectee; and who are influenced by the inspectee's character (veterinary medicine-focused professional role identity). The only relationship that could not be verified by means of quantitative data was the relationship between 'commitment to economic interests' and 'commitment to animal welfare'. In Chapter 5 I categorized people who were committed to animal welfare and economic interests as having a veterinary medicine-focused professional role identity (represented by 'John'), because the curriculum of the veterinary medicine degree course focuses on animals on the one hand – students receive medical and clinical training – and on the economic aspects of farming on the other. This 'missing' relationship could indicate the existence of a large group of veterinary inspectors with a mixed professional role identity: individuals who do not clearly identify with one of the two 'extreme' role identities, but who are more sensitive to external circumstances. This large group of inspectors with a mixed identity could also be a sign of a profession in transition. In 2008, Vanthemsche (2008) published a highly critical evaluation report about the NVWA. The authors concluded that the NVWA was neglecting its tasks as regards enforcing rules and regulations consistently and strictly. As a result, an intensive training programme was introduced, focusing on teaching veterinary inspectors the strict 'rule enforcement' part of their work. This training programme put more stress on the organizational principles, forcing veterinary inspectors to combine these with the principles of veterinary medicine. I assume that the consistent use of both work principles together may have brought about a fundamental change in veterinary inspectors' professionalism. However, since this development is relatively new, the two principles can still be found to coexist. This might also explain the high number of situations described as dilemmas and situations including work-related tensions (summarized in the previous sections) that I found.

Together, the results of the qualitative analyses of the different interpretations of key aspects of the professional role, and the question whether different interpretation patterns of key aspects (professional role identities) can be distinguished, support the proposition that *individuals holding the same profession differ regarding the way they interpret their professional role: they have different professional role identities* (P4). This conclusion is further supported by the quantitative results, which means that these findings may be generalized to the entire population. It is then interesting to compare these findings with those from related studies to identify parallels and contradictions. One study that seems

particularly relevant is that by De Graaf (2005), who researched farm animal veterinarians' conceptualizations of animals and their owners, using discourse analysis. De Graaf was able to identify four discourses. Discourse D (which he called the Professional Veterinarian) bears a likeness to the organization-focused professional role identity I found in this study. De Graaf described veterinarians using this discourse as relying on legislation and agreements, and being willing to maintain and enhance animals' well-being and health. It is noticeable that the remaining three discourses partly describe elements occurring together in the veterinary medicine-focused professional role identity: a strong desire to improve animals' well-being (Discourse A, Animal's Advocate), deviation from rules and pragmatic solutions (Discourse C, The Situational, Pragmatic and Intuitive Veterinarian), and feelings of connection with the animal's owner and the consideration that farmers have to make a living (Discourse B, The Supporter of the Responsible Farmer). Empirical evidence for the existence of different role identities– i.e., individuals do not share one single understanding of their own professional identity – is highly interesting, because it challenges the fundamental assumption in the sociology of professionalism that professionals share one professional identity. (See also, e.g., Beijnaard, Verloop and Vermund's (2000) study on teachers' perceptions of professional identity, and Rosenthal, Breault, Austin and Tsuyuki's study (2010) on pharmacists' self-perceptions of their professional role).

Next, the finding that professionals have different professional role identities is interesting because it can be linked to the longstanding debate on professional's discretionary power. The findings suggest that – regardless of changing organizational expectations focused on more transparency, accountability, equity, and consistency – public servant professionals' discretionary power continues to exist. Professionals give specific meanings to their professional roles which are reflected in the varying choices they make.

The effect of professional role identity on decision-making

However, in this study I went one step further: I investigated not only the different perceptions professionals have about their professional role, but also whether these different views are reflected in decision-making. Hypothesis 1, *decision-making in dilemma situations is influenced by professional role identity, i.e., the way individuals interpret their professional role,* was tested using questionnaire data (7.4). The results provided some support for the hypothesis. The dimension 'commitment to economic interests' influenced the decision "I defer the decision until I talked to my supervisor" in Dilemmas 1 and 2. In other words, individuals who scored high on this professional role identity dimension were more likely to use the avoidance-oriented coping strategy 'building firewalls' than to choose a response category implying immediate and negative consequences for the

inspectee. This means that even individuals who scored high on economic interests did not decide to certify all cattle (Dilemma 1), or to do nothing (Dilemma 2), which would have been the most logical decision in terms of safeguarding economic interests. They did not act against the mission of the organization. Rather, they deferred the decision, possibly to find other ways to act for the benefit of the individuals they were inspecting. Support for this conjecture was provided by the variable 'considerations in decision-making'. I found that some respondents indicated they deferred the decision because they wanted to limit financial damage (7.4). This raises the question if there are any situations at all in which veterinarian inspectors behave systematically and explicitly against the mission of the NVWA. Even though the data indicated that veterinarian inspectors vary with regard to the decisions they make, no statistically relevant number of respondents crossed the line and said they had acted against the organizational objectives, values and regulations: they did not show deviant workplace behaviour. One explanation for the finding that individuals did not go against the mission of the NVWA might – again – be related to the phenomenon of socially desirable answers. As mentioned before, the NVWA stresses strict and consistent rule enforcement and detachment from the objects of inspection as its core principles. Respondents, therefore, might consciously or unconsciously answer in such a way that they distance themselves from anything reeking of lax rule enforcement, which would lead to biased answers. An alternative explanation for deferring the decision in Dilemmas 1 and 2 might be that decision-making is context-dependent. In Dilemmas 1 and 2 a lot of money is involved, potentially increasing the pressure on veterinary inspectors. Deferring the decision and talking to the supervisor first might also be seen as a way to play safe in dilemma situations with serious financial implications. This line of reasoning – again – is supported by varying considerations in decision-making. I found that many inspectors indicated that they deferred the decision in Dilemmas 1 and 2 because they wanted to limit financial damage (7.4).

In Dilemma 3, a situation in which public health and animal welfare were in conflict, the dimension 'commitment to public health' had a significant effect on decision-making. Individuals who thought that fostering public health was a very important aspect of their professional role were more likely to disqualify the animal from the production process immediately than to do additional medical research or wait for additional information about the vaccination history of the animal. At this point, far-reaching conclusions are premature. However, the results make it plausible to assume that individuals who focus on public health in their work are very strict in avoiding any potential threat to public health.

The dimensions 'strict rule enforcement' and 'commitment to animal welfare' were not found to have a significant impact on decision-making in any of the three dilemma situations investigated here. However, most of the time the non-significant effects were in the direction we expected. If veterinary inspectors considered strict rule enforcement an important aspect of their work, the probability that they deferred their decision diminished. Rather, it became more probable that they made a decision that implied negative financial consequences for the inspectee.

How can these statistical non-findings be explained? Why were the professional role identity dimensions 'strict rule enforcement' and 'commitment to animal welfare' not reflected in the decisions veterinary inspectors make in dilemma situations? Ther are two possible explanations for the missing effects: 1) the low Cronbach's α coefficients of the measurement instruments, implying a low internal consistency of the items measuring the role identity dimensions, and 2) the small sample size in this study. The disadvantage of less reliable scales and small sample sizes is that they decrease statistical power: the probability that an analysis will cause a false null hypothesis to be rejected (De Vellis, 2003).

Next to the non-findings for the effects of the professional role identity dimensions 'strict rule enforcement' and 'commitment to animal welfare', attention needs to be paid to the low power (expressed in Nagelkerke's R square) of the models testing Hypothesis 1. As a result, a significant amount of variation remains unexplained. Thus, next to professional role identity there must be other important factors, not included in the conceptual model, which are better (?) predictors of the reasons why individuals make certain decisions in dilemma situations. The analysis of considerations in decision-making (7.5) indicated that the desire to 'play safe', previous rule enforcement, and personal standards probably also affect decision-making in dilemma situations. A theoretical explanation for the low percentage of variance explained is provided by the principles of identity salience and identity hierarchy known from identity theory. As previously explained (2.6), 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 particular role in social intercourse (Stets & Burke, 2000). Depending on the relative levels of people's commitment to different role identities, these are positioned differently within the identity hierarchy. From the basic assumption that salient identities are likely to be activated frequently across different situations (Burke & Stets, 2009), we might argue that it is a different role identity than the professional role identity of veterinary inspectors that is positioned highest in the identity hierarchy, and hence is played out more frequently in dilemma situations. For example, person identity standards – the meanings associated with being a particular kind of person (Burke & Stets, 2009) – may be positioned higher in the identity hierarchy and so be played out more frequently.

Including a large number of general and case-specific control variables (gender, age, type of employment contract, additional employment, years of employment at the organization, proactivity, team, and position) in the logistic regression models did not diminish the significant effects of the independent variables. In Dilemma 1, gender had a positive impact on the decision "I defer my decision until I talked to my supervisor". This, however, was not the case in Dilemmas 2 and 3, which implies that we cannot assume that women generally defer their decisions more frequently than men do. Besides, we need to keep in mind that the number of women in the sample was not representative (6.2.2). Another control variable with a significant effect on decision-making was 'type of employment contract'. In Dilemmas 2 and 3, practitioners seemed to prefer response categories that had an immediate effect. This might be because practitioners are paid per task performed, so that they might avoid activities that require a lot of (administrative) time. Interestingly, proactivity did not have a significant impact on decision-making. Respondents with a proactive personality acted neither more nor less in line with organizational expectations than others.

Summing up: The results of the analyses investigating proposition P4 and testing hypothesis H1 provide empirical evidence for the argument that: a) the sociological theory of professionalism is overly vague because it is not clear which behaviour can be expected from professionals in dilemma situations, and b) approaching professionalism as professional role identity is helpful. Different types of professionals could be differentiated, and evidence was found that the way in which individuals see their professional role has behavioural consequences. Like individuals who were committed to the inspectee, individuals who believed that being sensitive to economic interests is part of their job were more likely to defer their decision than to take strict measures. The opposite seemed to be true for individuals who considered safeguarding public health a crucial aspect of their work. These individuals were very strict, in the sense that they were more likely to avoid any possible threat to public health. Next to clear-cut cases, there were also many veterinary inspectors with mixed professional role identities. Whether they were strict enforcers of rules and regulations or customer-oriented public servants depended on external circumstances, such as the attitude and previous behaviour of the inspectee and the opinion of the supervisor.

These findings are in line with Gouldner's (1957) insights discussed above – a differentiation into two roles is too simplistic. Rather, within these roles there are different types, who vary in their degree of commitment to professional skills and values and in their loyalty toward the employing organization. Our findings showed that traditional perspectives on professionalism, treating professionalism as one shared professional identity, cannot sufficiently explain the behaviour of professionals in dilemma situations. All participants in this study had the same professional background: they were veterinarian inspectors. Nevertheless, they made different decisions when confronted with dilemma situations. These choices could partly be explained by the way veterinary inspectors interpreted their professional role. This finding is in accordance with the basic assumption of identity theory "that people engage in activities that correspond in meaning to the meaning of their identity" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 188). Some veterinary inspectors saw themselves more as what Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2000) describe as 'agents for the clients'. Even though they are government employees, they considered the economic interests of the inspectee. This is in line with occupational professionalism, where professional norms are assumed to be set by the professionals themselves and less attention is paid to serving the state´s interest than to the reappraisal of professionalism as a normative value system (e.g., Elliot 1972; Evetts, 2012; Freidson, 1983). However, unlike the predictions by Maynard-Moody and Musheno, our respondents did not systematically – or in statistical terms, significantly – stretch rules in order to put the interest of the client first, but rather deferred difficult decisions. Other veterinary inspectors defined themselves more in terms of occupational logic: they followed the principles of organizational professionalism (e.g., Clark & Newman, 1997; Larson, 1977). In particular, they indicated that the organizational objective 'public health' reflects important aspects of their work and that the objective 'strict rule enforcement' is an important consideration in the decisions they make. 'Commitment to the public interest' was found to predict a decision that excludes any threat to the organizational value 'public health'. As discussed above, and against expectations, the professional role identity dimension 'strict rule enforcement' had no explanatory value in the dilemma situations I have studied.

Discussing the possible scources of different role identities

Now that the added value of the concept of professional role identity as predictor of decision-making in dilemma situations has been demonstrated, an important question arises about the antecedents of different role identities. Where do these identities come from? An answer to this question is highly relevant because it can provide us with concrete methods to ensure consistent decision-making, and ultimately behaviour, of public servants, which in turn, is highly desirable for organizational performance (Wanberg, 2012) and within a context of

seeking equality before the law for all citizens (Rainey, 2003). I had expected that I could partly answer this question by comparing different groups of employees: practitioners versus 'regular' veterinarian inspectors, and employees with additional employment versus employees without additional contract. The argument was that practitioners and people with an additional employment contract might focus more on economic interests and less on strict rule enforcement than 'regular' veterinary inspectors, because they indirectly depend on the prosperity of the private sector and their greater distance to the NVWA. The expected differences were not supported by the data. In the interviews I saw individuals from all groups who indicated that considering the economic interests was an important aspect of their work, and neither did the results of the survey analysis data neither turn up significant differences between the groups.

One explanation for this finding might be that the 'regular' veterinary inspectors and the employees without additional employment contract – those who considered the economic interests – had worked in private practices for many years before they were employed by the NVWA as civil servants and therefore still might think as private practitioners. Strict rule enforcement might not yet (?) be entirely internalized, and considerations regarding the economic interests might still be part of their perception. This suggests that (professional) role identities are a product of, among other things, past (professional) roles and role-related experiences. The only significant differences between practitioners and 'regular' veterinarian inspectors were found in the analysis of the decisions they made in dilemma situations. In Dilemmas 2 and 3, the results suggested that practitioners – when compared with 'regular' veterinary inspectors – are more likely to make a decision that implies actions on the spot that a decision that entails both financial damage to the inspectee and a lot of time-consuming administrative work. This finding does not conform to the analysis of Sager, Thoman, Zollinger, van der Heiden and Mavot (2014), which showed that "private actors may use their direction as SLBs [street level bureaucrats] to pursue their private, instead of the public interest" (p. 500). Rather, they are in accordance with Tummers, Bekkers, Vindk and Musheno (2015) who point out that individuals do not often break the rules. My study shows that neither 'regular' veterinary inspectors nor practitioners systematically pursue their own interest in dilemma situations: they do not act against the organization's mission or break rules. The only difference that could be found between private (in this case practitioners) and public actors (in this case 'regular' veterinary inspectors) was that the former group of employees was less likely than the latter to make a decision that entails both financial damage to the inspectee and a lot of time-consuming administrative work than a decision that implies action on the spot.

Although an answer to the question about the sources of the different interpretations of the professional role falls outside the scope of this dissertation, I will briefly discuss some streams in the literature that might provide theoretical explanations for this question and that shows how the presence or absence of particular role identities may be influenced.

One possible explanation for the different role interpretations comes from literature on organizational socialization in which the process through which organizational culture is handed down to (new) employees is described (e.g., Anakwe & Greenhaus, 1999; Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein & Gardener). By providing specific information at job, team, and organization levels (socialization content) through formal and informal processes, organizations can stimulate individuals to adopt organizational principles. The argument is that employees who are acquainted with the socialization content – i.e., who mastered and internalized that content – are more likely to act in line with organizational objectives than individuals who know less about the organization. Regarding the question of where differences in professional role identity come from, literature on organizational socialization then suggests that these differences are grounded in the levels of knowledge employees have about their organization, team, and job. If we relate this literature to the case studied here, we can expect employees with extensive knowledge of organization, team, and job content to develop an organization-focused professional role identity, while employees with little knowledge about this are more likely to have a veterinary medicine-focused professional role identity. By providing employees with socialization contents the NVWA could stimulate them to adopt an organization-focused professional role identity. In a related dissertation (forthcoming), Daphne van Kleef will present her empirical investigation of the relationship between socialization contents and professional role perceptions.

Alternative explanations for differences in professional role identity can be derived from research on the professional identity of a group of professionals that has been studied more frequently than veterinary inspectors: teachers (for a meta-analysis of research on teachers' professional identity see Bijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004). Beijaard et al. (2000), for example, distinguish the following factors as determining teachers' perceptions of their professional identity: student teachers' biographies, teachers' teaching context, and prior experience. It is in particular teaching and school culture and personal life experiences, such as critical events, prior education, and point in the 'life-cycle' that are expected to influence the stories of individual teachers. Similarly, these factors could also play a role in shaping the way veterinary inspectors perceive their professional role. In particular, it might be worth investigating whether and how the organizational climate of the companies that veterinary inspectors have to inspect relates to their professional role identities. In

the interview data I found large differences in working climate between different abattoirs; at some the working climate was pleasant while at others veterinary inspectors indicated that they did not trust anybody. It is reasonable to assume, on the basis of earlier research on teachers' perceptions of their professional role, that these differences in organizational climate are reflected in the way veterinary inspectors interpret their professional role.

8.1.4 Clarifying the meaning and behavioural consequences of PSM in dilemma situations

In line with insights from identity theory I have put forward the argument that the meaning of PSM can be clarified by approaching PSM as a role identity-dependent concept rather than an ideal. In order to support this line of reasoning empirically, two propositions were investigated: *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) and *professional role identity provides meaning to being public service motivated and is reflected in decision-making in dilemma situations* (P5). Before I present and combine the qualitative and quantitative research findings for these two propositions, I will first describe PSM among veterinary inspectors, show the fuzziness of the concept, and present data concerning the question of how and why PSM develops over time.

Public service motivation among veterinary inspectors

Both the qualitative interview data and the quantitative questionnaire data suggest that veterinary inspectors are highly public service motivated. Even though described in different ways, a large number of interviewees referred to aspects of PSM as driving factors in their work (5.3). Some mentioned PSM directly by indicating that their motivation was to be able to contribute to the public interest. Others referred to seperate dimensions of PSM by indicating that their motivation was grounded in the opportunity to safeguard public values, solve wrongs, and support needy and disadvantaged people. The only subcode in the concept of PSM that could not be derived from the interviews was 'making sacrifices', which relates to the PSM dimension 'self-sacrifice'. This qualitative finding can be generalized to the entire sample because it is supported by the quantitative results (7.1.1). The mean score for PSM among veterinary inspectors is higher than, for example, the mean PSM score found in a national survey among Dutch civil servants working in the subsectors of public administration, public security, defence, education, and academic hospitals (Leisink & Steijn, 2009). Interestingly, and in line with the qualitative findings, the mean scores for the separate PSM dimensions – except for 'self-sacrifice' – were also found to be high. They were clearly above 3.5 (3 is the centre of the scale), while 'self-sacrifice' scored 'only' 3.37.

These findings support Van Loon's et al. (2013) argument that PSM expressions differ between public services providers, and also provide additional evidence for their finding that the PSM dimension 'self-sacrifice' seems to play a less important role with employees working in organizations providing so-called negative services than the other three PSM dimensions. Like policemen and prison guards in the Van Loon et al. study, veterinary inspectors provide negative and unwanted services to their users: they enforce compliance with rules and regulations directed at, for example, protecting animal welfare and public health. These rules are often not compatible with the economic interests of the inspectees. Interestingly, no differences could be found in PSM levels between 'regular' veterinary inspectors and practitioners, and between employees with and without additional employment. *Socialization mechanisms* were the rationale behind the expected higher level of PSM among 'regular' veterinary inspectors (e.g., Brewer, 2008); *crowding-out mechanisms* caused the expected lower level of PSM among employees with additional contracts (e.g., Giauque et al., 2013). (For more information about these mechanisms see Subsection 2.3.2). A possible explanation for the lack of differences in PSM levels between employees with and employees without additional employment is that employees who work in private practices, in which market mechanisms and extrinsic rewards – which are expected to cancel out PSM – are common, did not perceive their practice as controlling. Many of the practitioners who work in private practices are self-employed, which gives them a high level of autonomy. According to Frey and Jengen (2001), the negative effect of extrinsic rewards on autonomous motivation is conditioned by feelings of external control.

I should also mention that the measurement instrument used – the PSM measurement instrument by Kim et al., (2013) – had to be modified after the pilot study and confirmatory factor analysis. Specially, I excluded one item from the dimension 'self-sacrifice' (PSM_ SS2: I believe in putting civil duty before self), one item from dimension 'attraction to public service' (PSM_APS_4: It is important to me to contribute to the common good and item), and one item from 'compassion' (PSM_COM_ 2: I empathize with others who face difficulties); the first item because it had caused confusion in the pilot study, and the last two because their factor loadings were low. It is important to ensure that the formulation of the items is suitable for the context. Veterinary inspectors are very down-to-earth and pragmatic, which might explain why they find it difficult to identify with items containing woolly phrases such as 'the common good (PSM_ATPS4)' and 'civic duty (PSM_SS4)'. I have therefore come to a similar conclusion as Giauque et al. (2011) and Liu et al. (2008): PSM is not a universal concept, but next to the role identity dependency of PSM we should also consider the institutional context – in particular the professional context. Depending on what values, norms, and language are common within professional institutions,

conceptualizations of PSM could vary. In other word, barristers and lawyers might use different words and refer to different values to describe PSM than veterinary inspectors. This conclusion is in accordance with Rainey's view on PSM (1982); he points out that PSM is a broad concept that can take different forms in different agencies and service areas.

The fuzziness of the concept of PSM

The results above suggest that PSM was high among veterinary inspectors. Both qualitative and quantitative data support this conclusion. However, the interview statements and quantitative results also supported my criticism that – assuming that 'public interest' is an integral aspect of PSM – the meaning of PSM is fuzzy in dilemma situations. The interview statements have made clear that simply asking veterinary inspectors about their motivation for their work was not enough to get a clear idea of their view of PSM (5.3). The interviewees either referred to the abstract concept 'public interest', or mentioned different aspects of it (public health, animal health and animal welfare). However, these different aspects could not always be realized at the same time, due to their sometimes conflicting characteristics (see for more information Section 5.1).

In the quantitative data I found evidence for Bozeman's (2007) theoretical argument that there is no clear idea of what 'the public interest' means, and for Rainey's (1982) line of reasoning that "there are as many ways to conceive of public service as there are to conceive of the public interest" (p. 289) (Section 7.3). The respondents provided a total of 23 different interpretations of the concept of public interest. If we assume that the public interest is an important and integral aspect of the overarching concept of PSM and its separate dimensions, this result supports my theoretical argument that PSM is also a fuzzy concept. This conclusion was further supported by my finding that even if people had conflicting views on 'public interest' depending on the role they held (providing a service in the role of practicing veterinarian and strict enforcement of rules in the role of veterinary inspector), they still score very high on PSM as measured by the modified version of Kim's et al. (2013) measurement instrument.

Public service motivation as a role identity-dependent concept

How can the 'fuzziness' of PSM shown in the previous section be clarified (SRQ3)? Both the qualitative and quantitative data provided some empirical support for the two propositions which I formulated in the theory chapter in order to verify my argument that if we want to clarify the meaning of the concept in dilemma situations PSM had better be approched as a professional role identity-dependent concept rather than an ideal. The two prepositions

were: *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), and *professional role identity provides meaning to being public service motivated and is reflected in decision-making in dilemma situations* (P5).

The first part of proposition 2, the 'meaning' part, was primarily investigated via quantitative data. Evidence was found that the way respondents interpreted the meaning of 'public interest', assumed to be an important aspect of PSM, depended on the role they held in society (7.3). About half of the respondents interpreted the concept of public interest as animal welfare in their role of veterinarian, and as public health in the role of veterinary inspector. A very small group of employees – ten individuals (< 4%) – referred to the same meaning of the public interest from the viewpoint of three different roles: veterinary inspector, practicing veterinarian, and civilian. This suggests that next to the general role identity dependency of the concept of public interest, for a very limited number of people, the public interest – and hence also PSM, assuming that the two concepts are interrelated – is more like a stable core trait that does not change its meaning regardless of the social setting of the individual in question. Support for the general role identity dependency was also found in qualitative data. One female veterinary inspector explained: "I'm a veterinarian. That's why I'm certainly for animal welfare. But clearly I'm also for public health. I have children of my own. They should be able to eat safe and healthy food" (R22). This makes clear that the question of how individuals will act in situations in which the various interpretations of the public interest are in conflict is relevant. On which interpretation will they act? In the theory chapter, I provided a theoretical answer to this question and formulated the proposition that *the effect of public service motivation on behaviour is influenced by the hierarchy of the role identities within the self* (P3). In other words, the role identity that is located in the highest position – the salient role identity – will be played out in dilemma situations and give meaning to PSM. Unfortunately, the empirical data available do not provide a means to test this proposition.

Proposition 5 was investigated by using qualitative data. By the examples of *John* and *Anna*, two highly public service motivated veterinary inspectors with extreme and contrasting professional role identities, I have shown that, depending on respondents' type of professional role identity, the meaning of 'public interest' – and hence also the meaning and consequences of PSM – was different. The analysis showed that investigating PSM directly may not be adequate, because interviewees mentioned different, sometimes conflicting, aspects of the public interest, which means that we cannot know how people with a high score on PSM will behave when it comes to dilemmas. By asking John and Anna how they perceived their roles as veterinary inspectors and what interests they represented

in this role, we gained a better picture of what it means and what it implies to them to be public service motivated. John made clear that considering the economic interest is part of his professional role and behaved accordingly. Anna, by contrast, explained that consistent rule enforcement is the most important aspect of her role, and accordingly enforced every single rule no matter what. This provides support for our proposition that *professional role perception influences the meaning of PSM and is reflected in public service motivated individuals' behaviour in dilemma situations (P5).*

In contrast to a purely institutional approach to PSM or introducing ideas on personnel–organizational fit, supplementing PSM by identity theory and viewing it as a role identity-dependent concept can explain why previous empirical approaches to the PSM-performance relationship have turned up inconsistent findings (e.g., Alonso & Lewis, 2001). Researchers taking an institutional perspective on PSM argue that internalized public values provide direction to individual behaviour, implying that highly public service motivated individuals show the same behaviour in comparable contexts and hence failing to explain ambivalent findings. Inconsistent findings on the PSM–performance relationship can be partly explained by personnel–organization fit, but because of the ambiguous meaning of the concept of public interest – even when personnel-organization fit is included – a direct relationship between PSM and performance must be doubted. By contrast, from the perspective of identity theory differences in behaviour – and consequently also differences in performance – are the result of different role interpretations and their hierarchical organization.

How and why does PSM change over time?

In this study I have not only shown the fuzziness of PSM and provided a new approach to studying PSM that seems to make the meaning of the concept in the context of dilemma situations clearer, but also addressed the question of how the level of PSM develops across time and which mechanisms can explain possible changes. On the basis of two rounds of interviews with newcomers at the NVWA it can be concluded that the level of PSM is static among one group of individuals and dynamic among another. As also observed by Ward (2014) and Kjeldsen and Jacobsen (2012), I found that PSM generally decreases over time. Five individuals who in the first round of interviews indicated that they were public service motivated seemed to have lost their PSM 15 months later. This finding makes it all the more necessary to investigate whether the often cited 'reality shock' provides a suitable explanation for the drop in PSM. Do newcomers who initially were motivated by their desire to help others lose their motivation as they become disillusioned by the reality of their daily work (e.g., negative attitudes of clients, red tape, lack of gratitude)? None of the individuals

who entered the organization without PSM had become public service motivation 15 months later, which implies that the high level of PSM among public employees could indeed be the result of attraction and selection mechanisms, as Perry and Wise (1990) propose. The results of our analysis of organizational and work expectations prior to the first 'real' working experiences (during the first round of interviews, the interviewees were still enrolled in a training programme and thus had not yet taken up their regular tasks) were very interesting, because they showed clear differences between people who lost their PSM and those who remained public service motivated. At the same time, however, these results also showed that the 'reality shock', as it is traditionally defined, cannot properly explain the loss of PSM. The group of employees who remained public service motivated had a much clearer picture of what the work as veterinary inspector implied than those who lost their PSM, both in terms of work content and possible difficulties. Because the individuals who lost their PSM did not have any clear expectations of their work there could be no discrepancy between these expectations and the working reality. Nevertheless, the results are interesting because they increase our understanding of post-entry PSM adoption mechanisms. Rather than the traditional reality shock, the results suggested that the loss of PSM could be explained by a different type of 'reality shock': a discrepancy between the working reality and the ability to deal with it. Individuals with clear expectations of their work seemed to be better able to deal with work difficulties, such as inspectees showing resistant behaviour, manipulating and lying. They indicated that they accepted it as part of the job, framed it as a strategic game, or took care to cover themselves by relying on rules and regulations. The 'covering' strategy can be linked to the work of Crozier (1963), who argues that civil servants consciously stick closely to the rules and regulations as a way to ensure their position and power and to cover themselves against supervisors and clients. From Crozier's point of view, hanging on to rules and regulations is seen as a reasonable strategy of self-protection. By contrast, individuals without an initial clear picture of what their job would look like experienced serious work-related stress. I conclude that because resistant behaviour on the part of the inspectees came across as a surprise or 'shock' to them, the inspectors lacked strategies for dealing with these work-related problems, which led to stress and loss of PSM.

This line of argumentation is in line with literature on occupational stress. In this field of research the relationship between stressful job conditions and adverse employee reactions has been investigated (e.g., Beehr, 1995; Spector & Jex, 1998). Results suggest that active coping strategies can play a positive role in this relationship (Jex, Bliese, Buzzell & Priman, 2001). Individuals who know what the working reality looks like have an advantage over individuals without clear expectations, because they are able to actively find ways to deal

with the demands of the working reality without losing their PSM. However, we also need to be aware of opposing findings. For example, Oberfield (2014) found that the strongest predictor of entrants' motivation were their initial motivations. The results I found in this study, however, suggest that it is also very important to investigate organizational and job expectations, and individuals' capacities to deal with work-related stress if we are interested in why PSM develops over time.

The findings in this study can also be explained by self-determination theory. Fundamental to this theory is the idea that "satisfied basic psychological needs [need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness] provide the nutriments for intrinsic motivation and internalization" (Gagné & Deci, 2005, p. 336). If PSM is indeed is a specific form of intrinsic motivation (e.g., Crewson, 1997; Houston, 2000), we may argue that non-fulfilment of basic needs crowds out PSM. It is especially the needs for relatedness and competence that seem to be important in this context; the individuals who seemed to have lost their PSM were those who had difficult relationships with the people they were inspecting – individuals who feel 'unrelated' – and who lacked the competence to deal with difficult situations.

Previous studies found a negative relationship between red tape, which can be defined as "rules, regulations, and procedures that remain in force and entail a compliance burden, but do not advance the legitimate purposes the rules were intended to serve" (Bozeman, 2000, p. 12), and PSM. The argument here is that public service motivated individuals who are confronted with high levels of red tape become frustrated, which results in a decrease in PSM. In this study I did not find that annoyance at unnecessary rules resulted in a loss of PSM. On the basis of the results it can be argued that the non-effect of red tape on PSM might be explained by the 'missing shock'. All individuals were well aware of the fact that working at the NVWA implies being confronted with many – sometimes redundant – rules and regulations. It can be argued that red tape did not surprise them, so that they were able to deal with it without losing PSM.

8.1.5 The relationship between public service motivation and professionalism

The literature review on the relationship between PSM and professionalism has shown that there is no clear answer to the question of the exact relationship between these concepts. I have argued that this is not surprising, since different authors have distinct views on professionalism and a different conceptualization of professionalism is needed: one that makes the meaning of the concept clearer by integrating the different perceptions of what it means to be a professional. I suggested professional role identity as such a conceptualization, and pointed out that studying the aspects individuals find important in their work – by

identifying interpretations of how to serve the public interest as a professional – might help to understand why equally highly public service motivated individuals make different choices in the face of dilemmas. Put differently, I argued that professionalism – seen as professional role identity – gives meaning to PSM.

The empirical findings of this dissertation regarding this line of reasoning were mixed: the qualitative and quantitative results contradict each other. In the previous section I summarized the qualitative findings, which illustrated that public service motivated individuals with different professional role identities interpret the meaning of 'public interest' – and hence also the meaning of PSM – differently and so make different decisions in dilemma situations. For a small and distinct group of highly public service motivated individuals with an organization-focused professional role identity, consistent and strict rule enforcement is an important aspect of their work, whereas individuals with a veterinary medicine-focused professional role identity mention safeguarding economic interest as important. In the quantitative analysis, however, I found that PSM and its separate dimensions were positively related to the professional role identity dimensions 'commitment to animal welfare' and 'commitment to public health', but negatively to the dimension 'commitment to economic interest' and (though not significantly) to 'strict rule enforcement'.

One explanation for this finding might be that in the survey research I did not ask respondents explicitly how they interpreted their task of serving the public interest in their professional role. Rather, the instrument measuring professional role identity required respondents to indicate how important it was to them to be able to contribute to animal welfare, public health, economic interest, and strict rule enforcement in their work as veterinarian inspector, the underlying assumption being that these values can be considered aspects of the public interest as related to the job of veterinary inspectors. Such an assumption might be premature. However, any critique of this assumption can be obviated at least partly by the answers to the additional PSM question (for more information see Subsection 6.1.2.1). Here, 20 respondents of the questionnaire explicitly answered that what the 'public interest' – a central element in PSM – meant to them in their role of veterinary inspector was strict rule enforcement, which indicates that the values respondents mention as important aspects of their professional role were the same values that they relate to the public interest.

In line with other research findings, I found evidence that PSM and professionalism are somehow related (Andersen & Pedersen, 2012). Rather than viewing professionalism as professional identification (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007; Perry, 1997) or as an occupational variable ranging from low to high (Andersen & Pedersen, 2012), I treated professionalism

as professional role identity, i.e., as the different interpretations individuals bring to their professional role or shared professional identity. I have argued that this approach is useful because it makes the meaning of the concept clearer by integrating the different perceptions of what it means to be a professional. The qualitative results supported the argument that professional role identity gives direction to PSM. Nevertheless, the results of the quantitative analysis imply that the results of the qualitative analysis cannot be generalized to the entire sample. This could indicate that the group of highly public service motivated individuals interpreting the task of considering the public interest as strict rule enforcement or safeguarding economic interest is very limited, and that the results cannot be generalized. Besides, it indicates that Andersen's words cited earlier – "professionalism and PSM are clearly not the same, but they seem to be related in ways that have not yet been fully analysed" (Section 2.5) – still holds true. Integrating identity theory into the equation took us a step closer to understanding the relationship between PSM and professionalism. Since the results of my empirical findings are mixed, however, we need to continue thinking of ways how to integrate these two concepts.

8.1.6 The combined effect of public service motivation and professionalism on decision-making in dilemma situations

The aim of my research project was to increase our understanding of what drives public professionals' decision-making in real-life dilemma situations. Because I was particularly interested in the question whether the two concepts, PSM and professionalism, together can help us understand why public servants make certain decisions when confronted with dilemma situations, I formulated the primary research question *what is the combined impact of public service motivation and professionalism on decision-making in dilemma situations?* I pointed out that – due to the fuzzy character of the concept of PSM (see Subsection 8.1.4 for a discussion of the research findings concerning this argument) – the strength of PSM has no direct effect on decision-making in dilemma situations. Rather, I predicted that the level of PSM would strengthen the relationship between professionalism (seen as professional role identity) and decision-making. Put differently, I expected that a high level of PSM would impel individuals to make decisions that are consistent with their interpretation of what it means to serve the public interest as a professional, and formulated the hypothesis that *PSM moderates the relationship between the way individuals interpret their professional role and the decisions they make in dilemma situations* (H2).

The quantitative questionnaire results provided no evidence for H2. Only if PSM was treated as a construct with separate dimensions (and not as an overarching construct) did

the results provide some evidence that the dimension 'compassion' played a role in decision-making. In combination with the two professional role identity dimensions 'commitment to public health' and 'commitment to economic interest', it had a direct positive (but still without moderation) effect on decision-making in Dilemma 1. A higher level of 'compassion' increased the probability of the decision being deferred until after a discussion with the supervisor, as compared to the response category 'I disqualify the cattle'. This finding provides some additional support for the advice by Kim et al. (2013) that researchers should use all four dimensions of PSM when studying the concept, because these have different antecedents and consequences. However, we need to keep in mind that 48 analyse were preformed and 'only' two significant effects were found. This could imply that the finding is potentially biased by the multiple comparisons problem. As more analyses are performed, the chance increases that a significant result will appear by random chance alone. The results also showed that PSM did not have a direct effect on decision-making in the context of dilemmas either. (I tested not only the effect of PSM in combination with professional role identity, but also the effect of PSM as a separate independent variable.) This provided support for my critique that it is not enough to know the strength of PSM if we want to predict how an individual will behave: PSM is a fuzzy concept in the context of dilemma situations, which had better be approached as a role identity-dependent concept than as an ideal.

Regarding the answer to the primary research question *what is the combined impact of PSM and professionalism on public servant professionals decision,* the results show that the strength of PSM does not work as an amplifier in the relationship between professionalism – viewed as professional role identity – and decision-making in dilemma situations. Against expectations, high scores on PSM did not strengthen the effect of professional role identity on decision-making. Possible explanations might be the following. The statistical power – the probability that a false null hypothesis will be rejected – partly depends on the sample size (e.g., Cohen, 1992). Given that the sample size on which the results of this study were based was limited, it is difficult to find significant effects. This might explain why the expected interaction effect of PSM could not be found in the data. Besides, as described in the previous section, I did not ask explicitly how respondents interpreted their task of serving the public interest from the point of view of a veterinary inspector. It might be argued that veterinary inspectors interpret this task differently – not as safeguarding animal welfare, public health, economic interests, and strict rule enforcement – and that therefore no interaction effect of PSM could be found. As found in Section 7.3, for example, some respondents also interpret 'the public interest' as 'honesty', 'society', and 'social welfare' in their role of veterinary inspectors.

8.2 Theoretical and empirical contributions

The major aim of my research has been to increase our understanding of what drives public professionals' decision-making in real-life dilemma situations. In particular, I wanted to shed light on the question of what effect *public service motivation* (PSM) and *professionalism* together have on the decision-making of public service professionals facing dilemma situations. At the same time, from the literature review on PSM and professionalism, it has become clear that there are gaps in our knowledge about PSM and professionalism research. In particular, if it comes to the context of dilemma situations, our knowledge about what it really means and implies to be a professional and to be public service motivated is still limited. Therefore, another important aim of this dissertation has been to add to the literature on PSM and professionalism, and to develop new approaches to the study of PSM and professionalism which would make the meaning and behavioural consequences of the two concepts clearer. In this section I will summarize the main theoretical contributions of this dissertation to the existing public administration literature.

Regarding PSM research, I have empirically shown the fuzziness of the concept of PSM and – by combining PSM with insights from *identity theory* – developed a new approach to the study of PSM that seems to clarify the meaning and predictive power of the concept in dilemma situations. I argue that such an approach is necessary, because even if we know that an individual is highly public service motivated decision-making is likely to vary depending on the person's interpretation of the concept of the public interest – an integral aspect of PSM –, especially in situations of conflicting values and demands. The approach is based on the argument that since the public interest is central to PSM, we have to clarify what the public interest means before we can develop a better understanding of PSM. I take a step towards such an understanding by arguing that the concept of *role identity* can be used as a way to clarify how individuals view and enact the public interest when holding different roles in society. Put differently, the concept of 'role identity' helps to determine the meaning and consequences of PSM. From the results of the investigation of the two propositions (P2 and P5) I conclude that viewing PSM as a *role identity-dependent concept* rather than as an ideal is a useful approach that helps to clarify the concept's meaning and behavioural consequences in dilemma situations. This new approach to studying PSM is useful because it contributes to the concept validity of PSM: it clarifies the meaning of PSM and in turn increases its predictive power regarding actual behaviour in dilemma situations. In doing so, I have made a contribution to one of the primary research areas of PSM research, which – following Vandenabeele and Van Loon (2015) – can be described as the 'nature and incidence of PSM'.

Moreover, this new approach is interesting because it also provides insights into the complex and frequently debated PSM-performance relationship. Assuming that decision-making and performance are interrelated, this new approach to PSM provides an explanation for the fact that previous studies did not consistently succeed in empirically verifying the positive PSM–performance relationship (e.g., Alonso & Lewis, 2001).

Second, in this dissertation I aim to contribute to the largest stream of PSM research: the outcomes of PSM. Rather than testing the effect of PSM using self-reported performance-related outcome variables on individual or organizational level, I researched how the strength of PSM influences public service professionals' self-reported daily decision-making. On the basis of the argument that the concept of PSM is fuzzy in the context of dilemma situations, I predicted that PSM has no direct effect on the decision-making, and found evidence to support this assumption. The traditional approach to the study of PSM does not help us to understand why people make certain decisions when confronted with dilemmas. The finding that PSM has no direct effect is very interesting because it strengthens the argument that a role identity-dependent approach on PSM is helpful. However, we need to keep in mind that PSM could affect other elements of decision-making which have not been studied. For example, PSM could indirectly affect a decision by a specific way of framing the problem in the decision-makers mind, and might also play a role in decision implementation.

Third, this dissertation contributes to the discussion about the question whether the PSM measurement scale is universally applicable across different institutional contexts. The application of the instrument within a case that had not yet been tested – Dutch veterinary inspectors – showed that the Kim et al. (2013) instrument could not be used without modifications. Veterinary inspectors seemed to find it difficult to identify with certain woolly phrases such as 'civic duty' (PSM_SS4) and 'common good' (PSM_ATPS4). Items containing these words had to be excluded from the analysis because of low factor loadings. This finding supports Giauque's et al. (2011) and Liu's et al. (2008) conclusion that PSM is not a universal concept, but that next to the dependency on role identities, in PSM research the institutional context – in particular the professional context – also needs to be considered. Depending on what values, norms, and language are common within professional institutions, the conceptualization of PSM can vary.

A final important contribution of this study is related to the current discussion about the stability of PSM (e.g., Wright & Grant, 2010). The results suggest that the level of PSM is static among one group of individuals and dynamic among another. This knowledge is very interesting because it helps to answer the question why the level of PSM found in the public sector is higher than in the private sector, and whether socialization or attraction-selection-attrition mechanisms are possible causes. Beyond that, the study contributes to the debate

on the mechanisms explaining *why* PSM changes across time. On the basis of empirical findings, I cautiously conclude that the loss of PSM cannot exclusively be explained by the traditional reality shock experienced by newcomers, as often suggested (e.g., Brænder & Andersen, 2013; Kjeldsen & Jacobsen, 2012). Rather, on the basis of the results of this study, I argue that the inability to deal with the demands of the daily work – because of a lack of clear organizational and job expectations in individuals starting work as veterinary inspector – might be a better, or at least additional, explanation for the post-entry dynamics of PSM.

The contributions of this study regarding research on the sociology of professionalism partly run parallel to its contributions to PSM literature. By combining professionalism with insights from identity theory I have presented a new approach to the study of professionalism that seems to be better suited to clarifying the meaning and predictive power of the concept in dilemma situations. I argue that such an approach is necessary because the theory of professionalism is vague: it is not always clear what behaviour can be expected from a professional at a specific moment. Depending on the approach to professionalism that is chosen, professionals are, for example, expected to go for quick solutions that benefit their occupation (neo-Weberian approach), or base their actions on professional norms directed at society at large (functionalist approach and reappraisal of the functionalist approach). Next to this variety of theoretical assumptions about professionalism, research also indicates that individuals with the same professional backgrounds have different conceptualizations or perceptions of their professional role, which implies varying professional behaviour (e.g., De Graaf, 2011). This provides a challenge to the assumption fundamental to the sociology of professionalism that all professionals within a certain occupation develop a shared professional identity and act and think in accordance/consistently with it (e.g., Andersen, 2009; Evetts, 2006). By combining the theory of the sociology of professionalism with insights from identity theory, I present a new approach to studying professionalism that seems to clarify its meaning and behavioural consequences in complex real-life situations: I suggest approaching professionalism as *professional role identity*. The main argument was that this new approach might be valuable in the context of dilemma situations because – as explicitly described in identity theory – role identities include both the general guidelines regarding what it means to be an occupant of a certain role, and the personal interpretations that individuals bring to their role. Professionals all have their own frames of reference which are influenced by not only professional socialization, but also by, for example, their personal and cultural backgrounds. On the basis of the empirical results for the proposition and hypothesis formulated in the theory chapter (P4 and H1), I conclude that viewing

professionalism as professional role identity is a useful approach which clarifies the concept's meaning and behavioural consequences in dilemma situations. This indirectly contributes to the theory of the sociology of professionalism, because this new approach demonstrates that this sociological perspective has its limitations: in the context of dilemma situations its predictive power and clarity of meaning are challenged. Shared occupational norms seem to be not the only factor influencing decision-making. I urge scholars to be aware of this limitation of the commonly used sociology of professionalism.

Similar approaches can be found in the literature. For example, using Q methodology scholars have identified different types of top administrators (De Graaf, 2011; Selden et al., 1999) and veterinarians (De Graaf, 2005). On the basis of interview data, Gould and Harris (1996) found that occupational therapy students perceive the profession of occupational therapist itself differently. By means of brief telephone interviews Rosenthal et al. (2010) identified different self-perceptions of the professional role of pharmacists. My research contributes to these studies by providing additional evidence from a profession that has not yet been studied – veterinary inspectors – for the conclusion that professionals with the same occupational background have different views on how to think and act as a professional: they have different professional role identities. However, because the results of my study are based on both qualitative and quantitative data, its contributions go one step further. The quantitative results provide some evidence that different perceptions of professional role may be generalized to the entire population of veterinary inspectors (P5). Next to this, I provide empirical evidence that the way professionals interpret their professional role matters. Even though H1 could not be fully accepted, the results indicate that professional role identity helps to explain decision-making in dilemma situations.

Besides enriching the theory on PSM and professionalism literature, this study also aimed at improving our understanding of the relationship between PSM and professionalism, a relationship that has not yet been fully understood. By reviewing traditional research on this relationship, I demonstrated why previous studies have yielded different conclusions regarding the relationship between PSM and professionalism: different scholars have different perspectives on professionalism. Whereas some scholars argue that a high degree of professionalism by definition implies being committed to an altruistic service ideal directed at safeguarding the public interest rather than personal gains (e.g., Freidson, 2001; Vinzant, 1998), others warn of the collective self-interest of individuals belonging to a professional group (e.g., Van Wart, 1998). This finding contributes to our understanding of the PSM-professionalism relationship because it helps to explain why different studies report mixed results. On the basis of the two arguments discussed above, i.e., 1) professionalism can be

better viewed as professional role identity and 2) PSM can be better seen as a role identity-dependent concept rather than an ideal, I presented a new line of reasoning, which goes beyond the traditional idea that the two concepts either supplement each other or are mutually exclusive. Differences in the aspects individuals find important in their work – especially how they interpret their task of serving the public interest – help to understand why equally highly public service motivated individuals make different choices in the face of dilemmas. Put differently, professionalism approached as professional role identity gives meaning to PSM. By including identity theory into the equation we are one step closer to understanding the relationship between professionalism and PSM. The empirical results of the investigation of proposition 5, which relates to this newly defined relationship between PSM and professionalism, are mixed: qualitative and quantitative results contradict each other. The qualitative data suggest that for a small and distinct group of highly public service motivated individuals, with an organization-focused professional role identity, consistent and strict rule enforcement is an important aspect of their work, whereas for individuals with a veterinary-medicine professional role identity this is safeguarding economic interest. In the quantitative analysis, however, I found that PSM and its separate dimensions are positively related to the professional role identity dimensions 'commitment to animal welfare' and 'commitment to public health', but negatively to the dimension 'commitment to economic interest' and (though not significantly) 'strict rule enforcement'. As mentioned before, support for Andersen's claim 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) still holds true. Therefore, we need to continue thinking about ways to integrate these concepts.

Finally, with this dissertation I aimed to contribute to the research on the question of what drives public service professionals' decision-making in real-life dilemma situations, by including PSM and professionalism as explanatory variables. I argued that these are two promising concepts if we want to increase our understanding of why public service professionals make certain decisions when confronted with dilemma situations, for two reasons: 1) they present two concepts, frequently debated in public administration literature, which are expected to be useful in explaining behaviour (Andersen, 2009; Vandenableele et al., 2006), and 2) both concepts are embedded within what March and Olson (1989) describe as 'the logic of appropriateness', which may be better suited to explain why individuals make certain decisions in the face of dilemmas than a more self-interested approach on the basis of rational choice, which the authors call 'the logic of expected consequences'(Weber, Kopelman & Messick, 2004). The theoretical arguments regarding the 'fuzziness' of PSM and professionalism, and the empirical findings of this study are

important contributions to traditional literature because they indicate the limitations of these two concepts in dilemma situations. They show that professionals with the same backgrounds do not perceive their professional role in the same way, and neither do they act in accordance with the same professional norms and values, as assumed within sociological approaches to professionalism. Rather, the individual interpretations of the professional role seem to matter as well. What is more, my arguments provide evidence that PSM has no direct effect on decision-making in dilemma situations, and that it might be useful to view PSM as a role identity-dependent concept rather than an ideal. In other words, I conclude that traditional approaches to PSM and professionalism are less useful concepts to use in a study of what drives public service professional's decision-making in dilemma situations than I initially expected. Other promising factors that were found to play a part in public service professionals' decision-making in dilemma situations are 'commitment to the inspectee', personal morality, and the desire to play safe. This might be a sign that against expectations both – the 'logic of appropriateness', but also the 'logic of consequences' – need to be considered when decision-making in dilemma situations is studied. Put differently, as pointed out in the Introduction to this book, 'the logic of appropriateness' provides a useful approach to investigating what drives professionals in dilemma situations, but insights from the 'logic of consequences' are also needed. This finding is in accordance with Le Grand's (2003) theory of motivation, claiming that different types of motives can co-exist: individuals are neither pure 'knights' nor pure 'knaves' and March and Olsen's (2009) argument that it is inadequate to rely exclusively on one logic. The findings of this study showed that even in dilemma situations in which – according to Weber et al. (2004) – a 'rational choice' framework has limitations 'following rules of appropriateness' and 'calculating individual expected utility' can both serve as approximations of decision-making at the same time. People do seem able to make conscious choices that are preceded by evaluation in the specific context of dilemmas.

8.3 Practical implications of the research findings

Next to the theoretical contributions, some practical implications resulting from the findings of this study can be highlighted. However, I should first acknowledge that outlining specific HR strategies that affect traditional approaches to PSM and/or professionalism is less useful than I expected if we are to anticipate unwanted behaviour or strengthen desired behaviour of public service professionals in dilemma situations than I expected. Rather, specific HR strategies need to be directed at the new approaches to the study of PSM and professionalism developed here – PSM as a professional role-dependent concept, and

professionalism as professional role identity. In this section I will explain what these HR strategies could be.

For daily practice, my findings imply that it is not enough to foster PSM by integrating public service values into an organization's management system (Paalberg, Perry & Hondeghem, 2008). Rather than focusing on increasing the level of PSM and investing in attracting and selecting public service motivated employees, it might be more valuable to pay attention to relevant role expectations as communicated by the organization and professional associations. By using human resource management tools to communicate what it means to serve the public interest from an organizational point of view and as a professional, roles can be used as resources and behaviour can be influenced. Because these expectations may be conflicting, organizations should intensify the collaboration with professional associations and educational institutions in order to bring expectations into line and prevent role conflicts. Besides giving meaning to the concept of public interest, it might be valuable during the selection process to pay very close attention to individuals' organizational and work expectations. Ensuring that selected individuals have a clear picture of their tasks and of potential difficulties they might encounter at work (e.g., manipulation, lying and aggression) might prevent them from becoming frustrated and hence losing their PSM. Besides, the results of this study suggest that this approach is useful because employees with a clear picture seem to be better able to deal with work-related difficulties. An alternative strategy might be to invest in training programmes that focus on teaching employees how to deal with work-related difficulties and stress.

The results of this study should urge Human Resource (HR) managers of veterinary inspectors to consider the different views employees have about their job when teams are formed or specific combinations of tasks are assigned. For example, attention should be paid to the question of what mixture of professional role identities is most suitable to accomplish organizational objectives. Besides, managers can use HR activities such as training sessions, mentor programmes and performance assessment to stimulate or suppress certain professional role identities, i.e., certain ways of interpreting the professional role. However, they also need to realize the way employees see their professional role can be influenced only partly. Cultural expectations as communicated by the organization play a role, but individual experiences also determine how individuals see themselves as a professional. Next to providing input for HR managers, insights into differences and similarities among veterinary inspectors' professional role identities are also useful for people to reflect on themselves as professionals, as well as for future professionals – students of veterinary medicine – as part of their orientation on becoming a public servant.

The deeper insights into the specific situations in which public service professionals experience dilemmas can help managers to anticipate the negative consequences of dilemmas such as frustration and stress, for example by adapting training programmes to the actual working context. In particular, managers should be aware of the fact that what is frequently mentioned as causes of work-related stress are not only situations in which conflicting values and demands are involved, but also situations that require veterinarian inspectors to implement unworkable rules, deviations from rule enforcement among colleagues and lack of organizational support.

The deeper understanding of the kinds of decisions public service professionals make in dilemma situations has practical implications, too. The findings of this study suggest that the management should be aware of the important role supervisors play in ensuring organizational objectives and consistent behaviour. Because they are frequently contacted by public professionals in dilemma situations that involve a substantial monetary impact and public scrutiny, it is important that they are well-prepared and know how to act in such difficult situations.

8.4 Limitations of the present research

In spite of all my efforts to ensure a sound design and execution of this study, there are several limitations to be pointed out. Some of these were already mentioned in the final sections of the qualitative and quantitative methodological chapters (Chapters 4 and 6, respectively) such as problems related to the different types of validity, reliability of interview data, and problems associated with self-reported quantitative data. I specifically discussed how I tried to remedy these limitations. In this section the limitations that influenced the results and go beyond the individual chapters will be discussed.

First, the qualitative approach in Chapter 5 implies that the results cannot be generalized to a larger population. The results of the quantitative approach in Chapter 7 can be generalized to the population of veterinary inspectors, but because of the cross-sectional character of the questionnaire data there might be problems with causal inference such as reversed causality and/or confounding variables. This means that both research methodologies have their limitations. Yet, with the mixed-method design the results present a stronger case and a more complete understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

Second, because the results of this study are based on data collected in only one professional field (veterinary inspectors working at the NVWA), we do not know whether the findings can be generalized to other public service professions, and beyond that, to the national context of the Netherlands. However, there is every reason to expect that the results

can be transferred to similar professionals, i.e., professionals with strong professional norms, internalized during their long academic education, and who are working for large public organizations in functions that require them to ensure organizational objectives (such as physicians working for the health care inspectorates) and can be transferred to countries with similar individualistic cultural orientations (e.g., Western European countries).

Third, it seems that the results of Chapter 7 should be interpreted with great care. As stated before, Cronbach's α for the variable 'professional role identity' was rather low and the sample size was small, which implies limited statistical power. In other words, it then becomes difficult to detect significant effects in the data. This might explain the non-findings of this study: why only some dimensions of the professional role identity had an effect on decision-making (H1), and why I had to reject the hypothesis that PSM moderates the relationship between professional role identity and decision-making (H2). However, because the entire research population (all veterinary inspectors in the Netherlands) contains only 403 individuals a large-N study was impossible. Also, I think I was justified in using the variable 'professional role identity' regardless the low Cronbach's α because 1) the principal component analysis I performed supports the idea that the items of the scale can be clustered in four different dimensions, and 2) the α depends on the number of items by which a concept is measured (Dooley, 2001) and the separate dimensions were addressed by only two or three items.

Another limitation that potentially biased the research results is respondents giving socially desirable answers. For example, respondents rarely chose answering categories that support the entrepreneurs' economic interests and thus go against the objectives of the NVWA. As mentioned before, I tried to minimize the risk of socially desirable answers by granting anonymity and confidentiality in the cover letter to the questionnaire. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of social desirability remains a limitation of survey research, especially if the research topic is a sensitive one.

8.5 Possible directions for future research

While this study has yielded interesting findings regarding the concepts of PSM and professionalism in dilemma situations, and the question of what drives public professionals' decision-making in real-life dilemma situations, there is still much work to do if we are to fully understand these research domains. First, the limitations of this study as discussed above raise a number of issues for future research. Second, my findings point to some directions for future research.

As mentioned earlier, because of its cross-sectional character the results of this study cannot necessarily be generalized beyond the case of Dutch veterinary inspectors. If we know that PSM is sensitive to cultural differences (Kim et al. 2013). Future research should address the question whether the findings of this study can be verified by data collected in different countries. Next to this, previous research by Andersen and Pedersen (2012) suggests that differences in the degree of professionalism (ranging from low, such as health assistants, to high, such as physicians) are related in various ways to the separate dimensions of PSM. It could then be interesting to further investigate if the findings can be verified by using data from an occupation scoring lower on the level of professionalism than that of veterinary inspector. In particular, it might be interesting to research if the concept of professional role identity can also be used to give meaning to the concept of PSM in cases of a low or medium level of professionalism (e.g., teachers, physical therapists).

Another direction for future research is related to the instruments used to measure PSM and professional role identity. As mentioned before, Cronbach's α for the separate dimensions of the concept of professional role identity was rather low, which implies that the construct validity of the dimensions is challenged: the measure does not optimally reflect the underlying construct. I believe that future research will benefit from developing the instrument measuring professional role identities further, and from using multiple items in order to better capture the concept's meaning and improve the value of Cronbach's α. By sharpening the instrument that measures professional role identity, clearer results may be found. Regarding the PSM measurement instrument, the results of this study suggest that we need a tool to assess the strength of not only PSM but also its specific meaning for individuals: an instrument that gauges what interpretations individuals attach to 'their' PSM and is sensitive to the professional context (jargon) in which it is applied. Since the public interest is central to PSM, we need to clarify what 'the public interest' means to individuals before we can develop a better understanding of the concept and ways to measure it. For example, research might benefit from asking respondents directly what the public interest means to them if they hold a particular role. This makes it possible to control for the values that individuals mention as important aspects of their (professional) role coinciding with the values that they relate to the public interest.

Next to this, this research should also encourage researchers to empirically investigate Proposition 3 – *the effect of public service motivation on behaviour is influenced by the hierarchy of the role identities within the self* – formulated in Chapter 2, because this would contribute to the research area involving the outcomes of PSM. For example, by using Yin's (1984) multiple-case replication design future researchers should investigate whether the relative levels of an individual's qualitative and quantitative commitment to different role

identities determine which role identity is positioned highest in the identity hierarchy, and whether this is reflected in the behaviour of individuals scoring high on PSM.

The results of the analysis of the 'longitudinal' interviews suggested that it is not 'the traditional reality shock' (as defined by Kramer 1974) newcomers experience after job entry that causes the loss in PSM. Rather, on the basis of the results of this study, I argue that a different sort of reality shock – the inability to cope with the daily demands of work – might be a better, or at least additional, explanation for post-entry adaptation mechanisms of PSM. Future research might benefit from pursuing this route, and could thus contribute to the clarification of change mechanism in the PSM level. In particular, combining PSM with psychological literature on coping strategies – focusing on the question of how people deal with stress – may take our knowledge of adaptation mechanisms to a higher level (e.g., Skinner, Edge & Sherwood, 2003).

The mixed findings of the qualitative and quantitative analyses regarding the relationship between PSM and professional role identity highlight our incomplete conceptual understanding of the topics studied, and call for future research. Integrating identity theory into the equation has taken us a step closer to understanding the relationship between PSM and professionalism. I think that future research on this relationship will benefit from a revised instrument by which to measure professional role identity, assessing the different dimensions via multiple items in order to better capture the meaning of these dimensions. Next, I think that future research would benefit from further refinement of our conceptual understanding of how the two concepts are related. In other words, we need to continue thinking of ways to integrate these two concepts.

This study focused on the question of which role PSM and professionalism together play in dilemma situations in general. I argued that knowledge of the ways individuals interpret their task of serving the public interest as professionals helps to understand why equally highly public service motivated individuals make different choices in the face of dilemmas, i.e., the concept of professional role identity clarifies the consequences of the PSM concept. Because *morality* – which refers to a code of conduct for "good" or "right" behaviour put forward by a society, a group of individuals (e.g., profession, religion, culture), or individuals – and the *public interest* are related concepts[4] it is interesting to address the question whether this line of reasoning can also be applied to decision-making on a specific type of dilemmas: *moral dilemmas*. In other words, does the argument help to answer the question raised by Measschalck, Van der Wal and Huberts (2008): how will public service motivated individuals decide in a moral dilemma situation in which responsiveness to a

4 Sorauf (1957) argues that the concept of public interest reflects the highest standard of governmental action or morality in governance.

particular citizen (compassion dimension) contradicts with an adherence to values such as neutrality and lawfulness (commitment to public values dimension)? I argue that future research might benefit from addressing this question empirically, while I am aware that this approach enables us to say something about the impact of PSM and (professional) role identity on morally desirable decision-making at an individual level only. This decision-making may be in conflict with what is accepted as a moral standard by a society or group of individuals.

8.6 Summary

In this book I have attempted to improve our understanding of what drives public service professionals' decision-making in real-life dilemma situations by shedding light on the question of what effect *public service motivation* and *professionalism* together have on public service professionals' decision-making in dilemma situations. My review of the literature on PSM and professionalism, however, showed that there are persistent gaps in our knowledge about the meaning and behavioural consequences of these concepts when it comes to the context of dilemma situations, which are omnipresent in public sector work. Therefore, another important aim of this book has been to delve into these two concepts and their interrelatedness more deeply, and to present new approaches to study PSM and professionalism that seem better suited to clarify the meaning and behavioural consequences in the context of dilemmas. On the basis of a mixed-method research design, the nature as well as the interrelatedness of the two concepts and their effect on decision-making in dilemma situations were studied using data from veterinary inspectors working for the Dutch Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (*Nederlandse Voedsel- en Warenautoriteit*, NVWA). Within the limitations of this study, the findings discussed in Chapter 8 enable us to draw conclusions benefiting the theory of public service motivation and professionalism, and provide input for practice-oriented human resources management and directions for future research. I hope that I have provided the reader with food for thought and inspiration for further research on PSM and professionalism – approached as professional role identity – in the particular context of dilemma situations, and the general question of why professionals make certain decisions when confronted with dilemmas.