

Organizational socialization practices and organizational socialization tactics.

Contents and interplays.

Emilie Bargues (Groupe ESC Clermont-CRCGM)

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Abstract

How organizations and their members can influence the socialization of their newcomers? The answers to this key question for human resources management and organizational behaviour are still incomplete. Indeed, Perrot & Roussel (2009) highlighted how the dividing line between organizational socialization practices and tactics remains blurred in the organizational socialization literature. In order to clearly distinguish between these tightly-related concepts, Perrot & Roussel (2009) took the stance that socialization tactics orient socialization practices. This paper aims to bring sharper focus to this distinction by exploring the content of organizational *socialization tactics* and its interplay with the content of *socialization practices*. This work utilizes a socialization practices survey that was carried out via a multiple-case study in seven French SMEs; this research environment is well suited to compiling observations on informal and non-formalized socialization practices that are not yet well known. This work is inspired by and builds on the methodological approach used by Jones (1986) to connect each socialization practice inventoried in our survey sample to the socialization tactic to which it is oriented. This interpretational approach develops proposals on the interplay between socialization practices and tactics, and teases out groups of organizational socialization tactics currently unidentified in the Van Maanen & Schein (1979) model. Thus this paper refines Van Maanen & Schein's typology by proposing an additional four tactics. Additionally this study helps managers explicate and build on implicit understandings of current socialization practices. This is accomplished by providing advanced knowledge and insights on how to handle organizational socialization.

Key words: organizational socialization, organizational socialization tactics, informal practices.

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Introduction

Organizational socialization is typically defined as the process through which individuals acquire knowledge about and adjust to their work context (Fisher, 1986; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979). It refers to the acquisition of the attitudes, behaviors, knowledge, and skills required to participate and function effectively as a member of an organization (Van Maanen, & Schein, 1979). A great deal of research indicates that socialization has a large impact on the adjustment of newcomers to their jobs, groups, and organizations (see reviews by Bauer et alii, 2007; Bauer, Morrison & Callister, 1998; Fisher, 1986). Over the years, socialization has become more important because individuals are more mobile. Also new employee socialization is a key issue for organizations and newcomers alike as individuals undergo socialization more often in their career and organizations deal with newcomers more often because of elastic personnel needs (Bauer et al. 2007). Thus, examining this process has important theoretical and practical implications. Particularly, the manner in which organizations socialize their newcomers is important because it affects the success of socialization and newcomers' adjustment (Saks & Ashforth, 1997). Despite its importance, this subject is not very well known.

Indeed firstly, Van Maanen and Schein (1979) identified six tactical dimensions of *organizational socialization tactics* defined as “the ways in which the experiences of an individual in transition from one role to another are structured for him by others in the organization” (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979:34-35). Their typology is extensively exploited in the literature, but few studies have contributed to enrich it in spite of that the authors acknowledge that their typology is not exhaustive. This paper therefore sets out with the primary objective of enhancing understanding on organizational socialization tactics.

Secondly, some studies are focused on a few *organizational socialization practices* (Louis et al., 1983) – for example job training, formal welcoming sessions, or mentoring (Louis et al., 1983). But they do not specify whether *socialization practices* and *socialization tactics* refer to one and only concept. Beside, Van Maanen and Schein (1979) sometimes describe one tactic by using several socialization practices, thereby implicitly positing the existence of an articulation between the contents of socialization tactics and practices. Perrot and Roussel

(2009) note this prevalent confusion in the literature between these two very closely linked concepts. To clarify the distinction between them we consider like Perrot and Roussel (2009) that socialization tactics guide socialization practices. This paper aims to bring sharper focus to their articulation by exploring the relationships between socialization tactics content and socialization practices content. This second objective can constructively help managers better identify the socialization processes being developed more or less consciously within their businesses, and thus make them better prepared to bring these processes under control. Indeed the connections relating socialization tactics to socialization practices would give keys to turning constructs into daily managerial practice. They would also give managers a valuable tool for checking whether the socialization practices mobilized by their teams fit the tactics they hope to instil, and clues for re-orienting them if necessary. To keynote, this study can empower managers with more advanced knowledge and insights on how to handle organizational socialization, as it sharpens their consciousness of the organizational socialization tactics and practices going on around them.

To answer to its two objectives, this work uses a socialization practices survey that was carried out via a multiple-case study in seven French SMEs. This research environment has been little studied in organizational socialization domain. Beside the splintered world of French SMEs (Marchesnay & Fourcade, 1997) offered the requisite visibility across a broad spectrum of practices. Moreover it is well suited to compiling observations on informal and non-formalized practices that are not yet well known. The Methodology is inspired by and builds on the methodological approach used by Jones (1986) to connect each socialization practice inventoried in our survey sample to the socialization tactic to which it is oriented. This interpretational approach develops proposals on the interplay between socialization practices and tactics, and teases out groups of organizational socialization tactics currently unidentified in the Van Maanen & Schein (1979) model.

We begin this paper by reviewing the state of play in terms of academic papers on organizational socialization tactics and practices and the positions they adopt in the relevant literature. Section two moves on to detail the methodology adopted for identifying socialization tactics content and exploring the interplays connecting these socialization tactics to socialization practices. Section three reports our results; while section four goes on to discuss our findings.

1. Organizational socialization tactics and practices : state of play through the literature

Organizational socialization tactics are defined as “*the ways in which the experiences of an individual in transition from one role to another are structured for him by others in the organization, [and the ways this process] organizes the learning experiences of a newcomer to a particular role*” (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979: 34-35). Van Maanen & Schein identified six groups of socialization tactics consciously or unconsciously applied by managers. To illustrate their model, the authors tied each group of tactics to a series of socialization methods or practices.

The first dimension, *collective* versus *individual* socialization tactics, captures the fact that newcomers are either put through a common series of experiences together or, at the other extreme, are left to accumulate a series of unique experiences separate from other newcomers. Collective tactics can be tied to practices such as “*basic training or boot camp in military organizations, pledging in fraternal orders, education in graduate schools for the scholarly and professional trades, intensive group training for salesmen in business firms, management training courses to which groups of prospective or practicing managers are sent for an extended period of common education, and so forth*” (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979: 38). Individual-mode tactics cited by the authors can typically be tied to practices such as “*apprenticeship programs, specific intern or trainee assignments, and plain on-the-job training*”.

The second dimension involves *formal* versus *informal* socialization tactics. Formal tactics involve tailoring a set of experiences explicitly for newcomers who are then kept segregated from other regular organizational members. Practices tied to this type of tactic include “*such socialization programs as police academies, professional schools, various sorts of internships, and apprenticeships in which the activities that are to be engaged in by the apprentice are prescribed officially and clearly*”. At the other end of this sub-spectrum, informal tactics allow new recruits to experience exactly the same environment as long-established organizational members. Van Maanen & Schein (1979) tie these tactics to practices such as “*on-the-job training assignments*”.

The third dimension captures *sequential* versus *random* socialization tactics. An organization employing *sequential* tactics is working to a known series of key steps in the newcomer socialization process, and these steps are mapped out for the recruit, whereas *random* socialization tactics reflect a more ambiguous onboarding process where the recruit is not informed of progression. Professional training such as medicine is a good illustrative example of sequential-process tactics.

A fourth dimension captures *fixed* versus *variable* socialization tactics. Where *fixed* tactics are employed, the steps in the socialization process are tied to a timetable that is communicated to the recruit, whereas variable socialization processes do not give newcomers any specific timetable. Fixed tactics can be illustrated in the fact that “*the promotional policies in most universities specify the number of years a person can be appointed to a given rank*”.

The fifth dimension, capturing *serial* versus *disjunctive* socialization tactics, hinges on whether or not experienced members of the organization groom the newcomers about to occupy relatively similar positions within the organization (thus serving as role models). Disjunctive tactics, in contrast, leave newcomers with no role models available to coach them on how they are to proceed in the new role.

Lastly, *investiture* versus *divestiture* tactics refer to whether newcomers get signs from insiders that affirm or disaffirm their identity. In response to divestiture tactics, the newcomer is pushed to effectuate changes and re-adjustments in aspects of their personal identity.

Each tactics dimension is expressed through polarities representing the two extremes of a continuum. This means a given tactic can be employed to a more or less moderate degree in relation to either of the extremes on the scale. The overarching purpose of Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) paper is "*to heighten and cultivate a broader awareness of what it is we do to people under the guise of 'breaking them in' to an organizationally defined role*".

Van Maanen & Schein's dimension-types model would ultimately spur a substantial body of research, all of which is centred on the causal relationships driving socialization tactics. The authors themselves formulated a number of propositions on the effects each type of socialization tactics has on newcomer behavior, specifically the new recruit's interpretation of the role they are expected to occupy. The authors conclude that certain tactics influence the degree of innovation or normed custodianship ultimately demonstrated in this role. Van Maanen & Schein's hypotheses were subsequently tested and re-tested time and again (stand-out examples include Allen & Meyer, 1990; Ashforth & Saks, 1996, King & Sethi, 1998). Jones (1986) went on to conclude that socialization tactics could essentially be distilled down into two broad categories: institutionalized tactics which promote custodial role orientations, and individualized tactics, which promote innovative role orientations in newcomers. This sparked a flurry of research seeking to highlight effects of socialization tactics on other variables, from newcomer attitudes to their job (Baker, 1989; Zahrly & Tosi, 1989; Baker & Feldman, 1991; Mignerey, Rubin & Gorden, 1995) to organizational value congruence (Grant & Bush, 2001) and back to person-job, person-organization and person-team fit (Chatman, 1989; Saks & Ashforth, 1996; Cooper-Thomas, Van Vianen & Anderson, 2004; Cable & Parsons, 2001, Kim et al. , 2005; Perrot, 2009).

Despite the substantial number of published papers investigating socialization tactics, there has been no attempt to redescribe the tactics content in finer detail since the foundational work of Van Maanen & Schein (1979). This lack of follow-through is all the more surprising given that the authors themselves acknowledged their type-model list had no logical or conclusive end, and that the subject-focus is sufficiently pivotal to prompt efforts to continue building on their investigations. The primary objective of this paper is therefore to redress this issue, i.e. to bring deeper insights into the content component of organizational socialization tactics.

At this juncture, it should be stressed that Van Maanen & Schein's (1979) six-dimension type-model was unable to benefit from the major contributions ushered in by the interactionist approach to organizational socialization, which was developed later on. This interactionist approach, which surfaced in the mid-1980s, broke away from previous research by reshifting the onus back towards the newcomer's pro-active role in his or her own socialization process. Many investigations aligned to this research strand were focused on studying newcomer information sources, newcomer information content targeted, and newcomer information acquisition strategies. One such study, by Ostroff & Kozlowski (1992), split newcomer information sources into two classes: interpersonal sources and non-interpersonal sources. Interpersonal sources refer to relationships between new hires and the socialization agents who enable the newcomer to acquire information, while non-interpersonal sources are the organization's official literature (job-related document material, rules and regulations,

employee handbook, etc.), experimentation testing new behavior patterns, and vicarious observation on socialization agents. Further Louis, Posner & Powell (1983) and Posner & Powell (1985) studied the relative efficiency of interpersonal sources. Related work examined the effective usefulness of newcomer-acquired information (Miller & Jablin, 1991; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Morrison, 1995). Finally, the approach extended to studies on “newcomer information-seeking strategies”, which were defined as conscious purposive ways of seeking out the information useful to their learning and adjustment processes (Morrison, 1993; Miller & Jablin, 1991). This work emerged two broad core types of information-seeking strategies: active information-seeking — when the new hire asks for or seeks feedback from a socialization agent — and passive information-seeking — when the new hire seeks feedback primarily through observation of their environment (Ashford & Cummings, 1983; Morrison, 1995). The interactional approach to organizational socialization also features a handful of studies that lend focus to newcomer socialization strategies geared towards goals other than information-seeking. For instance, Reichers (1987) and Nelson & Quick (1991) identified strategies that were geared towards successful integration on a social level, where new hires are aiming to establish privileged relational ties with certain organization members in order to build a vital support network to help them cope as they struggle to learn and adjust. It is equally possible to find strategies aimed at self-shaping positive perceptions of the new setting (Ashforth & Black, 1996; Taylor & Brown, 1988). Yet another socialization strategy is behavioral self-management (Vancouver & Morrison, 1995), where newcomers set themselves their own objectives and re-orient their behavior patterns accordingly. In the same vein, Manz & Snyder (1983) and later Saks & Ashforth (1996) identified strategies wherein new hires pro-actively self-motivate themselves to adopt the requisite behaviors. Rounding off this strategy-centric work, Nicholson (1984) observed new hires employing strategies that entailed modifying the methods and procedures conventionally tied to their role so as to bring them more into line with their previous experiences, and thereby minimize the transitional adjustments required of them.

The body of concepts and theories developed through this interactionist approach offers useful input that we can constructively integrate in our effort to gain deeper insights into the content component of organizational socialization tactics.

Furthermore, we have flagged another weakness hampering papers on the art of organizational socialization. As Perrot & Roussel (2009) highlighted, the line between socialization practices and socialization tactics — as drawn by the organizational socialization literature — remains blurred. The term “organizational socialization practices” (Louis et al., 1983) is employed in reference to sets of experiences and situations that are mobilized by the organization and its members and that influence the socialization of new company hires: examples include on-the-job training, initiation to the organization’s functional culture (Feldman 1976, 1977, 1983, 1989), formal newcomer onboarding sessions, business trips, off-the-job leisure activities, and ultimately mentoring (Louis et al., 1983). However, research focused on certain socialization practices fails to link them up to the socialization tactics identified by Van Maanen & Schein (1979). Compounding the problem, the field theory also fails to specify whether socialization practices and socialization tactics refer to one and the

same concept. Furthermore, there are times where Van Maanen & Schein's description of tactics content uses different socialization practices to illustrate the same tactic, thus implicitly positing an interplay between tactics content and practices content. In the same vein, as we shall see further on, the method adopted by Jones (1986) to pinpoint organization-led socialization tactics implicitly assumes that several different socialization practices are tied to the same type of socialization tactics. To round up, in a more recent organizational socialization model proposed by Saks & Ashforth (1997), the authors identify organizational factors of the socialization process. Their shortlist groups together orientation programs, training programs and mentoring programs alongside socialization tactics, which makes the implicit assumption that there is a distinction differentiating each of these program-groups from socialization tactics.

In order to clearly distinguish between these tightly-related concepts, Perrot & Roussel (2009) took the stance that socialization tactics orient socialization practices. To add support to this distinction and to the implicit hypothesis of interplays between tactics content and practices content that takes shape between the lines of work by Van Maannen & Schein (1979) and Jones (1979), this paper's second objective is to complete a more systematic exploration of these interplays.

Moving forward, section two sets out the methodology adopted to tackle this paper's dual objective of providing deeper insights into the content component of socialization tactics and exploring the interplays connecting these socialization tactics to socialization practices.

2. A method for exploring socialization tactics content and its interplay with socialization practices content

This section studies the method used by Jones (1986) to identify organizational socialization tactics. The method is first shown to be based on collating observations of practices and interpreting them to identify the underlying tactics. Moving forward, we present a multiple-case study research project that we had carried out in French SMEs and which gave us the keys to inventory a wide cross-section of socialization practices. This practices inventory then serves as startpoint as we forge ahead to gain deeper insights into socialization tactics content and its interplay with socialization practices content.

2.1. The methodological approach employed by Jones (1986)

In an effort to operationalize the Van Maanen & Schein (1979) model, Jones (1986) designed a questionnaire-based study that identified organization-led socialization tactics by surveying a cohort of new hires on the actions, behaviors and attitudes displayed by organization members in their direction. Put another way, Jones proposed to connect each type of socialization tactics to a set of socialization practices. For instance, in order to identify "formal/informal"-dimension tactics, Jones (1986) asked newcomers to score the following assertions on a 7-point scale (ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree"):

- “I have been through a set of training experiences which are specifically designed to give newcomers a thorough knowledge of job-related skills.
- During my training for this job I was normally physically apart from regular organizational members.
- I did not perform any of my normal job responsibilities until I was thoroughly familiar with departmental procedures and work methods.
- Much of my job knowledge has been acquired informally on a trial-and-error basis.
- I have been very aware that I am seen as “learning the ropes” in this organization.”

(Jones, 1986, p. 278)

In other words, Jones (1986) is asking five questions in order to identify when one and the same tactic is being employed. Each of these questions is sounding out one particular socialization practice, which means Jones is implicitly tying different socialization practices to one and the same tactic. The net result is that Jones identifies coherent sets of socialization practices that he interprets as being oriented by specific individual socialization tactics.

We built on Jones’ groundwork to explore the content of socialization tactics by running a survey on the socialization practices found in French SMEs. We go on to show how our line of approach identifies a panel of practices — some of which interplay with the socialization tactics featured in the six-type Van Maanen & Schein (1979) system, and some of which interplay with socialization tactics that did not feature in the Van Maanen & Schein model. Before elaborating on these results, we first present the methodology employed in our research on socialization practices at French SMEs, before going on to list the practices we inventoried.

2.2.Exploring socialization practices in French SMEs

The driving purpose behind our research was to expand our knowledge of organizational socialization practices, lending particular focus to those less formalized and more subconscious practices that to date remain relatively unexplored. Our decision to focalize on SMEs as our field was guided by several reasons. Firstly, because the field had never been investigated within the organizational socialization domain. Second, as it well geared to compiling observations on informal, relatively unformalized practices: SMEs are widely recognized as fertile ground for ‘emerging’ or as-yet unformalized practices, while the fact that each SME has a relatively low employee/agent headcount proves makes them ideal for hosting fully exhaustive investigations (Torrès, 1998). SMEs thus offer relatively good visibility over non-conscious or non-formalized practices in action. Lastly, because the splintered world of SMEs (Marchesnay & Fourcade, 1997) offered the requisite visibility across an extremely broad spectrum of practices.

We opted for a multiple-case study format as the best-gearred research design when the boundaries between effect and effect-context are hazy at best – as is the case for informal and non-formalized practices – and when the research being led is essentially exploratory (Yin, 1994). To observe the diversity of SME’s socialization practices, we mobilized a configurational approach built on the work of French scholars (Torrès (1998), Torrès and Julien (2005), Messeghem (2003), Marchesnay (1982, 1991)) and particularly Bentabet et al. (1999) which identify three configurations of SME – “independent traditional” SME, “entrepreneurial” SME, and “managerial” SME – each with distinct methods when it comes to training and managing people. Using their model we shall explore through a multiple-case study, the variety of the socialization practices in SME’s world. Also, the primary endpoint guiding case selection was the representativeness of this three SME configurations.

Organizational socialization is a dynamic process through which both individuals and organizations evolve over time. To account for this, we led one wave of data collection on new hires after less than one month on the job followed by a second wave two months later. Forty-one semi-structured interviewed were led in total. Interviewees were systematically asked to recall their thoughts and memories around the time before they were effectively onboarded so as to identify the organizational socialization practices mobilized from the off in the “anticipatory socialization” phase (Feldman, 1976). Secondary data was also collected. Secondary data sources included the material information sources that the new hires had been handed during their onboarding process and that they cited during the interviews. Any contextual document material the proved useful for understanding SMEs was also collected as secondary data, alongside company brochures plus their CEO’s business card, email and phone conversations between the CEO and their team members, newcomer’s CV, company website, and any employee handbooks. The kind of secondary document materials collected varied strongly from site to site, as some SMEs print out and hand over more newcomer onboarding documents than others. To round off the data collection effort, we recorded a handful of direct observations on the newcomers over the first day on the job and during their lunch breaks, which enabled us to witness an ample number of informal exchanges between newcomers and insider organization members.

Under the framework of this research, we polled a panel of process-actors on their standpoints so as to diversify the range of positions and perspectives surveyed and be in a position to triangulate the data. We thus questioned the newcomers, their CEOs at the SMEs, and various newcomer colleagues.

The list below reflects an exhaustive inventory of all the socialization practices we were able to observe in the SMEs within the framework of this multiple-case study:

- “Adapted work” practice:** Structure the newcomer’s activity so that it does not overlap the activity of their peers (in terms of job tasks or performance targets) but remains adapted to the newcomer’s learning and adjustment needs.
- “Normal work” practice:** Structure the newcomer’s activity so that remains exactly the same as the activity of their peers in terms of job tasks or performance targets.
- “Learning-centric” practice:** The newcomer’s activity is structured in such a way that the firm is not expecting any immediate value creation, but instead the sole emphasis is on

developing the newcomer's knowledge capital. Put simply, the new hire is placed in apprenticeship mode, on-the-job training, or in-house/outplacement continued professional development training.

-“Hands-off” practice: The new hire has no predetermined activity to perform, and organizational co-workers do not set them any activity to do; the newcomer is left to figure their own program of what to do.

-“Innovation-centric” practices:

- Let the newcomer's in-firm mission evolve in order to facilitate the process of getting the newcomer on-board.

- Evolve certain organizational features in order to facilitate the process of getting the newcomer on-board.

-Practice of unveiling the newcomer face-to-face to the organizational members

-Organizing a welcome-on-board office party

-Practices that hinge around putting together teams ready to host the new hire:

- Merge the new hire into a particular workgroup team.

- Merge the new hire into a training team (for “on-the-job” or professional development training).

- Build a newcomer-mentor buddy system

- Practice that hinge around inviting the newcomer on work breaks and off-the-job leisure activities

- Identity evaluation practices: insider organizational members observe, monitor and test the new hire for the purpose of assessing the newcomer's identity and personality profile.

-Practices designed to mould an identity adjustment:

- Organizational members explicitly ask the new hire to readjust certain behavioral and attitudinal aspects.

- Organizational members openly demonstrate their lack of recognition for the newcomer by dismissively cold-shouldering them.

- Show-of-confidence practices:

- Organizational members adopt welcoming and attentive behavior patterns to demonstrate recognition of the newcomer's identity.

- Organizational members explicitly voice their recognition for the newcomer.

- Information obstructionism practice

-Practices that hinge around actively delivering valuable onboarding information:

- chatting with the newcomer,

- giving verbal guidance,

- handing over material information sources (job-related document material, rules and regulations, organizational chart, and so on).

-Practices timetabling the sequenced transmission of information:

- Rank-ordering information based on its importance for the newcomer's learning and adjustment processes.

- Scheduling information release to the newcomer.

- Practices that hinge around formalizing valuable socialization information:

- putting together a new employee handbook.

- drafting a welcome statement.

- Guided-tour practice: visually signpost the location and host space for interpersonal and material information sources.

- **Practices hinging on positioning the newcomer within the space** via measures that integrate the newcomer's need for face-to-face access to interpersonal information sources.

-Adopting enthusiastic attitudes and behaviors in response to queries voiced by newcomers.

- Adopting aggressive or pained behaviors in response to queries voiced by newcomers.
- Adopting attentive and receptive behaviors and attitudes to newcomers' innovative proposals and behavior patterns.
- Adopting behaviors and attitudes that talk down or stifle newcomers' innovative proposals and behavior patterns.
- Adopting or adapting some of the newcomer's innovative proposals and/or behaviors.

3. Organizational socialization – making the switch from practices to tactics

This next section proposes to tie up some of the socialization practices inventoried in French SMEs with the socialization tactics identified in Van Maanen & Schein's (1979) typology. The natural cohesiveness shared between other inventoried practices prompts us to propose that there are further types of socialization tactics adding to those identified in the Van Maanen & Schein model.

3.1. The practices tied to Van Maanen & Schein's (1979) socialization tactics

Based on Van Maanen & Schein's (1979) definition of informal tactics, the practices allied to this tactic-type are those that differentiate the newcomer from the firm's organizational members. Three practices inventoried in the SMEs fit this orientation: adapted work practices, learning-centric practices, and hands-off practices. Looking closely, and each of these sets of practices consists in assigning newcomer's activity in a way that job content or performance expectations create conditions in which the newcomer gets an opportunity to forge their own position within the firm.

In contrast, practices allied to formal-type tactics are those that leave no room to distinguish the newcomer from the firm's organizational members. A case that fits this pattern is normal work practices, where the newcomer is assigned exactly the same activity as their peers in terms of job tasks or performance targets.

Based on Van Maanen & Schein's (1979) definition of investiture tactics (1979), the practices allied to this tactic-type are those constructed to confirm the identity of the entering recruit and to ratify the dependability and usefulness of those personal characteristics they bring with them to the organization. A case that fits this pattern is practices wherein organization members adopt welcoming and attentive behavior to ratify the entering recruit's identity or even go as far as explicitly telling them that they 'fit right in'.

At the opposite end of the continuum, practices allied to divestiture-type tactics are actions that progressively disaffirm the identity of the newly entering recruit. A case that fits this pattern are practices that involve organizational members explicitly asking the new recruit to readjust certain behavioral and attitudinal aspects or openly demonstrating their lack of recognition for the newcomer by dismissively cold-shouldering them.

Finally, we identified another practice that is visibly oriented by a tactic at mid-way on the investiture—divestiture continuum. The practice in question is where insider organizational

members assess the newcomer's identity and personal characteristics once the recruit has entered the firm, or else they monitor and test the new hire for the purpose of assessing their abilities, motives and values.

Based on Van Maanen & Schein's (1979) definition of collective tactics (1979), the practices oriented by this tactic-type are those constructed to take a group of recruits and put them through the same experiences together. Two socialization practices observed in French SMEs were allied to this tactic-type: practices that revolve around putting together workgroup teams and practices that revolve around putting together training teams comprised exclusively of newcomers.

At the opposite end of the scale, the practices allied to what Van Maanen & Schein (1979) defined as serial tactics are those that help build a relationship between the newcomer and their predecessor or an organizational peer. Several socialization practices fit with this orientation: placing the new recruit in a workgroup team alongside either their predecessor or some of their peers is one; another is placing the new recruit in a training team that features either their predecessor or one of their peers; another still is appointing the new recruit's predecessor or one of their peers as their tutor/mentor.

Under Van Maanen & Schein's (1979) model, "sequential" tactics are designed to specify identifiable steps for the newcomer to know what different phases and passages they need to go through before they can climb to reach the "target role" (the reverse of the "random" tactics found at the opposite end of the continuum). There is a degree of overlap here with the fixed tactic-type, which refers to efforts to provide the recruit with knowledge of the time it will take to complete each passage-sequence (the reverse of the "variable" tactics found at the opposite end of the continuum). Whether these tactics qualify as sequential or fixed, they all orient organizational members' practices towards communicating information on social mobility and career path. We did not observe field evidence of these orientations in any of the SMEs surveyed. This result may reflect the fact that SMEs tend to lean towards variable and random socialization tactics, i.e. they do not communicate this kind of information content to new recruits. However, this explanation may only tell part of the story, and there are also grounds for challenging whether this category of socialization tactics is effectively meaningful. This second explanation gained weight with the work of Morrison (1995) grounded by Miller & Jablin (1991), who showed that there are other sources of information content far more critical to newcomers' successful organizational assimilation (headed by technical information, feedback from co-workers on performance and behaviors, information on their social peer group).

Table 1 recaps our propositions for tying the socialization tactics identified in Van Maanen & Schein's (1979) typology and the socialization practices inventoried in our sample of French SMEs (author reference).

Table 1: Propositions connecting content of socialization practices to content of Van Maanen & Schein (1979)-model socialization tactics

Socialization tactics	Socialization practices
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Van Maanen & Schein (1979)	(Bargues-Bourlier, 2009, 2010)
<i>Formal tactics</i>	- Normal work practices
<i>Informal tactics</i>	- Adapted work practices - Learning-centric practices - Hands-off practices
<i>Investiture practices</i>	- Show-of-confidence practices
<i>Divestiture tactics</i>	- Identity evaluation practices - Practices designed to mould an identity adjustment
<i>Serial tactics</i>	- Forming workgroup teams that place the new recruit alongside their peers or their predecessor - Forming training teams that place the new recruit alongside their peers or their predecessor - Forming recruit/peer (or recruit/predecessor) one-to-one mentorships
<i>Disjunctive tactics</i>	- No actions (intendedly or otherwise) aimed at placing recruits in contact with peers in workgroup teams or tutorships
<i>Collective tactics</i>	- Forming workgroup teams that place several new recruits together in the same cohort - Forming training teams that place several new recruits together in the same cohort
<i>Individual tactics</i>	- No actions (intendedly or otherwise) aimed at placing recruits in contact with other recruits
<i>Fixed/variable tactics</i>	<i>Practices not identified in the SMEs surveyed</i>
<i>Sequential/random tactics</i>	<i>Practices not identified in the SMEs surveyed</i>

A number of the socialization practices inventoried in the SMEs surveyed could not be tied to socialization tactics identified Van Maanen & Schein (1979). Our analysis now turns the spotlight on these practices, and we propose to reshuffle them into a fresh set of groups highlighting the logical cohesiveness that ties them together and that can be used to emerge and identify other types of socialization tactics.

3.2. The practices tied to other organizational socialization tactics

We identify a set of practices that are aimed at building newcomers' social relationships. However, in contrast with serial/disjunctive and individual/collective-dimension tactics (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), these practices are not aimed at building relationship ties neither with pairs and predecessors nor with other new recruits but rather building relationship ties with various categories of insider staff. Practices that fit this pattern include practices of unveiling the newcomer face-to-face to the organizational members, practices that hinge around inviting the recruit on work breaks or off-the-job leisure activities (like a barbecue party), practices that involve integrating a recruit into a workgroup or training team comprised colleagues that are not peers, predecessors or new recruits. Our proposition is to rethink these practices as a potential vector of organizational "sociability/unsociability" tactics. Put more

straightforwardly, thus type of tactic expresses the extent to which organizational members engage in facilitating the recruit in their efforts to build social relationships ‘across the board’.

Note that we also identify a set of practices aimed at organizing the content of information released to new recruits — practices such as timetabling information releases, formally drafting the information content of various source-media (employee handbook, welcome statement). This dimension of practices revolves around how strongly the organization wants to keep a structural hold on how information gets communicated to new recruits. We see these practices as tied to a polarized tactics dimension that we term “constructed information content *versus* unconstructed information content”.

We further identify a set of socialization practices more or less consciously geared to the purpose of either evolving or conserving the work environment encountered by the new recruit. Cases that fit this pattern are practices that hinge around evolving a newcomer’s in-firm mission, practices that hinge around evolving the newcomer’s organizational role, or practices that hinge around evolving certain organizational features in order to facilitate the process of getting the newcomer on-board. This set also extends to practices that consist in adopting (or adapting) some of the innovative or out-of-the-box ideas or behaviors that recruits bring with them. On the other end of the continuum, we also observed practices where organizational members seek to stifle any innovative new idea or behavior that recruits bring with them. Taken together, this cluster of practices does not link back to any of tactic dimension in the Van Maanen & Schein (1979) model, and so we are prompted to propose that they should be considered as a vector of “innovative/conservative” socialization tactics.

Finally, we identify socialization practices that aim to shape and mould recruits’ pro-active systems of thinking and behavior — in other words, their socialization strategies. To illustrate, initiatives such as handing over job-related paperwork, positioning the recruit in the host space via measures integrating the need for face-to-face access to co-workers, organizing a walk-round tour of the company to provide visual bearings on where to look and who to see for information, and adopting attentive and enthusiastic attitudes and behaviors in response to queries voiced by recruits, are all practices that reflect attempts to facilitate recruits’ information-seeking efforts. At the other end of the spectrum, there are also practices that translate no attempt to aid the information-seeking recruit or even more or less conscious desire to actually block and hamper them in their information-seeking efforts. Cases that fit this pattern are information obstructionism practices or behaviors that involve demonstrating an aggressive attitude in response to queries voiced by new recruits. We thus identify a new polarized tactics dimension that we term “pro-information-seeking *versus* anti-information-seeking” tactics. Table 2 recaps our propositions for tying up the new sets of socialization tactics identified above and the socialization practices inventoried in our sample of French SMEs.

Table 2: Propositions connecting content of socialization practices to content of the socialization tactics left unidentified by the Van Maanen & Schein (1979) model

Organizational socialization tactics	Socialization practices (Bargues, 2010)
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<p>Sociability tactics The organization is looking to facilitate relational connections between recruits and a broad panel of organizational members</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Practice of unveiling the newcomer face-to-face to the organizational members -Welcome-on-board office party -Practices that hinge around inviting the newcomer on work breaks and/or off-the-job leisure activities - Forming workgroup teams that place the new recruit alongside colleagues that are not peers, predecessor or other new recruits - Forming training teams that place the new recruit alongside colleagues that are not peers, predecessor or other new recruits
<p>Unsociability tactics</p>	<p>Absence of actions (intendedly or otherwise) aimed at placing recruits in contact with a broad panel of different-category company staff</p>
<p>Tactic of structuring the information content The organization constructs the release of information useful to the recruit onboarding process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Practices timetabling the sequenced transmission of information -Practices formalizing information aimed at onboarding purposes (employee handbook, welcome statement)
<p>Tactic of non structuring the information content</p>	<p>Absence of actions (intendedly or otherwise) organizing the information content transmitted to recruits</p>
<p>Innovative tactics The organization exploits the fact an ‘outsider’ has joined as an opportunity to innovate and evolve</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Innovation-centric practice: CEOs or senior managers evolve the newcomer’s in-firm mission and/or evolve certain organizational features (such as scope of activity) in order to facilitate the process of getting the newcomer on-board -Adopting innovative ideas and/or behaviors that recruits bring with them
<p>Conservative tactics The organization refuses any innovation impelled by the presence of an ‘outside’ element and orients socialization initiatives towards embedding and entrenching its ‘traditional’ system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Attitudes and behaviors that talk down and stifle new recruits’ innovative proposals and behavior patterns.
<p>Pro-information-seeking tactics The organization attaches value to recruits’ information-seeking efforts and seeks to facilitate the process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information transmission practices (handing over job-related paperwork, chatting, discussion and verbal guidance) - Guided tour of the company (to give bearings on where to look and who to see for information) - Positioning the recruit in the host space via measures integrating the need for face-to-face access to coworkers -Adopt attentive and enthusiastic attitudes and behaviours in response to queries voiced by new recruits
<p>Anti-information-seeking tactics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adopt aggressive or pained attitudes and behaviors

The organization does not attach value to recruits' information-seeking efforts and does not facilitate the process. Indeed, the organization may even make it harder.	in response queries and requests voiced by newcomers.
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4. Discussion

Contributions

This exploration into the content of organizational socialization tactics has prompted us to refine the Van Maanen & Schein (1979) typology by proposing a further four tactics polarities: *sociability* versus *unsociability* tactics, *constructed information content* versus *unconstructed information content* tactics, *innovative* versus *conservative* tactics, *pro-information-seeking* tactics versus *anti-information-seeking* tactics. A number of these tactics orient the socialization practices of the members of the organization and thereby influence newcomers' socialization strategies. This work also contributes to align the typology of organizational socialization tactics under the interactionist-school of organizational socialization in which newcomer had accorded an active role in mediating personal and role outcomes (Jones, 1983). This paper thus brings refinements to theory on the content of organizational socialization tactics. This is an important contribution, since although it has become a cornerstone of the literature; the Van Maanen & Schein typology has not been revisited in finer detail since 1979, despite prompts from the authors to continue building on their foundational work.

Our research analysis has also clarified the dividing line and interplays between the content of organizational socialization practices and organizational socialization tactics. Indeed, we build on the methodological approach developed by Jones (1986) to connect each socialization practice inventoried in our survey sample on French SMEs to the socialization tactic that appears to orient it.

Limitations and directions for future research

The new taxonomy propositions produced through this exploratory research warrant confirmatory work. Furthermore, we see no conclusive end to this work, which could be extended and expanded by studies in settings outside the SME sphere. Given these limitations, the insights and evidence proposed through this research on the content of socialization tactics could platform explanatory studies focusing on the interplays connecting socialization tactics to various socialization factors and mechanisms.

Beside, our propositions on the interplays between organizational socialization practices and tactics also warrant further confirmatory work. As things stand, the field theory propositions put forward here are simply a stepping stone towards a more extensive understanding of the interplay between these two constructs.

Changing tack, readers looking at the methodology employed here could be forgiven for believing we have adopted a perspective that minimizes the power of the actors on the organizational socialization process. In reality, though, we know full well that socialization agents never act solely in blind conformity with the orientations distilled through their environment, preferring to also follow their own interests. This means that the practices observed in this research doesn't reflect exclusively the organization's orientations on the socialization process; they also translate agent interplay. However, this precision does not ultimately undermine the acuity of our method; indeed its aim was to explore the tactics and to enrich their description. That said, our method would fall short if asked to identify real socialization tactics actually employed at grass-roots level, being unable to disentangle the effect of interactions from agency interplay on these tactics.

Managerial implications

In perspective of managerial practice, the deeper insight into socialization tactics provided through this study offers practitioners a platform they can pick up and run with. However, the proposed connections relating socialization tactics to socialization practices already give keys to turning these constructs into daily managerial practice. They also give managers a valuable tool for checking whether the socialization practices mobilized by their teams fit the tactics they hope to instil, and clues for re-orienting them if necessary. To keynote, this study can empower managers with more advanced knowledge and insights on how to handle organizational socialization, as it sharpening their consciousness of the organizational socialization tactics and practices going on around them.

Conclusion

Newcomer socialization is heavily shaped by the actions that organization and organizational members mobilize consciously or not to structure the process. The content component of organizational socialization tactics had not been revisited since the foundational work of Van Maanen & Schein (1979). Furthermore, there is a pressing need to address the interplay of the content of these tactics with the content of socialization practices. By adopting an interpretational approach, this paper has brought valuable contributions adding depth to the organizational socialization tactics type-model, and has proposed an underlying set of socialization practices for each socialization tactics type-group identified. It offers field practitioners the codes they need to decipher the formal and informal processes than organizations mobilize in order to influence the socialization of new recruits.

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