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Publication Date

2017

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

The Recognition of Expertise as a Centripetal Force:
Membership Negotiation in Non-Profit Organizations

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in Communication

by

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June 2017

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May 2017

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you first and foremost to Dr. Karen Myers who advised this thesis and has been crucial to my own socialization into the academic discipline. Karen, I have learned so much from your insight and guidance as this paper has evolved. Thank you to my committee members Dr. Linda Putnam and Dr. Norah Dunbar who helped greatly in refining this project, as well as to Dr. Jennifer Gibbs for her helpful comments on an earlier iteration of this paper. Thank you to each of you for how thoughtfully you have contributed your expertise.

Next, thank you to the participants of this study and the many employees who work in non-profit organizations. I am impressed by the ways you use your diverse range of abilities to help those in need. Without you, there is no story.

And lastly, thank you to the wide circle of family, friends, and mentors who continue to encourage me as I negotiate my own identity. I am eternally grateful that you recognize who I am and can remind me when I forget. Thank you. Christina Seto, Jo Cristea, and Spencer Nicholls, thank you for being my willing listeners and readers. To Dr. Ryan Hartwig, Dr. Courtney Davis, and Dr. Michael Bruner, thank you for teaching me how to pay attention and for helping me follow my love for words to graduate school. To my parents Sue and Ray Endacott and sister Nicole Endacott, thank you for all your unyielding support and your many good questions about this work. This one's for you.

ABSTRACT

The Recognition of Expertise as a Centripetal Force:

Membership Negotiation in Non-Profit Organizations

by

Camille G. Endacott

Using interview data collected at three non-profit organizations, this study investigates how employees share knowledge gained from former organizational roles in their current workplace and the implications of doing so for their organizational membership. This study examines the communicative practices that employees use to negotiate roles that incorporate their expertise into their work and recognition by others for doing so. Results reveal that the functional domain where individuals were positioned shaped the ways in which their knowledge and skills were communicated and recognized as expertise by others. These findings show that employees actively work to craft favorable positions in the workplace rather than merely adjusting to their formal job description. Moreover, this study contributes to organizational socialization research by highlighting employees' agency to take part in their own socialization and the impact of others' perceptions based on their functional role.

Keywords: membership negotiation, expertise, identity work, organizational roles.

The Recognition of Expertise as a Centripetal Force: Membership Negotiation in Non-Profit Organizations

According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015), today's workers have held an average of 11.7 jobs between the ages 18 and 48. Given the number of times Americans change jobs, most individuals who enter organizations do so as veteran workers, or individuals who have previous job experience and, in many cases, developed areas of expertise (Saks & Ashforth, 1997, p. 271). While much socialization research focuses on how members gain the expertise needed to be successful in their current organizational role, many employees enter organizations already equipped with unique knowledge and skills that they have gained in former organizational settings. Like neophyte newcomers (individuals without previous job experience), they are socialized by their organizations to become familiar with required job tasks, to learn about their supervisors' expectations as well as develop an understanding of the culture of the organization (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). At the same time, these veteran workers are faced with reconciling potentially conflicting understandings of their roles garnered from past employment with their current organizational positions. Employees' expertise, allegiances, and experiences gained from their past work are not necessarily barriers to organizational socialization, nor does their use of practices learned from previous employers indicate a lack of motivation to identify with their new organization. Instead, employees may continue to draw on and discuss their past expertise in service to their organization and in doing so become recognized for their unique contributions.

While organizational socialization research has focused primarily on organizational efforts to develop newcomers into productive loyal workers, the active and agentic ways that

workers facilitate their own integration and utilize the expertise they already possess are far less represented (Beyer & Hannah, 2002). In particular, socialization research has not attended to how employees make their unique areas of expertise available to coworkers— that is, how they share knowledge beyond the functional requirements of their role – and what the implications of doing so are for their organizational membership.

Membership negotiation, as first conceptualized by McPhee and Zaug (2000) and later developed as a theoretical construct by Scott and Myers (2010), addresses inadequacies in previous conceptualizations of how members are integrated into organizations by describing how organizational members create, adapt to, or change their organizational roles. These scholars argue that as members interact, they are not only socialized by the organization but they also negotiate boundaries of their roles and their identities within the organization and their workgroups. Through interaction with supervisors and coworkers in the workplace, they individualize their roles as well as how they are perceived by others. For members with salient areas of past expertise, crafting roles that allow them to be seen as experts by others in their workplace may be an especially important component of membership negotiation.

This study focuses exclusively on the membership negotiation of employees within non-profit organizations. Non-profit organizations are well-suited to exploring issues of membership negotiation because of the relative flexibility of members' roles and the tendency for workers to have high job mobility and to move across organizational and industrial boundaries (Anheier, 2014). Non-profit organizations, especially small non-profit organizations, often have a scarcity of resources such that employees frequently draw on a range of skills and expertise to accomplish organizational goals (Anheier, 2014). Young non-

profit employees' job satisfaction is also more contingent on how closely they perceive the fit between their education and job than for-profit employees whose higher salaries offset the effects of poor education-job fit (Lee & Sabharwal, 2016). Thus, non-profit employees may especially value roles that allow them to exercise their existing knowledge. Features unique to non-profit organizations, such as their mission, emphasis on development, and commitment to engagement (Koschmann, 2012) may also motivate members to draw on their expertise in creative ways. Lastly, non-profit organizations are especially poised to benefit from their members' knowledge gained from other sectors because of their frequent dependence on interorganizational collaboration to carry out their work (Barge & Hackett, 2003; Lewis, 2005).

Previous research has provided little information about how workers draw on expertise that is not primarily embedded within their functional role to negotiate their membership and develop, maintain, or cast off organizational identities. The purpose of this investigation is to understand how organizational members communicate these discrete areas of knowledge to others in their workplace, how others come to perceive this knowledge as expertise, and how the recognition of expertise relates to membership negotiation. Towards these ends, this paper begins with a review of literature on membership negotiation as it relates to organizational socialization, expertise construction, and identity work. Next, this paper describes how employees share their knowledge such that others recognize it as expertise and the implications of doing so for their organizational membership. Finally, implications of members' agency in the formation of their roles for the theory and practice of membership negotiation are offered.

Membership Negotiation and Organizational Socialization

Organizational socialization is “the process by which one is taught and learns ‘the ropes’ of a particular organizational role” (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 211). Through the efforts of organizations to socialize newcomers, entering members attain skills and knowledge that enable them to become productive and accepted members of the organization. As they are socialized, they often individualize their roles and adapt how they perform tasks in line with their own individual preferences and needs (Jablin, 2001). In doing so, they not only define their organizational position, they also define their usefulness toward fulfilling organizational goals. It allows members to define how they fit into their workgroup and organization (Moreland & Levine, 2001).

Like Bullis (1993), I adopt the term “organizational socialization” to describe the process through which newcomers learn about an organization and become trained to take their part in it (Schein, 1968). While Jablin (1987) prefers the term “organizational assimilation” to refer to both the organizational efforts to socialize newcomers and members’ efforts to individualize their role, I use organizational socialization to align with Van Maanen and Schein’s (1979) model. In their theory of socialization, these authors focus much of their theorizing on organizations’ efforts to teach newcomers about their values and expectations but also account for individuals’ self-initiated movement within organizational domains.

After much examination of the tactics used by organizations to socialize newcomers, organizational socialization research has turned to take into account the ways organizational members proactively facilitate their own socialization. For instance, newcomers may seek feedback (Black & Ashford, 1995), build relationships with their supervisor (Ashford & Black, 1996), or manage and monitor behavior (Saks & Ashforth, 1996) as means of adjustment to new jobs and workplaces. Scholars have also examined how organizational

socialization tactics interact with newcomer behavior to predict organizational outcomes (Ashforth, Sluss, & Saks, 2007; Griffin, Colella, & Goparaju, 2000; Saks & Ashforth, 2007). However, little empirical work has conceptualized socialization as a process of constructing membership – that is, not merely as an adjustment to unfamiliarity, but as a constitutive process that produces the roles and relationships that sustain organizing.

McPhee and Zaug (2000) offer a theoretical framework to account for the constitution of membership in their identification of four flows of communication that constitute organizations. One of those flows or types of communication essential for organizational functioning is membership negotiation. Membership negotiation “establishes, maintains, or transforms” the relationship between an organization and its members (McPhee & Zaug, 2000). Drawing on structuration theory, Scott and Myers (2010) extended the construct by arguing that as individuals negotiate their membership in organizations, “identities and power relationships are intentionally and unintentionally produced, reproduced, and transformed” (p. 96). Rather than restricting socialization to the entry stage, membership negotiation considers the ongoing nature of role construction and the development of relationships with others in the workplace. From this perspective, it is through communication that organizational members constitute their roles as well as their relationships to other members and the organization as a whole. In doing so, they both are *socialized into* and *they themselves create* patterns of norms, power relations, and formal structures that facilitate and constrain their organizational membership.

Empirical research in membership negotiation examines “the practices and strategies that constitute identities, positions, and membership boundaries, and status gradations” (McPhee, Poole, & Iverson, 2014, p. 81). For example, scholars have examined how

individuals discursively position themselves to constitute professional identity (Kuhn, 2009), the assimilation of workers into high reliability organizations (Myers, 2005), and employees' negotiation of work-life conflicts around family leave policies (Kirby & Krone, 2002). This paper continues in this vein. To do so, I re-examine Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) model of socialization and considers its implications for membership negotiation and the reconciliation of past work experience with organizational roles. Next, it considers how membership negotiation outlines the process of role innovation. Finally, it considers the identity work involved in negotiating membership and presents the research questions of interest in this study.

Socialization into Organizational Roles

Foundational theorizing of organizational socialization was offered by Schein (1971) and Van Maanen and Schein (1979). This study draws on their model as a basis for conceptualizing organizational entry and subsequent employee integration. While this model has been criticized for conceptualizing socialization as linear despite evidence to the contrary (Kramer, 2011) as well as for reifying notions of organizations as bound containers (Axley, 1984; Smith & Turner, 1995), it serves as a useful guiding framework to explore how individuals position themselves and become centralized within organizations. It also provides useful delineations about the multi-faceted nature of individuals' membership by considering their place within three distinctive domains. Secondly, I use this model without adhering to Van Maanen and Schein's assumption that organizations have strict boundaries. Instead, I conceptualize organizations' boundaries as permeable to outside influence, including other organizational practices and larger institutional logics, as I will show later in this paper. For these reasons, I use Schein's (1971) and Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) foundational

models of organizational socialization to frame my study but link their conceptualization of organization socialization to membership negotiation.

Schein (1971) proposes that as newcomers join organizations, they enter three different domains: a functional domain, a hierarchical domain, and an inclusionary domain. The functional domain refers to the divisions of tasks that occur in organizations. For example, an organization may have divisions such as the marketing department, human relations, or the finance department. When an individual enters an organization, they enter into a certain functional domain and are socialized to the types of tasks and work they will complete. Next, the hierarchical domain refers to the distribution of ranks within an organization. Organizations will vary in the number of levels members can ascend and the mobility with which they can do so. An individual is then socialized into a certain position within the organizational hierarchy. Van Maanen and Schein argue that most individuals will become more socialized and valuable to the organization as they move up within this hierarchy. Lastly, the inclusionary domain is interactional in nature and refers to the relationships formed among organizational members. Most newcomers to organizations enter on the periphery of the inclusionary domain and move towards the center as they gain trust, form stronger relationships with their coworkers, and become organizational insiders (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

The demonstration of expertise may be an especially important element within the functional domain, which refers to the various divisions of organizations that are typically segmented by tasks for which they are responsible. As such, the functional domain defines the skills that are necessary for successful integration into a given functional segment. This specific domain may both facilitate and constrain the types of expertise that members share

based on its relevance to its associated tasks. Though organizational members are socialized to occupy certain positions in these domains, they can also adapt and change if the function of their tasks changes, if they move higher or lower in the organizational hierarchy, or if they move closer to the periphery or center of organizational activities. This type of movement may be facilitated by the construction of perceived expertise--that is, by sharing particular knowledge or skills that are seen as masterful or valuable by others within the organization.

In addition to moving in and across organizational domains, Van Maanen and Schein (1979) argue that individuals are also socialized into organizational roles. They identify three components of these roles, through which members can respond to organizational socialization. The first component of an organizational role is its corresponding knowledge base, which refers to the repertoire of solutions available for problem solving associated with the role occupant's duties. Secondly, the role's strategic base refers to the logics used to select solutions within that role. Lastly, each organizational role possesses a mission. This mission positions the purpose of the role in relation to the mission of the organization as a whole and to other roles in the organization. These missions "legitimate, justify and define the ends" that the occupants of the role pursue (p. 227). These three components intertwine to form organizational roles that Van Maanen and Schein (1979) argue are fairly static over time even as newcomers step into and out of them. The authors argue that many newcomers take what they call a "custodial" response to their role by maintaining the components as they found them (p. 229).

However, Van Maanen and Schein (1979) acknowledge that another type of response can occur --- that of role innovation. Role innovation occurs when role occupants redefine the basic premises of their positions. While Van Maanen and Schein acknowledge that such

innovation occurs, they do not explicate how individuals do so or what the implications of innovation are for others in the organization. Furthermore, the resources that are available to members to incorporate into their roles – the knowledge, strategies, and ways of communicating their purpose in organizations – are largely unexplored.

Conceptualizing individuals' role innovation and movement in organizational domains as membership negotiation can better account for the communicative ways in which members position themselves in organizational space. Organizational structures, such as formal expectations for a given role, both constrain and facilitate members' movement (Giddens, 1984). While Van Maanen and Schein's model privileges these structures and the socialization tactics through which individuals learn their roles, members also have agency in establishing their place within the organization. Members' communication of their expertise is one such way that they may exercise agency in negotiating their membership. In doing so, they shape and are shaped by others' expectations for them. Scott and Myers (2010) propose that if members' perceptions of their role align with the expectations of others in their organization, their roles are more likely to be reinforced. The agentic ways through which members can share expertise and the recursive process through which it is recognized by others and comes to bear on their organizational roles is explored in the next section.

Membership Negotiation and Expertise Construction

While Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) model describes how individuals are socialized into domains and roles of a single employing organization, it does not take into account how employees' past organizational memberships – the roles they have held as well as the expertise they gained in those roles – impact how they are integrated into their current organization. Clearly, individuals' past organizational experiences equip them with certain

spheres of knowledge and expectations about how that knowledge should be exercised that can impact their subsequent socialization. Where an individual has been located within the domains of their former organizations should provide them with certain expectations about where they fit in their current organizational domains. For instance, an employee who was previously positioned high in the hierarchical domain in a supervisory position may negotiate their membership so that they can lead in some capacity, even if only as a volunteer chair of a committee.

The same individual may also discuss past achievements with others to gain validation for their contributions (Ashforth, 2001). Communicating the knowledge and identities gained from their past work experience may also facilitate employees' movement along the inclusionary domain of their current organization. For example, employees' discussion of past knowledge may lead to them being seen as more *rewarding* by their coworkers – that is, seen as well-positioned to contribute to the goals of their workgroup (Moreland & Levine, 2001). This facilitates their development from outsiders to insiders who are included in central organizational activities.

Similarly, members' past roles (and their accompanying knowledge, strategies, and missions) provide resources with which they can innovate their current organizational role. For instance, the extensive expertise members have gained in a former role may be quite different than the accompanying knowledge base of their current role. An individual who has worked previously in finance must acquire new knowledge to work in a marketing department. However, many employees do not abandon their previously-gained functional knowledge simply because they work in a new organizational domain. Instead, in certain situations, they may draw on their long-held knowledge base to better accomplish their new

work. Members may also discuss strategies garnered from other roles as they implement them. In doing so, they may construct new expectations for the role they now hold. Individuals may also reconcile differences among conflicting role missions. If the formal boundaries of a member's organizational position do not allow them to reconcile their previous role missions, they may potentially negotiate their membership such that they can draw on and implement long-held knowledge in informal ways.

Within the socialization literature, little attention has been paid to how members utilize expertise gained prior to assuming their role in their current organization. However, outside the socialization literature, scholars have described the communicative processes through which expertise is constructed in organizations, albeit within the institutional logics of the work at hand without consideration of extra-role knowledge. These scholars have argued for a shift away from viewing expertise as a cognitive resource consisting of task-specific knowledge and instead recommend reconceptualizing expertise as a construct that emerges from interaction. Kuhn and Jackson (2008) propose a framework for studying expertise by way of examining the complex processes used to “access, create, and apply knowledge” (p. 455). The authors argue that the production of the content of expertise is social and occurs within communities, as novices are transformed into experts via socialization. From this perspective, expertise exists primarily through the communication that makes it available and laden with power. For the purposes of this paper, expertise is seen as emergent from interaction: employees' knowledge is conceptualized as expertise when others in their workplace recognize it as valuable.

Members may seek to obtain recognition of their knowledge and skills in interactions with others outside of the organization. Expertise construction may function as a form of

currency with clients, especially when the work at hand is less tangible or is ambiguous in nature (Alvesson 2001; Treem, 2016). Treem's study examined how public relations employees communicated their knowledge such that it was seen as expertise by clients. In lieu of displaying technical skills or discussing specific domains of knowledge, employees were still able to demonstrate expertise through *how* they processed information and delivered it to their clients. Though demonstrating expertise to external clients may be necessary for continued business, organizational members' communication of expertise to coworkers is crucial for establishing others' expectations for their organizational role.

In this vein, members also demonstrate their knowledge and skills with others within the organization. Treem (2012) identified tactics through which employees in knowledge-intensive firms constructed and attributed expertise to one another. Treem found that individuals were considered experts when they transcended established procedures, created opportunities for specialization, showed that they could handle large quantities of information and shared information without being asked for it. Expert employees were also quick to volunteer their help in locating relevant information and to contribute insights gained from their past experience.

As they share their knowledge, employees must also manage others' impressions of their doing so. In Treem's study, employees managed their coworkers' perceptions of them by celebrating their contributions to the organization instead of gloating about their individual successes. Similarly, Erdhardt and Gibbs (2014) found that employees used technology to promote themselves, but their managers often used it to diffuse credit to larger groups. These studies suggest that employees must manage the dialectic of volunteering their contributions without seeming overly self-promoting. In addition to these self-presentational

concerns, employees who share knowledge from their previous organizations may also need to consider how others perceive their organizational identification, or their relationship to the organization. Members can communicate their relationship to the organization to others in ways that create, maintain, alter, or dissolve their organizational identification (Scott, Corman, & Cheney, 1998). If they talk too much about the achievements they gained in the past or how their former organization did work, they may be perceived as living in the past and less central to the organization. Other members may in turn influence these individuals' identification so that they can contribute to the organization in more normative ways (Scott & Myers, 2010). Still, as individuals disclose expertise that serves the collective organizational interests, they may reinforce their own identification. Informal or formal recognition of their expertise may further cement their organizational identification (Bullis & Bach, 1989).

Previous work suggests that employees draw on the resources available to them to communicate their expertise to others and define where they fit into organizations. If employees can communicate their knowledge such that they are perceived as competent, they may be more likely to be involved in organizational decisions and feel valued by others in their workplace (Yoon, Gupa, & Hollingshead, 2016). Consequently, the communication of expertise may have important implications for how organizational members negotiate their roles and areas of influence in organizations (Scott & Myers, 2010). However, employees must find ways of sharing their knowledge in ways that are favorable to others and organizationally appropriate. To better understand how members communicate their knowledge and skills, particularly knowledge and skills gained outside of their current organizational role, and how this communication is related to the recognition of expertise by others, the following research question is posed:

RQ1: How do members share knowledge and skills gained from their past work experience such that others recognize it as expertise?

The Negotiation of Expert Identities

Underlying membership negotiation is the assumption that individuals seek to create organizational roles that are consistent with their identities. Svenginson and Alvesson (2003) define identity work as the ways people form, repair, maintain, strengthen, or revise the constructions of their identity. The outcome of this process is “a sense of coherence and distinctiveness” (p. 1165). Brown (2014) similarly conceptualizes the goal of identity work as clarity, a sense of wholeness, and integration among the various facets of an individual’s identities. Members have a certain degree of agency to present themselves to others in ways that support the notion of who they themselves think that they are (Snow & Anderson, 1987).

An individual’s global identity is a compilation of both personal and social identities that form a system of goals, values, attributes, and beliefs (Epstein, 1980). People seek to enact their global identity and receive confirmation for their identity in the roles that they hold (Ashforth, 2001). Individuals’ past work experience may embed itself within their global identities by shaping their values, approaches to work, or the distinctive traits by which they define themselves. For example, an employee who is trained to adhere to a professional code of exemplary service may internalize these values as part of her identity. In subsequent positions, she may seek out roles where her contributions can align with these values, even when there are no longer shared by her employing organization. In this way, employees work to negotiate their membership to achieve greater congruence between their global identity and their organizational role. In doing so, they would strive to craft positions that affirm the components of their identity that are informed by their past work experience.

Just as individuals may strive to incorporate parts of their identity into their organizational role, they may also work to distance themselves from other aspects of their work history. This may be especially true if an employee has held stigmatized or “dirty” jobs (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). However, a job does not necessarily have to be stigmatized for individuals to distance themselves from it. For instance, in Kreiner, Hollensbe, and Sheep’s (2006) study of Episcopal priests, respondents described ongoing tension between their private, individual identity with their role as a clergy member. They worked to segment their roles so that they could maintain an individual identity separate from their ministerial work. In order to maintain appropriate balance between work roles and private life, individuals may communicate in ways that leave important parts of their global identity unincorporated into their organizational positions. Or, employees who have recently undergone a career transition may wish to separate themselves from past accomplishments if they no longer see them as part of their global identity, no matter how prestigious they are.

Because identity work occurs in and around organizations, individuals’ agency to craft favorable identities is both enabled and constrained in varying degrees by organizational structure (Watson, 2008). Certainly, organizations provide patterns of interaction that are often tied to professional, social, or role identities. While individuals may draw on diverse repertoires of “prior experiences, attitudes, and knowledge” as they negotiate their identities, they do so within the boundaries of their organizational roles (Waldeck & Myers, 2007, p. 329). At the same time, organizational members may be pressured to perform some roles and not others (Simpson & Carroll, 2008). Organizational discourses and leadership may construct the identities of employees by defining them, categorizing them, or providing them with a certain vocabulary of motives, a process Alvesson and Wilmott (2002) call identity

regulation. They argue that the regulation of individual identities serves as a means of organizational control. Thus, just as organizations can contribute the raw materials of identity for individuals to infuse into their roles, they also can constrain the extent to which identities can be performed in role capacities.

One approach to understanding how individuals discursively create identities in social settings is that of positioning, developed by Davies and Harré (1990). The authors argue that human actors discursively position themselves relative to others in conversation. In the selection of content to disclose and the structuring of the narratives they tell, they define their past and preferred identities. While individuals may position themselves in a variety of ways, the influence that their talk has on the development of social identity is likely enabled and constrained by social structures such as setting, shared interests, extent of interpersonal interactions, and what is appropriate to disclose given relational norms.

Similar processes of positioning and identity creation occur as organizational members integrate and establish their place in organizations. As members interact with supervisors and others, they craft identities *in relation to* others in the organization as part of their membership negotiation (Scott & Myers, 2010). Employees work to negotiate their membership to achieve greater congruence between their global identity and their organizational role. For many organizational members, the identity of “expert” in some domains may be a crucial element of their global identity. They strive to craft positions that affirm the components of their identity – namely, their status as expert as informed by their past work experience. Individuals who are successful in doing so may be more satisfied with their work, as Cable, Gino, and Staats (2013) found that newcomers who were initially socialized to focus on personal identity and be their “authentic selves” were more satisfied

with and committed to their work than those who were socialized to focus on organizational identity. To the extent that they are able to negotiate a favorable identity, they may be more satisfied with their work and less likely to exit their organization (Gaillard, Myers, & Seibold, 2010).

In summary, individuals' previously-occupied organizational roles may provide them with salient expertise (knowledge, strategies, and missions) as well as important "expert" identities to incorporate into their organizational role. Moreover, membership negotiation captures how individuals establish their roles, as well as how they form relationships and exert power within organizations. Members negotiate roles that are aligned with their identities, which are both formed and constrained by organizational structure. Though scholars have examined how organizational members gain the expertise needed to perform their jobs well, little is known about the ways in which communication of pre-existing knowledge and skills serves as a continuing resource for individuals to negotiate their membership in organizations nor does it explain how others' recognition of their knowledge and skills as expertise affects individuals' membership, consisting of their roles, relationships, and positioning within organizational domains. To address this absence, the following research question is posed:

RQ2: How is others' recognition of their expertise related to individuals' organizational membership?

Method

To explore these research questions, participants from three non-profit organizations, all of which provide social services to vulnerable populations, were asked to participate in semi-structured interviews. Participants were drawn from these multiple sites to obtain a

representative sample and to identify patterns that held across different organizational contexts.

Organizational Sites

Data were collected at three research sites located within the greater Los Angeles area. The first site was a small, religious non-profit organization that provides housing and recovery programs for homeless families and employs approximately 30 people. The second site was a small, religious non-profit organization that provides after-school and summer education opportunities for students in low-income families and employs approximately 30 people. The third site was the veteran affairs department of a large non-profit organization that offers social services to homeless populations. The department consists of approximately 90 employees.

Participants and Procedures

Twenty-three employees participated in semi-structured interviews. A contact person at each organizational site provided email addresses of employees with previous work experience. Employees were then invited to participate and scheduled for an interview via email. Descriptive statistics of the sample are reported in Appendix A. As argued previously, non-profit employees are more likely to have gained expertise via a diversity of professional experiences, they are more likely to be interested in contributing these skills and that expertise is more likely to have been made salient to them while they carry out the duties of their current jobs. While a few participants had fairly homogenous past work experience, many of them had worked in a variety of other sectors and positions.

Participants were interviewed at their respective organizations, except for two who were interviewed by phone. Participants received informed consent forms and were told that

their participation was voluntary, they could choose not to answer any questions and their responses would be confidential. Twenty-one participants gave permission to be audio recorded. Two chose not to be recorded, so notes were taken during the interview. Instances related to expertise and expertise recognition emerged during the interview process, which focused more broadly on the impact of employees' past work experiences on their organizational membership. The interview protocol (Appendix B) was designed to elicit participants' recounting of instances in which they shared elements of their past work experience with others, their perceptions of how others viewed their past work experience as a result, and their perceptions of the effects (if any) of these discussions on their organizational membership, such as changes in their organizational role or in the relationships with their co-workers. The interviews ranged in length from 15 minutes to 40 minutes, with an average length of 27 minutes. The transcriptions and the field notes consisted of 112 pages of single-spaced data.

After initially analyzing the data, clarification I conducted a follow up interview with one respondent who had discussed changes he made to his role but not how he had gone about implementing these changes. The follow up interview provided clarity and insight into his role innovation. I also sought to conduct follow up interviews with my primary contact person at each organizational site. However, the primary contact person at the third site had been transferred to another organizational site shortly after the original data collection and was not available for an interview. Thus, two follow up interviews were conducted with representatives from sites one and two. These interviews provided very little new information (supporting that I had achieved theoretical saturation) and supported my initial analysis.

These three interviews were transcribed, yielding an additional 6 single-spaced pages of data and were included in the final analysis.

Data Analysis

My approach to analyzing my data was informed by grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Membership negotiation and communication of expertise were used as sensitizing concepts to code sections of the data that related thematically to the posed research questions (Tracy, 2012; Lindlof & Taylor, 2010). In the first reading of the data, each occasion where participants discussed their knowledge or skills, how they shared it, how others recognized their knowledge and skills as expertise, or how their expertise affected their membership was flagged for further analysis. Only knowledge and skills that participants said they had obtained through their past work experience were included in this coding. In consideration of the prevalence of paid internships in non-profit work, these experiences were included in the category of past work. In the next round of coding, each segment was also descriptively coded. For example, segments related to expertise content were coded into categories such as “communicating with populations” or “sharing organizational best practices.” Next, I looked for patterns among these codes to see how types of expertise related to how it was shared or how it was viewed by others. In this manner, data were sorted so that RQ1 could be addressed.

After revisiting the literature on membership and expertise, I collapsed my original open codes into axial codes. Throughout my reading of the data, the content of expertise, how it was shared, and how it was seen by others were clearly related to whether the expertise was related to the inner workings of the organization (for example, managing data software), to its outer workings (serving and communicating with clients), or in an arena

where expertise was demonstrated to both coworkers and clients. The axial codes were useful in that they arranged participants into groups who could then be analyzed. After further analysis of respondents' communicative practices for sharing knowledge in each group, it was clear that the functional domain in which participants worked was related to the ways their knowledge was recognized as expertise. I then sorted participants loosely into these categories by their position within a functional domain.

After sorting participants into groups, the analysis shifted such that I looked for patterns within groups, especially in relation to the extent to which they could negotiate their membership to reflect their expertise or expert status. To address RQ2, I followed a similar procedure in which I flagged all instances where employees discussed some aspect of their organizational membership (such as changes in their organizational role or status within the organization) and coded them descriptively. I then revisited these codes to create axial codes for each group such that I could identify patterns in the effects on organizational membership by the type of expertise possessed or how it was shared.

In this step, I moved from descriptive codes to more theoretical abstraction (Charmaz, 2006). First, I saw that respondents varied in the type of knowledge that they shared with others in their workplace and in how they shared it. I distinguished between employees' sharing of explicit knowledge – that is, knowledge that could be clearly articulated – and the sharing of tacit knowledge, or knowledge that is subtle, personal, and difficult to articulate precisely in words (Polanyi, 1958). A small group of respondents seemed to describe some combination of explicit and tacit knowledge that allowed them to function as brokers across groups and to communicate with various audiences. While sensitive to these variations in knowledge, I was able to return to my data to look more closely at how respondents gained

recognition for their expertise. Similarly, I noticed that the groups of respondents (sorted by their current functional domain within the organization) described different role alteration processes. For example, one group described processes of role negotiation (Van Maaren & Schein, 1979) while others described content innovation of their roles in which they added to their roles but did not change their fundamental mission. Another group described little change in their roles but instead relayed their use of more ephemeral opportunities to position themselves (Davies & Harré, 1990) as useful to their coworkers. By revisiting both literature on expertise and on membership, I could identify the processes by which respondents shared their knowledge in each domain as well as its subsequent effects on membership.

I then revisited the coded data to identify any additional patterns that illustrate links between communicating expertise and organizational membership negotiation. Finally, based on my initial analysis, I went back to the original transcripts and reread them to ensure that my findings conformed to the meanings expressed by my participants in the original interviews. I also conducted member checks in my three follow-up interviews to ensure that my interpretation of the data matched with that of participants.

Findings

In this section, I present my findings for research question one and two using the data gathered from semi-structured interviews. First, I answer research question one and show that how respondents shared the knowledge and skills gained from their past work experience varied based on what functional domain they occupied in their respective organization. Next, I answer research question two and organize the implications of expertise recognition on membership by the categories defined in research question one. Based on these data, I

propose a model of expertise recognition and its subsequent implications for membership negotiation by functional domain (see Appendix C).

RQ1: The Recognition of Expertise

Research question one asked how respondents share their knowledge and skills such that it was recognized as expertise by others. In this section, I show that respondents shared their knowledge and skills such that their recognized expertise appeared to vary based on the functional domain in which the respondents worked and the audience to whom the knowledge was directed. Most respondents fell into one of two primary functional domains. First, one group of respondents worked in the functional domain related to serving clients. Though these respondents' knowledge and skills were often directed towards clients, their coworkers recognized their expertise when it was relevant and useful to their own caseload. Next, a group of respondents worked in the functional domain related to the operations of their organization, including finance and administrative work. These respondents shared knowledge and skills directly with their coworkers by introducing new practices and completing tasks that others in the workplace were not equipped to do. Lastly, a group of respondents communicated knowledge that transcended more than one functional domain. These respondents communicated their knowledge to multiple audiences and served as organizational intermediaries. Communicative practices for sharing expertise in each of these groups are outlined in more detail below.

Expertise in the Service Domain. Nine respondents discussed knowledge and skills that applied directly to the tasks of their role and primarily to their organization's functional domain of service for clients. Respondents in this category described their skill in working with diverse populations of clients, communicating with vulnerable groups, and in

understanding the issues addressed by their organization firsthand. While these respondents' knowledge and skills varied, what they had in common was that respondents in this functional domain said that they demonstrated their expertise by how they served clients. For example, Kelly, a social worker at site three worked previously at a shelter for domestic victims. She described this expertise as it applied to working with veterans, marked primarily by her willingness to be empathetic with them. Emily, a caseworker at site one, worked previously at a shelter for individuals who were chronically homeless and mentally ill. She said that clinical experience coupled with her own emotional intelligence helped her better serve clients during their weekly counseling meetings. These respondents' skills often were directed towards maintaining good relationships with clients and addressing their needs.

The content of these respondents' knowledge was usually tacit in nature, meaning its content was hard to articulate precisely in words and was attained primarily through personal experience (Polanyi, 1958). For example, Monique, a case worker at site one, said that her skill in working with gangs in Los Angeles helped her to have greater sensitivity towards her clients. She reported: "[My experience] makes me more open to their situation and understanding when they come from that type of life or even that area, because you're affected by your environment, you know? It helps me just keep aware and be conscious of certain things when they pop up." Lisa, a case manager at site one, described the "instinct" that she obtained as a substitute teacher that allows her to better serve children affected by domestic violence. These respondents often discussed knowledge gained from experience, on-the-job training, and internships. Miguel, a program coordinator at site two, worked previously in two different restaurants. While working in food services, Miguel said that he learned how to "hustle," how to be more humble, and how to manage other employees. He

compared the more tacit skills he gained in his work experience to the formal knowledge that his colleagues with professional degrees possess.. He said, “A lot of times, you need field experience. So it’s not just books. I can read about soccer all day but if I don't play, I’m not gonna get better.” In this way, members in the service domain positioned themselves as having more tacit and relational knowledge than their more corporate colleagues.

According to many of these respondents, the audience to whom this knowledge was shared was the respondent’s clients rather than their coworkers. For instance, Marie, a social worker at site three, was involved with management at her previous job at a larger non-profit organization. In this job, she managed other employees and helped them through team-building activities and training. She called herself an expert in conflict resolution. Unlike in her past job, Marie is currently in a position in which she directly serves a caseload of clients. When asked if she would ever consider sharing her skills with others in her organization. She answered, “No, not at all. I don't really see where I would, in my job, except working with my veterans, like passing on those tools to them.” In fact, two respondents said that coworkers did not always recognize or appreciate the importance of their knowledge, especially when this knowledge was explicit instead of tacit. For example, Andrew, a social worker at site three, said that he formerly worked for a government agency with which the organization works closely. He has the “inside scoop” on this organization and has good working relationships with many key contacts at this agency. However, when Andrew offers to assist his coworkers in finding contacts at this agency, his coworkers disparage the agency and do not utilize the information he provides. Though the veterans Andrew assisted benefitted from his familiarity with this agency (he secured them housing in places with less noise to avoid triggers for their PTSD), his co-workers did not recognize the value of his

knowledge. This suggests that the “rules” of demonstrating knowledge in this domain constrain expertise to tacit, personal experience that is not tied to specific organizations, especially organizations that are seen unfavorably by coworkers.

Still, respondents did find means of discussing knowledge and skills such that it was recognized as expertise by their coworkers. Often, respondents did so by sharing stories about the clients they had served in the past. Respondents said that coworkers were familiar with their general work experience through these stories but knew relatively little about the details of these former jobs. Miguel said, “People don’t necessarily know all the key components. They know the gist of it, like the surface stories. They don’t see like the transitioning stages in between those things.” Similarly, Megan, a case worker at site one, said that she is open about her past work experience, but said “I don’t necessarily feel like I’m saying, ‘When I worked here, we did this’ as much as like ‘This is how I think we should handle it.’ So I don’t know if they would know like the specifics of my history.”

Respondents’ knowledge was not situated within specific organizations and did not pertain to the specific positions they had held but instead was drawn from the experience they gained working with clients *in* those positions. Respondents did not relay their entire work history to coworkers but instead shared from their established repertoire of solutions which they and others could use to serve clients. Consequently, respondents could discuss these stories without appearing overly-identified to former organizations. Respondents said that they disclosed more of these stories over time as occasions arose that made their insight relevant.

Employees in the service domain were able to share their knowledge with others when they or their coworkers worked with certain types of clients. Respondents who previously worked with clients facing specific issues, such as alcoholism, or with distinct

types of clients, such as victims of domestic violence, could share their experience when their organization served a client with the issues or history with which they were familiar. For example, Brianna, a social worker at site three, said that she discusses her previous work experience working with clients with substance abuse issues. When coworkers had questions about how to treat clients, such as how to best support clients in their patterns of sobriety, Brianna said “they would call on me because I did that for a long time.” Across the sites, respondents in the service domain obtained recognition for their expertise when it applied to the clients they or their coworkers currently served. Arielle, a social worker at site three, was asked how her coworkers became familiar with her past work experience at another social services agency. She said, “It’ll come up in conversations when we’re talking about clients. And so, we’ll be like, ‘Oh, well no, I had a client where this is what happened versus this.’ That’s how I think they know.” Thus, respondents in this domain were largely dependent on their caseload and the admittance of certain types of clients to create opportunities for them to obtain recognition of their expertise from others.

The recognition of respondents’ expertise was also contingent on others seeing their behavior as worth imitating. Often, members advised their coworkers on how to better serve clients during case meetings. For example, Brianna, advised a coworker on how to better serve a client with paranoid schizophrenia and offered suggestions on how to calm the client when he has barricaded himself within a residence. She said, “It was a big opportunity for me to help one of my coworkers.” Another respondent, Emily, said that she advises her successor in her former role as a housing manager. She said, “Because we shared the role, we share a similar role so it's like, ‘Well you know when I was working at this place, we did it like this and maybe you can incorporate it into how you do business going forward.’ In this

way, others saw members' knowledge and skills as expertise when they were meaningfully given away to others, made accessible for imitation, and perceived as useful to current clients' needs.

Expertise in the Operations Domain. Ten participants who worked in administrative roles discussed knowledge and skills that applied to the functional domain of operations in their organizations. These respondents often shared their knowledge at the beginning of the organizational tenure but continued to do so by taking on work that often only they could do and by sharing best practices from former organizations. Though their current organizations were non-profit, these respondents offered knowledge that helped the organization run more effectively and positioned themselves as bringing "professionalism" to their workplace. Employees often discussed the knowledge and skills they gained as a result of working in more structured and systematic fields and equated professionalism with precision. For example, Pamela worked at a large accounting firm before working part-time as an accountant at site one. She said, "I bring a professionalism that they might not get from a bookkeeper that just has small business clients or accountants that never worked in corporate." Pamela said she discussed her knowledge while helping her organization overhaul the systems used for accounting, throughout which she was frequently sought out for her insight by her less-experienced coworkers. Similarly, Katie discussed her skill in attending to detail gained from previous work in engineering:

"Engineering, that world is very different than the non-profit world. It's a lot more rigid, it's very technical... So I think working in that job made me a lot more detailed and very, like, meticulous about things. Engineering is all about documenting

processes and procedures so I think that's something that I was able to bring here. To help kind of put more infrastructure in place.”

Katie and other respondents reported being asked by coworkers to perform certain tasks, suggesting that others recognized their expertise. However, these coworkers did not seem to imitate their coworkers but instead asked them to take on additional tasks that drew on their previously-established knowledge.

Unlike employees in the service domain, respondents in the operations domain said that their coworkers learned about their knowledge at the beginning of their organizational tenure as opposed to this familiarity emerging over time. Four of the respondents said that others knew about their experience because of the hiring process, in which supervisors and coworkers interviewed them about previous work or viewed their resumes. Because this knowledge was explicit rather than tacit and available at respondents' organizational entry, others could more readily recognize these individuals' areas of expertise without as much proactive disclosure from the individuals themselves. However, these individuals ensured that their expertise would continue to be recognized as such when they performed tasks that utilized their exclusive skills.

When recounting interactions with coworkers, many respondents described instances when others noticed that they approached their tasks in more structured ways than their colleagues, suggesting that their expertise was recognized when it was seen as exclusive and rare in their workplace. Brenda, a volunteer coordinator for site two, worked for several years in engineering before joining her current non-profit organization. She recalls conversations where her adherence to precision set her apart from her colleagues. For example, she said,

“People ask for numbers about how many volunteers we have. My goal last year was 150 [volunteers]. So our executive director started saying 150 a long time before we actually had 150. And I'd say, “It’s actually 137.” You know, very precise.

Hopefully, it will be 150 but right now it’s 137. So stuff like that is kind of a constant reminder of my background.”

Brenda said that her coworkers call her “the engineer” because of interactions like the one listed above. However, coworkers not only recognized these respondents’ previously established knowledge and skills but because of this expertise, they also were called upon these respondents to expand their organizational roles. Brenda, for example, was put in charge of implementing her organization’s transition to a new type of customer relationship management software. In this way, others recognized respondents’ knowledge and skills when the skills and knowledge were not shared by others in the workgroup. As a result, this expertise became integrated into the experts’ organizational roles.

These respondents also positioned themselves as transmitters of best practices from their former organizations to their current one. When asked what she shares most about her past work experience, Becky, an accountant at site two, said, “If we have certain systems that, from my experience, I know could function better, it’s usually from that work experience where I know, ‘Okay, this is a good system’ and that’s when I would mention something like that.” She said that her coworkers “hear” and “receive” her comments.

Similarly, Kayla, a development associate at site one, said that her discussions of her past work experience often center on best practices. She worked previously as a special event coordinator for a larger non-profit organization as well as in entertainment marketing. She said, “If I’m talking about it like on an organizational level, a lot of times I talk about the

really good things that we were doing and how we were doing it and the methods we were using, staff trainings we were having that really impacted us or new ways of doing development and fundraising.” Kayla was unique in her development workgroup in that she had experience working with much larger non-profit organizations, as well as in marketing outside of the non-profit sector. She could then offer the best practices of larger non-profit organizations and for-profit companies that could then be applied to improve fundraising at her smaller site. Sharing best practices provided opportunities for these respondents to position themselves as professional and insightful in ways that were unique within their workgroup. Kevin, a director at site one, also shared insight from his former organization. Kevin was unique in terms of the extensiveness of his past work experience in non-profits, as he joined the organization with decades more experience than his younger co-workers. He said that his coworkers recognized the lessons about organizational strategy that he learned from his years of experience as useful when they saw positive results from organizational changes. He said, “If I’m making decisions that they see in a positive light, they will have a positive impression about what my experience has been in the past.”

Knowledge held by these workers in the supportive administrative roles was more explicit than those in the service roles and often attached to specific institutional or organizational contexts. Consequently, these respondents seemed to be more careful to communicate their knowledge to others in ways that did not jeopardize their coworkers’ perceptions of their identification with the organization. For example, Kevin purposefully avoided saying the name of the large, internationally-recognized non-profit organization he had previously worked for. He said,

“What I’ve tried to do is both limit the number of times I use those illustrations or change the lesson and just not refer to [the organization], simply say, you know, “Have you thought about doing it this way?” And you know, ‘If you go down the road you’re going down, you’re probably going to encounter this, this and this, from my past work experience,’ but not explicitly saying ‘When I was at [the organization].’ I don’t want to... I haven’t yet caught anyone rolling their eyes as I mention [the organization], but I don’t want that time to come.”

Other respondents made sure they shared their knowledge while also highlighting their connection to their current employer and their coworkers, especially when they interacted with coworkers in the service domain. These respondents said that even though the knowledge they contributed primarily served to enhance the organization’s efficiency, they still wanted to be seen as squarely focused on service to their clients. Kayla said that even though she is in charge of raising money for the organization, she did not want to isolate herself from the clients they serve. When asked about how she would like to be seen by her coworkers, she said,

“I think because of my role, I want them to see me as deeply caring about the identity of our organization and of our staff. Because a lot of times with development fundraising, it's hard to stay kind of grounded in remembering that our families matter, our integrity matters... You know, being, like, really connected to the cause.”

Others in the operations domain, especially those who worked with the organization’s finances, expressed similar desires to be seen as attached to the cause or mission of their organization.

These findings suggest that employees discussed knowledge gained from previous positions in ways that confirmed, rather than contradicted, their identification with their current organization and their connection to their clients.

Expertise Extending Beyond A Functional Domain. Lastly, four participants discussed knowledge and skills that appeared to extend beyond their functional domain. Notably, these four participants were male. While these participants may have entered their organization in one functional domain (operations or service), the knowledge and skills that they shared transcended these boundaries within the organization. Often, they shared knowledge and skills that uniquely helped their organization articulate its purpose to both coworkers and others outside of the organization, such as clients, donors, or community members. For example, Adam, a program manager at site two, worked previously as a pastor to young people in his local church. He recalled a conversation where his supervisor pulled him aside to let him know that she recognized his expertise in working with students. He said,

“She pulled me aside she said, “Even though you're transitioning to this school partnerships piece, you have to be involved with the students. I just watch you how you share your story and how you were so transparent and vulnerable and how it resonates with the students and how they respond to it. And what happens when you do that. And it means a lot to me.”

In this context, Adam stood out because he was exceptionally good at serving clients (in this case, helping students process past pain), increasing his centrality in the functional domain of service. However, because of this knowledge -- and because his supervisor saw firsthand how others responded to it -- Adam was moved into a leadership role where he forged

strategic partnerships with other organizations in the community to better serve their constituents. Similarly, other respondents obtained recognition for their expertise when they demonstrated skill in communicating messages to dual audiences. For example, Kyle, who works as a mentor coach at site two, said that his coworkers noticed his skill in writing the organization's regular blog posts to their community. Kyle, who said that his previous experience as a screenwriter helped him to hone his writing skills, began writing some of the organization's regular blog posts about serving low-income students. While his position is situated within the functional domain of service, his skill in writing (gained from his past work experience) extended into the operations domain as his blog posts caught the attention of his coworkers. He wrote blog posts that he called "verbose" and "poetic" in comparison to the writing of his colleagues, and he said that this led to him becoming the "go-to-guy" for writing and editing posts for the organization's blog. He was positioned by colleagues as an exceptionally skilled writer and entrusted with editing others' posts. Kyle said, "That was a niche that I served and now I collaborate with the other pastor to make things sound nice. To make them sound pretty for people." Kyle and other respondents' past work often prepared them to be especially skilled in communicating to a variety of audiences. Though these respondents could communicate well with clients, they also positioned themselves as capable of working with donors, families, or other organizational representatives. When others took note of this skill, these respondents' expertise was recognized as useful beyond their functional domain. Though the number of these types of members was relatively small in this sample, the expertise shared by these members often had far-reaching implications for their respective organizations.

These four respondents showed their previously held knowledge and skills by communicating to a variety of audiences. These respondents' knowledge was accessible and visible to co-workers because the occasions in which it was shared were presentational in nature. Respondents took advantage of programming events and opportunities to post on behalf of the organization as stages on which they could highlight their expertise. Adam, for example, said that coworkers knew about his expertise because he shared stories during events where both the students that he served and his coworkers were in attendance. Similarly, Kyle used digital channels to address dual audiences. Kyle's blog entries were visible to both organizational members and the public. Coworkers could then see how others responded to Kyle's posts and recognize his expertise as such. Because members communicated their knowledge to dual audiences, their expertise was recognized both by external audiences (such as clients) and other organizational members whose work they influenced.

In addition to communicating to dual audiences, respondents in this category also shared their knowledge by acting as intermediaries between their organization and other groups. Logan, the director of donations and facilities maintenance at site one, discussed his knowledge from over two decades of experience as a contractor with his supervisor and volunteered himself to coordinate the construction of new housing units for clients. While Logan's position is formally within the operations domain, his knowledge relating to contracting facilitated his positioning in an informal leadership role, thus bringing him higher in the organizational hierarchy. In volunteering as an intermediary, he could represent the organization's interests to the many other groups involved in the construction, including contractors, budgeting teams, and the board of directors. Similarly, Adam volunteered to

represent his organization on a coalition of clergy in his city. As opposed to Andrew, a social worker in the service domain, these respondents did not try to connect their co-workers to other organizations but instead stepped up to do so themselves, forging their own place in organizational partnerships. These respondents' participation in organizational collaborations seemed to provide further credibility of their expertise to co-workers, as respondents said their coworkers appreciated and drew on their ability to communicate to external groups. Thus, in this third category of workers, their expertise may have made them more central in their functional role, but the nature of their expertise extended beyond their function to serve a larger organizational purpose.

RQ2: The Recognition of Expertise and Membership

Research question two asked how the recognition of respondents' expertise is related to their organizational membership. The data point towards one important finding: the sharing of expertise is not merely a catalyst through which organizations access knowledge and accumulate information. Instead, the recognition of members' expertise by others— that is, being seen as an expert by those inside and outside of the organization – was closely connected to their membership via their organizational roles and interactions with others in the workplace. In this section, I discuss the results for research question two as organized by the functional domains and present the common implications of expertise recognition for membership. For members in the service and operations domain, their expertise helped them to become more centralized within their functional domains. Although those were the two primary groups, the results also showed a small group of respondents whose expertise crossed functional domain boundaries. They appeared to not only become more centralized in their functional domain, but also rise in the organization's hierarchical domain by taking

on either informal or formal leadership roles. These results are depicted in the model of expertise recognition and membership negotiation in Appendix C.

Membership Negotiation in the Service Domain. For those in the service domain of their respective organizations, the recognition of their expertise by others helped them to negotiate their membership such that they could exert influence over organizational decisions and establish themselves as advisors to their coworkers within their domain. These respondents were not seen explicitly as experts – that is, many described instances where their expertise applied to certain situations but did not discuss being treated consistently as experts by colleagues. However, these respondents discussed speaking up during meetings to advise their colleagues. For example, Emily said that her previous experience in working at a rehabilitation homeless shelter (as well as her firsthand knowledge of homelessness) helped her to guide her colleagues' discussion of policies. She said, "When we're sitting in a staff meeting and they're like, 'We want to solve this problem and we want to implement this rule.' This is my time to step up and say that sounds great on paper, but practically this doesn't work because it makes the residents feels like this." Similarly, Kelly, a social worker at site three, spoke up when her colleague expressed frustration with a client who was a victim of domestic violence during a case meeting. Kelly shared that she had previously worked with domestic violence victims and had more sympathy towards them than her coworker. She said, "I wasn't annoyed by this veteran or thought that this veteran made me upset. Rather, I thought that I could maybe assist this veteran with the skills that I got from my internship." Kelly offered to take on the client to her caseload. These respondents said that coworkers did listen to their input and that they were able to change the outcome of organizational decisions. However, they were usually only able to establish this type of

influence when external situations (certain types of clients or cases) made their knowledge relevant. Thereafter, coworkers approached these respondents for help when they were struggling to best care for certain types of clients or, in the case of Kelly, entrusted them with their own clients.

Respondents' expertise helped them to position themselves as valuable sources of advice to their coworkers. While their areas of expertise were rarely incorporated formally into respondents' roles, this finding suggests that the recognition of respondents' knowledge as expertise by others facilitated their movement from the periphery to the center of the organization's inclusionary domain within their functional division. This movement consists of becoming an organizational insider who is increasingly central, not only to the work of the organization but also to the web of relationships within it (Schein, 1971). These respondents' expertise helped them to be seen as central and important by their coworkers within their functional domain. While the recognition of respondents' expertise facilitated their positioning as valuable and useful to their coworkers, it also provided opportunities to bond interpersonally with coworkers. As respondents shared stories that showed their knowledge, they also told stories that were comical, strange, or related to their coworkers' experiences. Olivia at site three said she told more of these stories over time. She said, "I think now, as time progressed, I think when I felt more comfortable, like after six months of working here, I think stuff I had done, like random stories came out." Thus, the stories these respondents told did not only help others to recognize their expertise, employees' disclosure of these stories seemed to indicate that they were more fully integrated into their organization's inclusionary domain. It seemed the more that respondents discussed knowledge and skills

they gained in previous organizations and positions, the more they were seen as valuable and contributing members of their current organization.

Membership Negotiation in the Operations Domain. Those with knowledge that applied to the operations domain of their organization often expanded the function of their organizational role (what Van Maanen and Schein, 1979, call “content innovation”, p. 228) and also prompted changes in organizational practice. Because they were often asked by their coworkers to take on additional work, the function of their organizational role increased such that they could draw on expertise garnered outside of their current position. For example, Paula, a program director at site two, worked in a large corporate firm before directing her organization’s after-school program. She said that her supervisors paired her with coworkers with less corporate experience so that they could learn from her. Similarly, Brenda used her engineering experience in working with computers when she was asked to lead the transition to a new type of customer relationship management software. She said, “I have the brain for it versus anyone else.” They became more centralized within their workgroup area. However, these respondents’ role expansion did not transcend their functional domain and rarely did it change individuals’ position in the organizational hierarchy.

These experts were not only asked to take on additional responsibilities, they also changed organizational practices. For example, Becky said that she implemented more formal channels for her co-workers to make requests and streamlined forms to be shorter and less confusing. Other respondents recalled instances where they discussed expertise relating to best practices that were then integrated into the organization’s events. In this way, respondents not only negotiated their membership but also changed the organizational structures into which their membership was embedded.

Many of these respondents remarked that they appreciated the friendlier, slower-paced culture of non-profit organizations after working in more cutthroat environments, such as engineering, corporate law, and corporate finance. However, some of these respondents remarked that they did not get to contribute the entire scope of what that they knew because of the constraints of working in smaller organizations. Becky said, “Mainly because this is a smaller organization, a lot of my capacity is not fully utilized, and I feel like I could bring more to the table.” Kevin said, “I’m used to an organization that needed systems that handed two and a half billion dollars. This place is a thousand times smaller and, as such, the systems that worked at [my previous employer] are far too involved and bureaucratic, require too many people, to be effective here. So one of those challenges is in translating that from the big to the small.” These findings suggest that much of these respondents’ knowledge was recognized as expertise and their roles within their functional area were expanded accordingly. However, some respondents were not able to negotiate their membership to include all of their expertise because the organization’s operations were too limited to require or benefit from them.

Membership Negotiation beyond a functional domain. Those respondents whose expertise crossed domains discussed the greatest changes in their membership as a result of others’ recognition of their expertise, including the establishment of expert status and role innovation. For example, Kyle’s comment that he is now the “go to guy” to review organizational messages suggest that these respondents were seen as experts. Similarly, Adam said, “I’m still treated like a pastor on staff” because of his expertise in articulating messages. These respondents also discussed leadership as an important part of their identity. For example, Logan said, “I don’t want it to sound egotistical, but I really enjoy being in a

leadership role. I like to work my way back into those positions.” Most importantly, these respondents were able to gain recognition for their expertise that allowed them to craft roles in alignment with this identity.

These respondents also innovated their role such that the original mission of their role changed to incorporate their expertise in more of a leadership role. For example, Peter, an executive director at site one, innovated his role such that he could work more with external donors to the organization instead of being involved in the day-to-day operations. He said that his past experiences in working as a missionary to families on Skid Row have allowed him to craft his role. He said, “My role is to focus more. So in some ways I'm getting fewer hats and more focused. But my role and responsibility is just as big or bigger.” In this case, Peter not only moved laterally to a new functional domain that caused him to work with external audiences, but also vertically in the organization’s hierarchy. Logan also innovated his role. Though he had only been working with the organization for a year and a half, he said that he shared his decades of contracting experience with his supervisor. After discussing these experiences, Logan stepped up into many leadership roles, exerting influence over the organization’s budget, strategic planning, and construction projects. He described how his responsibilities changed over the year and a half that he had been in his position:

“Originally, it was just kind of like basic maintenance on the properties and [collecting] in-kind donations and so forth. Now it’s evolved into, like I said, budget process, but also any major projects that we’re doing, we just finished up one at our non-disclosed site, we remodeled 16 bathrooms. And so I became the project manager and basically the go-between between the architect, [our organization], I represented [our

organization], the architect, the city of Glendale, and the contractor. And that was negotiating cost overruns, and you know, securing the finances from the city. And arguing with the contractor.”

While some of these respondents’ role innovation may be due to their personalities (these respondents were exceptionally charismatic), these data suggest that obtaining recognition of their expertise from others helped them to negotiate more central roles and move up to some extent toward leadership roles.

As argued by Van Maanen and Schein (1979), these respondents’ rise in the hierarchical domain of the organization also seemed to indicate their integration in their organizations’ inclusionary domain. While these respondents innovated their role as others recognized their expertise, their coworkers also positioned these individuals as key contributors and experts on myriad issues. For instance, Logan said that his younger coworkers who are still “feeling their way through the politics of work” often asked for his help in settling disputes among them. Adam said that he is often called on to discuss issues of race and racism. This may indicate that as individuals rise in the organizational hierarchy, all of their discrete areas of knowledge are more visible and accessible to recognition by others in their workplace. Though these individuals served as representatives of their organizations to external stakeholders, they did not do so at the expense of their inclusion to the inner circle of organizational workings.

That these respondents articulated expertise to dual audiences highlights the importance of place and visibility in the process of using expertise to negotiate organizational membership. Organizational members may receive more validation for their expertise when their coworkers can actually observe the effects of expertise firsthand, as well as viewing the

effects of this expertise on the populations that the organization serves. Being “caught in the act” of being an expert may be even more important for members in the service domain.

Because these members highlight the way that their expertise serves clients, the extent of the knowledge may be hidden from their coworkers and thus receive little recognition.

For instance, Olivia, a social worker at site three, was dismissed as overly-invested by her coworker when she sought to reconcile with a disgruntled client. The client left the office, but Olivia followed him outside to offer an opportunity for forgiveness. The client thanked her for her efforts and left in better spirits. When she returned to the office, her coworker told her, “You can’t do that all the time, Olivia.” Here, Olivia demonstrated her service-oriented expertise but did so in a way that was physically off-site and invisible to her colleagues. As a result, the way she drew on knowledge was misunderstood by her coworker and therefore could not positively benefit her organizational membership. In contrast, Olivia recounted a time where she accompanied her coworker to an appointment with a client at a government office. The client brought his screaming children who caused an uproar in the waiting room. Olivia began playing with the children and calmed them so that the meeting could continue. The coworker took notice of Olivia’s skill in calming the children and now asks her to assist with other clients’ families. Olivia said that other coworkers now recognize her expertise and rely on her to work with other children when they come into the office. Because Olivia could demonstrate her expertise to two audiences – in this case, she was seen by both the client and her coworker as capable and skilled – she innovated her role such that she was more central and potentially considered more valuable within the domain. This suggests that members who can demonstrate their skill in front of their coworkers – especially if their knowledge is tacit and is oriented towards serving the client – may be

better positioned to receive recognition for their contributions as expertise and negotiate roles consistent with their identities.

In summary, members achieved recognition for their expertise differently based on whether their expertise crossed functional domains to make significant contributions to larger organizational goals. Those in the service domain shared tacit knowledge by counseling their coworkers and their expertise was recognized when others were willing to imitate their behavior. In contrast, the recognition of expertise for those members in the operations domain occurred as a result of their doing work that no one else could do and sharing the best practices of their former organizations. Lastly, others shared knowledge and skills that transcended functional boundaries and did so by communicating to both organizational outsiders and insiders simultaneously or acting as an intermediary on behalf of the organization. In the next section, I discuss the implications of these findings for the study of expertise and membership and for organizational practice.

Discussion

These findings offer several important theoretical and practical implications for organizational socialization and the study of membership negotiation. First, this study contributes to organizational socialization research by highlighting the importance of members' previously obtained knowledge in equipping workers to become integrated into their organizations and to individualize their roles. These findings also build on Van Maanen and Schein's theoretical model by identifying the recognition of expertise as a mechanism through which members became more central in their organization. Next, these findings offer insight into how the recognition of expertise may occur most successfully when members communicate to dual audiences, that is, when they communicate to both organizational

insiders (coworkers) and outsiders (for instance, clients or stakeholders) simultaneously. Lastly, these findings offer practical implications for organizational members seeking to gain recognition for expertise in non-profit organizations.

First, these findings are grounds to better understand how individuals become socialized—more central within their domain and potentially advance within the organization. Simultaneously, it also allows scholars to further consider the expertise that members have gained previous to organizational entry and its relationship to socialization and membership negotiation. While some respondents took more of a custodial approach to their organizational role, others were able to innovate their role such that the mission, function, and strategies attributed to that role changed dramatically (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Members with previously-established areas of expertise are able to contribute past knowledge and skills as a means to negotiate the boundaries of their role in a way that less experienced or neophyte workers may not. Members' past work experience does not merely provide them with cognitive resources for their current work. Instead, members can *communicate* aspects of their expertise to others and constitute their membership as a result. These respondents negotiated their membership and continued to acquire new responsibilities and areas of influence throughout their organizational tenure. Accordingly, workers with varying levels of experience may respond to organizational socialization differently.

These findings also adds to Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) model by identifying the recognition of expertise as a mechanism for individuals' movement towards the center of the inclusionary domain. While the authors focus their theory on what people learn about their work and how their learn it, these findings show that individuals' socialization is also contingent on what others learn about them and how they learn it. As individuals shared their

knowledge and others recognized it as useful to the work of the organization, they both positioned themselves and were positioned by others as more involved in the work of the organization. This was especially true for members whose expertise traversed functional boundaries. Likely, individuals' centripetal movement (movement toward the center) was facilitated by negotiation of their *rewardingness*, or their capability to meet organizational goals in ways that align with their own needs (Moreland & Levine, 2001). The recognition of individuals' expertise by others both makes their knowledge available for use in meeting organizational goals and meets individuals' needs to contribute in ways congruent with their identity.

Next, these results contribute to the study of the communicative behaviors that individuals use to influence others' perceptions of their expertise in organizations. These findings show the value of dual audiences when obtaining recognition for expertise— that is, the sharing of knowledge and skill to those within and outside of the organization – is a significant contribution to the literature on expertise and membership. While behaviors that demonstrate expertise to clients (Treem, 2016) and to coworkers (Treem, 2012) have been outlined, little is known about how knowledge can be shared both within and outside of organizational boundaries concurrently. In the current investigation, occasions for sharing knowledge to dual audiences arose because of non-profit organizations' programming, especially fundraising events and workshops. In one case, employees demonstrated their knowledge digitally through the use of blogging, suggesting that organizations' digital presentation to stakeholders, in addition to social media accessed only by organizational members (Leonardi & Treem, 2012) may present further opportunities for expertise recognition. Occasions where members articulate their knowledge both to their coworkers

and their clients in the same space may have especially important implications for individuals' organizational membership. Members who can communicate to multiple audiences are likely seen as more competent and perhaps more credible by others and can consequently negotiate more central and influential roles.

Vacuums of expertise also seem to serve as occasions for the recognition of individuals' skills as useful to the organization. When employees in the operations domain possessed skills gained from their past work that were not held by others in their workplace, they were recognized for these skills and called on to perform them such that they became reified within their organizational role. Thus, organizational need and the relative scarcity of certain types of skills within non-profit organizations provide employees with opportunities to negotiate roles that incorporate capabilities gained from past work experience. In this study, many of the employees in the operations domain were eager and excited to incorporate specialized skills into their role, lamenting only that they could not draw on the entire repertoire of their knowledge because their organization was too small to require them to do so. While these workers may have expressed desire to contribute more, managers or co-workers may run the risk of exploiting these employees by asking them to expand their role and take on work that over-burdens them or forcing them to compensate for less-equipped team members. While not the focus of this study, employees are also likely to engage in negotiations that limit the scope of their role or involvement in their workplace as a way to maintain work-life balance or to distance themselves from roles inconsistent with their identity. Still, employees who are seeking recognition for skills that would otherwise lie outside of the scope of their roles may capitalize on vacuums of expertise within their organization as they negotiate their membership.

The importance of recognizing employees' past expertise presents a compelling case to consider how organizations might benefit from the diversity of members' past experience. Some respondents were careful to communicate their knowledge in ways that showed identification with their former occupations but not with the specific organizations where they were employed. In the current study, some participants saw their past experience in other fields of work and familiarity with other institutional logics, or patterns of solving problems (Lammers, 2011), as important sources of alternative perspectives and solutions within their organization. In this case, they borrowed useful knowledge and skills from their previous organizations and looked for ways to strategically use them in the new context. In doing so, they contributed more fully to their current organization. They retained certain ways of approaching their work and positioned themselves as still tied to other sources of knowledge. Thus, employees may negotiate their membership such that they maintain at least functional identification with their former professions or positions (and the expertise they provide) long past the entry stage.

By maintaining training from and ties to their former professions and positions, members were able to contribute more knowledge and skills in their current organizational role than they would if they had not retained these areas of expertise. This supports Gossett's (2002) finding that it may serve organizations to purposefully maintain some strategic distance from their employees – but, in this case, only between the individual and the expectations of the functional domain. When members discuss their past knowledge, they may do so in ways that are contrary to the established expectations of their functional domain. This knowledge can then provide occasions for organizations to re-frame their practice and interrogate their assumptions (Kuhn & Porter, 2010). However, members may

only be willing to discuss this knowledge when they feel included within and identified with the organization and its mission. Organizations may benefit as members negotiate roles that allow them to be functional outsiders – that is, sources of alternative, diverse sources of knowledge – but inclusionary insiders that are contributing, integrated members of the organization.

As in Beyer and Hannah's (2002) study, respondents retained some of the professional identities they gained from their past work experience which were informed by their former occupations, affiliations, and industries. Most likely, these professional identities became integrated with new identities to shape their global identity. This study builds on Beyer and Hannah's work by showing that individuals' established identities did not only facilitate their adjustment to their current work but also helped them to craft roles and relationships that allowed them to contribute in ways that were congruent with these identities. Members' past work experience is relevant to this process to the extent that it shapes members' perceptions of what they are equipped and willing to contribute. Thus, when members draw on expertise gained in other organizational settings and retain certain approaches to problems, skills, and habits of being in the workplace does not suggest incoherence in their organizational membership. Instead, individuals may experience more coherence between their global identity and organizational membership when they can be recognized for the diversity of their contributions.

Practical Implications

The practical implications of this study are twofold. First, these data confirm Molloy and Heath's (2014) findings that non-profit organizations have to manage multiple and often competing discourses. In the current study, organizations required members who could

contribute to serving external groups as well as members who could aid in their internal functioning. Demonstrating expertise in both is important but expertise is recognized differently in each of them. Thus, members should use communicative practices that are congruent with their functional domain if they seek to have their expertise recognized by others. Within the operations domain, members should strive to put their most unique skills into practice and take on opportunities to do the work no one else can do. Because skills in operational domains may be connected more closely to specific organizations (e.g., former organizations), it may be more important for these employees to express identification with their current organization. Within service domains, members should seek to counsel their coworkers about clients and find ways of presenting their success with clients that are congruent with organizational norms.

Second, these data suggest that members whose knowledge spans these domains may be most likely to elevate themselves in the hierarchy, even into informal or formal leadership roles. For individuals who see leadership as important part of their global identity, ascending the organizational hierarchy such that they can exercise leadership skills may be an important part of their membership negotiation. Organizational leaders should seek ways for veteran newcomers with leadership experience to exercise these abilities, either formally or informally. While many respondents placed the greatest value on their own areas of expertise (for example, service-oriented respondents saw work with clients as the most important function of the organization), these findings suggest that individuals who can straddle the boundaries of these domains and negotiate roles that allow them to recognize and translate expertise across them are especially valuable members in organizations.

However, the finding that only men were able to negotiate these leadership positions and gain recognition for their expertise across multiple domains suggests the presence of underlying power issues in membership negotiation, especially in negotiating leadership positions. One of the communicative practices through which men gained these leadership positions, volunteering to represent the organization, was very proactive. The subsequent effects of this communicative practice on respondents' membership indicate that others perceived their willingness to volunteer as useful and legitimate. However, the same proactive behavior in women may be perceived as presumptuous or overbearing by colleagues if they see high-achieving women as atypical in the workplace (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The women in this study did not speak directly to this issue, but it is striking that none reported volunteered as leaders to represent their organization to others. It may be that women wanted to avoid repercussions (real or perceived) for asking to be placed in leadership roles (Babcock & Laschever, 2003) and thus neglected to do so. Women may face different challenges in gaining recognition for their expertise, especially for their previous leadership experience, as well as in crossing inclusionary boundaries (Shenoy-Parker & Myers, 2013). They may in turn especially benefit from additional sources of credibility, such as endorsements or recognition from those outside the organization, as they share their expertise and negotiate new areas of influence.

These findings and their practical implications are, in part, generalizable to organizations other than non-profit organizations. For instance, the practices through which employees obtain recognition for their expertise in working with clients and its subsequent effects on membership may be important in for-profit organizations that are focused on serving clients well and whose employees are highly interdependent. For example, these

findings may generalize to public relations employees, who both work with clients and contribute to the firm as a whole, but not to realtors, whose careers depend on serving clients but who work as independent contractors and compete with other agents in their workplace, thus making it unlikely that they will negotiate roles that are highly interrelated with others in their line of work. The characteristics of the non-profit organizations in this study and non-profit organizations in general that may offer more role flexibility and relatively flat hierarchical structure, may also facilitate employees' membership negotiation more so than many highly structured for-profit organizations. Lastly, employees' movement inward in the inclusionary domain may be more crucial for those in organizations without a clear or extensive hierarchical structure. Without possibilities for upward promotion, employees' intent to stay at the organization may be dependent on their negotiation of highly centralized roles and the establishment of insider status within the inclusionary domain.

Limitations and Areas for Future Research

This study was narrow in scope, both in terms of its participants and the organizational sites represented. Because participants were recruited using convenience sampling, the responses gathered might represent the participants most eager to share facets of their organizational experience. Employees who were not willing to participate might negotiate their memberships differently. More representative sampling techniques in future studies would help mitigate this effect. Additionally, the findings were based on three non-profit organizations, two of which were religiously-affiliated which may affect the generalizability of these findings to other organizations, especially those in which members' work histories might not be as varied. Lastly, while I only considered knowledge and skills that participants gained as a result of their past work experience, it is possible that these areas

of expertise were also obtained through other means (for example, volunteering) or that these were driven by personality traits of participants. However, efforts were made in both the interview procedure and subsequent data analysis to consider only those skills and areas of knowledge that were learned in individuals' past work.

Future research should consider how individual and organizational attributes facilitate or inhibit membership negotiation. Though this study did not consider the role of race and gender in membership negotiation in any depth, two participants did express that their coworkers underestimated what they could contribute to the organization because of their race. Moreover, the respondents who most dramatically negotiated their membership to be seen as experts were all male. This aligns with previous work that has shown that women face more difficulties when seeking to obtain recognition for their expertise, even when their expertise matches that of their male colleagues (Joshi, 2014). Though there is not sufficient data from this study to detail the effects of gender on the recognition of individuals' expertise as gained from their past work experience, future work should consider how the self-presentational concerns detailed in this paper interact with members' gender to affect their membership negotiation. Future research should also continue to address how employees' race, religion, and other higher-order group identities affect the ways they share their expertise (or neglect to do so) and the outcomes of their efforts.

Additionally, observational data would enhance these findings. This study relied on participants' recall of expertise sharing, observing how respondents' share their knowledge and skills within their natural organizational setting could provide more insight.

The organizational structures and practices that provide opportunities for membership negotiation should also be investigated. For example, at site three, weekly case conferences

served as a time where co-workers could advise one another on how to best serve clients. Future research should explore how other practices such as this might facilitate members' communication of expertise. These studies could take a quantitative approach to examine how workers' communication of knowledge and their perception that this knowledge is recognized as expertise by others are connected to other outcomes, such as organizational identification, assimilation, and commitment. These preliminary findings suggest that employees want to contribute to the organization by drawing on areas of expertise, even if they are not initially or formally embedded within their organizational role. Future research should investigate further how employees work to align others' perceptions of expertise with their own and the implications of doing so for individuals and the work of the organization.

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Appendix A

Descriptive statistics of participants by research site

Research Site	Sex		Average Org. Tenure	Ethnicity					N
	M	F		White	Asian	Hispanic	Black	Other	
Site One	3	6	2.5 years	6	1	0	2	0	9
Site Two	3	4	4.1 years	2	1	3	1	0	7
Site Three	1	6	2.2 years	2	1	1	1	1	7
Total (average)	7	16		10	3	4	4	1	23

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

PROMPT: I'm interested in how individuals share their past work experience. That is, not just the positions they have held but the knowledge and skills they have developed from that work experience. And in particular, how your coworkers might consider that in interactions and in working with you.

1. What is your current job? (job title and organization)
2. How long have you worked in your current position?
3. Before this current job, where did you work? Could you tell me generally about your past work experience?
4. How do you think that this work experience affects your role in your current workplace?
5. How do you believe your coworkers see your past work experience? Does it affect the way they view you as a coworker?
6. How does your past work experience affect your interactions with coworkers? For example, I've talked with someone who was in a career in marketing and so whenever her current organization goes to plan and market an event, they look to her to do so. Can you think of anything similar happening with your coworkers that pertains to your work experience?
7. Can you think of a time when you talked about your past work experience (knowledge or skills) at work? What happened in that conversation/interaction?
8. In a perfect world, how would you want your coworkers to see the skills and knowledge you've gained from past work experience? Can you recall a time when you talked about your past work experience in a certain way to make them see it that way?

9. Describe a time when you discussed or even just alluded to your past work experience with someone else. Do you believe your sharing that past affected how your colleague(s) sees you?

10. Are there any parts of your skills and knowledge that you don't find yourself talking about at work? Why?

11. Has the ways you've talked about your past work experience (skills and knowledge) changed over time?

Appendix C

Model of Expertise Recognition and Implications for Membership Negotiation

Functional Domain	How Knowledge and Skills were Shared	Implications of Expertise Recognition for Membership Negotiation
Members in Service Domain (n = 9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members shared past experience as it was relevant to current clients • Members served clients well • Members offered stories and advice about past clients to coworkers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members exerted influence over organizational decisions • Members formed advisory relationships with co-workers • Members became more central in their functional domain
Members in Operations Domain (n = 10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members shared past experience at the beginning of their organizational tenure (hiring process, resumes, etc.) • Members shared best organizational practices • Members accomplished tasks that no one else could do 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members innovated the content of their role by taking on additional responsibilities • Members changed organizational practices • Members became more central in their functional domain
Members whose expertise transcended a functional domain (n = 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members demonstrated expertise and an aptitude at communicating with multiple audiences • Members volunteered to act as intermediaries between organization and outside groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members extensively innovated their role and were seen as experts • Members became more central to the organization and in multiple functional domains • Members moved higher in the organization's hierarchical domain