Socialization process of a newcomer and the role of co-workers

Master Thesis

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Johannes Kepler
Universität Linz
Altenberger Straße 69
4040 Linz, Österreich
www.jku.at
DVR 0093696
Content

Content ........................................................................................................... 2
Sworn declaration ............................................................................................. 4
List of figures ...................................................................................................... 5
List of tables ...................................................................................................... 6
Abstract ............................................................................................................ 7
1. Introduction .................................................................................................. 8
   1.1. Problem definition .................................................................................. 8
   1.2. Purpose of the thesis ............................................................................. 9
   1.3. Research question .................................................................................. 10
   1.4. Findings of the thesis ........................................................................... 10
   1.5. Structure of the thesis ........................................................................... 11
2. Theoretical Background ............................................................................... 12
   2.1. Organizational Socialization Theories .................................................... 12
       2.1.1. Organizational socialization and the significance for the organization.. 16
       2.1.2. Organizational socialization and the significance for newcomers...... 17
   2.2. Socialization Practices and Tactics ......................................................... 18
       2.2.1. Socialization Tactics ...................................................................... 18
       2.2.2. Socialization Practices and Personnel Instruments .......................... 20
   2.3. Newcomer Adjustment ........................................................................... 22
       2.3.1. Model of Newcomer Adjustment ..................................................... 23
       2.3.2. Model of Newcomer Experiences ................................................... 24
   2.4. Newcomer Attribute .............................................................................. 25
   2.5. Newcomer and Organizational Insider .................................................. 26
   2.6. Research Gap ......................................................................................... 29
3. Methodology ................................................................................................ 31
   3.1. The Research Approach ....................................................................... 31
       3.1.1. Research context .......................................................................... 31
   3.2. Research Design .................................................................................... 32
       3.2.1. Qualitative Research Design .......................................................... 33
       3.2.2. Case Study Approach ................................................................... 33
       3.2.3. Data collection .............................................................................. 34
   3.3. Data Analysis ......................................................................................... 35
4. Results .......................................................................................................... 37
   4.1. Antecedent 1: Newcomer Attributes ...................................................... 38
4.1.1. Personal Attitude of the Newcomer ........................................... 38
4.1.2. Willingness to integrate ................................................................. 39
4.1.3. Organization-member fit ................................................................. 40
4.1.4. Experience with previous socialization processes ......................... 41
4.2. Antecedent 2: Social Integration context ........................................... 42
4.2.1. Interaction with co-workers .............................................................. 43
4.2.2. Social Relationships established prior to entry ............................... 46
4.2.3. Team culture & atmosphere ............................................................ 47
4.2.4. Communication style ................................................................. 48
4.2.5. Freedom of action ........................................................................ 49
4.2.6. Demographic aspects .................................................................... 50
4.3. Antecedent 3: Significant events influencing socialization ............... 51
4.3.1. Team-events .................................................................................. 51
4.3.2. Informal breaks ............................................................................. 52
4.4. Consequences of a successful socialization process ............................ 53
5. Discussion & Conclusion ...................................................................... 56
5.1. Implications for theory ..................................................................... 56
5.2. Implications for practice .................................................................... 58
5.3. Limitations ....................................................................................... 60
5.4. Further need for research ................................................................... 61
References ............................................................................................... 63
APPENDIX ............................................................................................... 67
Sworn declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted is my own unaided work, that I have not used other than the sources indicated, and that all direct and indirect sources are acknowledged as references.
This printed thesis is identical with the electronic version submitted.

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Katharina Moser, May 2017
List of figures

Figure 1 Combination of socialization tactics and personnel instruments (Ardts et al., 2001, p. 163) .......................................................................................................................... 21
Figure 2 Model of newcomer adjustment during socialization (Bauer et al, 2007, p. 708) .............................................................................................................................. 23
Figure 3 Themes Newcomer Attributes ................................................................. 38
Figure 4 Themes Social Integration Context ......................................................... 42
Figure 5 Themes Significant events influencing Socialization ......................... 51
List of tables

Table 1 Interview Partners ...........................................................................................................32
Abstract

Global competition, restructuring, economic uncertainty and attempts to gain and retain talented workforce are challenges which employees and organizations have to face. These challenges affect the working environment and change the nature of the work relations. The number of newcomers requiring socialization increases steadily and organizations are more frequently challenged with the newcomers’ socialization process. Organizational socialization studies have been gaining more and more attraction within the last years. However, the phenomenon of newcomers’ socialization was mainly studied with regard to psychological aspects and outcomes and influences of newcomers’ team leaders. Despite awareness of organizational insider influences during organizational socialization, there is a lack of attention with regard to the influence and effects of team members and resulting social relations. This thesis reviews the literature of organizational socialization and outlines several concepts and influencing aspects of newcomers’ entry phase. The main aim of this thesis is to examine the interaction between newcomers and co-workers by the use of a 360 degree feedback method. In addition, the overall process was analyzed to investigate consequences of newcomers’ socialization processes. Results show that co-workers support can be seen as a key success factor affecting the newcomer’s socialization process. In addition, team affiliation was facilitated by the newcomer’s integration. The newcomer’s successful socialization led to an increased group cohesiveness, but at the same time negatively affected the group’s psychological safety. The research findings are illustrated in form of a visual aid to better understand the influencing factors of the newcomer’s successful socialization.

Keywords: Organizational socialization, co-workers support, successful socialization, consequences of successful socialization, team cohesion, psychological safety
1. Introduction

In order to introduce the research issue, this chapter will examine the importance of the research purpose. First, the thesis is discussing the problems found within the significant field of research and will further clarify the purpose of the thesis. As a result, the research question will be outlined. The first chapter will conclude with an explanation of the structure of this thesis.

1.1. Problem definition

The increasing complexity of many company structures, lack of skilled employees, demographic impacts, and the resulting changes for organizations and employees constantly increase the relevance of Human Resource Management (HRM). Newcomer socialization practices are interesting and promising fields of research and have attracted increasing attention in the last years within the field of HRM (Bauer et al., 2007, p. 707). Despite an increasing amount of research focusing on the psychological aspects and the influence of supervisor support, lack of attention has been paid to the role of co-workers and the resulting aspects during the individual socialization process of newcomers (Allen, 2006; Cooper-Thomas, et al., 2004; Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2009). Based on this, Bauer et al. (1998, p. 169) highlight the need to focus on the impact of interactions between newcomers and different organizational insiders.

As mentioned above, a common criticism of existing research is that socialization research suffers from a lack of an interactionist approach (Bauer et al., 2007, p. 707). Morrison’s (2002) research is one of the few empirical studies which have examined the socialization process through a social network perspective and investigated the influence of network strength during a socialization process. Morrison (2002, p. 1158) highlighted the relevance of examining the relationship between social networks and the role of contacts during organizational socialization of a newcomer as an area for future research. Moreover, when it comes to newcomers’ socialization, the team members are part of the newcomers’ socialization process. Therefore, organization insiders and especially co-workers are an important field to investigate. Despite the fact that various factors can influence newcomers as they begin their new job, little is known about the role of co-workers and the underpinning factors influencing newcomers learning and adjustment and the resulting outcomes. In addition, several researchers
highlighted that there is a lack of understanding about how socialization is influenced by interaction with organizational insiders and related impacts of co-workers during newcomers’ entry (Bauer et al., 1998; Fang et al., 2011; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2011). Moreover, the majority of existing research of socialization studies focuses on data collection methods based on quantitative research but a need to obtain data from qualitative measures exists (Bauer et al., 1998; Cooper et al., 2006).

Due to these reasons, this thesis extends previous research of organizational socialization and contributes to existing literature by examining the socialization process and the influence of co-worker related aspects by using a 360-degree feedback method which allows to utilize solicit information from a variety of sources (Atkins & Wood, 2002, p. 875).

1.2. Purpose of the thesis

The purpose of the research is to investigate the socialization process from an interactionist perspective as well as to identify antecedents and consequences of a successful newcomer socialization process.

The above-mentioned lack of unified and integrated socialization literature fosters the need to investigate socialization processes and to explore the role of organizational insiders, especially that of co-workers as a key mechanism of newcomers’ socialization. Therefore, the goal of this thesis is to explore how the newcomer socialization process is influenced by team members and which consequences unfold based on this aspect. The specific research question and objective of this thesis focuses on seeking answers to the “how” (exploratory) aspects which influence the socialization process of a newcomer. Moreover, the role of co-workers as a possible key mechanism and underpinning factors such as newcomers’ behavior, adjustment and proactivity and resulting outcomes which will influence organizational socialization will be analyzed.

In addition to mentioned reasons, existing research (Bauer et al., 1998; Cooper et al., 2006) highlights that there is a need for more diverse measurement sources, reducing the dominance of self-reports and states that there is a need to collect data from sources other than the new employees within organizational socialization research. Morrison (2002, p. 1158) suggests a study that obtains data from both
newcomers and company insiders for future research. Given these considerations, an analysis of newcomers’ socialization process by using the 360 degree method seems suitable because it allows not only to examine the socialization process among different newcomers but rather to bring in new knowledge through interviewing also the newcomers’ environment. Another advantage of this approach is that by using different sources of knowledge (newcomer, supervisor, team colleagues, family members of newcomer), issues that might arise through and in the role and behavior of co-workers during the socialization process can be identified.

1.3. Research question

As a consequence of the problem definition and the review of the state of the research field, this thesis contributes to literature by answering the following research question:

Which antecedents and consequences of a successful socialization process can be identified?

1.4. Findings of the thesis

This master thesis analyzes the socialization process of a single newcomer working in an organization which operates in the field of a small and medium sized enterprise (SMEs) and adopts HRM practices through informal and flexible approaches. The findings of this thesis with regard to antecedents are visualized within three main categories: Newcomer attributes, social integration context and significant events influencing the socialization process. The analysis shows that the constant support from close co-workers, as well as the open and friendly relations within the team enhanced the newcomer’s socialization process. Further, the findings indicate that the newcomer’s previous experiences with close co-workers and demographic aspects of the team members influenced the newcomer’s socialization process.

One finding with regard to consequences shows that due to the successful socialization process the team cohesion was strengthened. However, strong team cohesion and homogeneity between the newcomer and her close co-workers may
decrease the group’s psychological safety. This finding is a significant contribution and expands existing theory of organizational socialization.

1.5. Structure of the thesis

The first chapter of the thesis introduces the topic and gives an overview of the concept of organizational socialization and different socialization tactics and attributes, which are the theoretical foundation of this paper. In addition to the research context of socialization processes of a newcomer, this chapter will also outline several outcomes of a socialization process, which could be derived from existing research. The aim here is to provide a better understanding of the research purpose.

The next main part of the thesis will deal with the methodology. In this chapter, the research context and design as well as the methods of data collection and data analysis will be explained in detail.

Next, the results of the research will be presented and explained. The findings will be presented through three aggregated dimensions. The 1st and 2nd order themes build the basis for the aggregate dimensions.

Moreover, the findings will be discussed in light of existing research and implications for theory are identified. Next, practical implications as well as limitations of the study are outlined. The thesis concludes with an outlook for further need for research.
2. Theoretical Background

The theoretical part of this thesis includes main concepts and definitions on organizational socialization retrieved from scientific journals and research papers related to the topic.

2.1. Organizational Socialization Theories

According to Van Maanen and Schein (1979), organizational socialization is a process in which a newcomer acquires the social knowledge and skills which are necessary to assume a role in the organization. The authors stated that it is a process by which one is taught and learns “the ropes of a particular organizational role” (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 3).

Through the socialization process, a person can gather information about patterns of behavior and perspectives which are acceptable and desired within the working environment and also attitudes which are not accepted within the organization (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 4). Van Maanen and Schein’s (1979) work is one of the most influential theoretical contributions with regard to socialization processes. It provides a theoretical basis that guided empirical research of this topic and illustrates socialization by introducing six tactics that organizations can use for newcomers’ socialization process. These six tactics will be explained within the chapter socialization practices and tactics in more detail.

Ardts et al. (2001) analyzed the process of organizational socialization from a different perspective and developed a framework for newcomers’ socialization process. According to Ardts et al. (2001) organizational socialization is defined as “the learning process by which newcomers develop attitudes and behavior that are necessary to function as a fully-fledged member of the organization” (Ardts et al. 2001, p. 159). This process makes it possible to focus on the interaction between a stable social environment and the new employees who enter it. In addition, organizational socialization consists of formal and informal processes that allow new employees to successfully become members of a collectivity. During this process, individuals learn organizational norms, beliefs, values and attitudes that are fundamental for being an organizational insider and member. In the study, a framework is illustrated which describes newcomers’ entry process via three
aspects: the process, the content and the outcome of organizational socialization and the behavior of the newcomer (Ardts, et al., 2001, p. 159).

“Socialization as a process” supports the theory that organizational socialization can be seen as a process when entering an organization. There are differences in terminology to describe the stages, however three main stages a newcomer has to pass can be found: (1) a pre-encounter stage (anticipatory stage), (2) an encounter stage (accommodation stage) and (3) an adaption stage, through which a newcomer transition from being an organizational outsider to a fully functional member (Ardts et al., 2001; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

(1) The "pre-encounter stage" includes the transition phase that occurs prior to organizational entry and when the newcomer forms expectations and beliefs. Kammeyer-Mueller and Warnberg (2003, 872) stated that one of the most enduring aspects is related to the match between knowledge held by the newcomer before entering the organization and their actual experiences after starting to work. Van Maanen & Schein (1979, p. 6 ff.) pointed out that the stage from being an outsider to becoming an insider occurs during the early adaption stage and therefore it is assumed to be most intense and critical.

(2) The "encounter stage" is represented by the initial entrance and early phase of newcomers’ socialization process. During this stage, newcomers become aware of the organizational context and experience the organizational life. Newcomers are confronted with the new environment and are exposed to learn how to adapt to a certain role within the organization. In addition, newcomers begin to experience changes related to their skills, behaviors or attitudes as they begin to recognize what life in the organization and work is actually like and what is needed to be successful (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012, 13).

(3) The "adaption stage" includes the process when a newcomer has undergone almost all learning in order to adjust to the new environment and the newcomer has settled in to perform new tasks to a large degree. This adaption stage is represented by role clarity, task mastery, social integration and the newcomer’s intention to stay within the organization (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012; Saks et al., 2007).
The process model represented by several stages a newcomer has to undergo in order to be a fully functional member of the organization provides insights into the challenges a newcomer and the organization experience during the entry phase. However, process models have been criticized by several authors (Ashford & Nurmohamed 2012, Ashforth et al., 2007b; Bauer et al., 1998). For example, it was criticized that process models suggest that the individual transitions from one stage to another, but often neglects to show how newcomers transition though these stages (Bauer et al., 1998). Furthermore, researchers criticize the linearity of socialization processes in which newcomers follow stages one after another (Ashford & Nurmohamed 2012, p. 13). Nevertheless, these models give an overall insight in order to understand the sequences which newcomers experience during the process of transitioning from being an outsider to an organizational insider.

“The content of socialization” is the number of areas to which socialization relates. The newcomer gains information through content about organizational structures, goals, myths, group work characteristics, attitudes and behaviors, dealing with the supervisor, colleagues and subordinates, learning about tasks and how to fulfill them. Furthermore, required skills and priorities as well as newcomers’ attributes will be of importance (Ardts, et al., 2001)

“The outcomes of socialization” are variables and criteria by which the level of organizational socialization can be defined. In the literature, outcomes can be divided into four categories: (1) Motivation and achievement aspects; (2) level of identification and commitment with the organization; (3) interpersonal qualities; and (4) feelings of self-assurance and competence (Ardts, et al., 2001, p. 160). “Social behavior of the newcomer” refers to newcomers’ ability to proactively affect their own adjustment. The process of organizational socialization includes the gathering of knowledge about company structures, formal rules and goals as well as social rules which are shaped by the companies’ traditions, history and policies. Furthermore, this process includes the assimilation of those values, norms and patterns that are fundamental for a new organizational member (Antonacopoulou & Güttel, 2010, p. 7). In addition, research findings show that newcomers gain information from different sources and that new organizational members tend to look for different kinds of information acquisition.
Antonacopoulou and Güttel (2010, p. 4) discussed the significant interplay between organizational socialization and staff induction. Staff induction is described as the core process of the way in which companies introduce new employees into the firm. In contrast to organizational socialization, staff induction has been defined as “any arrangement made to familiarize the new employee with the organization, safety rules, general conditions of employment, and the work of the section or department in which they are employed” (Skeats, 1991, p. 16). Staff induction practices govern the newcomer’s socialization in a way that the person will become a fully functional member of the company. It encourages the individual learning process and enables the newcomer to get familiar with organizational rules, requirements and systems in the organizational environment. Van Maanen and Schein (1979, p. 5) state that during the socialization process the newcomer gains fundamental information which is necessary to manage everyday organizational life. Antonacopoulou and Güttel (2010, p.5) determined the role of socialization and staff induction as core elements of organizational recreation. On the one hand, organizations consciously need new employees in order to sustain themselves and grow. On the other hand, employees need to contribute to organizational values, norms and activities.

The important question, which many researchers of organizational socialization considered, is when a newcomer is fully socialized. Therefore successful socialization has been conceptualized according to newcomer’s adjustments and outcomes. Indicators of successful socialization include adjustments as job satisfaction, intention to remain, commitment to the organization and lower organizational turnover (Ashford & Nurminohamed, 2012; Bauer et al., 2007; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). However these distal outcomes are criticized by several researchers insofar as that they do not fully capture the process of newcomer’s adjustment and give no insight whether socialization has been successful. Proximal indicators as role clarity and work group integration are viewed as direct indicators and reflect the development of social relationships (Ashford & Nurminohamed, 2012, 15). Existing organizational socialization theories emphasize that organizational insiders are a potentially learning source for newcomers. Despite the fact that insiders can affect newcomer’s socialization and building networks with organizational members helps newcomer to learn the ropes of their new roles, not
much empirical research was made about specific types of insiders and whether social integration will be facilitated through support by social relationships.

To sum it up, organizational socialization contains activities which are done by the organization and activities which are done by the newcomer themselves in order to achieve a successful socialization (Antonacopoulou & Güttel, 2010, p.5). Successful socialization refers to the process in which new employees make the change from being an outsider to being an insider in an organization (Bauer et al., 2007, p. 718). Next, organizational socialization and the importance for the organization on the one hand and the newcomer on the other hand will be explained in detail.

2.1.1. Organizational socialization and the significance for the organization

The main aim of organizational socialization is to convey task relevant information to newcomers. Highly relevant for the organization is to give newcomers the time to learn and to transfer newcomers’ new tasks effectively, as well as the learning of organizational values and rules. Socialization practices stimulate newcomers’ learning in order to introduce them with organizational conditions, systems, rules and colleagues in the new work environment (Antonacopoulou & Güttel, 2010, p.7; Bauer et al., 1998; Saks et al., 2007).

Some approaches on organizational socialization research emphasize that socialization tactics used by organizations influence newcomers’ turnover (Allen, 2010; Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Bauer et al., 1998). Further studies identified reduced employee turnover as the most critical socialization outcome for the organization (Bauer et al., 2007; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006). Allen (2010) supported these findings and highlighted in his study that newcomers’ turnover can be influenced by embedding them more extensively into the organization. In addition, Cooper-Thomas and Anderson (2006) emphasize that organizations, who are unable to successfully socialize newcomers and in further consequence to retain qualified employees, face higher internal costs as a result of higher turnover.

Ashforth et al. (2007) pointed out that the primary focus of organizational socialization research was predominantly on large organizations. In addition, Umer (2012, p. 29) noted that research on specific HR-practices have largely ignored
SMEs, even though these companies could be important subjects for empirical research. Evidence shows that the way in which SMEs operate and integrate HRM practices differs from how large organizations operate (Ashforth et al., 2007; Cardon & Stevens, 2004). SMEs are characterized by fewer hierarchical levels, flat structures and they tend to allow more informal and flexible approaches to integrate and manage their staff (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012, p. 20). Due to the fact that different organizational contexts for socialization lead to different factors and that different organizational forms emphasize different socializing aspects, this thesis examines a single newcomer’s socialization process in the context of SMEs in more detail.

To summarize, the above mentioned implications highlight the importance of organizational socialization and the resulting implications related to newcomers.

2.1.2. Organizational socialization and the significance for newcomers

Socialization is not only important for organizations, it is also highly important for individuals who are entering a new environment. Therefore, one needs to take a closer look at socialization from a newcomers’ perspective and the implications for organizations.

Van Maanen & Schein (1979) stated that newcomers experience new situations and therefore they need to encounter organizational norms and beliefs which are unfamiliar to them. In order to learn these organizational rules and to learn the values and norms, newcomers are required to develop behaviors and attitudes which are relevant to function as a fully-fledged member of an organization (Ardts et al., 2001, 159). Existing literature defines indicators for a successful socialization process. Indicators such as role clarity, task mastery, values congruence and perceived organizational member fit are believed to be significant for a successful socialization (Bauer & Green, 1998; Kammeyer-Mueller & Warnberg 2003; Morrison, 2002). In addition, successful newcomer socialization reduces uncertainty and helps newcomers make sense of the organizational environment and to better assume a certain role. From a newcomer perspective, success indicators include increased job satisfaction, commitment to the organization, reduced ambiguity, enhanced ability to perform tasks, better knowledge to manage organizational life and knowledge to better integrate into
the new environment (Antonacopoulou & Güttel 2010; Bauer et al., 2007, Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

The above-mentioned indicators highlight the significance of organizational socialization practices for new employees and the dependency of induced HR-practices on the success of newcomer’s integration and social acceptance.

2.2. Socialization Practices and Tactics

There are several theoretical perspectives, practices and tactics with regard to organizational socialization which are described in more detail.

2.2.1. Socialization Tactics

One of the most fundamental approaches to the understanding of organizational socialization is Van Maanen and Schein’s (1979) theoretical model of factors which influence newcomer’s socialization process as noted in a previous chapter.

Van Maanen and Schein (1979, p. 23) provide a typology of socialization tactics that companies select in order to structure the learning experiences of a newcomer in a particular role. These tactics are defined as “ways in which the experiences of individuals in transition from one role to another are structured for them by others in the organization” (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979, p. 23).

Van Maanen and Schein’s (1979) model consists of six tactics organizations can use to classify newcomers’ socialization process. These tactics are:

(1) Collective versus Individual processes
(2) Formal versus informal socialization processes
(3) Sequential versus random steps in the socialization processes
(4) Fixed versus variable socialization processes
(5) Serial versus disjunctive socialization processes
(6) Investiture versus divestiture socialization processes

(1) Collective versus Individual processes describe whether the newcomer is being socialized as a part of a group that shares common learning experiences or if the newcomer is individually exposed to unique experiences and isolated from others. Van Maanen and Schein (1979, p. 38) argued that individuals who socialize via collective tactics experience thoughts, feelings and actions in the group almost
always like an “in the same boat” mentality. Individual processes are likely to be far less homogeneous than those processed via collective tactics.

(2) **Formal versus informal socialization processes** describe that newcomers go either through a structured process of socialization activities or through an unstructured more flexible approach. Formal processes are for example socialization programs such as internships, professional schools and apprenticeships where the activities are clear and official requirements. Informal socialization tactics include a laissez-faire socialization where new roles are learned via trial and error. On-the-job training assignments and learning through experiences are samples of informal socialization modes (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 44).

(3) **Sequential versus random steps in the socialization processes** refer to how systematically or uncertain the socialization process will progress or unfold. More precisely, sequential socialization refers to the extent to which the profession related specifics of sequences and identifiable socialization steps lead to the target role. This process is likely to be linked with hierarchical boundaries. Random socialization is the result of sequences of steps where the target role is unknown and ambiguous or when the target role changes continually. Random processes include a wide and diverse variety of perceptions of the target role which may lead to innovative orientations (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979, p. 51).

(4) **Fixed versus variable socialization processes** refer to newcomers’ socialization procedures which can either be clearly communicated with a fixed plan or with no specific schedule or timetable. In the case of a fixed tactic, the organization lets the newcomer know how much time it will take to fulfill a given process. The timetables specify the degree to which the newcomer must follow the schedule. Trainees can be put on the “fast track”, when they have to fulfill new rotational assignments every year, or newcomer’s can be on the “slow track”, when their assignments remain the same without changes for a few years. Van Maanen and Schein (1979, p. 57) noted that variable tactics can be a very powerful antidote to the formation of team solidarity.

(5) **Serial versus disjunctive socialization processes** can be seen as the degree in which experienced members teach newcomer about role models. Serial socialization refers to the process in which experienced colleagues serve as role
models for newcomers and show them how to proceed in their new role. On the other hand, disjunctive socialization processes do not include predecessors who teach newcomers how to act in the new role. This process allows newcomers to make their own interpretations and perceptions about the situation (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979, p. 60). In practice, it is easier for newcomers to learn via serial processes and through experienced members than learning by themselves “how things are going” in the organization (Phillips and Gully, 2013, p. 235).

(6) **Investiture versus divestiture socialization processes** refer to the extent to which the process is created to approve or refuse characteristics and personal identity of the newcomer. You can speak of an investiture mode when a newcomer’s personal characteristics are accepted and it’s allowed for him to bring this personal attitudes into the organization. Divestiture processes seek to deny certain personal characteristics of newcomers (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979, p. 64).

These six socialization tactics can be seen as general characteristics of action and approaches taken by the organization to foster newcomer adjustments and for organizations to categorize the socialization process (Ardts et al., 2001; Bauer et al., 2007).

2.2.2. **Socialization Practices and Personnel Instruments**

According to Ardts et al. (2001, p. 162), newcomers experience informal and formal socialization practices when entering an organization. Informal socialization practices such as the standard joke which will be played on all new employees by colleagues or superiors, are hard to monitor because they often take place through individuals which have not been selected or instrumented by the organization in how to guide the newcomer, whereas formal personnel instruments such as introduction program, training, performance appraisals and career panning can be planned (Ardts et al., 2001, p. 162ff).

Personnel instruments are part of the socialization setting and can be framed with different socialization tactics. The matrix in figure 1 gives an overview of the different socialization tactics and the translation in regard to the personnel instruments.
**Figure 1 Combination of socialization tactics and personnel instruments (Ardts et al., 2001, p. 163)**

1. **Institutionalized socialization and personnel instruments** result in an introduction program that is aimed at a group of newcomers (collective), who are not with regular organizational insiders (formal) and are socialized together with other newcomers’. Mentors or role models are used for this program and help with the affirmation of the newcomer’s identity. Training and education programs aim at developing existing qualities which result in the deepening of knowledge instead of the broadening. Career planning includes defining steps and time schedules that have to be undertaken to approach the next position in the career plan (Ardts, et al., 2001, p. 164).

2. **Individualized socialization and personnel instruments** are used when the organization wants innovative newcomers. According to Ardts et al. (2001, p. 164), individualized tactics occur more individually and the introduction is implemented at the actual workplace with regular organizational insiders. Such practices may be applied ad-hoc and without clearly separated steps or time lines. The main aim is to induce practices on the individual level and to support the newcomer’s own identity and qualities. Training and education via individualized socialization practices means that those trainings on the job should be chosen...
which are relevant for the newcomer and should not be aimed at developing existing knowledge (Ardts, et al., 2001, p. 1645).

Aside from these socialization practices, it is also important to consider the several phases of socialization which a newcomer experiences. Therefore, the paper will further outline the basis concept of the stage model.

2.3. Newcomer Adjustment

Building on Van Maanen and Schein’s (1979) model of organizational socialization, Jones (1986) created scales for each of the six socialization tactics and then implemented them into the first empirical research on the interaction between socialization tactics and newcomer adjustment. The six tactics are classified into two categories, which are institutionalized (formal, collective, fixed, sequential, serial and investiture) or individualized tactics (informal, individual, variable, random, disjunctive and divestiture) (Jones, 1986, p. 263).

Based on this quantitative study, institutionalized tactics reduce uncertainty during the first phase of organizational entry and this approach concerns newcomers mainly as passive members during the organizational socialization process. According to Jones (1986, p. 264), individualized tactics include limited organizational involvement and show fewer structures during organizational socialization. Individualized approaches encourage newcomers to become more active in implementing their own socialization process. Empirical research (e.g. Allen and Meyer, 1990; Ashforth and Saks, 1996; Saks et al., 2007) supports the model and the underlying basic propositions of socialization tactics into the categories proposed by Jones (1986). However, research found that different approaches to socialization tactics lead to different effects regarding the learning and adjustment of newcomers (Bauer et al. 2007; Saks et al., 2007). For example, Bauer et al.’s (2007, p. 715) meta-analysis of newcomers’ adjustments during organizational socialization found that the proposed role of socialization tactics reduce newcomers’ uncertainty. These results are consistent with the relevance proposed to socialization tactics in the first empirical research conducted by Jones (1986). Saks et al.’s (2007) study of the relationship between tactics and newcomer adjustment found that the relative importance of different socialization tactics and the effects on outcomes remain unclear. The next sub-chapters give
insight into different models of newcomer adjustment and also explain newcomers’ experience during the socialization process.

2.3.1. Model of Newcomer Adjustment

Socialization research has studied adjustment indicators in many different varieties. According to Fischer (1986), newcomer adjustment during organizational entry consists of task and social related transitions. Similarly, Feldman (1981) proposed that adjustment consists of three factors: Resolution of role demands, task mastery and social acceptance.

“Resolution of role demands” refers to knowledge about tasks that need to be performed and the understanding of task priorities which can be described in general by role clarity. “Task mastery” refers to newcomers’ learning of tasks and gaining confidence in the role (self-efficacy). “Adjustment to one’s group” is described by the feeling of acceptance by peers (social acceptance) (Bauer et al., 2007, p. 708). Consequently, researchers have used role clarity, self-efficacy and social acceptance as indicators of new team members’ adjustment.

Another approach was introduced by Bauer et al. (2007) to describe newcomer adjustments. Figure 2 presents the model examined in this research. It consists of three aspects, namely antecedents of newcomer adjustments, main indicators of newcomer adjustments and outcomes.

![Figure 2 Model of newcomer adjustment during socialization (Bauer et al, 2007, p. 708)](image)

This framework includes newcomers’ information seeking and organizational socialization tactics as antecedents of newcomer adjustment. One the one hand, newcomers have to adjust to the conditions of the organization that emphasize specific socialization tactics. On the other hand, newcomers are seeking for information which will support them to adjust to a variety of situations. Uncertainty reduction appears when newcomers try to decrease it via gaining information
through different knowledge sources. For newcomers, it is essential to know what is required for a successful process of adjustment. The outcomes of newcomers’ adjustments can be described by job satisfaction, commitment, intention to remain and turnover. Newcomers who are equipped with a clear vision of their role and expectations are more likely to have a higher level of performance (Bauer et al., 2007, p. 710). Newcomers who held no clear role are usually less committed to and satisfied with the organization. According to Bauer et al.’s (2007, p. 708) model role clarity, self-efficacy and social acceptance are the three key indicators of newcomer adjustments during organizational socialization.

2.3.2. Model of Newcomer Experiences

In addition to newcomers’ adjustments regarding socialization, newcomers’ experiences are also crucial. In order to understand newcomers’ socialization processes in more detail, Louis (1980) presents in his study a model of newcomer experience. Louis (1980, p. 235) identified key features of the newcomer experience and categorized the process of newcomers’ coping of sense making in three main phases which will be described below.

**Change** represents the first phase of the entry experience and is seen as an objective difference in a major characteristic of the new and old context of the newcomer. When beginning a new job, the newcomer can experience a change in his or her role and changes related to a professional identity can occur (Louis, 1980, p. 235). Schein (1978, p. 54f) argued that during the entry into a new organization, an individual experiences three boundaries: functional, hierarchical and inclusionary. The newcomer takes on a set of activities within a functional area and has to learn how to carry them out (Louis, 1990, p. 235).

**Contrast** is the second feature of the entry experience. It relates to a difference in appearance of the newcomers’ role or particular aspects within an overall framework which are known to the newcomer. Contrast occurs when newcomers face new situations. What features particularly appear to be acceptable are determined by features of previous experienced settings. For instance, this could be how organizational members dress in the new environment may or may not be experienced as a contrast by the newcomer, depending on whether the dress code differs between the new and old setting or not. Differences in dress codes by itself is not a sufficient precondition for noticing a contrast. Contrast mainly includes
specific perceptions of reality and differences between the new and old context by which newcomers define and otherwise characterize the new situation (Louis, 1980, p. 236).

**Surprise** is the third entry experience and represents the difference between individual expectations and experiences in the new working environment. Surprise encompasses the individual’s affective reaction to differences, including changes and contrasts. Surprise can be positive or negative. According to Louis (1980, p. 237), different forms of surprise exist. For example, one form of surprise arises when unconscious job expectations are not met.

Awareness of above mentioned types of experiences (change, contrast, surprise) during the newcomers’ socialization process is an essential mechanism that aims to provide a successful transformation process for newcomers.

After reviewing newcomer adjustments and experiences during an organizational socialization process, a general theoretical background should be given. Nevertheless, it is important to also expound newcomers’ characteristics and attributes to understand relevant and influencing aspects during organizational entry of an individual. Therefore, studies in regard to newcomer attributes will be discussed in the next chapter.

### 2.4. Newcomer Attribute

In order to get an overview of the different attributes of newcomers, it is necessary to explore it in more detail. Newcomer attributes are important factors during the whole entry phase. According to Bauer et al. (1998, p. 170), newcomers enter an organization with a set of experiences, values and skills that must be considered in order to fully understand the socialization process. Researchers focused on the effects of work experience, newcomers’ values, as well as personal and demographic characteristics.

**Work experience** may affect newcomers’ socialization because past experiences can have an effect on newcomer’s expectations. Bauer, et al. (1998, p. 170) stated that especially those with more work experience should show less surprise and adopt to their new role more easily. Job experience provides newcomers with political realities of organizational life and may facilitate coping. Furthermore,
previous work experience influences newcomers’ attitude regarding job satisfaction (Perrot, et al., 2014, p. 249 ff).

**Values** and the impact on socialization was examined by few studies. Results showed that newcomers’ socialization is facilitated when new employees possess values which correlate with the fundamental values of the organization (Bauer, et al., 1998, p. 171).

**Personality** can be described through individual characteristics of the newcomer such as self-confidence, extraversion and openness. Personal characteristics can have an influence on the level of success of the socialization process. Development of relationships with organizational insiders and the creation of positive attitudes can be related to extraversion. A newcomer with a positive affectivity reflects that he or she feels enthusiastic and may therefore be more pleasant to be within the organization and may have more opportunities for informal learning sources. A newcomer with a higher self-efficacy can better adjust to his new role (Bauer et al., 1998, p. 172).

**Demographic attributes** and effects of diversity on newcomers’ socialization process were examined by few empirical studies. Few socialization studies have reported differences in regard to gender. The results suggest that gender differences are slight and remain a relatively unexplored field of investigation (Bauer et al., 1998, p. 174).

After reviewing general concepts and practices of existing research, the next chapter will outline several limitations of existing socialization research and highlight the relevance of the expounded research question of this thesis.

### 2.5. Newcomer and Organizational Insider

In addition to attaining task mastery and learning procedures of work related issues, several researchers of organizational socialization identify a need for new employees to learn to interact with other employees in the organization (Fitness, Fletcher, and Overall, 2003; Louis, 1990; Morrison, 2002). Despite the fact that interpersonal behavior is relevant during the organizational socialization process, there is little empirical data available about the interplay between co-workers during the newcomers’ socialization process.
Fitness et al. (2003) studied relationships more intensely with regard to the social psychology context. Fitness et al. (2003) defined key dimensions and processes which explain the development of relationships as following: Newcomer attribution, attachment to the organization and quality of relationships. According to Fitness et al. (2003, p. 220), the development of relationships is based on the situation, personal cognitions, expectations, ideals and the outcomes of the interaction between newcomers’ cognitions and the organizational situation. Although this study highlights the relevance of network related aspects, it did not provide some deeper understanding of which type of networks or relationships are relevant for a successful socialization.

Specifically related to newcomers’ support, Hurst et al. (2012) reviewed different forms of support which influence the socialization process. Support means assistance in learning tasks, social acceptance or provision of advises. Newcomers who adjust to an organization and enter a new team can have several skills that others may not have, colleagues may have different experiences and skills and thus, the newcomer can be considered a resource which is valuable to the team. At the same time, perceptions of interdependences may be enhanced, through integration and discussion of different viewpoints. As a result, new approaches to solve a problem can be found (Hurst et al., 2012, p. 122).

Another study focuses on supervisor and co-worker incivility and the socialization-related learning. Ghosh et al. (2013) uses the lenses of organizational socialization theories to interpret the influence of supervisor and co-worker incivility on employee related learning. Based on this, existing research deals with the crucial role of co-workers. However, these studies focus only on the co-workers’ incivility during socialization (Ghosh et al. 2013, p. 182). Existing research studied the relationships between organizational insider and newcomer as mentioned, however research was mainly focused on the importance of supervisor influences and did not give insight with regard to different forms of social relationships.

Furthermore, Morrison (2002) explains how patterns of social relationships affect organizational socialization. According to her, network relationships can be important when entering an organization. Newcomers’ process of learning and integration into a team and the differences in relationship structures can lead to several outcomes that can be regarded as successful socialization. Morrison (2002,
p. 1150) discusses the range and status of the information network and the indicators of learning which are represented through organizational knowledge, role clarity and task mastery. Results show that newcomers who gain information via different organizational sources are more likely to show a higher level of companies’ knowledge and understand the context better. Newcomers who have a high level of task mastery have a more intense information network and a greater role clarity. Newcomer who had friendship networks from various teams showed more commitment to the company. However, this study focuses only on network ties and the resulting relevance of different forms of networks but not on the interactions and social relationships (Morrison, 2002, p. 11508 f.). Nevertheless, as the newcomers’ socialization process is crucial for the individual’s future, turnover intent and to the success of the socialization initiatives, existing research did not analyze and explore interactions between newcomers and co-workers and the support during organizational socialization. Therefore, this thesis will analysis and explore interactions between newcomers and co-workers and their effects on antecedents and consequences of a successful socialization process of a newcomer.

While several studies examined the relationships and different aspects in the process of newcomers’ socialization, research highlights that there has been little empirical research of how the overall structure of newcomers’ relationships with team members matters (Morrison, 2002, p. 1156). Focusing too much on newcomers’ abilities and social aspects regarding the fit to the organization can lead to the underestimation of the powerful aspect of influence of the social system and organizational insiders on the success of the newcomer’s socialization process. Although existing theory stated that newcomers need to interact with organizational insiders, little is known about specifics related to co-workers and the interactions within the team (Bauer et al., 1998, 169 f.). Because socialization wasn’t examined enough with an interactionist perspective in existing socialization literature, it is necessary to investigate newcomer’s socialization processes by exploring the role of team members as a key mechanism and also to analyze consequences of interactions between insiders and newcomers. The research gap will be explored in more detail in the next chapters.
2.6. Research Gap

The existing literature examines the phenomenon of socialization and how new employees adjust to an organization. It also provides the description of outcomes of the newcomers’ socialization process. However, during the literature review, I noticed a lack of research specifically aimed at the role of co-workers and how colleagues’ behavior and support can influence the socialization process of new team members.

The existing empirical research is predominantly concerned with the influence of supervisor support on newcomers’ socialization process as the key indicator of success (Bauer & Green, 1998; Jokisaari, & Nurmi, 2009; Major et al. 1995). When studying existing empirical data in detail, I also noticed that socialization research remains divided among a number of fronts with regard to the success factors of newcomers’ socialization and some contradictions remain. In the following the different research streams and the resulting research gap will be explained.

Some theories emphasize network ties as a key success factor for newcomers. For example, Morrison (2002) identified the role of network ties during the socialization process as essential. The quantitative research of Morrison (2002) shows how patterns of social relationships affected socialization. Characteristics of the newcomer’s informal network were related to indicators of learning, task mastery and role clarity. The role of different kinds of network structures and the impact on socialization was examined. Results suggest that relationships provide a way to learn and assimilate but little insight into whether and how the structure of newcomers’ relationship matters was provided (Morrison, 2002, p. 1157). According to her findings, newcomers become socialized by developing a certain network (Morrison, 2002, p. 1137). Still others suggest the influence of newcomer-organizational fit is positively related to the socialization process. For example, Cooper-Thomas et al. (2004) suggest that a person-organization fit is an elementary part of a successful socialization process. Results of the research show that socialization tactics influence perceived fit, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

Jokisaari and Nurmi (2009) provide results from a quantitative research on organizational socialization and the role of supervisor support. In their longitudinal research, they tested outcomes of socialization as job satisfaction, work mastery
and role clarity and the perceived supervisor support. Results supported the argument that a key aspect in organizational socialization is related with supervisor support especially at the beginning of organizational entry (Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2009, p. 538). Therefore, their results are consistent with those of earlier studies which foster the importance of supervisors in organizational socialization (Bauer and Green, 1998; Morrison, 2002).

Existing literature recognizes that newcomers are socialized into an existing network through interactions between new team members and organizational insiders which result in the formation of social networks (Morrison, 2002, Fang et al., 2011; Rollag et al., 2005). Although, Morrison (2002) suggest that the structure of networks is important during organizational socialization, not much is known about the influence of team colleagues during organizational socialization (Fang et al., 2011; Kammeyer-Mueller & Warnberg, 2003; Morrisson, 2002; Saks et al., 2007). Thus, there remains lack of research on the role of social relations and the role of co-workers as a key mechanism influencing new team members’ learning and adaption during organizational socialization (Fang et al., 2011; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2011).

Based on the above examined research gap this thesis contributes to literature on newcomers’ socialization process by examining the interplay between insiders and newcomers and identifying possible antecedents and consequences of these interactions.
3. Methodology

The methodology part of the thesis describes the research approach, data collection method as well as the instruments for data analyzing.

3.1. The Research Approach

The empirical research is based on qualitative research which focuses on employees’ perceptions, experiences and expectations and the reasons behind their opinions, thus analyzing the research question in depth. The context as well as the data collection method are described below.

3.1.1. Research context

G. Englmayer is a medium sized company and offers a full service for transport and logistics in different segments (warehouse logistics, express-service, sea & air, high-tech logistics, furniture logistics) as well as customs consulting. The company was founded as a small family owned company by Martin Dollhäubl in the year 1858 and his stepson Georg Englmayer took over the business. From these days on, the company has been called G. Englmayer. In 1907, the company was purchased by Franz Wiesinger and the management was later passed on to his son Heinz Wiesinger at the end of the eighties, who is still the owner. The company consists of four subsidiaries in Austria: Wels, Wundschuh, Leopoldsdorf and Salzburg. Furthermore, seven subsidiaries abroad grant a comprehensive transportation network. Expansions of the business and opening of subsidiaries lead to a continually increased size of employees and workforce. Currently, approximately 450 people are employed within the Englmayer group. Nearly 160 employees are located in Wels, which is the head office of Austria. This thesis focuses on the parent company’s socialization process in Wels. The company structure has a flat hierarchy. Human resource practices for integrating new employees are not systematically defined and there are few official instructions for staff induction practices. As mentioned above, the company is medium sized. Therefore, this case study can provide insight into how SMEs operate and integrate newcomers. Existing research examines mainly large organizational contexts. However, evidence shows that HRM practices of smaller companies differ in comparison to the way large organization operate (Cardon & Stevens, 2004).
In order to choose an interesting case within the organization, I asked 10 newcomers to fill in a chart in which perceived feeling of integration should be drawn over time. Furthermore, the newcomers were asked to give an overview of their socialization process in order to see which case will give access to an interesting field of research. As a consequence, I chose the case that showed the most changes in the chart. By using the 360 degree feedback method it was important to choose relevant interview partners from the newcomer’s surrounding. Therefore beside the interview with the newcomer herself, interviews were conducted with her direct and indirect co-workers and with her supervisor. One co-worker is also the newcomer’s brother in law and another interview was made with her sister who also works within the organization. Table 1 gives an overview of the interview partners and the length of the interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview partner</th>
<th>Newcomer (N1)</th>
<th>Co-worker (C1)</th>
<th>Co-worker (C2)</th>
<th>Co-worker (C3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview length</td>
<td>31:01 minutes</td>
<td>29:29 minutes</td>
<td>35:49 minutes</td>
<td>25:14 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview partner</td>
<td>Supervisor (S1)</td>
<td>Co-worker (Brother in law, C4)</td>
<td>Co-worker (C5)</td>
<td>Private environment (Sister, P1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview length</td>
<td>33:34 minutes</td>
<td>22:26 minutes</td>
<td>20:14 minutes</td>
<td>25:26 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1 Interview Partners*

### 3.2. Research Design

This chapter gives an overview of the chosen research design. In order to gain deep insights into the socialization process of a newcomer, a qualitative research design was chosen. Furthermore, a case study approach was conducted as the study targets one specific organization.
3.2.1. Qualitative Research Design

The research question of this thesis will be answered through qualitative research. This form of research is appropriate for studies of social relations. Qualitative research aims to examine relevant information from “inside” and therefore from the view of the respondent in order to better understand the social realities (Flick, Kardoff & Steinke, 2000, p. 22). A qualitative research approach is used when the researcher wants to investigate dynamics of social systems or social contexts and structures of procedures. Froschauer and Lueger (2003, 202) pointed out that qualitative research addresses the investigation of a connection between actions and consequences of the examined context and gains insight into how social systems are developed. Furthermore, this research method emphasizes daily life activities of the respondents. For this reason, data will be collected in real life settings. In addition, qualitative research allows flexibility of the researcher’s perceptions (Flick, Kardoff & Steinke, 2000, p. 22). Due to the mentioned aspects of qualitative research, the exploration design of this thesis will be based on qualitative methods in order to answer the research question.

3.2.2. Case Study Approach

This master thesis follows a case study approach. Case study research is used to understand the dynamics within single settings. Eisenhardt (1989, p. 534) defines the case study approach as an empirical research that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context that focuses on understanding the dynamics of single settings.

A fundamental aspect is the selection of a case study for building a theory. Concerning the selection of an appropriate case, this thesis explores the company G. Englmaier for research as a single setting in more detail. I chose the topic and research method because I realized it will help me to scientifically explore an area in the company that I am working for that is highly relevant. Since I am employed in this company, I had the opportunity to choose from several different cases. The research question concerning newcomers’ entry and staff induction are highly relevant for the company group G. Englmaier. Due to the way the organization handles the entry of newcomers, it is possible that this specific case can answer the research purpose of this thesis. Organizational socialization and introduction practices and the interplay between the newcomer and organizational insiders can
be investigated in detail. In addition, another reason why this case was chosen is the fact that I work in the organization and therefore have access to internal information and communication systems and the possibility to observe newcomers’ socialization process.

This thesis will use a single-case study approach due to the fact that the organization G. Englmayer will be analyzed. The organization is an appropriate candidate for a single-case study. The company structure has a flat hierarchy and this has not changed fundamentally during the last years. Human resource practices for integrating new employees are not systematically defined within the company. Therefore, it is a representative case for other companies which have not systematically defined HRM practices.

3.2.3. Data collection

To get in-depth insights into the socialization process of the newcomer and her environment, semi-structured interviews serve as a data collection method. A semi-structured interview is one of the most adequate techniques for understanding of the reasons of interviewees’ choices, behaviors and attitudes. Semi-structured interviews are appropriate for studying specific situations and are often used in connection with cases with small samples. This method for data collection allows to gain in-depth information regarding complex and sensitive issues (Laforest, 2009, p. 1). The research aim of this thesis is to get an understanding of the socialization process of a newcomer during organization entry. In order to explore the process of newcomer’s socialization in greater detail, a 360 degree feedback was conducted.

During the interview phase the newcomer’s colleagues, supervisor and family members were interviewed. A guideline for the interviews was made in advance which allows the researcher to conduct the interviews with the possibility to ask further questions which might spontaneously emerge (Edwards and Holland, 2013, pp. 2).

The interview consisted mainly of open questions about the socialization process of the newcomer and specified questions which were derived from the guideline. The newcomer was asked 15 questions with the purpose of gathering general
information to get a picture of the setting of the case and of understanding the role in the organization. To identify responsibilities and task related aspects which might influence the socialization process, questions about HR-practices, previous working experiences and expectations were posed. In order to get an understanding of how the socialization and adaption process works, questions concerning the newcomer’s first days in the new working environment, what supported or hindered the newcomer’s introduction process, the role of team members and atmosphere and communication in the team were included. In order to find out to which degree the socialization was successful, the newcomer was asked to draw a chart with the perceived level of integration and questions regarding the actual situation were asked. There were also interviews conducted with people from the newcomer’s environment, including the newcomer’s close co-workers with the same responsibilities, team colleagues with other tasks and family members. The 15 questions of these interviews were adopted from the general guideline. To gain deeper insight into how team members can influence the newcomer’s socialization process, it was examined how the colleagues / family members assess the adaption process of the new team member. Furthermore, questions regarding the interaction behavior of the newcomer and changes of attitudes and reasons behind these processes were asked. The interview phase also included one interview with the newcomer’s supervisor which contained 16 questions. Questions about the team characteristics, supervisor support, organizational-newcomer fit, communication in the team and other influencing factors of newcomer’s socialization process were investigated. The interview guides can be found in the appendix.

3.3. Data Analysis

The analysis of the interviews will be conducted using the “Gioia Methodology”. Gioia et al. (2012) have devised a systematic inductive approach to concept development which allows bringing “qualitative rigor” to inductive research. This method allows a 1st and a 2nd-order analysis, which forms the basis for the aggregated dimensions.

Gioia et al. (2012) suggest starting the research progress by looking for similarities and differences among the categories. Therefore, the first step is to reduce the complexity of data to a manageable number of categories. The next step includes
thinking of multiple levels in order to answer the important question “What’s going on here?” (Gioia et al., 2012, p 20). By developing answers to this question, themes from the interviews emerge and categories for the 2nd order can be built. In this 2nd order analysis, the researcher asks herself whether the emerging themes suggest concepts that might help to explain the phenomena, also nascent concepts become visible.

The data structure makes it possible to configure data into a visual aid and a diagram which shows the process from raw data to terms and themes with a data structure. This methodology seems very suitable for this research because it supports the researcher in thinking about the data theoretically, not just methodologically. Furthermore this methodology allows rigor by representing how the researcher progressed in conducting the analysis (Gioia et al., 2012).
4. Results

In the following chapter, the results of the data analysis will be presented in two parts. First, I provide an overview of the **antecedents of a successful socialization process**. The aggregated dimensions which result from the 2nd order themes will be outlined and discussed in more detail to describe the content. For further substantiation, original quotes from the interviews will be given. Three main aggregate dimensions “Newcomer Attributes”, “Social Integration context” and “Significant Events influencing Socialization” were constructed in order to answer the research question. Because the thesis is about the socialization process of a newcomer entering a team, it is necessary to take a deeper look at each of the three dimensions. Therefore the following chapters examine each dimension with its 2nd order themes in detail.

Second, I will identify potential **consequences of a successful socialization process** by highlighting how a successful socialization process can affect group cohesiveness and psychological safety.

One overall finding was that the newcomer socialization process was characterized by individualized tactics and without clearly defined steps. Trainings on the job were done by organizational insiders. Due to the fact that team members work in shifts, the team leader and the newcomer mostly worked in different time schedules and therefore the involvement of co-workers played an even greater importance during newcomers’ socialization process in this case. This aspect was confirmed also through observations and will be explained in detail in the next sub-chapters.
### 4.1. Antecedent 1: Newcomer Attributes

In order to give an overview, figure 3 below outlines the 2nd order themes which are significant attributes of the newcomer and influenced the socialization process. These 2nd and 1st order themes will be now discussed in detail in the following sub-chapters.

#### Figure 3 Themes Newcomer Attributes

### 4.1.1. Personal Attitude of the Newcomer

The behavior of the newcomer is influenced by personal characteristics and values, therefore personal attitudes play an important role during the newcomers’ whole socialization process. In the interviews, the personal characteristics of the new employee played a significant role.
All interview partners pointed out that the newcomer is a very communicative and open-minded person. Furthermore, they stated that the newcomer is a very friendly person and showed willingness to integrate and to support the team members. Personal characteristics of the newcomer were perceived very positive, as can be seen in this example statement of a colleague in the interview: “The newcomer is a polite and friendly person and that is why all colleagues integrated her immediately (Interview N3, 237 f.).” Moreover, co-workers had the impression that the newcomer was authentic and that the behavior of the newcomer plays an important role during the socialization process. “The newcomer is a very open person and therefore you can communicate more openly. When there are problems, the newcomer communicates with you and talks about difficulties (Interview C6, 75 f.).” This is also related to the aspect that the interview partners mentioned that the newcomer was showing a lot of effort and tried to support the co-workers. “I find it great how the newcomer assumed her role. How she acted, that she listened carefully and tried to implement what she was told (Interview C2, 20 f.).”

Another aspect which was highlighted by each interview partner was the importance of openness. The newcomer was not afraid to get in contact with people and to interact with organizational insiders. “[...] it’s positive for the working atmosphere when there is a person who enjoys to communicate and to interact with the people inside the company (Interview S1, 30 f.).”

Furthermore, several interview partners mentioned that another female newcomer socialized soon after the examined newcomer and therefore the team had the opportunity to analyze both processes and to compare them. In contrast, this newcomer had a completely different behavior, she was perceived to be shy, less talkative and seen as a more introverted person (Interview C3, 226f).

Newcomers’ behavior and their personal characteristics are essential aspects during the organizational entry phase. Above mentioned statements show that when entering an organization, personal attitudes of newcomers play a fundamental role.

4.1.2. Willingness to integrate

An essential aspect of a successful organizational entry is the attitude and the willingness of the newcomer to integrate into the team. All interview partners
mentioned that the newcomer showed willingness to support others, to integrate and to get to know organizational insiders. Therefore, one of the first actions was that the newcomer showed interest in getting in contact with other employees. “The newcomer is a person who wants to know everything and also wants to participate, she has asked about a lot when she had difficulties and also two or three times on the same topic (Interview C6, 24 f.).”

The newcomer’s team leader and co-workers argued that due to the communicative type of the newcomer it was easier to integrate her into the team. “The newcomer agreed to assist others, to integrate herself and to get to know people (Interview C2, 315).” Additionally, it was a positive experience for the existing team because the newcomer integrated into the team very fast and showed commitment.

Moreover, the team leader mentioned that the newcomer was showing a lot of effort and willingness to learn and to integrate into the organization from the very beginning. The willingness to integrate into the new team was seen as an important aspect for a successful socialization.

4.1.3. Organization-member fit

The person-organization fit can be an important aspect of newcomers’ socialization process and the way how well the process works. This can also be shown in the example of G. Englmayer and the analyzed socialization process.

All interview partners described the newcomer as friendly and communicative. These aspects of the newcomer correlate with the organizational culture which was described to be open and personal. This is also reflected in the company vision: “Logistics totally personally – it is true in our company (Interview C4, 83).” Moreover the supervisor and the co-worker outlined that the newcomer fits exactly into the team. These was underlined by a statement from the supervisor in the interview: “She is the kind of type that fits perfectly for our team (Interview S1, 351).”

Due to the mentioned attitudes of the newcomer, the organizational-member fit can be seen as a positive antecedent for the social integration of a newcomer.
4.1.4. **Experience with previous socialization processes**

The newcomer’s experience with previous socialization processes contributed to the assessment of the actual socialization process.

The newcomer had experienced previous socialization processes as very difficult. She came from an industry where rules were very strict and for this reason she felt comfortable in the new team from the first days on. “Given that I came from a tight industry where nobody talked to others I really felt comfortable within the first days (Interview N1, 12 f.).” In addition, the newcomer pointed out that she appreciated this completely positive socialization experience which she had within G. Englmayer. “I never had this situation like now with my team that is why I honor this a lot more (Interview N1, 213 f.).”

One team member mentioned that the previous experiences affected the newcomer because she was in a firm where nothing was allowed and everything had to be done by instructions. The aspect of experience with previous socialization processes **affected the newcomer’s behavior and attitudes** during her early organization entry. One co-worker mentioned that the behavior of the newcomer was cautious at the beginning and that this was related to the negative experience within her previous organization entry phase. “In my opinion the newcomer changed, she flourished because she told me about her previous work and there she was really unhappy and you notice that she feel very well here (Interview C3, 214 ff.).”

**Proposition 1:** Newcomer’s personal characteristics, the fit with the organization and willingness to integrate strongly influence a positive organizational socialization process.

**Proposition 2:** Newcomers’ attitudes towards organizational entry is shaped by previous experience.
4.2. Antecedent 2: Social Integration context

During the socialization process of a newcomer, different aspects inside and outside the organization are relevant and can be seen as the context of social integration. Therefore, figure 4 below shows factors which influence the process of social integration during organizational socialization of the newcomer. For this reasons also the 2nd order themes will be outlined in detail.

**Figure 4 Themes Social Integration Context**
4.2.1. Interaction with co-workers

During early organization entry, interactions between the newcomer and the team members influence the process of socialization.

One co-worker reported that the interaction with the newcomer was very harmonious from the beginning. “The trial lesson was very cool, we were on the same wavelength and it fits from the start. I was pleased as I heard that the person starts to work in our team because between the newcomer and me it harmonizes quite well (Interview C3, 16 f.).” In addition, all interview partners reported that the interaction and cooperation between newcomer and the co-worker is very good. “Cooperation with the newcomer goes hand in hand and it is a difference if there is a person who completely let the work rest [...] or if a person keeps attention to complete work when the close co-worker starts to work (Interview C3, 224 f.).”

According to the team leader, the interaction between the co-workers and the newcomer was good from the first days on and the team members were interested in getting in contact with the new employee. One co-worker pointed out that sympathy is an important factor. “Sympathy between newcomer and me was there and therefore understanding was better and made working together easier (Interview, C6, 65 f.)” In addition, all team members reported that they are open-minded for changes and new colleagues. “[...] of course all people are open-minded for new employees, there is nobody in the office who says that he or she does not want to talk a word or something like this (Interview C2, 225 f.).”

One interesting point, which was mentioned by a view interview partners was regarding a team member who held entirely different viewpoints regarding task related issues. Beside these discrepancies, the team member had a different background and diverse social relationships. One co-worker stated that it was difficult to integrate the colleague because of the social and work related differences (Interview C2, 122f.). Soon after newcomers entry above mentioned co-worker leaved the company. The team leader argued that it was a difficult decision: “It was not easy for me but the situation has not allowed another decision (Interview S1, 188ff.).”

Another aspect which was stated by the interview partners was fun during work and that the newcomer is similar to her team members in regard to the fun aspect.
“It was extremely easy with the newcomer, because she is such an open person and such a funny person and with her it is always funny (Interview 5, 12 f.).”

Aside from the team leader, **co-workers played a very important role** during the socialization process of the newcomer. “Team members play a very big role because the rapport among each other and the sympathy I think is an important factor if you feel comfortable or not (Interview S1 166 ff.).” The newcomer was supported by her co-workers from the beginning and they showed a willingness to answer the newcomer’s questions about how everything in the organization works. One close co-worker who had not been long in the organization supported her to understand processes and activities and explained to her how organizational life actually is. Furthermore, the co-worker introduced her to workflows and supported the newcomer a whole month in order that she know how to assume her role and also to learn how to act within the organization. “Her co-worker who is also not long in the company taught her how to do her job and that is a factor which helped the newcomer (Interview C2, 47 f.).” The fact that the **co-workers’ experience of organizational socialization** lies not far back was an important aspect influencing the newcomer’s socialization process. During the interview, the co-worker mentioned that she knew exactly how the newcomer felt and that is why she really wanted to support the newcomer and tried to help her to better understand the work activities. The co-worker was more precise and clear when explaining work related issues because she knew which aspects have to be focused on.

Co-workers were supporting the newcomer not only in task-related activities but **co-workers also showed willingness to integrate her** and to support the newcomer. Due to the fact that the team constellation in which the newcomer integrated was reformed some time after the newcomer entered the organization, cooperativeness and the understanding among team members was better. “The co-workers of the newcomer are very helpful and this was in the previous departure not the case (Interview C8, 26 f.).” Moreover, co-workers gave the newcomer the **feeling to be welcome** and all members of the team supported the newcomer wherever she needed help. One aspect which was emphasized by co-workers was that **mutual support** plays an important role and this leads to a comfortable feeling. Not only had the co-workers helped the newcomer, the
newcomer also tried to help their co-workers. “Newcomer supported us and so we automatically helped her (Interview, C5, 46).”

When entering an organization a newcomer has to learn how things work in the new environment. The introduction phase into organizational standards and rules was done by informal practices mainly through newcomer’s closest co-worker without any formal instructions. It was mentioned by the team leader, that co-workers play a fundamental role during organizational socialization. In addition, the introduction phase was facilitated through informal practices and recommendations by co-workers.

The newcomer pointed out that learning on the job was mainly accomplished through learning by doing and by trial and error. “It was learning by doing (Interview N1, 89).” Furthermore, the newcomer pointed out that she learned some new information for job related activities every day and that she learned from failures. Due to the fact that within the examined case team members work in different layers it was not possible for the team leader to train the newcomer in regard to work-related activities. The training of the newcomer which was mainly undertaken by co-workers was more intuitive and without planned schedules. This was highlighted by one statement of the team leader: “As good as the colleagues are, as good the new team member will be and so co-workers play an important role (S1, 170).” Additionally the newcomer was not shy and asked for support and task relevant information whenever she needed help.

Another aspect which is important during organizational socialization is that the newcomer has to be granted enough time in order that the socialization process can be positive. New employees need time to adapt and to adjust, as well as time to understand the task-related activities and to build relationships with organizational insiders. Team members considered time as an important factor during the organization entry phase. Co-workers argued that the amount of time taken to explain work-related issues and to introduce the newcomer to her new role was an important aspect. In the case of the newcomer, she had one month with her co-worker and learned how the job has to be done. From the point of view of team colleagues, sufficient time should be taken to adjust to the new role and to show to the newcomer task related responsibilities and activities.
Furthermore, the fact that the newcomer should not be put under pressure excessively was highlighted by one co-worker: “But when you put too much pressure that does not help. Therefore, let them time, give them some rest (Interview, C2, 277 f.).”

Team members reported that the newcomer asked to extend the introduction phase and that this aspect had influenced the success of the entry phase. “It was helpful to extend the adaption phase as long as the newcomer needs time (Interview C3, 311).”

The findings above highlight the significance of interaction and support by co-workers during newcomer’s early days within the organization. Therefore the newcomer’s adjustment, behavior and feeling is strongly affected by co-workers support. Moreover the mentioned aspects imply the importance of giving the newcomer enough time for a successful organizational socialization process. The fact that a co-worker was mainly responsible for newcomer’s introduction phase emphasizes the significance of co-workers during newcomer’s socialization process. Furthermore, sympathy between newcomer and co-workers had strengthened the integration process.

4.2.2. Social Relationships established prior to entry

Organizational socialization of newcomer’s is a continuous process, therefore it is important to know that a network can be an important access to social relationships and for integration. This shows the example of the 360-degree feedback from the newcomer’s environment.

The fact that the newcomer already knew a team colleague in advance facilitated the socialization process. All interview partners from the working environment as well as the interview partners from the private environment mentioned that based on the social connection from her private life it was an option for the newcomer to get in contact with other organizational insiders aside from her team colleagues. One co-worker argued that it is a pleasant feeling when the new employee knows organizational members before and is not completely alone. “The newcomer had a contact person in the office, who she already knew and this helped her.” (Interview C2, 84 f.) In addition to the strong relationship with a member from her team also the newcomers’ sister works in the organization (different
department). The access due to the existing social relationships from various departments enhanced the newcomer’s integration within the organization. Furthermore, an interview partner from the private environment highlighted that most of the organizational insiders knew that the newcomer is a family member and this made it easier for her and she gained internal information before organization entry.

In addition to the above mentioned positive aspects related to the social integration, the social network helped the newcomer in order to find orientation in the new environment. The newcomer had the possibility to turn to a familiar person when questions arise. This argument was highlighted by a statement from an interview partner. “The person who the newcomer was familiar with had of course helped her. At the beginning there are many questions and you ask some questions two or three times [...] and then you ask someone who you are more familiar with.” (Interview C6, 31 f.).

When newcomers start to work in a new organizational environment, it is beneficial to know an organizational insider in advance. Newcomer had a social connection to diverse organizational members prior to her organizational entry. Through this social relationships and network the newcomer was able to get information about company related information prior to organizational entry.

4.2.3. Team culture & atmosphere

During all interviews the culture of the team was described as open, friendly and loyal. Team traditions or social activities which could enhance social integration of new team members do not exist within the organization. The overall organizational culture is more informal and emphasizes a family friendly atmosphere.

Within the organization, different team cultures exist and also cohesion varies among teams. However, all teams share one aspect, namely that the team culture is shaped mostly by team members themselves. The atmosphere within the examined team was comfortable and loose. “Simply the employees who bring in the good mood and even if the day is stupid or when a serious word is spoken however then there is again a loose atmosphere. That makes it much more comfortable for me to work in the office (Interview C2, 210 ff.).”
Another important aspect was that the team members are all friendly and have no prejudices against new colleagues. “Generally I can say that we are nice, we are friendly and we try to stick together and I believe that when you have the feeling that there is a cohesion and that you can turn to somebody, this facilitates the organization entry (Interview S1, 344 ff.).”

The team member’s foster team work and have a strong sense of belonging to the group. In addition, all interview partners stated that there is a strong team cohesion and that the working atmosphere is very good. This shared culture was described by one co-worker as following. “[…] it is a completely cool team. I am not sure if this exist a second time in our company (Interview C8, 180 f.).”

As mentioned during the interviews, team atmosphere is a crucial factor influencing a newcomer’s feeling of commitment and comfortableness. Additionally it was mentioned by all interview partners that the overall mood within the team is really good. One interview partner from the newcomer's private environment supported this with a clear statement. “She would have earned more money elsewhere but she said it’s because of the people and the working atmosphere (Interview P1, 67 f.).”

This statement leads to the conclusion that the culture is shaped by the team members themselves and that an atmosphere which is based on an honest and open culture can lead to an enhanced and faster integration during organizational entry. Moreover, a team with a positive atmosphere and open culture can be seen as a stable fundament for a newcomer’s socialization process.

4.2.4. Communication style

In general, the communication style within the team was described as open and relaxed. The interview partners characterized the communication with the newcomer as good, relaxed and honest. Further, it was stated that the communication between her and the co-worker who introduced her was good. “The newcomer and her close co-worker had a good communication and working atmosphere (Interview C6, 42 f.).” Beside this aspect, the newcomer emphasized that the open communication within the co-workers has influenced her feeling of comfortableness in a positive way. “Open and communicative behavior of co-worker gave me the feeling to be welcome (Interview N1, 15 f.).”
During the interviews, it was mentioned that the communication within the team was already good before the newcomer entered the organization. However, after newcomer’s entry the internal communication was better and also the co-workers benefited from this aspect.

This explanation shows that not only newcomer benefited from the existing open communication style but also the co-workers benefited from the newcomer’s socialization process because it enhanced the communication culture within the whole team. “She really likes to communicate [...] and this was good for the whole team (Interview S1, 31 ff.).”

4.2.5. Freedom of action

Freedom of action is reflected by the space given to employees by their team leader. During organizational socialization, freedom of action given to the newcomer can vary.

Team members highlighted that they have freedom and can organize and time their work mostly by themselves. “One has a lot of space, you can also schedule your work by yourself [...]. That one simply has a free decision-making power (Interview C3, 392 ff.).” In addition, one interview partner highlighted that the newcomer empathized the freedom of action which has been given to her from the first days: “She was really relieved from the beginning, because everything is not so strict by norms, that not everything is so fixed but that you really have space and she liked this freedom of action from the beginning (Interview P1, 76 ff.).”

All team members emphasized the freedom of action and argued that they are not monitored or controlled by their supervisor. “You are not observed precisely and it is not so strict that has influenced it strongly (Interview, P1, 82 ff.).” Furthermore, the newcomer and her co-workers can schedule their work freely.

Additionally, freedom of action of team members is reflected in the framework that the team members can participate and act freely under the condition that they fulfill their work conscientiously and within a certain time. “Work has to be done and this in a proper way then you are allowed to do and one has the freedom of action where you can have everything, if one works tidily (Interview C8, 120 ff.).”

In conclusion, freedom of action can be seen as a positive effect of a newcomer’s integration phase.
4.2.6. **Demographic aspects**

All interview partners mentioned the aspect of age several times during the interviews. A similar age distribution among all team members influenced the cooperation in general.

In more detail, one co-worker stated that that due to the fact that all team members are young, meaning under 35 years old, the rapport is better and therefore it was easier for the newcomer to socialize. “In our team all are young and I think that the understanding between young people is better (Interview C8, 190 f.).”

Moreover, the team leader highlighted that this similar age distribution in the team and the better rapport led to a better integration of the new employee: “We are also a young team from the department and I am already almost an old person in our team and I believe that it had done quite well that we are generally a young team so that there are no old-established people, and I think you have the feeling of belonging together (Interview S1, 51 ff.).”

Another relevant aspect which was pointed out was related to gender. Although gender issues are usually measured within a quantitative research approach, the examined qualitative interviews gave an insight into the influence of gender during a socialization process. During the interview with the newcomer she highlighted the aspect that her team leader is a woman and that the rapport was good from the beginning. “My supervisor is a women and we had immediately found a common ground (Interview N1, 170 f.).”

In addition, another female co-worker characterized the cooperation with the female newcomer as good, harmonious and funny and justified this good rapport as a result of same gender. “It is easier to talk among women, when you have somebody with whom you can talk and laugh (Interview C3, 118 f.).”

The mentioned statements above showed that the success of the newcomer’s socialization process was affected by a similar age distribution of all team members and the team leader. Same gender was also mentioned as an influencing aspect which leads to better rapport.

**Proposition 3:** Successful socialization is dependent on co-workers’ behavior toward newcomer’s integration and willingness to support.
Proposition 4: Social integration is facilitated by social relationships.

Proposition 5: Successful socialization is affected by a similar age distribution between the newcomer and the team members.

4.3. Antecedent 3: Significant events influencing socialization

Newcomer’s socialization includes different processes which can be seen as significant events of newcomer’s socialization. Therefore figure 5 shows which events were reported to have a significant influence.

![Figure 5 Themes Significant events influencing Socialization](image)

4.3.1. Team-events

Human resource practices which are introduced by an organization can influence newcomer’s socialization process. Within the examined team human resource practices were described in form of a team-event. Other organizational related events like informative meetings or companies Christmas party were mentioned only on the edge.

During newcomer’s socialization process, the team was allowed to undertake a team event. All interview partners who joined the team-event described it as a very positive activity. The newcomer highlighted that the team-event helped her
really a lot (Interview N1, 124 f.). “I drove home from the team trip and thought I really have a cool team and I can work with them (Interview N1, 210 f.).”

Other team members mentioned that they had a lot of fun with the newcomer and that the team-event was a good possibility to not only to get to know the new employee in the organizational environment but also privately. “We had a lot of fun together and it is how I said when you have fun together and can communicate then you feel more comfortable because you come in the office and you know the people like you and that is worth a lot (Interview C3, 230 ff.).”

To summarize, the team-event strengthened the team cohesion and understanding between the newcomer and her co-workers.

4.3.2. Informal breaks

During all interviews informal breaks were mentioned to have a positive influence on newcomer’s socialization process.

Informal breaks took place in form of short breaks outside the organization in designated areas. On the one side, communication with team members which the newcomer already knew were strengthened further and on the other side, it was a chance for the newcomer to get in contact with team members and other organizational insiders which she had not known before. Co-workers have described informal breaks as a possibility for the newcomer to get to know team members also privately and to get new insights. “Informal breaks with colleagues helped to integrate (Interview S1, 58).”

The newcomer highlighted that she was asked at her first working day to join break with other team members and that she really appreciated this acceptance and social integration possibility. “It was the total difference here because right on the first day I went to the outdoor area for a short break, my co-worker also went in break with our team leader and then they asked me to join them and I do not know why but I was really surprised. I was very glad and I just never had such a situation (Interview N1, 421 ff.).” Another positive factor of the informal breaks was mentioned by one co-worker as following: “That helped her, when they made a break together [...] it is a positive aspect when you are together outside the office with people from the team (Interview C2, 169 ff.).”
During the whole newcomer’s entry phase, informal breaks enhanced the social integration. In addition, the team leader mentioned that informal breaks were also used to give feedback and to ask the newcomer for feedback about her personal well-being. “During short breaks outside the office we talk just as well. There we ask if everything is okay, if she feels good so I have asked for her feedback if everything is fine and she confirmed that always again (Interview S1, 58 f).” Moreover, the team leader pointed out that the informal breaks with newcomer’s co-workers helped to integrate.

The analysis indicates that informal breaks are important opportunities for newcomer’s social connection and for two-sided feedback.

**Proposition 6:** Informal breaks with co-workers and team events are important sources for a newcomer’s social connection and for feedback.

In general, interview partners characterized successful newcomer socialization as having a good and honest communication with the newcomer, by newcomers feeling of comfortableness because of strong cohesion and support by co-workers, good understanding due to the same age as well as the time the co-workers spent for the newcomer on learning the new role. By the use of a 360 degree feedback method, different views, perceptions and factors which lead to a successful socialization were identified and provides a broader understanding of the influencing factors during organizational entry. The next chapter will identify consequences of the successful socialization process in terms of group cohesiveness and psychological safety.

### 4.4. Consequences of a successful socialization process

One main finding with regard to consequences shows that the newcomer’s socialization process strongly influenced team cohesiveness. The fact, that the newcomer knew team rules, norms and organizational insiders already prior to organizational entry facilitated her socialization process and the status she hold within the team. Based on the newcomer’s strong ties and personal affiliations the newcomer immediately gained a high status role. As a consequence the newcomer was accepted by her co-workers and the status role enhanced.
The examined case shows that the newcomer changed the existing communication culture within her team. The new role acceptance led to a changed team behavior where commitment and affiliation to the team were perceived to be high. This can be explained through the positive synergies the newcomer developed soon after organizational entry. She constantly tried to integrate and interact with team insiders. As a result, a team culture developed where newcomer and her co-worker shared common values and attitudes and are more likely to communicate with each other.

Another finding within the examined case was that the newcomer and her co-workers were very homogeneous and they shared a same view of how tasks should be fulfilled. The strong group cohesiveness resulted in a more difficult social integration and acceptance for those team members who have different backgrounds and different social networks. In addition, not all team members had the same ability to integrate and to express their viewpoints as the newcomer. As a consequence of the strong cohesion, not only leadership competences deprived but the strong cohesion also led to changed group formation, divergent perception of status roles and changed hierarchy distribution within the team.

Furthermore, newcomers’ successful socialization process negatively affected group’s psychological safety. Psychological safety can be defined as “feeling able to show and employ one’s self without fear of negative consequences of self-image, status or career” (Kahn, 1990, p. 708 f.). When psychological safety is high, team members frequently do not think about potential negative consequences and they are capable to raise concerns about something the team might not want to hear. In contrast, group cohesiveness can reduce willingness to disagree and challenge others’ views (Edmonson, 1999, p. 354). Therefore, newcomers’ strong ties and the high cohesiveness with co-workers resulted in a decreased psychological safety were ”outsiders” with different views and backgrounds are less likely accepted.

Based on the above-mentioned analysis, the success of one newcomer’s socialization process can severely affect the success or failure of a future newcomer’s socialization process. The case shows that another socialization process was perceived to be completely diverse. Interview partners mentioned that it was easier for the newcomer in contrast to other newcomers who did not request for support. „The other new team member learned her job mostly with
prepared documents and by self-studying, she did not ask other team members (Interview C3, 216).” Although the following newcomer socialized three months afterwards, the level of integration differs as one team member mentioned: “The other newcomer still is in the introduction phase and she needs to be more open to integrate in the team (Interview C3, 239ff).” By analyzing interactions and the two socialization processes within the team it was obvious that newcomers’ individual attributes are significant aspects which facilitate or hinder a successful integration.

The case shows that the newcomer’s successful socialization process led to an increased team cohesiveness but at the same time reduced the group’s psychological safety. A combination of personal attributes, strong cohesion and low psychological safety consequently resulted in a more difficult socialization process for the following newcomer. When a team is faced with different socialization processes contemporary as in this case, newcomers with weak access to social relations and divergent abilities to integrate in a new environment have a more difficult initial position within the organization and socialization takes more time and effort. Especially when a newcomer enters a homogenous group, as within the analyzed case, it is more difficult to engage in daily routines, than within a heterogeneous team where other viewpoints and divergent ideas are desired and promoted.
5. Discussion & Conclusion

After presenting the findings, the thesis will discuss several implications. First this chapter deals with implications for existing theory and for practice. Moreover, the thesis exposes several limitations and concludes with fields for further research.

5.1. Implications for theory

The heart of organizational socialization refers to the process of acquiring the social knowledge and skills to assume an organizational role. During this process newcomers learn about organizational values and goals, the attitudes which are accepted within the organization and the information needed to obtain a certain role (Ashford and Nurmohamed, 2012, 14).

To briefly summarize the state of field, much research was done with regard to the concept of networks and social support through the supervisor when it comes to newcomer’s socialization. However, research is rare concerning socialization and the effects of co-workers’ support and behavior on newcomer. Moreover, a successful socialization, as mentioned already, is related to have direct outcomes on social integration and therefore there is a need to examine how this social integration is affected by organizational insiders. Based on this, it is fundamental to understand which aspects influence and affect the socialization process of newcomers. Additionally, present research focuses on the interaction between newcomer and supervisor as the key mechanism influencing new team members learning and adaption and neglects the interplay of newcomers and co-workers. As a result, the purpose of this study is focused on the research gap of the organizational socialization process with regard to the importance of social relationships during organizational entry phase. These explications are supposed to highlight the significance of the research topic and expose the reasons for the mentioned relevance of this thesis. Below, theoretical implications of this study will be outlined in detail.

First, this thesis contributes to the importance of social integration during organizational socialization. The findings of this thesis with regard to the influencing factors during newcomer’s socialization highlighted that co-workers behavior and interaction played a significant role for the success of the social integration. Existing research discusses that strong ties imply smaller networks
and formal socialization tactics will lead to stronger ties (Morrison, 2002, p. 1157). In this case, the newcomer was socialized via informal tactics and integration was strongly influenced by newcomer’s social relationships with insiders established already prior to the organizational entry. The newcomer’s strong social alliance with diverse organizational members led to an effective socialization process. The paper of Kammeyer-Müller and Warnberg (2003, p. 832) underlines that work group integration can be a source of social support and assistance for newcomers. The paper of Fitness et al. (2003, p. 220 f.) also highlighted that relationships with insiders can be seen as a resource which is valuable for the newcomer. The findings of this thesis support this research by showing that relationships with co-workers can be fundamental sources for a successful socialization process. Further, it was shown that newcomers’ socialization was increased by a high level of work group integration.

Furthermore, this thesis contributes to the distinction of group cohesiveness and psychological safety which was highlighted within the context of group related literature by Edmondson (1999, p. 354). While group cohesiveness increased in the case, the group’s psychological safety decreased which is indicated by the less successful socialization process of another newcomer.

This thesis adds implications not only to the socialization theory but also to the literature on group behavior and thereof resulting consequences. Although research on group behavior has focused on a range of variables, much of the emphasis has been put on implications on group properties and group phenomena as decision making processes or group pressure (Asch, 1951; Kerr & Tindale, 2004; Robbins & Judge, 2012) and there has been little research relating to organizational socialization combined with organizational behavior research. The present results add to existing literature by spreading lights on consequences of newcomers’ socialization processes with regard to group behavior properties.

The study of Van Maanen and Schein (1979) about the theory of organizational socialization is a useful explanation of how organizations can categorize the newcomer’s socialization process. However, as the model of Van Maanen and Schein (1979) focuses on frame conditions for organizations, this thesis serves as an extension and explanation of the individualized tactic expounded by Ardt et al. (2001), due to the aspect that the newcomer in this case mainly go through a
more informal socialization process. The findings underline that individualized socialization occurs through focusing on personal related needs and mainly by ad-hoc practices. Furthermore, new role behavior was learned via trial and error and interactions with co-worker enhanced the social integration of the newcomer.

5.2. Implications for practice

Concerning the important role of co-workers, findings show that co-workers not only supported the newcomer during the whole learning and adaption process but also social integration was mainly guided and shaped by co-workers. That means co-workers are a fundamental source of learning and for social relations at the early stages in newcomer’s organizational life. Co-workers are the key contact who mediate relevant information from the organizational context and are essential for newcomer’s integration. Therefore it might be valuable to incorporate key co-workers in the adaption process of newcomers in order to facilitate newcomers’ socialization processes as well as to enhance co-workers capabilities to convey task relevant information and to foster social integration. As shown in the case, the team had the chance to get to know possible new team members during organized trial lessons. Based on these findings, organizations should put emphasis on the importance of co-workers during decision-making processes regarding organization-newcomer fit.

Furthermore, another implication for practice is that not only the newcomer is dependent from their co-worker but also vice versa. The findings of this study show that in organizations and departments where employees were exposed with time pressure and assigned with tasks which are mainly critical in terms of time, co-workers and newcomers need to collaborate after a short time and have to rely on each other. According to Hurst et al. (2012, 127) situations where interdependences occur, the need for interaction increases and at the same time motivates team members to cooperate with colleagues. As a consequence of the intense collaboration, personal characteristics and individual skills within the whole team can be explored and relationships can be formed. Therefore, for practice it is significant for organizations to think about social relationship influences on newcomers during the socialization process.

Another finding shows that not only co-workers’ support played a fundamental role during newcomer’s whole socialization process, but also the mutual support was
mentioned to have an influence on newcomer’s acceptance and social integration. Further, another contribution of this thesis is that demographic attributes of the team members influence the socialization process. The paper of Bauer et al. (1998) examined demographic effects on newcomer’s socialization process to be slight and remained to be a relatively unexplored field of investigation (Bauer et al., 1998, p. 174). This thesis shows that demographic aspects as same age distribution lead to a better integration. One outcome was that understanding between co-worker and newcomer was enhanced due to the fact that all team members have a similar age distribution. This can be an explanation and influencing factor for the success of newcomer’s socialization. Additionally, this paper shows that team members’ and newcomers’ interaction and cooperation was facilitated through the fact of same gender. In addition, being of the same gender was mentioned to positively influence the socialization process of the newcomer.

As mentioned above team members experienced a high level of cohesiveness soon after newcomers’ socialization process. This can be explained through the newcomer’s and co-workers high level of homogeneity. The strong cohesiveness was beneficial for the newcomer and her close co-worker, but it was at the same time unfavorable for team members with different backgrounds as different age, social relations, personal attributes or ability to integrate into existing networks. A homogenous team can lead to barriers for new team members, it might be even harder to get socialized when it is not accepted to have a variety of heterogeneity within a group. For a well-functioning team organizations have to cope with heterogeneity in order to really produce a high level of psychological safety where all individuals feel appreciated and are motivated. Groups with a high level of psychological safety are groups in which everybody feels confident that the team will not punish someone for having a different opinion and speaking up. HRM practices should therefore emphasize both group cohesiveness and psychological safety within groups. Consequently, team members with weak ties are likewise heard, socialized and motivated compared to those with strong ties.

Moreover, another implication for practice refers to newcomers’ experiences with previous socialization processes. Perrot et al. (2014) underline that experience with previous socialization is significant for newcomers’ behavior. Based on this, the thesis contributes and expands the above-mentioned significance for newcomers. The findings show that aside from the importance of newcomer’s own
experiences with previous socialization, co-workers experiences with socialization affect newcomer’s social integration and learning of tasks. Furthermore, as the findings show, informal breaks are an optimal source for interaction, social connection and for feedback. Therefore organizations should think about HR-practices which allow to involve team members in order to successfully integrate newcomers in the organizational environment.

5.3. Limitations

Limitations of this thesis due to the chosen research design will be clarified in the following. Qualitative interviews allow researchers to gain knowledge about individuals, events and processes within its real life context. For me as a researcher it was essential to not predetermin a priori the findings and how social phenomena should be viewed. Therefore, the value of this study was to avoid making assumptions and to adopt neutral views of human interactions during the interview phase.

Another aspect was that I work in the organization where the study was conducted. Therefore, I focused on avoiding biased questions because they could influence the respondents’ answers. The reason for that is that every person has different points of view and perspectives and this could lead to a misunderstood question. In order to reduce this limitation, I focused on asking objective, neutral and general questions during the data collection phase. Furthermore, the order of questions can lead to bias. Therefore ordering topics, questions, activities and simultaneously being open for emerging topics and resulting questions requires some competencies. In this case, in order to reduce this limitation, the interview guide was prepared in advance in order allow the respondents to be as open as possible.

Another limitation lies in the chosen case study approach. A case study design is criticized due to the generalization of the research findings. In general, studies of organizational socialization indicate that research results will vary among organizations because of different settings of newcomer’s socialization. However, existing research emphasizes the need for diverse measurement sources other than self-reports. In order to reduce the limitations, the process of how a newcomer became socialized and the role of co-workers were examined by the use of a 360 degree feedback method. By including information sources other than the
newcomer herself, diverse perceptions and viewpoints also from the private
environment emerged and led to a better understanding in regard to the success
of the newcomer’s socialization process. Nevertheless, research investigations
including multiple newcomers and multiple organizations could lead to a broader
understanding of organizational socialization and the interplay between
newcomers and co-workers.

5.4. Further need for research

First of all, further research is needed in regard to consequences of newcomers’
socialization processes on social relationships. Existing research focuses only on
patterns of social relationships and characteristics related to indicators of learning,
task mastery and role clarity. During analysis of the interviews, it was evident that
the team atmosphere in general and cohesion with co-workers are related and
played an important role during newcomer’s whole socialization process. In
addition, personal attributes and strong relationships with organization insiders
enhanced social integration. Further research should examine aspects and
consequences of social relationships during a socialization process and the
resulting impacts on team cohesion and group related properties in more detail.
In further consequences, if newcomers’ successful socialization affects team
cohesiveness the question arise how organizations can ensure a working climate
where psychological safety is high so that everybody feels appreciated.

Existing literature mentions the role of organizational insiders when new team
members enter the organization. Nevertheless, research with regard to
organizational socialization and the influence of co-workers and the importance of
social relationships during organizational entry is rare. Most of the studies focused
on the influence of the supervisor during newcomer’s socialization process. These
aspects imply the reason for the research purpose of this thesis. Due to the fact
that research is still rare, further research is required. In a competitive business
environment, where talented and skilled employees are needed and
simultaneously, competition among organizations increases steadily, this field of
research is fundamental for the successful integration of new employees.

Regarding the research setting, it would be an opportunity to extend the research
by involving more organizations of a similar context in order to compare the
findings and also to find links among small and medium sized enterprises.
A valuable direction for future research will be to determine whether team cohesiveness plays a more important role than is currently understood in the socialization process in regard to different leadership contexts.

Further, an interesting factor of future research concerning team member related aspects can also investigate the impact of demographic aspects. In this case, co-worker and supervisor outlined that the same age distribution between co-workers had a positive impact on newcomer’s social integration and on the understanding among newcomer and co-worker. In further consequence, the impact of age related aspects during a socialization process should increasingly be taken into account by future research. In addition, a quantitative study on above mentioned aspects could also investigate the influence and consequences of gender regarding the success of newcomer’s socialization. In this case, it was highlighted that the same gender increased the cohesion within the team members.

Some researchers emphasize the influence on newcomers by the use of formal socialization tactics as a key success factor (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979; Cooper-Thomas and Anderson, 2006). However, as the findings of this case show, the newcomer was socialized mainly through informal practices. Therefore for the understanding of organizational socialization with regard to different tactics, another future research field could focus on outcomes of organizations using formal socialization tactics in comparison to organizations using informal tactics.
References


APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: Interview guide newcomer

Can you tell me more about your first days at work?
Can you tell me about what have helped you to settle in/ find orientation?
How did you figure out what is essential in the company/ for your job?
How would you describe the culture within the company?
How was the behavior / interaction with the co-worker at the beginning?
How was the behavior / interaction with the team leader at the beginning?
Did your team colleagues support you at the beginning of your working life?
Did your supervisor support you at the beginning of your working life?
Was there any event or any other human resource practices which influenced your opinion about the company/ team colleagues/ supervisor?
Have you experienced any barriers during the introduction phase?
How long did your socialization process last? Do you feel integrated into the team?
If you have to evaluate your socialization phase, what would you answer? Why?
What was your previous working experience?
APPENDIX B: Interview guide co-workers

How long are you working in the company / team?

For how long do you know the newcomer?

Can you tell me more about newcomer’s first days at work?

How would you describe the newcomer? Why?

How would you describe the culture within the company?

How was the behavior / interaction with the newcomer at the beginning?

How was the behavior / interaction between the newcomer and the team leader at the beginning?

Was there any event or other human resource practices which influenced newcomer’s opinion about the company/ team colleagues/ supervisor?

Have you experienced any barriers during newcomer’s introduction phase?

How important are networks during a socialization process in your opinion?

If you have to evaluate newcomer’s socialization phase, what would you answer? Why?

What was newcomer’s previous working experience?

How would the optimal socialization process look like based on our experiences?

Were there any differences between the newcomer and other newcomer’s socialization processes among your team?
Appendix C: Interview guide supervisor

How long are you working in the company / team?

How many employees are within your team?

How long you know the newcomer?

Can you tell me more about newcomer’s first days at work?

How would you describe the newcomer? Why?

How would you describe the culture within the company? Why?

How was the behavior / interaction with the newcomer at the beginning?

How was the behavior / interaction between the newcomer and the co-workers at the beginning?

Have the team members supported the newcomer?

How co-workers supported the newcomer?

Was there any event or other human resource practices which influenced newcomer’s opinion about the company/ team colleagues/ supervisor?

Have you experienced any barriers during newcomer’s introduction phase?

What did you as the team leader expect from newcomers?

How important are networks during a socialization process in your opinion?

If you have to evaluate your socialization phase, what would you answer? Why?

What was newcomer’s previous working experience?

How would the optimal socialization process look like based on our experiences?

Were there any differences between the newcomer and other newcomer’s socialization processes among your team?